

Speaking errors analysis: A case study of English-major undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi

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Abstract

English speaking is an essential communication skill that Thai learners face difficulties in improving. This study aimed to investigate the types of English-speaking errors made by Thai undergraduate students when speaking English and identify the sources of such errors. The population included 133 Thai sophomore students who enrolled in the Presentation in English course in the first semester of the academic year 2021. Twenty-four participants were selected by a purposive sampling method. The data was collected using a speech error identification form adapted from Clark & Clark's concept, which was validated by three experts in English learning and identified the sources of errors according to Dulay, Burt, & Krashen. Frequency and percentage distribution statistics were used to analyze the data. Inter-raters validated the errors consisting of two native English speakers and one Thai teacher. The results revealed that the most frequently found speech errors were filled pauses, stutters, and repeats, respectively. The misformation was the most frequently found, followed by the omission of "be" and the addition of "be" in the sentences as grammatical errors. Each type of error results from one of the three sources of errors, which are cognitive, psychological, and sociological reasons. The pedagogical implications from this study could be applied in designing teaching and learning processes to develop students' speaking skills.

Keywords: English speaking error analysis, speech error, grammatical error, Thai EFL students

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Introduction

In terms of linguistic communication, speaking and listening are regarded as fundamental human activities. As the former involves a mechanism for converting meaning into sounds that utilizes simple structures to specify hidden representation, the latter is likely the reversion (Clark, & Clark, 1977). Speaking enables us to put our thoughts into words, revealing our intended feelings and desires for others to perceive. According to Martina, Akbarjono, Friantary, & Sari (2021), speaking is an interactive process involving the transfer of information. In addition, speakers anticipate that listeners will differentiate the functions of the structures they utter and respond appropriately. Even if the listeners responded to everything that was said (Clark, & Clark, 1977), if they do not understand what they mean, this is considered a "misunderstanding."

According to Evans (2017), English is a difficult language to learn for non-native speakers, especially when the sound system, vocabulary, and grammatical rules of their native language appear different. Learning how to address oneself in English is not simple, especially in a foreign setting where there are some limitations to the exposure to the authentic use of the language (Navidinia, Mobaraki, & Malekzadeh, 2019). In Thailand, English is problematic for Thai citizens in their daily communication (Sasum, &

Weeks, 2018). Among four skills, speaking is regarded as a vital key for daily communication (Bashir, Azeem, & Dogar, 2011) and is considered the most significant skill for second language learning (Akkakoson, 2016; Clark, & Clark, 1977; Crystal, 2003). Undoubtedly, Thai learners of English remain unable to master the language, especially in speaking and listening skills (Jaiyai et al., 2005).

According to Sasum, & Weeks (2018), Thai students are aware of the significance of English, but despite many years of formal English education, they are unable to effectively address themselves in English. Students are unable to express themselves naturally in English, as demonstrated by the fact that English-language classrooms continue to use Thai as their medium of instruction. Additionally, they have fewer opportunities to practice the target language (Khamkhien, 2010). Additionally, it is believed that Thai English learners are passive and lack sufficient responsibility for their education (Noom-ura, 2013). Another assumption is that Thai students struggle to distinguish between their native language and the target language. Even though they have the opportunity to use the language in their common language classroom, this results in problematic face-to-face interactions (Leaduwee, 2018). In addition, they lack confidence in speaking English (Boonkit,

2010) and fear of making errors when interacting with foreigners (Trent, 2009).

Numerous researchers have found it intriguing to examine the speaking abilities of Thai English language students. Sasum, & Weeks (2018) conducted a survey to investigate Thai students' speaking abilities and their suggestions for improving them. Students addressed their needs to improve vocabulary knowledge and spelling in the target language, as revealed by the results. In addition, they emphasized the quality of the basic learning materials, the teachers' professional knowledge, and their teaching abilities. In addition, Suthiwartnarueput (2017) investigated the effects of spontaneous speaking practice on Thai students. Students liked impromptu speaking activities because they perceived them to be authentic and beneficial.

It is evident that many studies attempt to ameliorate the English proficiency of Thai learners. Error analysis offers another possibility to investigate the problems produced by EFL learners. Error analysis refers to a branch of linguistic analysis that concentrates on the error production of learners (Gass, & Mackey, 2013). In other words, it focuses on the comparison of errors produced by learners in the target language and the structure of the target language. It differs from contrastive analysis because the latter aims to compare the errors made with the native language.

On the other hand, error analysis concentrates on the production of errors in both the native language and the target language (Gass, & Mackey, 2013). Error analysis can be categorized into interlingual and intralingual frameworks. Interlingual errors are associated with those resulting from the native language, which includes cross-lingual comparison, while intralingual errors are those caused by the target language that is being learned (Gass, & Mackey, 2013). Lightbown, & Spada (2006) coin the term "interlanguage as the development of second language knowledge of learners.". Interlanguage is not only set up in a certain way, but it also changes as students hear the target language and get the chance to change their ideas about how to learn a second language.

Moreover, each sentence serves a distinct purpose in communicating meaning. In their speech, speakers inform listeners of their intended purposes, such as to warn and instruct listeners to perform certain tasks, pose questions, and so on. However, if the listeners fail to comprehend the speaker's intent, they are considered to have "misinterpreted" the message. According to Clark, & Clark (1977), the most common speech errors produced by speakers are silent pauses and filled pauses. When attempting to speak faster, the person who speaks slowly tends to eliminate the pause rather than shorten the words. However, repetitions and false starts are

significantly more complicated. Maclay, & Osgood (1959), as cited by Clark, & Clark (1977), discovered that speakers made repeated errors with function words such as article and preposition, as well as false starts with content words. Next, corrections frequently occur at the constituent boundary's beginning. Therefore, repetitions, false starts, and corrections are strong evidence that speakers attempt to finish their sentences. However, when their utterances are obstructed, they pause and commit such errors. Clark, & Clark (1977) also noted that interjections may occur when the speaker appears to forget and searches for the appropriate words. The interjection resembles a moment of hesitation. It indicates that speakers must pause and consider their words. Lastly, the articulatory gestures that correspond to a sequence of muscular contractions in and over the mouth may be the cause of stuttering and tongue-slipping (Lashley, 1951 as cited in Clark, & Clark, 1977).

According to Dulay, Burt, & Krashen (1982) taxonomy of surface structure, errors can be classified into four categories. Learners who do not fully master the L2 system frequently omit certain grammatical morphemes, nouns, and verb inflections, possibly due to their inability to acquire the rules of the target language. The second type of grammatical error that cannot occur in a well-formed sentence is added. This

includes regularization, which involves overseeing exceptions and generalizing rules to areas where learners do not apply to indicate certain tenses; double marking, also known as the failure to exclude certain items; and simple addition, which could be a non-native error or a native speaker's way of emphasizing information. Misformation is the incorrect form of the morpheme or grammatical structure utilized in their speeches. The final term, misordering, refers to instances in which the correct grammatical forms are used in the correct context but are arranged in the incorrect order.

The minor mistakes included the use of the present tense, the addition of a direct object, the use of plural nouns, the use of a third-person pronoun, etc. Clark, & Clark (1977) identified psychological (anxiety), cognitive, and sociological causes for planning difficulties. Anxiety in situations and social contexts is one of the error sources caused by the fear of being evaluated and the interference of the mother tongue in speech production in target languages. In addition, the effects of anxiety diminish the ability of speakers to plan and deliver their speeches. According to Taylor (1969), cited in Clark, & Clark (1977), the cognitive reason occurs when speakers have trouble explaining or finding the proper words. It is believed that concrete objects allow individuals to express themselves more effectively than abstract ones. Sociological factors constitute the

third error source. Under the pressure of conversation, speakers must make themselves clear when they have not yet completed their utterances and when they conclude their speech. This is due to the fact that if they are hesitant at any point, someone else may take over the conversation. Clark, & Clark (1977) pointed out some of the reasons why mistakes happen, but Savaş (2014) said that the English-speaking problems of English learners were caused by fatigue, fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation in the classroom, not knowing enough about the topics, nervousness, and not having enough time to express ideas.

It can be concluded that the analysis of the error has been interesting to several researchers. Dayat (2017) investigated speaking errors and discovered that the majority of them were incorrect omissions, redundant words, misused, confused, or misplaced forms. In addition, interviews with these students revealed their errors, which included interlingual and intralingual transfer, learning background, and communication strategies. Chania, & Amri (2019) investigated grammatical mistakes in English debate activities. The omission was the primary error, consisting of singular and plural nouns, pronouns, subjects, objects, prepositions, articles, auxiliary verbs, and other words. The subordinate errors included the use of the present tense,

direct objects, plural nouns, and the third person pronoun, among others. Even though the speaking skills of Thai undergraduates have been explored, it has mainly involved learners' needs, self-assessment, and problematic aspects. Some interesting research has been done on how and why Thai EFL undergraduate students make mistakes when they speak, especially in a Thai setting. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the sources of errors produced by English major undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi when responding to English questions on various topics.

Research questions

1. What are the English-speaking errors made by English major undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi?
2. What kinds of grammatical errors are made by English major undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi?
3. What are the sources of English-speaking errors made by English major undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi?

Methodology

In this research, the researchers applied a mixed-method research design mainly based on

interviews of speaking performances (Figure 1). According to Widodo (2014), interview transcriptions were considered the qualitative data set that represented speaking performances. The data was collected and analyzed as follows: First, the researchers recorded the participants' speeches on the determined topics and transcribed the recordings. Then, the data obtained from the

conversations between the participants and native English speakers were transcribed. After that, the speech and grammatical errors produced by participants were classified and quantified in frequency and percentage as a quantitative approach. Finally, the speech errors and their sources were identified. Each analytic phrase was inter-rated by three experts.

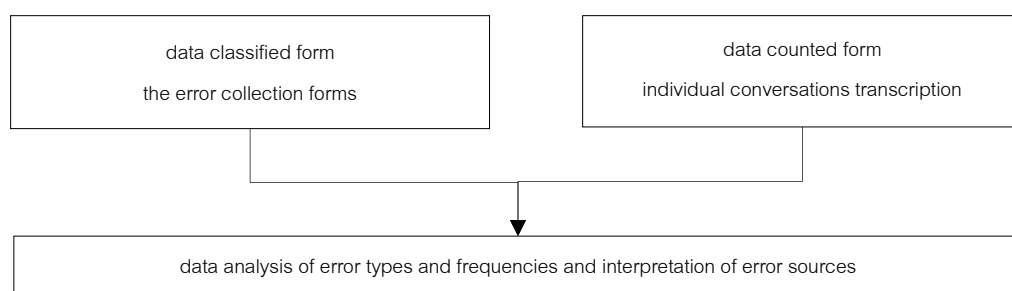


Figure 1 Mix-method research design.

Participants

The population of this research was 133 second-year English for Communication majors who enrolled in a Presentation in English course in the first semester of the academic year 2021 at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi. Twenty-four students were selected by a purposive sampling method. The criteria for selection of participants were based on the speaking performance reported by the instructors of the Presentation in English course. The majority of the time, they received between 6 and 8 out of 10 points on in-class

presentation tasks. This indicates that they made adequate errors to demonstrate proficiency in the language.

Procedures

The participants prepared and delivered a self-introduction speech to two native English teachers and one Thai teacher. Following that, they were required to conduct a conversation on each of five similar topics, including pets, favorite foods, hobbies, travel destinations, and future careers. This is because these topics do not require participants to have any specific background knowledge, and the researcher

intends to encourage them to produce as much language as possible. To investigate the speaking errors, the transcriptions from the conversations between participants and native speakers were employed to elicit their speaking performances. Each conversation lasted about 7-10 minutes depending on the participants' responses, which were provided by their varying levels of fluency. During the conversations, two foreign teachers and one Thai teacher marked their speaking errors in the speech data collection form, which was adapted from Clark, & Clark (1977). The voice recorder was used to check that the interviewers' counts of mistakes were correct.

Data Analysis

The frequency distribution and error percentage were used to analyze the data. The percentage formula is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{The numbers of each type of error}}{\text{The total numbers of data of error}} \times 100$$

The speaking errors produced by the participants were categorized into speech error production and grammatical errors.

Results

The results of the data analysis were presented in three sections, including the speech errors, grammatical errors, and the sources of errors made by Thai EFL undergraduate students. The speech production errors can be shown in (Table 1).

(Table 1) shows that a full pause occurred 85 times, equivalent to 29.31 percent. Next was stutters. There were 60 stutters, representing 20.68 percent. It was followed by repeats, which occurred 42 times, representing 14.48 percent. A silent pause occurred 35 times, which is equal to 12.06 percent. Corrections occurred 38 times, which was equivalent to 13.10 percent. Finally, a slipping of the tongue was found only 30 times, equivalent to 10.37 percent. The findings of the grammatical error can be described in (Table 2).

Table 1 Speech production errors.

| no. | type of speech error | frequency | percentage (%) |
|-----|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1 | filled pause | 85 | 29.31 |
| 2 | stutters | 60 | 20.68 |
| 3 | repeats | 42 | 14.48 |
| 4 | correction | 38 | 13.10 |
| 5 | silent pause | 35 | 12.06 |
| 6 | slip of tongue | 30 | 10.37 |
| | total | 290 | 100.00 |

Table 2 The grammatical error.

| no. | type of grammatical error | frequency | percentage (%) |
|-----|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1 | misformation | 28 | 44.00 |
| 2 | omission of 'verb to be' | 15 | 24.00 |
| 3 | addition of 'verb to be' | 10 | 16.00 |
| 4 | mis-ordering | 6 | 10.00 |
| 5 | addition of preposition | 4 | 6.00 |
| | total | 63 | 100.00 |

(Table 2) demonstrates that the wrong choice of verb occurred 28 times, representing 44 percent of total grammatical errors, followed by the omission of "to be", which occurred 15 times, representing 24 percent. The addition of "to be" or "verb" occurred 10 times and accounts for 16 percent. Mis-ordering occurred 6 times, which

was equal to 10 percent, and the addition of prepositions was the smallest part because it had only 4 frequencies, equivalent to 6 percent.

The overall findings of the participants could be summarized regarding speaking problems and sources of speech errors in (Table 3).

Table 3 Matrix of error types and sources of speaking problems.

| speaking problems | types of speech error | sources of errors | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|
| | | psychological | cognitive | sociological |
| lexical | stutters | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | correction | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| grammatical | misformation | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | omission of 'verb to be' | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | addition of 'verb to be' | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | mis-ordering | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | addition of preposition | | ✓ | ✓ |
| fluency | repeats | ✓ | | |
| | silent pause | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | filled pause | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | slip of tongue | ✓ | ✓ | |

(Table 3) represents the summary of speaking problems among Thai EFL students. The most salient attribute resulting in speaking problems is the cognitive factor, which covers most types of speech errors except repeats and silent pauses. Next, the psychological factor affects all the types of speech errors in fluency, lexical, and additional' of verb to be' in the grammatical type of error. Finally, the sociological factor contributes to correction (lexical), wrong word choice, omission of "verb to be," misordering and addition of prepositions (grammatical), and silent pause (fluency).

Discussion

The investigation into the production of speech errors includes grammatical errors and other sources of error. The speech errors in this study can be categorized into 5 categories. The most frequent errors of Thai EFL undergraduate students are pause and stutter, which contradict Clark, & Clark (1977). They reported that the most common speech errors were silent pause and filled pause at a certain point, and the findings suggested that the filled pause and stutter were the most common error types among Thai EFL students.

The first category found contained pauses associated with sounds. It is produced primarily by the participants as they attempt to fill in the blanks with ah, er, uh, and mm. The example can

be found in "So, it simply prefers, er, and an expansion. "The participants paused for a moment in the middle of the sentence, but it was not silent. The space was filled with the sound "er," and then the sentence continued. Clark, & Clark (1977); Fadhila, Fauziati, & Haryanti (2013) say that this type of error production "occurred more often than the silent pause and may have been caused by the development of intralingual aspects" (Touchie, 1986).

In addition, the speaking error produced by participants was a stutter, which was frequently found in Fadhila, Fauziati, & Haryanti's (2013) study. Stuttering occurs when the participants repeatedly repeat the same sound rapidly. The illustration of stutters can be seen in "We shared a story to ecec-ec each other." The participant rapidly repeated the word "ec." The speaker could produce the sentence fluently after repeating the word "ec." Many believe that the source of this error derives from mouth movement, overthinking, and fear of being judged, which is related to the anxiety reason (Clark, & Clark, 1977; Savaş, 2014). This is also consistent with Marzec-Stawiarska (2015) study, which revealed the learners' emphasis on fluency and vocabulary in their English speaking.

Repeats refer to the situation in which participants produce speech sounds and repeat one or more words before they finish their sentences. A case of this point can be seen as "I usually bring my/my coat with me." This example indicates that

the speaker repeated the word "my" before completing the sentence. The source of this error production may result from obstruction of the idea, which may be derived from anxiety reasons (Clark, & Clark, 1977; Savaşç, 2014) and a lack of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2001).

Moreover, correction occurred when the participants repeated one word or more. This can be illustrated as "They play/I'm sorry, I mean they like to play with my dog". In the beginning, the participant says "they to play," but then she corrects the sentence to "They like to play with my dog." In the middle of the sentence, the participants corrected the sentence by using the explicit utterance "I'm sorry, I mean." This source of error indicates that participants rushed their thoughts and might be afraid of being judged. The reasons for these speech mistakes are cognitive and psychological. This is in line with what Lightbown, & Spada (2006); Fadhila, Fauziati, & Haryanti (2013); Gass, & Mackey (2013) say about the reasons for learners' lexical and grammatical mistakes.

Another interesting point is a silent pause, which can be observed when the participants think of the next word or forget the next word, so they keep silent for a second to produce the next word, such as "I used to do // conference job since I was in my second year." After the word "I used to do...", the participants stopped and kept silent for a few

minutes. Then they completed the sentence by saying, "... conference job since I was in my second year." This kind of discontinuous speech with a silent pause was also found in Fadhila, Fauziati, & Haryanti (2013) study. The sources of error may be seen as overthinking and obstruction of the idea, which might be related to anxiety (Clark, & Clark, 1977; Savaşç, 2014), and lack of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2001).

Finally, the slip of the tongue can also be seen as an unconscious mispronunciation in the speech error. An illustration of this type of error is "I like watching YouTube in my free time." The word "washing" was pronounced instead of "watching". The reason for this error may result from the articulation program and the mouth movement. This also fits with what Marzec-Stawiarska (2015) said about speech problems, low concentration, losing your train of thought, short sentences, and silence.

To answer the second and third research questions, the omission of 'verb to be' is an obligation that must have one finite verb in a complete sentence in English. In the results, the participants failed to use 'to be' to make grammatical sentences. The examples were "Kaem as a roommate of James", "I Ø interested in English" and "What Ø the question?". This type of grammatical problem was found more often than those in Fadhila, Fauziati, & Haryanti (2013) study,

which related to cognitive and sociological reasons because they might not yet have mastered the target language and the social situation that forced them to finish the conversation.

Moreover, misformation was mostly found. Subject-verb agreement is vital in English sentences. The examples can be seen in the following sentences: - "He have sick", "I has dogs and cats." As stated by Harmer (2015), grammar is yet another significant element of English teaching syllabi to develop learners' communicative abilities. The findings in this study reveal that the cognitive factor is the major cause of the participants' production of speech errors. Yet, this disagreed with Dayat's (2017); Chania, & Amri (2019) studies, which revealed incorrect omission as the most frequent error, followed by redundant words and misused forms of tenses because of their first language as one of the learners' error factors in Dayat (2017) study.

The addition of "verb to be" and the verb was also found to be an error. An example of this type of error made by the participants was "This is the note describing how to cook or bake cookies." The verb described was added in conjunction with the use of the verb to be in this sentence, which causes additional verbs. Another example was also found in "We are serve...". As claimed by Clark, & Clark (1977), anxiety in situations and social contexts is one of the error sources resulting

from psychological reasons for fear of being assessed and the mother tongue's interference in speech production in the target languages. The psychological cause of speaking errors in this study was in line with the study of Dayat (2017), which identified ideas as the most common type of confusing words.

Moreover, the addition of the preposition was observed within the grammatical error. The example is "Please move in there." The participants added the preposition "in" unnecessarily. The use of "in" could be influenced by the speaker's first language. More misplacing of a preposition can also be seen in "I like the weather in there". This is in accordance with Touchie (1986), who specifies that utterance errors result from intralingual and cognitive factors, which should be corrected regarding the high level of occurrence, intelligibility levels, ranges of the learner's different socio-cultural contexts, and content focus.

In addition, a wrong position will change the meaning of the sentence. It does not only influence the meaning of the sentence, but it can also result in ungrammatical sentences. The example is "Do you know what this is?" In the question, the positions of "to be", "auxiliary," and "modal verbs" are next to the question word. The example showed that the participants made a misordering by placing "is" after the subject. It should be near the question word "Do you know what is this?" There were about

6 times that participants exercised misordering, such as "skill English," "food spicy." Touchie (1986); Fadhila, Fauziati, & Haryanti (2013) found that lexical and grammatical errors were caused by the transfer of interlingual and intralingual aspects by the learners.

Conclusion

To summarize, the first part of the results presented the English-speaking errors, including filled pauses, stutters, repeats, corrections, silent pauses, and slips of the tongue (Table 1). The second section revealed kinds of grammatical errors, which were mis-formation, omission of "verb to be", addition of "verb to be", mis-ordering, and addition of preposition (Table 2). There are two sources, including interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Interlingual transfer occurs when the sentences of the speakers are influenced by their first language. Intralingual transfer occurs when the speakers have insufficient knowledge of the rules of English.

The last part of the findings was the sources of English-speaking errors, which consisted of cognitive, psychological, and sociological aspects (Table 3). Among the errors produced by undergraduates, the cognitive source is caused by the unusual topics in the conversation. The participants showed a sign of difficulty when they may have had to communicate with improvised

questions that may have been fabricated during the interview. Besides, they indicated a sign of hesitation when they had to talk with native speakers. This was caused by psychological and sociological reasons. They occur when the speakers must talk to someone who has a higher position.

The results of the study suggest some important implications for strengthening and improving the methods of English-speaking teaching. Teachers should apply these findings to develop English speaking courses and create meaningful classroom activities for the improvement of students' speaking skills. Relevant tasks and hands-on learning experiences (Onkao, 2020) can motivate students to maximize their learning. Communicative activities are a useful teaching approach to enhance the fluency and accuracy of the students' speaking skills. In addition, the learning environment can promote their learning. It is also recommended to motivate EFL students to develop their speaking skills by providing a relaxed learning atmosphere, appropriately assigning speaking tasks to their proficiency levels, utilizing group activities, allowing preparation for tasks, adding immediate chances of speaking, giving sufficient feedback, and designing compulsory attendance (Harmer, 2015). Alternatively, a synchronous Online English Speaking Group (AOESG) could help to increase

speaking ability through a self-practiced program in which the English learners are assigned to regularly perform and record their own speaking tasks on daily life topics such as family, interests, going shopping, hometown, friends, and careers through the WhatsApp platform, before sharing them with their peers in the group each week of the course, in which they can obtain more information for these resources (Chunngam, & Worasesthaphong, 2018). They needed to pair up with partners to converse with each other. It was found that the AOESG needed both interaction between speakers and feedback from teachers to help people improve their speaking skills (Alkan, & Bümen, 2020).

In addition, students should be encouraged to speak English without worrying about their mistakes, in which case teachers should be aware of when and how to give them corrections and constructive feedback (Kusirirat, & Nuchprayoon, 2022). Further studies should be replicated to find out speech errors with different levels of speech performance and different groups of students so that the results of the studies can provide new insights for pedagogical improvement.

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