Abstract

The scientific research has made a rigorous effort to examine common grammatical errors in spoken English which are committed by non-English majored undergraduates who are less proficient in the international language. Accordingly, our paper aims to vividly identify errors types based on their incidence levels, as well as to uncover possible causes of such grammatical underperformance, thereby putting forward feasible solutions to well deal with the phenomenon on both sides of in-charge teachers and students. The research and language data were gained from the survey questionnaire and the simulated oral interview of 80 designated students getting involved in a set of optional oral topics. Error analysis of 40 topic-based oral performances depicted that the five most common grammatical errors committed by the students are verb form, word form, pronoun, plural form, and article, respectively, in accordance with linguistic description of errors. On the basis of Dulay et al (1982) surface structure taxonomy, the most incidental types of error involve omission and misinformation, correspondingly, while elements addition and misordering being less frequent. In addition, study outcomes illustrated a fact that a number of students failed to assure essential constituents of a full utterance to a fairly large extent during their oral performance.

Key words: Common Errors, Non-English Major, Speaking Skills, Linguistic.

Introduction

It is common knowledge that language acts as an essential and characteristic product of every country given the fact that it is the particular nature of each nation. Once any learners expose themselves to an international language, it is vital for them to acquire four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing with a view to mastering and using it in a proficient manner. Out of above four skills, speaking is likely to be regarded as the one requiring much time learning and practicing. Many students encounter challenges in speaking at early moments. In reality, a decent speaking acquisition is among keys which enables learners’ step gradually to open the door to this astounding language. Furthermore, it is not easy to learn English due primarily to the complication of its grammatical patterns. Also, it is misconceived by many English learners that when they have memorized a wide array of grammar structures and can write well, they can, therefore, speak proficiently. In hopes of learners being competent in uncovering specific false grammatical practices during their course of speaking and in being corrected, coupled with substantial changes which should be harnessed to well deal with common grammatical errors in English speaking skills, such study would like to
make a rigorous analysis of common tense mistakes made by a designated group of students that have already been realized among them, as well as that go beyond their recognition during the course of their English speech. The study focuses on investigating certain common grammatical errors in speaking skills by non-English major students at the People’s Police University, as well as the reasons for such types of errors. Based on the study results, specific suggestions and solutions would like to be put forward for teachers to identify these genres of mistakes in a more appropriate manner.

Theoretical Underpinnings

1. Speaking

In our communication speaking is considered twice as much as reading and writing (Rivers, 1981) and it is used by learners to show their opinions and hopes and intentions.

Also, Pattison (1992) points out that learners need to learn how to speak with confidence, in English. And know the language means able to speak it.

Hence, it will be recognized that speaking is becoming a skill (primary skill) that is more important than others, which learners have to acquire. Nunan (1999) stated comparing to listening, role of speaking is considered as the over-bearing elder sister”.

And then, mastering speaking is a goal for language learners (Goh and Burns, 2012). Also, learners regard speaking ability as the measurement of knowing a language (Burkart, 1998) and their progress in spoken communication.

Last but not least, Le Huong Hoa, Dinh Tran Ngoc Huy (2021) stated speaking and other 3 English skills of students need to be improved from basic to advance in schools.

2. Errors

In English communication, learners can have errors in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary (According to Nunan, 1999). For instance, students might be familiar with “interested with” rather than “interested in”.

So, when students consider first language used in target language then their use is suitable and considered as errors (Saville, 2006). Moreover, it is the intervention of L1 into L2 that caused errors.

Le Huong Hoa, Dinh Tran Ngoc Huy (2021) also stated overcoming errors in English communication (when practicing 4 English skills) is important to improve learner’s English ability at schools.

Last but not least, students can face grammatical errors (grammar considered as pattern which governs language) if they often use mother tongue when encountering obstacles in the second language (Richard, 1971) and there are 4 grammatical errors features such as misinformation, omission, misordering, and over-generalization (Ellis, 1997).

3. Underlying Theoretical Frameworks

Within the study, the analysis of transcribed oral data for common grammatical errors is performed in study (Dulay et al, 1982) related to Surface Structure Taxonomy. Based on taxonomy, learners errors are put into 4 types including misinformation, omission, misordering, and over-generalization.

Hence, this study is conducted based on this taxonomy, aimed at shedding light on specific grammar errors committed by students at the People’s Police University.

On the other hand, authors classified grammatical errors into tense, pronoun, question, article, preposition, verb form, instead of verb phrase, noun phrase, adjective, S-V agreement in the context that studies these errors will be incorporated in error analysis (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 1982).

And last but not least, Ng, D.T., Huy, D.T.N., Thanh, P.T., & Döngül, E.S. (2021) discussed about roles of language which is considered its application for teaching English Students at Master’s Grade Levels.

Methodology

1. Research issue

Below are issues and questions for our research:
1. What are grammatical errors committed by students in course of English speech?
2. What are causes of errors?

2. Research Methods

In the research of error analysis, a mixed method (both quantitative and qualitative) is utilized. (Kothari, 2004) claims that there are a couple of methods which are fundamental such as quantitative and qualitative ones.

When it comes to a descriptive research, as argued by Seliger and Shohamy (1990), a combination of techniques required to specify naturally occurring phenomena in which there is no experimental manipulation.

Next authors will investigate students’ grammatical errors via collecting the data from a survey questionnaire and topic-based spoken English performances about general English
topics at A2 CEFR level by 80 targeted students at the People’s Police University.

3. Research Procedures

As for the former one (survey questionnaire), it was conducted personally by the researcher in the field of the study. With regard to the latter (the topic-based oral interview) the researcher required participants to perform their oral speech on certain topic-based oral questions and simultaneously made recorded audio-taping, gathering, and turning them into written form and analyzing. In this manner, the objectivity of data collection and subsequent analysis is ultimately assured.

Findings and Discussions

1. Survey Questionnaire Findings

Question 1: How long have you been learning English?

Table 1. English learning duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking a look at the table 3, it is evident that there is a vast majority of students confirming 7 years of duration of their English acquisition so far, which respectively involve 4 years of secondary level and 3 ones of tertiary level. By comparison, those who acknowledge their time of English learning for 3 years accounts for just 15%, while no one admits other facts.

Question 2: How do you feel about the role of speaking skills?

As illustrated from the aforementioned pie chart, speaking skills is acknowledged as being 'very important' with the dominant rate (60%). This is absolutely evident due to the fact that speaking skills takes the under-lying position in any type of social interactions which are dispensable in daily life. Fewer students contend that the role of speaking skills is ‘important’, occupying 38%, 22% less than that of the former.

Concerning those who hold the opposite view, claiming that English speaking skills is ‘not very important’, they make up an underwhelming figure of 2%. It means that none of them consider English oral capacity is ‘not important’.

Question 3: Do you like learning English grammar?

Yes, 35%

No, 65%

Chart 2: Students’ passion in English grammar
Based on the survey outcome, it is apparent that there are 65% of them taking 'little interest' in not learning English grammar. By contrast, the number of those who 'favor' learning grammar makes up 35%. That is, they affirmed that a good command of grammar is the foundation for the accuracy in foreign language acquisition, especially in speaking skills. They advocated learning English grammar helping to alleviate the ambiguity in oral English, as well as minimizing grammatical error commission.

**Question 4: How important is grammar in English speaking skills?**

There is a fact that in the absence of grammar, the language is very likely to fall apart or collapse. Indeed, the survey observed nearly half of involved students upholding 'the utmost significance of grammar' in English speaking skills (45%). At a lower level, two-thirds of the former figure acknowledged grammar in English speaking skills as 'being important' (accounting for 30%). On the contrary, only 18% of total surveyed subjects diminished the significance of such aspect in oral English, claiming that grammar is 'not very important'. Such statistics were approximately three times bigger than that of complete protesters who constituted 7% of total participants. The survey outcome suggests that both students and teachers should pay much more attention to this matter. Once perfect grammar is not fulfilled, we fail to assure the flows of proper communication. In other words, we cannot communicate well enough with a restricted grammatical capacity. Hence, grammar tuition is an essential stage in language teaching and the teachers who possess an excellent command of grammar are more likely to perform well in their work, even in the cases where students are pure English beginners without English grammar capacity.

**Question 5: What types of error/mistake do you often commit while speaking?**

A vast majority of students admitted committing errors regarding “article” (80%), this was followed by the figure of those making “verb form”-related errors (75%). Taking the third place of popularity in mistakes, “pronoun”, “preposition”, and “subject-verb agreement” shared the same proportion (equally 65%). To a lesser extent, “word form”, “plural noun”, and “tense error” witnessed a decline of 5% in the incidence of error commission (60% of each), which are triple times bigger than that of students making “question form”-related mistakes (20%). “Negation”, amazingly, there was as low as 10% of the involved students recorded to confirm their commission of such type of error (also the lowest). The statistics in details are illustrated as follows in Table 2:

### Table 2.

**Errors based on linguistic description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic description of errors</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Verb Form</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Word Form</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pronoun</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plural Noun</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Article</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tense Error</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Preposition</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. S-V Agreement</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Question Form</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Negation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6: How frequent do you commit these errors while speaking English?

**Table 3.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors of linguistic description</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Verb Form</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Word Form</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pronoun</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plural Noun</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Article</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tense Error</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Preposition</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. S-V Agreement</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Question Form</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Negation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted from table 3, it is evident that “tense” error witnessed the highest rate of involved students who admitted ‘always’ committing such type of error (65%), turning it into the most frequently-committed mistake among those. This is followed by respective “verb form”, “pronoun”, and “preposition” which underwent the identical level of frequency of error commission (with 60% for each). To a lesser extent, 55% of total designated participants acknowledged their fault practices in three genres of “word form”, “article”, and “S-V agreement” on an ‘always’ basis. Taking the two following downward positions in such category are “plural noun” and “question form”. While the former (“plural noun”) observed a half of surveyed subjects ‘always’ conceding the relevant type of mistakes (50%), the latter (“question form”) held the written account of the modest percentage of such level of frequency (35%), equivalent to roughly one third of total participants. “Negation”, interestingly, totally runs against the initially-mentioned type of error (“tense” error) in all the listed levels of frequency, with as low as 5% of involved students admitting ‘always’ making errors of such kind, whereas up to 65% of those getting confident in ‘never’ committing false practices in this classification.

With regard to the ‘usually’ level, “negation”, once again, makes its own path with the only single-digit percentage at the level of incidence (5%, also the lowest), while “question form” is the only type of error to experience the higher percentage of frequency level than that of the former category (40%). As for remaining mistake genres, they recorded corresponding rates of frequency that approximately halved in comparison with the first classification (ranging from 25% to 35%).

From the opposite perspective, when it comes to the two remaining categories of frequency (namely ‘rarely’ and ‘never’), other than “negation” with the highest rates at both levels, 25% and 65%, correspondingly, most other types of error observed the modest single-digit percentages of frequency level of error commission (fluctuating from 3% to 10%), in which there are even kinds of mistake undergoing two respective one-digit percentages for both corresponding levels of frequency (including “verb form”, “pronoun”, “tense” error, and “preposition”). Noticeably, there are no participants in the survey claiming that they have ‘never’ committed “pronoun”-related errors (0%). It means that errors of such kind are utterly inevitable for designated students in the survey.
Common Errors Made by Non-English Majored Students in Speaking Skills: A Case Study at a University in Vietnam, 590

Question 7: Why do you make these above errors?

It is inevitable that learners make mistakes in the course of language acquisition. This fact has stimulated a series of study to be executed to sort out specific most common types of errors committed by them. Nonetheless, another thing that is of equal significance is why the common mistakes are made or the possible causes for such phenomenon in other words. In accordance with the above survey questionnaire, we can recognize that the designated students usually make mistakes during oral English, especially “verb form” and “word form”. Therefore, we should find out the specific reasons for such false practices prior to putting forward certain solutions.

Based on the aforementioned survey outcome, the major culprits behind students’ grammar errors have come to light. Accordingly, there are as many as 50% of total participants blaming ‘slips of the tongue’ (interpreted as uncontrolled oral speech, or verbal failures due to state of under-confidence or poor preparations) for their grammar under-performance. Making up 5% fewer than this, ‘performance pressure’ is regarded as being the second-most common factor to be responsible for their grammar mistakes (45%). ‘Performance pressure’ is in fact perceived as the students’ distress or anxiety that are brought about due to teachers’ aggressive verbal or non-verbal gestures, exam atmosphere, or grade-related pressure, and so on. On another aspect, it is highly reasonable that 40% the entire designated group have taken initiative in making self-assessments, admitting that their most-committed grammar errors are attributable to their own ‘poor grammar capacity’, truly a subjective factor. As far as other secondary causes are concerned, one fifths of total surveyed students take the blame for their gaps in memory, the so-called ‘forgetfulness’ (equivalent to 20%), which is excessively two times higher than the figure of those calling out ‘bad models’ as a contributing factor to their false grammatical practices (8%). ‘Bad models’, that is, occur at the time when they heard incorrect English – from such sources like the TV programs, English unorthodox conversations, or from some non-native English teachers, and of course, from their schooling partners. Logically, they tend to take up such oral English that contain certain common grammar mistakes as a linguistic habit, and turn it into one of the fossilized errors which are extremely hard to modify in a short time. Last but not least, other anonymous causes account for just 1% of the entire targeted group.

2. Topic-based Oral Interview Findings

- **Surface Structure Descriptions of Types of Errors in Oral Interview**

Via the error analysis from the audio-taping, an elaborate examination of the types of errors based on surface strategy descriptions (Dulay et al., 1982) shows that the most frequent error is omission (696 errors, equivalent to 63.67% of total 1.093). This is followed by misinformation (262 errors or 23.97%). Such figure is by far greater than that of those who committed addition (118, equivalent to 10.79%). Standing at only 1.55%, or as few as 17 errors of such kind, mis-ordering is the least-committed among four types of error.

**Table 4.**

Frequency of types of errors based on surface structure descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of errors based on surface structure descriptions</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>63.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misinformation</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>23.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>10.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mis-ordering</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total errors</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>99.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word count</td>
<td>13,196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the aforementioned Table 4, the high incidence of omission errors indicates that the students remained unaware of the need to assure efficient performance of essential constituting parts of the utterances, and missed out on them as a result, for example, “My family two generation (Student 5)”. The frequent omission of essential parts of utterances such as main verbs gives rise to incomplete structures, thereby leading to vague interpretation, or even miscomprehension by the conversational partners. When it comes to misinformation, the relatively high rate of mistakes of such kind reveals the fact that involved participants were conscious of the necessity to utilize a particular grammatical feature in certain parts of the sentences, but made a false choice. For instance, “Winter holidays is* very cold, and I don’t like it* (Student 4)”. Within it, the copula (verb be) and object (it) were misinformed. On other aspects, the employment of additional grammatical features (118 errors or 10.79%) or mis-ordering (17 errors, equivalent to 1.55%) are by far less frequent than omission and misinformation of elements. As for the former (addition), a typical illustration can be taken is “The most holiday I like best, it is the holiday in summer because summer have a good weather, awesome weather we can start and relax (student 9)”. Hereafter, the superlative adjective “most” and subject “it” were made redundant in the utterance. With regard to the latter (mis-ordering), the sentence “I wish come for a camping, maybe together shopping (student 12)” can be taken as an example, in which the adverb “together” needs re-ordering at the end of the utterance.

- Describing Errors (Linguistic) In Oral Interview

Look at table 5 below: we see there are “verb form” (268 errors), then “word form” (261 errors). Furthermore, The false practices by involved participants with “verb form” are due specifically to omission (202 instances), incorrect choice (44 instances), or addition of redundant parts in cases of no necessity (22 instances), which are typically illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors of linguistic description</th>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Misinformation</th>
<th>Misordering</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb Form</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>24.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>14.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural form</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>11.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-V agreement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.093</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second most frequent grammatical error for the less proficient students within the study is related to “word form” (making up 261 errors, or 23.9%). To be specific, errors of “word form” consist of incorrect use of noun, adjective, verb and adverb forms of the morpheme, for instance, employing “production”, “productive” or “produce” while the required correct form is “productively”.

In lieu of “police”, Student 13 should have said “policeman” depending on intended formality of singular noun usage. With “word form”, the overwhelming type of error is “omission” of essential nouns or verbs (making up 146 errors). This is followed by “misinformation” (53 errors), while there are also “addition” errors with 3 ones fewer (50 errors). “Mis-ordering” witnessed a modest number of corresponding errors (12 ones).

“Pronoun” ranks third among the grammatical errors made by the involved students in the oral interview (158 errors, equivalent to 14.46%). Out of four categories, “omission” observed the dominant figure of errors (122 errors) which is overwhelmingly greater than those of “misinformation”, “addition”, and “mis-ordering” (accounting for 24, 9, and 3 errors, respectively). In other words, the students either omitted them when they should be used in most cases, or made wrong choices of required pronouns, sometimes added pronouns unnecessarily.

The challenge facing with “plural form” may be due to L1 influence – a conclusion reached by
Marlyna Maros et al. (2007) based on their contrastive analysis of 120 English essays written by Form One Malay students.

In terms of the fifth rank, “article” is the one to be mentioned. Made by the involved students in the oral interview, errors of “article” ranged from “omission”, “addition” to “misinformation”, (total 91 errors or 8.33%). Among them, as many as 70 errors were recorded in the category of “omission”, compared to its one fifth in “addition”, and one tenth in “misinformation” (14 and 7 errors, respectively). Noticeably, “mis-ordering” observed no error being made available. In Lightfoot’s (1998) study of the usage of the English article system by Japanese second language learners, it was notified that the most frequently occurring error type is “omission” and this tendency is likely to have been caused by direct interference from the article-less Japanese language. In our study, the phenomenon is vividly manifested, with “omission” taking the overwhelming position.

When it comes to “tense error”, the examination of grammatical errors which were made by the less proficient students in the oral interview shows that “tense error” is the sixth highest in frequency. Accordingly, there are 76 “tense errors” identified from the oral speech data of the involved participants. To resolve gray areas in the identification of “tense errors”, “subject-verb agreement” and “verb form” errors, we settled on these clarifying guidelines in our error analysis. If the activity described is that of a third person in the present, as in “She work as an auditing officer”, the error is classified as a “subject-verb agreement” error rather than a “tense” error. If a main verb or auxiliary verb is omitted from an utterance, the error is classified as a “verb form” error (described earlier). In our analysis, we categorized the “tense” errors into use of wrong tenses (67 instances) and the wrong construction of the tenses (9 instances).

Muddling up the use of Simple Past Tense (both the copula be and main verbs), Present Continuous Tense and Present Perfect Tense was the most incidental, occurring in various contexts in the data set. A set of examples can be taken as follows:

- The Simple Past Tense (the copula be): “Yeah, I think the holiday last year is a good time and a good chance for me to travel all over the world” (Student 9).
- The Present Continuous Tense form: “A man play sports, and two people play sports” (Student 11).
- The Present Perfect Tense form: “It is from grade 3, I remember, so it is about twelve years, I guess.” (Student 15).

In all three aforementioned examples, the tenses were incorrect, and the forms underwent falsified construction. Three of them witnessed the unexpected tenses being used in place of required tenses. “Tense” errors were also frequently found in the writing of Form Four Chinese students in the study by Abdul Rashid Mohamed et al. (2004). The English tense system seems more difficult compared to languages such as Chinese and Bahasa Melayu in which words are added before a verb to situate the time of the action. If this is considered a case of negative transfer from other languages, then sensitizing learners to the source of the error might help them in noticing the incorrect form. This is assuming that the learners are familiar with the past and participle forms of regular and irregular verbs.

From another perspective, within the study, 56 “preposition” errors were identified from the oral interview data of the less proficient students (accounting for 5.12% of total). The problem facing with prepositions is due to “omission” (34 instances), “addition” of prepositions when there should not be any (12 instances) or incorrect choices (8 instances), while “mis-ordering” takes the fewest (2 instances), indicated as follows:

- “Misinformation”: They are riding on* the park. (Student 22).
- “Addition”: …and in the future I would like to become in* investigator advanced, or immediately…yeah…immediate. (Student 16).
- “Omission”: I live…hmm…^ Ku Jut district. (Student 20).

The above outcome reveals that the students are uncertain of the correct usage of “prepositions”, therefore fail to well deal with them in certain cases, similar to ESL learners in other settings. The difficulty in mastering “prepositions”, according to Treault and Chodorow (2008), “seems to be due to the great variety of linguistic functions that they serve” and choices which need to be made depending on the intention of the writer (for instance, we sat at/on/nearby the beach).

Last but not least, “subject-verb agreement” errors recognized in the oral interview data are entirely of the “misinformation” type (constituting 54 errors or 4.94% of 1.093). The less proficient students in this study tended to use the third-person form of the verb in spite of the plural subject, for example:

- My father and my mother works worker… (Student 24).

In another case, the third-person form of verb was misused in response to the first-person subject, for instance:
• *I lives in Ca Mau…* (Student 26).

In such illustrations, the final "s" is wrongly added to the verb in the third person plural or the first-person singular in the present tense. Occasionally, the base form of the verb is misused with a singular subject, for example, "Yes, she *like* reading a book, *listen* to music (Student 25)." Under other circumstances, some students utilized a plural verb to go with an indefinite subject, as in "I *find that everything are* busy. (Student 7)." Identical types of subject-verb agreement errors were also identified by Surina Nayan and Kamaruzaman Yusoff (2009) in their analysis of term papers written by students enrolled in an "English for Academic Purposes" course in a Malaysian university. In reality, "subject-verb agreement" errors are made not only by students but also academics attempting to publish in refereed journals. Flowerdew (2001) cites "subject-verb agreement" as one of the common surface errors in papers submitted by non-native writers of English, as pointed out by the journal editors interviewed for the study. While we accept discord in "subject-verb agreement" as a grammatical error often made by non-native speakers of English, our attention was drawn to the possibility of a specific type of the "subject-verb agreement" error being a feature of spoken English in informal settings. The use of the base form of the verb for singular subjects (e.g. she drive a car) may appear to be a "subject-verb agreement" error on the basis of the surface structure. However, this type of error may be a case of "past tense and present tense being not morphologically marked" (Bautista & Gonzales, 2006).

With regard to the final ones, only one "negation" error was produced by the involved students as they performed in oral interview. Such is an utterance in negative statements "I *think so not*" (Student 13). The error is more complicated than the incorrect placement of the negating particle, *not.* It is stated by Croker et al. (2003) that one relatively infrequent error in English involves the placement of the inflection to the right of a negative rather than to the left but other error types also occur. Elliot (1983) also emphasized the infrequency and variability of "negation" errors in her study of grammatical errors made by Chinese second language learners of English studying at universities in Singapore. Only three "negation" errors were found and the errors were not of a particular type. She came to a conclusion that the essays did not call for the use of "negation". Furthermore, Mitchell and Myles (2001) affirm that contrary to the underlying systematicity claimed for the development of the rules of "negation", performance is seen to vary "quite substantially from moment to moment" (p.18). In view of the variability in "negation" errors, remedial teaching may not be as straightforward as providing and practicing rules for construction of negative statements.

As far as "question form" is concerned, due to the fact that all the oral speeches recorded in the interview are in form of monologue according to the design of the topic set, therefore it is foreseeable that no "question form" errors are committed by the involved students.

### 3. Discussions

Based on the outcomes of survey questionnaire, we have managed to hold certain rigorous insights on spoken English capacity of non-major students at the People's Police University who have completed the general English curriculums at A2 CEFR level during their two first academic years. Overall, it was admitted that the most frequent type of error committed by them is "tense error" (occupying 65%), this precedes a trio of other error classifications being "verb form", "pronoun", and "preposition" with 5% lower (60% for each). To lesser extents, "word form", "article", and "subject-verb agreement" observed the same percentage of error confirmation (accounting for 55%).

In the aforementioned analysis on reasons for such types of mistakes, 'slips of the tongue' was claimed to be the major culprit behind students' failure to perform their grammatical proficiency during their spoken English (making up 50%), this was followed by two other leading causes, namely 'performance pressure' and 'poor at grammar' (accounting for 45% and 40%, respectively). To our own mind, such two latter reasons are definitely worth giving particular concerns due to the fact that they are utterly subjective and very likely to be much enhanced if students are put in the rightful practical action, and given correct English tuition and training. Accordingly, the outcomes reveal that the intense exam atmosphere, aggressively teaching attitudes and gestures act as directly contributing factors to their oral underperformance. They fail to master their mental and emotional composure to come into full play during the oral tasks under such circumstances. The same can be said about their grammatical self-deficiency ('poor at grammar'). It itself, first and foremost, deters students from speaking English in the utmost freedom and fluency. They are subjectively inhibited from coming up with good grammatical utterances or speeches, as a result producing unexpected intervals during their oral performance.

Secondly, on the basis of the surface structure descriptions of grammatical error identified in the oral interview data, the results vividly illustrate that the most frequent types of errors involve "omission" and "misinformation"
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(accounting for 63.67% and 23.97%, respectively). “Missing sentence constituents (object, subject, auxiliary verb, copula, preposition) give the impression of phrasal ‘telegraphic speech’, according to Bautista and Gonzales (2006) in their description of Malaysian English. The study outcomes also indicate that “verb form” poses the biggest challenge to the less proficient students in this study (constituting up to 268 errors in total, or 24.54%). To lesser extents, “word form”, “pronoun”, and “plural form” rank second, third, and fourth in the table of difficulty facing the involved participants (all accounting for triple-digit figures of error, 261, 158, and 128, correspondingly), these are followed by “article”, “tense”, and “preposition”. Such results were to a large extent in uniformity with the error analysis of essays by Abdul Rashid Mohamed et al. (2004), in which he pointed out “verb form” also being ranked the highest among the grammatical errors for the Chinese Form Four students of different levels of English proficiency (along with “preposition”). It is because of the monologue nature of the speech data we employed that no “question” errors are made available in the data set as a rule. In addition, we still maintain the “omission” of the plural “s” ending as a sign of ungrammaticality rather than a feature of speech. Also, the frequent “omission”, or “misinformation” errors for “word form”, “pronoun”, and “plural form” speak of the extent of students’ grammatical inaccuracy at the targeted proficiency level. The same can be said about the error quantities in the categories of “article”, “tense” and “preposition” that help to disclose relatively huge gaps and shortcomings in their students’ capacity to efficiently construct certain utterances of grammatical standard. It is apparent that even in many cases they fail to come up with essential constituents of a complete utterance as required, consequently bringing about occasional intervals between their speeches. As a result, they find it highly challenging to produce long or fairly complex sentences, or even complete sentences, as well as maintain the flow of oral speech. The overwhelming figures of “omission” and “misinformation” errors in general, as well as those for “verb form”, “word form”, and “pronoun” in particular also vividly manifest the reality that these grammatical categories being difficult for the students. In other words, they have still struggled to deal with, or produce fundamental constituting parts of a complete utterance in spoken English at the required level. By comparison, errors in “preposition”, “subject-verb agreement”, “negation” are less frequent. However, this does not mean that students’ gaps in such categories should be given diminished concern.

Conclusions

Within the scope of this study, pursuant to the theoretical underpinnings of errors in speaking skills, great attempts have been made by the author to bring the two research questions to light. With regard to the former one, the outcomes ultimately reveal that ‘omission’ and ‘misinformation’ respectively take the two top spots in the most incidental types of error among the targeted students (according to the surface strategy taxonomy), while ‘verb form’, ‘word form’, and ‘pronoun’ are correspondingly identified as the three most frequently-committed types of error among those (based on the linguistic description of errors). As for the latter one, ‘slips of the tongue’ is recognized as being the major culprit behind the participants’ grammatical underperformance, followed by respectively ‘performance pressure’ and ‘poor at grammar’ in the list of possible reasons. Simultaneously, the study also focuses on putting forward a series of highly feasible solutions to alleviate the predicament, on both sides of teachers and students. Thereby, it entirely serves for the ultimate purpose of driving students to get through their engrained grammatical errors in their spoken English, also select highly efficient approaches of enhancing oral English skills.

To sum up, the researcher believes that error commission is indispensable part of English acquisition in general, as well as spoken English in particular. In other words, it is obvious that learners make mistakes during their oral performance provided that they get fully aware of different approaches to correct them. It is hoped that this study may serve as a helpful source of reference for those who share the same interest in the matter.

References


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