An Analysis of Preposition Partner Errors in the Written and Spoken Discourse of Non-English Major Thai Students

Krittaya Ngampradit[1]
Lawrence Honkiss[2]

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore preposition-partner errors - the inappropriate use of prepositions - found in the written and spoken discourse of Thai university non-English major students. The authors used the taxonomy of errors proposed by Hemchua and Schmitt (2006) to analyze three categories of preposition-partner errors (omission e.g. rely <rely on>, addition e.g. face up <face> and substitution e.g. depend to <on/upon>). The data of this study was taken from writing compositions, oral presentations, and interviews. The participants of this study were 80 students from Rajamangala University of Technology universities and Kasetsart University in Thailand. The analysis revealed that (a) Case I: Omission Errors were the most numerous errors in spoken discourse and Case III: Substitution Errors were the most numerous errors in the written discourse among students from both academic and technical

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[1] English lecturer at Kasetsart University (M.A. in Applied Linguistics for ELT and B.A. in English with First Class Honors Degree). Her research interests involve error analysis, giving feedback, translation studies, and language assessment.
[2] English lecturer at Rachamangla University of Technology Thanyaburi (M.A. in TEFL; B.S. in Commerce) His research interests involve corpus-based research, psycholinguistics, and lexical fossilization.

universities; (b) there is a high positive relationship between errors committed in speaking and writing for Case I: Omission Errors and Case II: Addition Errors but no significant relationship for Case III: Substitution Errors from both universities. The results from this research have significant implications in vocabulary teaching and learning, particularly in the Thai context.

Keywords: Preposition partner errors, spoken discourse, written discourse

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้คำคู่คำบุรพบทผิด(การใช้คำบุรพบทอย่างไม่เหมาะสม)ที่พบในแหล่งรวบรวมงานเขียนและการสื่อสารด้วยวาจาของนิสิตนักศึกษาไทยสาขาวิชาทั่วไป นักวิจัยอ้างอิงประเภทของการใช้คำคู่คำบุรพบทผิดของเหมเชื้อและสมิธในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล กล่าวคือ 1) การละคำบุรพบท เช่น rely <rely on> 2) การเติมคำบุรพบท เช่น face up <face> 3) การแทนที่ เช่น depend to <on/upon> ข้อมูลของการศึกษาวิจัยครั้งนี้มาจากงานเขียน การนำเสนอหน้าชั้นเรียน และการสัมภาษณ์นิสิตนักศึกษา ประชากรที่ใช้ในการศึกษาจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 80 คน เป็นนิสิตนักศึกษาจากมหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์และมหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลวิทยาเขตต่างๆ

จากการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลผลการวิจัยพบว่า ก) การใช้คำคู่คำบุรพบทผิดประเภทที่ 1 “การละคำ”และประเภทที่ 3 “การแทนที่”เป็นประเภทที่พบมากที่สุด (ตามลำดับ) ในแหล่งรวบรวมการสื่อสารด้วยวาจาและแหล่งรวบรวมงานเขียนของนิสิตนักศึกษาจากทั้งสองมหาวิทยาลัย ข) มีความสัมพันธ์ในเชิงบวกทางสถิติของการใช้คำบุรพบทผิดระหว่างแหล่งรวบรวมการสื่อสารด้วยวาจาและงานเขียนของนิสิตนักศึกษาทั้งสองมหาวิทยาลัยในประเภทการใช้คำคู่คำบุรพบทผิดประเภทที่ 1“การละคำ” และประเภทที่2 “การเติมคำ” แต่ไม่พบนัยยะของความสัมพันธ์ทางสถิติสำหรับการใช้คำคู่คำบุรพบทผิดประเภทที่3 “การแทนที่” ผลการวิจัยดังกล่าวมีประโยชน์ต่อการเรียนการสอนคำศัพท์ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในบริบทของไทย

คำสำคัญ: การใช้คำคู่คำบุรพบทผิด แหล่งรวบรวมการสื่อสารด้วยวาจาและแหล่งรวบรวมงานเขียน

1. Background of the Study

Hemchua and Schmitt (2006) argued that one of the main reasons for committing preposition partner errors is lack of proficiency. Thai students are sometimes not aware of what particular preposition is needed and thus, this results in their erroneous use. This circumstance is inevitable because even young native speakers take years to master prepositions (Durkin et al, 1985). In the recent microscopic analysis (individual) on Thai lexical errors conducted by Hemchua and Honkiss (2013), preposition partner errors were identified as fossilizable - the state of backsliding or lexical errors impervious to negative improvement - for Thai learners. This claim is congruent with that of Littlewood (1984: 59) who claims that *individual differences* simply reflect how quickly – or how far – specific learners progress in their learning. Individual differences also refer to learners' first language and interlanguage, which in turn, are factors influencing erroneous lexical choices. Another factor to consider according to Llach (2011) is the *contextual differences* of the learners. The author referred to the following criteria: learning environment (natural acquisition or formal classroom), teaching approaches, tasks, nature of linguistic input, emotional climate of the learning situations and teacher variables (personality, approach and strictness). However, most research related to preposition partner errors is based on the written discourse of the students. The area of spoken discourse, on the other hand, remains under-researched. In attempting to gain deeper insight into the various types and causes of preposition partner errors, findings are likely to be more reliable and comprehensive if the areas of both written and spoken discourse are analyzed. It will also further increase

reliability if, at the same time, factors of individual and contextual differences are considered. This research aims to conduct an exploratory analysis of preposition partner errors in both written and spoken discourse (individual differences) from the context of both technical and academic universities (contextual difference) among non-English major students. The main reason of conducting this study was the frequency and seriousness of preposition partner errors among Thai learners. Preposition partner error is one of the errors that is considered a serious lexical error in the Thai context because it is one of the most frequent errors of Thai learners (Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006) and considered incorrigible, hence, fossilized (Hemchua & Honkiss, 2013). Erroneous preposition use significantly affects the quality of students' written and spoken discourse and it could lead directly to misunderstandings of the intended message. At worst, constant and persistent exposure to erroneous prepositions could lead to fossilization. Even so, a comprehensive explanation of the root causes of preposition partner errors is still elusive. By and large, there are two frequently cited factors that contribute to lexical errors in general: first, *individual difference,* which means the learner's first language causes him or her to repeatedly commit errors (Andersen, 1983; Han, 2000; Kellerman, 1989; Littlewood, (1984); Selinker & Lamendella, 1978) and, second, *satisfaction of communicative needs,* which means that a learner develops his or her second language competency in order to communicate according to his or her current needs (Corder, 1978; Llach, 2001; Selinker & Lamendella, 1978).

In this study, it was hypothesized that these two commonly cited factors of lexical errors have a great influence on the preposition partner errors of Thai learners. This was the main reason for selecting the participants from different contextual backgrounds i.e. technical and academic universities. At the outset, the use of preposition partner errors were revealed in both of the two productive modes of writing and speaking, thereby triggering the researchers' interests. The findings of this study will be beneficial for English and foreign language teachers and learners, educators, non-formal education professionals as well as parents, to understand the typical existence of preposition partner errors among Thai learners. In addition, teachers and educators can adapt or develop educational instructions, lesson plans and curricula based on both natural language and individual linguistic nature and capacity.

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What are the types of preposition partner errors in the writing composition and spoken discourse of the non-English major students from Rajamangala University of Technology universities (RMUTs) and Kasetsart University (KU)?
2. What type of relationships exist between the errors found in both types of the discourse and in both universities?
3. What could be the possible remedies to solve the misuse of preposition partners by the students?

The terms in this study were defined as follows:

1. *Preposition partner errors*–A Preposition Partner Error (PPE) refers to the inappropriate use of prepositions found in participants' written and spoken discourse. The following are cases of preposition partner errors:

    a) Case I-Omission: Example: *Also, you have many things to do and to think<think about>.*

    b) Case II-Addition: Example: *I don't have to face up to<face> the traffic congestion.*

    c) Case III-Substitution: Example: *There are no traffic jams that result of<from> having many cars*

2. *Written discourse*– a collection of written composition of students from Rajamangala University of Technology universities and Kasetsart University.

3. *Spoken discourse* – a collection of oral presentations, discussions, conversations and interviews by students from Rajamangala University of Technology universities and Kasetsart University.

The study identified the numbers of errors found in each type of the three preposition partner error cases. Moreover, the most and least frequently found error categories were also studied. The findings of this study provided some explanations of the typical presence of preposition partner errors in support and in addition to the findings of Hemchua and Honkiss (2013). Lastly, this study

discussed some feasible ways to solve the inappropriate use of preposition partners by Thai learners.

2. Method

2.3 Analysis of Preposition Partner Errors

The analysis of errors in the writing composition and speaking tasks was limited to the analysis of preposition partner errors. Other lexical, grammatical and syntactical errors were not included. The researchers analyzed the data from the students based on the classification of lexical errors proposed by Hemchua and Schmitt (2006). Examples of cases of preposition partner errors are stated in the definition of terms.

Error Count

The authors used the classification of preposition partner errors proposed by the aforementioned researchers to determine a quantitative value of the number of preposition partner errors in the writing compositions and spoken discourse of the participants. In conducting the error count, individual cases of preposition partner errors were counted at a word level, phrasal level and sentential level.

1. Single word preposition (for example, *Chiangmai is the most popular of<in> Thailand.*)

2. Complex preposition or phrases of two or more words that function like one-word prepositions (for example, *We stopped outside to<of> the city.*)

3. Prepositions in collocation (for example, *The world will come for<to>an end*)

4. Multiple errors in one sentence or a phrase were counted separately (for example, *I went to the office since<at> 8 o'clock with my tidy clothes and waiting <for> my trainer.*)

5. Identical errors made by the same student were counted as one error (for example, *We need to cooperate<with> each other* and *If we cooperate <with> each other...).*

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Frequency of PPE Errors—RMUTs.

Universities	**Speaking Task No of errors**	**Writing Task No of errors**	**No. of students who committed errors** N=20	
Rajamangala University of Technology Universities			Speaking	Writing
Case I: Omission	97	20	20	19
Case II: Addition	56	77	18	16
Case III: Substitution	34	122	16	19
Total	187	219		

Table 2: Frequency of PPE Errors—KU.

University	**Speaking Task No of errors**	**Writing Task No of errors**	**No. of students who committed errors** N=20	
Kasetsart University—Bangkhen			Speaking	Writing
Case I: Omission	100	86	20	17
Case II: Addition	52	69	18	16
Case III: Substitution	54	176	16	19
Total	206	331		

The first objective of this study was to determine the frequency of PPEs among the participants from both technical and academic universities in terms of speaking and writing. The authors conducted a series of speaking and writing tasks and the results are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 shows the frequency of both speaking and writing PPE errors from the participants of three Rajamangala University of Technology campuses. The 20 randomly selected participants yielded a total of 187 and 219 PPE errors in their speaking and writing tasks respectively. Among the three cases of PPE errors, Case I: Omission heads the list for speaking tasks and Case III: Substitution for the writing task. In comparison, the number of Case I errors in speaking tasks is almost 5 times higher than in the writing task while the number of Case III errors in the writing task is almost four times that of the speaking task. Another observation that can be drawn from this data is that the type of error with the lowest number of PPE errors in speaking (Case III: Substitution = 34 errors) had the highest number of PPE errors in writing (122 errors).

In the same manner, the type of error with the lowest number of PPE errors in writing (Case I: Omission = 20) had the highest in speaking (97 errors). In general, however, the total number of PPE errors in the writing task is higher than in speaking tasks by more than 15%. This suggests that participants, from both universities, tend to commit more PPE errors in writing than in speaking tasks despite having time to counter-check their writing output. Table 2 on the other hand shows the frequency of errors among the 20 participants of Kasetsart University. The results show congruency with the results from RMUTs in that the incidence of writing task PPE errors was higher than that of speaking task PPE errors by more than double (37%). Similar to the findings in RMUTs participants, the most

numerous errors found in the speaking task were Case I: Omission errors, with a total number of 100 errors, while there was a total of 176 errors in the writing task. Significantly, the lowest PPE errors in speaking (Case II: Addition) was also the lowest in writing. These results show that Thai students are more likely to commit PPE errors in writing and less in speaking, regardless of their university background. From the tabulated results of PPE errors among universities, it can be interpreted that there are two most common denominators between academic and technical universities. First, the most frequent PPE errors seen in speaking were Case I: Omission errors, and second, the most frequent PPE errors seen in writing were Case III: Substitution errors.

Omission Errors in the Spoken Discourse

Case I: Omission errors were the most frequent speaking errors among universities primarily because of, but not limited to, (a) loan-to-localized words and (b) Claque (L1 translation). The loan-to-localized word hypothesis is the assumption that the authors would like to propose as one of the reasons for the omission of prepositions in the spoken discourse. Thais have the tendency to *shorten* some loan words in the process of localizing a word. For example, Thai people would say *kilomet, kilo or lo* when they mean *Kilometers* or *Vet* for *veterinary* or *veterinarian.* Although these two words are not prepositions, it may partly explain the mental lexicon of Thai people in general when dealing with a foreign language and eventually adopting it to local circumstance, particularly in spoken discourse. The word *Vet (My father is a vet.)* was mentioned by one of the participants during the interview but was spelled out in full in the writing task *(My father is a veterinary.)* Although the word *veterinary* requires the proper derivative form in this sentence, the point is that the student may tend to shorten some words when

speaking and may spell out in full when writing. However, the claim of the authors for the validity of the loan-to-localized word hypothesis may not apply to the entire loaned lexis in the Thai language. The authors only consider this hypothesis as applicable to some lexical aspects that were omitted by the students in their speaking tasks but were present in the writing task.

In terms of PPE, Thai people also tend to shorten their sentences when speaking, and PPEs are one aspect that are omitted; for example, *Please careful <be careful of> yourself,* and *My house is next <next to> Future Park (Shopping mall).* One explanation for this comes from the assumption that the natural tendency of Thais to shorten a word or sentence could lead to the omission of preposition. From another perspective however, the omission of *of* may also be a result of Claque or L1 translation (interference). The sentence *Please be careful of yourself* can be literally translated into Thai as *careful (rawang =* ระวัง*) yourself (tua=*ตัว) *please (duay =* ด้วย*).* The verb *be* can be easily omitted because it is not present in the Thai language while *of*, having its own meaning, might not be easily transferred or localized as a part and partner of *careful.* This can be true even for young native speakers, such as in the cases of *near to* or *next to* (Durkin et al., 1985). The presence of the word *please* might also confuse the student as it can be positioned at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the sentence depending on the emphasis of the speaker.

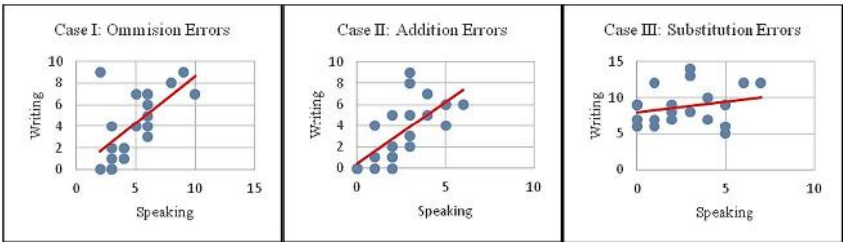
Substitution Errors in the Written Discourse

For the writing task, Case III: Substitution errors were the most numerous errors among universities. These findings were similar to the findings of Hemchua and Honkiss (2013), who reported that Case

III: Substitution errors were the most numerous errors and are fossilizable lexical errors for Thai learners. It is notable that the participants in Hemchua and Honkiss (2013) were English major students and the participants in this research were non-English major students and yet, the results were the same. With this premise, it can be assumed that PPE in writing emanate from factors beyond students' academic backgrounds, meaning they are inherent and naturally occurring phenomena. Case III: Substitution errors were more likely to occur in writing than in speaking based on the following assumptions (a) a drift in the priming of a word, and (b) priming conflict. A drift in the priming of a word, according to Hoey (2005, p.9), "provides a mechanism for temporary or permanent language change." It is assumed in this study that Thai students, while doing a writing task, were experiencing certain mental preposition crossroads and thus ended up missing the right preposition choice. Unlike speaking that is more focused on fluency, writing gives the students the benefit of time to think and re-evaluate the need for a preposition to meet a certain accuracy level. This short time of *thinking* creates vulnerability particularly if the preposition partners are not properly primed. Hoey (2005, p.13*)* argued that *every word is primed as a result of the cumulative effects of an individual's encounters with the word.* With a severe scarcity of the use of English in Thailand, it is likely that the priming of some prepositions may not fully solidify together with its partner. The students might have an idea of the need for preposition in a particular sentence, but they might not have a solid grasp of which preposition to use. The following sentence provides an example: *At the first place we visited was Chiangmai.* At first, it might look as Case II: Addition error, but what might have been actually in the mind of the students is the prepositional phrasal marker, *In the first place,* which does not literally mean a place. This is an example of

a drifted primed preposition with respect to Case III: substitution errors.

The priming conflict on the other hand pertains to the prepositions that have the same meaning in L1 but different meanings in L2. In this case, one form of preposition priming is being overwhelmed by another, more dominant form of preposition priming. The prepositions *for* and *to* are two conflicting cases of prepositions, but more often than not, the word *for* is more dominant than *to.* Thai students will commonly say e.g. *I want to have a lot of money for* <to> *build a house* because the word *for* is generally used in their language system, except careful and more proficient learners who know its full form 'in order *to*'. The critical aspect of committing PPE in writing is the matter of time. If the students have time to think, they are more likely to commit substitution errors but if not, particularly in speaking, they might tend to omit the use of prepositions.



(a) **(b)** **(c)**

Figure 1: Relationship between speaking and writing PPE errors: RMUTs.

The next objective of this study was to determine the relationship among errors on (a) speaking and writing and, (b) between technical and academic universities. In order to address this objective, the authors used the Pearson-correlation coefficient to, first, establish the level of the relationship and, second, identify the level of significance. The results were further defined using a coefficient of determination.

Relationship among Errors on Speaking and Writing

Figure 1 shows the relationship between writing and speaking PPE among the three cases of PPE of RMUTs participants. Figure 1a and Figure 1b shows immediate relationships in terms of writing and speaking while Figure 1c shows little to no relationship. In more detail, Table 3a shows the strong *positive* relationship between Case I PPE in speaking and writing among RMUTs, $r = .763$; $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Table 3b also shows the strong *positive* relationship between Case II PPE in speaking and writing, $r = .756$; $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). However, Table 3c shows a low *negative* relationship between Case III PPE in speaking and writing, $r = -.221$. This suggests that for Case I and Case II errors, whenever the number of PPE errors in writing increases, the number of PPE errors in speaking also increases and vice versa. However, case III - Substitution Errors - showed no relationship and therefore it can be inferred that the factors affecting PPE in writing and PPE in speaking are likely to be different.

To provide a more meaningful and precise interpretation of the aforementioned results, the authors used the *coefficient of determination or* (r^2) to determine the percent of variation in the

values of both variables. For Case I, the value is $r^2 = .58 (58\%)$ whereas Case II gives a value of $r^2 = .57 (57\%)$. This means that for Case I, 58% of variation in PPE in speaking can explain or account for variation in PPE in writing, and for Case II, 57%. To directly interpret this finding, there is a greater than 50% chance that if the speaking ability of the students improves (less Case I and Case II PPE), their writing ability will improve as well. It can also be concluded that although Case I: Omission errors were the most frequent speaking PPE and Case I: Omission errors were the least frequent writing PPE, their strong relationship suggests that at a certain ratio, the two variables are linearly related.

Table 3: Bivariate correlation matrix among PPE cases of errors: RMUTs.

(a)

Case I		RMUTs speaking1	RMUTs writing1
RMUTs speaking1	Pearson Correlation	1	.763**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
RMUTs writing1	Pearson Correlation	.763**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

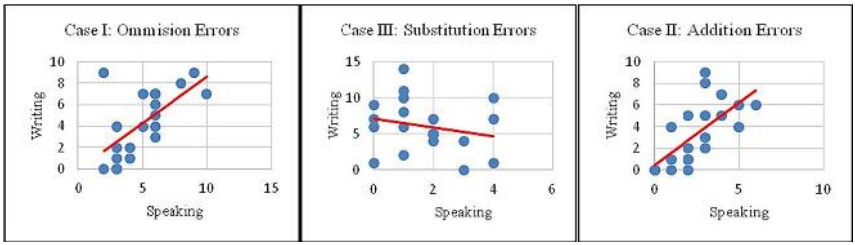
(b)

Case II		RMUTs speaking2	RMUTs writing2
RMUTs speaking2	Pearson Correlation	1	.756**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
RMUTs writing2	Pearson Correlation	.756**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(c)

Case III		RMUTs speaking3	RMUTs writing3
RMUTs speaking3	Pearson Correlation	1	-.221
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.350
	N	20	20
RMUTs writing3	Pearson Correlation	-.221	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.350	
	N	20	20



(a) (b) (c)

Figure 2: Relationship of speaking and writing PPE errors: Kasetsart University.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between speaking and writing among the participants from Kasetsart University. There was a clear *positive* relationship between writing and speaking for Figure 2a and Figure2b. Table 3a shows a moderately *positive* relationship of r = .631**; $p > 0.01$ (2-tailed) while Table 3b shows a moderately *positive* relationship of r = .660**; $p > 0.01$ (2-tailed). However, Table 3c shows low to no relationship of r = .251. The *coefficients of determination* of Case I and II are $r^2 = 40\%$ and $r^2 = 43\%$ *respectively*. For the Kasetsart University participants, there was around a 40% chance that if the speaking ability of the students improved (less Case I and Case II PPE), their writing ability would improve as well. Significantly, the results from RMUTs and KU collaborated with each other. Participants who committed both Case I and II PPE from RMUTs and Kasetsart University both showed moderate to strong *positive* relationships between speaking and writing. This therefore implies that participants' academic backgrounds (technical or academic university) was a major factor in

committing PPE. However, the correlation coefficient findings in this research do not directly imply a causal or dependent relationship between speaking and writing PPE. The correlation coefficient reported above measured only the degree to which the two variables are related.

Table 4: Bivariate correlation matrix among PPE cases of errors: Kasetsart University.

(a)

Case I: Omission (KU)		KU speaking1	KU writing1
KUspeaking1	Pearson Correlation	1	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	20	20
KUwriting1	Pearson Correlation	.631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	20	20

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(b)

Case II: Addition (KU)		KU speaking2	KU writing2
KUspeaking2	Pearson Correlation	1	.680**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	20	20
KUwriting2	Pearson Correlation	.680**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	20	20

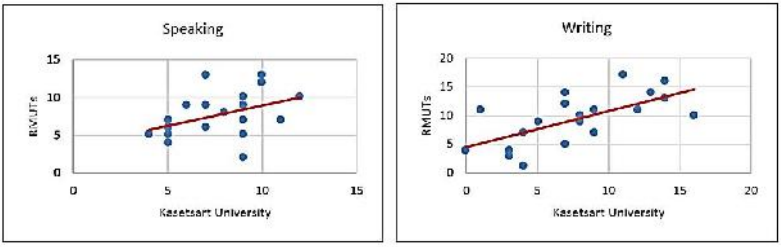
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(c)

Case III: Substitution (KU)		KU speaking3	KU writing3
KUspeaking3	Pearson Correlation	1	.251
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.286
	N	20	20
KUwriting3	Pearson Correlation	.251	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.286	
	N	20	20

Relationship between Technical and Academic Universities

Figure 3 shows the scatterplots of relationships between RMUTs and Kasetsart University in terms of speaking and writing.



(a) **(b)**

Figure 3: Relationship of speaking and writing PPE errors between KU and RMUTs

Figure 3 shows the overall representation of the relationship of errors from Kasetsart University and three Rajamangla Universities. Figure 3a shows the scatterplot of speaking PPE from RMUTs and Kasertsart University while Figure 3b shows the writing PPE. It is noticeable that Figure 3a deviates more from a straight line than Figure 3b, which falls closer to a straight line. Table 4a shows a modest *positive* relationship of r = .419, and Table 4b shows a moderate *positive* relationship of r = .653**; p > 0.01 (2-tailed). The *coefficient of determination* of speaking PPE is r^2 =17.5% and Writing PPE is r^2 = 42.6%. The data suggests that there is a weaker relationship between technical and academic universities in terms of speaking PPE. There are many factors influencing why speaking PPE demonstrate a weaker relationship between academic and technical universities. For example, language communities (e.g., peers,

faculties, majors, etc.) and habits of an institution may somehow influence the speaking PPE of the students. The majority of the participants from RMUTs admitted that English is still not part of their day-to-day lives on campus.

Kasetsart University students, however, admitted that English might be somehow more common on their campus because of signboards, student activities, university activities and announcements. In terms of curriculum, RMUTs non-English major students study only two general English courses (6 credits) whereas Kasetsart University non-English major students study four general English courses (12 credits). In this case, limited exposure to English language in the classroom situation also limits the students' acceptability and adaptability to the language. Writing on the other hand may be influenced by the kinds of general courses technical and academic universities offer to non-English major students. RMUTs offer English Fundamental and Communicative English. These two general course subjects are also taught in Kasetsart University for non-English major students. However, a complete analysis of these two courses and their effects on the writing skills of students was beyond the scope of this research. The authors only considered the closest possible commonality between the participants.

Table 5: Bivariate correlation matrix among PPE cases of errors: KU and RMUTs.

(a)

Speaking		KU speaking	RMUTs speaking
KU speaking	Pearson Correlation	1	.419
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.066
	N	20	20
RMUTs speaking	Pearson Correlation	.419	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.066	
	N	20	20

(b)

Writing		KU Writing	RMUTs writing
KU writing	Pearson Correlation	1	.419
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.066
	N	20	20
RMUTs writing	Pearson Correlation	.653**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	20	20

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Nature of Preposition Partner Errors

The results of this study provide three main contributions to our knowledge on the typical presence of lexical errors, specifically preposition partner errors. First, preposition partner errors are **distinct**. Although the errors were classified as preposition partner errors and further sub-categorized into three cases, none of the students committed exactly the same errors. Numerous errors pertaining to the same preposition word were committed but considering all peripherals such as the word before/after or its collocates, each preposition partner error was exclusive (for example, *For to <To> relax my body and mind,...and go to the cliff for to <cliff to> see the sun, What do you want to do for to <to do to> fix it?*) to individual students. However, this claim has certain limitations. The task given to the students was a productive task, which means the authors had less control over the output of each student. Although the topic for the speaking and writing tasks was assigned, the students' outputs were totally different from each other. The ideas and use of vocabulary in the composition and interview, not to mention the styles and the organization, reflected the philosophical truth on human distinctiveness; that is, individual differences. Even the least common Case II errors, such as *addition* of the preposition *to* (*I can go to<go> there., I will go to <go> everywhere., I would like to go to <go> with someone.)* and *of (Most of <Most> people realized..., We can do all of <all> three ways*.) were not entirely similar to each other considering the close context.

Second, preposition partner errors are **diverse**. As the number of non-native English speakers increases due to globalization, diversified outputs from students are inevitable. A single word can have a variety of meanings based on the individual's intention and interpretation. More often than not, it depends on the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things. Preposition partner errors are not an exemption to this. One categorical explanation for this is L1 interference. Thai students, when they do not know or are uncertain about the right preposition in English, generally use L1 as a source of reference and dependence. For example, *Stars on <in> the sky*. The sentence *Stars on the sky* is a literal translation from the Thai language system (Stars = ดวงดาว+ on = บน+ the sky = ท้องฟ้า). Thai students might be uncertain whether to use *in* or *on* in this particular instance, but because of L1 they may automatically come up with the preposition *on*. The theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Gardner (1983) in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence* best describes this classification of lexical errors. Preposition errors are diverse primarily because of user diversity.

Lastly, preposition partner errors are **dynamic**. By looking at the interaction of participants' errors in eighty compositions and presentation and interview transcriptions, we can see that errors are wonderfully interactive. For example, in the most common omission or Case I errors students wrote (*We cooperate <cooperate with> each other; We need to cooperate <cooperate with> each other; or If we cooperate <cooperate with> each other.*). The word omitted was the same – *with* - but had a different function in each case. For the first one, the omitted word *with* along with the word *cooperate* was a suggestive statement, for the second one, however, it has an imperative connotation. For the last one, it was a conditional

statement. Preposition partner errors cannot be completely confined to an absolute category. Swan (2010) said that native-like fluency is an impossible aim because English language is a moving target. Preposition partner errors are dynamic in the sense that it functions exponentially differently in different situations.

Possible Remedies: Reversal to Nature

The approach to dealing with speaking PPE and writing PPE should definitely be different because both skills have different processes. For this research, the authors would like to suggest theoretical remedies based upon the conception of the detected presence of PPE.

Distinctiveness to Completeness—one of the explorations of PPE is being distinct. Specifically, it is very difficult to fit one preposition to all contexts. Studying prepositions to match each word would only lead to hasty generalizations of their use and would definitely lead to either of the three categories of PPE. As suggested by Nation (2001), *chunking* (for example, *cooperate with, listen to, work in/at/for* etc*.)* would help students to learn the words. He also suggested utilizing small vocabulary cards or reading aloud to increase students' accuracy in their use of prepositions and partners.

Diversity to Conformity—one of the common variations in the productive skills of L2 learners are their diverse backgrounds or their L1. Adult second language learners can never learn in the way young learners do because adults use L2 for a purposefully

communicative need. Once the purpose is met, stoppage of learning sets in. Han (2004) termed this as *satisfaction of communicative needs*, and she also posited that it is one of the prevailing causes of fossilization. Conformity in this sense means being strict with the Standard English and having high yet attainable goals. Curriculum developers and/or teachers must have a concrete program for PPE correction and inculcation. It is also effective if the phrasal verbs and preposition partners are separately discussed as they tend to cause the students confusion.

Dynamism to Control—the acceptance of *Globalized English, Englishes* or *Local varieties of English* in English Language Teaching would be beneficial for a quick-fix to language fluency but not for long-term accuracy. A Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach might be also helpful in infusing a possible remedy for PPE as long as PPE is to be emphasized. Most often than not, as Hemchua & Honkiss (2013) reported, PPE is neglected in corrective feedback. Hence, if CLT is merely treated as another quick-fix formula, it would not only just create long-term inaccuracy but also a permanent one—lexical fossilization. Control does not mean going back to the traditional deductive approach. It means cultivating the natural learning of the students with proper guidance and adequate feedback which will enable them to go forth and explore PPE but never go back to be stabilized with PPE errors.

4. Conclusion

The distinctiveness of lexis and the distinctiveness of a language community together create a distinct effect on an individual's ability to acquire language, in this case, preposition partners. In the case of PPE, the language communities in which the

students have an opportunity to use the target language play a significant role in promoting or preventing PPE. Contextual parameters seems to be the significant underlying factors underpinning the presence of the three cases of preposition partner errors, where appropriate preventive measures, careful anticipatory plans, and awareness of the teachers as well as all involved sectors could, believably, effectively heal and better this erroneous use of preposition partners among students.

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Appendix

Samples of Preposition Partner Errors

Omission

...want to take course a *<take a course in>* Korea language.
...show many types *<types of >* arts such as drawing.
I need to travel *<travel to>* Phuket.
...emission such as *<such as from>* car, factory or machine.
...co-operate *<cooperate with>* each other/we need to co-operate <cooperate with> each other/if *<cooperate with>* each other[13]
I never take a bus *<for>* 2 hours.
I can speak to the foreigner <from> the different country.
...the student didn't listen <listen to> me.
Sai Keaw beach is about 800 meters long *<with>* white sand.
It has a charm *<charm of>* its own.

Addition

I will go to work at *<work>* there.
I promise with *<promise>* myself...
I need to meet my favorite bands at *<bands>* there.

[13] Errors made by the same student on the same essay were counted as one error.

I really want to go in *<go>* abroad.
I will go to my favorite places in *<places>* someday.
The cause from is *<is>* activities of people.
It modifies or increases to *<increase>* value.
Immigration Division 1 serves for *<serves>* many foreigners.
I must visit there for *<there>* once in my life.
I want to visit in *<visit>* France.

Substitution

There are several interesting places on *<in>* the world.
...make me want to see in *<with>* my eyes.
I never travel in *<to>* another country.
It was built in Qin Xi Huang era with *<by>* many Chinese.
You can make it to *<into>* a new one.
We can do the same thing in *<at>* the same time.
...protect of *<from>* global warming.
I learn how to adjusting with *<to>* them.
...say a big thank for *<to>* my university.
...on *<from>* June to October, 2011.