

An English as a Foreign Language Teaching Method of English Verb Phrase

Structure by Government and Binding Theory*



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Abstract

English is very important and essential for everyday use in the 21st century, for example, English is the language of international communication, English allows us to access to an online information and knowledge, English helps us to enter the global workforces as it is the dominant business language. Therefore, to enhance the quality of English as a Foreign language learning management at the tertiary level in Thailand, Government and Binding Theory is applied to study and analyze English verb phrase structures as contents for teaching. The objectives of this research are (1) to analyze English verb phrase structures by Government and Binding Theory, (2) to create the lesson plans with the content of the verb phrase structures analyzed by Government and Binding Theory, (3) to compare students' achievement before and after learning by the teaching method with the content of the verb phrase structures analyzed by Government and Binding Theory, and (4) to present the students' satisfaction on the lesson plan. A mixed method research is used by analyzing the content from English text books used in the ENL1001 General English subject of 9 campuses of Rajamangala University of Technology with Government and Binding Theory. Quantitative data are collected from 30 students by random sampling. The research instruments are content-relevant and reliable, including 1) 6 lesson plans with activities and practice exercises of the verb phrase structures analyzed by Government and Binding Theory with content validity (IOC = 1), 2) 20 items of pre-test and post-test with content validity (IOC = 0.78), difficulty index ($p = .3000-.7333$), discriminant index ($r = .223-.643$), and Reliability = .836, and 3) 10 questions of a survey of students' satisfaction on lesson plan (IOC = 1).

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The results of this research have been found that (1) there are 2 main structures of the verb phrase structures, which are a head verb initial and a modal verb/aspect with a head verb initial. The first structure is more common since 4,879 sentences are found in the data while only 859 sentences are found for the second structure. There are 3 patterns of the first verb phrase structure, which are 1) head verb (V) + noun phrase (NP) e.g. ate Sukiaki and ice-cream; 2) head verb (V) + infinitival clause (CINF) e.g. want to find a hobby; and 3) head verb (V) + complementizer clause (CP) e.g. thinks that the south of Italy is warmer than the north. For the second verb phrase structure, there are 2 patterns, which are 1) modal verb (MV) + head verb (V) e.g. can shop for hour; 2) aspect (ASP) + head verb (V) e.g. am studying English. Both groups of the verb phrase structures contain the optional internal phrase structures, which are noun phrase (NP), prepositional phrase (PP), adjective phrase (AdjP), and adverb phrase (AdvP), e.g. am an football fan [VP [V am [NP [DET an [N football [N fan]]]]]]; take the subway to school [VP [V take [NP [DET the [N subway]]] [PP [PREP to [NP [N school]]]]]]; is great fun [VP [V is [ADJP [ADV great [ADJ fun]]]]]; and like her very much [VP [V like [NP [N her]]] [ADVP [ADV very [ADV much]]]]], respectively. (2) The verb phrase structures that are found in the content analysis are used as both the contents of 6 lesson plans that are created by the framework of Content Base Learning and the 30 multiple choices of the pre-test and the post-test. Those lesson plans are designed to teach 6 hours according to the objectives of each learning topic. After finishing the teaching processes, 3 parts of the survey of students' satisfaction on lesson plan, which are personal information, opinion on the lesson plan, and suggestion, are conducted to evaluate the teaching. (3) For the result of the post tests, the students have had higher achievement at .05 level of statistical significance, and (4) the students have high level of satisfaction on the lesson plan of this teaching as the result of the satisfaction survey. This dissertation is significant in terms of Linguistics pedagogy for English as a Foreign Language. According to the result of this study, Thai students have the better understanding of English verb phrase structures when analyzed by the Government and Binding Theory. It could be useful for instructors to apply Government and Binding Analysis on the other English structures as the contents of the teaching method for Thai students who study English as a foreign language.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language; Teaching Method; English Verb Phrase Structure; Government and Binding Theory



Introduction

The Ministry of Education of Thailand is aware of the importance of English language for Thai students as we can see in the management of education which includes various levels of English programs from primary school to university level. According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 2008), English and other foreign languages are included in the curriculum for 40 hours in grades one to three and 80 hours in grades four to six at primary school level, 120 hours (3 credits) at junior high school level, and 240 hours (6 credits) at senior high school level each academic year. However, for the students in the vocational education program, who are in the same level with senior high school students, they study English and other foreign languages only 36 hours (6 credits) each academic year (Vocational Certificate Program, Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2019). Besides, their duration of English learning is less than the duration of the students who are in the basic education program.

At the university level, English is continuously specified to be the core subjects and the free elective subjects for both academic and technological universities. For the technological university such as Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin (hereafter RMUTR), which focuses on technology and science with the aim of developing students' capacity through academic and technological input with a practical approach, compels every first-year student to take "General English" (ENL1001), which comprises all English four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This subject also includes grammar learning.

All English skills of the first-year students at RMUTR, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are limited to the academic purpose because most of them graduated from a vocational education program in technical schools where their English classes focused on specific subjects such as English for Industrial Technicians, English for Business, English for Agriculture, and English for Tourism. A classroom research conducted by Makkana (2013) shows that the test results of the RMUTR Industrial Management major students' speaking skill in subjects such as "General English" and "English for Everyday Use" are low to moderate level. The surveys in classrooms also indicate that many engineering students make some mistakes when writing some English structures such as the errors of the adjective position in a noun phrase and that of an adverb in

a verb phrase. Furthermore, the every year overall grading of most of the students, who study “General English”, is not at the satisfied level, for example, in 2016, from the total of 41 Telecommunication Engineering students, only 4.88 percent achieved grade A; 0 percent for B+; 2.44 percent for B; 4.88 percent for C+; 9.76 percent for C; 17.07 percent for D+; 24.39 percent for D; and 26.83 percent for F; in 2017, from the total 35 Computer Engineering students, only 7.14 percent obtained grade A, 9.52 percent for B+, 9.52 percent for B, 14.29 percent for C+, 14.29 percent for C, 9.52 percent for D+, 7.14 percent for D, and 11.90 percent for F.

According to the Framework For Teaching (FFT) developed by Charlotte Danielson, one of the four domains is instruction, which should engage the students in learning. From the past till present, Tradition Grammar is applied as English teaching method for Thai students from the primary school to the university level. It is a grammatical framework for the description of the structure of the language. In order to be fluent in English, students need to memorize English prescriptive rules, the definition of its parts of speech, and the parsing of English sentences. Even in the university level, the traditional grammar has been used in English teaching until nowadays according to the RMUTR lecturers’ interview. Lecturers start lessons with the parts of speech and grammar rules, which need to be memorized by the students. The prescriptive grammatical rules that the students memorized do not allow them to generate the English sentences that they have never seen before. So, their capacity to write English sentences is limited only to those sentences that the teachers taught them as it is stated by Hillocks (1986) that the study of traditional school grammar has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. Most of Thai students cannot apply the English rules to write the correct English sentences even though they have learned them since in primary schools.

According to the surveys in classrooms, one of the English phrase structure errors of RMUTR engineering students is verb phrase structures in the embedded clauses. For example, they used “verb + verb” instead of “verb + infinitive verb” as in *I want to go study, *I go buy some food. In order to have the clarified explanation for the internal structure of English verb phrase, the Linguistics theory, Government and Binding Theory (GB), is proposed as a tool for the analysis. In the 1980s, Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, introduced the Government and Binding Theory, which is the theory of syntax and a phrase structure grammar in the tradition of Transformational Generative Grammar. GB considers the Phrase Structure Grammar as the basis

of grammatical analysis. Phrase Structure Rules are the native speakers' competence on their own language's syntactic constraints. The idea is that a syntactic structure composes of constituents that have some grammatical relations, for example

A sentence "John buys a book." composes of [NP John] + [VP buy a book]

A verb phrase "buy a book" composes of [V buy] + [NP a book]

A noun phrase "a book" composes of [Det a] + [N book]

GB then can be an appropriate analysis of the internal structure of English phrases, which are also based on the constituency relations, for example, an English verb phrase "go biking on the weekends" is analyzed by GB as [VP [V go [NP [N biking]] [PP [PREP on [NP [DET the [N weekends]]]]]]], which a verb go is a head, a noun phrase biking is its complement, and a prepositional phrase on the weekends is its adjunct.

In order for the RMUTR engineering students to have a better understanding of the structure of English verb phrase, this study proposes a syntactic analysis of English Verb Phrase Structure by Government and Binding Theory for English as a Foreign Language teaching method in a tertiary level.

Objectives of the research

1. to analyze English verb phrase structures in General English (ENL1001) textbooks of Rajamangala Universities of Technology by Government and Binding Theory.
2. to create the lesson plans with the content of the verb phrase structure analyzed by Government and Binding Theory.
3. to compare students' achievement before and after learning by the teaching method with the content of the verb phrase structure analyzed by Government and Binding Theory.
4. to present the students' satisfaction on teaching method with the content of the verb phrase structure analyzed by Government and Binding Theory.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of the dissertation follows a mixed method research which is the type of research in which a researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. It is divided into two main parts which are content analysis and teaching



method. It is started with a content analysis of English verb phrase structure in the textbooks used in 9 Rajamangala Universities of Technology. After that, the findings of content analysis are created the teaching method to be tested and evaluated with the first year engineering students who study General English subject at Rajamangala Universities of Technology.

The population in part 1: content analysis is all English sentences in text books which are used in General English subject in nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology. After the survey of problems in teaching English at RMUTR by interviewing, there was a survey of the textbooks by asking for the information from nine lecturers who teach at nine Rajamangala Universities of Technology. There are eight textbooks used in General English subject of Rajamangala Universities and the population in this research was listed from these eight as they are the representatives of all textbooks used at nine RMUT. There are 6,737 affirmative sentences. Due to the Government and Binding theory in using surface structures for analyzing the verb phrase structures, only 6,737 affirmative sentences were used as the samples in the first objective of this research.

The tool in the first part of the research study is Excel Program which is conducted to collect all sentences from the textbooks. There are two Excel Program presentations for collecting data. The first Excel Program Form 1: Sentence Collecting is presented a column of all affirmative sentences. This form is used to collect the data. The second Excel Program Form 2: VP Structures consists of three columns. There are numbers, verb phrase structures, and structures of verb phrase. This form is used to group and analyze the data. Verb phrase structures are grouped into 2 mains groups; 1) Head verb with a modal verb initial: (MV) V and, 2) Head verb initial: V (CONJ V), (MV) V (ASPECT), V (INF CLAUSE), and V (CP). In this research, tree diagrams and square brackets are also used to be tools as presented for analyzing each group of English verb phrase structures by Government and Binding Theory.

The step of refinement and processing of the instrument is to find and classify the structures of English verb phrase. Then, English verb phrase structures in affirmative sentences are presented in tree diagrams according to the Government and Binding Theory in order to explain the relationship of each constituents as a syntactic structure composes of constituents that have some grammatical relations. After that, verb phrase structures are formed and grouped into phrase structures by a square bracket to create the teaching method with the content of the verb phrase structure before teaching in the classroom.

The population in the second part are students who study English at Rajamangala Universities of Technology in the same level and program. The participants of the research are selected by random sampling which is one of the simplest forms of collecting data from the total population. All population carries an equal opportunity of being chosen as a part of the sampling process. Regarding non-English major students, 30 first year engineering students, are selected to be the samples of this study as they need the knowledge of verb phrase structure in learning other English subjects in the next academic year. Moreover, all of them have the same basic knowledge of English subject after finishing the English fundamental course (ENL001) which is specified for the first year students according to the policy of the university. Another reason is that the results of the research may be discrepant with English major students because of their basic knowledge and interest. Thus, 30 non-English major students are selected by random sampling.

The participants of the research are 17 Instrument Engineering students, 10 Telecommunication Engineering students, and 3 Mechatronics Engineering students. All of them study General English subject in semester 2, 2019 academic year.

The research instrument of this study are 1) lesson plans: lesson 1 part of speech and verb phrase structure, lesson 2 V (CONJ V), lesson 3 (MV) V, lesson 4 V (ASPECT), lesson 5 (INF CLAUSE), and lesson 6 V (CP), 2) tests: Pre-test, and Post-test, and 3) a survey of students' satisfaction on lesson plans.

The lesson plan of a teaching method of English verb phrase structure is designed by using the GB theory for students to do worksheet and activities in individual, pair, and group work. They help each other in concluding the knowledge of each learning unit after finishing all activities.

Pre-test and post-test are designed according to the results of the content analysis. The objective of the pre-test is to know how well the students has knowledge about the subject according to the lesson plan. Meanwhile, the objective of the post-test is to see their progress after finishing the lesson plan learning. The reason that why they are the same tests is to investigate and measure the progress of students in studying and use the results to reflect on the lesson plan. So that the lesson plan by GB theory is completed and suitable for the further use.

The results of pre- test, and post- test will be collected and reported to explain the efficiency of the method by T-test statistic. Moreover, a survey of student's satisfaction with



lesson plan will be used to examine their satisfaction. The descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will carry out.

In order to collect the data in Part 2: teaching methods, lesson plans are administered to the samples who are 30 first year engineering students in General English for one semester. The lesson plan begins with the pre- test and the results of the test will be recorded. After that, lesson one to six will be taught for six weeks. Then the post-test is conducted to compare the achievement of the students after learning with the teaching method. During class time, all feedback and responses on the lessons will be recorded to be used in the analysis as well.

The study of verb phrase structure teaching method will be used to find the validity and reliability in order to make the efficient lesson plan. After adjusting the lesson plan, it will be taught in classrooms for one semester to evaluate the efficiency of the method. The results of pre- test and post- test will be collected and reported to explain the efficiency of the method by T-test statistics.

In teaching method, the material validation was completed through the evaluation of three experts in the field of Linguistics and two experts in statistics and measurement. The agreement of tools of the verb phrase structure analyzed by Government and Binding Theory will determine the true finding. The index of Item- Objective Congruence (IOC) (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977) is used to validate.

Research results

This research consists of four objectives: 1) to analyze English verb phrase structures by Government and Binding Theory, 2) to create a lesson plans with the content of the verb phrase structure, 3) to compare students' achievement after learning by the teaching method, and 4) to present the students' satisfaction with said teaching method. The findings are presented as follows:

- 1) the findings on content analysis: verb phrase structure,
- 2) the findings on lesson plans with the content of the verb phrase structure analyzed by Government and Binding Theory,
- 3) the findings on students' achievement after learning by the teaching method, and
- 4) the findings on the students' satisfaction on the teaching Method.

First, in the findings of content analysis: verb phrase structure, there are 2 main groups of verb phrase structure. They are grouped and analyzed by using tools: the table in excel program, square brackets, and tree diagram. The data is analyzed and grouped as follows:

1) Head verb with a modal verb initial verb phrase structure

- 1.1) (MV) V
- 1.2) (Modal Verb) Verb (Aspect); (MV) V (ASPECT).

The finding is found that 1,462 sentences of verb phrase begin with modal verb: (Modal Verb) Verb; (MV) V, and (Modal Verb) Verb (Aspect); (MV) V (ASPECT).

2) Head verb initial verb phrase structure: consists of:

- 2.1) V aspect
- 2.2) V (CONJ V)
- 2.3) V (INF CLAUSE)
- 2.4) V (CP)

It is also found that 5,275 sentences begin with finite verb: Verb (Conjunction Verb); V (CONJ V), Verb (Infinitive Clause); V (INF CLAUSE), and Verb (Complementizer Phrase); V (CP).

There are noun phrases, prepositional phrases, adjective phrases, and adverb phrases followed verb phrases and formed the sentences.

1) Findings related to noun phrase

Noun phrase in English sentences is presented from the least to the most complex structures in the following patterns:

- 1) NP → N,
- 2) NP → ADJ N,
- 3) NP → ADJ ADJ N,
- 4) NP → DET N,
- 4.1) NP → DET ADJ N,
- 4.2) NP → DET ADV ADJ N, and
- 5.) NP → N POSS N.

2) Findings related to prepositional phrase

Prepositional phrase in English sentences is shown from the least to the most complex structures in the following patterns: PP → P (NP).

3) Findings related to adjective phrase

Adjective phrase in English sentences is revealed from the least to the most complex structures in the following patterns:

- 1) ADJP → ADJ,
- 2) ADJP → ADJ CONJ ADJ,
- 3) ADJP → ADV ADJ,
- 4) ADJP → ADV ADJP,
- 5) ADJP → COMP ADJP,
- 6) ADJP → ADJ COMP NP, and
- 7) ADJP → COMP ADJ COMP NP.

4) Findings related to adverb phrase

Adverb phrase in English sentences is proposed from the least to the most complex structures in the following patterns:

- 1) ADVP → ADV, and
- 2) ADVP → ADV ADV.

Second, in the findings in lesson plans, 30 multiple choice items of pre-test and post-test which are created by the results of content analysis, six lesson plans with worksheets, comprising parts of speech, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases, and verb phrases designed to teach for 6 hours in the controlled class, and a 3-parts survey of students' satisfaction on lesson plan are conducted to 30 engineering students of Rajamangala University of Technology in the controlled class .

Third, for the result of the tests: pre-test and post-test, the students show a high achievement at .05 level of statistical significance. That means after learning using the teaching method with the content of verb phrase structure, the students have better understanding on the topics and it reveals that the developed tools are effective.

Fourth, in the part of the students' satisfaction with said teaching method, the students are highly satisfied at highest level on the opinion on the lecturer, the facilities in learning, and the content of the teaching method, respectively.



Discussion of research results

The findings of the present study showed that Thai EFL students are not aware that part of speech influences the positioning of structures. In this case, the study to a considerable extent discussed the subcategorization frames of part of speech, which tell what type of words to form the sentences. Research study and teaching method or methodology concerning the awareness of pattern of phrases in relation to be followed after verb in order to provide useful data and patterns for instructors to initiate teaching and developing students' ability by linguistics approach in English classrooms. It is also hoped that new findings from research results could help students to improve their competencies in English learning,

The study of English language of Thai students in the past demonstrated teaching and learning using traditional theories which may not have been satisfactory. In this research, the researcher proposes a linguistics theory that helps Thai learners who study English as a foreign language have more understanding on verb phrase structure. In the findings, it is found that the use of linguistics theory: Government and Binding Theory, in teaching and learning comes with the satisfied results according to the post-test scores of the samples whose post-test scores have increased 76.66% with the statistical significance.

However, the high standard deviation (S.D.) in the findings: pre-test 3.88 and post-test 4.61 indicates that the values are spread out over a wider range. This means the samples in the research have much difference in English skills.

Meanwhile, some findings of the research showed that there are samples who have the post-test at the same score (10%) and lower score (13.33%), the samples present their opinions on the teaching method at the highest in overall aspects: lesson plan, lecturer, duration, and place and facilities in learning. Thus, many reasons or factors that make the student's exam scores the same and lower. It can be deduced that students may not familiar with the teaching by the contents analyzed by Linguistics Theory. However, most of the student got higher post-test score just learning with the teaching method for one semester. Hence, the English teaching method with Linguistics Theory should be included in the basic curricular from high school, so that the achievement in learning English of Thai students will be more effective.

This study proposes a syntactic analysis of English Verb Phrase Structure by Government and Binding Theory for English as a Foreign Language teaching method in a tertiary level in order

to clarify the inside structures of English verb phrase from the simplest structure to the most complex structure solving problems in learning English of Thai English learners due to the traditional linguistics teaching. It is found that modern linguistics theory can be perfectly enrolled in English teaching for Thai students who study English as a foreign language. Not only in the tertiary level but also in all levels should apply the modern linguistics theory to the pedagogy since Thai students study English for so many years in school but numerous challenges still there. This study can be a better option for both students and teachers.

Conclusion

The Government and Binding Theory (GB) is proposed to analyze English verb phrases structures for teaching Thai students as a foreign language. This journal is significant in terms of Linguistics pedagogy for English as a Foreign Language. According to the result of this study, Thai students have the better understanding of the English verb phrase structures analyzed by the Government and Binding Theory. It could be useful for Thai instructors to apply Government and Binding Analysis on the other English structures as the content of the teaching method for Thai students who study English as a foreign language.

Suggestions

There are 3 recommendations related with the research study as follow:

First, according to the feedback from the samples of the research, the teaching method may be adjusted in terms of duration and content used in each chapter by considering from the pilot study and basic knowledge of students. For example, engineering students have relatively weak background knowledge in English subject based on the results of the pilot study, the instructor can adjust the teaching duration from 1 hour to 1.5. - 2 hours by adding lecture on the content and number of exercises so that students can learn and understand lessons better. Moreover, the bigger group of samples would be reasonable for the next research. The researcher should give the treatment to the bigger group of samples, also to the other majors with poor English in other Rajamangala Universities of Technology to see if it yields the same results.

Second, there are many commercial foreign text books or tools based on phrase structure, like text books of Oxford press and Cambridge press. Meanwhile, there is little research about

teaching method of English verb phrase structure by linguistics theory in Thailand. In addition, there is not a curriculum or English text books which are suitable in a Thai context. So, there should be a standard curriculum and text books according to the Ministry of Education policy so that it is significant in terms of the pedagogy to help Thai technological students to have better understanding in phrase structure and English verb phrase structure by linguistics approach. Moreover, it could be useful for Thai instructors to apply the teaching method in teaching for Thai students who study English as a foreign language.

Third, there should be a standard curriculum and text books with Linguistics knowledge from the high school to the university level in the Ministry of Education policy so that it is significant in terms of the pedagogy to help Thai students to have better understanding in English grammar by linguistics approach.

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