

Research Article

Slip of the Tongue in English-Language Debates: A Psycholinguistic Study

Wiwit Sariasih^{1*}, Zainal Rafli², Endry Boeriswati²

¹Applied Linguistic Doctoral Program, Jakarta State University, Indonesia

²Graduate Program, Jakarta State University, Indonesia

ORCID

Rafli: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1124-7992>

Boeriswati: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5469-9855>

Sariasih: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0785-0425>

Abstract.

Debaters need to plan, speak fluently, and think critically during a debate. However, a common error occurs during debates known as slips of the tongue. They are caused by nervousness, tension and unpreparedness. This research aimed to identify types of slips of the tongue and their units of error through a descriptive qualitative study. The data were collected from the video recording of an English Debate Competition at a university. The data were analyzed using two theories by Gleason and Ratner Click or tap here to enter text. and by Dardjowidjojo Click or tap here to enter text. to investigate units of error in slips of the tongue. The second theory was presented by Altiparmak and Koruoglu which described nine types of slips of the tongue: shifts, exchanges, anticipations, persistence, additions, deletions, substitutions, blends, and deviations. There were 78 data points found in slips of the tongue - 39 units of error and 39 types of error. The units of error found in slips of the tongue were 11 distinctive feature errors, 9 syllable errors, 6 phonetic segment errors and 14 word errors. Types of the slips of the tongue were 15 deletions, 9 substitutions, 11 blends, and 4 deviations.

Keywords: Debate, Slips of Tongue, Unit of Error

1. Introduction

The English debate is one of the student activities that aims to channel students' interests and talents in debating using English. Debate is an activity that can stimulate critical thinking and speaking skills for debaters (Husnawadi & Samsudarni)[4]. During the debate the speakers will try to convey their ideas in a structured and systematic manner so that they can be understood by the debaters and the audience who observe the debate. Debating in English is not only the ability to concoct ideas and point of view but also the ability to speak in English. In debating, the speaker usually speaks clearly and decisively and sometimes tends to be quick to convey his/her thoughts within the allotted time, especially during debate competitions in English. When conveying

Corresponding Author: Wiwit Sariasih; email: wiwit_9906922015@mhs.unj.ac.id

Published 26 May 2023

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

© Wiwit Sariasih et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICASI Conference Committee.

 OPEN ACCESS

thoughts through debate, slip of tongue commonly occur due to excessive enthusiasm, nervousness in conveying the contents of the conversation, and unpreparedness.

Slips of the tongue may occur because the time is very short to speak while the ideas or thoughts that is needed to convey are too many. According to Pateda (1989) as quoted by Pangesti [5] "slip of the tongue refers to a situation where the pronunciation is wrong, for example due to not remembering or due to psychological pressures." For debaters, tongue slip may occur due to psychological pressure because they have to speak fluently in conveying their arguments. Scientifically, slip of the tongue is included in the study of psycholinguistics which studies how language is produced by speakers by considering psychological aspects such as unpreparedness to speak, nervousness, lack of confidence and being in a hurry to say something. Slips of tongue can be categorized into several types according to Altiparmak & Koruoglu [3], namely: Shift, exchange, anticipation, persistence, addition, deletion, substitution, blend, and deviation. Meanwhile, Aitchison [6] and Field [7] classify slips of the tongue into two major groups namely; selection errors and assembly errors. Selection error is when two words are mixed which is caused by an error in replacing the word with another word which is known as "slip of brain"[7]. Errors in assembly occur when the right word has been picked up or mapped out by the brain but is wrong at the time it is produced or spoken Aitchison[6].

Slips of the tongue Phenomenon also occurs during a debate competition in English and becomes an interesting phenomenon to study. During a debate competition, the psychological pressure experienced is greater where there is a demand to appear well and accurately in conveying arguments without giving gaps for the opposing party to argue back on what has been said. The focus of this research is to observe and discover the slips of the tongue that occurs during an English debate in a university-level English debate competition (NUDC). The purpose of this study was to find out the error found in slips of tongue and types of slips of the tongue that occurred during a debate competition in English.

The phenomenon of slips of the tongue has received much attention from language researchers and several studies related to slips of the tongue have also been produced. Yus [8] in a study of slips of the tongue at an early age found that there were six forms of speech errors or slips of tongue in early childhood namely: anticipation, deletion, exchange, transposition, perseveration, deletion and exchange. Sasmita, Saman and Syahrani [9] examined slips of the tongue in speech production in presidential and

vice presidential debates using a psycholinguistic approach, observing the concept of language in human mental processes when speaking, especially when producing an utterance. Maldini and Indah [10] in their research on slips of the tongue and its relation to gender in debates, found that men experience slips of tongue more often than women. Slips of the tongue that were mostly experienced by men were substitution and addition while women experience more various types of slips of the tongue. Al-Tufaili & Rahi [11] in their study found that slips of the tongue also occurs in politicians in America when giving speeches. Then concluded that American politicians are not talented in oration so that the slip of the tongue often occurs. Munawaroh, Karim and Setiawan[12] researched silences and slips of the tongue in the Debate Event for Candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent of Karawang Regency 2020 where two pauses were found, namely filled and non-filled silences. There were also five forms of slips of the tongue that occurred in the debate, namely; assembling (anticipation) errors, word mixes (blends), distinctive feature errors, syllable errors, and word errors. The five studies above discuss about tongue scraping with different objects, namely in early childhood, debate for regent and deputy regent candidates and presidential and vice president candidates. This study also examines the slips of the tongue, but the slip of the tongue that occurs in university English debate. This study aims to find out the tongue-tied units found in speakers when conducting debates in English and types of slips of the tongue in English Debate. This research was conducted with a psycholinguistic approach using two theories, the first is how the occurrence of unit of error in slips of the tongue presented by Gleason & Ratner [1] and Dardjowidjojo[2] where slips of the tongue can occur in distinctive features, phonetic segments, syllables, words and constituents bigger than the word. The second was the theory presented by Altiparmak & Koruoglu [3] which describe nine types of slips of the tongue; Shifts, exchanges, anticipations, persistence, additions, deletions, substitutions, blends, and deviations.

2. Methods

This research used descriptive with qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen [13] a qualitative approach is an approach in which research is conducted by looking at the focus of the problem as it is. The focus of this research problem is the slips of the tongue that arise when students carry out English debate competitions at the university level. The data were from recordings of the ongoing debate by Pamulang

University students in a university-level debate competition. In this study the researcher acted as an instrument that directly collected data from data sources, namely the recording of debate. The data collection technique was documentary and the data collection tool was video recording documents. Data collection was carried out through observing debate recordings during the English debate.

The steps of the research included; 1) translating the English debate videos into written form or debate transcripts, 2) analyzing the debate transcripts that had been grouped according to the tongue-swept units found, and types of slips of the tongue 3) The technique of sorting the determining elements of slips of the tongue, namely the data was analyzed by sorting the data according to slips of the tongue unit. 4) The data that had been obtained were grouped according to the unit of error and types of slips of the tongue.

3. Results and Discussion

The study found that there were error words in the debaters' utterances in the English debate competition. These words still come from the same semantic field and are intact even though they are wrong or not in accordance with what the speaker meant. There are 39 data related to the units of error of the slips of the tongue; 11 distinctive feature, 9 syllable, 6 phonetic segment, and 14 word errors. Following is errors of slips of the tongue found in the tongue slip units.

1. Distinctive feature

In slips of the tongue, the unit is a distinctive feature if the dislocated is not a phoneme, but only the distinctive feature of that phoneme.

"We don't need to stress open that matters --- we don't need to stress upon that matters."

In the sentence above, it can be seen that there is an error in the pronunciation of "upon" is uttered "open" by students during debates. This fallacy occurs when the speaker speaks enthusiastically at a fast pace and looks a little nervous. The confusion from "upon" to "open" is not really the replacement of the phonemes /u/ to become /o/, and /o/ to /e/ but the substitution of the distinctive feature [-vois] with [+vois].

1. Syllable

Errors are also common in syllables. In this case, the exchange occurs in producing an utterance. Errors can occur in the first consonant or the addition of a vowel in a word.

*If we are about to **woke** in the office— if we are **working** in the office*

The sentence above shows that there is an error in the syllable where the working word with two syllables /wer'/ and /king/ is produced into one syllable, namely /wɜk/. It happens because the speaker is in a hurry to express his/her opinion and then pauses and repeats the words in the sentence more slowly and firmly.

1. Phonetic segment

A more common error is an error with more than one distinctive feature called the phonetic segment error.

*You need to **pocus** on what important has **down** aaa.... done.*

*We are good fashionable enough or we are not **persontable** aaa... fashionable enough*

1. Words

Word errors occur when there are words that change places. In general, this error is recognized by the speaker and then immediately corrected. But sometimes it also happens that the speaker is not aware of it, so he/she cannot correct the mistake.

I want to government rebut the idea...hmmm(pause filler)..I want to rebut the government's idea

It already the rule say is that – It is the rule already says that...

The sentences above were spoken by the speaker in the debate competition, there was an error in the placement of words. In the first sentence, it can be seen that there was an error in the location of the word “rebut” and then it was immediately corrected by the speaker. Meanwhile, in the second sentence, there was an error in the placement of the words but the speaker did not correct it because he/she did not realize it.

In the analysis of English debate competition, it was also found that the types of slips of the tongue were carried out by the debaters. Of the nine types of the slips of the tongue; shifting, exchange, anticipation, persistence, addition, deletion, substitution, blends, and deviation found five types of slip of the tongue in English debate competition, four types of slips of the tongue were found, including: deletion, substitution, blends, and deviation.

1. Deletion

There are 15 data that refer to the type of deletion in the slips of the tongue that are carried out by the debater.

*As the figure or leader, the president should reconsider build up the **infrastruture** that can be useful not only for short period but for long period.*

There is deletion in the sentence above in the word infrastructure where there is an omission of "truct" which is in the middle of the word to become "infrasture" when the debater said it in a fast tone and did not realize the error that occurred.

1. Substitution

Substitution occurs when the debater replaces words with a completely different meaning than they should, thus making the listener confused in understanding what the debater means.

*The decision is not suitable in this current situation when the **mont** of unemployment increase.*

In the sentence above there is the word "mont" which has no meaning so that listeners find it difficult to understand the sentence. The word in question is actually "amount" but what the debater says is "mont." Substitutions that occurred during the debate competition was 9 data.

1. Blend

Blend often occurs when the speaker conveys the words quickly considering the time given to speak is limited when there is so much to say. Blend is a type of slips of the tongue that occurs when two or more words are combined into one. As in the sentence below:

*It surely a **weihmatter** that need to be discussed in advanced. Thus, in this forum the **appropriatejudgment** towards this matter need to be handle carefully.*

In the first sentence there is a word "weighmatter" which is a combination of two words, namely "weighty" and "matter." The speaker had difficulty in pronouncing the word "weighty" so he/she combined it with the word "matter." In the second sentence there is a combination of the words "appropriate" and "judgment" to become "appropriate-judgement." The speaker had difficulty in pronouncing the word "appropriate" correctly so he/she combined it with the word "judgment" when speaking quickly because he

had received a warning from the time keeper that the time to speak was running out. There were 11 types of mixed tongue twisters found in the English debate competition.

1. Deviation

Deviations occur when the speaker does not use the prefix or suffix correctly. It can happen due to errors in processing sentences in the brain or errors when producing words as in the following example.

*The demonstration is a prove that the people are **unsatisfied** to the house of representative.*

The deviation in the sentence above is the word "unsatisfied" which gets the prefix "un-" while the correct affix for the word "satisfied" is "dis-" so that it becomes the word "dissatisfied" because it refers to people. While "unsatisfied" is used to refer to objects. There are 4 deviations found in the English debate conducted by the debater.

Slip of the tongue can have a negative and positive impact on the speaker. The negative impacts of slipping the tongue are the listener cannot understand what the speaker is talking about. If the speaker cannot understand the intent of the speaker, there will be an error in understanding the speech and communication will be interrupted. In a debate when slips of the tongue occurs, listeners can use this to rebut what the speaker says and provide arguments that can endanger the speaker's position. The positive impact of slips the tongue is that the listener will focus on the unclear information so that they forget other important things that the speaker talks about.

4. Conclusions

Slips of the tongue usually occurs when the speaker conveys his/her thoughts. It is common due to nervousness, enthusiasm, rush and anxiety. This study found that there are four units of errors in the slips of the tongue, namely the errors of distinctive features, syllables, phonetic segments and words. In the types of slips of the tongue that occur when the debater is debating, there are four types of tongue slips, namely: deletion, substitution, blend and deviation. Even though it is normal to occur during a debate, it can be avoided by practicing speaking quickly and fluently and arranging ideas to be conveyed sequentially so that the appearance of the slips of the tongue can be avoided.

Acknowledgments

The deepest gratitude is address to Prof.Dr. Zainal Rafli, M.Pd and Prof.Dr Endry Boeriswati, M.Pd for the knowledge and guidance in completing this research. The author also would like to address the gratefulness to the collogues in Pamulang University especially Christy Tisnawijaya and Latifah for the support and understanding.

References

- [1] Gleason JB, NB, Ratner. Psycholinguistics. 2nd ed. Florida: Harcourt Brace College Publishers; 1998.
- [2] Dardjowidjojo S. Psikolinguistik: Pengantar Pemahaman Bahasa Manusia. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia; 2003.
- [3] Altparmak A, Kuruolu. SLIPS OF THE TONGUE: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STUDY IN TURKISH LANGUAGE. [Online]. Available: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299469262>
- [4] Husnawadi. The Role of English Debating Tournament in the Face of the ASEAN Economy Community (AEC). 119 DINAMIKA ILMU. 2016;16(1).
- [5] Pangesti F. SENYAPAN DAN KILIR LIDAH BERDAMPINGAN DALAM PRODUKSI UJARAN. Hasta Wiyata. 2019 Jan;2(1):8–17.
- [6] Aitchison J. The Articulate Mammal: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics. London: Routledge; 2007. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203934715>.
- [7] Field J. Psycholinguistics: The Key Concepts. New York: Routledge; 2004. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203506929>.
- [8] Yus A. "A SPEECH ERRORS/ TONGUE SLIPS PADA MASA USIA DINI," Jurnal Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra. 2012;24(1):1–10.
- [9] Sari NS, S. Saman, Syahrani A. Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia FKIP Untan, "SELIP LIDAH TERHADAP PRODUKSI UJARAN DALAM DEBAT CAPRES DAN CAWAPRES MENGGUNAKAN PENDEKATAN PSIKOLINGUISTIK."
- [10] Maldini MY, Indah RN. SLIP OF THE TONGUE AND GENDER RELATION IN ADVANCE DEBATE COMMUNITY. Journal of Languages and Language Teaching. 2020;8(4):360.
- [11] Al-Tufaili QA, Rahi HJ. A phono-discourse analysis of tongue slips in political speech. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change. 2020;11(5).

- [12] Siti, Abdul KA, Hendra S, Munawaroh. Senyapan dan Selip Lidah dalam Acara Debat Calon Bupati dan Wakil Bupati Kabupaten Karawang 2020. *EDUKATIF: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*. 2022;4(2).
- [13] R. C. & B. K. Bogdan. *Qualitative Research for education: An Introduction theory and method*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc; 1984.