Semantic Error Analysis in English Oral Presentation

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the oral semantic errors made by students during their English oral presentations and to classify these errors according to the categories defined by Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani's (2012), adapted from James' (1998) error classification theory. This study uses qualitative descriptive analysis method. The study's population consisted of approximately 50 6th-semester English Education students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, with a sample size of 14 students from class 6A1, who were scheduled to perform their oral presentation. The data collection techniques used are observation and documentation. Data analysis involves several steps: identifying semantic errors, categorizing the collected semantic error, describing the corrected versions of these semantic errors, and concluding with a descriptive analysis of the semantic errors. The findings of this study found that among the fifteen semantic errors found in students' oral presentations, lexical choice errors were the most frequent, totaling 8 errors (53%). Collocation and formal misformation had the lowest occurrence, each with only 1 error (7%). Additionally, lexical-grammatical choice errors accounted for 3 instances (20%), while formal misselection accounted for 2 errors (13%) in the study.

Keywords: oral presentation, semantic, semantic error

INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential aspect of human existence, with each language having its own set of rules and structures to ensure effective communication and mutual understanding between speakers and listeners. A language addresses all three levels of communication: it must allow task completion (effectiveness), enable meaning transmission (semantics), and account for possible noise in the communication channel (syntax) (Huttebraucker et al., 2024). Semantics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the interpretation and understanding of meaning within languages. Furthermore, Griffiths (2006) defined semantics as the study of the toolkit that helps us understand meaning, which includes vocabulary and patterns used to create more complex meanings in sentences (Medina & Saraswati, 2021). Additionally, semantics studies symbols or signs that convey meaning, the relationships between different meanings, and their impact on people and society (Givano, 2023). Semantics involves examining how language tools like vocabulary and sentence structures influence complex meanings, while also exploring the relationships of symbols and their broader societal impacts.

Semantic errors often occur in individuals' communication, especially for second or foreign language learners. Wijana (2011) explained that semantic errors occur when the chosen words do not align with the intended meaning of a sentence (B et al., 2023). These errors are more common when language learners struggle with specific linguistic structures, often due to differences between their native language and the new language they are learning. Keshavarz (1993) mentioned that semantic errors involve misunderstandings such as using inappropriate diction, unintended words, and errors in referencing (B et al., 2023). Semantic errors can significantly hinder communication, whether in writing or speaking. When it comes to verbal communication, semantic errors can significantly impact the clarity and effectiveness of our messages. Unlike written errors, which can be identified and corrected through careful review, spoken errors, especially in a second language and foreign language learning, present challenges because speech happens in real-time, leaving no opportunity for editing thoughts.

As students advance in their studies, they transition from informal to formal communication, such as delivering oral presentations, which is essential for enhancing their English proficiency. Oral presentation skills are crucial for students, particularly in higher education and for their future careers (Al-Nouh et al., 2015). However, oral presentations are a form of public speaking, which is widely recognized as a challenging task for many individuals. It can be particularly challenging because presenters must not only master technical delivery skills but also think and speak in a language they are still learning or not accustomed to using daily (Mardiningrum & Ramadhani, 2022). Students often struggle with word choice during presentations, particularly when speaking in front of an audience, leading to semantic errors that may hinder their message. These errors are compounded by limited vocabulary, influence from their native language, and the pressure of public speaking. It is critical for students to practice extensively and seek support to improve their language skills in these situations. Therefore, it is important to carry out error analysis to help students understand the objectives and determine steps to improve the quality of their learning outcomes.

Semantic errors can be analyzed into several categories, and to analyze students' oral presentations researchers used Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani's (2012) theory, adapted from James' (1998) error classification theory, which categorizes semantic errors into five categories (Anggraeni, 2020): a) Formal misselection occurs when a similar-looking but incorrect linguistic form is chosen, affecting letters, prefixes, suffixes, or entire words; b) Formal misformation refers to mistakes in word formation based on incorrect application of the rules of the target language or interference from the learner's native language; c) Lexical choice errors involve selecting incorrect words or vocabulary that do not fit the intended meaning in a given context; d) Collocation refers to the incorrect combination of words that typically appear together in a language; and e) Lexical-grammatical choice involves incorrectly using a word from one grammatical category (such as a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb) in place of a word from a different grammatical category.

Several previous studies about analyzing semantic errors or oral presentation have been conducted. One such study was carried out by (Amna, 2021), which focused on examining syntactical errors and mistakes made by management students from the Faculty of Economics when using English sentences during in-class business presentations. Additionally, Rajab et al. (2016) analyzed semantic errors in argumentative essays written by Libyan postgraduate students. Similarly, Atmoko et al. (2023) focused on semantic errors in fieldwork reports by students of SMK Semesta Bumiayu. Unlike these studies, which primarily analyze written communication and syntactical errors, this research focuses on semantic errors in verbal communication during oral presentations.

This study aims to analyze the oral semantic errors made by students during their English oral presentations and to classify these errors according to the categories defined by Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani's (2012), adapted from James' (1998) error classification theory. The findings of this study aim to raise awareness among students, empowering them to improve their semantic skills in speaking and oral presentations by enabling them to identify and correct errors more effectively. Additionally, this research serves as a valuable resource for readers and future researchers interested in expanding their understanding of semantic errors in oral presentations, offering a reference for further studies in this area.

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative descriptive analysis method. Creswell (2017) stated that qualitative research is a method for examining and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human situation. The study's population consisted of approximately 50 6th-semester English Education students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, with a sample size of 14 students from class 6A1, who were scheduled to perform their oral presentation. This research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, which was located on Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan No. 1 Cikokol Tangerang. The data collection techniques used are observation and documentation. The observation method involves watching and describing a subject's behavior to gain insights or understanding (Zevalkink, 2021). The researchers observe students' oral presentation performance in class 6A1. Document analysis encompasses the examination of diverse materials such as books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports (Morgan, 2022). However, the term "document" includes a broad range of visual sources like photographs, video, and film (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this research, the researchers conduct document analysis of the recorded videos of the students' oral presentations.

The primary of this study is the data collected from the observation and documentation oral communication of 6th semester English Education study program students conducted during the presentation. The secondary data is collected from journals and books relevant to this research. Primary data is information collected directly by the researcher through methods like surveys, observations, questionnaires, focus groups, case studies, and interviews (Ajayi, 2023). While, secondary data is information collected from published sources, meaning it was gathered by someone else for a different purpose but can be used in research, such as published printed sources, books, journals, weblogs, and newspapers (Taherdoost, 2021). Data analysis involves identifying, categorizing, conclusions. Data analysis involves several steps: first, identifying semantic errors by taking notes during the observation and documentation of students' oral presentations. Second, categorizing the collected semantic error data using the five types proposed by Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012), adapted from James' (1998) error classification theory, consisting of formal misselection, formal misformation, lexical choice, lexico-grammatical choice, and collocation. Third, describing the corrected versions of these semantic errors based on their respective types. Finally, concluding with a descriptive analysis of the semantic errors observed in students' oral presentations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After observing and analyzing videos of students' oral presentation performances, it was found that students majoring in English experienced several semantic errors, which is 15 data points. The following is the categorization using Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani's theory (2012), adapted from James' (1998) error classification theory, and the description of the data obtained:

1. Lexico-grammatical Choice

Data 1

"We will **presentation**" → "We will **present**"

Students frequently make this error during their oral presentations by mistakenly using the noun "presentation" instead of the verb "present," which results in a lexico-grammatical error. In English, the verb "present" should be used to express the action of delivering or showing information to an audience. Using "presentation" here is incorrect because "presentation" is a noun that refers to the event or act of presenting, not the action itself. Therefore, the appropriate expression would be "We will present," which correctly uses the verb to convey the intended meaning of performing the act of presenting information to an audience.

Data 2

"An **explaining** of point a, b, c" → "An **explanation** of points a, b, c"

The student's error in the sentence "An explaining of point a, b, c" is a lexico-grammatical error because it incorrectly uses the verb "explaining" and the preposition "of." In English, "explaining" is a form of the verb "explain" that acts like a noun, representing the action of explaining. However, in this case, it's used incorrectly as if it were a noun phrase. The correct noun should be "explanation," such as "An explanation of points a, b, c." This correction reflects proper grammar by accurately describing the act of explaining each point.

Data 3

"The **important** of predication" → "The **importance** of predication"

A lexico-grammatical error occurred during an oral presentation when a student mispronounced "importance (ɪmˈpɔːtəns)" as "important (ɪmˈpɔːtənt)," leading to the phrase "The important of predication" The word "Importance" is a noun that describes the significance or value of something, while "important" is an adjective used to describe things of significance. In the context of discussing the significance of predication, the correct term should be "importance," not "important." This mispronunciation resulted in a sentence that does not make grammatical sense because "important" was used incorrectly as a noun. Therefore, the correct phrase should be "The importance of predication," which accurately conveys the intended meaning.

2. Formal Misselection

Data 4

"In the **warm**" → "In the **womb**"

The student mistakenly pronounced the word "womb (wuːm)" similar to "warm (wɔːm)." This distinction between "warm" and "womb" illustrates how choosing similar-sounding words can significantly change the meaning of a sentence. Phonetically, these words are alike, but they carry distinct meanings. "Warm" describes a pleasant temperature, whereas "womb" refers specifically to the anatomical structure where a fetus develops during pregnancy. In this context, the students presented material on children's language development in relation to fetal development, emphasizing the importance of correctly using the word "womb" to convey the specific biological context under discussion.

Data 5

"Please, **rise** your hand" → "Please, **raise** your hand"

During the question and answer session, students often confused the pronunciation of "raise (reɪz)" with "rise (raɪz)." This mix-up often happens because the words sound similar, even though they have different grammatical functions. "Rise" is an intransitive verb indicating upward movement without a direct object, as in "The sun rises in the east." In contrast, "raise" is a transitive verb that requires a direct object to show lifting or elevating something, like in "Please raise your hand." While both words involve upward movement, "raise" specifically directs the action towards an object or person.

3. Lexical Choice

Data 6

"Any question **again?**" → "Any **more** question?"

This error often occurs during the question and answer session, where students use the word "again" instead of "more," even though it's incorrect in this context. The phrase is meant to invite further questions, but "again" is not used correctly here. "Again" implies repetition, which does not fit the intended meaning. In the context of asking for additional questions, "Any more questions?" is correct because it is asking for new questions, not the repetition of the same one. Using "again" would suggest you want the same question to be asked once more, which is not the intended meaning.

Data 7

"The first material presentation will be read by **myself**" → "The first material presentation will be read by **me**"

"The first material presentation will be read by myself" contains a lexical choice semantic error because of the incorrect use of the reflexive pronoun "myself." Reflexive pronouns such as "myself" are used when the subject and object of the verb are the same, or for emphasis, as in "I made the cake myself," meaning you made it without help. In the sentence given, "myself" is used incorrectly because it is not a case where the subject and object are the same. The correct pronoun to use here is "me," as it functions as the object of the preposition "by." Therefore, the sentence should be "The first material presentation will be read by me." This usage is grammatically correct and avoids the unnecessary and incorrect use of the reflexive pronoun "myself."

Data 8

"Who wants to **question**?" → "Who wants to **ask**?"

In an oral presentation Q&A session, the use of the verb "question" in the sentence is not appropriate in this context. "Question" usually suggests a formal or critical inquiry, such as in legal or investigative contexts where doubt is involved. In contrast, "ask" is the correct verb to invite people to inquire or seek information in a casual or formal setting like a presentation Q&A. Using "ask" ensures clarity and encourages audience participation by inviting questions or comments. Therefore, using "Who wants to question?" might confuse the audience about the speaker's intention, while "Who wants to ask?" or "Who wants to ask a question?" are clearer and more appropriate for encouraging interaction in such sessions.

Data 9

"Let us **give thanks to** Allah SWT for granting us good health" → "Let us **thank** Allah SWT for granting us good health."

During the opening session of an oral presentation, students frequently commit a lexical error when they say "Let us give thanks to Allah SWT for granting us good health." The error lies in the misuse of the phrase "give thanks," it is slightly redundant because "thanks" alone suffices to convey gratitude effectively. By using "thank" instead of "give thanks," the sentence becomes clearer and directly communicates the intended message of expressing gratitude to Allah SWT for the gift of good health. Therefore, the more appropriate sentence would be "Let us thank Allah SWT for granting us good health."

Data 10

"Let's go to the **material**" → "Let's go to the **presentation**"

This error commonly occurs during the opening session of students' oral presentations. The use of the word "material" in the sentence "let's go to the material" represents a lexical choice error. In this context, "material" typically refers to study materials or content, which doesn't accurately convey the act of presenting information to an audience. On the other hand, "presentation" precisely describes the action of addressing listeners with prepared information. Using "presentation" instead of "material" ensures that the focus remains on effectively delivering content to the audience, aligning with the oral presentation's purpose to inform or engage listeners with well-organized information. Therefore, the appropriate sentence should be "Let's go to the presentation."

Data 11

"Can you repeat it **again**" → "Can you **repeat it**"

During a Q&A session, this error was quite common to occur when the student or moderator asked someone who has asked a question to repeat it for clarity. The sentence "Can you repeat it again" contains a lexical error because it is redundant. The word "repeat" already implies doing something again, therefore adding "again" is unnecessary and complicates the sentence. Removing "again" makes the request more concise and grammatically correct, simply asking the person to repeat their question. This correction ensures that the request for repetition is clear and effectively communicates the need for clarification without unnecessary repetition of words, improving the flow and effectiveness of communication during the Q&A session.

Data 12

"If someone **talks** "where the cheese sandwich sits" → If someone s**ays** "where the cheese sandwich sits"

In the context of quoting someone's words or a specific phrase, using the verb "talks" is not appropriate because it does not accurately capture the act of quoting speech. The verb "talks" typically refers to having a conversation or speaking generally, rather than quoting specific statements. On the other hand, the verb "says" is more suitable in this context as it specifically denotes quoting someone's exact words or a phrase. Therefore, correcting the sentence from "If someone talks 'where the cheese sandwich sits'" to "If someone says 'where the cheese sandwich sits'" ensures that the sentence accurately reflects the action of quoting someone's statement about asking about the location of some who ordered the cheese sandwich.

Data 13

"Please **on mic** your microphone" → "Please **unmute** your microphone"

A lexical choice error occurred when the student or moderator asked the audience to "please on mic your microphone" instead of saying "Please unmute your microphone." The phrase "on mic" is not commonly used in this context and introduces ambiguity, as it does not clearly convey the action of activating a microphone. On the other hand, "unmute" is widely understood and clearly tells people to turn on the microphone for speaking. This correction makes the instruction clear, ensuring that participants understand and follow it correctly during the Q&A session, which improves communication and interaction in both virtual and live settings.

4. Collocation

Data 14

"Can **affects** how easily speech is understood." → "Can **affect** how easily speech is understood."

The word "affects" in the sentence is a collocation error. The student mispronounced the word and used the wrong form by adding the suffix "-s." The word "can" before it is a modal verb indicating capability and it does not require the third-person singular form of the verb that would be "affects." Instead, the correct form should be "affect," without -s, which means to influence or impact something. This aligns with the intended meaning that various factors can influence how easily speech is understood during. Therefore, the sentence should accurately state "Can affect how easily speech is understood," reflecting the appropriate use of the verb "affect" alongside the modal verb "can."

5. Formal Misformation

Data 15

"Cooperation, Principle, and **Implicatute**" → "Cooperation, Principle, and **Implicature**"

During the oral presentation, the student misspelled the title as "Implicatute" instead of "implicature," which constitutes a formal misinformation. In formal settings like academic

presentations, correct spelling is important for clarity and accuracy. "Implicature" is a specific term in linguistics that refers to implied meanings in communication. "Implicatute," on the other hand, is not a correct word and does not convey the intended meaning. This error might confuse the audience because it uses the wrong term and changes the meaning of what is being discussed. Therefore, while unintentional, this error is a semantic error because it misinforms the audience due to the incorrect use of a formal term.

Based on the previous discussion, the summary of research findings is categorized by semantic errors in students' English oral presentations, as shown in the following table:

Table 1 Semantic Error Categorization

No.	Category	Frequency	%
1.	Lexico-grammatical	3	20%
2.	Formal Misselection	2	13%
3.	Lexical Choice	8	53%
4.	Collocation	1	7%
5.	Formal Misformation	1	7%
Total		15	100%

CONCLUSION

In this study, semantic errors in English oral presentations made by students in the English Education department are classified into several categories. The errors are classified into five categories: lexical grammatical choice, formal error, lexical choice, formal error, and collocation. There were 15 semantically inappropriate words used by the students during the presentation. The findings of this study found that among the fifteen semantic errors found in students' oral presentations, lexical choice errors were the most frequent, totaling 8 errors (53%). Collocation and formal misformation had the lowest occurrence, each with only 1 error (7%). Additionally, lexical-grammatical choice errors accounted for 3 instances (20%), while formal misselection accounted for 2 errors (13%) in the study. The findings of this study can be used to help enhancing students' understanding of semantic errors in oral communication and providing feedback for lecturers who guide students in preparing oral presentations.

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