



Exploring Vietnamese EFL English-Majored Students' Perceptions of the Causes and Effects of Speech Errors in Spontaneous Speech

Lam Ky Nhan^{1*}, Luong Vo Nhat Quang¹

¹Nam Can Tho University

*Corresponding author: Lam Ky Nhan (email: kynhan0203@gmail.com)

Received: 7/2/2025

Revised: 13/3/2025

Accepted: 5/4/2025

Keywords: cognitive overload, communicative competence EFL learners, language interference, speech errors, spontaneous speech

Từ khóa: can thiệp ngôn ngữ, lỗi phát âm, lời nói tự nhiên, năng lực giao tiếp, người học tiếng Anh, quá tải nhận thức

ABSTRACT

This study aims at exploring the causes and impacts of speech errors in spontaneous speech produced by Vietnamese EFL learners, with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The results of the study showed that the major causes of speech errors were L1 interference, cognitive overload, and lack of exposure to real life English conversations. These linguistic and cognitive challenges affected to a large extent learners' oral fluency that in turn reduces their confidence, increased their anxiety and made them hesitant in speaking. Furthermore, the study establishes the immediate and more general effects of speech errors on communicative competence and classroom participation. The results of the study also suggest the need for specific pedagogical interventions to assist learners to overcome speech disfluencies and enhance their spoken English proficiency.

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu nguyên nhân và tác động của lỗi phát âm trong bài lời nói tự nhiên của người học tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ thứ hai (người học tiếng Anh) ở Việt Nam, thông qua các phương pháp định tính và định lượng. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy nguyên nhân chính dẫn đến lỗi phát âm bao gồm sự can thiệp của tiếng mẹ đẻ (L1), quá tải nhận thức và thiếu tiếp xúc với tiếng Anh giao tiếp trong thực tế đời sống. Các thử thách về mặt ngôn ngữ và nhận thức nói trên ảnh hưởng đáng kể đến sự trôi chảy trong giao tiếp bằng của người học khi nói, từ đó làm giảm sự tự tin, tăng cảm giác lo lắng và khiến họ do dự khi nói. Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu còn xác định các tác động trực tiếp và tổng quát của lỗi phát âm đối với năng lực

giao tiếp và sự tham gia trong lớp học. Kết quả nghiên cứu cũng đề xuất sự cần thiết của các can thiệp sư phạm cụ thể nhằm hỗ trợ người học vượt qua khó khăn về mức độ trôi chảy khi nói và nâng cao năng lực nói tiếng Anh.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Spontaneous speech is a crucial component of language proficiency; however, it poses significant problems for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Errors in spontaneous speech are typical and have their roots in linguistic, cognitive, and psychological factors. Research proves that EFL learners make typical mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary due to the transfer from their first language (L1), which results in transfer errors and structural mismatches between the two languages [2],[3],[4]. In addition, the cognitive aspects of producing speech in real-time often lead to hesitations, repetitions, and disfluencies in speech, as learners try to converge accuracy, fluency, and complexity in their output [18],[19]. These challenges, however, not only affect linguistic competence but also affect learners' confidence and willingness to communicate [10], [11].

Understanding the causes and effects of spontaneous speech errors helps in improving EFL instruction and communicative competence. Previous studies have shown that linguistic interference and cognitive overload are the main causes of these errors, while psychological factors like anxiety and fear of failure worsen the situation [7],[8],[14],[15]. Nevertheless, there is a lack of study that looks at the interaction of these factors for Vietnamese EFL learners in a

systematic way. To this end, this study investigates the particular causes and consequences of spontaneous speech errors in Vietnamese university students majoring in English. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the study aims to offer a holistic view of how linguistic, cognitive, and psychological factors lead to speech errors and how they affect learners' communication and self-confidence. The results will be useful for informing language teaching pedagogical practices to improve fluency and accuracy in the spontaneous speech of EFL learners.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Theoretical Framework on Speech Errors

Definition and Classification of Speech Errors: Speech errors are defined as unintended variations from the intended speech products. Some common types are slips of the tongue, false starts, pauses, hesitations, repetitions, and grammatical errors. Slips of the tongue are deliberate substitutions of a word during speaking, which reveal the underlying cognitive processes of word production [16]. False starts are realized through the speaker's inability to continue with a phrase and having to stop in order to reformulate or correct themselves, thus indicating a change of mindset [1]. Pauses and hesitations can be associated with cognitive load or uncertainty, and repetitions can be viewed as a way of stressing some point or finding one's voice again [1]. Grammatical errors, however, are

more likely to be attributed to lack of competence or cognitive resources in the speech production process [1].

These speech errors are explained by theories including Levelt's Model of Speech Production, which posits that speech production involves three levels: conceptual level, formal level, and lexical level. This model predicts that errors can happen at any of the levels, resulting in different kinds of speech errors [16]. Moreover, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the social basis of language development, which means that speech errors can also be affected by the communicative situation and the society that the speaker is in [20]. This last perspective focuses on the interplay between cognitive and social factors in the genesis of speech errors.

Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic. Perspectives on Speech Errors: From a psycholinguistic point of view, cognitive processes are the main determinants of speech production. Recent studies show that the brain's language regions are activated in real time during speaking and that performance can be imperfect when cognitive resources are stretched thin [1]. For example, younger speakers may make more grammatical errors and fillers since they have not yet fully developed their cognitive control than older speakers [1]. In addition, the complexity of language processing has been found to involve the interaction of several cognitive components such as memory and attention that can greatly affect fluency and accuracy of production [16],[1].

This paper also highlights how sociolinguistic factors contribute to speech fluency and accuracy. It is important to note that the context

of communication can influence the way through which people convey messages as different situations may pose different amounts of pressure on speakers [6]. According to Vygotsky, language is not only a cognitive activity but a social practice which means that the way in which people communicate is influenced by the circumstances of the interaction [20]. For instance, language fillers that are usually regarded as pauses can have a number of social meanings including the fact that a speaker is paying attention or uncertain in a conversation [16]. Therefore, analyzing speech errors is not only about looking at the linguistic level but also at the cognitive and sociocultural level.

1.2.2 Speech Errors in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Causes of Speech Errors in EFL Learners: Errors in speaking English for individuals learning it as a language can stem from cognitive and language-related reasons. A key factor is the influence of the learners' language that can result in mistakes related to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary when using the language [5]. For example, the Bilingual Lemma Activation (BLA) model proposes that the mental lexicon of individuals includes language elements that can impact how learners articulate themselves in their second language [13]. This interference might result in pronunciation errors or improper grammatical constructions since learners may unconsciously apply rules from their language in second language situations [12].

Furthermore, speaking can be affected by having much to think about, which sometimes leads to mistakes for people learning EFL. They often find it hard to balance the complexity,

accuracy, and smoothness of their speech (CAF), which can cause them to make mistakes or pause when speaking [5]. Paying attention also plays a part in this; if learners are not focused or feel overwhelmed, they may struggle to use language and end up making more mistakes [9]. Moreover, not being exposed to real life language usage could impede learners from grasping speech structures, resulting in enduring mistakes in their communication [17].

Effects of Speech Errors on Learning and Communication: In EFL contexts, the impact of speech errors on learning and communication can be substantial. Errors can act as a deterrent in gaining effective communication, resulting in misunderstandings and lowering of confidence among the learners. For instance, when learners produce speech that is not easily comprehensible to listeners owing to pronunciation errors or grammatical flaws, it can be a barrier to successful interaction [10]. This is particularly so in language learning contexts where peer interaction is crucial for the development of communicative competence [12].

Furthermore, the psychological effects of making errors cause anxiety and reluctance to participate in speaking activities that can further impede language development [10]. The cycle of error and anxiety can lead to learners' motivation and willingness to engage in communicative practices being diminished, which in turn can impact their overall language proficiency [12]. Hence, correcting speech errors in EFL learners is important not only to enhance their linguistic skills but also to create a positive learning atmosphere that would encourage active participation and confidence in language use.

In summary, speech errors made by EFL learners are caused by cognitive overload, L1 interference, and insufficient exposure to the target language. These errors can hinder not only the learning process but also the overall effectiveness of communication, which in turn calls for specific pedagogical strategies to be employed to help learners overcome their challenges. Thus, knowing the causes and effects of speech errors, educators can more effectively support EFL learners on the way to fluency and communicative competence.

1.2.3 Previous studies

Vietnamese EFL learners make different kinds of speech errors in spontaneous speech, and the causes of these errors can be attributed to both linguistic and cognitive factors. The first major reason is the learners' L1, which can cause pragmatic transfer and interference in learners' English language production. For example, research has established that EFL learners tend to use L1 grammatical structures and vocabulary when speaking English, making errors such as wrong verb tenses and word selection [3]. This is especially the case with speech acts, which are further complicated by cultural differences in communication norms that may result in inappropriate language use [7],[15].

Cognitive overload is another major determinant of speech errors. EFL learners are also affected by the complexity of the language production process, particularly in spontaneous production tasks, where they have to come up with the output on the spot [19]. This pressure can cause pauses, repetitions, and other disfluencies because the learners have not fully learned the linguistic rules of English [19]. Moreover,

insufficient preparation for real-life speaking tasks can worsen these problems because learners may not be ready to speak spontaneously in English and therefore make more mistakes [21],[22].

The effects of speech errors on learning and communication are multifaceted, influencing Vietnamese EFL learners in various ways. First, these errors can hinder the effectiveness of communication in a very direct way, resulting in misunderstandings and frustration for the speaker and the listener. Research shows that producing speech that is difficult to understand due to pronunciation or grammatical errors limits the learners’ capacity to convey their messages as intended [10],[19]. This communication breakdown can lead to decreased confidence and reluctance to participate in speaking activities, thus limiting their practice and improvement opportunities [10],[19].

Furthermore, the psychological implications of making mistakes cannot be ignored. If the errors are frequent, they may cause anxiety and fear of speaking, which can become a vicious cycle that prevents further language development

[10],[19]. In turn, as the learners become more sensitive to their speech errors, they may become more self-conscious and less willing to speak spontaneously [19]. Therefore, correcting speech errors in EFL settings is important not only for enhancing the learners’ linguistic competence but also for creating a positive emotional climate in the classroom, which would encourage students to speak more confidently.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Participants

The study involved 326 English-majored students from university in Can Tho city with ages from 18 to 22, selected to provide a representative sample of the student population specializing in English. These participants were chosen based on their enrollment in the English major program, ensuring that they possess a sufficient level of language proficiency and are engaged in advanced language learning. The participants were distributed across different academic years to capture a range of experiences and perceptions related to speech errors in spontaneous speech.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

Demographic Variable	Category	No. of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	102	31.3%
	Female	224	68.7%
Age	18	45	13.8%
	19	78	23.9%
	20	96	29.4%
	21	67	20.6%
	22	40	20.6%
Language Proficiency	B1 (CEFR)	105	32.2%
	B2 (CEFR)	221	67.8%

2.2 Instrumentation

This 20-item questionnaire is designed to explore the causes and effects of speech errors among EFL learners. It consists of two main sections: causes of speech errors (Items 1–10) and effects of speech errors (Items 11–20), using a 5-point Likert scale to measure learners’ perceptions (as shown in Table 2). The first section focuses on various factors that contribute to speech errors, including first-language (L1) interference, cognitive overload, attentional challenges, and lack of exposure to real-life English usage. It examines how learners’ native language influences pronunciation, grammar, and

vocabulary, how cognitive demands affect speech fluency, and how limited opportunities for authentic communication contribute to mistakes.

The second section assesses the impact of speech errors on learners’ communication, confidence, motivation, and participation in language learning. It explores how errors may cause misunderstandings, reduce self-confidence, and lead to fear of speaking which can discourage learners from practicing English. Additionally, it examines how frequent mistakes can contribute to anxiety and reluctance to engage in conversations, ultimately affecting language development.

Table 2. Description of the questionnaire

Clusters	No. of items	Sample	Source
Causes of Speech Errors	10	I make more speech errors when I am not paying full attention while speaking.	Grabowska Chenczke et al. (2023)
		I tend to pause frequently or hesitate when speaking because I am unsure about grammar or vocabulary.	
Effects of Speech Errors	10	I sometimes avoid speaking English because I am afraid of making errors. I feel discouraged when my peers notice my speech mistakes.	Haristiani & Christinawati (2024)

Note: The table does not include all items. Instead, only one item from each cluster is presented as a reference

The interview protocol included open-ended questions organized into four clusters corresponding to the questionnaire: Types of Speech Errors, Causes of Speech Errors, Effects on Communication and Learning, and Social and Psychological Factors. This approach allowed participants to elaborate on their responses, providing richer, more detailed data about their experiences and perceptions.

The interviews were conducted either in person or via online platforms, depending on participants’ availability and preference, ensuring flexibility and maximizing participation. Each interview was recorded with participants’ consent, transcribed, and subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis. This process was aimed at identifying recurring themes and patterns, adding depth to the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire.

2.3 Procedure

A comprehensive 20-item questionnaire was developed and carefully structured to align with the study's focus on speech errors in EFL learners. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: Causes of Speech Errors and Effects of Speech Errors, covering factors such as L1 interference, cognitive overload, attentional control, exposure to authentic language use, communicative challenges, and psychological barriers. The questionnaire was administered online, enabling efficient data collection from a broad participant base. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), ensuring a detailed assessment of learners' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to speech errors in English.

To supplement the quantitative data from the questionnaire, the third step included semi-structured interviews with a group of participants. These interviews sought to elicit deeper, more qualitative insights into students' attitudes. The interview questions followed the same four clusters as the questionnaire, guaranteeing consistency and alignment in data collecting. Interviews were performed in person or online, depending on the participants' interests and availability. Each session was recorded with the participants' permission, transcribed verbatim, and prepared for further study.

2.4 Data analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were first compiled and organized using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and standard deviations, were calculated to provide an overview of the students' responses. This step

allowed for identifying central tendencies and variability in the perceptions of speech errors. To explore relationships between different variables (e.g., types of speech errors and perceived causes), inferential statistical methods such as correlation analyses were also employed. These analyses helped in uncovering patterns and associations within the data, offering insights into the broader trends among the participants.

For the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted. The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded to identify recurring themes and patterns that aligned with the study's four main clusters. Coding was done both inductively, where themes emerged directly from the data, and deductively, based on the pre-established theoretical frameworks. Themes were then grouped into categories that reflected students' perceptions of speech errors, their causes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 EFL English-Majored Students' Perceptions of Causes of Speech Errors in Spontaneous Speech

This report presents the findings on the causes of speech errors among EFL learners based on responses from 326 participants. The results indicate that various linguistic, cognitive, and exposure-related factors contribute to speech errors in English-speaking situations.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Causes of Speech Errors in EFL Learners

Items	No	Mean	SD
1. I often make pronunciation errors because my first language influences how I pronounce English words.	326	3.85	0.92
2. I sometimes use incorrect grammar in English because I unconsciously apply my first language's grammatical rules.	326	3.73	0.88
3. I struggle with finding the right words in English due to interference from my native language.	326	3.65	0.95
4. When speaking English, I make errors because I have too many ideas to organize at once.	326	3.80	0.90
5. I find it difficult to balance accuracy, fluency, and complexity when speaking English, which leads to mistakes.	326	3.92	0.89
6. I make more speech errors when I am not paying full attention while speaking.	326	3.70	0.93
7. I feel overwhelmed when speaking English, which causes me to make more mistakes.	326	3.78	0.91
8. A lack of exposure to real-life English conversations makes it difficult for me to use correct speech structures.	326	3.85	0.94
9. I tend to pause frequently or hesitate when speaking because I am unsure about grammar or vocabulary.	326	3.68	0.97
10. I make more mistakes when speaking English in spontaneous conversations compared to prepared speeches.	326	3.75	0.92

One of the major causes of speech errors among EFL learners is first language (L1) interference. The highest mean score ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.89$) was given to the item which stated that learners face challenges in achieving accuracy, fluency and complexity simultaneously. Furthermore, very close to it, a high rating was given to pronunciation errors which are influenced by L1 ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.92$), which shows that English pronunciation is greatly affected by the phonetic patterns of the native language. Furthermore, grammatical errors which are caused by the unconscious transfer of L1 rules ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.88$), and

problems in vocabulary retrieval due to L1 interference ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.95$) also point to the continuing role of the learners' native language.

Cognitive overload was another prominent factor that was found to contribute to speech errors. Participants agreed that having many ideas to organize at once led to mistakes ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.90$), and not paying full attention while speaking increased the chances of errors ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.93$). Moreover, a problem of feeling overwhelmed when speaking English was also noted as an issue ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.91$), which

means that anxiety or processing demands affect fluency and accuracy.

A lack of exposure to real-life English conversations was also found to contribute to speech errors. The statement “Frequent exposure to incorrect language use by native speakers makes it difficult for me to use correct speech structures” had a mean score of 3.89 (SD = 0.95). In addition, a lack of interaction with natural spoken English was reported as limiting learners’ ability to produce accurate and fluent speech (M = 3.85, SD = 0.94). For instance, learners often pause or hesitate while speaking because of grammar or vocabulary uncertainty (M = 3.68, SD = 0.97), which highlights the importance of practice and familiarity in speech production.

Finally, the findings also reveal a significant distinction between planned and spontaneous speech. The standard error of 0.92 around the mean score of 3.75 indicates that learners make more errors when speaking spontaneously, which supports the hypothesis that planned speech

results in more accurate communication than impromptu speaking.

The results indicate that speech errors in EFL learners are influenced by first-language interference, cognitive overload, attentional factors, and limited exposure to real-life English communication. These findings suggest that targeted pedagogical strategies—such as increasing exposure to authentic English interactions, improving attentional control, and fostering confidence in spontaneous speech—could help learners minimize speech errors and enhance fluency.

3.2 EFL English-Majored Students’ Perceptions of Effects of Speech Errors in Spontaneous Speech

This report presents findings on how speech errors impact EFL learners’ communication, confidence, and overall language learning. The results indicate that speech errors have notable effects on learners’ ability to communicate effectively, their confidence, and their motivation to engage in English-speaking activities.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Effects of Speech Errors in EFL Learners

Items	No	Mean	SD
11. My speech errors make it difficult for others to understand me.	326	3.80	0.91
12. I feel less confident when I make mistakes while speaking English.	326	3.92	0.89
13. I sometimes avoid speaking English because I am afraid of making errors.	326	3.75	0.94
14. When I make pronunciation errors, listeners often misunderstand my message.	326	3.85	0.92
15. My grammatical mistakes negatively impact my ability to communicate effectively in English.	326	3.70	0.93
16. I feel anxious when I make errors while speaking English.	326	3.88	0.90

17. My speech errors make me hesitant to participate in class discussions or group conversations.	326	3.78	0.91
18. Making frequent errors in English lowers my motivation to practice speaking.	326	3.85	0.94
19. I feel discouraged when my peers notice my speech mistakes.	326	3.68	0.97
20. Speech errors prevent me from improving my English fluency and communicative competence.	326	3.75	0.92

Research has shown that speech errors affect comprehensibility and, therefore, communication. The statement “My speech errors make it difficult for others to understand me” got a mean score of 3.80 (SD = 0.91) which shows that learners have problems in expressing themselves so that their messages are correctly received. This frown was also matched by a frown on the face of participants in terms of reporting mispronunciation as a cause of misunderstanding (M = 3.85, SD = 0.92) and grammatical errors as a barrier to communication (M = 3.70, SD = 0.93). These results show that imprecision in pronunciation and grammar can be rather problematic for EFL learners in terms of communication.

Speech errors also have a significant negative effect on learners’ self-perceived confidence and anxiety. The highest mean score (M = 3.92, SD = 0.89) was obtained for the statement “I feel less confident when I make mistakes while speaking English”, showing that the psychological repercussions of making errors are significant. Moreover, speech-related anxiety was another significant problem (M = 3.88, SD = 0.90) and participants were afraid of making mistakes in front of other people (M = 3.75, SD = 0.94). Moreover, speech errors also led to hesitation in

participating in group discussions (M = 3.78, SD = 0.91) in the classroom, meaning that errors can limit students’ participation in the classroom.

The results highlight that speech errors have adverse effects on learners’ motivation and willingness to engage in speaking practice. The statement “Making frequent errors in English reduces my willingness to engage in speaking practice” was rated 3.85 (SD = 0.94), which shows that recurring errors can demotivate the learners from enhancing their speaking skills. Furthermore, participants stated that they felt discouraged when their peers pointed out their errors (M = 3.68, SD = 0.97). In addition, speech errors were found to affect English fluency and communicative competence in general (M = 3.75, SD = 0.92), highlighting the need for pedagogical interventions to tackle these issues.

The findings suggest that speech errors not only create communication difficulties but also affect learners’ confidence, increase anxiety, and lower motivation to engage in speaking activities. Addressing these challenges through error correction strategies, confidence-building exercises, and increased speaking practice in a supportive environment could help learners overcome speech-related barriers and improve their fluency in English.

3.3 Results from the semi-structured interview

Causes of Spontaneous Speech Errors: Among the most frequent problems reported in the collection of errors was language transfer. This occurs when learners unconsciously transfer the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical rules of their first language (L1) into English. Unwanted transfer is called negative transfer and results in mispronunciations, syntactic errors, and unnatural word choices. They shared,

“Some English sounds do not exist in my native language, so I replace them with familiar ones, which sometimes makes my words difficult to understand.” (Participant 3).

“I stress words based on my native language patterns, but this sometimes makes my speech sound odd to native English speakers.” (Participant 7).

Some learners noted that they often structured their sentences based on their first language, which caused errors in word order, tense usage, and prepositions.

“In my native language, we don’t use articles, so I tend to omit them in English, and sometimes, my sentences don’t sound right.” (Participant 10).

“I think in my first language and then translate into English, but that sometimes makes my sentences grammatically incorrect.” (Participant 14).

Spontaneous speech means the production of language structures with minimal or no planning, requiring the retrieval of vocabulary, grammatical structuring, and real-time articulation. This, in turn, led learners to acknowledge that this cognitive overload results in errors.

“I know the word in my mind, but sometimes, I can’t recall it fast enough, so I pause or use the wrong word.” (Participant 6)

“If I don’t immediately find the correct word, I replace it with a similar word, but sometimes that changes the meaning.” (Participant 19)

Several participants reported that speech anxiety and fear of mistakes inhibited their ability to speak confidently and accurately. Many learners mentioned that they experienced nervousness, which caused them to pause frequently or make more errors. They stated,

“When I’m nervous, I forget even simple words and make pronunciation mistakes.” (Participant 15).

“I hesitate a lot because I am scared of making errors, and that affects my fluency.” (Participant 27).

Effects of Spontaneous Speech Errors: Many learners acknowledged that their speech errors often led to miscommunication, requiring them to repeat themselves or clarify their meaning.

“Sometimes, people misunderstand me because of my pronunciation, so I have to repeat myself several times.” (Participant 4).

“When I stress the wrong syllable, people don’t understand what I’m trying to say.” (Participant 9).

A lot of people who took the survey said that they felt that making mistakes hampered their self-assurance and kept them from speaking in public forums.

“I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes, so I avoid speaking English unless necessary.” (Participant 18).

“If my classmates notice my errors, I feel discouraged and don’t want to speak.” (Participant 22).

The findings suggest that spontaneous speech errors in EFL learners arise from linguistic interference, cognitive limitations, psychological barriers, and lack of exposure to real-life conversations. These errors negatively impact communication clarity, self-confidence, and motivation, creating challenges for learners’ fluency development. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive pedagogical approach that enhances lexical access, reduces anxiety, and provides extensive opportunities for real-world speaking practice.

3.4 Discussion

The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative results support and build upon earlier research on spontaneous speech errors of Vietnamese EFL learners. The results indicate that such errors are mainly caused by linguistic interference, cognitive overload, and psychological factors that pose a significant threat to language learning and communication. Many learners blame their speech errors on their first language (L1), especially in pronunciation and grammar. The mean scores for the level of difficulty in pronunciation due to L1 interference were 3.85 out of 5, while the mean score for grammatical errors due to the use of L1 structures was 3.73 out of 5. These results show that learners usually use their native linguistic system when producing English language structures. These outcomes are in line with those of [1] and [3], who established that EFL learners usually use L1 grammatical and lexical structures in English,

which results in errors such as wrong verb tenses and incorrect word choice.

In addition, cognitive overload is one of the major factors that cause speech errors among learners, and the high mean scores show the difficulty of the task, that is, how to balance accuracy, fluency, and complexity ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.89$). The difficulty of the process of analyzing and producing linguistic forms in online speech production results in frequent pauses and other disfluencies, as has been observed in earlier research [19].

This research also establishes the importance of psychological factors in spontaneous speech errors. An overwhelming number of learners felt anxious when speaking English, and the mean score for anxiety-related errors was 3.88 out of 5. A fear of making mistakes was evident in the interviews, with several participants refusing to engage in speaking activities because they were afraid of being judged. This is in consensus with the findings of [10] and [19], who established that speech anxiety hampers learners’ willingness to communicate. Moreover, it was established that speech errors occur frequently, which decreases the learners’ self-efficacy ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.89$) and motivation ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.94$), thus suggesting that speech errors generate a negative cycle of anxiety and avoidance. These findings indicate that to address spontaneous speech errors, it is necessary to approach them from a linguistic, cognitive, and emotional perspective. Further research should be conducted to determine the type of interventions that may be most effective in helping learners decrease speech errors and improve their communicative ability.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, this study shows that spontaneous speech errors in Vietnamese EFL learners are multifaceted and the reasons for them can be sought on the linguistic, cognitive, and psychological levels. The results of the study reveal that L1 interference, cognitive overload and speech anxiety are the factors that contribute to the occurrence of speech errors and thus affect the fluency and self-confidence of the learners. These errors not only interfere with the process of communication but also affect motivation and willingness to participate in speaking activities which only perpetuate negative learning experiences. The results of the study are in concurrence with previous research studies, and thus call for pedagogical practices that aim at these underlying causes in order to enhance learners' spoken English language skills. In order to improve the spontaneous speech of EFL learners, language instruction should include the following: More exposure to real-life language use, for the management of cognitive load and for effective support of reducing anxiety. Thus, the present study suggests that these factors should be addressed holistically so as to create a better and more effective learning environment for the learners to participate actively and confidently in spoken communication. As for the future work, it is worthwhile to examine the possibilities of applying certain classroom techniques and using some technological tools to help learners overcome these difficulties and, therefore, enhance their fluency and communicative competence.

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