PROBLEMS OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF A2 PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH CONVERSATION

[1]KORNSAK TANTIWICH, [2]KEMTONG SINWONGSUWAT, [3]DAVID A. BRUNER

[1]Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus, Songkhla, Thailand
[2]PhD., Assistant Professor, Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus, Songkhla, Thailand
[3]Professor of Practice, American University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
E-mail: [1]Kornsak.t@psu.ac.th, [2]Kemtong.s@psu.ac.th, [3]hoppebruner@gmail.com

Abstract - To elevate the English proficiency of most Thai undergraduates to meet B1 graduation requirement, English conversation is one of the most important skills that needs to be addressed. This study aimed at outlining significant conversation problems that keep Thai university students from attaining the university proficiency goal so that they can systematically be tackled in conversation teaching. Data included video recordings of 83 two-three party role-play conversations of approximately three to five minutes in length which were obtained from two English conversation classes at Prince of Songkla University. The data was transcribed and analyzed according to the Conversation Analysis (CA) framework. The findings were that the majority of students had difficulties in constructing and allocating turns, especially in the segmental, super-segmental, and syntactic organization of turn construction units (TCUs), and holding and expanding turns. Apparently not cognizant of turn-holding devices, transitional relevant places (TRPs), adjacency pairs and the overall structure of conversation, the students failed to perform relevant, preferred actions in response to turns, to systematically organize turns into coherent sequences of actions, to make appropriate topic initiations and shifts, and lacked the ability to open and close conversations. It was recommended that students be made aware of the structures and mechanisms of conversation and provided more opportunities to practice using English in conversation with an explicit understanding of these mechanisms and realization of interactional goals.

Keywords - A2 EFL Learners, Conversation Analysis, English Conversation Problems, Thai Undergraduates .