

Non-Standard English Grammatical Features Used by Thai Streamers and English Language Teachers' Perceptions of Their Usage^{*}

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In recent years, streamers have increasingly gained popularity among teenagers. Some streamers have also emerged as influential “language teachers” by using English as an international language, while at the same time exposing their viewers to non-standard forms of the language. This study investigates non-standard English grammatical features used by Thai online game streamers and explores English language university teachers' perceptions of non-standard features. Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical framework was used to analyze the speech of four Thai game streamers. The findings indicated that omitting articles (65.3%) and dropping third-person present tense markers (20.1%) were the most common grammatical deviations among the four Thai streamers. The interview results from eight English university teachers revealed that while most English language teachers prioritized fluency over accuracy, they emphasized that the acceptability of non-standard English usage depends on the context. Overall, the findings suggest a pedagogical shift toward a more flexible approach to English instruction that balances communicative effectiveness with grammatical accuracy, depending on the context.

Research Article

Abstract

Keywords

non-standard English;
English as an international
language (EIL);
Thai streamers;
English language teachers'
perceptions

^{*} This paper is a part of the author's thesis entitled “Non-Standard English Grammatical Features Used by Thai Streamers and English Language Teachers' Perceptions of Their Usage”

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การใช้ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษ ที่มีลักษณะไม่ตรงตามมาตรฐานในหมู่สตรีมเมอร์ชาวไทย และมุมมองของผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ*

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ในช่วงไม่กี่ปีที่ผ่านมา สตรีมเมอร์ได้รับความนิยมเพิ่มขึ้นในหมู่วัยรุ่น สตรีมเมอร์จึงเริ่มมีบทบาทเป็นเสมือน “ครูสอนภาษา” ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อผู้เรียน ซึ่งสตรีมเมอร์บางคนใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติทำให้ผู้ชมของพวกเขาได้รับรู้รูปแบบของภาษาที่มีความไม่เป็นมาตรฐาน งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษที่ไม่ตรงตามมาตรฐานของสตรีมเมอร์ชาวไทยและสำรวจมุมมองของอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับอุดมศึกษาที่มีต่อการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษที่อาจไม่เป็นไปตามมาตรฐานโดยใช้หลักทฤษฎีของเซอิดลโฮเฟอร์ (Seidlhofer) ในการวิเคราะห์การพูดของสตรีมเมอร์ชาวไทย 4 คน ผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่าลักษณะทางไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษที่ไม่ตรงตามมาตรฐานที่พบบ่อยในหมู่สตรีมเมอร์ชาวไทย คือ การละคำนำหน้านาม (65.3%) และการไม่ใส่ตัวบ่งชี้ความเป็นเอกพจน์ของประธานบุรุษที่สาม (20.1%) ในส่วนของการสัมภาษณ์อาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษทั้ง 8 คนเกี่ยวกับมุมมองที่มีต่อการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษที่ไม่ตรงตามมาตรฐานนั้นพบว่า อาจารย์ส่วนใหญ่เน้นความคล่องทางภาษามากกว่าความถูกต้องทางภาษา นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าบริบททางภาษาเป็นตัวกำหนดว่าไวยากรณ์ที่ไม่ตรงตามมาตรฐานจะเป็นที่ยอมรับหรือไม่ ทั้งนี้ผลการศึกษางานวิจัยนี้อาจนำมาซึ่งการเปลี่ยนแปลงทิศทางการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทยให้มีความยืดหยุ่นตามบริบท มีความสมดุลระหว่างการสื่อสารที่มีประสิทธิภาพกับความถูกต้องทางไวยากรณ์

บทความวิจัย

บทคัดย่อ

คำสำคัญ

ภาษาอังกฤษที่ไม่ตรง
ตามมาตรฐาน;
ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะ
ภาษานานาชาติ;
สตรีมเมอร์ชาวไทย;
มุมมองของผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ

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1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, English has established itself as the predominant global language. It is widely learned, with approximately 1.27 billion speakers as of 2020, projected to reach 2 billion by 2030 (Dash, 2022). The rise of English is attributed to British Empire colonization, international trade, American cultural influence, and ultimately, the internet, which has played a significant role in shrinking the world and facilitating global communication.

English is not only spread across the globe by the internet; video games also contribute. Most games use English as the main language or support English subtitle. After the COVID-19 struck, people stayed indoors more often, and they sought entertainment. The gaming industry benefited from this situation, witnessing substantial growth. The market revenues increased by 2.1% to \$196.8 billion in 2022 (Wijman, 2022).

Apart from a growing number of new gamers, streamers have also become more popular. The number of streamers broadcasting video games grew significantly, increasing from 1.7 million to 9 million between 2015 and 2021 (Iqbal, 2024). Moreover, the hours spent watching game-streaming also grew rapidly from 200 million hours to almost 23 billion hours in nearly 10 years. This trend indicates growing worldwide interest in gaming and streaming.

As non-native English speakers, Thai streamers often use English to broaden their audience. However, their English usage may exhibit *non-standard* features traditionally viewed as *ungrammatical*. This study examines these features and explores English teachers' perceptions toward such usage, addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the common non-standard grammatical features used by Thai streamers?
2. What are English teachers' perceptions of non-standard grammatical features?

2. Related Literature

This section reviewed the key framework and related studies of non-standard grammatical features, including English as an international language, the lexicogrammatical theory, and English teachers' perception.

2.1 English as an International Language

Kachru (1992) classic model of three concentric circles provides a framework for understanding English's global spread. The inner circle encompasses countries where English is the native language

(USA, UK, Canada, etc.); the outer circle includes countries where English holds significant status due to historical colonization (India, Nigeria, Malaysia, etc.); and the expanding circle comprises countries such as Thailand, Japan, and Vietnam where English is used as a foreign language and is a key language in the tourism industry.

As English has globalized, it has transformed into what McKay (2002) describes as an international language used both globally (for international communication) and locally (within multilingual societies). In the future, *glocal* language could evolve as people around the globe mix their local identities into English.

Furthermore, Brutt-Griffler (2002) explains that the development of an international language is characterized by four central features: econocultural functions (world market development), transcendence beyond elite users, stabilization through coexistence with local languages, and language change through convergence and divergence. These dynamics have led to the emergence of local English varieties that reflect cultural identities while maintaining mutual intelligibility.

The role of new media, games, and game streamers in EFL use and teaching in Thailand

More Thais are learning English through online games and live streams, where English acts as a lingua franca, exposing them to diverse varieties and non-standard forms. These informal, fast-paced contexts encourage experimentation and prioritizing communication over grammatical precision, helping learners gain confidence in using English spontaneously. This trend highlights the need for English education in Thailand to incorporate real-world language examples from gaming and streaming, shifting the focus from native-speaker norms to effective communication, aligned with the view of English as an International Language (EIL).

2.2 The Lexicogrammatical Theory

The lexicogrammatical theory has been used in many studies (Imperiani & Mandasari, 2019; Jaroensak & Saraceni, 2019; Yamaguchi, 2018) to analyze non-standard features without prescriptively judging them as *correct* or *incorrect*. It is suitable for this present study as the researcher aimed to apply a broad foundation of non-standard grammatical features, allowing for the inclusion of newly discovered features.

Seidlhofer (2004) lexicogrammatical theory identifies eight linguistic features as follows:

1. Dropping third person present tense (-s)

The speakers tend to drop the -s sound in third person present tense. For example, he ask us to come (Imperiani & Mandasari, 2019).

2. Confusing the relative pronouns *who* and *which*

The speakers use *who* and *which* incorrectly or tend to omit it. For example, those countries *who* involve in (Imperiani & Mandasari, 2019, p. 348).

3. Omitting definite and indefinite articles

The speakers omit definite and indefinite articles (a, an, the). For example, consider as important organization in Indonesia (Imperiani & Mandasari, 2019, p. 348).

4. Failing to use correct forms in tag questions

The speakers use tag questions differently from native English speakers. They use *no?* or *right?* instead of *isn't it?* For example, I also contact HE, *right?* (Imperiani & Mandasari, 2019, p. 351).

5. Inserting redundant prepositions

The speakers use excessive prepositions such as study *about*, discuss *about*. For example, I want to study *about* geology today.

6. Overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality

The speakers tend to add *do*, *have*, *make*, *put*, *take*. For example, will you please *do* a reservation for me? (Lim & Hwang, 2019).

7. Replacing infinitive-constructions with that-clauses

The speakers tend to replace *to* with *that*. For example, *I want that we go swimming* instead of *I want to go swimming* (Seidlhofer, 2004).

8. Overdoing explicitness

The speakers tend to use the combination of words that are not necessary such as *black color* (Seidlhofer, 2004).

2.3 English Teachers' Perceptions

As observed by Russell-Mayhew et al. (2007), teacher's perceptions influence classroom practices to a high degree. Teachers who have positive views toward non-standard English are likely to create supportive learning environments that promote communication, increasing student confidence and reducing anxiety. On the other hand, teachers with negative views often focus on grammatical *correctness*, which may potentially increase student anxiety (Yim & Ahn, 2018). These perceptions are influential in the context of English language teaching in Thailand, where traditional methods focused on grammatical rules. However, current pedagogical approaches tend to prioritize real-world communication instead. As Vaishnav (2024) argued, the goal of language teaching goes beyond grammar drills and rote memorization to developing communicative competence, where fluency is more important than accuracy. This shift aligns with a more adaptable and open-minded view toward language usage, further reinforcing the role of teacher in shaping classroom environments.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach to gain comprehensive insights into non-standard English features used by Thai streamers and teachers' perceptions toward these features. It involved collecting data and analyzing quantitative data in order to answer the first research question and it continued with the qualitative component, i.e., an in-depth interview in order to address the second research question.

3.1 Phase 1: Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

The first phase addressed the first research question: "What are the common non-standard grammatical features used by Thai streamers?" The participants were selected based on six criteria:

1. Being native Thai speakers
2. Playing online games, specifically Valorant
3. Having over 20,000 followers
4. Possessing competitive tournament experience
5. Playing solo with foreign teammates
6. Regularly uploading live videos on their platform of choice (Twitch, YouTube, Facebook Gaming)

After considering these criteria, the four participants were carefully selected. Even though there were several eligible participants who met these criteria, the researcher chose these four based on their experience with international teams. Each streamer was observed for 20 hours, and their speech was transcribed and then categorized according to Seidlhofer's (2004) eight lexicogrammatical features. Two English language experts verified the identification of non-standard features. The quantitative data was subsequently presented in tables.

3.2 Phase 2: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The second phase investigated the second research question: "What are English teachers' perceptions of non-standard grammatical features?" The participants were university English teachers with relevant knowledge and experience. The inclusion criteria for the participants were:

1. Holding a master's degree or higher
2. Having a minimum of two years of university teaching experience
3. Giving consent for the interview recording

Through purposive sampling, eight English university teachers were selected with the following distribution:

Table 1

Sample Distribution by Thai/Non-Thai (American, British, Australian) speakers, area of teaching, and gender

Thai/Non-Thai speakers	Area of teaching	Male	Female	Total
Thai speakers	Writing	0	2	2
	Speaking	1	1	2
Non-Thai speakers (American, British, Australian)	Writing	2	0	2
	Speaking	2	0	2
Total		5	3	8

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with eight English teachers, each lasting at least 15 minutes. The participants' answers were recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed thematically to identify patterns in the participants' perspectives. To enhance reliability, intercoder reliability methods were employed, with three coders agreeing on the interview questions.

This study received ethical approval from the University's Institutional Review Board. All participants were fully informed of the study's purposes, risks and benefits, and they had the right to withdraw at any time.

4. Results

In this section, the findings from both quantitative and qualitative methods will be presented. The quantitative data, which focuses on the frequency of non-standard English features, will be summarized in tables using percentages and frequencies. The qualitative data will be presented thematically.

4.1 Quantitative Findings: Streamers' Non-Standard English Features

The table below summarizes the overall occurrences of non-standard English features observed in four Thai streamers, ranging from the most to the least frequent.

Table 2

The non-standard features found among Thai streamers with the highest frequency

Non-standard grammatical features	Percentage of Occurrence
1. Omitting definite and indefinite articles	65.3%
2. Dropping third person present tense (-s)	20.1%
3. Uncategorizable features	7.4%
4. Failing to use correct forms in tag questions	4.1%
5. Inserting redundant prepositions	3.1%

The analysis revealed that the most common non-standard grammatical features were:

1. Omitting definite and indefinite articles (65.3%)

Examples: "I go take gun." (Participant 2), "I took spike." (Participant 3)

2. Dropping third person present tense (-s) (20.1%)

Examples: "He do a magic trick." (Participant 1), "Reyna flash." (Participant 3)

3. Uncategorizable features (7.4%)

Examples: "I think Jett still open." (Participant 3), "I'm died." (Participant 4)

4. Failing to use correct forms in tag questions (4.1%)

Examples: "Half, no?" (Participant 3), "We go mid and force Sage util ok?" (Participant 4)

5. Inserting redundant prepositions (3.1%)

Examples: "They are on eco bro." (Participant 2), "It's at real." (Participant 3)

The analysis of the language used by the four Thai streamers revealed several non-standard features that fell outside of Seidlhofer's established lexicogrammatical theory. These features involved omitting plural markers on countable nouns, the deletion of the copula 'be', omitting a subject or an object, inconsistent verb tenses, missing prepositions, lacking subject-verb agreement, confusing adjectives and verbs, and omitting the auxiliary verb 'do'.

In addition, the analysis also highlighted the absence of four features that are part of Seidlhofer's framework; confusion between the relative pronouns 'who' and 'which', overuse of verbs of high semantic generality, replacing infinitive constructions with that-clauses, and overdoing explicitness.

4.2 Qualitative Findings: Teachers' Perceptions toward Non-Standard Features

The one-on-one, in-depth interviews with eight English teachers revealed several key themes:

Common grammatical errors among students: Most teachers identified the lack of subject-verb agreement and incorrect tense usage as the most common non-standard features among Thai students. They stated that *"Sometimes the students use the wrong tense. They talk in present tense but it's in the future or they talked about past events but they used 'present' verb forms."* A few teachers reported that their students often used wrong prepositions.

Frequency of errors and tolerance: Half of the teachers reported encountering non-standard features in nearly every lesson but considered them normal and forgivable. Most of them agreed that these features were tolerable as long as the message was clearly conveyed.

Correction strategies: Most teachers prefer personalized feedback or one-on-one consultation. In writing courses, they typically located mistakes, deducted points, and suggested corrections. In speaking courses, they favored direct one-on-one feedback or recasting techniques. One teacher deliberately avoided correction to promote a risk-taking environment. He stated that *"Usually I don't fix it. Sometimes the students worry so much about grammar that they won't try to speak. I personally tell them to make grammar mistakes so they can improve fluency and communication skills."*

Accuracy versus fluency: Five out of eight teachers prioritized fluency over grammatical accuracy, believing that *"Fluency should come first, and accuracy will follow."* Three teachers adopted a context-dependent approach, emphasizing that the importance of accuracy varies depending on the course and its purpose. One of them said *"It depends because sometimes the most important thing is fluency. But if they're doing the course work, accuracy is important."*

Impact of non-standard usage: All teachers agreed that the impact of non-standard English usage is highly contextual, particularly influenced by students' future professions and communication goals. Two teachers stated that *"It depends, if students are going to be ambassadors or working about law, they should be fluent in English. But if the job needs only an intermediate level, that's just fine,"* and *"In job context, it affects our professional look. It also depends on the job they are working such as working as a writer or translator. Even though the messages are fine, the organization will lose credibility."* They considered non-standard English acceptable outside the classroom as long as it was comprehensible. However, they emphasized the importance of teaching students when to adapt to more formal registers.

Future challenges: Teachers identified three main challenges: the pervasive use of non-standard English, the rise of artificial intelligence, and maintaining student motivation. First, most teachers emphasized the importance of standard English despite recognizing the limitations of their students. One of them stated that *"If the students take a language course, it must help refine their language skills."* Second, most teachers expressed concern that AI could hinder the learning process as

their students used it for homework. One of them remarked *“I need to make sure that students are able to do the work, not get AI to do it. The skills will be diminished because they are not practicing.”* Third, some teachers noticed the lack of motivation in learning English, as summarized by one who said, *“They want the result of being good right now and when they can’t, they lose motivation and don’t want to study.”*

Standardized testing: Most teachers believed standardized tests would not undergo significant changes to accommodate non-standard English. While three teachers suggested that widespread non-standard features lead to adaptation, they felt that such changes would not be imminent. One of the teachers firmly asserted that *“Standard English is always standard English no matter what. There is no way slangs can be in the BBC English. The language can change but cannot be replaced, and the test’s name is standardized test, so it has to be standard.”*

In sum, this section presented the results of common non-standard grammatical features observed from four Thai streamers, and English teachers’ perceptions toward non-standard grammatical features. The common non-standard features among four Thai streamers were the omission of definite and indefinite articles, dropping third person present tense (-s), uncategorizable features, failing to use correct forms in tag questions, and inserting redundant prepositions consecutively. Regarding teacher perceptions, the key insight was that most teachers prioritized fluency over accuracy. They believed that non-standard features were tolerable and forgivable. Moreover, they asserted that standardized tests would not adapt to accommodate non-standard features in the near future.

5. Discussion

This section will discuss the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative methods along with implications and limitations of the study.

5.1 Quantitative Findings on Four Thai Streamers

The high frequency of article omission (65.3%) observed in this study aligns with previous studies on Thai EFL learners, such as Phettongkam (2017), who identified article omission as a persistent issue due to the absence of equivalent structures in Thai. Similarly, the lack of third-person present tense markers (-s) (20.1%) reflects Baker’s (2002) study which noted that Thai learners at all proficiency levels struggle with tense consistency.

In contrast, the lower frequency of incorrect tag questions (4.1%) and redundant prepositions (3.1%) suggests that these features may be less influenced by Thai language interference. However, Participant 4 showed the highest frequency of incorrect tag questions. He demonstrated a clear first language transfer through the use of simplified forms like “right?” and “no?”

Unlike the findings in Imperiani & Mandasari's (2019) study, which identified at least one of these features, this present study found an absence of the following four features: confusing the relative pronouns 'who' and 'which', overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, replacing infinitive constructions with 'that' clauses, and overdoing explicitness.

Uncategorizable features were discovered in this study, accounting for 7.4% of all non-standard features. This feature highlighted a narrow spectrum of Seidlhofer's framework. However, a study by Nguyen & Newton (2022) revealed that Vietnamese EFL learners also produced copula deletion (one of the uncategorizable features) almost 17% of the time. Such occurrence suggests that language learners simplify target language grammar, and omitting unfamiliar function words could be a way to reduce cognitive load allowing them to focus on conveying the core message.

5.2 Qualitative Findings on Teacher Perceptions

The teachers' emphasis on fluency over accuracy reflects a shift in language teaching paradigms. As one teacher observed: *"In the worst-case scenario, students should survive by asking for help... speaking naturally is more valuable than perfection."* This perspective is supported by Kaushik's (2017) work on context-adaptive teaching, but it contrasts with traditional Thai instructional approaches that often prioritize grammatical precision.

The three teachers who adopted a context-dependent approach highlighted a key distinction. That is, while spoken errors might be tolerated, writing demands greater accuracy. As one teacher explained, *"In writing, deviancy from conventions hinders success,"* which supports Celce-Murcia et al.'s (2014) view that grammatical precision remains critical for academic and professional contexts.

However, contrary to Truscott's (1996) argument that grammar correction was pointless, and raised student anxiety, the interview data showed that each teacher had their own corrective strategies when encountering non-standard features. The strategies consisted of 1) Recasting, which involves reformulating non-standard features mid-conversation. 2) Selective feedback, where teachers point out the non-standard features in writing course but overlooking it on speaking course. And 3) Risk-taking encouragement which promotes fluency by normalizing non-standard features. Regarding the last strategy, one teacher explicitly stated that *"I don't fix errors – I want students to experiment"*. His primary goal was to help students survive in real-world situations. Therefore, he encouraged students to take risks and focus on their speaking skills.

5.3 Implications of Findings

The findings of this study challenge the long-held idea that non-native English learners should sound like native speakers. Decades ago, standard English emphasized learners following strict

grammatical rules and vocabulary. However, standard English was changed to many variations. It prioritizes understanding and communication, which aligns with theories of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and World Englishes. In many societies, standard English is considered a ticket for higher level of education and career advancement. However, English learners today focus more on communicating effectively for their careers rather than only on academic excellence. As the population of the expanding circle has far outnumbered that of the inner circle, standard English could no longer remain fixed.

In addition, the common appearance of non-standard features among Thai streamers, combined with teachers' preference for fluency over accuracy, supports a communicative approach to language teaching. This perspective is consistent with Truscott (1996) whose work is widely cited and famously challenged grammar correction. Therefore, a fluency-focused approach in a language classroom is recommended. It increases authentic communication opportunities, emphasizes real-world language use, and encouraging learners to take risks. However, this does not mean we should abandon grammatical accuracy entirely. While communicative emphasis is important for promoting overall proficiency, grammatical precision still holds value in formal context. Hence, English language teachers should be able to adapt their approach, emphasizing fluency in dynamic, fast-paced communication, as in gaming, but still recognizing the importance of accurate grammar and standard English in formal writing and situations where precise language is required.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The limited number of subjects in this study; four streamers and eight university teachers, restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider increasing participant number and broaden the context. In addition, the uncategorizable features show that some grammatical features did not fit into the established categories, indicating a need for a more complete framework. Finally, to ensure the most productive and insightful interviews, it is beneficial to optimize the preparation phase. Before speaking with teachers about non-standard features, it would be useful to provide them with concrete examples and accompanying game-streaming video segments. This will help ensure teachers' understanding enabling them to give more precise and thoughtful responses.

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