



# English as a Foreign Language Student Productive Conditional Verb Form Errors in Thailand

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## Abstract

Which conditional verb forms proved most difficult for Thai secondary school students to produce, and what errors resulted in written and spoken English, were studied. Data was collected from two tasks: 1) a gap-fill task by 68 twelfth-grade students in an integrated English program at a public high school in Bangkok, Thailand and 2) a spoken task to explore the errors made by 20 students from the same group. Results of the gap-fill task were that the majority of participants misused the subject and verb agreement in Factual Conditional; present simple tense in Future Predictive, together with Present Counterfactual; and future simple tense in Past Counterfactual. In the spoken task, the future simple tense was most commonly misused in the target conditional types altogether. Pedagogical implications were provided in the study. For example, teachers of English should have their students effectively master grammatical if-conditional constructions, especially the present simple tense, future simple tense, and even the subject and verb agreement in the production of conditional sentences.

**Keywords:** Conditional verb forms, Thai EFL learners, Grade 12 students, Production, Spoken

## Introduction

English if-conditionals are regarded as one of the crucial resources that are worth mastering in academic discourses, both in spoken and written languages, due to the fact that they can be employed to “hypothesize, hedge, interact with addressee, promote” (Thomas & Jolivet, 2008, p. 191) or even soften research claims. Mastering this grammatical feature can be of great contribution to learners’ proficiency (Luu Trong Tuan, 2012). Nonetheless, syntactic as well as semantic complexities of the if-conditional to date have been an obstacle to learners of English as a second (ESL), learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), and even native speakers in acquiring this grammatical point efficiently (Covitt, 1976, as cited in Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) owing to the fact that they represent a wide range of meanings, forms, and are utilized for various discourse functions (Norris, 2003). Covitt also makes clear that ESL teachers have been faced with three main difficulties in teaching conditional sentences: (1) *Structure*, conditional constructions are different from other grammatical features as they have two clauses: an if-clause and a main clause, which are more complicated than other grammatical constructions in English; (2) *Semantics*,

a receiver has to understand the meaning or what message a speaker is trying to convey in the if-conditional, e.g. a request, advice, criticism, possibility, or an action; (3) *Tense-aspect and modal auxiliaries*, this area can be problematic to EFL/ ESL learners as the verb forms in the if-conditionals frequently do not maintain their typical references to time. In addition, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) point out that only forms and meanings of the three traditional if-conditionals are described in ESL course books or grammar books, which do not include the complexity and variety of other English conditional forms and meanings; therefore, most of the EFL/ ESL learners often find it difficult to deal with if-conditionals in real life. As the problems noted above, it can be seen that even teachers of English have experienced such a barrier to teaching the English conditionals. It is, therefore, not surprising at all if ESL/EFL learners will find such syntactic and semantic areas challenging to comprehend and produce as well.

In Thailand, this grammatical area had received a little attention from Thai researchers; therefore, few studies have been found investigating such challenge. According to Sattayatham and Honsa (2007), it has been discovered that Thai EFL learners from four medical schools at Mahidol University found if-conditionals most difficult to produce their verb forms in written English. The Past Counterfactual Conditional (or unreal past conditional) was in the first rank of all grammatical errors made by the students. This finding appears to be so worrying that we need to put a high priority on this syntactical feature. In addition to the errors and problems determined in the written data from most previous studies and a few from Thailand, the present study will bridge the gap by further exploring the types of errors Thai EFL learners might commit and the challenge they might encounter when it comes to producing four types of English if-conditionals, which are basically emphasized in ESL or EFL teaching materials as well as included in a wide variety of grammar course books (Chou, 2000).

### **Research questions**

This quantitative research study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What errors do Thai EFL students frequently make in the production of English if-conditionals in written English?
- 2) What errors do Thai EFL students frequently make in the production of English if-conditionals in spoken English?

### **Review of Literature**

#### *Definition and background of conditional sentences*

An if-conditional basically contains an *if*-clause or the protasis and a main clause or the apodosis (Bache & Davidsen-Nielsen, 1997; Sandford, 2003), as in (a) and (b), below:

- (a) If I take physics, I need to take calculus first.
- (b) If I go to a medical school, I will have to borrow lots of money.

In a conditional sentence such as, *if you were our boss, you would be able to solve this problem*. The first clause, *if you were our boss*, is called the ‘antecedent’, and the second clause, *you would be able to solve this problem*, is called the ‘consequent’. However, the sequence of the two clauses can be changed without



affecting the meaning: *You would be able to solve this problem if you were our boss*, (Sandford, 2003).

### *English if-conditionals in ESL/ EFL contexts*

Many studies categorize English *if*-conditionals into various types, structures, and usages as well as use different names for individual types of conditionals; for instance, Eastwood (2002), proposes three major types of conditionals: future predictive, present unreal, and past unreal conditionals. This category of conditionals is commonly known as traditional conditionals (Murphy, 1994; O’Keefe, Michael, & Ronald, 2007), which are basically used by EFL/ESL learners and teachers.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, pp. 548-552) classified English conditional sentences by their meanings or semantics for ESL/EFL teachers, as follows:

#### **1. Factual Conditional Sentences**

Factual conditionals contain four types: generic, habitual, implicit inference, and explicit inference.

##### 1.1) Generic Factual Conditionals

These conditionals represent relationships that are true and unchangeable; for example,

If ice is heated, it melts.      If water is frozen, it becomes ice.

*If + present simple, present simple* is the structure of these conditionals. Furthermore, they are often found in scientific writing as sciences are frequently associated with these relationships.

##### 1.2) Habitual Factual Conditionals

These conditionals express either past or present true relationships that are typical or habitual, and they are similar to generic factual conditionals as they express a timeless relationship. If the habitual relationship refers to the present time event, present simple tense is used in both the *if*-clause and the main clause, while past simple tense is used in the *if*-clause and main clause if the habitual relationship refers to the past time event; for example,

*Present:* If I cook, Sandy set the table.

*Past:* If Yaya sang, Barry danced.

(Adapted from the examples by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 549)

Additionally, *when* or *whenever* can substitute for *if* in the factual conditionals and still express the same idea; for example,

When (ever) I cook, Sandy set the table.

When (ever) Yaya sang, Barry danced.

##### 1.3) Implicit inference conditionals

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) explained that these conditionals “express inferences about specific time-bound relationships” (p. 549), and they are likely to sustain the same tense and aspect or the same modal in the *if*-clause and the main clause. The examples below are given by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, p.549):

If you’ll bring some wine, I’ll bring some beer and potato chips.

If it’s Tuesday, it’s Sam’s birthday.

Nonetheless, *if* cannot be substituted for by *when* or *whenever* like in the generic and habitual conditionals. Doing so can change the meaning and make the sentence ungrammatical; for example: When(ever) it's Tuesday, it's Sam's birthday.

#### 1.4) Explicit inference conditionals

Parallelism of tense, aspect, or modal is not strict in both clauses of this conditional type due to the fact that the *if* clause is primarily used for inferring explicitly; thus, the main clause or the result clause has an inferential modal, conventionally *must* or *should*; for example,

If anyone is so busy, it must be Anne.

If someone is diligent, it should be John.

### 2. Future (Predictive) Conditional Sentences

#### 2.1) Strong condition and result

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, p. 550) propose that these “sentences express future plans or contingencies”. The normal form of this type is the present simple tense in the if-clause and ‘will’ or ‘be going to’ in the result clause; for example,

If Marry arrives at the office early, she's going to check her e-mail messages first.

If you get this task done, I'll buy you a glass of iced coffee.

#### 2.2.) Degrees of weakened or result

A weaker modal of prediction, e.g. *may* or *should* can be used in the result clause when the outcome is not sufficiently certain to use ‘will’ or ‘be going to’; for instance,

If Marry arrives at the office early, she **may** check her e-mail messages first.

If you get this task done, I **should** buy you a glass of iced coffee.

### 3. Imaginative Conditional Sentences

This type of conditional includes two subtypes, i.e. hypothetical conditionals and counterfactual conditionals.

#### 3.1) Hypothetical conditionals

This type of conditional “expresses what the speaker perceives to be unlikely yet possible events or states in the if-clause” (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 551).

e.g. If Joe had the time, he would go to Mexico. (present hypothetical)

The researchers also describe that the if-clause not strongly negated as there is a chance that Joe has or will have the time. In addition, the possibility of the result clause can be stronger if the negative quality of the if-clause becomes further weakened, as exemplified below:

If Joe  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{should have} \\ \text{happened to have} \\ \text{should happen to have} \end{array} \right\}$  the time, he would go to Mexico.



In contrast, the weakening does not occur in a counterfactual conditional because the condition is not possible and the if-clause is strongly negated.

Furthermore, the researchers suggest that this conditional type can refer to both the future and the present, and they provide the examples, as follows:

*Present:* If Joe had the time, he would go to Mexico.

*Future:* If Joe were to have the time, he would go to Mexico.

### 3.2) Counterfactual conditionals

This type of conditional expresses the impossible events with respect to both the present and the past. The researchers provide the explicit sentence examples below:

*Present counterfactual:*

If my grandfather were alive today, he would experience a different world.

*Past counterfactual:*

If my grandfather had been still alive in 1996, he would have been 100 years old.

### Related studies

Sattayatham and Honsa (2007) conclude that Thai EFL students made the highest number of errors in the Past Counterfactual Conditional among 20 grammatical points studied in their writing. Lai-chun (2005) indicates that the Past Counterfactual and Present Counterfactual were found most difficult to produce for Chinese secondary school students. Furthermore, Chou (2000) points out that the same past simple tense was employed in the if-clauses for both the Present and Past Counterfactuals and also the acquisition order of all if-conditionals studied was influenced by the over-production of the form ‘modal + verb’ in the main clause.

### Methodology

#### *Scope of the study*

This study was limited to the four typologies of English if-conditionals, since these types are basically taught to Thai EFL students and included in EFL curricula or English textbooks. The researcher also checked with an English teacher where this study was conducted that all four types had been covered in classes. They are:

#### The four English if-conditionals assessed in the current study

<b>Name</b>	<b>Structure</b>
Factual Conditional	<i>If + present simple, present simple</i> e.g. If we heat ice, it melts.
Future Predictive	<i>If + present simple, will + verb</i> e.g. If he comes, we will be happy.
Present Counterfactual	<i>If + past simple, would/could/might + verb</i> e.g. If I found one billion dollar, I would return it to the
police. Past Counterfactual <i>participle</i>	<i>If + past perfect, would/could/might have + past</i> e.g. If she had come with me, I would have been happy.

## *Participants*

The populations of the current study were Grade 12 Thai EFL learners studying in an integrated English program (IEP) at a public school in Bangkok, Thailand. There were 77 Grade 12 students from the IEP from different majors, i.e. Science – Mathematics, Mathematics – English, English – French, English – Chinese, and English – Japanese, were requested to voluntarily participate in the study. They were assumed to have acquired more English language skills than other groups of students in the upper secondary level (Grades 10 to 12). As a result, 68 students, including 28 males and 40 females of this program voluntarily participated in the gap-filling task. In addition, the bottom ten participants whose Oxford Placement Test scores ranged from 11 to 18 out of 60, along with the top ten participants whose scores ranged from 30 to 42 were recruited for the spoken task, totaling 20 samples.

## *Research instruments*

This study was a quantitative research design containing four instruments, as follows:

### 1. Oxford placement test

This test was used to assess students' English proficiency and to recruit 20 students out of 68 for the spoken task. This test, version 1.1, was obtained from the Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (Photocopiable © UCLES 2001, Retrieved from <http://www.grad.mahidol.ac.th/grad/event/pdf/oxfordtest.pdf>). It comprises three parts: part one (items 1 to 40); part two (items 41 to 60); and part three (writing section). In this study, only the first two parts covering reading signs, cloze tests, and vocabulary tests were used to assess the students' English proficiency.

### 2. Demographic information questionnaire

This questionnaire containing 9 questions was employed to draw the information regarding the students' backgrounds, e.g. name, age, gender, and educational background.

### 3. Gap-filling task

This task, which consisted of 20 test items, was used to examine students' conditional errors in written English. The participants were asked to produce the grammatically correct verb forms in both the if-clause and main clause of the target if-conditional types.

### 4. Spoken task

This task, which had 12 test items, was employed to explore the students' conditional errors in spoken English. Likewise, the participants were asked to produce the grammatically correct verb forms in both the if-clause and main clause of the target if-conditional types in their English utterances.



## Data analysis

### *Analysis of English if-conditional errors*

Non-target verb forms of the if-conditionals in the gap-filling task and spoken task were examined, counted, and regarded as conditional verb form errors. Nonetheless, the errors resulting from the misuse of a subject and verb agreement from the Factual Conditional and the if-clause of Future Predictive Conditional were regarded as a type of conditional error as well; for example, *Cathy frequently **\*post** just negative comments on Facebook, unless she **\*like** what others say about her*. In this conditional sentence, there were two verb form errors, i.e. **post** and **like**, since these verbs did not agree with the singular subjects, **Cathy** and **she**, respectively.

### Results

#### *The overall English if-conditional errors from the gap-filling task*

The following pie chart illustrates the overall number of conditional errors discovered in each typology from the gap-filling task. According to the chart, it has been discovered that the participants were more likely to have trouble producing grammatically correct verb forms of the Past Counterfactual and Present Counterfactual Conditionals than the other if-conditional structures. Therefore, it is worthwhile noting here that the majority of participants produced more conditional errors in both counterfactuals than the other conditional types studied in written English.

Figure 1. The overall number of English if-conditional errors found in the gap-filling task

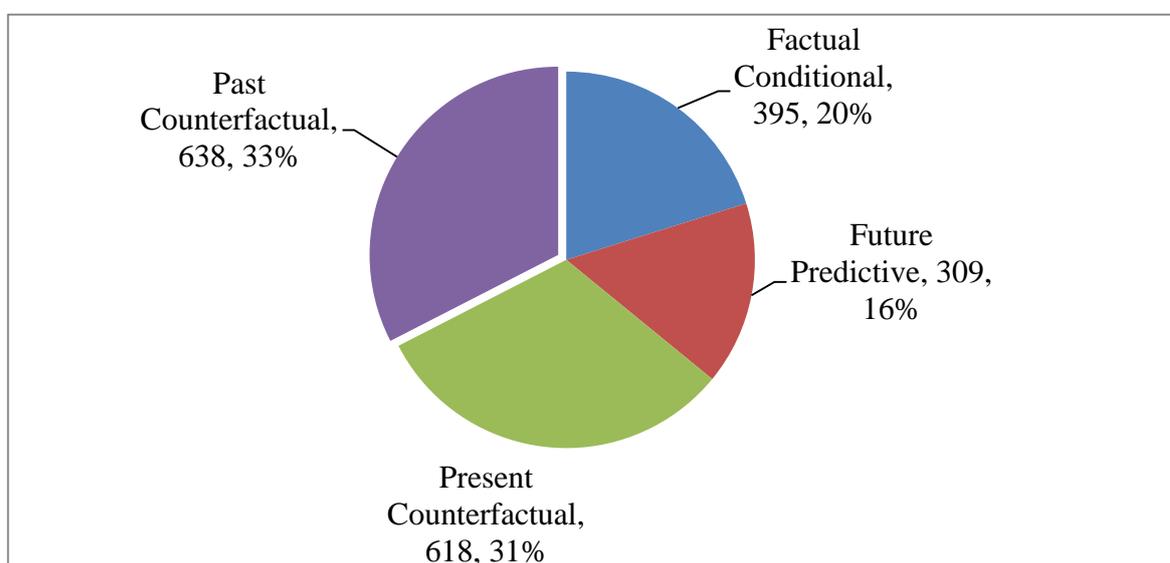


Table 1 below shows the top five conditional errors. According to the Table, the most common conditional errors found in both the if-clause and main clause of this conditional type were derived from the misuse of subject and verb agreement (96 tokens/26.67%), along with future simple tense (93 tokens/25.83%). Put differently, the majority of students in the study wrongly applied the two grammatical points more frequently than the other ones. Despite the fact that only the verb tense of present simple is the primary structure of both the if-clause and main clause of this

typology, many students were likely to confuse over the usage of verb tense by applying the structures of future simple tense, present participle, and past simple tense in lieu of the target structure unnecessarily.

Table 1. Top five errors in Factual Conditional from the gap-filling task (n=68)

Rank	Type of error	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	Subject and Verb Agreement	S-V	96	26.67
2	Future Simple Tense	Ftr.	93	25.83
3	Present Participle	Prs-P	45	12.50
4	Past Simple Tense	Pst.	43	11.94
5	Misformation	MF	38	10.56

As shown in Table 2 below, the majority of students (43 tokens/18.45%) incorrectly employed the verb tense of present simple in the main clause as well as that of the future simple (33 tokens/14.16%) in the if-clause of this conditional type. The past simple tense was also in the same rank as future simple tense. What's more interesting, however, the present participle and past participle, which are non-finite verbs and grammatically unacceptable in the English if-conditional constructions studied, accounted for 19.75 percent altogether. Like that of the Factual Conditional, the subject and verb agreement was still ranked in the top five conditional errors, since this type of error was caused by the incomplete use of a grammatical rule in present simple tense.

Table 2. Top five errors in Future Predictive Conditional from the gap-filling task

Rank	Type of error	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	Present Simple Tense	Prs.	43	18.45
2	Future Simple Tense	Ftr.	33	14.16
2	Past Simple Tense	Pst.	33	14.16
3	Present Participle	Prs-P	28	12.02
4	Past Participle	Pst-P	18	7.73
4	Subject and Verb Agreement	S-V	18	7.73
5	Misformation	MF	16	6.87

Table 3 shows the overall non-target forms or errors in the Present Counterfactual. It was discovered that the most frequent structures produced by the students were the present simple tense (223 tokens/45.14%) and future simple tense (166 tokens/33.60%), respectively. It can also be noticed that the majority of participants evidently did not acquire the English if-conditionals from the former typologies to the latter ones. Simply put, they still employed the verb form of Factual Conditional in forming both clauses, particularly the if-clause, as well as mostly applied the verb form of the main clause of Future Predictive in producing the main clause of Present Counterfactual.



Table 3. Top five errors in Present Counterfactual Conditional from the gap-filling task

Rank	Type of error	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	Present Simple Tense	Prs.	223	45.14
2	Future Simple Tense	Ftr.	166	33.60
3	Present Participle	Prs-P	31	6.28
4	Past Simple Tense	Pst.	18	3.64
5	Base Form of a Verb	BaF.	13	2.63

Table 4 presents the conditional errors found in the Past Counterfactual. As can be seen in the Table, it was found that the top three errors were involved with misusing the future simple tense (149 tokens/32.04%), present simple tense (136 tokens/29.25%), and past simple tense (105 tokens/22.58%), respectively. These very high percentages support the findings, as noted earlier, in that the majority of the participants appear not to acquire the English if-conditionals from the earlier types to the later ones. To put another way, they tend to mistakenly employ the verb patterns of the Factual Conditional and Future Predictive for those of the Present Counterfactual as well as to apply those of the Factual Conditional, Future Predictive, and Present Counterfactual for those of the Past Counterfactual.

Table 4. Top five errors in Past Counterfactual Conditional from the gap-filling task

Rank	Type of error	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	Future Simple Tense	Ftr.	149	32.04
2	Present Simple Tense	Prs.	136	29.25
3	Past Simple Tense	Pst.	105	22.58
4	Conditional Auxiliary	CnA.	32	6.88
5	Present Participle	Prs-P	24	5.16

#### *The overall English if-conditional errors from the spoken task*

Apart from exploring the if-conditional errors in the Gap-Filling Task in terms of written English, the spoken data of all conditional types were altogether transcribed and examined, as shown in Table 5 below. According to the Table, the findings revealed that the misuse of future simple tense (125 tokens/ 27.00%) and subject and verb agreement (82 tokens/ 17.71%) were most frequent in the participants' English conditional utterances, respectively.

Table 5. Top five errors in the four target conditional types from the spoken task (n=20)

Rank	Type of error	Code	Frequency	Percentage
1	Future Simple Tense	Ftr.	125	27.00
2	Subject and Verb Agreement	S-V	82	17.71
3	Present Simple Tense	Prs.	78	16.85
4	Omission	Om.	39	8.42
5	Past Simple Tense	Pst.	36	7.78

## Discussion

As reported above, the gap-filling task revealed interesting and unexpected findings in that there were two if-conditional types sharing the same error type; that is, the misuse of present simple tense was found in the first rank of Future Predictive and Present Counterfactual. Although this verb tense is a grammatical structure in the if-clause of Future Predictive Conditional, the majority of participants misused it in the main clause of the same conditional type unnecessarily. What is more surprising, nevertheless, is that this verb tense has nothing to do with the grammatical features of the counterfactual conditionals; however, the participants mostly applied it for the if-clause and main clauses of these two conditional types. Moreover, all of the conditional typologies, except for the Past Counterfactual, shared the second top of errors—the misuse of future simple tense, in the production of conditional verb patterns in written English. Despite being a part of the Future Predictive construction, this verb form error was found in this conditional type as well, since most of the participants wrongly used it in the if-clause rather than the main clause. The work of Chou (2000) concludes that the acquisition of all English conditional types studied was influenced by the over-production of the verb pattern ‘modal + verb’, particularly ‘will + verb’ unnecessarily. These findings are also consistent with those of Chou (2000) in that L2 learners tend to show smallest changes in rule of the English if-conditionals from one developmental stage to the next one; for example, as in the current findings of the study, when they acquired from the Future Predictive to Present Counterfactual and to Past Counterfactual, the verb pattern of present simple tense was still used by the majority of participants. In addition, it is worthwhile noting here that the past simple tense structure was in the top five errors of all conditional types in written English. In factuality, the past simple tense has nothing to do with the if-clauses and main clauses of the Factual and Future Predictive Conditionals, since they do not basically contain past grammatical features [-past] which could be explained by Brown’s Cumulative Complexity (1976) and O’Grady Development Law (1997). Surprisingly, despite having both past [+past] and perfect [+perfect] grammatical features in the Past Counterfactual structures, nearly all of the participants employed merely the past simple form when producing both clauses of this conditional type. Therefore, it could be assumed that they could not acquire the Past Counterfactual Conditional, which has the highest number of grammatical features and is the most grammatically complex among the three other types studied (Chou, 2000; Ko, 2013; Lai-chun, 2005; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007). Further, misformed constructions were in the fifth rank of Factual and Future Predictive Conditionals, in which many students used non-standard grammatical verb forms in the conditional structures.

As for the spoken task, the misuse of future simple tense was commonly frequent in the students’ English utterances, in which they mostly used the construction ‘will + verb’ in the main clause of the target conditional types, especially that of the Past Counterfactual because none of them could not produce the correct structure ‘would have + past participle’ in spoken English. In addition, the incompletely grammatical use of the relationship between subject and verb was found in their English utterances as well. In other words, many students failed to make a verb agree with its subject, particularly a singular subject.



## Conclusion

In the gap-filling task, the Past Counterfactual accounted for most errors, followed by Present Counterfactual; Factual Conditional; and Future Predictive Conditional. That is to say, they found the Past Counterfactual most difficult to produce its verb form, whereas found the Future Predictive Conditional easiest to do so in written English. Regarding conditional types of errors, the misuse of the subject and verb agreement was commonly frequent in the Factual Conditional, while present simple tense in the Future Predictive, along with the Present Counterfactual, and future simple tense in the Past Counterfactual.

In the spoken task, the misuse of future simple tense was most frequent in the students' English utterances, followed by the incomplete use of subject and verb agreement, and the present simple tense.

## Pedagogical implications

Having conducted this research study, there are certain constructive advices and suggestions for an improvement and adjustment of teaching and learning English language materials, lesson plans, syllabus, or course outlines for the English if-conditionals.

First, teachers of English and curriculum planners should realize the significance of teaching and learning English if-conditional in their classes as a prerequisite starting point, the problem and difficulty that most learners frequently encounter, and also make their students aware of the conditional acquisition so as to achieve mastering this grammatical feature.

Second, the most common English if-conditional errors resulted from verb phrase errors, e.g. many participants did not achieve even making a verb form agree with its subject like, '*Cathy frequently \*post just negative comments on Facebook, unless she \*like what others say about her*' and some of them over-applied the grammatical rule like, '*An expert on health suggest that if we \*exercises every day, we usually \*buns a lot of calories*'. Consequently, teachers and other related educators are suggested to place a high priority on such problem prior to teaching them more complicated structures like, the English if-conditionals; otherwise, they might not be able to fully acquire the target grammatical point due to their poor performances on basic syntactic constructions and morphology.

Third, as the present and other previous studies (Bryant, 1984; Chou, 2000; Ko, 2013; Luu Trong Tuan, 2012; Massafi et al., 2014; Petcharapirat, 2013; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007) discovered that counterfactual conditionals, especially the Past Counterfactual, appeared to be the most problematic for EFL/ ESL learners in that their syntactic complexities, to some extent, play a vital role in the learners' acquisition, specially the production performances. For this reason, teachers should pay particular attention to counterfactuals and provide their students with ample opportunity to practice and expose to these conditional typologies.

Fourth, teachers, curriculum planners, and educators should adjust and develop the characteristics of existing English if-conditional lessons in Thai language system, especially exercises, tasks, and tests which are used to assess students' performances of the production of conditional verb patterns, since it has been observed that the majority of these materials merely focus on a verb pattern in either the if-clause or main clause without allowing learners to use context clues such as

temporal references to a present, past, or future situation (Gabrielatos, 2003) or degrees of possibility (Wu, 2012) in a test item when it comes to forming conditional structures; for instance, *If **were** him, I \_\_\_\_\_ (not do ) like that.* It is highly likely that this type of test item implies that what a language learner should do is just memorize grammatical verb forms in both clauses of each typology and then try to recall them when structuring a conditional verb pattern.

Fifth, despite the fact that there has been a wide range of natural and authentic uses of English if-conditionals produced by native English speakers (Farr & McCarthy, 2002, as cited in O’Keef, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007; Jones & Waller, 2011; Phoocharoensil, 2014; Thomas & Jolivet, 2008) and speakers from various contexts, it is suggested that teachers have their students master the conventionally standard typologies first owing to the fact that the classic types are frequently used to assess students’ knowledge of English conditional constructions through certain standard tests and examinations. Then, it is advisable that teachers present alternative if-constructions, along with some sentence examples from concordance lines in corpora to their students. It is, nevertheless, inappropriate that the teachers include a large number of alternative or colloquial if-forms in their lesson plans. By doing so, it could overwhelm and confuse them unnecessarily as well as might do them more harm than good.

### **Recommendations for further research studies**

The following recommendations could serve as a guideline to conduct future research so as to generalize the findings of the present study by covering some other English if-conditionals or increasing the number of participants:

First, the current study put an emphasis on the four most frequently taught if-conditional types: Factual Conditional, Future Predictive, Present Counterfactual, and Past Counterfactual among Thai EFL learners. Therefore, there might be some other typologies, e.g. mixed-time reference conditional, included in students’ grammar books and taught in other high schools as well that researchers could further explore in Thai EFL learners.

Second, with certain limitations and time constraint, this study was limited to 68 students from the integrated English program at a public school in Bangkok for the gap-filling task, along with 20 out of the 68 participants for the spoken task. Therefore, further research studies could expand the findings of this study by increasing the number of students from other programs in either public or private schools in Thailand.

### **About the Authors**

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