

## Slips of the Tongue in Donald Trump's 2025 Inauguration Speech: A Psycholinguistics Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

Speech errors emerge when linguistic planning at the conceptualization stage fails, resulting in unintended distortions of sound, form, or meaning. The objectives of this research are to identify the types of slips of the tongue, to classify them, and to analyze the factors contributing to their occurrence in the 2025 inauguration speech of Donald Trump. This study employed a descriptive-qualitative methodology, guided by the theoretical frameworks of Fromkin (1973) and Freud (1901). Data collection involved identifying types of the slip in video recordings of Trump's inauguration speech accessible via the ABC News YouTube channel. This focused with the examination of eight slip types: anticipation, preservation, substitution, blends, additions, deletions, sound exchanges, and morpheme exchanges. The findings reveal that there are six of types of slips of the tongue occurred in Trump's speech: perseveration (three occurrences), anticipation (two occurrences), substitution (two occurrences), blend (one occurrence), deletion (one occurrence), and addition (five occurrences). Notably, sound exchanges and morpheme exchanges were absent. Addition emerged as the most frequent error type, while blend and deletion were the least frequent. This research significantly advances the understanding of speech errors in high-stakes political communication. It demonstrated that slips of the tongue reflect cognitive load, psychological pressures, and contextual demands inherent to public speaking.

**Keywords:** *Donald Trump's speech, Political Communication, Psycholinguistics, Slip of the Tongue*

### ABSTRAK

Kesalahan bicara muncul ketika perencanaan linguistik pada tahap konseptualisasi gagal, yang mengakibatkan distorsi suara, bentuk, atau makna yang tidak disengaja. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis kesalahan bicara, mengklasifikasikannya, dan menganalisis faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap terjadinya kesalahan bicara tersebut dalam pidato pelantikan Donald Trump tahun 2025. Studi ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif-kualitatif, yang dipandu oleh kerangka teoritis Fromkin (1973) dan Freud (1901). Pengumpulan data melibatkan identifikasi jenis-jenis kesalahan bicara dalam rekaman video pidato pelantikan Trump yang dapat diakses melalui saluran YouTube ABC News. Hal ini difokuskan pada pemeriksaan delapan jenis kesalahan bicara: antisipasi, preservasi, substitusi, campuran, penambahan, penghapusan, pertukaran bunyi, dan pertukaran morfem. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa terdapat enam jenis kesalahan bicara yang terjadi dalam pidato Trump: perseverasi (tiga kali), antisipasi (dua kali), substitusi (dua kali), campuran (satu kali), penghapusan (satu kali), dan penambahan (lima kali). Yang perlu diperhatikan, pertukaran bunyi dan pertukaran morfem tidak ditemukan. Penambahan muncul sebagai jenis kesalahan yang paling sering terjadi, sedangkan penggabungan dan penghapusan adalah yang paling jarang terjadi. Penelitian ini secara signifikan memajukan pemahaman tentang kesalahan bicara dalam komunikasi politik yang berisiko tinggi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan ucapan mencerminkan beban kognitif, tekanan psikologis, dan tuntutan kontekstual yang melekat pada berbicara di depan umum.

**Kata Kunci:** *Komunikasi Politik, Pidato Donald Trump, Psikolinguistik, Salah Ucapan*

## INTRODUCTION

Culture comprises the totality of non-biological human activities and constructs that are neither reflexive nor instinctual. It constitutes a foundational element in the sociocultural framework of human existence. As culturally constituted agents, human exhibit a species-specific distinction: symbolic communication (e.g., verbal language). Oral speech represents one of the most elemental modalities of human interaction. Language serves as a critical cognitive faculty in human existence, functioning as the primary medium for thought externalization and intersubjective understanding. Studying language means that we also study a scientific discipline called linguistics. Linguistics is the scientific study of language based on the questions of how linguists define their object of study, and how it is best described and compared. Some of the main branches of linguistics include: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and neurolinguistics (Matthew, 2002). The writer chose one branch of linguistics, namely psycholinguistics as the basis of this study.

Psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary field that combines psychology and linguistics to explore how humans acquire, use, and understand language. According to Clark and Clark's (1977) in their book entitled *Psychology and Language: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics* stated that language psychology is concerned with three main things, namely language understanding, language production, and language acquisition. Stillings, et.al (1995) states that psycholinguistics is part of an emerging field of study with cognitive science. Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary endeavour that refers to the ability of psychologists, linguists, scientists, in studying mental processes and the human mind. Psycholinguistics theory, on the other hand, discusses how the attachment of a speaker who is prone to memory limitations, distractions, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying their knowledge about language.

Errors made by a speaker when speaking in the field of psycholinguistics are known as slips of the tongue. Boomer & Laver define it as an unintentional deviation in performance from the actual phonological, grammatical, or lexical intent of the speaker's utterance (qtd. in Fromkin, 1973:217). In Dell's (1986:284) much-cited formulation, speech errors arise when normally occurring cognitive processes deviate from the speaker's pre-speech linguistic plan. Slips of the tongue can occur anywhere, in both formal and non-formal situations. These errors are often spontaneous in nature. This phenomenon can be found from various ages, both children and adults. In addition, these verbal errors can occur in native speakers, but more often appear in second language users. This means that a person's ability to master a second language can be measured by how often he or she uses the language.

Slips of the tongue can occur, when sounds, structures, and meanings represent in a different way than the intended words. For instance, in sound errors, instead of saying ‘take a call’ one says ‘peak a call.’ Then, in the morpheme error, one says ‘a tea of cup’ instead of ‘a cup of tea.’ Since there are errors in the sound and structure, the meanings also change following verbal blunders. According to Freud (1963), speech errors or slips of the tongue are caused by the intrusion of repressed ideas from the unconscious into one’s conscious speech output. Humans can produce tongue slips consciously if they realized their slips and revised it into the intended words, while the other speaker made an unconscious slip, they did not correct the errors and just continue the speech. In the speech process, errors may occur in any situation, whether formal occasion like an inauguration speech or informal occasion like daily conversation.

Inauguration speech represent a critical juncture in a nation’s political narrative. The speech is carefully prepared to inspire public trust, set the incoming administration’s vision, and deliver a cohesive message by the speaker in different forms and ways. If politicians experience tongue slips, they will become the public spotlight because the people will pay attention to them. By examining verbal blunders in this context, one can uncover hidden biases, underlying cognitive processes, or subconscious attitudes that could affect the intended meaning of the speaker utterances. Examining Donald Trump’s 2025 inaugural speech provides a special chance to investigate the relationship between political communication and psycholinguistics. Trump’s speech could be a breeding ground for verbal blunders due to his distinctive speaking style, which is characterized by spontaneity and a break from traditional political vocabulary. A psycholinguistic analysis of the type and source of these blunders can provide insights on the processes that underlie Trump’s communication style as well as the possible effects of these mistakes on public opinion.

In the context of speech errors, or slips of the tongue, psycholinguistics plays a crucial role in explaining the underlying cognitive processes that lead these errors. Drawing on Fromkin’s psycholinguistic theory of speech production, this thesis investigates the cognitive processes that are responsible for the observed speech errors. This includes by applying Fromkin’s model to analyze errors at various stages (e.g., conceptualization, formulation), analyzing whether Trump self-corrected any errors. Some types of speech errors, such as word substitutions or morpheme errors, can be analyzed in terms of the specific stage of processing at which the error occurred, providing insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying speech production.

There are previous studies had discussed about the same topic and theories, but none of them discussed the same object. Those studies are “Slips of the Tongue Produced by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in Presidential Debates 2020” is written by Purba (2021), “Slips of the Tongue by Jokowi and Prabowo in the Presidential Debates 2019” is written by Qimmahtum et al (2021), “Slip

of the Tongue in Barack Obama Interview at the Axe File” is written by Zulaihah and Indah (2021), “Slips of the Tongue in Speech Production of Indonesia State Officials: A Psycholinguistic Study”, and “Slip of the Tongue in English-Language Debates: A Psycholinguistic Study” is written by Sariasih et al (2023).

The researcher has formulated the objectives of the research. First, to identify and classify types of slips of the tongue that occur in Donald Trump’s 2025 inauguration speech. Second, to analyze and describe the influencing factors that contribute to the occurrence of slips of the tongue during Trump’s inauguration speech. By conducting this research, researcher hope the results can be useful theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research helps advances psycholinguistics by applying error analysis to political oratory, which has a high pressure and understudied genre. Practically, by discovering the tongue slips and the cause in political speech, it will aid media trainers and politicians in mitigating speech errors and also offers educators real-world case studies.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, the writer uses Fromkin's (1973) theory as a reference theory to identify and classify the types of tongue slips found in speeches and find the most frequent types of tongue slips. In addition, the writer also uses the theory of Freud (1920) as a reference theory to analyze the cognitive factors that cause the speaker to make tongue slips. This research also uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative descriptive research in this study is a research procedure with the results of the presentation of descriptive data in the form of oral speech in a speech event or act of communication and linguistic phenomena that also influence the use of language. The primary objective of employing the qualitative technique is to delve into and scrutinize specific data within the existing corpus (Neuman, 2014). This approach fosters inductive theory construction, as it facilitates the interaction between data and theory throughout the data collection process (Neuman, 2014, 177). Data classification emerges as a crucial aspect of the analysis conducted in this study. Using qualitative methods, the writer describes the phenomena and research results using language. Data taken from the inauguration speech video of Donald Trump on YouTube.

### *Preparation*

Before conducting research, the writer searched on the internet, read books in library, read e-book and research related to slip of the tongue, including: An Introduction To Linguistics (Wardough:2015), Speech Errors as Linguistic Evidence (Fromkin:1973) and additional sources from theses, research articles, and journal that have been previously researched regarding slips of the tongue. After that, the writer understands and collects all the tongue slips and then she also determines the speech to be researched and found the video of inauguration speech of President

Donald Trump on the official account of the ABC News YouTube channel, where this YouTube channel is related to the object to be researched.

### ***Data Collection***

The writer collected the data by watching the President Donald Trump's 2025 Inauguration Speech on the YouTube Channel until complete and listening carefully. To make it easier to research the writer uses video transcript techniques and then matches them again the words spoken by the speaker, The writer did this repeatedly to obtain systematic and structured data while observe every word, sentence and clause. After that, she adopted a set of transcription conventions (e.g., for indicating pauses, hesitations, filled pauses like "um" and "uh," and overlapping speech). Common conventions include those employed in conversation analysis. Lastly, the writer highlighted and noted down the tongue slips utterances produced by the speaker in the video transcript.

### ***Data Analysis***

The writer analyzed the data in this research by using the theories of Fromkin (1973) and Freud (1920), after finding slips of the tongue data produced by the speaker in the inauguration speech on the YouTube channel. Finally, the writer identified the types of slips of the tongue, as well as classified them, and analyze and the factors that contributing to their occurrence in the President Trump's 2025 Inauguration Speech on the YouTube.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **Types of Slips of the Tongue in Donald Trump's Speech**

Based on the data found, the writer reviews the utterances that have been found in Donald Trump's inauguration speech and was identified and classified them into several sections. The identification process is done by matching the observed speech errors (including: addition, deletion, anticipation, substitution) to the related linguistic units (phoneme, morpheme, lexicon), as well as grouping them based on the pattern of the disrupted speech production mechanism. Based on the data obtained, there are six types of slips of the tongue contained in the speech, namely perseverations, anticipation, substitution, blend, deletion and addition as the most dominated type of slips in this speech.

### ***Perseveration***

Here are some details linguistic analysis of the perseveration errors in the transcript, analyzed and explained using Fromkin's theory (1973) of how those words become slips:

- a. The first slip was "any longer during every" which is in the syntactic level. The temporal planning (any longer during every" allows the preposition "during" to slip into an earlier syntactic slot where it is not appropriate.

- b. The second slip was “ameran” which is in the morphological level. The restart attempt is distorted because the stem Amer- from “American” remains in the phonological buffer. The output turns into a blend (ameran = Amer + partial -an).
- c. The third slip was “in any way way shape” which is in the lexical level. The lexical item “way” repeats due to failed clearance from working memory. It is common in formulaic phrases (“way shape or form”) under time pressure.

### ***Anticipation***

Here are some details linguistic analysis of the anticipation errors in the transcript, analyzed and explained using Fromkin’s theory (1973) of how those words become slips:

- a. The first slip was “any longer during every” which is in syntactic level. The temporal marker during (planned for “every single day”) activates prematurely and inserts itself into prior clause boundary. This reveals syntactic planning ahead of articulation.
- b. The second slip was “henceforth be the the official policy” which is in phonological level. One of the determiners the from “official policy” phonologically anticipates its position, causing repetition. It shows pre-articulatory activation of function words.

### ***Substitution***

Here are some details linguistic analysis of the substitution errors in the transcript, analyzed and explained using Fromkin’s theory (1973) of how those words become slips:

- a. The first slip was “external revenue service” which is in semantic level. The word “external” is a semantic antonym triggered by contextual priming: preceding discourse focused on “foreign sources”. This shows lexical competition in semantic network: “external” was activated by foreign concept outcompetes target “internal”.
- b. The second slip was “wars we never get into” which is in lexical level. The words “get into” was *colloquialism* replaces *formal lexical item* due to *dialect interference*.

### ***Blend***

Here are some details linguistic analysis of the blend errors in the transcript, analyzed and explained using Fromkin’s theory (1973) of how those words become slips:

The slip was “incomplete disrepair” which is in morphological level. The two phrases “incomplete disrepair” is competing (in disrepair vs. complete disrepair) fuse at morphological level. The prefix “in-” replaces preposition in and made a structural anomaly that leads to semantically incoherent.

### ***Deletion***

Here are some details linguistic analysis of the deletion errors in the transcript, analyzed and explained using Fromkin’s theory (1973) of how those words become slips:

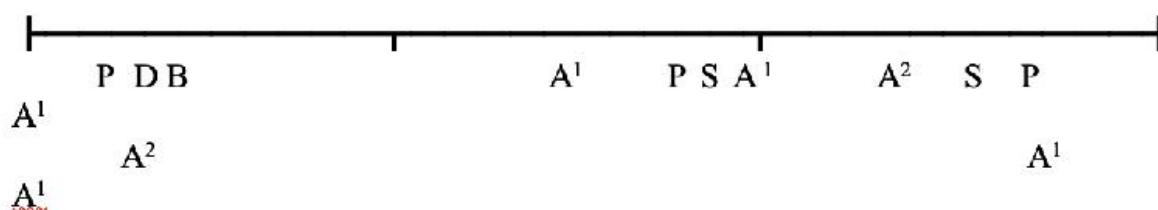
The slip was “provide” which is in a morphological level. It is because the sentence was started with 3rd-person and -s was omitted. This shows a morpheme deletion type of slips.

### **Addition**

Here are some details linguistic analysis of the addition errors in the transcript, analyzed and explained using Fromkin’s theory (1973) of how those words become slips:

- a. The first slip was “can’t do that” in the end of the sentence, which is in lexical addition. These words show overflow phrases that only create “junk” elements in the speech.
- b. The second slip was “government” in department of government efficiency, which is a lexical addition. This shows a redundant modifier was included because of semantic perseveration. An overflow phrase creates “junk” elements.
- c. The third slip was “the the” in the middle of a sentence, which is a phonological addition. This shows a high frequency function word (the) recycled in articulatory buffer. Same as the first slip, the overflow phonological phrase will create debris.
- d. The fourth slip was “shape or form” which is a semantic perseveration from prior context. This reveals the way phrases degrade into rote articulations, losing precision.
- e. The fifth slip was “will will” which is a morphological addition. It was a motor speech repetition. This highlights the way subject language production is to emotion (prosody) rather than rules (syntax).

This is an image that chronologically maps the distribution of speech errors during Donald Trump's 30-minute speech, visualizing the density of error types.



*Picture 1. Types of Slips of the Tongue in Trump’s 2025 Speech Duration*

Lettered lists:

A¹: Addition

A²: Anticipation

B: Blend

D: Deletion

P: Perseveration

S: Substitution

### **Slips of the Tongue Analysis that appeared in Donald Trump's speech**

The primary data for this study comprises speech errors identified in Donald Trump's second presidential inauguration address, sourced from the official YouTube recording. Freud's (1920) psychoanalytic theory, as articulated in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, provides the foundational lens for analyzing these speech errors. This framework positions the inauguration, a high-stakes political event, as the perfect setting for observing psychological tensions expressed in speech, interpreting slips not as random linguistic accidents but as compromises between conscious articulation and repressed unconscious material (Freud, 1920, p. 44).

After reviewing President Trump's inauguration speech, the writer identified multiple utterances exhibiting speech error. These errors were analyzed through Freud's (1920) psychoanalytic framework, which interprets such slips as unconscious intrusions revealing hidden psychological conflicts. Unlike linguistic classifications, these are some of the factors that lead to slips of the tongue found in this speech.

#### ***Perseveration***

Perseveration happens when the speaker fails to clear phonological or lexical buffer. Speaker made this error when repressed thought seeks expression through repetition. This type of slip is an earlier linguistic unit whether it is sound, morpheme, or word that unintentionally repeated in a new context. In the speech, perseveration is a defense mechanism, where the speaker will be repeating a word symbolically controls anxiety.

#### ***Anticipation***

Anticipation is a later linguistic units that appears prematurely. Some words that were planned to appear earlier in the utterance are anticipated and affect the word that was planned to appear earlier in the utterance. This type of slips usually happened because the subconscious desire leaks before its intended time. This error can happen during phrase transitions or when the speaker planning phrases ahead. Psychologically, this type of slippage occurs when suppressing excitement or anxiety about upcoming content. Some of the impulsive individuals or those with impulse control are make the most frequent anticipation compare with a secure or well-prepared speaker.

#### ***Substitution***

Substitution is a form of tongue slip that occurs when the target (phoneme, word, or morpheme) is replaced with the incorrect unit. This kind of slip is psychologically described as conscious aim that has been "censored" by the subconscious; it is a compromise. Using this analysis, the author determines that most substitution in this speech happened when speaker conflicts with their own statement. Substitution is functions as ego-defense, this type of slip masks unacceptable thoughts. These errors reveal critical insights about language production and subconscious motivation.

***Blend***

Blend is a type of speech error that occurs when two competing linguistic units (words, morphemes, or phrases) fuse into a single hybrid form. These errors peak during conceptual uncertainty or lexical competition. Psychologically, blends arise from unresolved ambivalence in the subconscious, where conflicting thoughts or emotions merge into a compromised utterance. This slip typically occurs when the speaker experiences hesitation between semantically related alternatives, reflecting inner tension. Functionally, blends act as linguistic condensations that disguise repressed conflicts, allowing partial expression of contradictory impulses.

***Deletion***

Deletion represents a critical category of speech error characterized by the omission of target linguistic units whether phonemes, morphemes, words, or syntactic markers. Psychoanalytically, deletions function as subconscious acts of suppression, where the mind symbolically "silences" emotionally threatening or cognitively dissonant content. This slip typically manifests during high-stress discourse or when processing complex morphosyntax, serving as an avoidance mechanism to sidestep taboo topics or psychological discomfort. Functionally, deletions operate as the linguistic equivalent of repression: they create voids where unacceptable thoughts might reside, allowing speakers to navigate charged narratives without full confrontation.

***Addition***

Addition is a distinct category of speech slips defined by the insertion of extraneous linguistic units absent from the target utterance—sounds, words, or grammatical elements. Freudian theory frames additions as ritualistic overcompensation, where speakers subconsciously reinforce statements to quell doubt or enact symbolic control. These errors peak during emphatic declarations, uncertain assertions, or high-stakes rhetorical performances, functioning as linguistic talismans that magically bolster confidence. Additions expose a collision of cognitive architecture and psychic vulnerability: where Fromkin sees buffer errors, Freud sees anxiety rituals.

**The Most Common Type of Slip of the Tongue in Donald Trump's speech**

Based on the analysis above, the writer found six out of eight types of slips of the tongue contained in fourteen data. The types obtained through the analysis are perseveration, anticipation, substitution, blend, deletion, and addition. Addition is the most frequent type of slip of the tongue in Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration speech. The primary cause of the frequent occurrence of addition slip is broken down into multiple factors based on the data identification and analysis method. First, there is extreme cognitive load. Where President Trump delivered a speech full of technical policy promises, so this forced the brain to process multi-layered information. Furthermore, Trump uses emotional rhetorical techniques. Where there is excessive emphasis,

which causes speech patterns that rely on magical repetition to build dramatic effects for the audience. Finally, the speaker has a vulnerable psychological state.

The inaugural speech is a high-stakes performance. Trump duplicates words to create the illusion of control over every promise that carries the risk of failure. The brain adds words as psychological shields, when promises exceed realistic capacity. There are five data points that show the type of addition in tongue slip. A form of slip of the tongue that also occurs frequently in this speech is perseveration, in spite of the most common type, addition. Throughout this inauguration speech, there were three instances of perseveration slips.

## CONCLUSION

This linguistic analysis of a high-stakes political address reveals that speech errors function as cognitive and psychological signatures of leadership under pressure. Through rigorous application of Fromkin's (1973) speech error as linguistic evidence and Freud's (1901) psychoanalytic framework to six from eight types of slips namely perseveration, anticipation, substitution, blend, deletion, and addition, while sound exchange, word exchange, and morpheme exchange was not found in the speech.

After analyzing this speech, it was found that the most frequent slip of the tongue in Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration speech was addition five times. Meanwhile, the least frequent slip of the tongue is two types. The high frequency of addition reveals cognitive overflow under rhetorical pressure which is in line with Freud's view of parapraxis as a compromise formation, exposing unresolved tension between the intended message and psychological burden. In contrast, the near absence of deletions and blend is lack of exchanges suggests a strategic suppression of errors that implies vulnerability or cognitive disorganization. Thus, Trump's verbal surplus operates as a Freudian leak and tactical shield that masks instability while inadvertently exposing the costs of maintaining authority under pressure.

Based on the research and analyze process, the writer about to give the suggestion that probably be useful. The writer provides suggestions for future researchers in examining research related to slips of the tongue using different research objects in order to obtain more types of slips of the tongue. In addition, examine how cultural background, political system, and ideological pressures affect speech error patterns. For instance, whether authoritarian leaders are more prone to deletion, while democratic leaders tend to make additions due to the burden of accountability. Moreover, the writer also suggests for analyzing various types of tongue slips using careful research methods and theories so that they can be more easily understood by readers and can be a reference for future researchers. Future researchers can also combine psycholinguistics and political science

to get broader research results and get a better understanding of the fields of linguistics, psychology, and politics.

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