



Effect of Explicit Instruction on Korean L2 Learners of English: /ð/ and /θ/

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Introduction

- The advent of the communicative approach to language learning has revitalized the emphasis on phonological competence as one of the fundamental underpinnings for facilitating mutual intelligibility.
- Therefore a communicative approach emphasizing: description and analysis, listening discrimination, controlled and guided practice, as well as communicative practice provides a flexible platform for addressing the most challenging phonological sounds for the L2 learners.

Methodology

- The L2 learner was a L1 speaker of Korean with an intermediate-high proficiency level in English who requested to specifically be instructed in learning the voiced and voiceless “th” sounds being non-existent in their L1.
- There were eight sessions administered over an eight week period with a 50 minute period per session.
- The instructions focused on description and analysis (phonetic alphabet of target sounds, oral and written illustration and how the feature is produced), Listening discrimination (listening practice with feedback on learners), Controlled practice (minimal pairs, short sentences, and an attention to special features (awareness rising), guided practice (information-gap activity), and communicative practice (fluency building activity; role play).
- Instructional material included: activities using minimal pairs and informational-gap, phonetic alphabet chart, diagrams, recorder, and prescribed dialogues.
- Preliminary assessment prior to instruction of the “th” using word list and in- context exercises, and using the same assessment for post instruction analysis.

Conclusion

- There was an overall improvement in the participants production of /ð/ and /θ/.
- Word list exercises saw significant improvement in the double digits. However, in-context exercises saw improvement only in the single digits especially for Participant 2, who has been studying in the US for more than 3 times as long as Participant 1.
- This data implies that explicit instruction of the “th” sound segment can generate improvement, but the nature of “th” sound segment for Korean L2 learners of English is very challenging and suggests a possible lengthier period of instruction.
- A close examination shows that both participants most common substitution of /θ/ is with the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, and the most common substitution of /ð/ is with the voiced alveolar stop /d/.
- Further studies can be made in conjunction with other phonological challenges for Korean L2 learners of English.

Reference

Celce-Murcia, Marianne, Donna Brinton, Janet M. Goodwin, and Barry Griner. *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide*. 2nd ed. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Acknowledgements

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Research Objectives

- Assess and quantify the effectiveness of the communicative phase approach in raising conscious awareness of phonological dissimilarity.
- Determine the effective of employing the communicative phase approach for developing new sound categories /ð/ and /θ/ for the L2 learner.
- Examine whether any improvement in the degree of mutual intelligibility occurred as a result of a modified or new phonological sound category.

Participants Demography

Participant 1:
Korean L1, early 20's,
1 year in the US,
College-level English proficiency.
Daily English usage: 30 to 40%

Participant 2:
Korean L1, early 20's,
3.5 years in the US,
College-level English proficiency.
Daily English Usage: 40-50%

Results

Participants' percentage of errors in pre and post assessment of /ð/ and /θ/.

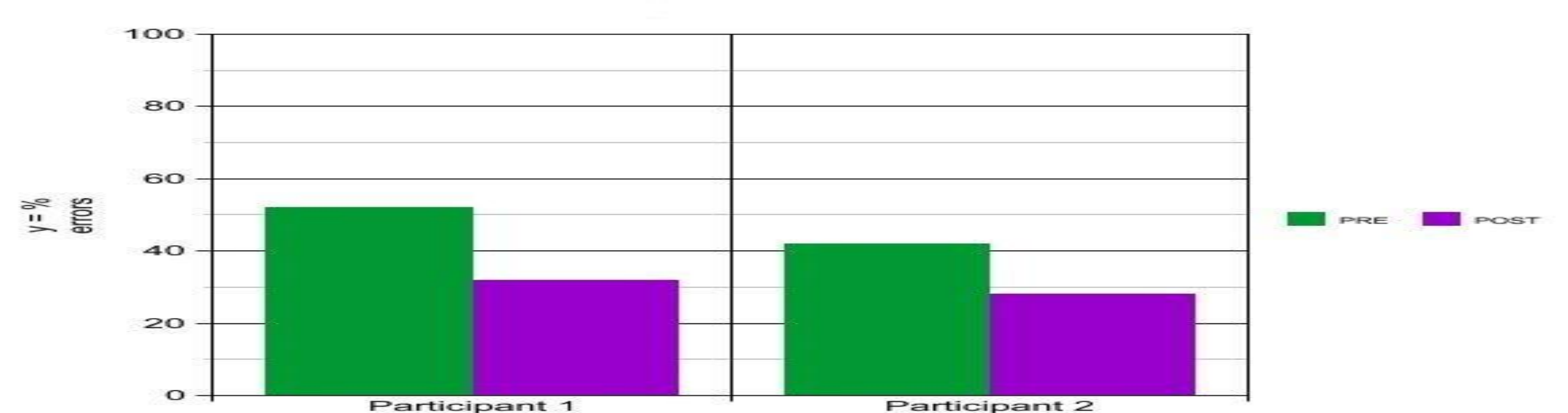


Figure 1. voiced “th” /ð/
WORD LIST

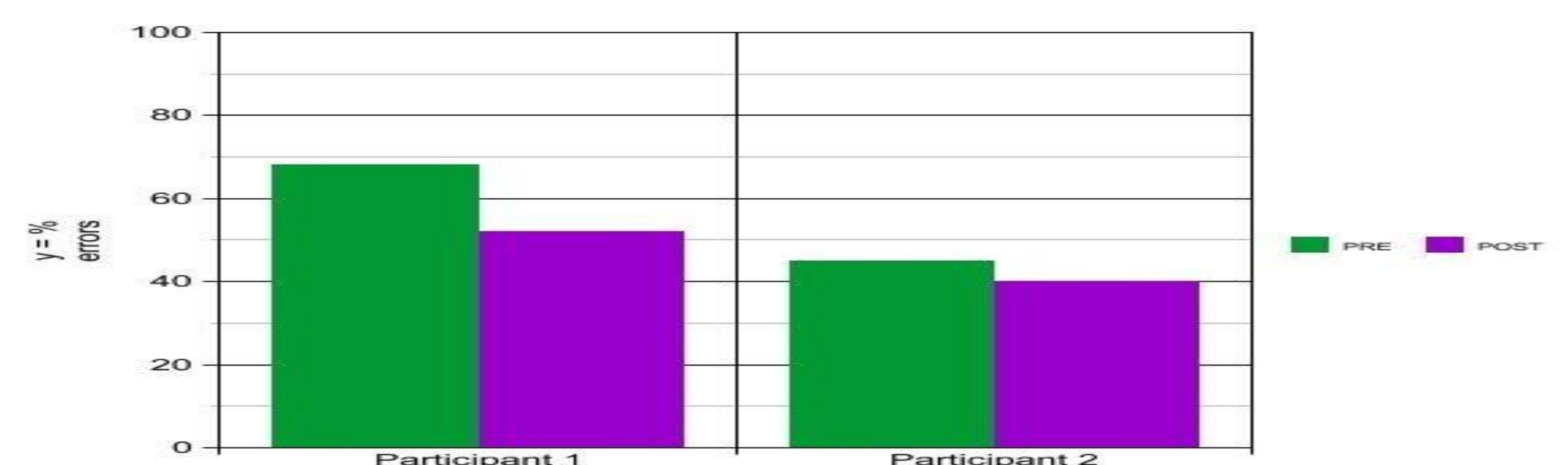


Figure 2. voiced “th” /ð/
IN-CONTEXT

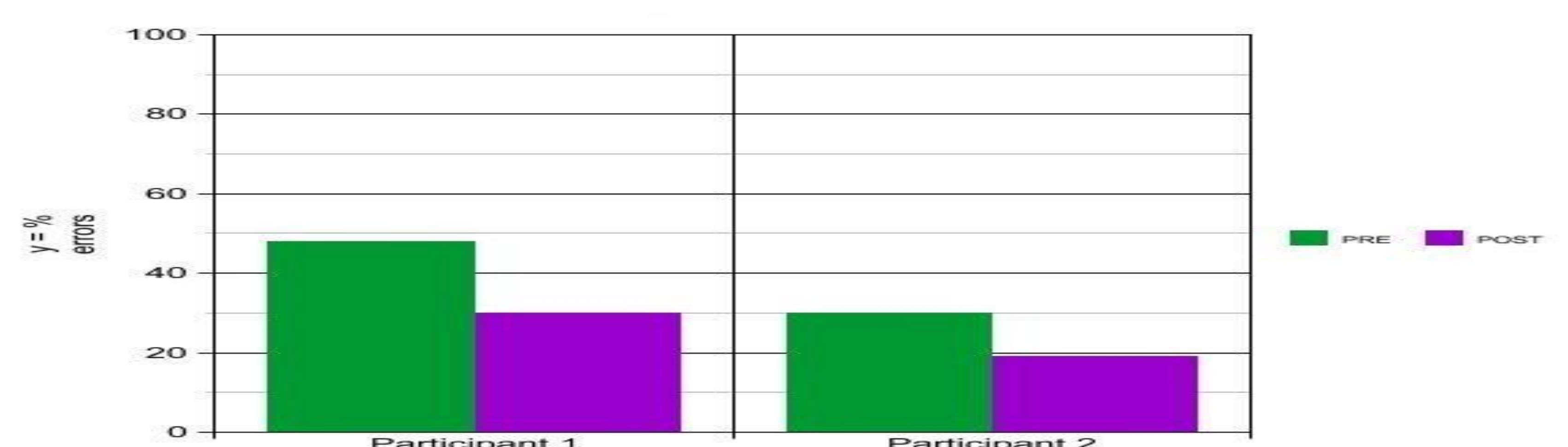


Figure 3. voiceless “th” /θ/
WORD LIST

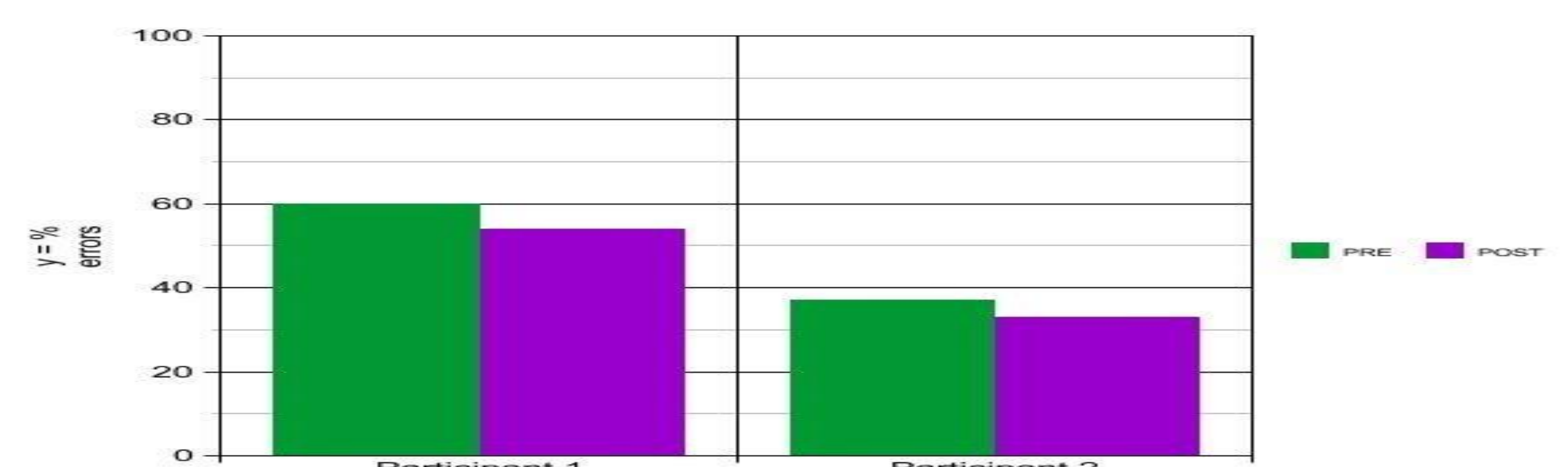


Figure 4. voiceless “th” /θ/
IN-CONTEXT