

Grammatical Competence of Junior High School Students

Estrella C. Sioco*

Pangasinan State University – School of Advanced Studies, Urdaneta City Pangasinan

Dr. Presley V. De Vera**

Pangasinan State University – School of Advanced Studies, Urdaneta City Pangasinan

Abstract

The study determined the level of grammatical competence of 177 Junior High School students and on the design and development of a supplementary learning material to enhance the grammatical competence of the students along subject-verb agreement. The study revealed that students favored textbooks as their preferred reading material at home. They are also exposed to various media types, with denser exposure to books and television. The students' parents are generally at par in their highest educational attainment, which vary across cases of being either graduate or undergraduate in College, High School and Elementary School levels. Majority of the students' fathers are High School graduate, parallel to the educational attainment of their mothers. The study concludes that the Junior High School students need to further enhance their level of grammatical competence in subject-verb agreement. The merits and essentials of the findings were drawn and treated as inputs in the development of a supplemental learning material in subject-verb agreement. The study offers a set of recommendations to improve strategies and techniques in instruction and in the development of instructional materials that will complement the goal to develop the relevant competencies of students in the field of English language learning.

Keywords: Grammatical competence, subject-verb agreement, supplemental learning material

Introduction

English is the current, highly recognized international lingua franca. As the world unites into a global community commonly engaged by modern technology, the need to use the English language has become more and more apparent. Today more than any episode in history, people from different regions of the world are able to communicate fast because of the favors of technology. Adjacent with a person's competent use of technology, it has likewise become essential to hone the skills of speaking or writing effectively in English if one were to partake in global commerce, especially that English is widely used in business industries and in education. Moreover, English is learned and studied in the modern world for its obvious practical importance, i.e. as a means to communicate in the international level and as a means to optimize one's access to opportunities in the employment market (Estanislao, 2013).

In the Philippines, English has long been a part of the curricula of varied academic programs. Curriculum has changed drastically but the learning of English remains intact in the essentials of any curriculum. With K to 2 coming to fore, English is offered in both the Junior and the Senior High School curricula. It is also the medium of instruction in teaching other subjects such as Mathematics and Science, among others. Filipinos are regarded to be among the more fluent speakers of the English language. This is one of the reasons that fellow Asians from other ASEAN countries have chosen to study here in the Philippines or resort to learning English from Filipino mentors.

*E-mail: estrellasioco@yahoo.com.ph, Tel.: +639480660486, Address: San Manuel, Natividad, Pangasinan Philippines

**E-mail: presley_devera@yahoo.com, Tel.: +639082223911, Address: Pangasinan State University – School of Advanced Studies, Urdaneta City, Pangasinan

In an article written by Cabigon (2015), the Philippines is recognized globally as one of the largest English-speaking nations, with the majority of its population having at least some degree of fluency in the language. English has always been one of the country's official languages and is spoken by more than 14 million Filipinos. It is the language of commerce and law, as well as the primary medium of instruction in education. Cabigon further noted that key stakeholders from the government, academe, private, and nongovernment sectors acknowledged that even if Filipinos are generally competent in English, concerns on how much of a competitive advantage have been raised. The stakeholders agreed that the country needs to scale up with its efforts to improve the teaching and learning of English, considering that these are vital skills of the workforce. This is an initiative that can potentially strengthen the Philippines' distinct economic, political or educational advantage in this part of the world, particularly in the ASEAN economic region.

Despite the economic benefits of being an English-speaking nation, Filipinos have not fully maximized its potentials. Studies show that the Filipinos' grasp of the English language is slipping while other Asians are catching up fast. In 2008, an online article by Karl Wilson in "The National" revealed that Filipinos scored an overall mean of 6.69 for the macro skills in English in terms of listening, writing, reading, and speaking. This indicates a rather low profile at the backdrop of international standards. Historically, the English proficiency of Filipinos has been consistently stable across 1993 to 2000 before a gradual decline has been reported in the following years. Even more alarming is the rising percentage of those who are incompetent in English which doubled from a measly 7% in 1993 to 14% in 2006 (UK Essays, 2013).

Apart from the above, grammar is regarded as one of the fundamentals of language. Regardless of any language, competence in grammar is foundational to one's ability to communicate in a particular language. One's good grasp of grammar implies the ability to send clearer messages, and the likelihood of being intelligible and understood by others. Moreover, one can also produce good quality writings with a competent mastery of grammar (Bradshaw, 2013).

English Grammar presupposes eight parts of speech namely: noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunctions, interjections and verbs. Students are taught to be competent in the fictional use of these grammatical elements. However, the researcher who has relatively spent years in the English language teaching career has noted that one of the main problems of the students is their functional grasp of subject-verb agreement. ESL students' problematic difficulties in their use of subject-verb agreement are becoming more obvious and rampant, and it cuts across the different grade levels where students belong. From the primary school towards the university level, many students are noted in their speech and writing as not being able to abide with the rules of subject-verb agreement. Errors on subject-verb agreement were found not only in students' essays but even in writings of colleagues in universities. The more worrisome dimension of this problem is that such fiasco extends even to professionals who use English in their lectures or those among the honorable members of state and national assemblies or those engaged in varied media outfits. Errors in subject-verb agreement are becoming wide spread and it seems as if many people are either no longer aware of the rules or they simply undermine the importance of grammar rules, for as long as they are able to convey their message (Tafida & Okunade, 2016).

Although the rules on subject-verb agreement have been introduced to students as early as their primary education, they still face problems in acquiring the linguistic competence in their communicative command or use of English. Nayan (2009) also concurs with this that despite being instructed of the grammatical rules at younger age, ESL (English as a second language) learners are not adept in deploying their knowledge of rules in their actual communicative use of English.

In the above context, one of the language learning competencies in the K to 12 program relates to grammar proficiency. Apparently, the observed deterioration among students in their application or usage of correct grammar in English language pervades not only those in the elementary level but also in the secondary level of education. Since K to 12 uses spiral progression, the grammar competencies are expected to be mastered by the learners in the early stages as a prerequisite for them to cope with the more advanced grammar lessons in the higher levels of their education.

In addition to the above, the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum uses the Spiral Progression Principle in English language teaching. In the spiral curriculum design, key concepts are presented repeatedly throughout the curriculum, but with deepening layers of complexity. As such, learning competencies in English are taught at

increasing levels of difficulty and sophistication. This allows the students to progress from the foundational level to higher levels of language use. Thus, the performance in English of the language learners, especially in writing which focuses on subject-verb agreement, is a crucial part in their language learning as it greatly affects their performance in the succeeding grade levels.

The researcher happens to be the lone English teacher of at Salud-San Eugenio National High School, who is tasked to prepare Junior High School students for higher levels of language learning especially in the area of grammar, which includes subject-verb agreement. Hence, a careful study on the nuances of the grammatical competence of the students and the possible conditions surrounding it would greatly help the researcher in catering to the language learning needs of the students. Thus, with this objective in mind, the researcher was prompted to formulate the conceptual framework of this study.

Literature Review

On Grammar and Grammatical Competence

Grammar may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines words in order to form longer units of meaning. There is a set of rules which govern how units of meaning may be constructed in any language: one may say that a learner who knows grammar is one who has mastered and can apply these rules to express him or herself in the acceptability of the language forms (Chung and Pullum, 2015).

In addition, Ur (2009) describes grammar as the way a language operates and combines words so as to express certain kinds of meaning, some of which cannot be conveyed adequately by vocabulary alone. These include the way ideas are grouped and related, and the purposes of utterances such as statement, question, request, etc. Grammar may also serve to express time relations, singular or plural distinctions and many other aspects of meaning. There are rules which govern how words have to be manipulated and organized so as to express these meanings such as when a competent speaker of the language will be able to apply these rules so as to convey his or her chosen meaning effectively and acceptably.

Moreover, grammar may speak even louder and more insistently than those of its denotation; most of the connotations carry a negative overtone, and yet many of the connotations are based on misunderstandings of the basic definitions of the word. Developing an awareness of the multiple connotations associated with the subject of grammar may help English teachers to understand students' potential aversion to studying grammar, as well as their own difficulties or confusions about the subject (Allen, 2013).

Furthermore, Burns (2009) says that grammar is essentially about the systems and patterns people use to select and combine word. By studying grammar people come to recognize the structure and regularity which is the foundation of language and people gain the tools to talk about the language system.

Similarly, Mellish and Ritchie (2008) articulate that in developing a grammar, one has to devise a suitable set of grammatical categories to classify the words and other constituents which may occur. It is important to understand that the mnemonic names given to these categories are essentially arbitrary, as it is the way that the labels are used in the rules and in the lexicon that gives significance to them.

Algeo and Pyles (2010) outline that grammar is sometimes defined as everything in a language that can be stated in general rules, and lexis as everything that is unpredictable. But that is not quite true. Certain combinations of words, called collocations, are more or less predictable.

Additionally, Kirkham (2010) summarizes grammar, at its core, as the rules of language. But how these rules are imagined and what these rules encompass can vary greatly from definition to definition. As a result, the common understanding of grammar differs in subtle but important ways from the linguistic sense of the term.

In the same way, Richards (2016) discloses that grammar is the system of rules used to create sentences refers to the knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses and syntactic structures used to create grammatically well-formed sentences in English. The rules for constructing grammatically correct sentences belong to sentence grammar.

According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011), grammatical competence is the speakers' knowledge of the forms and meanings that exist in grammar, and a theoretical knowledge of how to use them. This type of knowledge is

reflected in the grammar rules. In other words, competence is in the head. Tasks that are sentence-based typically develop the grammatical competence.

Likewise, Eisenmann and Summer (2012) state that not only has grammatical competence focus long been considered a necessary part of language instruction; it has also even to this day often been considered a sufficient condition for successful language learning. In formal grammar teaching, the classroom contents are typically organized mainly based on analysis of language forms, rather than language functions and real communication. The language is often divided into parts and taught in isolation.

However, Larsen-Freeman (2010) explains that grammatical competence has a different starting point than formal grammar, and the focus is mainly on social interactions, communication and why some forms are more appropriate than others. Some say that language is not considered to be a set of rules, since language used is important. This is somewhat problematic because grammar does have to do with rules and the structure of the language. It cannot be claimed that grammar is purely functional, although it has functions and these functions are of utmost importance.

Also, Ur (2009) defines grammatical competence as anything the learners are asked to do that produces a clear outcome and that the function of the task is simply to activate the learners in such a way as to get them to engage with the material to be practiced in an interesting and challenging way. Other terms used in relation to grammar tasks are exercise and activity. The term exercise often refers to the conventional textbook procedure, which focuses much on correct forms, and can be done correctly without much understanding and meaning. Furthermore, Chomsky (1965 as cited by Mojabi, 2014) elucidates that grammatical competence is defined as the ability to recognize and produce the distinctive grammatical structures of a language and to use them effectively in communication.

On the other hand, Hymes' (1972 as cited by Mojabi, 2014) view was thought to be more realistic wherein he defined grammatical competence as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations, thus bringing the sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky's linguistic view of competence.

Finally, Ellis (2007) explicates grammatical competence in relation to implicit and explicit knowledge. Ellis distinguishes two senses of grammatical difficulty: 1) the difficulty learners have in understanding a grammatical feature, and 2) the difficulty learners have in internalizing a grammatical feature so that the students are able to use it accurately in communication. Ellis further argues that the first sense of grammatical difficulty relates to explicit knowledge, while the second sense relates to implicit knowledge.

On Subject-Verb Agreement

Sullivan (2012) mentions that a single relationship lies at the heart of every sentence in the English language. Like an indivisible nucleus at the center of an atom, the subject-verb pair unifies the sentence. It can be surrounded by any number of modifying words, taking on new shades of meaning, but no matter how many adjectives, adverbs, and independent clauses become attached, the basic unit remains. The subject-verb pair guarantees that the sentence means something. Without this core, a sentence fragments and loses its power to speak. Indeed, a sentence only becomes complete when it contains at least a subject and a verb.

McLean (2013) further notes that agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender. Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

In addition, Mudrak (2014) reiterates that in English, the verb in a sentence must agree with the subject, specifically in terms of number. That is, singular subjects require singular verb forms and plural subjects require plural verb forms. In most cases, writers can easily choose the correct verb form for a subject. However, when other clauses intervene between the subject and the verb, errors in subject-verb agreement become more common. Errors sometimes occur because word processing software does not correctly identify the subject and suggests an incorrect verb form, so be alert as you write any important documents. In every sentence, it is important to identify the true subject and ensure that the verb agrees in number with that element and not another noun in the sentence.

Huda (2015) recaps in his blog that the subject of a sentence must agree with the verb form in that sentence. A singular subject must agree with a singular verb, and a plural subject must agree with a plural verb. Sometimes it can be hard to identify the subject of a sentence and it can be confusing to know whether to use the plural or singular form of the verb. Other times, people use conjunctions to join different subjects, plural and or singular, and that makes it unclear whether to use the plural or singular verb. To top it off, there are many exceptions to these guidelines.

Additionally, Rodriguez (2015) in Tafida & Okunade (2016) notes that the use of singular versus, plural verbs and correct subject-verb agreement are more abstract concepts and require more detailed explanations. Correct use of singular and plural verbs also depends on the writer's ability to correctly identify the subject of the sentence and to determine if the subject is singular or plural.

Lastly, Vaurula (2012) writes that even though subject-verb agreement is one of the basic features of the English grammar and has been referred to as a fairly simple or easy semantic feature, even advanced learners and sometimes also native speakers fail to use the feature correctly. This is especially the case with the 3rd person singular –s that is acquired fairly late among the different morphemes studied in English as a second language. Grammatical morphemes of English emerge in learner language at different times, and the rates at which they are mastered vary greatly. When it comes to subject-verb agreement, the plural noun –s is acquired much earlier than the 3rd person singular –s and, consequently, there have been various attempts at trying to explain the phenomenon. Therefore, learning plural nouns have more meaning to learners than learning to inflect verbs as the plurality conveys more meaning than adding a 3rd person singular –s to the verb.

On the Development of Learning Material

Patel (2017) emphasizes the significance of materials development in language program. According to her, teachers should not be discouraged if textbooks are not available as long as they have the objectives of the teaching-learning process or they are familiar with the needs of the learners because they can develop their own materials to achieve their objectives. However, she advises that materials that are appropriate for a particular class need to have an underlying instructional philosophy, approach, method and technique which suit the needs of both the students and teachers.

Similarly, Kellough (2009) states that the detailed planning for teaching and learning is carried out for several reasons, but the most important one is to ensure curriculum coherence. The workbook or learning material in particular, serves as an agenda for the teacher, a helpful aid for substitute teachers and a useful record for use in the future when teaching similar lessons and classes. Further, it provides information on the quality of teaching and learning, and what the teacher and students could do to improve the standard of their performance.

Tomlinson (2016) pioneered an MA course in materials development in 1993. According to him, with the increase in the recognition of the importance of materials development, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of universities delivering MA courses and modules on materials development and in the number of PhD students researching aspects of materials development. And it is now recognized as one of the most important undertakings in applied research. According to Tomlinson (1998) (as mentioned in Patel 2017), materials development refers to anything which is done by writers, teachers or learners to provide sources of language input in ways which maximize the likelihood of intake.

On Conditions affecting Grammatical Competence

According to Arcelo (2003) found that the Philippines is very accommodating of female students wherein 59.03 percent of enrollees in public higher education was female during the years 1996-1997.

Torres (2011) as cited by Few (2013) when he found out that the functional literacy rates of Filipino boys are lower than those of Filipino girls. It is also reported that boys' underachievement in primary education is driven by the following factors: parents' and teachers' low academic expectations for boys, the economic viability of working, passive classroom experience, gender bias and stereotyping.

In the ADB (Asian Development Bank) Economics Working Paper, Series No. 199 entitled "Education Outcomes in the Philippines", Dalisay et al (2010) highlights one of the reasons for having students who are over-

aged for their grade level in Elementary Education. Accordingly, parents postpone the enrollment of their children in primary education. The research found that: “[...] less than half of 6-year-old children are not yet in primary school. BEIS reported that 63.36% of Grade 1 enrollees are older than 6 years. Of these overaged Grade 1 pupils, 63.44% are 7 years old. Parents appear to postpone enrolment at 6 years old and tend to send their children to school when they get older.”

In 2012, the Department of Education released Department Order No. 16, s. 2012 implementing the Mother Tongue-Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The implementing guidelines specify the standardization of the students’ mother tongue (first language used) as an instructional medium from Kindergarten level to Grades 1 to 3.

A 2016 published article by Rappler Philippines (Cepeda, 2016) highlights several expert analyses provided by World Bank lead economist Jan Ruthowski who took note of the reasons behind the poverty of many Filipinos’ despite those who are employed. The latter’s report noted that:

“[...] reducing in-work poverty is ... the main challenge facing the [Philippines’] labor sector.

... the cause of in-work poverty among Filipinos [is] the low learning capacity of the poor, [that is] 30% of workers who finished secondary education hold unskilled jobs and work as laborers.

... there is [also] a scarcity of productive, well-paying jobs, especially in the rural areas. The World Bank’s findings echo the data recently released by the Philippine Statistics Authority.” (Cepeda, 2016)

Moreover, Kohli (2014) stated in an online article that electronic books (ebooks), tablets and computer-based learning might be pervading elementary and middle schools throughout the United States of America, but college students are still old-school. She conducted a survey of about 1,200 students in 100 American colleges in October found that for almost every type of schoolwork, students prefer to use a book rather than a computer.

Finally, Sicat (2013) wrote in an article in a newspaper that learning from the books was thus a heavily and unnecessarily burdened activity. Waiting time to read in the library was long for many. Few students could afford to buy their own books. The learning process was more difficult just from the scarcity of supply of reading materials. Today, the photo copy machine, the internet and electronic editions of standard books are available more cheaply. The technology for copying is easily at hand.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed the descriptive-developmental method. Descriptive research is a useful mode of inquiry to know what is happening or to explain a phenomenon where people have conflicting beliefs about what is happening (Church, 2010). Descriptive research was engaged in this study for its requirement to describe the sets of data gathered from the respondents such as: sex, grade level, age, grade in English in the first and second grading, first language used, reading materials at home, types of media exposure, occupation of parents, parents’ educational attainment, monthly family income, and level of grammatical competence on subject-verb agreement.

Developmental approach is known as the systematic study of educational processes where the creation of knowledge, grounded in data systematically derived from practice, is of primary importance (Richey & Klein, 2005). It was used in this study in the development of the supplemental learning material to enhance the grammatical competence of the students along subject-verb agreement based on the findings of the study.

Inferential technique was also used in the study, specifically differential statistics. Social scientists examine the relationships between variables, and thereby to create inferential statistics, include but are not limited to: [linear regression analyses](#), [logistic regression analyses](#), [ANOVA](#), [correlation analyses](#), [structural equation modeling](#), and survival analysis (Waters, 2010).

Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study included one-hundred seventy-seven (177) Junior High School students from Salud-San Eugenio National High School, Natividad, Pangasinan enrolled in the school year 2017-2018. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents into the different grade levels.

Table 1

Distribution of the Junior High School Students at Salud-San Eugenio National High School, Natividad, Pangasinan

Grade Level	Number of Students
GRADE 7	45
GRADE 8	49
GRADE 9	41
GRADE 10	42
Total	177

Total enumeration was used to determine the sample population since the entire class population for each grade level was employed as respondents.

Data-Gathering Instrument

For purposes of gathering data, specialized instruments were developed, adopted and modified. In the interest of transparency and clarity, the description and purpose of the instruments were adequately communicated to the student-respondents, the teachers and the school administration as these were indicated in the cover letter attached to the instruments. It also stipulates a confidentiality clause to ensure the security of data gathered.

Two (2) instruments were used in gathering the data, namely: 1) the questionnaire that gathered the profile of the students, and 2) the test on subject-verb agreement.

The questionnaire which is a profiling instrument was used to obtain the learner-profile variables namely, sex, grade level, age, grade in English in the first and second grading, first language used, reading materials at home, types of media exposure, occupation of parents, parents' educational attainment, and monthly family income. The design of this instrument was adopted from Crisostomo (2007), although certain changes were introduced.

The test on subject-verb agreement was prepared by the researcher. It is comprised of 200 multiple-choice questions, equally distributed to test students' mastery of the 20 rules of subject-verb agreement, i.e. 10 questions for each rule. The rules are as follows: 1) A verb agrees with its subject in number; 2) Collective nouns such as crew, faculty, class, committee, etc. usually take singular verbs when the speaker refers to the group as a whole or the group acts as a whole, but take the plural verbs when the speaker refers to the individual members or the members in the group act individually or separately; 3) Compound subjects joined by *and* generally require plural verb but compound subjects joined by *and* but referring to the same person or thing (or things regarded as one or complement to each other) requires singular form of verb; 4) The third person pronouns such as *he, she, and it* require singular form of verb. While the pronouns *I, we, you, they,* require plural; 5) Compound subjects joined by *or, either...or, or neither...nor* generally require verbs that agree with the subject nearer the verb; 6) Compound subjects composed of negative and affirmative parts require verbs which agree with the affirmative; 7) Compound subjects joined by *with, together with, as well as, including,* and other similar words require verb that agrees to the first subject; 8) Singular indefinite pronouns require singular verb. Singular indefinite pronouns

are: *each, every, everybody, everyone, everything, anybody, anyone, anything, somebody, someone, something, one, no one, nothing, nobody, either, and neither*. (9) Plural indefinite pronouns require plural verbs which include: *many, several, both, few, and other*; 10) *All, some, plenty, lots of* require singular or plural verbs depending on the number of the object of the *of-phrase*.

The next set of rules include 11) When *all* means the *only thing*, the verb required is singular; 12) If a fraction is used as subject, it requires singular or plural verbs depending on the number of *of-phrase*; 13) The expression *a number* when used to precede a subject requires a plural verb. While the expression *the number* when used to precede a subject requires a singular verb; 14) When relative pronoun is used as the subject of the dependent clause, a singular or plural verb is required depending on the number and person of its antecedent; 15) Demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that* require singular verb; while *these* and *those* require plural verbs; 16) The title of a book, magazine, or movie is considered singular and therefore requires singular verb; 17) When *there* is used as an expletive, it requires either a singular or plural verb depending on the subjects that follow the verb; 18) Expressions of amount or quality preceding plural nouns referring to *money, time* or *distance* are generally considered as singular and therefore require singular verbs; 19) The verb agrees with the subject, not the phrase that follows it; and 20) Nouns plural in form but singular in meaning take singular verbs.

The foregoing selected rules were lifted from the module “Let’s Learn All About Subject and Verb Agreement” (Balili, 2012). Prior to administering the instrument to the students, it was subjected to content-validation that employed the expert evaluation of English language teachers with a considerable length of service in teaching. These included Head Teacher, Master Teachers and regular teachers (i.e. with the rank of Teacher III).

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to administering the data-gathering instruments, permission was officially sought from the Principal of the research locale. The concerned teachers handling the students were tapped of their assistance in scheduling the sessions for the data-gathering procedure. The profiling questionnaire was initially administered, followed by the conduct of the test.

To ensure the reliability of the data obtained, the researcher personally administered the instruments to the students and carefully explained the directions. All data were carefully checked, recorded, tallied, tabulated and analyzed using spread sheets.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Various modes of data treatment were employed for data analysis corresponding to the requirements in each of the research problems.

For problem number 1 (demographic profile), each of the learner-profile variables were recorded, tabulated and noted of their frequency counts and percentage.

The students’ grades in first and second quarters were qualified using the standard descriptive equivalents of the ratings based on School Form 5 Report on Promotion and Learning Progress and Achievement under DepEd Order 8, s. 2015. This rubric is presented below:

Descriptions	Grading Scale	Remarks
Outstanding	90 – 100	<i>Passed</i>
Very Satisfactory	85 – 89	<i>Passed</i>
Satisfactory	80 – 84	<i>Passed</i>
Fairly Satisfactory	75 – 79	<i>Passed</i>
Did Not Meet Expectations	Below 75	<i>Failed</i>

For problem number 2 (level of grammatical competence of students along subject-verb agreement), data on the students’ level of grammatical competence on subject-verb agreement were described using mean score and mean percentage score. The results were conveyed in terms of Mean Percentage Score (MPS) and its descriptive

equivalent as adopted from DepEd Memorandum no. 160 series of 2012 which is shown below:

Weight	Mean Percentage Score	Descriptive Equivalent
1	96-100%	Mastered
2	86-95%	Closely Approximating Mastery
3	66-85%	Moving Towards Mastery
4	34-65%	Average
5	15-33%	Low
6	5-14%	Very Low
7	0-4%	Absolutely No Mastery

For problem number 3 (relationship between students' level of grammatical competence and their profile variable), Chi-square test for independence was employed to establish significant relationship or association between the students' level of grammatical competence and their profile variables. Specifically, for effect size, Cramers V and Phi value was utilized.

For problem number 4 (suggested learning materials to enhance students' grammatical competence in subject-verb agreement), the merits of the research findings were extracted and isolated for the development of a supplemental learning material that will enhance the grammatical competence of the students along subject-verb agreement.

Findings and Discussion

Socio-Demographic and Academic Profile of the Junior High School Students

The research involved the participation of 177 Junior High School students. There are many male students (52 percent) than female students (48 percent). They are Grade 7 students (25.4 percent), Grade 8 students (27.7 percent), Grade 9 students (23.2 percent) and Grade 10 students (23.7 percent). Their ages vary across 12 to 19-year-olds with larger fractions of students aged 13-16 (84.7 percent). In addition, the grades obtained by the students in the first and second quarters range across "Did Not Meet Expectations" to "Outstanding" and the average grades in both quarters got "Satisfactory" ratings (80.61 / 80.98).

Majority of the students' (74.6 percent) reported "Iloko" to be their first language used. Majority of the students have access to "textbooks" (80.7 percent), "newspapers" (68.9 percent), "magazines" (57.6 percent), "online reading materials" (51.4 percent) and "novels" (48.6 percent) in their respective homes. The students are also exposed to varied media types such as "books" and "television" (98.9 percent), "radio" (93.8 percent), "internet" (93.2 percent), "newspapers" (81.4 percent), and "magazines" (67.2 percent).

The occupations of the students' parents range across blue collar and professional services and industries. Majority of the students' fathers are employed as "skilled agricultural / forestry / fishery workers" (57.1 percent), while the rest are employed in "crafts and trades" (9.0 percent), "service and sales" (7.3 percent), "elementary occupations" (6.2 percent), "plant and machine operations / assembly" (4.0 percent), "management" (1.1 percent), and "professional services" (1.1 percent). Some of the students' fathers are househusband/deceased (9.6 percent). On the other hand, the occupations of the students' mothers also vary, to include employments in "service and sales" (15.3 percent), "agricultural, forestry and fishery skills industries" (15.3 percent), "elementary occupations" (6.8 percent), "clerical positions" (1.7 percent), "crafts and trades" (1.7 percent), and "management" (0.6 percent). Majority of the students' mothers are either housewives or deceased (58.8 percent).

The students' parents have relatively at par highest educational attainment. Majority of the students' fathers are High School graduate (57.6 percent), while the rest of the students' fathers are College graduate (15.8 percent), High School undergraduate (11.9 percent), College undergraduate (5.6 percent), Elementary School graduate (7.3 percent), and Elementary School undergraduate (1.7 percent). On the other hand, majority of the students' mothers are High School graduate (53.1 percent), while the rest are College undergraduate (12.4 percent), College graduate (14.7 percent), High School undergraduate (8.5 percent), Elementary School graduate (7.9 percent), and Elementary School undergraduate (3.4 percent).

Finally, majority of the students belong to families having the lowest income range, P7,890 and below (55.4 percent). Smaller fractions of the students belong to families with relatively higher income ranges namely,

P7,891 to P15,780 (28.2 percent), P15,781 to P31,560 (13 percent), P31,560 to P78,900 (2.3 percent), and P78,901 to P118,350 (1.1 percent).

Level of Grammatical Competence of the Junior High School Students

The great majority of the students (90.4 percent) were found to have “Average” grammatical competence in the area of subject-verb agreement. Only a few number of students (9.6 percent) have reached the level “Moving towards Mastery”.

Relationship between the Students’ profile Variables and their Grammatical Competence

Across the relationship of profile variables with the students’ level of grammatical competence, the results show that only a few variables are significantly related to grammatical competence. The variables include “sex” (3.87 / 0.05), grades in English in the 1st and 2nd grading period (42.492 / 0.000 and 32.227/ 0.000) “monthly family income” (10.867 / 0.028), and “online reading materials” (7.807 / 0.007). Moreover, based on the computed effect size, “monthly family income” has a medium or typical effect, while the other three significant variables have small effect. Level of significance is set at 0.05.

Conclusions

Based on the merits of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The Junior High School students are mostly male; are teenagers; have satisfactory grades; speak Iloko; have textbooks at home; and are exposed to diverse media types. The parents’ occupation range across blue collar and professional services and industries; are mostly High School Graduates; and with lowest level of monthly income.
2. The level of grammatical competence of the Junior High School students is Average.
3. In the context of the students’ characteristics, the students’ sex, grade, monthly family income, and access to online reading materials significantly relate to their grammatical competence.
4. The supplemental learning material for the Junior High School students to enhance their grammatical competence was based from the research findings to cater to their specific needs and characteristics drawn from their socio-demographic and academic variables, the level of their grammatical competence, and variables that signify to their grammatical competence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Teachers and administrators should provide the students varied reading and learning materials on subject-verb agreement to enhance their grammatical competence;
2. Teachers should conduct home visitations to further understand the real situations and needs of the students which affect their academic performance;
3. Teachers should raise the level of grammatical competence of the students in the area of subject-verb agreement by being aware to the findings of this study.

References

- Algeo, John & Pyles, Thomas (2010). *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, Sixth Edition. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. Boston, Massachusetts, USA.
- Allen, Graham (2013). *Rolland Barthes*. London & New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group.
- Cohen, Jacob (1988). *Statistical Power and Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, Second Edition. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Eisenmann, M. & Summer, T. (2012). *Basic Issues in EFL Teaching and Learning*. Heidelberg: Winter.

- Ellis, R. (2007). The Differential Effects Of Corrective Feedback on Two Grammatical Structures. In A. Mackey (Ed.), *Conversational interaction in second language acquisition* (pp. 339- 360). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Kellough, R. and N. Kellough (2005). *A Guide to Methods and Resources*. Ohio: Prentice Hall.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2010). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McLean, Scott (2013). *The Basics of Speech Communication*. Boston, United States. Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Nassaji, H. & Fotos, S. (2011). *Teaching Language in Second Language Classrooms: Integrating Form-Focused Instruction in Communicative Context*. New York: Routledge.
- Sherman, Dayne (2011). *The Little, Brown Handbook, 11th Edition*. Southeastern Writing Center. Louisiana, USA.
- Ur, P. (2009). *Grammar Practice Activities: A Practical Guide for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

JOURNALS/ MEMORANDA

- Arcelo, Adriano A. (2003). In pursuit of Continuing Quality in Higher Education through Accreditation: the Philippine Experience. *International Institute for Educational Planning*. 1 (01).
- Barraquio, Dulce Corazon T. (2015). Grammar Proficiency of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Calamba College Students. *Philippine E-Journals*. 1 (1).
- Cabigon, Mike (2015). State of English in the PH: Should we be concerned? *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Department of Education Order No. 8, s. 2015, dated April 1, 2015. Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program.
- Department of Education Order No. 160, s. 2012, dated September 10, 2012. Maximizing Utilization of the National Achievement Test (NAT) Results to Raise the Achievement Levels in Low Performing Schools.
- Department of Education Order No. 16, s. 2012, dated February 17, 2012. Guidelines on the Implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE).
- Few, Robert S. (2013). Why are Boys Under-performing in Education? *United Nations Girls' Education Initiative*. 1 (01).
- Mbau, Anitha T., Marhum, Mochtar & Muhsin, Mohamad (2014). An Analysis on the Subject-Verb Agreement Errors in Writing Paragraph Made by the Second Semester Students of English Department. *E-Journal of English Language Teaching Society*. 2 (2).
- Nayan, Surina (2009). A Study of Subject-Verb Agreement: From Novice Writers to Expert Writers. *International Education Studies*. 2 (3).
- Noori, Miqdad A., Shamary, Isam H. & Yasin, Mohamad S. (2015). Investigating Subject-Verb Agreement Errors among Iraqi Secondary School Students in Malaysia. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 3 (5).
- Philippine K to 12 Curriculum Guide ENGLISH (Grade 1 to Grade 10) dated July 2015.
- Sicat, Gerardo P. (2013). How College Textbooks Became Affordable – A Memoir. *Crossroads*. The Philippine Star.
- Stapa, SI & Izahar, MM (2010). Analysis of Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement Among Malaysian ESL Learners. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*. 16 (1).
- Tafida, Amina G. & Okunade, Shittu K. (2016). Subject-Verb Agreement Problem among English as Secondary Learners: A Case of One Hundred Level Undergraduates of Federal University of Technology, Minna. *Journal of Education and General Studies*. 2 (2).

UNPUBLISHED THESES AND DISSERTATION

- Amin, Z., A. Mansoor, S.R. Hussain & F. Hashmat (2016). Impact of Social Media on Students' Academic Performance. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, 5(4),22-29.
- Alnatheer, A.A. (2013). *The Role of Motivation and Motivational Strategies in Saudi Students' Communicative Competence in English*. Australia: School of Cultural and Professional Learning, Queensland University of Technology.

- As-il, Jose F. (2003). "English Communication Proficiency of Freshman Students of Saint Louis High School." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Baguio.
- Batalla, Andrei V. (2016). "Difficulties in English Writing Skills of Sophomore College Students." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Pangasinan State University, School of Advanced Studies.
- Cabansag, John N. (2013). "Written Language Proficiency of Laboratory High School Students in a State University in Cagayan Valley Philippines." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Isabela State University.
- Cadiz, Lenaida A. (2004). "Oral Communication Skills of the Second Year College Students of Abra Valley Colleges." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City.
- Chevalier, A., C. Harmon, V. Sullivan, & I. Walker (2013). The Impact of Parental Income and Education on the Schooling of their Children. *IZA Journal of Labor Economics*, 2013, 2(8).
- Crisostomo, Budy G. (2007). "English Proficiency of the students of Cardinal Reyes High School, Bronx, New York." Unpublished Dissertation. University of Baguio. Baguio City.
- Dalisay, S.M., R.B. Rodriguez, A. Martinez, & S. Cuevas (2010). Education Outcomes in the Philippines. MMLA, Philippines: Asian Development Bank. ISSN 1655-5252. Publication Stock No. WPS102229.
- Mabuan, Ronaldo T. (2015). An Analysis of Weblogs' Grammatical Errors of Filipino Learners of English as Second Language. Unpublished Master's Thesis. De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines.
- Milan, Remedios D. (2004). "Competence in English Grammar of First Year students of the Mountain Province General Comprehensive High School." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Baguio. Baguio City.
- Navarossa, Alex H. (2001). "Teaching Strategies in Theme Writing for High School Freshmen." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Naga College Foundation. Naga City.
- Mojabi, Seyede S. (2014). "Correlation between Grammatical Competence and Pragmatic Competence among Iranian University EFL Learners." Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Malaya. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Sreenathachary, V. (2011). Using Internet in Improving One's English Language Skills: 50 Informative, Educative, and Entertaining Websites. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 2(2).
- Ulla, Mark B. (2014). Analysis of the Language Errors in Writing among BSEE and AB English Students. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Father Saturnino Urios University, Butuan City, Agusan del Norte.
- Vaurula, Nina (2012). Subject-Verb Agreement of Finite Verbs in the Present Tense in Written Productions of Finish Secondary School Learners of English as a Second Language. A Pro Gradu Thesis. Jyvaskylan yliopisto. Kielten laitos. Englanti. Helmikuu.
- Vega, Natividad V. (2000). "Student-Related Factors and the Composition Writing Performance of College Freshmen in the Catanduanes Agricultural and Industrial College." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Panganiban, Catanduanes. Virac, Catanduanes.
- Yan, Jeanne A. (2007). "Grammatical Competence of Fourth Year English Majors of Benguet State University." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet.

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

- Burns, Anne (2009). Grammar and Communicative Language Teaching: Why, When and How To Teach It? Retrieved from <http://www.professoranneburns.com/downloads/camtesol2009.pdf>.
- Balili, Bines (2012). Let's Learn All About Subject and Verb Agreement. Retrieved from https://medenglish2012.weebly.com/uploads/2/0/8/6/20862786/let_us_all_learn_about_subject-verb_agreement_-_a_module_for_grade_7_by_bines_balili.pdf.
- Bradshaw, William B. (2013). Why is Grammar Important. Retrieved from <https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/4128521>.
- Cepeda, M. (2016). "Filipinos are Working hard but Remain Poor --- World Bank". RapplerPhilippines. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/136750-filipinos-jobs-remain-poor-world-bank>.
- Chung, Sandy & Pullum, Geoff (2015). Grammar. Retrieved from <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Grammar.pdf>.
- Church, John (2010). Descriptive, correlational and experimental procedures. Teacher Education's Core Knowledge

- and Skills. Retrieved from [http://www .tecks.co.nz/home/Typesofresearchevidence/](http://www.tecks.co.nz/home/Typesofresearchevidence/).
- Estanislao (2013). The Importance of the English Language. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/mobile/Estanislao13/the-importance-of-the-english-language>.
- Huda, Muneer (2014). Subject-Verb Agreement: Final Word. Retrieved from <http://muneerhuda.com/2014/06/subject-verb-agreement-final-word-authority-author/>.
- Kirkham, Samuel (2010). English Grammar in Familiar Lectures. Retrieved from <http://www.polysyllabic.com/?q= navigating/intro/grammardef>.
- Kohli, Sonali. (2014). American College Students say they would rather study with Real Books, Not Laptops. Retrieved from <http://qz.com/316001/ american-college-students-say-they-would-rather-study-with-real-books-not-laptops>.
- Mellish, Chris & Ritchie, Graeme (2008). The Grammatical Analysis of Sentences. Retrieved from <http://homepages.abdn.ac.uk/advaith/pages/teaching/CS 4025/information/gram.pdf>.
- Mudrak, Ben (2014). Subject-Verb Agreement Across Prepositional Phrases. Retrieved from <https://www.aje.com/en/arc/editing-tip-subject-verb-agreement-across-prepositional-phrases/>.
- Patel, Dipika (2017). Significance of Materials Development in Language Teaching. Retrieved from <http://www.fortell.org/content/significance-materials-development-language-teaching&ved>.
- Richards, Jack (2016). Definition of Grammar. Retrieved from <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/definition-of-grammar/>.
- Richey, Rita C. & Klein, James D. (2005). Developmental research methods: Creating knowledge from instructional design and development practice. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225969619_Developmental_research_methods_creating_knowledge_from_instructional_design_and_development_practice
- Sullivan, Brogan (2012). Subject-Verb Agreement. Writing Commons Organization. Retrieved from <https://writingcommons.org/open-text/style/grammar/706-subject-verb-agreement>.
- Tomlinson, Brian (2016). The Importance of Materials Development for Language Learning. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com.ph/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://link.springer.com/content/pdf>.
- UK Essays (2013). The English Language In The Philippines English Language Essay. Retrieved from <http://www.ukessays.com/essays/english-language/the-english-language-in-the-philippines-english-language-essay.php?cref=1>.
- Waters, Janet T. (2010) Correlational Research Guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.capilanou.ca/psychology/student-resources/research-guidelines/Correlational-Research-Guidelines.html>

About the Authors

Estrella C. Sioco is a MAEd in Communication Arts – English graduate at School of Advanced Studies, Pangasinan State University, Urdueta City Pangasinan. She currently works as Secondary School Teacher III at Salud – San Eugenio National High School in Salud, Natividad, Pangasinan.

Dr. Presley V. De Vera is an Ed.D. major in Educational Management graduate at Pangasinan State University. She finished Bachelor of Laws at the University of Pangasinan and a Doctor of Communication candidate at the University of the Philippines Open University. She is an Associate Professor II at Pangasinan State University – Lingayen Campus under the Communication Arts Department and a faculty member at School of Advanced Studies – Pangasinan State University Urdueta City, Pangasinan.