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Research Article

Grammar Skills of Secondary Teacher Education Students in a State University: Basis for Worktext Development

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the standing in the grammar of the freshmen secondary teacher education students of a state university in Zambales, Philippines. Using descriptive research, a questionnaire served as the main instrument in gathering data involving eighty (80) students. A typical respondent is between 16-18 years old, female, speaks Filipino at home, prefers to read in English, and loves short stories as a genre to read. The grammar test consists of three parts: speech; subject-verb agreement; and phrases, clauses, sentences, and sentence patterns. The respondents got the highest scores in the parts of speech. There was a significant increase in their post-test scores. The students should explore and study English grammar and should give more time to appreciate it fully. Gender, language spoken at home, preferred reading materials, and genres should not affect the students' learning. A regular encouragement might help them enhance the students' grammar skills. Students should practice using English at home, explore reading other genres to develop effective reading habits. The teachers should develop more exciting and up-to-date teaching strategies on improving the students' grammar skills. A worktext can be developed based on the results of the study.

Keywords: *EFL learners, instructional material, language module, language teaching, prospective teachers*

Background

The grammar of a language primarily studies the forms of words and their relationship to each other. We learn grammar to find out how to put words together correctly to express our ideas most clearly and effectively.

Proficiency in grammar is essential because it is where an individual can express himself, talk about his ideas and feelings, learn to converse, relate with people, ask for information, state his likes and dislikes, give advice and assert his intentions. Grammar, which has been

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learned extensively by both EFL and ESL students, continues to be a challenge for some students. While the tools and techniques have been implemented, the learners continue to struggle with specific difficulties in sentence construction, such as tenses, adjective clauses, prepositions, conjunction use, and so on (Kholili, 2020).

Some students are not familiar with the grammar rules, especially the parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, phrases, clauses, sentences, and sentence patterns. They cannot even identify the complete sentence to clauses or phrases. That is why they cannot construct even simple sentences. The teacher education student students are future educators, so they must be fluent in speaking and writing. How can they be proficient if they are not familiar with the grammar rules?

Singh (2011) states that grammar is a useful and most interesting subject for the students because he can express himself and talk about his ideas and feelings. It is where he learns to converse, relate with people, ask for information, express his likes and dislikes, give advice, state his intentions. Learning grammar rules and writing mechanics is an essential part of learning to write. Writing and grammar skills allow authors to communicate their message or story to their readers straightforwardly and understandably. It is crucial to understand grammar principles and how to apply them correctly.

In the Philippines, many studies focused on determining the grammar skills of students. These studies focused on grammar proficiency and first language interference of tertiary students (Cabaruan & Cue, 2018), high school students' grammar skills (Sioco & De Vera, 2018), pupils' grammatical proficiency (Salas & Legaspi, 2020), use of varied instructional strategies in improving English grammar proficiency (Alvarez, 2017; Baronia, 2020; Caminade, 2015; Natividad, 2019; Palasan, 2017), teachers' grammar skills (Rosales & Coronel, 2017), and positioning Philippine English grammar and lexicon (Torres, 2019).

Several studies also focused on the development of instructional materials such as worktext, module, and teaching guide. These

studies include the development and validation of English teaching guide (Gilbas et al., 2012), English worktext (Ambayon & Millenes, 2020); English instructional material (Aragon, 2020), and instructional materials in other disciplines such as science and mathematics (Dio, 2017; Esquiedo & Ballado, 2021; Mercado, 2020; Rogayan & Dollete, 2017).

The present study sought to determine the grammar skills of a state university's freshmen secondary teacher education students in Zambales, Philippines. The study focused on parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, phrases, clauses, sentences, and sentence patterns.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age; Gender; Language used at home; Preferred printed reading materials; and Preferred Genre in reading materials?
2. How may the grammar skills be described based on the pre-test and post-test results?
3. Are there significant differences between the pre-test and post-test results of the respondents?
4. How may the findings of the study be used to develop a module?

Methods

Research Design

The research method employed a descriptive method research design to determine the grammar skills of the teacher education students. Descriptive study necessitates a more in-depth examination of different phenomena and their interrelationships. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010).

Respondents

The respondents of this study were eighty (80) freshman secondary teacher education students in one state university in Zambales, Philippines. There were twenty-one (21) male and fifty-nine (59) female who were primarily residents of San Marcelino, Zambales.

Instrument

The data gathering instrument used in this study was a grammar test which was divided into three parts: (a) Parts of Speech, (b) Subject-Verb Agreement, and (c) Phrases, Clauses, Sentences, and Sentence Pattern Test. The test was crafted by the researcher with an acceptable reliability index.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

In terms of students' profile, most of the respondents were female. Majority of the respondents were 16-18 years old. Most of them speak Filipino at home. Several respondents preferred to read English reading materials. And most of the respondents read short stories.

Grammar Skills of the Teacher Education Students

The grammar skills are described into three (3) aspects: Parts of Speech; Subject-Verb Agreement; and Phrases, Clauses, Sentences.

Parts of Speech. Nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections are the forms of words that make up the vocabulary. To better construct sentences, one must first comprehend what parts of speech are and how they act in a sentence.

Table 1 shows the Pre-test and post-test results of the respondents in parts of speech. Five (5) or 6.25% obtained Excellent in the pre-test and eleven (11) or 13.75 % in the Post-test. Forty-one (41) or 51.25% got Very good in the pre-test and fort- three (43) or 53.75% in the Post-test.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post Test Scores in Parts of Speech

Score	Pre-test		Post Test	
	f	%	f	%
Excellent (32 - 40)	5	6.25	11	13.75
Very Good (24 - 31)	41	51.25	43	53.75
Good (16 - 23)	29	36.25	25	31.25
Poor (8 - 15)	5	6.25	1	1.25
Total	80	100.00	80	100.00
Mean	23.51 (Good)		25.86 (Very Good)	
Standard Deviation	5.15		5.12	

The result shows that most of the respondents obtained very good in the pre-test and post-test. The mean (M) of the pre-test is 23.51 which is good and the standard deviation (SD) is 5.15. The mean (M) of the post-test is 25.86 which is very good, and the SD is 5.12.

Every day, English speakers and authors use the parts of speech. The parts of speech resemble that of a bird. The bird represents the English language, and the individual parts of its body describe the components of speech. The bird is incomplete without any of the features. They are the elements that make up the English language. All have a role to play. The pieces of speech are therefore comparable to the game's characters. The parts of speech are the participants in the game of English. Every player contributes, and each position is crucial. Some

players stay for the entire session, while others only come in on occasion. (Paradigm Accelerated Curriculum, 2005).

Subject-Verb Agreement. The verb conjugates according to the subject while writing sentences. When conjugating verbs, the general rule is that if the subject is a single person, location, or thing (rather than a single noun), the verb is conjugated in the singular. The verb is conjugated in the plural if there are many persons, locations, or objects. In other words, the verb and subject agree in number.

Table 2 shows the Pre-test and Post-Test results of the respondents in Subject-verb agreement. Two (2) or 2.5% were excellent in the Pre-test and one (1) or 1.25% in the Post-test. Eleven (11) or 13.75% obtained Very good in the Pre-test and fourteen (14) or 17.5%.

There were fifty-seven (57) or 71.25% who were good in the Pre-test and fifty-five (55) or 68.75% in the Post-test. There were ten (10) or 12.5% who were poor in the Pre-test and Post-test.

Table 2. Pre-test and Post Test Score in SV Agreement

Score	Pre-test		Post Test	
	f	%	f	%
Excellent (32 - 40)	2	2.50	1	1.25
Very Good (24 - 31)	11	13.75	14	17.50
Good (16 - 23)	57	71.25	55	68.75
Poor (8 - 15)	10	12.50	10	12.50
Total	80	100.00	80	100.00
Mean	19.84 (Good)		20.36 (Good)	
Standard Deviation	4.46		4.36	

The Mean (M) of the Pre-test was 19.84 which was good and 20.36 which is also good in the Post-test. The Standard Deviation (SD) is 4.46 in the Pre-test and 4.36 in the Post-test.

The subject-verb agreement problem highlights the need for a writer to make sentences simple and readable. When plural subjects are used for singular verbs, or vice versa, no one knows who is doing that. This is especially significant when long sentences separate the subject and verb. Subject-verb agreement is essential to authors because it allows them to write simple sentences that the reader can understand.

Phrases, Clauses, Sentences, and Sentence Patterns. Table 3 described the Pre-test and Post Test Scores of the respondents in Phrases, Clauses, Sentences and Sentence Patterns.

Most sentences in English are written using one of many common sentence patterns. The simple sentence patterns outlined in this guide to sentence patterns will assist you in deciphering the underlying structure in even the most complicated English sentences. In English, parts of speech are combined to form sentence patterns.

Table 3. Pre-test and Post Test Score in Phrases, Clauses, Sentences and Sentence Patterns

Score	Pre-test		Post Test	
	f	%	f	%
Excellent (16 - 20)	2	2.50	5	6.25
Very Good (12 - 15)	10	12.50	12	15.00
Good (8 - 11)	36	45.00	44	55.00
Poor (4 - 7)	30	37.50	18	22.50
Very poor (0 - 3)	2	2.50	1	1.25
Total	80	100.00	80	100.00
Mean	8.78 (Good)		10.06 (Good)	
Standard Deviation	3.80		4.31	

The table shows that there were two (2) or 2.5% respondents who obtained Excellent in the Pre-test in Phrases, Clauses, Sentences and Sentence Patterns and five (5) or 6.25% in the Post-test. Ten (10) or 12.50% got Very Good in

the Pre-test and twelve (12) or 15% in the Post-test. Thirty-six (36) or 45% were good in the Pre-test and forty-four (44) or 55% in the Post-test. Thirty (30) or 37.5% obtained Poor in the Pre-test and eighteen (18) or 22.5% in the Post-

test. Two (2) or 2.5% were Very Poor in the Pre-test and one (1) or 1.25% in the Post-test.

The table shows that most of the respondents were good in Pre-test and Post-test in Phrases, Clauses, Sentences, and Sentence Pattern. The Mean (M) was 8.78 in the Pre-test with a Standard Deviation of 3.8 and 10.06 M with 4.41 SD in the Post-test.

According to research, using students' writing as the framework for explaining grammatical principles is the most effective method of helping students develop their mastery of grammar in writing (Bacon, 2020; Camps & Fontich, 2019; Daffern et al., 2017; Handayani

& Johan, 2018; Saifudin, 2019; Singh et al., 2017; Wyse & Torgerson, 2017).

Table 4 shows that there were sixteen (16) or 20% who obtained Very Good in the Pre-test and thirty-one (31) or 38.75% in the Post-test in the Phrases, Clauses, Sentences and Sentence Patterns. There were fifty-five (55) or 68.75 who were good in the Pre-test and forty-seven (47) or 58.75 in the Post-test. Nine (9) or 11.25% were poor in the Pre-test and three (3) or 3.75% in the Post-test. The Mean (M) of the Pre-test was 51.66%, with Standard Deviation of 9.67 in the Pre-test and 56.28 M and 10.11 SD. Both were good.

Table 4. Pre-test and Post Test of Total Scores

Score	Pre-test		Post Test	
	f	%	f	%
Excellent (80 – 100)	0	0.00	0	0.00
Very Good (60 – 79)	16	20.00	31	38.75
Good (40 – 59)	55	68.75	47	58.75
Poor (20 – 39)	9	11.25	3	3.75
Total	80	100.00	80	100.00
Mean	51.66 (Good)		56.28 (Good)	
Standard Deviation	9.67		10.11	

Difference in the Grammar Skills of the Respondents

Table 5 shows the computed t-values to test the significant difference between the respondents' pre-test and post-test scores on their grammar skills.

For the grammar skills on parts of speech, the computed t-value is 4.440, which is significant at 0.05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected, there is

a significant difference between the pre-test score and the post-test score of the respondents.

On the other hand, the computed t-value in the subject-verb agreement is 0.908, which is not significant within 0.05 level. The null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between the pre-test score and the post-test score of the respondents.

Table 5. t-Test for the Significant Difference on the Pre-test and Post Test Scores

Variables	Pre-test Mean	Posttest Mean	Computed t-Value df = 79 and α = 0.05	P-Value
Parts of Speech	23.51	25.86	4.440	0.000*
Subject-Verb Agreement	19.84	20.36	0.980	0.339
Phrases, Clauses, Sentences and Sentence Patterns	8.77	10.06	2.209	0.030*
Total Score	51.66	56.28	5.173	0.000*

*Significant at 0.05

For phrases, clauses, sentences, and sentence patterns, the null hypothesis is rejected since the computed t-value is 2.209 which is significant at 0.05 level. There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post scores of the respondents along these grammar skills.

There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the analysis of the total score. The null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level. It can be deduced that generally, the grammar skills improved after instruction. There is a significant increase in their post-test scores.

Conclusion

Majority of the respondents were between 16-18 years old, female, spoke Tagalog at home, preferred to read English and the genre love to read was Short Story. There were three (3) parts of the Grammar test: Parts of Speech, Subject-Verb Agreement and Phrases, Clauses, Sentences and Sentence Patterns. The respondents got the highest scores in the Parts of Speech. There was a significant difference between the respondents' pre-test and post-test scores in the parts of speech and grammar skills.

Students should explore and study English grammar and should have more time to appreciate it fully. Age, gender, language spoken at home, preferred reading materials, and genres should not affect learning, but regular encouragement might help them enhance their grammar skills. They should also be exposed to the other genres of reading like novels, novelette, travelogue, metrical tales, yarn, satire, etc., to enhance their knowledge in English grammar. Students should practice using English at home, explore reading other genres to develop effective reading habit.

Learners should be familiar with and use their daily lives the rules and guidelines in parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, phrases, clauses, sentences and sentence patterns. They should apply it not only in school but also at home and in their community. Teachers should develop more interesting and up-to-date teaching strategies on improving the students' grammar skills. The worktext on the review of English grammar will enhance the students' grammar skills and the teachers. A

parallel study should be conducted to address other concerns of students in grammar skills.

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