



EXPLORING GRADE 7 STUDENTS' SECOND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract:

This study investigated the second language difficulties of Grade 7 students in one national high school in Sorsogon province, Philippines, S.Y. 2023-2024. Specifically, it identified the grammatical errors of students in their narrative essays along with subject-verb agreement and verb tenses. It determined the second language difficulties leading to their grammatical errors and their implications for language teaching and learning. Based on the 45 essays analyzed by the 15 students, the results showed that the grammatical errors identified were along the verb tense, which ranked highest (66%), and subject-verb agreement (42%), indicating a high level of students' writing difficulty. Several linguistic difficulties that contributed to these errors were vocabulary gaps, limited knowledge of grammatical rules, syntactic differences between the students' local language (L1) and English language (L2), the challenging learning environment, lack of resources, distractions, and insufficient family support. The students' L2 difficulties may have implications for teaching and learning, particularly in terms of communicative effectiveness, reading comprehension, shift in teaching approach, and balancing formal and communicative activities.

Keywords: language difficulties, second language, teaching and learning

1. Grammar Acquisition: An Overview

Acquiring a language and learning a language are two different things. However, combinations of these, both internally and externally, are very important in the development and enhancement of one's knowledge about languages. Since language is

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composed of complicated systems or so-called “*four subsystems comprisal such as Discourse, Grammar, Lexicon, and Semantics*” (Filho & Queriquelli, 2017), which varies from different contexts and cultural formations, it could hardly be described in its entirety. Grammar alone is already a vast concept, and many have debated what is really grammar (Aguion, *et al.*, 2021).

Euson (2020) states that grammar is an organization of rules and exceptions that disclose the language's meaning (see also Aguion, *et al.*, 2021). Hence, the debate about grammar issues is highlighted by Hinkel (2018), stating that “...*the ongoing debate about the usage, usefulness, and purposes of prescriptive and descriptive grammars has been continuing since the early history of writing, literacy, and attempts at language standardization.*”

While grammarians and linguists are continuously studying these arguments, Nassaji (2017) argues that grammar acquisition needs to be given attention since when a person acquires the structures and rules of the language, he/she can use that knowledge to enhance communicative competence. Hence, studying grammar pedagogically is given much attention (e.g. Anderson, 2005; Pawlak, 2009) but still needs more empirical researches (Aguion, *et al.*, 2021).

Contextualizing such issues on grammar acquisition in a multilingual and postcolonial nation such as the Philippines poses a challenge, particularly in periphery schools. Grammar acquisition possesses a more comprehensive paradigm because this encompasses not only the rules for constructing sentences and the principles governing language usage, including syntax, morphology, semantics and phonology. It also reflects its role in structuring and understanding language at different levels, from words to complex sentences and across different contexts. However, the rule of subject-verb agreement and verbs are one of several grammatical principles that fall under the domain of syntax that determine the pattern and order of words arranged in sentences and are considered brutal by L2 learners. One example of this is the situation in one of the secondary schools in Sorsogon province, wherein an identified group of students find it hard to write essays following the English grammar rules.

As Widianingsih (2016) says, ESL learners encounter difficulties in maintaining the agreement between the subject and the verb with singular or plural subjects, which leads to incorrect sentences. The standard structure of a sentence follows a fixed word order, which is the (subject-verb-object). It becomes challenging for learners to manipulate words correctly, considering that the word order in their native language is different (Roxas, 2017). This has led to errors in the agreement and other areas, such as verb tenses.

There were studies (e.g. Karim & Sakim, 2015; Fitrawati & Safa, 2021) that found out that learners faced severe challenges in writing sentences following grammar correctly and mastering cohesion in Bangladesh and Indonesian schools. These studies showed that learners were facing enormous problems in word structure and creating an accurate meaning. While these previous studies looked at students' grammatical errors, they failed to develop an intervention for the writing difficulties of learners. Thus, the latter was the focus of this study. From the identified grammatical errors, this study proposed a learning material that may cater to grammar instruction to improve student's

awareness of grammar and minimize writing errors anchored on the result of the study. Writing is critical in language learning as teaching the English language recognizes the four language micro-skills. This skill is essential for communicating one's ideas. Furthermore, it is considered the most challenging skill to develop because it does not come naturally and spontaneously to learners (Redrico *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, Opara (2016) states that several learners can understand English but experience difficulties in putting their ideas into writing.

2. Contextualizing the English Language Situation in the Philippines

Despite the fact that the Philippines is recognized globally as the largest English-speaking nation (Cabigon, 2015), Filipinos have not yet fully realized its advantages. There were researches indicating that although other Asians are quickly catching up, Filipinos' command of the English language is deteriorating. For instance, this is seen in the International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 result that the Philippines ranked 77th out of 81 countries and performed worse than the global average in all categories. This indicates a low profile in the international standards.

Meanwhile, the Philippine educational system has been using English as a medium of instruction from the basic to tertiary level (Quibol-Catabay, 2016). Despite numerous reforms in the education curriculum, the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in other subjects remains essential in the teaching and learning process, as stated in Executive Order No. 210, Section 7, Article XIV, known as Establishing Policy to strengthen the use of English Language states that for communication, English language is used as the medium.

Besides, one of the most significant reforms in education in the country is the implementation of the K-12 Curriculum in the Philippines Education System under the Republic Act 10533, which aims to improve the quality of Education and include learning competencies to develop learners' communicative skills and language grammar proficiency. Along with this, the Department of Education designed a curriculum guide for educators to impart learners with uniform and relevant learning outcomes. The revised curriculum guide, tagged as most essential learning competencies (MELCs), shows that the intensive instructions for subject-verb agreement and verb tense were given to students from fifth grade (Grade 5) to seventh grade (Grade 7). It is observed that these competencies were no longer given intensive instructions at higher grade levels. For that reason, Grade 7 students are expected to master these skills, considering that the K-12 curriculum uses spiral progression, where students are expected to master concepts in each grade level to develop the ability to deal with complex grammar lessons.

The National Achievement Test (NAT) administered last 2023 to Grade 7 students in one of the junior high schools in the Division of Sorsogon accumulated the lowest Minimum Proficiency Level (MPL) in science, which was 39.82% and in English, which is 42.62% and 45.26% in Mathematics and the highest MPL was in Filipino with 57.93%. This result indicates a connection between Grade 7 students' proficiency in the English

language and their performance in other learning areas, considering that Science and Mathematics use English as a medium of instruction. Once students could not comprehend and process what was in the text, they could hardly answer the questions correctly.

Given the significance of writing in language learning in schools where English proficiency is vital, understanding and addressing students' grammar difficulties is imperative. The Philippine educational system, rooted in English as a medium of instruction, emphasizes developing learners' communicative skills and grammar proficiency. Implementing the K-12 Curriculum underscores this commitment by integrating grammar instruction from Grade 5 to Grade 7, aligning with the spiral progression approach to curriculum design. Therefore, investigating the grammar acquisition challenges of Grade 7 students in one junior high school is crucial in assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and identifying areas for improvement.

3. Objectives

This study identified the second language difficulties of grade 7 students in one of the junior high schools, school year 2023-2024.

Specifically, it sought to:

- identify the grammatical errors made by students in their narrative essays along with subject-verb agreement and verb tenses,
- determine the second language difficulties of grade students, and
- propose a material based on the results of the study.

4. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-qualitative method to determine the grammatical errors the top 15 Grade 7 students made in the first quarter of the school year 2023-2024. The 45 narrative essays of these students were analyzed by identifying the SV agreement errors and the verb tense errors.

The grammatical errors were interpreted using the Likert scale adopted from Fitrawati & Safitri (2021), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Quality Interpretation of Error Frequency Percentage

Error Frequency Percentage	Interpretation
0	Exceptional
1-10	Excellent
11-25	Very good
26-40	Good
41-55	Fair
56-80	Poor
81-100	Very poor

As to the second language difficulties of these students, the unstructured interview was conducted, and data were thematically analyzed. The findings of the study served as the basis for proposing a grammar workbook to develop mastery in grammar and usage.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Grammatical Errors of Grade 7 Students in Narrative Essay Writing

This section showed the data analysis of the grammatical errors in students' essays, which was analyzed manually and presented based on the error analysis procedure.

Table 2 shows the total grammatical errors committed by Grade 7 students in two categories of grammar, namely subject-verb-agreement and verb tenses. From the average frequency presented in percentage in Table 2, results revealed that verb tenses become the most challenging, with 66% errors in students' essays. These errors indicated that students have a poor ability to apply verb tenses when writing an essay. Moreover, the subject-verb agreement appears to be the next problematic area, with a percentage of 42% and is considered to be a problem in grammar acquisition of the Grade 7 students.

Table 2: Summary of Errors Committed by Grade 7 Students in Narrative Essay

Number	Type of Error	Total Number of Errors (Frequency)	Percentage	Interpretation
1	Subject-Verb Agreement	114	42%	Fair
2	Verb Tenses	225	66%	Poor

5.2 Subject-Verb Agreement

Looking into students' errors in subject-verb agreement, Table 3 illustrates that there were 144 errors in 342 sentences in subject-verb agreement, equivalent to 42% error frequency. Students demonstrate a fair ability to apply the rules in agreement in their essays. Meanwhile, the most frequent error that students committed in their essays was the error between the agreement of singular subject and singular verb, which existed 98 times in 342 sentences, suggesting the students' problem in correctly forming sentences. The error followed this in the agreement between plural subject and plural verb, which shows that students faced problems in agreement, as they could not match the correct verb to a plural subject.

Table 3: Summary of Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

No.	Subject-Verb Agreement Rules	Frequency of Error		Description
		Number	Percentage	
1	Singular subject takes singular verb	98	29%	Good
2	Plural subject takes plural verb	46	13%	Very good
Total		144	42%	Fair

Figure 1 illustrates an example from the essay written by Student 1. The sentence was composed of the subject *teacher*, which is singular, and the verb *teach*, which is plural instead of *teaches*, to agree with the singular subject *teacher*. Thus, the student used an improper verb that would match the subject *teacher*, as the rule says that a singular subject should take a singular verb.

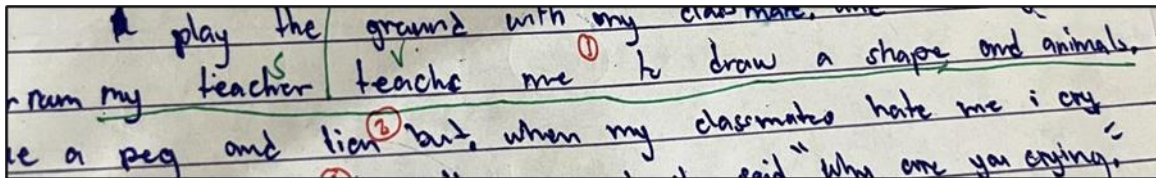


Figure 1: Subject-verb Agreement: Error in Singular Subject

The same case was found in another essay. The subject of the sentence is *sister*, which is singular and the verb used was *like*, which is plural instead of *likes* to match with the singular subject *sister*.

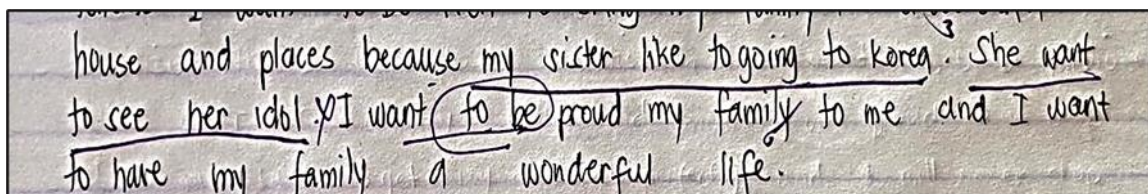


Figure 2: Subject-verb Agreement: Error in Singular Subject

The results indicated that the errors committed by Grade 7 students were due to the omission of the suffix *-s/-es*, confusion when the subject is an indefinite pronoun, mismatch with the subject and verb when the subject is in the first-person singular *I* and errors when there is the intervening word. These errors were due to overgeneralization in adding *-s/-es*, relying too much on their background knowledge and confusion with the subject's proximity from the verb. Students also expressed that they find it hard to construct grammatically correct sentences because they have limited knowledge of the rules since there are several confusing rules in English. In the case of subject-verb agreement, students stated that sometimes it is challenging to identify the subject and the verb in the sentence because not all subjects are followed by the verb immediately. So, they find it hard to decide which appropriate verb to employ in the sentence. Some students expressed that every word with 's' is plural, which they also apply to cases of plural verbs.

According to Abbood (2020), overgeneralization causes the majority of students to make grammatical mistakes. Language acquisition errors occur when a specific form is overgeneralized. Scovel (2021) states that when learners encounter a new rule or a pattern in the target language, they assume that the rule applies to all without exceptions.

5.3 Verb Tenses

Meanwhile, Table 4 shows that students have some problems using tenses, with 225 errors in 342 sentences, or 66%, being described as poor student performance. From the data presented in average frequency in the form of percentages, past tense becomes students' most challenging tense, which existed 107 times or 31%. Errors follow this in using the present tense form, with 71 errors or 21%. Using future tense form errors gained the least error, with 14%.

Table 4: Summary of Errors in Verb Tenses

No.	Type of Error	Frequency of Error		Description
		Number	Percentage	
1	Error in using Simple Present Tense	71	21%	Very Good
2	Error in using Simple Past Tense	107	31%	Good
3	Error in using Simple Future Tense	49	14%	Very Good
Total		225	66%	Poor

Grammatical errors in verb tense are shown in Figure 3. Based on the corpus. There were inconsistencies in the timing of actions or events within a sentence and between sentences. The student was asked to narrate events in the past; however, the student used *invites* which is the present simple tense instead of the past simple tense of the verb *invited*, to show that the action was completed, as the rule states that in the narrating past event, the subject is followed by verb2 or the past tense. This was followed by going, which confuses the narration of the event, considering that he used going, which is a gerund form, instead of the base form go after to in the infinitive phrase.

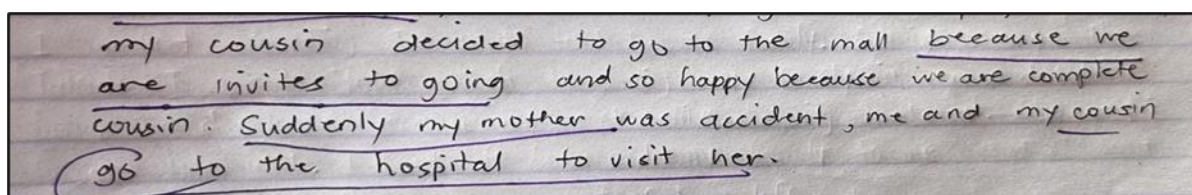


Figure 3: Verb Tenses: Past Simple Tense

In cases of present simple tense, as shown in Figure 4, the student used the past tense of the verb *was* instead of the auxiliary *am* when they were required to narrate present events; this is followed by present tense *get*. The example shows that there were two tenses combined in one sentence, the use of a past form of auxiliary *was* and the use of present form *get* which makes the sentence erroneous. This error may cause confusion, disruption and lack of clarity in communication.

Another error was shown in the same written output where the student wrote *I'm listen*, the student used *listen* instead of the present continuous tense *listening* to state that the action is currently in progress at the time of speaking. This difficulty is due to students don't know the use of verb 'be'.

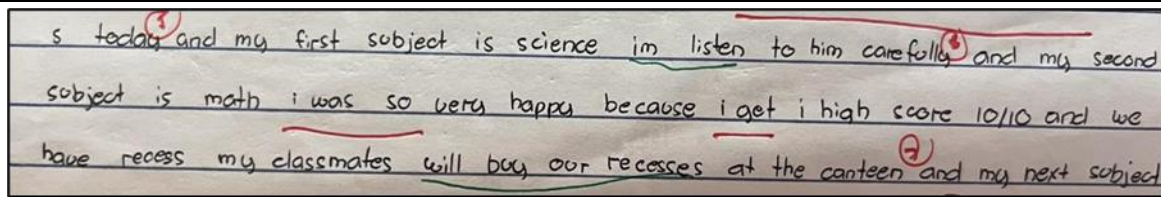


Figure 4: Verb Tenses: Present Simple Tense

Meanwhile, the student narrates future events, talking about his ambition, yet in his sentence, he used *became*, which is in the past tense, instead of *become* and *working*, which is in the present continuous tense. The simple future tense is formed using the auxiliary verb 'will' or 'shall' followed by the base form of the main verb (subject+will/shall+ base form of the verb). Considering that the student was asked to narrate future events, the error occurs in using *became* instead of the base form *become* to state the futurity of action.

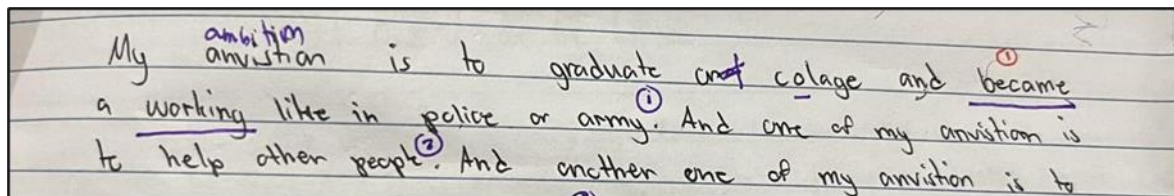


Figure 5: Verb Tenses: Future Simple Tense

The data indicates that most learners struggle to understand the simple past tense. It turned out that learners find simple past tense to be extremely challenging category to understand. A lot of students find it challenging to memorize the structure, such as the simple past tense pattern. Additionally, research revealed that learners struggled with using auxiliary verbs, namely the distinction between *was* and *were*. Moreover, the results indicate that learners struggled with memorizing verb 2, which is an irregular verb. The most common challenges encountered by students were learning the pattern of simple past tense, differentiating when to use an auxiliary verb, and having trouble remembering verbs, particularly irregular verbs. Moreover, learners also faced difficulties in constructing sentences in the present simple tense. The difficulties were the use of the verb 'be' (*is*, *are*, *am*). The omission and addition of the suffix *-s/-es* also contribute to their difficulty. Moreover, the difficulty in the use of 'has' and 'have' was observed.

Furthermore, when it comes to verb tense errors, the Grade 7 students frequently use future simple tense when they employ the past simple tense. This is consistent with the study conducted by Suvarnamani (2017), where students misplaced these two tenses far more often than they did the others. Similar to this study, the use of other verb tenses like past and present tense had become the main problem in students' essays, resulting in its highest occurrence of errors.

2. Second Language Difficulties of Students

This section presents the second language difficulties of Grade 7 students. Data were analyzed thematically to generate the themes based on the unstructured interview conducted. The second language difficulties of students consisted of vocabulary gap, limited knowledge of grammatical rules, morpho-syntactic distance of L1 and L2 and a conducive learning environment.

2.1 Vocabulary Gap

When students' vocabulary is limited, they will struggle to organize their thoughts in a writing assignment. When learning a language, vocabulary matters a lot. It serves as a useful indicator of the performance and acquisition of any language skill, in addition to aiding in language production and understanding. Other authors who have done similar studies and discovered the importance of a foreign language's vocabulary size corroborate this. According to Viera (2017), this approach fosters a more comprehensive ability in students to compose coherent written compositions.

As to the language difficulties of the students, the vocabulary gap is one of the factors. Students shared that they do not know much about using English and often run out of words. Consequently, students faced difficulties acquiring the language, specifically, the rules in subject-verb agreement and verb tenses, as seen in their writing. As manifested in the student's response, she had difficulty constructing sentences because she did not know many words in English that she could use when forming an essay.

*"...an mga words po ma'am minsan dai ko aram an tama na word na gagamiton.
[I don't know much words to use in my sentence.]"*

In this matter, the student feels as though she does not have enough English vocabulary. Rohmatillah (2017) affirms that second language acquisition becomes harder without proper vocabulary learning.

Another informant expressed that she often finds herself writing with the same words repeatedly, which makes her writing seem tedious and repetitive. Furthermore, she stated that she struggled to use words with appropriate meanings that compromised the depth of her essay.

*"...minsan pa ulit-ulit nalang po an ingagamit ko an mga aram ko lang po.
[I use the words repeatedly based what I only know.]"*

Hence, limited vocabulary hinders the students' ability to vary sentence structures, which affects the clarity and coherence of their writing. Furthermore, errors occur due to improper word use in a sentence.

As Cremer, Digshoff de Beer and Schoonen (2010) stated vocabulary knowledge is important because it does not only require knowing the multitude of words but is essential in acquiring knowledge of each word and creating semantic networks from multiple lexical items.

2.3 Limited Knowledge of Grammatical Rules

The second difficulty of the students is the limited knowledge of grammatical rules. These are observed in the works of the students, and the results were validated when they narrated that they experienced difficulty in using correct tense structure in their sentences while writing. Some students shared that they sometimes face difficulty in maintaining the subject-verb agreement, especially if the subject is in the third person singular, for instance, using *has* and *have* in subjects in the first-person singular. One of the students said that she often used the singular form due to her confusion with the rules.

This difficulty may be labelled as *"incomplete application of rules arises when the learners fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences"* (Richards, 1971, p. 72). Furthermore, the student shared that he is faced with difficulty in verb agreement in complex sentences. It is a challenge for him to maintain subject-verb agreement in complex sentences, such as compound subjects or relative clauses.

In addition, some students overgeneralized the rule if they were not aware of the correct form of the verb. Most of them find it challenging to memorize irregular verbs. As a result, students tend to add *-d* and *-ed* after the verb to form the past tense of the verb. Students often choose inappropriate verb tenses due to several misconceptions in adding *-d/ed* especially in cases of irregular verbs. Furthermore, these difficulties were due to students not understanding the verb usage, which includes verb 1, verb 2, and verb 3. As stated,

*"...an pag add po ma'am sin -d nan -ed lalo na po sa mga irregular verbs.
[when adding -d and -ed specially in cases of irregular verbs.]"*

This grammatical difficulty was similar to Wornyo's (2016) notion that inadequate knowledge of English grammar affects students' performance in different skill areas, such as reading and writing. Furthermore, Chung and Pallum (2015) state that a learner who understands grammar is one who has mastered the language and can use these rules to express themselves in a way that is appropriate for the language. Moreover, grammar is important to convey many aspects of meaning, such as time relations and singular/plural differences.

2.4 Morpho-Syntactic Distance of L1 and L2

Additional difficulty for students is related to the morpho-syntactic distance of L1 and L2. It was found that the learner's native language results in grammatical difficulties in producing acceptable sentences in writing. Some students shared that they often translate

in their minds the sentences from their native language to the target language. Doing this affects their ability to transfer the rules of the target language, considering the syntactical and morphological differences between Filipino and English. Cai (1993) concurred that these differences led to improper idea presentation and grammatical mistakes in writing. Filipino grammar is very different from English grammar, especially regarding word order and verb morphology. It has a very flexible word order and can follow both the SVO and VSO patterns. The syntactical and morphological differences between Filipino and English may be the reason why the students have difficulty transferring the rules of the target language.

Hence, citing a specific lexical item's counterpart in a different language can be difficult due to ambiguity and the difference in grammatical structures. Furthermore, according to Roxas (2017), the problem occurs due to the various possible translations of English sentences to Filipino, considering that the Filipino language is free-word in sentence construction. Benfougha (2010) stated that context and word collocation should be used in order to clarify a certain meaning. Thus, translation won't be viewed as monotonous and should not create grammatical errors. This is also in relation to the statement cited by Wu & Garza (2014) that the learners' native language or L1 can interfere with learners' errors. Students can't get away from their native language which becomes a crucial problem in writing.

2.5 Inconducive Learning Environment

In the Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis Stephen Krashen suggested that a supportive and conducive learning environment, where learners feel comfortable and motivated, greatly enhances language acquisition.

With reference to the responses of students when interviewed, there were students who experienced difficulties in writing because of several reasons including; inhibition in using the language due to fear of creating mistakes, limited learning resources, outside noise and limited support from parents. As they stated:

*"... minsan pano ma'am intatarawahan ako pag nag sasaba English.
[Sometimes, they made fun of me when I speak using the English language.]"*

Similarly, another student stated,

*"...maski ngani ma'am dictionary wara kami sa balay.
[we do not have a dictionary at home.]"*

Another response states that,

*"...wara man ma'am nagtutukdo saakon sa balay.
[nobody teaches me at home.]"*

Based on the students' narrative, the learning environment, distractions due to outside noise, unavailability of learning resources and lack of family support contribute to the difficulties of students in acquiring a second language. This caused them to create errors in writing because it disrupted their focus. This indicated that the teacher should ensure that they provide a conducive environment to make the teaching and learning process meaningful.

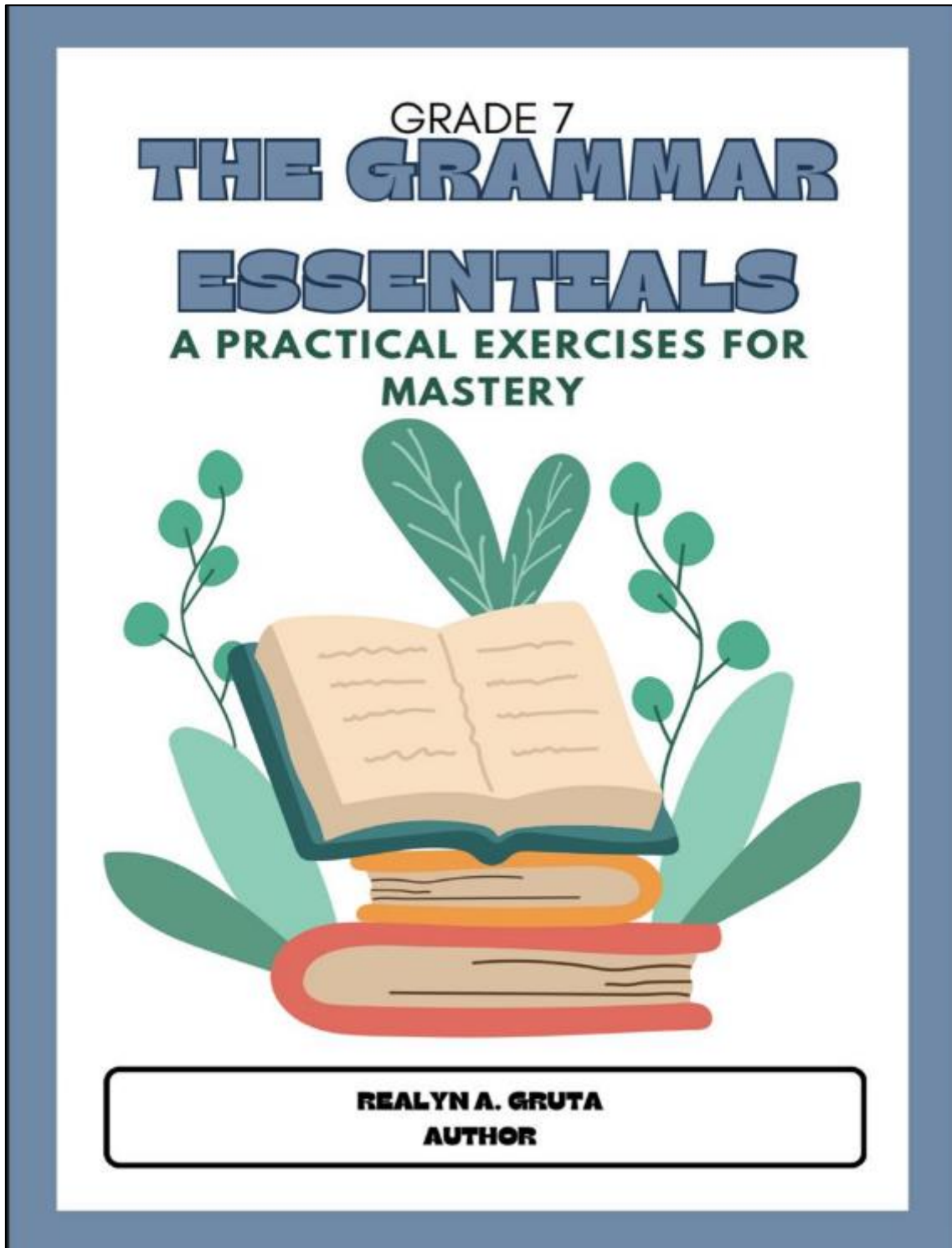
In line with the notion that a lack of learning resources affects language acquisition, Foster (2015) supports the idea that one barrier to students' learning to write is a lack of exposure to books and reading resources. As Foster (2015) clarifies, exposure to different learning materials can help students become aware of the language.

3. Proposed Grammar Essentials: A Practical Guide for Mastery

The result of the study showed that learners committed grammatical errors in subject-verb agreement and verb tenses. There were errors found in each subject-verb agreement rule with an agreement in singular subject and singular verb becoming the most frequent error found, followed by the second rule which is the agreement of plural subject and plural verb. Errors in other rules were also found in students' written output which gives an implication that there is a necessity to develop learning material that may further enhance students' grammatical competence and address the issues of grammatical errors.

Therefore, a strategic intervention material titled *Grammar Essentials: A Practical Exercises for Mastery* (see Appendix A for the sample) was proposed. This workbook on grammar is complemented with grammar worksheets that cater to all the grammatical rules and different examples. This also includes discussions of three simple tenses of the verb. Examples and activities were also provided for mastery. This workbook aims to have a significant impact on enhancing students' grammatical skills.

Appendix



PREFACE

The English language presents a great deal of complexity and difficulties for learners, yet it stands out as an essential component of language acquisition. Being proficient in English requires learning its complex grammar, which is necessary for effective communication both orally and in writing. Learning grammatical usage is essential to speaking and writing English with confidence and fluency.

This strategic intervention material "The Grammar Essentials: A Practical Exercises for Mastery" was developed. This material is essential in today's educational landscape because this integrates technology into the learning process because this also provides link to access online in the absence of the printed material. Moreover, this workbook on grammar, complemented with grammar exercises aims to have significant impact in enhancing students' grammatical skills. Furthermore, the accessibility of this material is essential in both synchronous and asynchronous classes.

This is a material developed based on the thesis titled "Second Language Difficulties of Grade7 Students" which is designed to have an advanced mastery in grammar usage, this is focused on the subject-verb agreement and verb tenses as one of the most important components in learning grammar. This will also harness the power of technology and print to create a more engaging, accessible, and effective learning experience that will not only enhance students' grammatical ability but also help students to succeed in one of the most essential skills which is writing.



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INTRODUCTION


Grammar is the backbone of language, providing the structure and rules that govern how to communicate effectively. From the simplest sentence to the most complex prose, grammar forms the foundation upon language is built. As teaching of the English language recognizes the four language micro-skills. Writing is seen as critical in language learning. This skill is essential for communicating one's ideas. Furthermore, it is viewed as the hardest skill to develop because it does not come naturally and spontaneously to learners.

The *Grammar Essentials: A Practical Exercises for Mastery* is a book designed to help students understand how words fit together and how to use them in a right way. In this book, the focus is on two important aspects of grammar--- subject verb agreement and verb tenses. This two big ideas describe how words agree with each other, and how words tell the time of an event. This components are essential foundation in language learning.


In this book, the ideas were explored step by step, using simple and understandable language, clear examples and series of activities to help the student grasp each concept. There have been several books available that deal with grammar however this book is specifically designed for Grade 7 students based on the study conducted by the author.

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SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT



All nouns and pronouns have number. They are singular in number if they refer to one thing. They are plural in number if they refer to more than one thing.



ALWAYS REMEMBER...

A. When a word refers to one person or thing, it is singular in number. When a word refers to more than one, it is plural in number.

**Examples: hat, I, sky, principle (singular)
hats, we, skies, principles (plural)**

B. A verb agrees with its subject in number.

Two words agree when they have the same number. The number of the verb must always agree with the number of its subject.

Examples: He fights. (singular subject and singular verb) Animals fight. (plural subject and plural verb)

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RULES IN SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

RULE NO.1

I. Singular subjects take singular verbs.

Examples: The lightning fills the sky.
(The verb fills is singular to agree with the singular subject lightning.)

Linda begins her vacation today.
(The verb begins is singular to agree with the singular subject Linda.)

RULE NO.2

II. Plural subjects take plural verbs.

Examples: Cheetahs run faster than most other animals.
(The verb run is plural to agree with the plural subject cheetahs.)

New families move into our neighborhood frequently.
(The verb move is plural to agree with the plural subject families.)

*** Notice that an -s ending is often a sign of the singular in the verb.

NOTE:

When a sentence contains a verb phrase, it is the helping verb that agrees with the subject.

Examples: The motor is running.
The motors are running.

Examples: The girl has been sick.
The girls have been sick.

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https://www.sfponline.org/Uploads/66/Package6-subject-verb-agreement.pdf?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0zevw61PII-uYCOzvSCXB2oR-dP-fOZy8N7IRO8ndTWbKuFaUoDMLf-4Q_aem_AaHNE6NBzwGq2ChwcGmiQ6zc_94yTqqIy5NbdyFE1N3u3EHqXchJV_VOIkgnemUi8mhHC_AfMEHG1IbqqlpCIknOe

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The students committed the most errors in verb tenses. The errors were mostly seen in the use of past tense, followed by errors in present tense and errors in the use of future tense being the least observed error. There were errors occurred in both singular and plural subject-verb agreement and errors in singular subjects become the most problematic area in the agreement. Grammatical errors in compound subjects and special cases of agreement had the fewest occurrences in students' written output. The students' grammatical errors in their essays were due to several linguistic difficulties of students in acquiring the rules of grammar namely: vocabulary gap, limited knowledge of grammatical rules, Morphosyntactic Distance of L1 and L2 and the conducive learning environment. There were several factors found in student's learning environments, these include distractions, insufficient family support, and limited learning resources. The grammar essentials were the output proposed and passed the validation and was recommended as the guide for Grade 7 students in mastering grammar.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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