FACEBOOK POSTS: ERROR ANALYSIS ON ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND USAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed writing errors along grammar and usage of student Facebook users in four (4) selected Grade 8 sections of Sorsogon National High School, S.Y. 2016-2017. The error analysis focused on grammar and usage specifically on Subject-Verb Agreement, prepositions, verb forms and determiners. The steps in analyzing errors suggested by Ellis (2008) were utilized in the error analysis of the respondents' Facebook posts. Unstructured interviews were also utilized to determine possible causes of the errors and the implication of the errors committed to language teaching and learning. Findings revealed that most errors were seen within the category of verb tense/ form, followed by subject-verb agreement and the use of prepositions on the second and third ranks consecutively. Other errors committed by the students next in rank were:use of Contraction, use of articles, Pronoun Agreement, use of singular and plural; and use of conjunctions. It was further revealed that the sentences constructed by the learners show that interference from their mother tongue is a source of difficulty in second language learning. Further, the grammatical errors committed by the students in their fb posts are also attributed to Intralanguage. Students tend to commit overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, and False Hypothesis as they try to produce the language. These in turn impede learners' successful acquisition of the target language. The results of the error analysis imply that although learners have been taught of the rules of the target language repeatedly, they still lack mastery in the identified areas or categories.It is further recommended that teachers of the target language may focus in developing the students' skills in the identified difficult concepts namely: tenses, Subject-Verb Agreement and Prepositions. Also, teachers may determine the mastery level of the students in learning grammar rules especially on Tenses, Subject-Verb Agreement and Prepositions to serve as basis in their crafting of significant materials for intervention or reinforcement. Furthermore, teachers may provide interactive and engaging activities especially on tenses, Subject-Verb Agreement and Prepositions for students to better and effectively learn and master basic grammar rules. Moreover, teachers may provide venues for students to use the language in actual situations whether writing or speaking.

Keywords: Error analysis, grammar, usage, intralanguage, interlanguage.

INTRODUCTION

The role of language in this highly technological era can never be undermined. Whether one aims for higher status in life or to simply survive, he will find himself in a situation which will demand language skills, be it reading, writing, speaking, listening or viewing.

According to Shaw (1993), the ability to speak, read and write in English, is now a basic assumption of our economic, political and social system. Hence, in a modern democracy such ours, it is essential to speak and write in English.

In the international scene, it is obvious that English language takes a growing importance, hence, its incorporation in socio- economic discourse. Its essentiality in world affairs cannot be ignored and even in the day-to-day conversations in countries that have English as an official language, hence, its inclusion in the curriculum.

In the Philippines for instance, English is extensively used in commercial, governmental and educational concerns. It is used in the schools as medium of instruction from upper elementary levels to graduate school level. Article XIV, Section 7 of the Philippine Constitution

> *For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipinoand, until otherwise provided by law, English.*

Although English can be viewed as Filipinos' second language, it can be observed that in the inclusion of English in the curriculum, only few succeed in acquiring, using and mastering the language. Thus, the language classroom is often the place where errors are observed in both spoken and written tasks.

According to Mackey (1989), errors are basically committed because the learner has had experiences with another language. Hence, a person who has been using a certain language since early childhood already had experience with his language and when he learns a new language, he would be faced with the problem of different sound, words and sentences, with varied groupings of things, persons and actions, and with different time, space and manner. The complexity of learning the new language may conflict with the structure of his native language. Thus, errors appear as learners attempt using or producing the target language.

Further, according to Corder (1974), when errors occur, it is the role of the language teacher to deal with these errors by devising some strategies after the conduct of error analysis. From being looked at as a problem that should be eradicated, errors are now considered as a device that learners use and from which they can learn. Moreover, these errors provide evidence of the learners' level in the target language. Further, these contain valuable information on the learning strategies of learners and they also supply means by which teacher can assess learning and teaching and determine priorities for future effort.

Writing as a way of composing learners' thoughts is a form of production of the target language. However, our motivation to write is not as high as our motivation to speak, listen or even read. Writing is a difficult process even in the first language. Furthermore, to formulate ideas and to write them out in a second language is even more complicated. Hence, learners' writing errors are much evident than in any other skills.

Nowadays, when writing, learners use different venues in expressing their views and opinions about certain issues in their lives, in the society, and in the world. They don't just put it in into the traditional paper and pen writing inside the classrooms. Today, rather, learners of the world live in a generation of continual digital revolution. They use information and communication technologies and the internet virtually every day. Technology has become a routine among learners, permeating many aspects of their lives, including learning. Indeed, technology is a fact of life that acts as a medium of daily communication affecting language learning.

Language learning has grown beyond the four walls of the classroom. In fact, most language learning occurs outside and informally. Informal learning, through a medium like ICT, therefore, is a significant alternative environment for language practice and use. Informal learning experiences are seen as the link or the bridge between social media and academic content.

In today's highly technical society, one prevalent thing is the use of Social Networking Sites. A social networking service is an online platform or medium used to establish social networks or social relations among individuals who share interests and activities. Most social networking services allow users to share their opinions, interests, activities and events within their individual networks. These are often aired on sites such as Twitter, Facetime, Facebook and Instagram. These serve as venue for them to communicate and express their sentiments in life.

Facebook is currently the leading social networking site with more than 500 million active users as of March 2011. According to Facebook statistics, its users spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook. In 2018, the amount of Facebook users in the Philippines is expected to reach 47.48 million, up from 3.49 million in 2014.(https:/www.statista.com). The Facebook phenomenon is happening all over the world. Undeniably, our learners, the young generation now, are spending more and more time online, and on Facebook.

In line with the teaching and learning process, Facebook often becomes an avenue for learners to post and comment using the second language. When posting status and commenting on Facebook posts, students openly share their thoughts and bombard World Wide Web with their whereabouts and undertakings. However, with the growing amount of time our learners spend on Facebook, educators consider this to be of value for educational purposes, specifically, language learning.

Further, it is the observation of the researcher that more often than not, learners bring their writing errors in their Facebook posts and have the world see and comment in them. When writing Facebook posts, learners easily make errors because information has to be transmitted without any aid from sources other than the language itself.

It is with such premise that the present study was conducted so as to analyze Facebook users' writing errors. Likewise, this would examine implications of such errors to the learning and teaching of the target language which is English.

Research Questions:

This study analyzed writing errors along grammar and usage of student Facebook users in four (4) selected Grade 8 sections of Sorsogon National High School, S.Y. 2016-2017.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What type of writing errors are committed by selected Facebook users along Grammar and Usage?
2. How frequent do errors occur in students' writing on Facebook?
3. What are the implications of the students' writing errors on Facebook to the learning and teaching of the target language?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Different literatures were reviewed and were found to be relevant to the present study. Similarly, the articles and other sources are significant in providing a clearer perspective on the topic chosen by the researcher.

Corder (1981) stresses that the function of error analysis is useful in its relevance to language teaching and the study of the language acquisition process. He further emphasizes that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found, and the theoretical justification, which claims that a study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition.

The above cited literature is significant to the present study. This is because it provides a clear understanding of the importance of doing error analysis so as to correct the identified errors.

In analyzing writing errors, it is essential to make a distinction between mistakes and errors. According to Brown (1994), mistakes refer to "a failure to utilize a known system correctly" whereas errors concern "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. Two things need to be stated here: Firstly, mistakes do not require special treatment assuming they are recognized. Secondly, error here refers to structure only.

Further, Corder (1974) reveals a criterion that helps us to do so: A mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot. Errors are "systematic", likely to happen regularly and not recognized by the learner. Hence, Gass & Selinker (2001) said that only the teacher or researcher will locate them, the learner will not.

Norrish (1983) stresses a clear distinction between errors and mistakes. He stated errors are "systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong". He adds that when a learner of English as a second or a foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form, and he uses one form sometimes and another at other times quite inconsistently, the inconsistent deviation is called a mistake.

The distinctions between errors and mistakes are highlighted in the above literatures. These bear significance to the current study for they provide a clearer understanding of the area under study, which is "errors" in grammar and usage.

When writing, learners easily make errors because information has to be transmitted without any aid from sources other than the language itself. Macrorie (1986) emphasizes the importance of motivation in good writing. He stated that motivation is the key to good writing. Until students want to write, no theory will make them writers. Once motivated, students can learn and apply linguistic principles in three main aspects of their writing: ideas, organization of ideas and editorial conventions.

The above-mentioned literature bears significance to the study at hand for it discusses one major factor that causes poor writing which is motivation. It could be true that one major problem in motivating lies in teacher's inability to listen. Misconceiving their function, pressed by time and crowded classes, teachers forget that all effective teaching is essentially dramatic. It involves interaction among all the people in the classroom, teachers and students alike. If teachers listen, they will discover that today's students are expressive and articulate. They want to change their world. They want to be heard on many subjects like war, racism, poverty, freedom of inquiry and love. To hasten change, words could be their weapon and shield. Writing can be a synthesis of desire and power if they discover how language structure can support and enhance their message.

Hyland (2004) in her article entitled *Enhancing students' engagement and motivation in writing*, she stresses that the enthusiastic way encouraging young writers to write about topics of

interest and relevance to them and providing them with genuine audiences can have a liberating and confidence-building effect.

Hyland's point bears significance to the study at hand for it stresses the role of motivation in good writing. This brings to light certain issues that affect language teaching especially in writing which was the focus of the study.

According to Kowles and Sasaki (2001), written exercises often bring out different errors than those which come up during oral work since students have more time to think and use their imagination. They further stress errors common to more students that can be marked in a way that they provide for constructive feedbacks to the students. Hence, the teacher must be diligent in returning papers as soon as possible. By perceiving that the teacher regards the assignment as important enough to get back promptly, the students are encouraged to be more conscientious themselves.

The work of Kowles and Sasaki (2001) provides the writer significant information on the importance of providing opportunities to students to take note of their errors when their papers are returned to them promptly. Through this, learners will be aware of their writing errors and won't bring these errors again in their other written performances and even in other writing venues like Facebook.

Hudelson (1996), an instructor in California State University, Freno, USA, emphasizes in his experience as a teacher that students rarely enter a composition class without a wide gap in their control of English Syntax. Moreover, the instructor cannot ignore the fact that many students still do not handle tense and aspect correctly and have difficult time with determiners.

The insights provided by the above cited literature are significant to the study at hand because they bring to light grammar errors commonly committed in writing. Hence, the same errors highlighted in the literature were also evident in the documents analyzed.

Barnwell (1991), for instance, stresses that in learning the vocabulary and rules of standard written English, one should naturally start at the beginning, making sure that the students know all the part of a sentence and their functions. Furthermore, Barnwell emphasizes that grammar is a tool for writing strong and varied sentences and for editing one's writing before the instructor or someone else does. When errors are pointed out to a student-writer, he will better understand how to correct them. Likewise, Barnwell seeks to identify in this study the need for grammar by students for more correct writing compositions.

The cited literature gives emphasis on the mastery of grammar rules to be able to write effectively. This is significant to the study at hand because the writing outputs of the participants in the form of Facebook posts were analyzed along the area of grammar and usage.

Conda and Anonas (1993) exemplify that knowledge of phrase and how it is used will suggest ways of diversifying and enlivening sentence. Variety in using phrases remedies the monotonous "subject-first" habits. Conda and Anonas emphasize the use of the participial phrase which adds life and movement to style. The appositive, a word or phrase which usually stands next to a word and means the same thing as the first word is also a very convenient device in writing.

Serrano and Bello (2004) state that writing is a laborious task. They further claim that the development of style among students should be done with the teacher modeling his work after that of the writer he likes. The beginning writer should also analyze author's work to discover how he manipulated both his material and his language to produce his effects.

The aforementioned literatures provide additional concepts to the present study in considering the lack of style as another obstacle to successful writing. These information are

relevant to the present study because the focus of the research is on writing, thus, style was also considered in the analysis of errors.

In a study conducted by Darus and Ching (2009), it was found out that the most problematic area in grammar among the Chinese students is verb tense. Wrong application of verb tenses can be seen when the participants did not apply the correct tense to the verb in the sentences.

Nzama (2010) conducted a study entitled *Error Analysis: A Study of Errors made by Usizulu Speaking Learners of English in Selected Schools*. In the said study, students from grades 10-12 were taken as participants and were made to write essays. The findings based on the essay written by grades ten, eleven and twelve revealed that all grades committed the following errors: use of auxiliaries, tenses, concords, articles, prepositions, pronouns, plurals, infinitives and auxiliary with past tense. Such difficulties were attributed mainly to interlanguage and mother tongue interference.

Meanwhile, Mungungu (2010) in his study entitled *Error Analysis: Investigating the Writing of ESL Namibian Learners*, he investigated common English language errors made by Oshiwambo, Africans and Silozi First Language speakers. The study examined errors in a corpus of 360 essays written by 180 participants. Errors were identified and classified into various categories. The study further revealed that the most common errors committed by the participants were tenses, prepositions, articles and spelling.

These studies conducted by Darus and Ching, Nzama, and Mungungu bear similarities to the current study because they all conducted error analyses in the use of English especially along grammar through identifying common writing errors. Also, the studies are similar with the study at hand because the participants of the studies were all non-native speakers of English. On the other hand, the current study focused only on Grammar and Usage and did not touch on mechanics like spelling and punctuations. Further, the current study analyzed learners' writing errors in a completely different context which is social media.

Wee et. al. (2010) attempted to identify and determine the type and frequency of verb-form errors in EAP writing of second year learners at a public Malaysian University Diploma Programme. The researchers examined the participants' discursive essays. It was revealed that the participants made the most number of errors in the omission of verb-forms in the area of the third person singular verb.

The study of Wee et. al is similar to the present research because both aimed to utilize error analysis in identifying difficult grammar concepts to a particular group of learners. However, Wee et. al. utilized students' essays while the present study considered Facebook posts and comments. Also, the cited study discussed and studied English for Academic Purposes while the present study discussed and studied English in a more non-formal context, that is, in a conversational context.

Taher (2011) conducted a study entitled *Error Analysis: A Study of Swedish Junior High School Students' Texts and Grammar Knowledge*. The results showed that the most frequent errors made by Swedish junior high school students were errors of verb tense, verb inflection and subject-verb agreement. The errors are probably caused by lack of grammatical knowledge, but also by incorrect transfer from Swedish into English. Furthermore, the results showed that the students from the two target groups to some extent made the same type of errors regardless of their productions were free written or more controlled.

In a similar study conducted to Swedish students, Johansson and Geisler (2009) found that that the most common errors learners made were related to verb form. In both target groups

which were either free written or controlled, errors of verb inflection were the most frequent ones, followed by errors of verb tense. In the free written productions, however, verb tense mixing occurred frequently whereas tense mixing never occurred in the controlled papers.

The studies of Taher and Johansson and Geisler are similar with the present study because the participants in the studies have English as a Second Language. Also, the researchers had English grammar as the focus of the study. However, in their researches, Taher and Johansson and Geisler utilized a free written and a controlled group, while the study at hand only observed free written posts of students. Also, the present study used Facebook posts and not full-length essays.

In Joki's study entitled *Which writing error is the worst?*(2016), she surveyed social media communities which writing mistakes were the worst kinds of errors. It was stressed that irregular verb tense ranked as the most difficult grammar concept to master, even for native speakers. Many of whom use incorrect irregular forms without realizing it. Second in rank among the worst writing errors which got 20% is Subject-verb disagreement. Further, Pronoun-Antecedent disagreement was viewed as the third worst writing error. When using pronouns, readers need to know to whom pronouns refer. However, this area of grammar is often found difficult by learners. Generally, Joki emphasized that while "errors" are part of English dialects all over the world; these non-standard forms carry a stigma that can significantly damage one's credibility if used in formal settings, like business or school.

The above-cited study is similar to the present study because it also identified errors committed by students in grammar. Joki similarly utilized social media communities as the source of writing errors. The present study however is different with the cited study because the study at hand used solely Facebook posts in the analysis of errors in grammar and usage committed by a different set of learners.

Meanwhile, in a study conducted by Carretero, et al. (2014) entitled *We celebrates Christmas different": An Error Analysis of Students' E-mails and the Case of Interlanguage*, the findings revealed that it was on subject-verb agreement, verb tense and prepositions where the respondents committed the most number of errors respectively. The respondents committed the errors more than once. It was concluded that although they have been taught the rules, they found these rules hard to apply.

The above-cited study is similar to the present because both aimed to identify writing errors committed by students in grammar. The researchers also both utilized internet as sources of data. However, the studies differ because Carretero et. al. utilized emails of students while the present study used Facebook posts as data for error analysis.

Sattayatham and Honsa (2007) carried out a research study to identify the most frequent errors of first year medical students at Mahidol University. The students were required to translate from Thai into English at the sentence level and the paragraph level. Linguistic items such as tense and verb forms appeared to be the source of frequent errors. The results showed that the most frequent errors were at the syntactic and lexical levels which led to the overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, and building of false concepts under intralanguage. Mother tongue interference was detected as major cause of errors.

The above-cited study is similar to the present study because both discussed common errors committed by students along grammar and usage. However, Sattayatham and Honsa included other factors such as the intervention of translation in the study, which was not included as a feature of the study at hand.

Gustilo and Magno (2012) made a study entitled *Learners' Errors and their Evaluation: The Case of Filipino ESL Writers.* The study investigated the sentence-level errors of freshmen students at three proficiency levels and the aspects of writing that raters focused on while rating the essays. One hundred fifty essays written by Freshmen College students on their first week of classes in five private schools in Metro Manila were collected, word-processed, and subjected to rating and coding or errors. It was revealed that sentence-level errors have a significant role in essay scores.

The study conducted by Gustilo and Magno is similar with the present study because both assessed errors of learners in writing. However, the cited study focused on essay writing and the different mechanics and criteria including word choice, punctuation and word order; meanwhile, the present study analyzed Facebook posts and only looked into grammar and usage excluding the use of punctuations and spelling.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study analyzed writing errors along grammar and usage of student Facebook users in 4 selected Grade 8 sections of Sorsogon National High School, S.Y. 2016-2017.

The descriptive design of research was utilized in the present study. A descriptive survey method allowed the researcher to summarize the data gathered with percentages, frequency counts, or more rigorous statistics, and draw inferences about a particular population.

Under descriptive design, the quantitative method of research was employed in this study. Nunan (2001) refers to this research method to be a systematic process in which numerical data are controlled and measured to address the accumulation of facts and then utilized to obtain information.

The qualitative method of research was also used in this study, specifically, elicitation technique. Cooke (1994) defines elicitation technique as data collection technique used in linguistics or other fields to directly gather knowledge or information from people. Under this technique, unstructured interview was employed in determining the implication of the Facebook errors to the students' learning and teaching of the target language.

The Sample
The primary sources of data for this study were 160 students from four sections in Grade 8 of Sorsogon National High School, S.Y. 2016- 2017. The four sections were 8-Masayahin, 8-Magiting, 8- Masunurin and 8- Mahinahon which are all heterogeneous groups. Each class is composed of 40 students. The participants were chosen by means of purposive sampling for they belong to the identified grade level and sections handled by the researcher.

The Instrument
The research instrument used was documentary analysis. This involved the analysis of Facebook posts and comments made by the target participants. With the posts, the researcher was able to identify the types and frequency of errors made by the students. Also, this allowed the researcher provide a thorough discussion and analysis of the subject under study.

Moreover, the researcher also utilized unstructured interview in the study. This allowed the researcher determine the implication of the identified Facebook writing errors to the teaching and learning of the target language.

Data Collection Procedures
Written documents were secured to conduct the study at the target grade level and sections. Upon obtaining permission from the concerned officials last October 20, 2016, the

collection of data started. The researcher developed a Facebook page for each section where she elicited responses from the participants. These responses, posts and comments were the subjects analyzed. Collection of data ended last December 20, 2016.

After identifying the errors and their frequency of occurrence, these were analyzed and the implications of the errors to the teaching and learning of the target language were divulged.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data gathered for two months were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted. A facebook group for each section was first created by the researcher wherein the study samples posted Facebook statuses. Ellis' (2008) steps in error analysis was adopted in this study. The steps include: a)identifying a section of a corpus of language b) identification of errors) c)classification of errors, analysis of the errors and d)explanation of the errors.

Moreover, after the error analysis, other statistical measures that were used are based on the discussion of Nunan (2001). For problems numbers one and two, the identified errors were analyzed by using frequency count in assessing the type and frequency of errors and were analyzed and tabulated. Problem number three on the other hand was determined through a qualitative discussion by the researcher on the implications of the identified errors to the teaching and learning of the target language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the sources of the study. These data were presented with the use of appropriate tables which were sequentially arranged to answer the problems that were sought by the study. Interpretations and analyses of the data are given.

Problems numbers two and three are likewise discussed along the top three grammatical errors committed by the participants of this study.

1.Writing errors committed by selected Facebook users along Grammar and Usage

Table 1 presents the writing errors committed by selected Facebook users along Grammar and Usage. It is reflected in the table that the highest error rates in this study occurred within the category of verb tense/ form with 128 errors, and an error rate of 80%. Second in rank as the category where students committed most errors is on subject-verb agreement. It was reflected on the table that out of 160 participants, 102 or 64 % displayed errors in the said category. The use of prepositions was third in rank wherein 83 or 56 % of the participants showed errors. Other errors next in rank were: use of contraction words with 50 or 31% of the students with errors, use of articles with 48 or 30% students having errors; pronoun agreement with 32 or 20%; use of singular and plural with 28 or 18%; and use of conjunctions with 15 or 9% of students committing errors.

TABLE 1: **Writing errors committed by selected Facebook users along Grammar and Usage**

Categories	No. of Participants	Rank	Percentage
Verb Tense / Form	128	1	80
Subject – Verb Agreement	102	2	64
Prepositions	83	3	56
Wrong word / Contraction Words	50	4	31
Articles	48	5	30
Pronoun Agreement	32	6	20
Singular/ Plural	28	7	18
Conjunctions	15	8	9

Based on the table, the highest error rates in this study occurred within the categories of Verb tense, Subject- verb agreement and prepositions respectively. The results imply that although learners have been taught of the rules of the target language repeatedly, they still lack mastery in the use of these.

Darus and Ching (2009) had the same findings when they examined errors in a corpus of 72 essays written by 72 Chinese students. Using Ellis's (2008) model on error analysis, their finding revealed that students' top 3 errors were also under verb tense, subject-verb agreement and prepositions respectively.

Further, Scott and Ytreberg (2005) say that writing is not always easy. Although the writing and the oral skill are combined in the classroom and the one clearly benefits from the other, writing has certain characteristics which seem to make it difficult for the students to get the grips, especially for young students. Writing is considered the hardest skill to master. The reason probably is that because writing requires good mastery of grammatical, punctuation, spelling and many more aspects. Thus, this may imply that teachers should provide student-centered language activities that would make students enjoy while learning.

Learners' errors could be categorized as interlingual errors or intraligual errors. Interlingual/transfer errors, which refer to the native language occur when the learner's L1 prevents him from acquiring the rules of L2. Sanal (2008) describes interlanguage errors as the mistakes committed by learners in the TL because of the influence of their mother tongues. The second is intralingual/developmental errors, which refer to the TL that is being learned. Sanal (2008) describes intralanguage errors as the mistakes committed by learners in the TL due to a lack of knowledge of that TL's rules. Richard (1971) agrees with Sanal and elaborates by stating that intralingual errors are items produced by learners that represent the structure of neither the mother tongue nor the TL. This type of error can further be subdivided into four types which are: over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, false theory hypothesized and incomplete application of rules.

However, the result may as well be backed by Corder (1994) stating that error is a natural norm that occurs in the process of second language learning. It indicates the strategies and attempts that learners use in order to acquire a language. Anker (2000) supports this idea positing that making errors is a natural part of learning process and must be considered as part of cognition.

2A. Frequency of errors' occurrence in the use of Verb Tense

Table 2A presents the frequency of errors' occurrence in the use of Verb Tense and the number of participants who committed them. The causes of this rank one grammatical error made by the participants will be discussed. As well, implications of these verb errors to language teaching and learning will be provided thorough discussion.

TABLE 2A: Frequency of errors' occurrence in the use of Verb Tense

No. of Errors	No. of participants who commit the errors	Percentage
8 - 10	16	10
6 - 7	18	11
4 - 5	27	17
1 - 3	67	42
0	32	20

Reflected on table 2A are the errors committed by the participants in the Verb Tense category. The column on the left shows the number of times the errors have been committed. Out of 160 respondents, 67 or 42% committed one to three errors on the use of verb tense. Meanwhile, 32 or 20% did not commit any error on verb tense. On the other hand, 27 or 17% made 4-5 errors in verb tense. Six to seven errors were committed by 18 or 11% of the respondents. Finally, 16 or 10% got 8-10 errors. Hence, it clearly reflects that students made errors more than once in this category.

These findings may explain that the use of English verbs is a major learning difficulty for the student-participants. Further, this indicates that most of the participants have not fully acquired the necessary skills in the use of the correct tense and forms of the verb. The tenses most commonly misused were the simple past tense, future tense and present simple.

In English language, some verbs have certain identical forms for the categories of Past Tense and Past Participle, for example, *talk – talked – talked*. These verbs are called regular verbs. Because the regular verbs pattern applies to most of the verbs, students extend this rule to other types of verbs, that is, irregular verbs, for example, *take – took – taken*. Such error can be exemplified in the following posts written by the participants as shown in Figure 2 and 3.
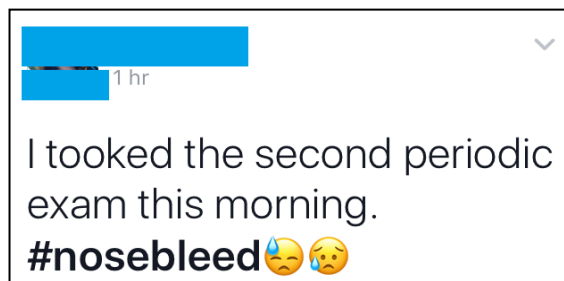
Figure 2
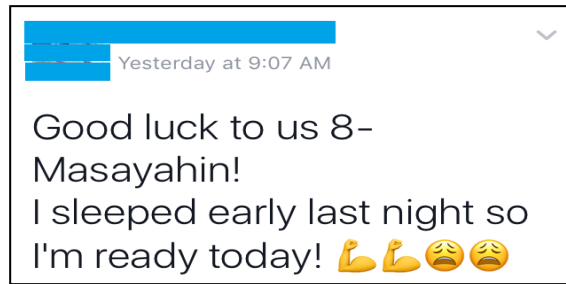
Figure 3

Figure 2 suggests that learners tend to over-generalize the rules for stylistic features when acquiring new discourse structures. Overgeneralization is under intralingual errors. Sentence No. 1 indicates this type of error when students confused regular verbs and irregular verbs. The student substituted the Past Tense of *take* which should have been *"took"* with *"tooked"*.

In Figure 3, over-generalizing the use of past tense is also displayed. The participants are well aware of the correct use of the past tense but have displayed errors in the use of "sleeped" that should be written as "slept".

Hyland (2003) suggests that learners may try out what they assume is a legitimate structure of the target language. Moreover, Ellis (2009) states that overgeneralization errors occur when learners yield deviant structures based on other structures of the target language.

These errors showed in the first two sentences then imply that students should be given more exercises in identifying verb forms and tenses for them to be completely aware of how verbs are written in varied verb forms. This should especially be done for students to personally identify the errors they have committed in writing verb forms.

As Lightbown and Spada (2006) suggest, when errors are persistent, especially when they are shared by almost all students in a class, it is useful for teachers to bring the problem to the students' attention because errors in language learning occur systematically and repeatedly without any notice by the learners. The errors are identifiable only by teachers or others who possess an accurate knowledge of the grammatical system.

Another verb tense error committed by the respondents is shown in figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4
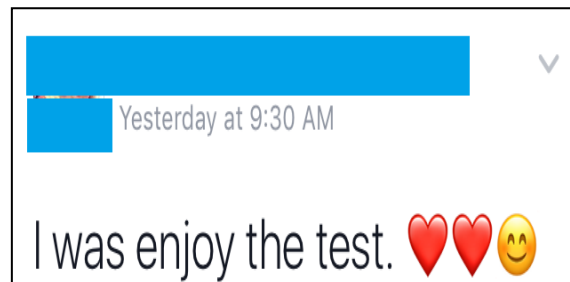
Figure 5

Basically, native speakers should not insert the BE copula in the sentences above such as "I enjoy the test" and "I just pretend to be happy without you". During the unstructured interview conducted by the researcher, when students were asked why do they add the BE copula in such statements, students answered that they are used in such practice wherein the BE copula is added especially if the sentence is beginning with "I", such as with *I am tired, I am (name), I am inviting you, I am lucky today*, etc. This error recorded is what Ellis (2009) also explains as "false concepts hypothesized" which is under intralingual errors. False concepts hypothesized occur when learners do not completely understand a distinction of rules in the target language.

According to Richards (1971), they are items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner, in this case, tries to derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language. In other words, they produce deviant or ill- formed sentences by erroneously applying their knowledge of target language rules and structures to new situations.

The errors also indicate learners' use of their interlanguage. Some of the participants were Filipino native speakers. Such constructions with the verb reflect in their first language which is Tagalog. Tarone (2003) defines interlanguage as the linguistic system created by someone in the course of learning a foreign language, different from either the speaker's first language or the target language being acquired. The above examples of the forms used by the participants tell exactly about their interlanguage.

This result implies likewise that the use of interlanguage by the participants is a manifestation of their hypothesizing the rules of the L2 and testing their own forms derived from their interlanguage. Hence, in the process, they commit errors.

The result also shows that the participants seemed not to have a clear understanding of when to use the Present and Past Tense. Most of the participants had a hard time using these two tenses appropriately. This is shown in Figures 6 and 7.


Figure 6
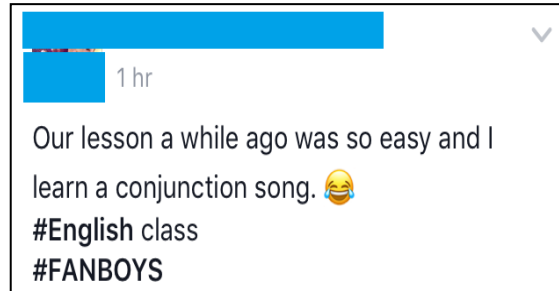
Figure 7

Learners seemed to be conscious that the event or story that happened in the past has to be told in Past Tense, hence one verb, especially the first verbs in the sentences, were expressed in Past Tense. But the students were not consistent with the usage of Past Tense, so the second verb or other verbs in the same sentence were expressed in Present Tense, such as with "*Our lesson a while ago **was** so easy and I **learn** a conjunction song"*. This is considered to be a grammatical error in the usage of tenses because it causes confusion to the reader.

These findings strengthen Hazaymeh (2012) recommendation that verb inconsistencies should be taken as a serious learners' ordeal that needs immediate solution. When he did a study to find out the secondary students' errors in learning English verb tenses, same findings occurred, that learners tend to shift and use two different tenses when expressing their ideas, thus becomes erroneous and causes confusion to the readers.

Meanwhile, the use of Past Tense was also a major error committed by the participants. This is shown in figures 8 and 9.
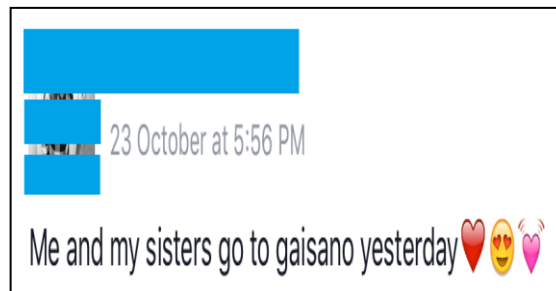
Figure 8

Figure 9

In figure 8, it is known that the time frame is in the past, as in the phrase, *yesterday,* but the respondent used the present form *go* instead of the past form *went* and in Figure 9, *experience* instead of using the past form *experienced.* This shows the understanding of the respondents of

the rule of the present tense use but apply that rule to the past. Again, overgeneralization was displayed. However, this is something positive because it just means that the respondents have internalized the rule of the present tense use and applied it on the past. This implies that they were testing it. As they continually did it, they committed the error. This has an implication to teaching that there is a need for continuous practice, giving of drills and scaffolding until the learner eventually learns the correct form.

Furthermore, Lightbown & Spada (2006) support this by emphasizing that development in the acquisition of a structure does not necessarily appear in a more accurate, correct or complex forms. Sometimes in the learner's attempt to produce new more complex structures beyond that first acquired components in his cognition, incorrect forms are produced until their internalized language system completely absorbs the new structure. Hence, inaccurate structures can be an indication of development in the learner's internal language system.

The participants also found the use of infinitives confusing. This error made by the participants in the category of Verb Tense/Form is shown in figure 10.
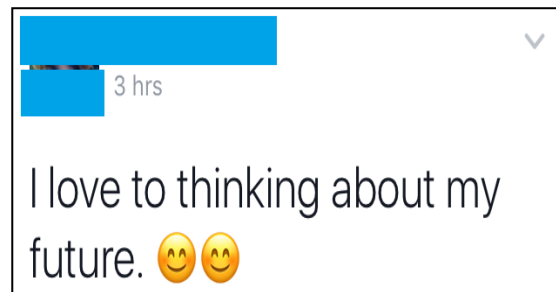
Figure 10

Figure 10 shows that the student tried to express futurity but the participant formed the tense in a wrong way, instead of using base form of the verb after infinitive, he added the –ing. The use of some suffixes like 'ing' with the infinitive "to" showed that these participants are aware of the rules on different tenses application but they have already hypothesized that these verbs can also be used in infinitive "to". This shows that they acknowledged the 'ing' form but they were not sure of the complete future tense form and its application in the English sentence.

The suffix 'ing' applied is not relevant to the context given because the context required verb to be written in the future tense form instead. This information revealed that the different tenses rules application was not formed because they have already hypothesized that these tenses forms exist in English grammar.

As it was mentioned above, "addition of suffixes to infinitive" is one of the errors under intralingual errors. This could also be exemplified in the posts of the participants shown in Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 11
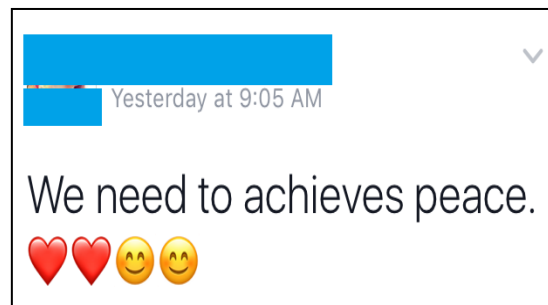
Figure 12

It is clear that mother tongue interference is not the cause of such type of errors. The rule "adding *s* to infinitive" does not exist in mother tongue. This type of error can be attributed to overgeneralization of linguistic rules within the target language the learner is studying. Students make this type of errors because they over-generalize the use of "s" with infinitives where this "s" should not be added; same thing with adding –s to express future action such as with "*Don't let the world changes your smiles*". This finding echo Wee (2010) assertion about verb tense/forms errors committed by second year learners at a public Malaysian University Diploma Programme. In his study, it was found out that subjects made the most number of errors in the area of the third person singular/plural verb (-s/es/-ies), particularly occurring when students tried to make the verb agree with the singular subject or plural subject by adding the –s inflection and using –ing to infinitives.

The findings above concerning writing errors in the use of verb tense/forms show that the selected grade 8 participants committed errors such as misusing verb tense, misusing tense after infinitive, shifting verbs from one tense to another and misforming verb. Errors of this nature may lead to miscommunication. The learners should be kept engaged in immersing themselves on the use of the language such as joining clubs and organizations that enhance communicative competence in the target language.

As suggested by Hijjo (2013) in his study entitled *A Morphosyntactic Analysis on Malaysian Secondary School Students' Essay Writing in English Class*, errors common to more students can and should be marked in a way that they provide for constructive feedbacks to the students. Hence, the teacher must be diligent in returning papers as soon as possible. By perceiving that the teacher regards the written tasks as important enough to get back promptly, the students are encouraged to be more conscientious themselves.

As well, in language teaching, thorough drills and exercises should be continuously given to the learners for them to attain mastery of the rules on verb tense/forms. Teachers should not proceed to the next skill/concept for discussion unless the students were able to completely grasp the rules on verb tense. The mastery of the students on the use of verb tense should not only be visible on surface level such as identifying tenses to be used, but also in sentence and paragraph construction. In the materials used, textual analysis may also include the rules of usages/forms of verb.

2B. Frequency of errors' occurrence in Subject-Verb Agreement

Table 2B presents the frequency of errors' occurrence in Subject – Verb Agreement and the number of participants who committed them. The causes of this rank two grammatical error made by the participants will be discussed. As well, implications of these errors to language teaching and learning will be provided thorough discussion.

**TABLE 2B: Frequency of errors' occurrence in
Subject – Verb Agreement**

No. of Errors	No. of participants who commit the errors	Percentage
8 - 10	5	3
6 - 7	22	14
4 - 5	15	9
1 - 3	60	38
0	58	36

Reflected on table 2B are the errors committed by the participants in the Subject – Verb Agreement category. The column on the left shows the number of times the errors have been committed. It can be gleaned on the table that out of 140 samples, only 58 didn't commit errors on this category. Although only five or 3% of the respondents committed errors 8-10 times, still, there were 60 or 38% made 1-3 errors, 22 or 14% committed 6-7 errors and 15 or 9% got 4-5 errors. In total, Subject-Verb Agreement comprises 60% of the total errors committed which clearly showed that Subject –Verb Agreement is one grammatical category which students found as an extreme ordeal.

Just like the errors committed in Verb Tense/Form category, it was also found out that participants tend to over-generalize rules of Subject-Verb Agreement in the target language as exemplified in figures 13 and 14.

2 hrs ·

A friend who understand your tears is more valuable
Than a lot of friends who only knows your smile.
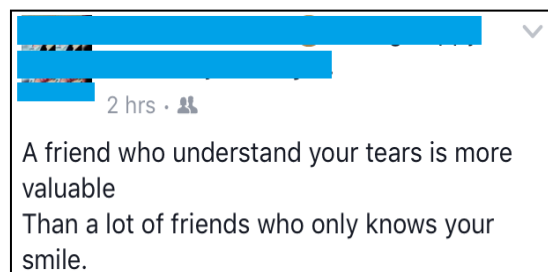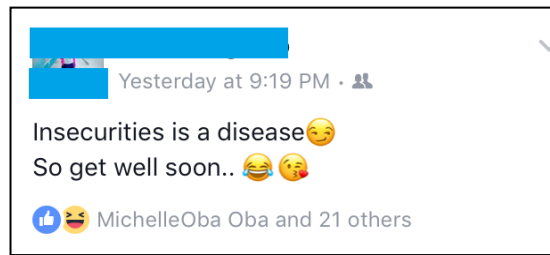
Figure 13

Figure 14

The above sentences display overgeneralization. Students are well aware that plural nouns are those that end with S, so they generalize that any subject that ends with (s), its verb should end in (s) as well, and a subject without (s) should not end with (s). This type of errors shows that students extend the rules because they don't have good knowledge about these rules. This error could also be associated with "false theory hypothesized" under intralanguage. Students build their own concept as they try to produce and use the language. This has an implication to teaching that there is indeed a serious need for teachers to explain thoroughly the rules of Subject-Verb Agreement for the students to refrain from over-generalizing the target language linguistic rules.

The participants had a difficult time determining the subjects of sentences whether they are considered singular or plural. This was found even more difficult especially if the subjects are special nouns and indefinite pronouns. In verge of confusion, the participants committed errors as shown in Figures 15 and 16.

Figure 15

Figure 16

Figures 15 and 16 show that the participants are actually not aware that "everyone" is singular, so it also requires a singular verb. Further, "happiness" is an abstract noun which is considered as singular which needs singular verb. However, "happiness" for the student can be achieved in many ways. This maybe the reason why the participant used "are" instead of "is".

This implies that scaffolding is needed until learners are able to identify whether subjects are considered singular or plural.

Subject–Verb Agreement in Number with third person singular as subject also creates confusion to the participants. This is clearly shown in Figures 17 and 18.
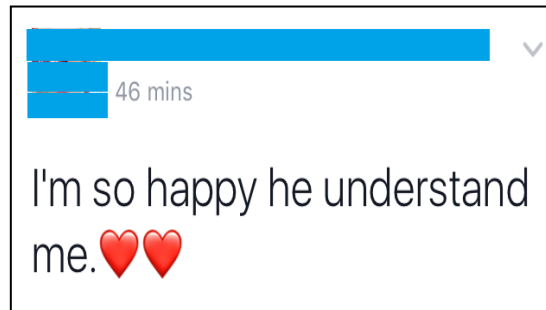
Figure 17
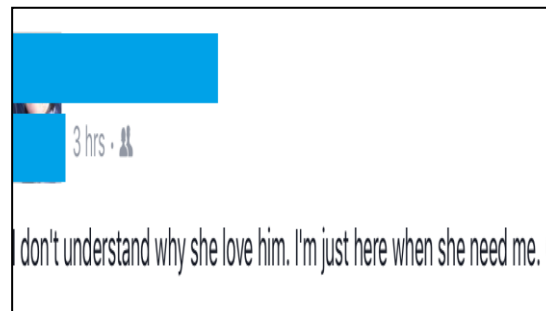
Figure 18

With figures 17 and 18, it can be observed that the students confused the third person with the use of plural verb. In an informal interview conducted to the students, they opined that it is mainly because of two reasons: over-generalization of the rules and lack of 'conscious' practice. In other words, they blame their 'wrong habits' as the reason for errors. In the error of over-generalization, the students said that if sentences like *I run… We run… You run…* are correct, they also assume that *He run… She run… and Rabi run…* are also correct forms, thus committing errors in the process. This kind of error can be assumed that some were not aware of the rules well. Learners are confused when they should use verb base, when they should add ending –s or –es, and they cannot differentiate subject whether it is singular that requires singular form of verb or plural.

The perceived SV errors may also be attributed to L1 interference. Learners' mother language is quite different with English. In their L1, there is no rule which says that a singular subject requires a single form of verb, or, the verbs do not change even their subject is singular or plural. Take some of the utterances below in the learners' mother tongue:

Sabot ni tiya ang isturya. (Auntie understands the story.)
Sabot ni Kikay nan ni Kiko ang isturya. (Kikay and Kiko understand the story.)

The examples above show that in Bisakol, the verb form does not change whether the subject is singular or pronoun. Such structure of language was somehow transferred when students use the target language which is English. Such L1 interference then becomes a problem in the learning and acquisition of the second language. This finding mirrors Carretero et al. (2014) point saying that when the structural pattern is not paralleled in the native language, the

student will have trouble learning it because of the interference from the native language habit pattern.

The influence of mother tongue also gave impact for students in making error in their vocabulary. This is also supported by Norish (1983) stating that in the theory of language testing, the students tend to transfer his vocabulary habits to the foreign language. Moreover, the learner will transfer meaning, forms, and distribution of the lexical units of his native language. From those statements it can be concluded that students' grammar and vocabulary are risked by error influenced by their native language. On the other hand, L1 interference may also help in the learning of L2 because L1 concepts are transferable to L2. Thus, the acquisition of a second language is developed upon the mastery and knowledge of an existing language which is the mother tongue. This is displayed in the sentences crafted by the students; however, in order to prevent students from committing errors, teachers should provide necessary guidance for students to apply the rules correctly.

Another set of errors displayed in the posts of the students are shown in the sentences below. The participants found it difficult to identify which are the subjects of their sentences or utterances, therefore, they commit errors in the process. This is exemplified in Figures 19 and 20.
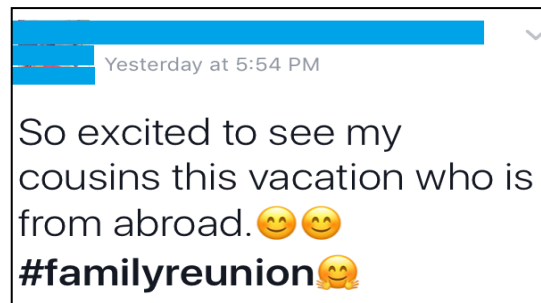
Figure 19
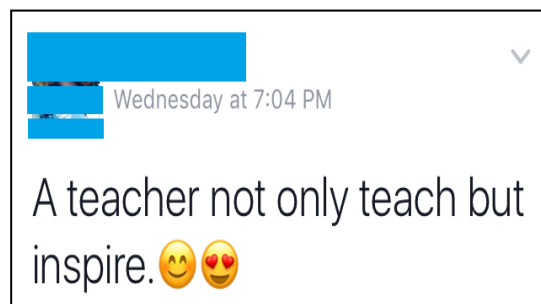
Figure 20

In the interview conducted by the teacher, the students committed the errors mainly because they found it difficult to identify the subject in each of the sentences. In the first sentence for instance, the student figured that the subject in the sentence is *who* so the verb utilized was *is* instead of using *are* to refer to the real subject which is *cousins.* In the second sentence, the same error is seen where the students was not aware whether which is the subject in the sentence. The subject then being *teacher,* requires verbs to be in the –s form (*teaches, inspires)* instead of the one utilized by the student.

Such error may be explained in the statement of Lightbown & Spada (2006) emphasizing that development in the acquisition of a structure does not necessarily appear in a more accurate, correct or complex forms. Sometimes in the learner's attempt to produce new more complex

structures beyond that first acquired components in his cognition, incorrect forms are produced until their internalized language system completely absorbs the new structure. Hence, inaccurate structures can be an indication of development in the learner's internal language system.

The findings further imply that teachers then need to provide more exercises that will help students master concepts and rules of grammar. Also, students should be provided different venues where they can actually utilized the target language for them to become fully aware of its structure, form and use.

2C. Frequency of errors' occurrence in the use of Prepositions

Table 2C presents the frequency of errors' occurrence in the use of prepositions and the number of participants who committed them. The causes of this rank three grammatical error made by the participants will be discussed. As well, implications of these errors to language teaching and learning will be provided thorough discussion.

**TABLE 2C: Frequency of errors' occurrence in the use
of Prepositions**

No. of Errors	No. of participants who commit the errors	Percentage
8 - 10	4	2
6 - 7	9	6
4 - 5	18	11
1 - 3	52	33
0	77	48

Reflected on Table 2C are the number of errors made by the respondents in the use of prepositions, the number of respondents who committed the errors, and the frequency of errors' occurrence in the category of prepositions. It can be gleaned that although the highest number of respondents which is 77 or 48% did not commit errors in the use of prepositions, still, there are 83 or 52% of them who made errors. Specifically, 52 respondents or 33% committed preposition errors 1-3 times; 18 or 11% made errors 4-5 times; 9 or 6% committed errors 6-7 times; and the remaining four or 2% committed 8-10 times preposition errors. These data suggest that the student-respondents still have no mastery in the use of English prepositions.

Interlanguage can again be identified as one of the factors affecting the students' use of preposition. Richards (1971) defined these interlingual errors as the errors caused by the interference of the native language. These errors are the results of the learners' application of the native language elements in their spoken or written performances of the target language. When encountered with new language, people tend to consciously or unconsciously draw a connection between what they already know and what they do not. Learners carry over the existing knowledge of their native language to the performance of the target language. In most cases, it is inevitable to learn a foreign language solely without depending on some linguistic features of the language which has already acquired. Moreover, In Bisakol, words that show direction and

position often are not as varied as the ones used in the English language and in most cases verbs function as determiners of direction and position.

Take for instance the sentences in the participants' mother tongue:

Ibutang mo an bag sa lamesa. (Place the bag on the table.)

The word *ibutang* when translated in English means to place or to put. However, in Bisakol, and as used in the given sentence the word has an implied meaning that an object has to be placed *on* something even without using any word equivalent to the preposition *on*.

Maglaug ka sa balay. (Get inside the house.)

The verb *maglaug* when translated in English would mean to enter. However, in Bisakol and as shown in the sentence above, the word instantly gets the meaning that the person should get inside the house even without using any word equivalent of the preposition *inside*.

The examples and the reason stated above may be one of the reasons why students omitted the prepositions as shown in Figures 21 and 22.
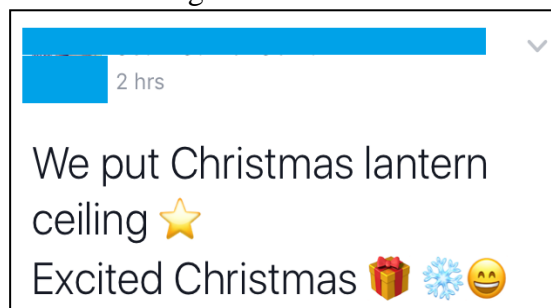
Figure 21
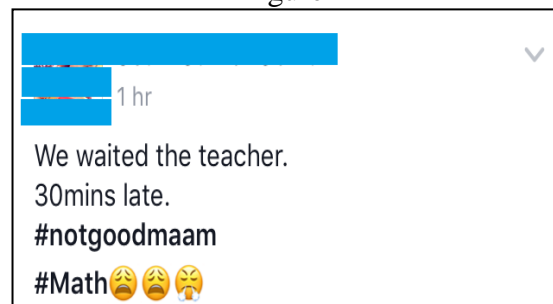
Figure 22

Interlanguage may also be the reason why the participants have used prepositions in sentences where prepositions are not needed. This is shown in Figures 23 and 23.
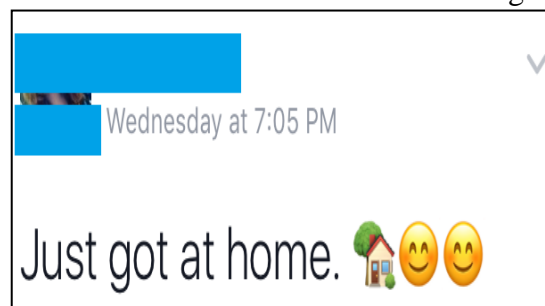
Figure 23
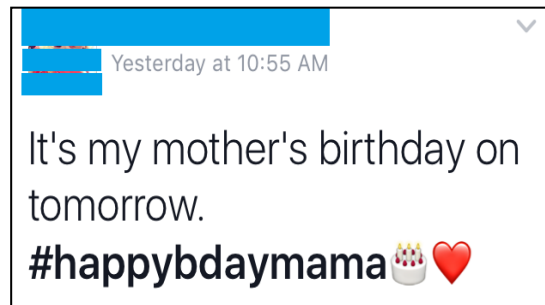
Figure 24

In the participants' first language, the sentences above could be translated as:

Kaka-abot lang sa harong. (Just got home.)

Birthday san mama ko sa aga. (It's my mother's birthday tomorrow.)

For the participants, "*sa*" should still be present when their utterances are translated in English so they have used prepositions in their sentences where prepositions are not needed.

According to Boquist (2009), in her paper on second language acquisition of prepositions, since it is easier not to teach prepositions, textbooks and teachers do not anymore teach them. Hence, learning prepositions is a *sink-swim* for L2 learners. The findings aforementioned clearly imply that there is lack of input from teachers.

The participants have also used the wrong preposition as exemplified in Figures 25, 26 and 27.
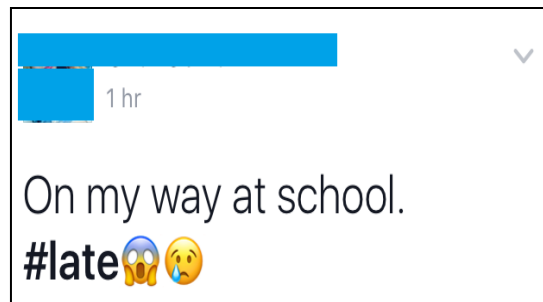
Figure 25

Figure 26

Figure 27

In Figure 25, instead of using the preposition *to* which shows *a point of arrival* as in the sentence "I went to Manila"*,* the student used *at* which also shows place/ point but signifies a *point of meeting* as in the sentence "We met at the park*."* Further, in Figure 26, although the preposition *on* may also be used to indicate time, however, the correct preposition used with the phrase to indicate time written is *at (at the moment).* Same error was committed shown in Figure 27 wherein the student used the preposition on instead of in.

Another error on the use of prepositions was shown in Figure 28.
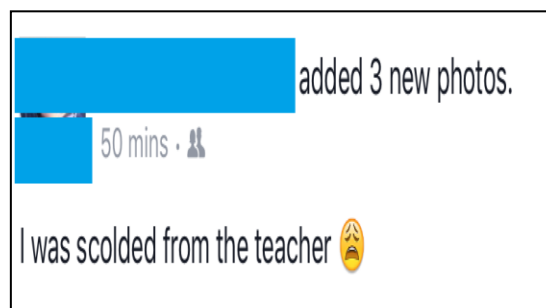
Figure 28

Although the sentence suggests that the scolding came *from* the teacher, the sentence requires a preposition to show who did the scolding as indicated by the sentence structure ,thus ,requiring the preposition *by* and not *from.*

The result implies that teachers should provide more activities to practice and remediate in the use of the different prepositions in English in order to better familiarize students with the rules on how they are used in sentences. As stressed by Nzama (2010), errors that require remedial work should be the prime step towards correction so that time is not wasted on teaching grammar items which pose little or no problems to the majority of students in relation to writing compositions.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FINDINGS
The results of the study revealed that:
1.   Most errors were seen within the category of verb tense/ form, where out of 160 samples, 128 errors were made or an error rate of 80%. Second in rank is subject-verb agreement where 102 or 64% of the respondents displayed errors. Third, is on the use of prepositions where 83 or 56% committed errors. Other errors next in rank were: use of Contraction of words with 50 or 31% of the students with errors, use of articles with 48 or 30% students having errors;

Pronoun Agreement with 32 or 20%; use of singular and plural with 28 or 18%; and use of conjunctions with 15 or 9% of students committing errors.

2A. In the use of verb tense, out of 140 respondents, 67 or 42% committed one to three errors on the use of verb tense; 32 or 20% did not commit any error on verb tense; 27 or 17% made 4-5 errors in verb tense. Meanwhile, six to seven errors were committed by 18 or 11% of the respondents and 16 or 10% committed 8-10 errors.

2B. Along subject-verb agreement, out of 160 samples, only 58 or 46% didn't commit errors on this category. On the other hand, 60 or 38% made 1-3 errors, 22 or 14% committed 6-7 errors, 15 or 9% got 4-5 errors and five or 3% of the respondents committed Subject-Verb agreement errors 8-10 times.

2C. In using prepositions, 77 or 48% of the respondents did not commit error. Meanwhile, 52 respondents or 33% committed preposition errors 1-3 times; 18 or 11% made errors 4-5 times; 9 or 6% committed errors 6-7 times; and the remaining four or 2% committed 8-10 times preposition errors.

3. The sentences constructed by the participants show that interference from their mother tongue is a source of difficulty in second language learning. Participants understand the rules of the first language but apply these to the production of the second language, hence, they commit errors.

Further, the grammatical errors committed by the students in their FB posts are also attributed to Intralanguage. Students tend to commit overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, and false hypothesis as they try to produce the language. These in turn impede learners' successful acquisition of the target language. These imply that although learners have been taught of the rules of the target language repeatedly, they still lack mastery in the identified areas or categories.

CONCLUSIONS

On the light of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The student-participants committed most errors in grammar and usage on the use or Verb tense, Subject-Verb Agreement and the use of Prepositions.

2. The student-participants committed errors in the use of verb tense frequently as projected in their Facebook posts. Meanwhile along Subject-Verb Agreement, errors were committed by the participants more frequent. Finally, in the use of preposition, most participants committed the errors less frequent.

3. There is a lack of reinforcement materials and other intervention drills which may aid in the students' learning of grammar rules in the target language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were offered:

1. Teachers of the target language may focus in developing the students' skills in the identified difficult concepts namely: tenses, Subject-Verb Agreement and Prepositions.
2. Teachers may determine the mastery level of the students in learning grammar rules especially on Tenses, Subject-Verb Agreement and Prepositions to serve as basis in their crafting of significant materials for intervention or reinforcement.

3. Teachers may provide interactive and engaging activities especially on tenses, Subject-Verb Agreement and Prepositions for students to better and effectively learn and master basic grammar rules. Moreover, teachers should provide venues for students to use the language in actual situations whether writing or speaking.

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