

Content-Based Assessment in English Structure of Pre-Service Elementary Teachers of Apayao State College, Philippines

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Abstract: This study was conducted to assess the content-based needs of pre-service elementary teachers in English structure. The Descriptive analysis method of research was used with questionnaire as the main data-gathering tool.

The content-based needs of the pre-service elementary teachers are on verbs, sentence correction and the use of pronouns. On content words, specifically on verbs, sentence correction and pronouns, most errors are committed on tenses, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions. Tenses of verbs are commonly committed error on verbs while the use of possessive pronouns on pronominal errors.

Cooperative learning, exposure to good grammar, use of skill books and workbooks, and tutorial sessions are seen very appropriate to enhance the aptitude of elementary pre-service teachers of Apayao State College on content and function words.

In the light of the findings, the following are forwarded as recommendations:

1. Utilize the mentioned interventions to enhance the aptitude of elementary pre-service teachers of Apayao State College on content and function words; and
2. Conduct similar study to secondary pre-service teachers.

Keywords: English Structure, Content-Based, English Proficiency, Elementary Preservice Teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Structure in English language proficiency has been growing as a result of globalization [1, 2] which influences educational institutions [3] and workplaces [4] to adapt themselves to international integration with English as the dominant internet language [5]. Learners should have global literacy that they must know and understand the structure of English to be a qualified as world citizens [6, 7]. Moreover, one of the standards for Structure in English language proficiency in the Basic Education Curriculum is the ability to use English as a tool for learning [8], for further study and career. The degree of a learner's skill with which a learner can use a language such as how well a learner can read, write, speak, and understand the language.

In the last couple of decades, developing foreign language learners' language proficiency and communicative competence has been demonstrated so that language teaching focuses on enhancing learners' speaking skills as well as communication skills [9]. With the emphasis on communication skills, students oftentimes forgot the rule of grammar which is very much needed in developing their writing proficiency.

Teaching grammar is a vital part of school education. Without good grammar, spoken or written words lose much of their meaning and most of their value.[10]. English grammar is very complex, and all its intricacies cannot truly be

learned by rote, they must be really understood – and understanding is most easily achieved when students are engaged, interested and having fun during a lesson.

In the study conducted by Barraquio (2015) on grammar proficiency of San Juan de Letran Calamba indicated that college students received fair ratings in parts of speech, possessive nouns, and verb mood and tense. Areas of plural nouns, pronoun usage, adjective and adverb usage, and pronoun-antecedent agreement needed improvement. The students failed in the areas of sentence structure, subject- verb agreement, and sentence construction [11]. Similarly Cabansag's study revealed that the persistent errors committed by the laboratory high school students in their written compositions namely: use of verbs, verb tenses and proper use of capitalization[12].

On the other hand, Gutierrez made a study on the competency level of college students in the use of article revealed that the most common mistakes done by the students are in the issue of indefiniteness (e.g. a and an) and zero article. On the other hand, the student preferred using *the* without the knowledge of the noun agreement with the determiner. For this reason the overuse of definite articles, accuracy in definite contexts surpasses their accuracy in indefinite context, because the greater number of errors would occur in their latter context which has indefinite nouns [13].

Writing proficiency testing is an increasingly widespread and required assessment, particularly as language skills do not develop synchronously in each area of use. Many speakers and listeners of a language are extremely competent and capable verbally, but lack solid reading and writing skills [14].

Statement of the Problem

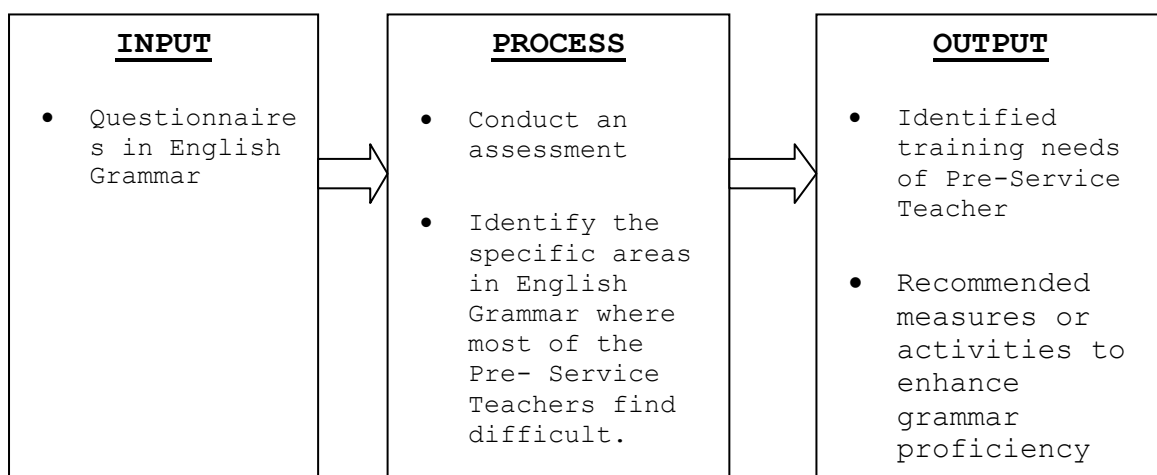
Transfer of learning is crucial due to the so-called multiplier effect. It is imperative that only learning that are positive and accurate should be received by learners. Future teachers should be given proper training to be able to carry out their tasks in the future well. As grammar lapses are evident on communications specifically of the third year Bachelor in Elementary Education students of ASC, suitable interventions should be taken to address the problem.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to diagnose the weaknesses of pre-service elementary teachers in English structure specifically, it aimed to:

- a. Identify the areas in English structure where the pre-service elementary teachers are weak at; and
- b. Identify interventions to improve the identified weaknesses.

Research Paradigm



Methodology

Research Design

The researchers employed descriptive analysis method of research. Here, strength and weaknesses of Pre- Service Teachers in English Grammar Proficiency is assessed as an input in designing interventions on how to improve their English Grammar Proficiency.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive analysis method of research was used with questionnaire as the main data-gathering tool.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Apayao State College, San Isidro Sur, Luna, Apayao for the school year 2014-2015.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the forty-five (45) fourth year Bachelor in Elementary Education students . Four (4) subject experts and 2 experts of the Apayao State College in test construction validated the questionnaire used in the study.

Research Instrument

A. Diagnostic Test

The diagnostic test was pretested to third year Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSEd) for item analysis purposes. The diagnostic test consisted of four subtest namely: Sentence Correction (15 points), Verbs (15 points), Pronoun (15 points), and Prepositions (15 points) of a multiple choice type covering the topics on English structure. Originally, there were 85 test items but were subjected to validation and item analysis. In order to achieve high degree of content validity, the suggestions of experts were sought. A table of specification was prepared which include the subject content, percentage or proportion of items in each area, and the cognitive processes involved. To check on content validity, the initial draft of the instrument was given to a group of four English teachers of the Apayao State College. All suggestions for improvement of the instrument were incorporated. After finalization of the second draft, this was pretested to BSEd III students. Item analysis follows to determine the item of discrimination and item difficulty. For the item analysis, there were two criterion groups, the top 27% and the bottom 27% based on scores. The accepted level of index of difficulty is 0. 25- 0.75. On the other hand, 0.20 – 0.40 is the acceptable level of discrimination for each item. 0. 40 and above is highly acceptable. Below 0.20 is not acceptable.

The reliability of the test was taken using the split- half method. For every student, the number of correct answers in all even and odd items was counted and tallied in two separate columns. Another column was prepared for the students' total scores in the exams.

To correlate the odd –numbered scores and the even –numbered scores, the Pearson's r was used. The result was the reliability of the half test.

The reliability of the whole test was taken from the formula:

$$r_{wt} = 2 r_{ht} / (1 + r_{ht})$$

Where; r_{wt} - reliability of the whole test

r_{ht} - reliability of the half test

Teacher made test commonly have reliabilities somewhere between 0.60- 0. 85. Using split half method, the reliability coefficient of the whole test is 0.85

Research Analysis

The researchers made use of descriptive statistics namely, frequency counts, mean and ranking in analysing the data.

On the appropriateness of the suggested interventions, the 3-point scale was used.

Table 1. Scale and interpretation on the degree of appropriateness of the suggested interventions

Scale	Score Range	Interpretation
3	2.34-3.00	Very Appropriate
2	1.67-2.33	Appropriate
1	1.00-1.66	Not Appropriate

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To determine the content-based grammar needs, a diagnostic test covering areas on sentence correction, verbs, pronouns and prepositions was administered to pre-service elementary teachers. The result is presented below.

Table 2. Total Errors on Content Area Committed by Pre-Service Teachers in English Structure

CONTENT AREA OF ENGLISH STRUCTURE	TOTAL ERROR	RANK
SENTENCE CORRECTION	282	2
VERBS	353	1
PRONOUNS	216	3
PREPOSITIONS	215	4

The above table reveals that ASC elementary Pre-service teachers committed most errors on Verbs (353), followed by Sentence Correction (282), the use of Pronouns (216) and the use of Prepositions (215). This finding finds support from Mojica's [15] paper on the self-reported writing problems and actual writing deficiencies of EFL learners in the beginner's level and of Magno, de Carvalho, Lajom, Bunagan, and Regodon's [16] study on the level of English language exposure of Taiwanese students. In the mentioned study, Mojica administered a questionnaire that required the 26 EFL participants to write two or three paragraphs on the subject of witting difficulties. Rating the data collected from the samples, she identified frequency of errors on vocabulary (61.4%) and grammar (69.2%). Grammar, in the paper was collectively coded errors on articles, determiners, number verb tense and prepositions.

Further, a survey of 34 professors teaching English as a second language in 20 Japanese universities elicited information about common errors in student writing. In open-ended questions, respondents identified 40 student error types, which were grouped into 18 categories. The most common problem category was sentence development, and other high-frequency categories, in descending order of occurrence, included subject-verb and number agreement, paragraph development, use of articles, and verbs [17].

Table 2.1 Total Errors on Sentence Correction Committed by Pre-Service Teachers in English Structure.

SENTENCE CORRECTION	TOTAL ERROR	RANK
PRONOUNS	91	2
CONJUNCTIONS	77	3
TENSES	110	1
PREPOSITIONS	4	4
LINKING VERBS	0	5

On sentence correction, ASC Pre-service teachers commit errors on tenses, followed by pronouns, the use of conjunctions and the use of prepositions and also with linking verbs as revealed in the number of errors committed. The finding is substantiated by Hourani [18] when he analysed the common grammar errors committed by 3rd year secondary male students in five leading schools on the Eastern Coast of the UAE. The most common and salient grammatical errors which were found in the students essays included: passivation, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality and auxiliaries.

Lixue Zhuang [19] found out that Verb errors constitute the highest proportions of all grammatical errors. Likewise, Chen [20], Chiang [21], Zhuang [22] and Yang [23] indicated that tense errors comprise the highest proportions in Chinese EFL learners' verb errors. Besides tense errors, the verb errors discussed contain auxiliary errors, S-V agreement errors, participle errors, infinitive errors, gerund errors, and mood errors.

Table 3. Total Errors on Verbs committed by Pre-Service Teachers in English Structure.

VERBS	TOTAL ERROR	RANK
LINKING VERBS	53	2
TENSES	300	1

The above table reveals that ASC Pre-service teachers committed most errors on tenses, followed by linking verbs as revealed in the number of errors committed. Izzo's finding is similar to this finding when he stated that verb tense was identified as the most common type of error. Other types of verb errors reported were active-passive voice, verb form, and the use of to with a gerund. Although agreement noun-verb and agreement verb tense also cross over into this category and could be considered as a part of this grouping, a separation was maintained in this review. Reduction of verb errors also requires EFL students to invest time and effort in their studies and to use English as frequently as possible. The second most frequently reported error category was agreement. It should be noted that majority of errors in this group were subject-verb agreement errors. The score assigned to this specific error type could probably be somewhat higher because some of the number agreement errors most likely fall into this category. This error is probably due to the fact that in the Japanese language the present tense of a verb does not change with number. Therefore, adding an "s" to the present tense of most English verbs to obtain the third person singular form appears to be difficult for Japanese students to comprehend. [17].

Table 3.1.Total Errors on Pronouns Committed by Pre-Service Teachers in English Structure.

PRONOUNS	TOTAL ERROR	RANK
INDEFINITE	18	5
INTERROGATIVE	44	2
DEMONSTRATIVE	25	3
POSSESSIVE	102	1
PERSONAL	24	4
REFLEXIVE & INTENSIVE	3	6

ASC Pre-service teachers committed most pronominal errors on possessive, followed by interrogative, demonstrative, personal, indefinite together with the use of reflexive and intensive as revealed in the number of errors committed. Oladunni [24].assessed the pronominal errors in written English of tertiary institution in Ekiti state. The aims of the study were to examine the kinds of pronominal errors in the written English of the L2 learners and ascertain the extent to which the errors are made. To this end, a descriptive survey research design was employed. Three hundred (300) Yoruba-English bilingual respondents were randomly selected from three tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. They wrote essays in English which were analyzed for the occurrence of pronominal errors using the Binding Principles. One hundred and sixty sentences were discovered in which the errors occurred. The analysis revealed the errors committed by respondents to include: lack of pronoun agreement; wrong insertion of pronouns; the use of pronouns without antecedents; and others. The study also advanced possible remediation to include, among others, assisting learners to internalize the systems of the language they are learning; understand those syntactic features which do not exist in, or, differ in some respects from those of their mother tongue; and so on.

Table 4. Appropriateness of Suggested Activities to Improve Grammar Proficiency of Pre-service Elementary Teachers

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES	MEAN	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
1. Exposure to Good Grammar	2.53	Very Appropriate
2. Target Habitual Mistakes	2.26	Appropriate
3. Remedial Teaching	2.21	Appropriate
4.Tutorial Sessions	2.34	Very Appropriate
5.Use of Skill Books	2.50	Very Appropriate
6.Use of Modules	2.26	Appropriate
7.Use of Work Books	2.42	Very Appropriate
8. Cooperative Learning	2.55	Very Appropriate
9. Immersion of proficiency strugglers with proficient one's	2.24	Appropriate

Scale	Score Range	Interpretation
3	2.34-3.00	Very Appropriate
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Cooperative learning, exposure to good grammar, the use of skill books, the use of workbooks, and tutorial sessions are seen as very appropriate strategies to address the most frequent errors committed by elementary pre-service teachers of the Apayao State College. Magno, de Carvalho, Lajom, Bunagan, and Regodon's [16] studied on the level of English language exposure of Taiwanese students, found that the more the learners are exposed to English, enables them to facilitate the language better. This was concluded after the findings showed that Taiwanese student participants in the Philippines have higher level of English exposure than the Taiwanese respondents in Taiwan. These samples were administered with a checklist for English language exposure to gauge the frequency of the samples contact with the targeted language. Further, Lilu and Yanlong [25] cited that media types such as the news styles seen on newspaper, magazines, radios, TVs and Internet, etc. follow the accepted rules of English and exposure of students to these forms allows students to pick up grammar and sentence structure. Such mediums observe punctuations and continuity which manifested on the results of the student participants.

Another consideration is the use of the language at school and at home will help students to brush up on their vocabulary words and make them conscious of their grammatical lapses. Teachers, parents and even peers may correct them on their mistakes. This maybe observed on the few mistakes that the highly exposed students made on verb tenses. The information that encompasses the medium of exposure such as internet, movies, television programs, etc., exhibit parallel construction. Parallelism on sentence construction refers to balance in the syntactical structure. Respondents that were exposed are likewise to have achieved fewer mistakes from this area.

IV. SUMMARY

This study was conducted to assess the content-based needs of pre-service elementary teachers in English structure. The Descriptive analysis method of research was used with questionnaire as the main data-gathering tool. The content-based needs of the pre-service elementary teachers are on verbs, sentence correction and the use of pronouns. On content words, specifically on verbs, sentence correction and pronouns, most errors are committed on tenses, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions. Tenses of verbs are commonly committed error on verbs while the use of possessive pronouns on pronominal errors. Cooperative learning, exposure to good grammar, use of skill books and workbooks, and tutorial sessions are seen very appropriate to enhance the aptitude of elementary pre-service teachers of Apayao State College on content and function words.

In the light of the findings, the following are forwarded as recommendations:

1. Utilize the mentioned interventions to enhance the aptitude of elementary pre-service teachers of Apayao State College on content and function words; and
2. Conduct similar study to secondary pre-service teachers.

V. CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

That the content-based needs of pre-service elementary teachers are on verbs, sentence correction and the use of pronouns. On sentence correction, the most errors are committed on tenses, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions. Tenses of verbs are commonly committed error on verbs while the use of possessive pronouns on pronominal errors.

Cooperative learning, exposure to good grammar, use of skill books and workbooks, and tutorial sessions are seen very appropriate to address content-based needs of elementary pre-service teachers of Apayao State College.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were recommended:

1. Utilize the mentioned interventions to address the content-based needs of elementary pre-service teachers; and
2. Conduct similar study to high school pre-service teachers.

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