

# Grammar Proficiency of Pre-service English Teachers: Basis for an Action Plan in a Teacher Education Institution

Norlyn Bedia Dillo<sup>1</sup> and May Arroyo Gañon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Student, Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo

**Abstract**— This study determined the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers. A total of 82 participants were selected from third year to fourth year using stratified random sampling. Only those who consented to participate were included in the study. The descriptive research design was used in this study. A Grammar Proficiency Test was adopted from E. Jamillo during the conduct of the study. The said questionnaire was composed of a 50-item test divided into four components: English Grammar, Identifying Errors, English Vocabulary, and English Reading Comprehension. The statistical tools used to determine the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers were mean, frequency, and standard deviation. The overall grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers was categorized as “very good” ( $M=35.76$ ,  $SD = 6.947$ ). With the given findings, both the 3rd year and 4th year pre-service English teachers have a “very good” level of proficiency in grammar. They have shown through their test results that they have a solid grasp of grammar, which is a critical skill for their future teaching roles. While most pre-service teachers performed at a “Very Good” level, some showed higher or lower proficiency levels which means that there is still a need for improvement and development in imparting grammar to learners especially to those who got a lower proficiency level. Among the 4 components of grammar proficiency test, participants generally excel in Reading Comprehension and Identifying Errors, there is a clear need to improve in English Grammar. Addressing these specific areas through targeted, differentiated instruction and practice could help elevate the overall proficiency of participants across all components. English educators should further improve their proficiency to promote quality of instruction that would be significant in the learning process. This study purports that mitigations on equipping students with strong grammar skills while identifying opportunities to further enhance their pedagogy are vital in a higher institution molding English teachers.

**Keywords**— English, Grammar, Grammar Proficiency, Pre-service Teacher, Proficiency Level.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the structural foundation of one’s ability to express him. The more the person is aware of how it works, the more the person can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way he and others use the language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English. And it can help everyone-not only teachers of English, but teachers of everything, for all teaching is ultimately a matter of getting to gripping with meanings (Crystal, 2004).

Grammar is an essential component of a language. In its absence, miscommunication may arise. Therefore, language can’t function without grammar. As Nordquist (2020) claimed, a language without grammar is like a pile of bricks without mortar to hold them together. Hence, people who speak the same language can understand one another since they are innately aware of their language grammar system.

According to Nanquil (2021), language students should not just learn and master a language because of completion in a particular grade level, but for various purposes that they will do in the future. If students realize that learning a language is more than the thought of passing a particular subject and grade, they will discover how many and how much they can get from it. They should realize its value by active participation in activities, joining organizations, making new circles of friends, asking and receiving information, and a lot more. Learners should also come to understand that grammar is an essential component of a language to meet the communicative needs of people and the gleaming functions it will offer. Indeed, the place of grammar in communication and socialization is indispensable as proven by various studies and practical applications.

Grammar is one of determining points of mastering English. It refers to a set of the structural rules of language which concerns with the grammar in any given natural language. Fauziati (2013, p. 5) stated that we

have to begin the study of language, namely its structure and the functions. As Clark and Clark's in Fauziati (2013, p. 5) have stated "philosophers, orators, and linguists have argued that a language has its structure because humans are subjects to certain general laws of thought." Hence, grammar becomes a basic thing that should be introduced for students in a school. Grammar also becomes starting points to master English well. Since grammar is an important aspect in learning English, the teacher's teaching will determine the learners' success in learning the language. In this case, the approaches of teaching grammar should be the main focus in teaching and learning process. The teacher's way in delivering and guiding the learners also supports the learners' effort in learning the language.

Grammar is an essential aspect of language. Therefore, when someone learns a new language formally, they are generally taught grammar. However, the extent of grammar instruction depends on the learner's proficiency level. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2007), learning grammar plays a crucial role in language acquisition. Research on language learning that emphasizes grammar (form-focused instruction) has shown that teaching grammar is more effective than focusing solely on meaning. According to Long, grammar-focused learning can be categorized into two approaches: Focus on Forms (FoFs) and Focus on Form (FoF). The first approach prioritizes explicit grammar instruction, where grammar is taught separately from context. In contrast, the second approach integrates grammar learning with meaning, emphasizing grammatical structures that naturally emerge in the learning material.

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

and as a means to optimize one's access to opportunities in the employment market (Estanislao, 2013).

English is a universal language that gains an increasingly importance in a daily basis, and it plays a significant role in developing educational systems worldwide. Basic grammatical English rules are considered the basis to each English learner, and the guarantor for practicing good language communication skills. Grammar learning is also the basic enablers for a good thoughts and ideas expression (Iqbal, et al., 2017). English teachers are considered as the main factor that could help students to cover the grammar difficulties and their discomfort feelings. As many teachers paid efforts to make grammar teaching methods as useful and more interesting activity within the curriculum of the English language (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011).

In helping pre-service or new teachers to comprehend the main concepts of grammar, it is also best to note two different perspectives of grammar (Yin, 1990). The first perspective sees grammar in a global sense under the framework of descriptive grammar, in which sometimes grammar is used to stand all the knowledge that a native speaker has about his or her language. This knowledge includes phonological facts, facts about the structure of words and sentences, facts about the meanings of words and sentences, and facts about the organization of the whole text or discourse. While the second perspective of grammar sees grammar in a narrower sense in which, grammar is often used to refer to a particular body of information about a language specifically on structure of words and sentences. Grammar is understood in this manner is composed of morphology and syntax. These two perspectives of grammar may lead to a better understanding on the role of grammar in the language teaching and learning process particularly in planning teaching goals to suit with the students' needs and curriculum standards.

Former senator and respected academician Edgardo Angara (2002) forwards that Filipinos have long stood out for their competence and proficiency in English. Today, however, he laments that many Filipinos, even college graduates, are no longer fluent in speaking, reading, and writing in English. The slide in the Filipinos' competence and proficiency in English distressingly comes at a time when the world is effectively adopting English as a global language (San Miguel, 2006). Senator Herrera (2004) asserts that being

good English speakers gives Filipino workers a competitive advantage in the employment market. He highlights, however, that other countries are fast catching up on the Philippines with regard to English advantage. Knowledge of grammatical rules and terminology is important for all foreign language learners, but especially for undergraduates who are used to cognitive learning and who are aiming for a high level of accuracy in the language (Hall, 2002).

The journey of Filipino pre-service teachers before entering the DepEd is a significant phase in their professional development and an essential aspect of the educational system. This journey encompassed academic preparation and field experiences or practice teaching, which shaped aspiring educators into competent and dedicated professionals. (Bihasa et al., 2024). Researching the grammar proficiency of pre-service English teachers is crucial because grammar is foundational to effective language teaching and essential for accurate communication. Teachers must be proficient to model proper usage, meet educational standards, and prepare students for global contexts. However, many pre-service teachers face challenges, including inconsistent grammar knowledge, difficulty applying theoretical rules in practice, struggles with error identification, native language interference, and low confidence in teaching grammar. Addressing these gaps through research can inform teacher training programs, enhance curriculum design, and ensure future educators are well-equipped to deliver quality English instruction.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine the grammar proficiency level of Pre-service English Teachers. A total of 82 participants out of the total population (N=96) were selected from third year to fourth year using stratified random sampling.

In a stratified sample, researchers divide a population into homogeneous subpopulations called strata (the plural of stratum) based on specific characteristics (e.g., race, gender identity, location, etc.). Every member of the population studied should be in exactly one stratum (Thomas, 2023). Only those who consent to participate were included in the study.

The descriptive research design was used in this study. Descriptive research design is a powerful tool used by

scientists and researchers to gather information about a particular group or phenomenon. This type of research provides a detailed and accurate picture of the characteristics and behaviors of a particular population or subject. By observing and collecting data on a given topic, descriptive research helps researchers gain a deeper understanding of a specific issue and provides valuable insights that can inform future studies (Sirisilla, 2023). It was appropriate in this study because this method aims to assess the grammar proficiency level of the respondents.

A Grammar Proficiency Test uploaded online by E. Jaramillo was adopted during the conduct of the study. The said questionnaire was composed of a 50-item test divided into 4 components such as the English Grammar, Identifying Errors, English Vocabulary, and English Reading Comprehension. A letter to conduct signed by the university president was secured before conducting the study.

All respondents voluntarily participated in the study. The statistical tools used to determine the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers were mean, frequency, and standard deviation. A rating scale was used to define their grammar proficiency level.

*Table 1: Description of Grammar Proficiency Levels Based on Score Ranges*

Scale	Description
0-9	Poor
10-19	Fair
20-29	Good
30-39	Very Good
40-50	Excellent

Table 1 shows the description of grammar proficiency levels based on score ranges.

## III. RESULTS

This section reveals the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers. The target of this study is to assess the level of proficiency in grammar of the pre-service English teachers.

In assessing it, the mean, frequency, and standard deviation of the responses from the 82 respondents were obtained. As a result, the proficiency level in grammar of the pre-service English teachers were revealed.

**Table 2: Distribution of Grammar Proficiency Levels of Pre-Service English Teachers**

Level	F	Percentage
Poor	0	0
Fair	2	2.4
Good	10	12.2
Very Good	44	53.7
Excellent	26	31.7
Total	82	100

Table 2 shows that 44 or 53.7% out of 82 respondents were very good when it comes to grammar. Meanwhile, 26 or 31.7% of the respondents showed an excellent grammar proficiency level. 10 or 12.2% of the

respondents achieved a good level of grammar proficiency and 2 or 2.4% of the respondents got a fair level. Nobody got the lowest level which is “poor”.

**Table 3: Summary of Overall Grammar Proficiency Level of Pre-Service English Teachers**

n	M	SD	Proficiency Level
82	35.76	6.947	Very Good

It is shown in the above table that the overall grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers was very good (M=35.76, SD=6.947).

**Table 4: Comparative Grammar Proficiency Levels of Pre-Service English Teachers by Year Level**

Year Level	M	SD	Proficiency Level
3rd Year	34.86	5.426	Very Good
4th Year	37.23	8.812	Very Good

Table 4 reveals that both the 3rd year and 4th year pre-service English teachers have a very good level of proficiency in grammar, (M=34.86, SD= 5.426; M=37.23, SD= 8.812).

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for English Grammar Proficiency Test Components**

English Grammar Proficiency Test Components	M	SD
English Grammar (15)	64.15	14.080
Identifying Errors (15)	74.88	17.381
English Vocabulary (10)	72.68	15.874
English Reading Comprehension (10)	76.22	21.753

Table 5 shows that the highest component is the “English Reading Comprehension” (m= 76.22, SD= 21.753). “Identifying Errors” component of the test is the next highest component (m=74.88, SD=17.381). The next component that has a (m=72.68, SD=15.874) is the “English Vocabulary” and the lowest component is the “English Grammar” (m=64.15, SD=14.080).

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS

Grammar may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines words in order to form longer units of meaning. There is a set of rules which govern how units of meaning may be constructed in any language: one may say that a learner who knows grammar is one who has mastered and can apply these

rules to express him or herself in the acceptability of the language forms (Chung and Pullum, 2015).

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

so as to convey his or her chosen meaning effectively and acceptably.

This study assessed the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers enrolled in a state university. A grammar proficiency test uploaded online by E. Jaramillo was used to conduct the study. The study revealed that the pre-service English teachers were very good when it comes to grammar. They have shown through their test results that they have a solid grasp of grammar, which is a critical skill for their future teaching roles. While most pre-service teachers performed at a "Very Good" level, some showed higher or lower proficiency levels which means that there is still a need for improvement and development in imparting grammar to learners especially to those who got a lower proficiency level. The higher mean score of 4th-Year Students suggests they have a slight edge in grammar proficiency compared to their 3rd-Year counterparts. This difference could be attributed to the additional academic exposure, training, or experience 4th-Year students have received, particularly through coursework, internships, or practicum opportunities.

Out of the 4 components of the grammar proficiency test, the "English Reading Comprehension" got the highest mean indicating strong overall performance, though the higher variability indicated difference in the individual abilities of participants. Participants also performed better under the "Identifying Errors and English Vocabulary" components. Meanwhile, the component "English Grammar" obtained the lowest average score indicating that participants found this section more challenging compared to others. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a consistent level of performance among participants in this area. This result suggested that educators should implement more targeted grammar instruction, with a focus on key areas where participants struggle.

Molding future English teachers, the Teacher Education Institution has the responsibility to address the leaning gaps of their students in dealing with the different concepts under the field of grammar. Particularly in the action plan, the TEI has to provide additional interventions or advanced grammar workshops tailored to address the needs of lower-performing individuals within the group. Maintaining a focus on strengthening grammar fundamentals to prepare students for higher-level grammar applications in their later years is also essential. The TEI may conduct further analysis to

identify areas of grammar where pre-service teachers may face difficulty and focus on improving those aspects for their own development and for their future classrooms.

## V. CONCLUSION

Although the result revealed that pre-service English teachers have very good proficiency level, we cannot ignore the fact that there were individuals who got a lower proficiency level. Because of this, we should not stop from seeking various interventions that could further improve the performance of our learners in grammar. A survey of research evidence shows that grammar can, in fact, be useful in terms of its effects on the learners' communication skills, either in their first language or in a modern foreign language (Paribakht, 2004). There is general agreement in the field that grammar learning is system learning and that such knowledge provides learners with a basis for generative and creative use of language and enables them to manipulate the language data in both comprehension and production of novel linguistic input and output, respectively.

This study identified the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers. A descriptive research design was used in conducting this study. A 50-item test was administered to the participants and the data revealed that pre-service English teachers are knowledgeable about grammar as they got very good level of proficiency. Furthermore, there were some individuals who showed an excellent level of proficiency which means they are competent in the field of grammar. However, there were few individuals who showed a lower proficiency level and those individuals should not be taken for granted although they are few. They should be assessed as to which area of grammar are they having difficulty. Facilitators should conduct tailored grammar workshops or review sessions to address specific gaps for those who scored below the "Very Good" level. In addition, among the 4 components of grammar proficiency test, participants generally excel in "Reading Comprehension" and "Identifying Errors", there is a clear need to improve in "English Grammar". Addressing these specific areas through targeted, differentiated instruction and practice could help elevate the overall proficiency of participants across all components.

According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011), grammatical competence is the speakers' knowledge of the forms and

meanings that exist in grammar, and a theoretical knowledge of how to use them. This type of knowledge is reflected in the grammar rules. In other words, competence is in the head. Tasks that are sentence-based typically develop the grammatical competence

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

In the action plan, the TEI may emphasize that English educators should continue doing their best to further improve the quality of instruction that would be significant in the learning process of our learners. Burns (2009) says that grammar is essentially about the systems and patterns people use to select and combine word. By studying grammar people come to recognize the structure and regularity which is the foundation of language and people gain the tools to talk about the language system. This study underscores that the concerned TEI may consider the effectiveness of the current curriculum in equipping students with strong grammar skills while identifying opportunities to further enhance their proficiency levels. This study also reflects the effort and dedication of teachers in such TEI in making their students have a solid foundation in the field of grammar.

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