

Grammatical Competence of 4th-Year Pre-service Teachers at Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

Chantal Mae G. Nagaño

Wesleyan University Philippines, Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

naganochantalmaeg190143@gmail.com

Jamaila A. Cesario

Lloyds Banking Group Company, Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

Ken Cedrick M. Facunla

Good Samaritan Colleges, Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

Beverly E. Macabangon

Ark of Knowledge Tutorial Centre, Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

Javelyn A. Paras

Good Samaritan Colleges, Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

Jiana A. Orden

Maligaya National High School / Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College

How to cite:

Nagaño, C. M. Cesario, J.A, Facunla, K. C.M. Macabangon, B. E, Paras, J. A. & Orden, J. A (2025). Grammatical Competence of 4th-Year Pre-service Teachers at Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College. *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies* 6(4).126-241. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlts.v6i4.636>

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:
01/09/2025

Accepted:
23/10/2025

Keywords:

*Grammatical
competence;
Pre-service
teachers;
Grammar
areas; GIFT;
Most and
Least learned
competencies..*

Abstract

This study assessed the grammatical competence of 50 fourth-year pre-service English teachers at Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College (ELJMC). Utilising the Grammar Inventory for Teachers (GIFT), the assessment covered seven grammar domains: classes of words, sentence elements, types of sentences, correct use of verbs, modifiers, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun usage. Results indicated an average overall competence level. High competence was found in six domains: modifiers, subject-verb agreement, classes of words, correct use of verbs, pronoun usage, and types of sentences. Sentence elements emerged as the least learned domain, falling into the low level of competence. The findings highlight substantial strengths in several grammar areas but reveal persistent, specific gaps in sentence structure knowledge. Recommendations include developing targeted grammar instruction modules and continuous monitoring to address the identified weaknesses, thereby enhancing the instructional quality and language proficiency of future educators.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalisation, English has become the dominant language for academic, professional, and cross-national communication. It remains central to education, where language competence significantly influences the effectiveness of teaching and learning, specifically in how students critically engage with academic content (Otaala & Plattner, 2013).

Despite its importance, a recurring national issue in the Philippines is the degradation of English language competence among students. This prompted policy measures, such as Executive Order No. 210, s. In 2003, institutionalised English as the medium of instruction in secondary education and necessitating remedial English courses for teachers.

For teacher education students, grammatical competence is an essential requirement. Pre-service teachers must demonstrate mastery of English grammar in preparing instructional materials and in their own oral and written communication. Lapses in this competence can hinder future academic and professional success. Grammatical competence encompasses foundational skills in morphology and syntax (Magpayo, Paras, & Sarmiento, 2015) based on grammar elements including word classes, sentence elements, types of sentences, appropriate use of verbs, modifiers, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun use.

Due to these concerns, a body of literature supports the need to assess and improve grammar competencies. Studies by Rogers (2016) and Li (2012) highlight gaps in the academic readiness of English learners regarding proficiency, teacher effectiveness, and institutional support. Further research has offered insights into specific grammar structures like word classes (Allison, 2020), sentence elements (Alimi, 2018), and modifiers (McManus, 2012). Locally, Filipino learners frequently demonstrate errors with subject-verb agreement (Mabuan, 2015) and pronoun usage (Putriani, 2015), underscoring the need for focused instruction. Altogether, these findings highlight the urgency of improving grammatical competence as a necessity for advancing academic development and effective teaching.

To address the persistent need for focused grammar instruction, this descriptive study investigated the grammatical competence of pre-service English teachers at Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College. The researchers used a locally adapted version of the Grammar Inventory for Teachers (GIFT), a foundational tool for objectively assessing grammar knowledge (Belk & Thompson, 1999). This instrument was contextualized for local linguistic and curriculum needs by Magpayo and Paras (2015), ensuring empirical validity.

The study had two primary purposes. The first was to assess the pre-service teachers' level of grammatical competence across seven grammar domains. The second was to identify the most and least learned subdomains. By pinpointing these specific strengths and weaknesses, the findings are intended to support institutional efforts in providing targeted interventions and informing teacher development programs to ensure their readiness for effective classroom instruction.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study is anchored on Noam Chomsky's theory of grammatical competence and Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence. Chomsky (1965) identifies grammatical competence as an individual's implicit knowledge of the rules and structures of a language, and centers on syntax, morphology, and phonology. Using this implicit system, individuals can produce and understand grammatically accurate sentences. Chomsky's theory is cognitive/mentalistic in nature and focuses on the conceptual internal system of linguistic knowledge rather than how that knowledge manifests in language.

For the purpose of engaging a broader realm of language competence within the classroom and instructional context, Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence guidelines were applied to understanding their model. This model consists of four components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. This model is broader and relates more functionally to language proficiency and conceptualizes real language use and instructional applications. In their model, grammatical competence refers to the precise application of vocabulary, syntax, and language rules, which represent the skills that are important aspects of future English teachers.

The implications of Chomsky's theory is on the cognitive capacity of grammar, and Canale and Swain's model place this knowledge in the communicative landscape. That, with

Chomsky's and Canale and Swain's model of competence lay an organizational framework for examining grammatical competence as a cognitive ability and a professional requirement for language educators.

The theoretical framework was integrated into a GIFT (Grammar Inventory for Teachers), adapted from Belk and Thompson (1999), used as an assessment tool to evaluate the grammatical competence of 4th year pre-service English teachers. The GIFT lists specific grammar domains and identifies areas that need improvement. It is consistent with Chomsky's perspective on internal, rules-based knowledge of grammar and Canale and Swain's perspective on communicative accuracy in educational settings.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study was structured to identify the grammatical competence of teacher candidates at Eduardo L. Joson Memorial College, and to generate data to inform targeted grammar instruction in teacher education programs.

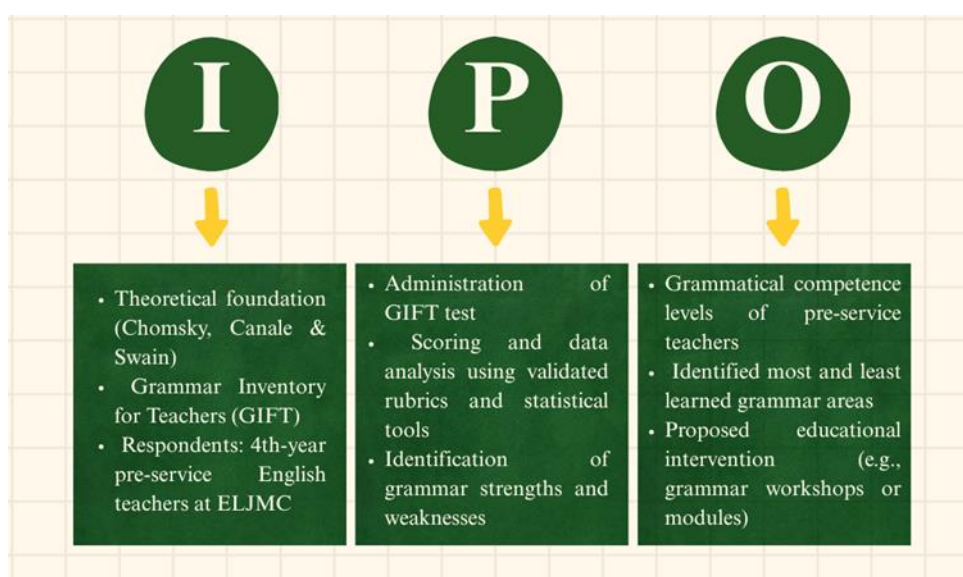


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Grammatical Competence in Pre-Service English Teachers

Grammatical competence is critical for pre-service English teachers, as it allows them to exemplify appropriate use of language and provide clear instruction. Magpayo, Paras, and Sarmiento (2015) examined the grammatical competence of first-year English major students from Holy Angel University, noting students demonstrated strengths in modifiers and word classes, but very significant weakness in sentence elements, sentence types, and pronoun usage. This indicates ongoing challenges related to certain areas of grammar that learners struggle with, demonstrating the need for explicit grammar instruction.

In a different way, Roca and Manla (2023) did a study to identify the grammar learning strategies and grammatical competence level of 2nd year and 3rd year pre-service teachers. Their study determined that while cognitive grammar learning strategies were implemented at a high level, their overall grammatical competence was fair, indicating a need for more explicit grammar instruction in teacher education.

Likewise, Dillo and Gañon (2025), within the United International Journal for Research & Technology, assessed the grammar proficiency level of pre-service English teachers. Their results indicated a good percentage of students achieved a "very good" level of grammar

proficiency; however, there continues to be areas for improvement particularly with respect to subject-verb agreement and sentence construction.

3.2. Grammar Instruction in Teacher Education

Effective grammar instruction is crucial in teacher education to ensure that pre-service teachers possess the necessary skills to teach grammar effectively. According to Hammond (2023) in “Teaching grammar in the 21st century classroom”, the instruction must be connected to meaning and context, leading to authentic reading and writing activities. When pre-service teachers connect grammar instruction to real-life contexts, they understand how to use the grammar instruction pedagogically and develop their own practice.

Erlbacher (2025), also discusses ways for engaging grammar instruction in a high school English classroom, highlighting the need for teacher education programs to equip pre-service teachers with innovative methods to teach grammar effectively.

3.3. Assessment of Grammar Proficiency

Assessing grammar ability is essential for determining what areas pre-service teachers may need extra support in. Bascones et al. (2024) study looked at the English language competence and teaching efficacy of English pre-service teachers, and the study showed that while these pre-service teachers had generally high English competence, they were most competent in reading and least competent in speaking skill, indicating a need for extensive assessment tools covering all aspects of language skills.

Roca and Manla's (2023) study examined grammar learning strategies and competence using questionnaires, which provided information about the effectiveness of current teaching practices, as well as elements for improvement.

3.4. Challenges in Grammar Instruction

Pre-service teachers typically face challenges related to grammar instruction that relate to limited exposure to successful grammar instruction strategies, as well as their own uncertainty about the grammar skills they possess. With regard to pre-service teachers' overall grammar instruction, the study by Roca and Manla (2023), noted that pre-service teachers showed high tendencies to utilize grammar learning strategies, however, their grammar competence remained fair, suggesting that there are gaps in the efficacy of the teaching they receive.

3.5. Classes of Words (Parts of Speech)

Understanding parts of speeches is fundamental to grammatical competence. Sahagun (2021) examined the grammar knowledge of teacher education students in Zambales, and revealed the students had improved in recognizing the parts of speech after the intervention, however, some challenges still existed particularly around less frequently used parts of speech like interjections and conjunctions.

3.6. Sentence Elements

To create coherent sentences, it is essential to understand elements of the sentence such as subjects, predicates, and objects. Alimi (2018) discussed sentence elements from a focus on structural and functional syntax. Structurally, the organization of phrases (NP, VP, and PP) are the basic building blocks of sentences. Functionally, we think about sentence elements as the subject (NP before the predicate), predicate (VP), and object (NP after the predicate). Sentence elements such as the predicate, object, and subject which include noun phrases, provide meaning in sentences. Adjectival phrases usually function as subject complements which refer to the subject, while prepositional phrases frequently serve as adjuncts to provide additional information about time, place, and manner. Being aware of sentence elements and patterns is especially important to write meaningful and syntactically correct sentences.

Sahagun (2021) also examined students' abilities to identify elements of the sentence. Although quantitative data showed that students progressed after the intervention, the study

revealed that students continued to struggle with identifying complex structures such as predicate nominative and object of prepositions.

3.7.Types of Sentences

Effective communication depends on recognizing and writing different sentence types—simple, compound, and complex. There is not a lot of specific research focused on sentence types; instead, general research suggests pre-service teachers struggle with writing variety and complexity, especially in writing and spoken communication.

In a relevant area of research, Media Rahmi, Saunir Saun, and Aryuliva Adnan (2016) explore the sentence type use in English essays written by students. The study makes distinctions among four different types - simple, compound, complex, and compound- complex sentences. In the analyzed essays, simple sentences are used most frequently, and compound-complex sentences are the least frequently used type of sentence. The study also identified issues relating to student writing including fragments and run-on sentences, highlighting areas where students struggle with sentence construction. Therefore, these findings suggest a need for focused instruction on sentence variety as a way to help students improve their writing skills.

3.8. Correct Use of Verbs

Verb usage, including tense consistency and proper verb forms, is a common area of difficulty. Roca and Manla (2023) found that pre-service teachers displayed fair competence in verb usage but have difficulty in terms of tense consistency and proper verb forms.

3.8.1. Modifiers

Modifiers (auxiliary verbs, adjectives, adverbs), like TOEFL scores are difficult to gauge but help elaborate a sentence's meaning, can be misused, which can lead to vagueness. There are not sufficient studies brainstorming modifiers. Studies addressing other contexts have identified adjective-adverb agreement as difficulty for the pre-service teachers. Arroyo and Abdulgalil (2019) engaged in action research and aimed at identifying common grammatical errors among English major students.

Arroyo and Abdulgalil (2019) identified errors related to modifiers occurring frequently, e.g., incorrect placement and use of adjectives or adverbs would create either vague or incorrect sentences. The study reiterates the need for targeted instructional strategies to address these specific areas of difficulty.

3.8.2. Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement errors are a common problem in Filipino ESL learners (Mabuan, 2018). The study by Mabuan (2018) investigated the weblog entries of one group of Filipino learners of English and identified subject-verb agreement as the second most frequent error, comprising close to 20% of errors. Mabuan (2018) explained that learners were wrongly identifying subjects, and their verb forms associated with them, showing a lack of command of syntactic rules. The findings of her study highlighted an overall need for students to develop their syntactic awareness through instruction and practice.

Subject-verb agreement errors are also common for pre-service teachers. Barroquillo and Tillo (2019) found that 4th-year BSEd students were factually rated to be at the beginner level of subject-verb agreement, and that errors were common in the identification of the correct forms of verbs associated with singular and plural subjects. Belarmino (2024) designed and used Strategic Intervention Materials (SIMs) to address those errors in subject- verb agreement. She showed very positive learning outcomes and a vast improvement in students' understanding and use of the rules in subject-verb agreement errors.

3.9. Pronoun Usage

Using proper pronouns, including agreement and case, is a useful skill that assists with clarity. Putriani (2015) looked into students' abilities to use personal pronouns correctly in English sentences, demonstrating the importance of pronouns in facilitating clarity, and

avoiding repeated nouns. Pronouns stand in for previously referenced nouns, making their use essential for simplification and streamlined communication. Putriani (2015) explained how there may be eight types of pronouns: personal, possessive, reflexive, reciprocal, demonstrative, indefinite, relative, and interrogative. Using pronouns correctly is a component of making coherent and meaningful sentences by limiting redundancy and clarifying the reference.

Roca and Manla (2023) reported pronoun-antecedent agreement was one area where pre-service teachers demonstrated fair competence limited to understanding pronoun-antecedent agreement, which suggests and highlights area of instruction needed in this aspect of grammar.

3.10. Synthesis of the Study

The reviewed literature highlights that while pre-service English teachers partial competence in many areas of grammar, significant gaps remain in both foundational knowledge and pedagogical application. Various studies (e.g., Magpayo, Paras and Sarmiento, 2015; Roca and Manla, 2023) indicated that learners often demonstrate proficiency in specific areas (e.g., modifiers, word classes) while display weaknesses (e.g., sentence elements, pronouns, subject-verb and verb forms and agreement). These issues illustrate a continued need for more targeted grammar instruction in teacher education.

The need for pre-service teachers to demonstrate grammatical competence is underscored once again, as it speaks directly to their own ability to model the accurate use of language and how to instruct. It is being emphasized that teacher education programs and faculty need to improve their grammar instruction and assessments (e.g., Fikron, 2018; Dillo and Gañon, 2025).

Contextualized, meaningful grammar teaching, the best approach according to Hammond (2023), is more effective than traditional methods, meaning deprived grammar instruction, along with engaging and student-centered instructional practices (Erlbacher, 2025).

Grammar assessment is also an important aspect of identifying improvement opportunities. Research by Bascones et al. (2024) has found that although many pre-service teachers feel comfortable developing assessments, they struggle to draw from assessment results for grammar instruction and feedback to students.

Particular grammatical areas such as the parts of speech (Sahagun, 2021), sentence structure (Rahmi et al., 2016), verbs (Roca & Manla, 2023), subject-verb agreement (Mabuan, 2015; Belarmino, 2024) -showed consistent areas of difficulty suggesting patterns of errors. The overall findings point to a need for the improvement of instructional design, assessment, and intervention for pre-service teacher training to build robust grammatical competence.

4. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive quantitative research design was employed to assess the grammatical competence of ELJMC fourth-year pre-service English teachers in the school year 2021-2022. The study focused on seven grammar domains such as classes of words, sentence elements, the types of sentences, correct verb use, modifiers, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun references.

Convenience sampling was used, targeting a total of 50 available fourth-year pre-service teachers. The data was collected from May 31 to June 4, 2022. A 100-item multiple-choice test adopted from Belk and Thompson's (1999) Grammar Inventory for Teachers (GIFT) was administered. The test comprised two parts. Part 1 (70 items) measured knowledge in terms of sentence elements and parts of speech, while Part 2 (30 items) assessed standard English usage.

Before implementation, we received approval from the Dean of Academic Affairs. The test was administered with the help of the course instructor. The anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants were upheld at all times.

The data analysis included computing the number and percentage of correct response per grammar item. Mean scores and mean scores percentage were used to describe the overall competence level, and most and least learned grammar areas. Competence levels were categorized according to the scale adapted from Magpayo, Paras and Sarmiento (2015): Very Low (0–24), Low (25–49), Average (50–66), High (6–83), and Very High (84–100). Grammar areas with mean scores $\geq 51\%$ were the most learned, and mean scores $\leq 50\%$, were the least learned.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The tables below are divided into three sections: Section 1 presents the grammatical competence level of pre-service teachers; Section 2 displays the most learned grammar areas; and Section 3 shows the least learned grammar areas.

Table1 : Level of Grammatical Competence

Grammar Areas	Mean Score	Correct Answers (%)	Level of Competence
Classes of Words (30 items)	22.22	74.06%	High
Sentence Elements (30 items)	14.82	49.4%	Low
Types of Sentences (10 items)	5.80	58%	High
Correct Use of Verbs (10 items)	7.34	73.4%	High
Modifiers (10 items)	9.20	92%	High
Subject-Verb Agreement (5 items)	3.96	79.2%	High
Pronoun Usage (5 items)	3.44	68.8%	High
Total	66.78	70.69%	Average

The table presents the grammatical competence levels based on different grammar categories. Classes of words, with a mean score of 22.22 or 74.06%, under high competence level. Sentence elements, with a mean score of 14.82 or 49.4%, under a low competence level. Types of sentences, with a mean score of 5.80 or 58%, are under high competence level. Correct use of verbs, with a mean score of 7.34 or 73.4%, under high competence level. Modifiers, with a mean score of 9.20 or 92%, under high competence level. Subject-verb agreement, with a mean score of 3.96 or 79.2%, under high competence level. Lastly, pronouns usage, with a mean score of 3.44 or 68.8%, under high competence level. The overall mean score of individual test results or grammatical competence level of 4th-year pre-service teachers is 66.78 or 70.69% of total correct answers.

The findings specify that the overall mean score of the participants is within an average level of grammatical competence. This means that the students exhibit a fair level of grammatical competence, highlighted by multiple errors across all areas of grammar tested, and limited background in the grammar concepts tested. Modifiers had the highest correct responses, then subject-verb agreement, classes of words, correct use of verbs, pronouns usage, and types of sentences. Sentence elements recorded the lowest percentage of correct responses.

A similar study conducted by Magpayo, Paras and Sarmiento (2015), the grammatical competence of first-year English major of Holy Angel University reported an overall mean score of 54.11, an average level. Whereas the present study graded a mean of 66.78, which falls within the same competence level. Modifiers also had the highest percentage of correct and

appears to be similar conclusion. But unlike the present study, they reported types of sentences, sentence elements, and pronouns as the least learned areas. This study, however, identified only sentence elements in the low competency level area.

5.1. Most Learned Grammar Points in each Grammar Area

Table 2.1 Most Learned Grammar Points in Classes of Words

Table 2.1 presents the test results in the classes of words section, showing high percentages of correct responses in items on adverbs (3 items) with a mean of 2.04 and 68%, pronouns (2 items) with a mean of 1.18 and 59%, prepositions (4 items) with a mean of 3.26

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
adverbs (3 items)	2.04	68%	High
Pronouns (2 items)	1.18	59%	High
Prepositions (4 items)	3.26	81.5%	High
action verbs (5 items)	3.32	66.4%	High
Nouns (4 items)	3.20	80%	High
linking verbs (3 items)	2.52	84%	High
adjectives (3 items)	2.22	74%	High
auxiliary verbs or helping verbs (1 item)	0.76	76%	High
coordinating conjunctions (1 item)	0.68	68%	High
correlative conjunctions (2 items)	1.36	68%	High
interjections (2 items)	1.82	91%	High

and 81.5%, action verbs (5 items) with a mean of 3.32 and 66.4%, nouns (4 items) with a mean of 3.20 and 80%, linking verbs (3 items) with a mean of 2.52 and 84%, adjectives (3 items) with a mean of 2.22 and 74%, auxiliary verbs (1 item) with a mean of 0.76 and 76%, coordinating conjunctions (1 item) with a mean of 0.68 and 68%, correlative conjunctions (2 items) with a mean of 1.36 and 68%, and interjections (2 items) with a mean of 1.82 and 91%.

All grammar points under classes of words recorded high percentages of correct answers, implying respondents possess a thorough understanding of this area. This result surpasses those of Magpayo et al. (2015), whose respondents demonstrated limited understanding of auxiliary verbs, coordinating and correlative conjunctions, and interjections. Therefore, classes of words is among the most learned grammar areas, with all specific grammar points receiving high percentages.

Table 2.2 Most Learned Grammar Points in Sentence Elements

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
complete subjects (3 items)	1.62	54%	High
adverbial clauses (1 item)	0.62	62%	High
adjective clauses (2 items)	1.46	73%	High
complete predicates (2 items)	1.36	68%	High
direct objects (4 items)	2.68	67%	High
prepositional phrases (1 item)	0.82	82%	High

Table 2.2 presents the test results in the sentence elements section, showing high percentages of correct responses in complete subjects (3 items) with a mean of 1.62 and 54%, adverbial clauses (1 item) with a mean of 0.62 and 62%, adjective clauses (2 items) with a mean of 1.46 and 73%, complete predicates (2 items) with a mean of 1.36 and 68%, direct objects (4 items) with a mean of 2.68 and 67%, and prepositional phrases (1 item) with a mean of 0.82 and 82%.

Most grammar points in sentence elements obtained high percentages of correct answers, implying respondents have a good understanding of this area. This result outperforms Magpayo et al. (2015), whose respondents showed low performance across sentence elements, except for predicate adjectives. Therefore, the grammar points with high correct percentages are considered the most learned within this area.

Table 2.3 Most Learned Grammar Points in Types of Sentences

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
simple sentences (3 items)	2.38	79.33%	High
compound sentences (2 items)	1.44	72%	High

Table 2.3 presents the test results in the types of sentences section, showing high percentages of correct answers in simple sentences (3 items) with a mean of 2.38 and 79.33%, and compound sentences (2 items) with a mean of 1.44 and 72%.

Two out of five grammar points in this area, simple and compound sentences, recorded high percentages of correct responses, indicating a solid understanding of these points. This result surpasses those of Magpayo et al. (2015), where only compound sentences received high scores. Thus, these specific grammar points are the most learned in the types of sentences area.

Table 2.4 Most Learned Grammar Points in Correct Use of Verbs

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
past tense (6 items)	4.94	82.33%	High
auxiliary verb 'did' (1 item)	0.60	60%	High
verb is not possible answer (1 item)	0.60	60%	High
past aspect of the verb (1 item)	0.94	94%	High

Table 2.4 presents the test results in the correct use of verbs section, showing high percentages in past tense (6 items) with a mean of 4.94 and 82.33%, auxiliary verb "did" (1 item) with a mean of 0.60 and 60%, verb not possible as an answer (1 item) with a mean of 0.60 and 60%, and past aspect (1 item) with a mean of 0.94 and 94%.

Most grammar points under this area recorded high correct percentages, indicating strong understanding. This outperforms Magpayo et al. (2015), where only past tense had high performance. Hence, the points with high correct answers are the most learned in this area.

Table 2.5 Most Learned Grammar Points in Modifiers

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
adverb of manner (3 items)	2.92	97.33%	High
superlative adjectives (3 item)	2.42	80.67%	High
descriptive adjectives (1 item)	1.00	100%	High
comparative adjectives (2 items)	2.00	100%	High
limiting adjectives (1 item)	0.98	98%	High

Table 2.5 presents the test results in the modifiers section, showing high percentages in adverb of manner (3 items) with a mean of 2.92 and 97.33%, superlative adjectives (3 items) with a mean of 2.42 and 80.67%, descriptive adjectives (1 item) with a mean of 1.00 and 100%, comparative adjectives (2 items) with a mean of 2.00 and 100%, and limiting adjectives/articles (1 item) with a mean of 0.98 and 98%.

All grammar points under modifiers recorded high correct percentages, indicating thorough understanding. This aligns with Magpayo et al. (2015), but contrasts with Pitaloka (2020), where modifiers were the most common error in descriptive writing. Therefore, modifiers are among the most learned areas.

Table 2.6 Most Learned Grammar Points in Subject-Verb Agreement

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
Singular subject, state of being (1 item)	0.94	94%	High
Singular subject, present perfect aspect (1 item)	0.70	70%	High

Compound subject, past tense of the linking verb (1 item)	0.92	92%	High
Singular subject “not one”, singular verb (1 item)	0.80	80%	High
Plural subject, past tense state of being (1 item)	0.68	68%	High

Table 2.6 presents the test results in subject-verb agreement, showing high percentages in singular subject, state of being (1 item) with a mean of 0.94 and 94%, singular subject, present perfect aspect (1 item) with a mean of 0.70 and 70%, compound subject, past tense of the linking verb (1 item) with a mean of 0.92 and 92%, singular subject “not one”, singular verb (1 item) with a mean of 0.80 and 80%, and plural subject, past tense state of being (1 item) with a mean of 0.68 and 68%.

All grammar points in this area recorded high percentages of correct responses, indicating solid understanding. This outperforms Magpayo et al. (2015), where difficulties were noted in some of these areas. It also contrasts with Bernal (2019), where students scored below average in subject-verb agreement. Thus, subject-verb agreement is among the most learned grammar areas.

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
Pronoun as predicate nominative (2 items)	1.24	62%	High
Possessive form of (singular) pronoun (2 items)	1.16	58%	High
Possessive form of (singular) pronoun (1 item)	1.00	100%	High

Table 2.7 Most Learned Grammar Points in Pronoun Usage

Table 2.7 presents the test results in pronoun usage, showing high percentages in pronoun as predicate nominative (2 items) with a mean of 1.24 and 62%, singular subject, possessive form (2 items) with a mean of 1.16 and 58%, and possessive form (plural) (1 item) with a mean of 1.00 and 100%.

All grammar points under pronoun usage showed high correct response rates, indicating solid understanding. This outperforms Magpayo et al. (2015), where only some points showed strong results. Thus, pronoun usage is among the most learned grammar areas.

Table 3 Least Learned Grammar Points in each Grammar Area

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
simple predicate (3 items)	1.30	43.33%	Low
predicate nominatives (4 items)	1.38	34.5%	Low
predicate adjectives (2 items)	0.94	47%	Low
object of prepositions (4 items)	1.06	26.5%	Low
simple subjects (4 items)	1.74	43.5%	Low

Table 3.1 Least Learned Grammar Points in Sentence Elements

Table 3.1 presents the test results in the sentence elements section, which show that the participants got low percentages of correct answers in items regarding simple predicate (3 items) with a mean score of 1.30 and a 43.33% mean score percentage, predicate nominatives (4 items) with a mean score of 1.38 and a 34.5% mean score percentage, predicate adjectives (2 items) with a mean score of 0.94 and a 47% mean score percentage, object of prepositions (4 items) with a mean score of 1.06 and a 26.5% mean score percentage, and simple subjects (4 items) with a mean score of 1.74 and a 43.5% mean score percentage.

The results show that 5 out of 11 grammar points in the grammar area sentence elements such as simple predicate, predicate nominative, predicate adjectives, object of prepositions, and simple subjects have a low percentage of correct answers.

This implies that respondents are struggling to understand these grammar points under sentence elements. This result outperforms that of Magpayo, Paras, and Sarmiento (2015), whose assessment of first-year English major students at Holy Angel University revealed difficulty in almost all grammar points of sentence elements, including complete subjects, adverbial clauses, adjective clauses, complete predicates, and direct objects, except for predicate adjectives. As a result, the specific grammar points with a low percentage of correct answers are the least learned in the grammar area sentence elements among the other grammar points.

Table 3.2 Least Learned Grammar Points in Types of Sentences

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
Complex sentences (2 items)	0.98	49%	Low
Sentence fragments (1 item)	0.28	28%	Low
Run-on sentences (2 items)	0.64	32%	Low

Table 3.2 presents the test results in the types of sentences section, which show that the participants got low percentages of correct answers in items regarding complex sentences (2 items) with a mean score of 0.98 and a 49% mean score percentage, sentence fragments (1 item) with a mean score of 0.28 and a 28% mean score percentage, and run-on sentences (2 items) with a mean score of 0.64 and a 32% mean score percentage.

The results show that 3 out of 5 grammar points in the grammar area such as complex sentences, sentence fragments, and run-on sentences have a low percentage of correct answers.

This implies that respondents are struggling to understand these grammar points under types of sentences. This result is superior to that of Magpayo, Paras, and Sarmiento (2015), whose assessment revealed difficulty in almost all specific grammar points of types of sentences, except for simple sentences, in which the students demonstrated competence. As a result, the specific grammar points with a low percentage of correct answers are the least learned in the grammar area sentence elements among the other grammar points.

Table 3.3 Least Learned Grammar Points in Correct Use of Verbs

Grammar Points	Mean Score	Mean Score Percentage	Level of Competence
Correct use of verb 'lie' (1 item)	0.34	34%	Low

Table 3.3 presents the test results in the correct use of verbs section, which show that the participants got a low percentage of correct answers in the item regarding correct use of the verb 'lie' (1 item) with a mean score of 0.34 and a 34% mean score percentage.

The results show that 1 out of 5 grammar points in the grammar area of correct use of verbs, specifically the correct use of the verb 'lie' has a low percentage of correct answers.

This implies that respondents are struggling to understand this grammar point under correct use of verbs. This result outperforms that of Magpayo, Paras, and Sarmiento (2015), whose assessment revealed difficulty in all grammar points under correct use of verbs, including auxiliary verbs 'did', verb as not the possible answer, past tense, and past aspect of the verb. As a result, the specific grammar point, correct use of the verb 'lie', with a low percentage of correct answers is the least learned in the grammar area sentence elements among the other grammar points.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall grammatical competence level of the fourth-year pre-service English teachers at ELJMC is Average (mean score of 66.78 or 70.69%). This suggests that while they possess a fair level of foundational competence, their performance is still marked by errors across all tested areas, indicating a limited or inconsistent background in some grammar concepts.

The study revealed a significant strength across most domains, with six out of seven areas classified at a high level of competence. These areas are:

- Modifiers (92% correct)
- Subject-Verb Agreement (79.2% correct)
- Classes of Words (74.06% correct)
- Correct Use of Verbs (73.4% correct)
- Pronoun Usage (68.8% correct)
- Types of Sentences (58% correct)

The most significant area of weakness is Sentence Elements, which was the only domain classified at a low level of competence (49.4% correct). This gap is specific to subdomains such as simple predicate, predicate nominatives, predicate adjectives, object of prepositions, and simple subjects. The finding that sentence structure is the least-mastered area indicates a critical weakness in the foundational syntactic knowledge necessary for effective teaching and the creation of clear instructional materials. This suggests a need to shift interventions from general review to structural grammar mastery.

In summary, while the pre-service teachers have a generally sound and satisfactory understanding of most grammar points, the persistent difficulty with sentence element analysis represents a major instructional blind spot that must be addressed to ensure their readiness as English educators.

6.1. Recommendations

The detailed findings of this study offer a clear roadmap for targeted interventions within the teacher education program:

Targeted Curricular Intervention for Sentence Elements:

- Focus: Since Sentence Elements is the least learned domain, the institution (ELJMC) should prioritize developing and implementing a focused remedial grammar module or workshop.
- Specificity: Instruction must specifically target the most difficult subdomains: simple predicate, predicate nominatives, predicate adjectives, object of prepositions, and simple subjects. Integrating varied learning materials and approaches, as suggested by the literature, is essential to ensure student adoption and learning.

Sustaining High Competence:

- To maintain the high competence levels in the other six domains (Modifiers, Subject-Verb Agreement, Classes of Words, etc.), instructors should continuously monitor students' grammatical development in both written and spoken activities.

- Furthermore, they should encourage students' personal support and development by recommending supplementary resources for these areas, though this should be paired with academic oversight.

Future Research and Institutional Utilization:

- College instructors, students, and future researchers are encouraged to utilize these specific results to guide further investigations into the factors that interfere with achieving full grammatical competence in English.
- The institution may use these findings to directly inform curriculum enhancement, ensuring that taught competencies are aligned with students' specific learning needs.

REFERENCES

- Alimi, D. (2019). Functional correlations between phrases and sentence elements. *Anglisticum. Journal of the Association–Institute for English Language and American Studies*, 7 (Conference Proceedings, Special Issue, 2018).
- Allison, M. Allison, M. (2020). Word classes and parts of speech in contemporary English grammar. Routledge.
- Arroyo, P. A. C., & Abdulgalil, M. S. (2019). *A study on the understanding of grammar among English major students at the University of Tripoli, Faculty of Languages* [Unpublished manuscript]. Scribd.
- Barroquillo, J. F., & Tillo, D. D. (2019). The relationship between subject-verb agreement proficiency and written discourse of tertiary level students. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(4), 1-15.
- Bascones, C. D., Abellana, A. L., & Borres, T. C. (2024). English language competence and teaching efficacy of English pre-service teachers. *International Journal of All Research Writings*, 6(6), 102–111.
- Belarmino, V. S. (2024, January 23). Strategic intervention materials on subject-verb agreement: A tool for the enhancement of students' grammatical competence [Manuscript submitted for publication]. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(1).
- Belk, J. A., & Thompson, R. F. (1999, April). Are preservice teachers literate in grammar and usage? (GIFT instrument) [ERIC Document No. ED429974]. ERIC.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Press.
- Dillo, N. B., & Gañon, M. A. (2025, January). Grammar proficiency of pre-service English teachers: Basis for an action plan in a teacher education institution. *UIJRT: United International Journal for Research & Technology*, 6(3), 111–116.
- Erlbacher, K. (2025). Teaching engaging grammar instruction in the high school English classroom [Unpublished manuscript]. University of Nebraska Omaha, Center for Teaching, Learning & Leading.
- Fikron, M. R. (2018). Grammatical competence within L2 communication: Language production, monitor hypothesis, and focus on forms instruction. *Pancaran Pendidikan*, 7(1), 101–112.
- Hammond, K. (2023). Teaching grammar in the 21st century classroom. Center for Professional Education of Teachers, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Li, J. Li, J. (2012). Principles of effective English language learner pedagogy (Research in Review 2012-3). College Board. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED562799.pdf>
- Mabuan, R. A. (2015, April 30). An analysis of weblogs' grammatical errors of Filipino learners of English as second language. In J. A. Gordon (Ed.), *ACTC2015 Conference Proceedings: Wikis* (pp. xx–xx). IAFOR.

- Magpayo, C. L., Paras, R. D. J., & Sarmiento, P. N. (2015). Grammatical competence of first-year English major students of Teacher Education Department in Holy Angel University A.Y. 2014–2015: An assessment [Unpublished undergraduate thesis]. Holy Angel University.
- McManus, P. McManus, P. (2012). The role of modifiers in advanced academic writing. Cambridge University Press.
- Otaala, J., & Plattner, I. (2013). The effect of English language proficiency on academic performance of undergraduate students at a Namibian University. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(2), 346–355.
- Pitaloka, N. (2020). An analysis of grammatical errors in students' descriptive writing. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 110–118.
- Putriani, R. (2015). *Students' abilities in using personal pronouns in their English sentences: A case study at the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Jepara in the academic year of 2014/2015* [Undergraduate thesis]. Semarang State University, Faculty of Languages and Arts.
- Rahmi, M., Saun, S., & Adnan, A. (2016). A study of sentence types in the writing of English department students of Universitas Negeri Padang in academic year 2014. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(1B), 17–24.
- Roca, R. M. C., & Manla, E. C. (2023). Grammatical competence level and grammar learning strategy of pre-service teachers. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(2), 140–152.
- Rogers, P. M. Rogers, P. M. (2016). Academic readiness of English learners in college: Proficiency gaps, teacher effectiveness, and institutional support. TESOL Press.

About the Authors

Author

Chantal Mae G. Nagaño *is an academic researcher and a Master of Arts in Education major in English candidate at Wesleyan University-Philippines, where she is currently pursuing thesis research. She is also an online ESL teacher, where she teaches students of various ages and proficiency levels. Her expertise is in applied linguistics, specializing in language assessment and curriculum development. Her primary roles included conceptualization, lead writing, and final project supervision. She developed the research design, drafted the full manuscript including the introduction and conclusion sections, and provided overall project direction for the research.*

Jamaila A. Cesario *is a Mortgage Financial Advisor at Lloyds Banking Group Company under Concentrix, contributing to the financial health of the UK economy. Her expertise is evaluating a client's financial status, including income and credit score, to empower customers toward a flourishing financial future. Her primary role was methodology design and data acquisition lead. She took the primary responsibility for establishing the detailed procedures for data collection, coordinated the administration of the Grammar Inventory for Teachers (GIFT) instrument, and ensured the integrity and fidelity of the raw data.*

Ken Cedrick M. Facunla *is a full-time instructor at the College of Education, Arts, and Sciences of Good Samaritan Colleges and serves as a teaching assistant at the Far Eastern University – Institute of Accounts, Business, and Finance (FEU-IABF) in Cabanatuan. His expertise lies in linguistics and teaching philosophies. His primary role was formal analysis and data interpretation. He performed the descriptive statistical analysis, calculated the*

means and standard deviations, and initially identified the most and least learned domains in the results section.

Beverly E. Macabangon *is a private tutor at Ark of Knowledge Tutorial Center. Her expertise lies in English language instruction and providing personalized academic support, focusing on customizing lesson plans to address individual areas of weakness. Her contribution focused on discussion and conclusion writing. She contributed significantly to the discussion section by linking the statistical results to pedagogical theory and drafting the specific, evidence-based curriculum recommendations.*

Javelyn A. Paras *is a Senior High School English Teacher at Good Samaritan Colleges. Her expertise centers on English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) and Personal Development, where she helps students strengthen their academic writing, communication, and critical thinking skills. Her role centered on literature review and resource curation. She was responsible for compiling and curating the foundational literature, ensuring all in-text citations were accurate, and maintaining the consistency of the entire reference list.*

Jiana A. Orden *is a Teacher I at Maligaya National High School under the Department of Education and is affiliated with Good Samaritan Colleges. Her expertise lies in English language teaching, literature instruction, and learner-centered pedagogy, with a focus on promoting 21st-century literacy skills. Her primary contribution was critical review and intellectual refinement. She performed a detailed review of the entire manuscript for logical consistency, verified the theoretical arguments, and ensured all scholarly standards were met before submission.*