GRAMMATICAL DEVIATIONS AS FEATURES OF PHILIPPINE ENGLISH IN LOCAL NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

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ABSTRACT

This study identified the grammatical features of Philippine English in local newspaper editorials. Specifically, the study determined the frequency of occurrence of deviant cases in terms of subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions. Through non-probability sampling, a total of forty-five (45) editorials were retrieved from the websites of three local newspapers and were interpreted and analyzed to identify grammatical deviations. To ensure the validity of the deviations found in the editorials, the researcher, along with three grammar raters, verified all the texts that contained the grammatical deviations. The specifics of the frequency counts showed that most of the deviations in subject-verb agreement were due to the use of a special noun (collective, clausal), while most of the deviant cases in article usage were associated with a missing definite article. For preposition usage, most of the deviations were linked to a missing preposition. Grammatical deviations as features of Philippine English in local newspaper editorials is a manifestation that a certain variety of English can be used as a medium to relay information and influence people's opinions within a specific context.

Keywords: data analysis*,* grammatical deviation*,* grammatical feature, newspaper editorial, Philippine English

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Jenkins et al. (2017) believes that the English language has been formed and adapted by Asians, both linguistically and culturally. English has become a global language; hence, it is no longer exclusive to countries where it is used as a first language. This idea shows that English is the lingua franca that Asians use and share with the rest of the world as a second language or foreign language. Such a language phenomenon has paved the way for the development of Asian Englishes such as Singaporean English, Brunei English, and Malaysian English. In the Philippines, according to Yumol-Florendo (2012), due to the existence of bilingualism and multilingualism, the use of English along with other local languages has led

to the emergence of a more innovative variant of English called Philippine English. Bautista (2000) defines Philippine English (PhE) as a nativized variety of English that is used by Filipinos in different sectors of society. Such a variety of English has syntactic features which deviate from and are unique to the standards such as American English, British English, and other World Englishes.

Rañosa-Madrunio (2004) asserts that certain varieties of English such as Philippine English and Singaporean English possess unique syntactic features. The study of Rañosa-Madrunio (2004) was geared towards identifying linguistic signals such as personal reference pronouns, modal verbs, attitudinal or evaluative adjectives, and passive constructions occurring in the written texts of the aforementioned varieties of English. The findings showed that the letters of complaint to editors as published in Philippine Daily Inquirer and Straits Times illustrated syntactic features which deviated from the standard American English.

In an earlier study conducted by Bautista (2000), she claims that nonconformities to Standard American English are present in the corpus of Philippine English data. Bautista (2000) states that the deviations need to be identified from published material produced by people of a certain status and educational background. The deviations, as studied by Bautista, are the grammatical features of Philippine English in written texts. The common grammatical features are deviations in subject-verb agreement, article usage, and preposition usage.

Aside from the deviations identified by Bautista (2000), the study of Dita (2009) determined another type of grammatical deviation as a feature of Philippine English. Dita (2009) investigated how adverbial disjuncts are used in Philippine English grammar. The study was based on the Philippine component of the International Corpus of English (ICE). Dita discovered that the usual positions for most disjuncts are initial, medial, and final. Examples of these disjuncts are adverbs that end in *–ly* such as *apparently*, *surprisingly*, and

unfortunately. The syntactic feature of adverbial disjuncts in Philippine English also reveals deviant cases from the standard American English.

The existence of the distinctive features of Philippine English has evolved through time. Grammatical deviations are not only apparent in printed materials but also in online texts. Such a claim is supported by the study of Esquivel (2019). Tweets were analyzed to highlight the distinctive features of Philippine English in a digital age. Specifically, the tweets were examined for lexical and grammatical features, and comparative analyses were made to characterize the features of Philippine English as a dialect of International English. Through textual analyses, the results showed that prominent lexical, grammatical, and linguistic features such as localized spellings, syntax, translated idioms, and innovated lexical items were evident.

As an extension of the previous studies on Philippine English, the researcher considers the relevance and the significance of conducting a study on grammatical deviations as features of Philippine English in written texts. The researcher believes that written texts, specifically local newspaper editorials, which can be accessed online, exhibit certain grammatical features that can influence a reader's perspective on how the English language can be structured in a particular context.

Shahzada, Mahmood & Uzair (2012) believe that newspapers display language variation of a certain culture. Due to such variation, newspapers can display a language variant, and the variation that causes differences is a basis in "institutionalizing a variety of English" (Hinkel, 2011). By carefully looking at language use in newspaper editorials, specifically grammatical deviations, a specific variety of English can be identified.

Newspapers are intended to communicate messages. A certain style of language must be applied to aid, interest, and persuade readers. Due to such strategy, certain linguistic features such as grammar can be observed in sentence construction. Consequently, the existence of grammatical features of a certain variety of English in newspapers is due to the influence of

local languages and how local newspaper writers approach the audience in using the English language. Also, the nonconformities to native norms of English can contribute a certain degree of influence on the language of newspaper readership (Shahzada et al., 2012).

Though newspapers can manifest grammatical features of a language variant, still, a newspaper includes an organization of word structures and grammatical means to inform, entertain, and even persuade people. According to Farrokhi & Nazemi (2015), editorial writers have the means of utilizing a variety of language devices in constructing texts. Such a perception implies that when it comes to persuasion, newspaper editorials can greatly influence readers. Since written language is used in giving comments and opinions as well as drawing conclusions, the nature of grammatical constructions can also influence the readers.

Considering the role of newspapers in shaping a certain variety of English, the researcher recognizes the need to study the grammatical features of Philippine English in local newspaper editorials. Based on the framework of Bautista (2000) on Philippine English as used in this study, the common grammatical features of Philippine English in written texts are deviations in subject-verb agreement, article usage, and preposition usage. Therefore, this study is of great significance in understanding and appreciating the distinctive features of Philippine English that are unique to other English varieties.

The Theoretical-Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 shows the flow of study. The study is anchored on Kachru's (1997) Theory on World Englishes and Kachru's (2005) Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes. Kachru's (1997) Theory on World Englishes affirms the fact that the English language has been used as a global language for communication. English is not only the language among native speakers but also a lingua franca used by different nationalities worldwide. Kachru's (2005) Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes, on the other hand, recognizes the spread of English in Asian countries through colonization and the acknowledgement of English as an international language. The

English language in these countries plays an important second language or foreign language role in chief institutions in a multilingual setting. From the perspective of the two frameworks, non-native speakers of English have used the language according to the demands of their culture that have been influenced by colonization.

Kachru (1997) asserts that while native speakers of English may take ownership of the language, the vast majority of the people around the world who use English as a second language may claim ownership of English based on how it is used in their respective cultures. Similarly, Tupas (2004) believes that there are more people in the world who use English as their second language than those who use English as their native language. Such a claim suggests that second language speakers have contributed to the development of World Englishes including Asian Englishes such as Singaporean English, Malaysian English, Sri Lankan English, Indian English, and Philippine English. Each English is distinct since it has evolved from a unique culture and a different historical experience. The English language, therefore, takes on many functions and features depending on the contexts of their use.

In the Philippines, one of the most significant contributions to the concept on World Englishes is the work of Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista (2000) on Philippine English. Based on her own study of a large corpus of data produced by 'educated' Filipinos, Bautista has come to the conclusion that Philippine English, which has certain grammatical features, does exist. Based on Bautista's (2000) model on Grammatical Features of Standard Philippine English, editorials from local newspapers were carefully studied to identify grammatical deviations in terms of subject-verb agreement, article usage, and preposition usage. The results were analyzed to come up with conclusions and recommendations.
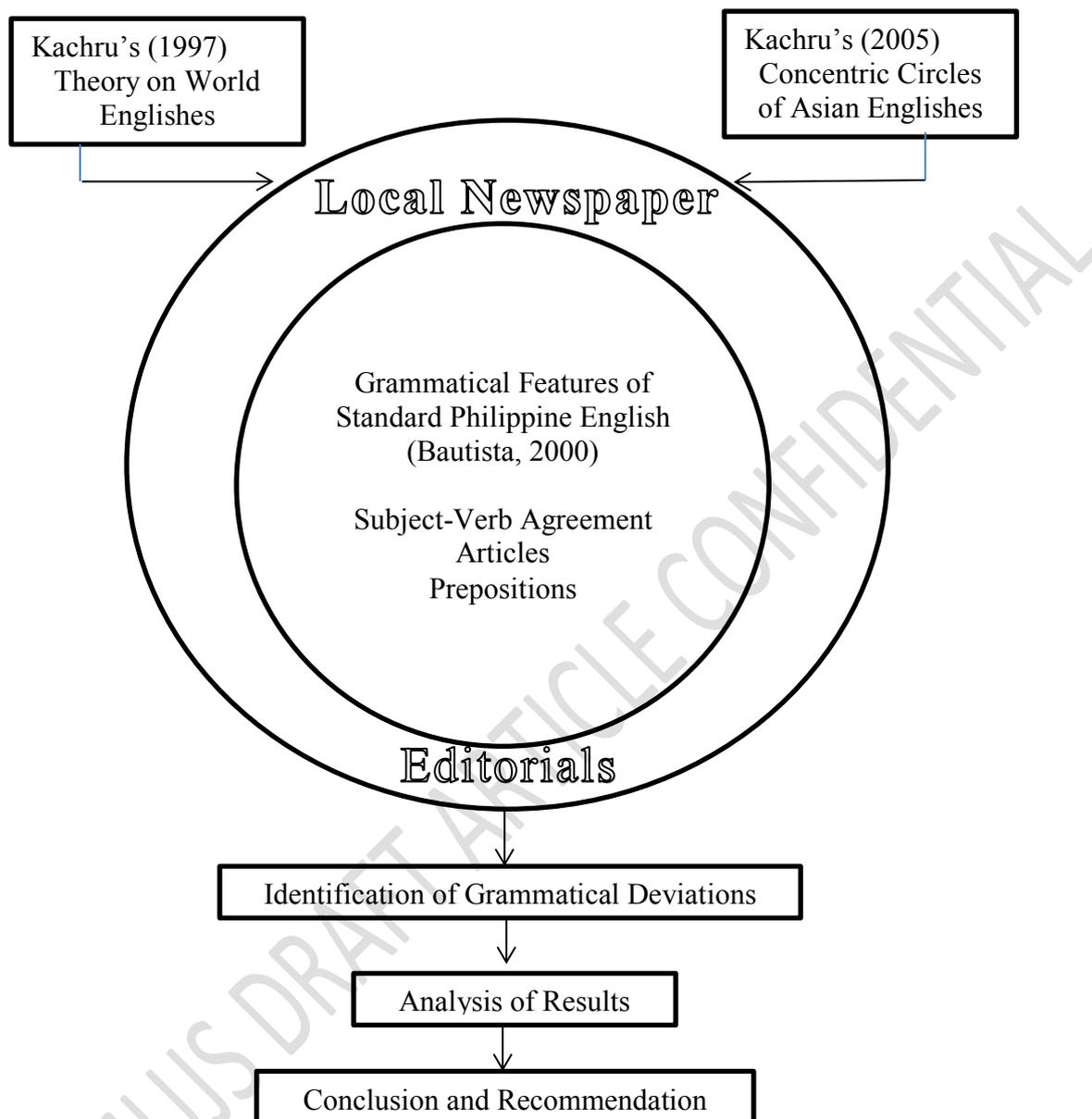
Figure 1. Theoretical-Conceptual Framework of the Study

The Purpose of the Study

The study determined the grammatical features of Philippine English in local newspaper editorials anchored on Bautista's (2000) model.

Specifically, this study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What is the frequency of occurrence of deviant cases in terms of the following grammatical classifications:

    1.1. subject-verb agreement;

    1.2. articles; and

    1.3. prepositions?

2. What is the frequency of occurrence of deviant cases in terms of the following grammatical classification types:

    2.1. subject-verb agreement;

        2.1.1. special noun (clausal, collective, amount, mass),

        2.1.2. pronoun antecedent,

        2.1.3. indefinite pronoun,

        2.1.4. compound subject, and

        2.1.5. relative clause antecedent

    2.2. articles; and

        2.2.1. missing indefinite article,

        2.2.2. missing definite article, and

        2.2.3. wrong article

    2.3. prepositions.

        2.3.1. wrong preposition,

        2.3.2. missing preposition, and

        2.3.3. inserted preposition?

METHODOLOGY

By adopting a non-probability convenience sampling, a total of 45 editorials were retrieved from the websites of three local newspapers. The editorials contained 400 to 450 words on average, and covered various topics such as politics, business, and social environment. Specifically, 15 covered politics, 15 discussed issues on business, and 15 dealt with social environment concerns. For research ethics, the names of the three local newspapers, the details of the editorials, and the writers' profiles were kept confidential.

Data analysis was done to identify grammatical deviations in subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions. To ensure the validity of the deviations found in the editorials, the researcher, and three grammar raters who have doctoral degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT) verified all the sentences containing the grammatical deviations. The three grammar raters had an interrater reliability score of 82% as assessed by an external statistician. According to McHugh (2012), most texts recommend 80% as the minimum acceptable interrater agreement. Such a notion proves that the deviations found in the editorials as identified by the three grammar raters were valid and reliable.

Each of the editorials was subjected to four rounds of careful analysis. The first, second, and third readings were to identify deviations in subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions, respectively. The fourth reading was intended to recheck all the identified deviations and corresponding grammatical classifications. To properly guide the researcher and the three grammar raters in verifying the deviations found in the editorials, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman's (1999) The Grammar Book and Rosal's (2010) Communication Arts book served as references. After a series of deliberations, the researcher and the three grammar raters came up with a list of deviations. The results were then presented in tabular form showing the

frequency and the percentage of the type of deviations on grammatical classification found in the local newspaper editorials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following tabular presentations reveal the grammatical features of Philippine English that are evident in the editorials of the three local newspapers.

Table 1 Number of Deviations Found for Each Grammatical Classification

Grammatical Classification	Number	Percent
Subject-Verb Agreement	14	35
Articles	20	50
Prepositions	6	15
Total	40	100

Table 1 shows that the deviations found in the editorials of the three local newspapers fall in the classification of Articles (49%), followed by Subject-Verb Agreement (34%) and Prepositions (17%).

The correct use of articles is a challenge for English language learners. Shoebottom (2013) states that there are four options to consider in determining the right article to use because in some cases a certain article is not necessary, which makes the correct use of article complicated. Also, the use of articles, according to Sun (2016) creates confusion among ESL learners because their first language (L1) does not have the same article system with their second language (L2). For instance, Filipinos do not use the indefinite articles *a* and *an* and the definite article *the* in their local languages.

Regarding subject-verb agreement, it is tricky because of some intervening words in a sentence that cause confusion in identifying the subject and the verb. One must make subject, and verb agree when words come between them, and reach agreement especially when the subject is an indefinite pronoun (Norquist, 2019). Moreover, according to Corral (2017), the difficulty on establishing correct agreement between subject and verb can be attributed to the

fact that the learners' first language does not have definite rules on subject-verb agreement. To point out, in the local languages of the Philippines, there is no rule which states that a singular subject requires a singular verb, or in some cases the verbs do not change even their subject is singular or plural.

Preposition usage, on the other hand, requires knowing the relationship of words in the sentence. Alwan & Yosuf (2019) state that "prepositions are not limited to meaning expressed by nouns; instead, they go beyond to include the meanings that been conveyed by adverbs and adjectives such as wh-questions: how, where, when, why, who among others" (p.36). Prepositional phrases, for instance, can function as noun modifiers, as adverbials, and as complements to adjectives or verbs. In addition, according to Tanpoco et al. (2019), the use of English prepositions is confusing for most Filipinos since prepositions in L1 are very few compared to L2 that can have varied uses. For instance, the prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* can be used in three different ways to indicate the position of an object: *in a corner*, *on a corner*, and *at a corner*. On the contrary, in L1, the three combinations can be structured using the preposition *sa,* as in *sa sulok*.

Table 2 Number and Percentage for Each Type of Subject-Verb Deviation

Type of Subject-Verb Deviation	Number	Percent
Special noun (clausal, collective, amount, mass)	4	29
Pronoun antecedent	4	29
Indefinite pronoun	2	14
Compound subject	2	14
Relative clause antecedent	2	14
Total	14	100

Table 2 reveals that most of the deviations in subject-verb agreement are due to the use of a special noun and a pronoun antecedent. Each of the two types of subject-verb deviation registers a deviation of 29%. Here are some examples of the deviations:

1. What people say about them, even maliciously and intentionally, *do* [does] little to distract the purpose…

2. No wonder the *Catholic Church* is struggling to be relevant to the youngest of *their* [its] flock.

The other deviant cases are linked to indefinite pronoun, compound subject, and relative clause antecedent. Each of the three types of subject-verb deviation constitutes 14% of the total deviation. The following are some of the deviations:

3. Anyone with a fear of or a disdain of numbers would be swamped by the

Rama administration's proposed allocations for *each department and*

projects [project].

4. Anyway, *Pe and Osmeña* (Pe can't defend himself and has been quiet all along until Osmeña came to his aid) *wants* [want] the matter resolved…

5. But it's not only *some media people* that *has* [have] gone overboard but so too some priests and Catholic faithful.

The deviations in subject-verb agreement can be attributed to the proximity of the subject to the verb or vice-versa and the presence of an intervening expression or phrase between the subject and the verb.

The use of a special noun and a pronoun antecedent is at times confusing. Especially when used in long sentences, the placement can lead to a challenge in determining the singularity or plurality of the subject. An indefinite pronoun should agree with the noun right after it, while a compound subject automatically takes the plural form of the verb.

According to Nurjanah (2017), the English language has its own patterns that complicate the rules on subject-verb agreement. Moreover, one must be careful with dealing with trickier cases in subject-verb agreement most especially when the subject is an indefinite

pronoun or when words or phrases come between subject and verb such as intervening

expressions and modifiers (Nordquist, 2019).

The findings as presented in Table 2 reaffirm the claim of Nurjanah (2017) and validate

the idea of Nordquist (2019).

Table 3 Number of Deviations Found for Each Type of Article Usage

Type of Article Usage Deviation	Number	Percent
Missing indefinite article	1	5
Missing definite article	18	90
Wrong article	1	5
Total	20	100

As shown in Table 3, the deviations in article usage are due to a missing definite article

(90%), while each of the use of a wrong article and a missing article constitutes a minimal

deviation of 5%. Some of the deviations are as follow:

1. Not every comment about [a] *people* carries the gene of *racism* in it.

2. This time, [the] *police* said the likely motive was a rejected business

    proposal…

3. …the young ones who sleep on the sidewalks, beg for alms from passing

motorists, sing for money in jeepneys, or worse, rob from pedestrians, sniff Vulcaseal

to get *a* [the] high and be oblivious to *the* pangs of hunger or are picked up by players

in child trafficking.

Incorrect article usage can be associated with the uncertainty of a noun's indefiniteness

or definiteness. According to Gaibani (2015), deviations in the correct use of articles are due

to deletion and substitution. This observation suggests that the presence or absence of an article

before a noun can make the latter general or specific. Moreover, Shoebottom (2013) states that

the correct use of an article is challenging because there are instances when an article is not

necessary. This perception implies four options to consider in using the correct articles, which makes it more confusing.

As presented in Table 3, the findings support the study of Gaibani (2015) and the idea of Shoebottom (2013).

Table 4 Number of Deviations Found for Each Type of Preposition Usage

Type of Preposition Usage Deviation	Number	Percent
Wrong preposition	2	33
Missing preposition	3	50
Inserted preposition	1	17
Total	6	100

Table 4 shows that 50% of the preposition usage deviations are associated with an incorrect preposition. On the other hand, using a wrong preposition and an inserted preposition comprises the remaining 33% and 17% of the deviations, respectively. The following are the sample deviations:

1. In Cebu, at least two libel cases in court are a result of alleged defamatory postings *in* [on] Facebook.

2. Each camp has its justifications for drafting a budget [in] a particular way.

3. …which led to the Oct. 25 arrest of another Korean trader who allegedly wanted to collect *on* [null] a P4 million gambling debt.

Preposition usage deviation can be linked to the nature of Standard American English in which verbs can co-occur with prepositions as in phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions such as *think of*, *fill in*, and *come up with*. In addition, a certain preposition can have a lot of uses, which causes confusion in identifying the right preposition to use in the right context.

Monaikul & Di Eugenio (2020) believe that second language writers tend to commit errors in the use of preposition due to interlingual errors. This is due to the fact that the target language has a diverse set of prepositions. Furthermore, prepositions can have different

meanings depending on the relationships of words in a sentence. According to Alwan & Yosuf (2019), prepositions are not limited to pairing up with nouns but they can also express different meanings when structured with adverbs and adjectives.

The findings as shown in Table 4 validate the ideas of Monaikul & Di Eugenio (2020) and Alwan & Yosuf (2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Due to the use of English as a second language, variations from the standard American or British English are apparent in Philippine context (Tupas, 2004). Filipinos manage to accommodate the norms of the standard English, at the same time, establish a sort of independence from the standards of the native speakers which results in grammatical deviations. These grammatical deviations are simply variations from the prescribed grammar of a native speaker; however, are considered to be features of Philippine English because such variations are acceptable, recognized, and used by educated Filipinos (Bautista, 2000). In reference to this study, the common grammatical features identified are deviations in the correct uses of subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions. These features are observable because second language writers use English with a broad set of rules and structures that can result in inconsistencies in grammatical construction. Moreover, the production of English is influenced by the transfer of knowledge in the first language to the target language that can lead to interlanguage errors.

Though these features are deviations from the standard, they still keep the sense of the editorials in place without compromising the writers' views. Such a claim is supported by the views of Gibbs & Pollard (2020) that small grammatical deviations do not interrupt the delivery of meaning. Therefore, having a precise grammar based on a certain standard is not necessary to fully convey an idea. The presence of grammatical features in local newspaper editorials manifests that a particular variety of English can be used as a medium to relay

information and influence people's opinions within a specific context. Since the editorials used in this study are localized, the grammatical features of Philippine English in written texts may vary by regional location. English is used in the different parts of the Philippines. Each region has its local languages, contributing to grammatical deviations in disseminating information and influencing people's opinions.

The grammatical deviations are features of Philippine English (Bautista, 2000). In the context of this study, the familiarity of the rules on subject-verb agreement and the correct uses of articles and prepositions can help second language writers and learners understand the grammatical features of a culture's English variety that is significant in relaying and understanding information. By developing a sense of critical language awareness, learners are able to gain respect and appreciation to other English varieties helping them develop their communicative competence (Chabo, 2021).

As an extension of this study, research that identifies Philippine English's grammatical features in social media posts may be conducted. Social media is a platform that enables people to express their views and opinions on specific topics allowing them to influence other people's perspectives. Esquivel (2019) claims that distinctive features of Philippine English in a digital age are evident. Moreover, studies that determine grammatical features as well as phonological features in oral transcripts such as speeches, commentaries, debates, and other forms of oral presentation that can be live or recorded may be undertaken. These types of communication can also impact the way people shape their thoughts and beliefs about certain issues. Tayao (2004) and Villanueva (2016) state that Philippine English doesn't only possess grammatical features but also exhibits phonological features.

Since the researcher of this study is involved in language instruction, the existence of grammatical deviations as features of Philippine English can pose certain pedagogical and curricular implications. Madrunio (2010) emphasizes that it is significant for English teachers

to teach their students the unique features of Philippine English and compare them with the standards of American English and other varieties. English teachers should emphasize to their students the distinction between "deviation" and "feature". By making students aware of such language phenomenon, English language learners are able to understand the grammatical features of their first language as well as those of the target language. In addition, the teaching and application of grammar rules in the classroom that involves corrective feedback should be observed for students to effectively learn and master the grammar rules of the target language. Through feedback, errors are identified; hence, deviations as features are recognized. Finally, language teachers should educate students that Philippine English may not be taken as an inferior version of the standard English. Instead, Philippine English is now considered as a variant of the English language that is accepted, recognized, and used by a certain speech community.

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