

Investigating Inflectional Morpheme Errors in ESL Learners' Writing

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Abstract—Understanding common errors in English language acquisition is crucial for enhancing ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction, particularly in mastering inflectional morphemes that are vital for grammatical accuracy. This study addresses the persistent challenges ESL learners face in mastering inflectional affixes, focusing on errors in nouns, adjectives, and verbs. It investigates the types and frequencies of inflectional morpheme errors among Grade Eleven students at San Jose National High School, aiming to identify the most problematic morphemes and provide insights into patterns of difficulty. A total of 261 student essays, written over three three-hour sessions, were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Errors were identified through Grammarly and categorized using Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Structure Taxonomy. Results indicate that verb inflections, particularly past tense and 3rd person singular present agreement morphemes, are the most challenging for learners, with noun and adjective errors being less frequent. Notably, the study highlights the 3rd person singular present agreement as a significant area of difficulty. These findings suggest the need for targeted instruction focused on verb inflections in practical writing contexts. By implementing error-focused teaching strategies, educators can address specific challenges, fostering improved grammatical accuracy and supporting better language acquisition outcomes.

Index Terms—second language, error analysis, inflectional morphemes, ESL learners, verb morphology

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language is not easy, and only a few succeed in mastering it. According to Dewaele (2016) and Fernández (2017), the learner has had experience with another language. A person who has been using a certain language since early childhood already has experience with that language, and when learning a new one, they face

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challenges related to different sounds, words, and sentence structures, as well as variations in how things, people, and actions are grouped and how time, space, and manner are expressed. These differences may conflict with the structure of their native language (Scharenborg & van Os, 2019).

Among global languages, English has emerged as the most sought-after, playing a critical role in business, education, travel, and international collaboration (Abdelrady & Ibrahim, 2015). Despite its global significance, achieving proficiency in English remains a challenge, particularly for non-native speakers. Grammar, as a foundation of language proficiency, governs sentence structure and ensures effective communication (Kharmilah & Narius, 2019). Writing, often regarded as one of the most complex language skills, frequently reveals learners' gaps in grammatical knowledge. Errors in grammar, particularly those involving inflectional morphemes, pose significant barriers to constructing well-formed sentences (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017). Inflectional morphemes alter words to convey tense, number, or agreement without changing their core meaning, making them crucial for grammatical accuracy.

Research identifies verb tense, pluralization, and subject-verb agreement as the most challenging aspects of English grammar for ESL learners (Daulay et al., 2016; Alam & Hameed, 2023). Contributing factors include interlanguage interference and insufficient mastery of grammar rules. Among common errors, omission errors—where necessary inflectional markers are left out—are particularly pervasive, reflecting the complexity of mastering these linguistic structures (Yordchim & Gibbs, 2014). Such errors impact students' academic writing and communicative competence, hindering overall language development.

Recognizing these challenges, this study examines inflectional morpheme errors in the written outputs of Grade Eleven Senior High School students at San Jose National High School. Employing error analysis as outlined by Corder (1967), the research investigates the types, frequencies, and patterns of errors. By identifying the most problematic inflectional affixes, this study seeks to enhance understanding of ESL learners' struggles and provide practical recommendations to improve teaching strategies and curriculum design.

The study focuses on Filipino ESL learners' unique challenges, particularly in the context of inflectional morphemes across nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Unlike previous studies, this research emphasizes the local educational context of San Jose National High School, chosen for its significant ESL learner population. By analyzing the writing of eleventh-grade students from vocational tracks, the study explores real-world linguistic difficulties faced by Filipino learners, aiming to inform instructional practices in similar educational settings across the Philippines.

Mistakes offer valuable learning opportunities for both students and educators. Al-Haysoni (2012) underscores the importance of error analysis in identifying and addressing student mistakes. This process allows educators to refine teaching strategies and provide targeted interventions. Building on this foundation, the present study seeks to analyze inflectional morpheme errors to identify the inflectional affixes most frequently misused by ESL learners.

The specific objective of this research is to conduct a detailed error analysis of inflectional morphemes in student writing. By identifying the most challenging inflectional affixes, the study fills a knowledge gap in ESL error analysis within the Filipino educational context. Its novelty lies in its focus on inflectional morphemes across nouns, verbs, and adjectives, providing fresh insights into the grammatical challenges faced by Filipino high school students. Through this exploration, the study offers practical implications for enhancing instructional approaches and curriculum design, ultimately supporting students in achieving greater grammatical proficiency in English.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), pioneered by Michael Halliday in the 1960s, offers a viewpoint on language that emphasizes its functional elements over solely structural ones. SFL is based on a social semiotic perspective of language, seeing language as a "web of linked systems for generating meaning" (Pertiwi, 2011). Unlike traditional grammar, which concentrates on word categories like nouns and verbs within individual clauses, SFL emphasizes the role of language in.

Understanding the nuances of second language acquisition and the challenges encountered by English as a Second Language (ESL) learners have been central themes in linguistic research for decades. Among the diverse facets of language learning, the acquisition and utilization of inflectional morphemes stand out due to their critical role in ensuring grammatical accuracy and fluency in writing.

A. Importance of Inflectional Morphemes in Language Learning

Morphemes represent the smallest meaningful units of language and play essential grammatical roles (Cook, 2016). They are categorized as "free morphemes" and "bound morphemes." Free morphemes can be further divided into lexical and functional types, whereas bound morphemes fall into derivational and inflectional categories. This research specifically targets eight inflectional morphemes in English: plural -s, possessive -'s, third-person singular present tense -s, past tense -ed, present participle -ing, past participle -en, superlative -est, and comparative -er.

Inflection refers to the morphological marking of properties on a lexeme, resulting in various forms for that lexeme (Booij, 2007). Essentially, an inflectional morpheme modifies the form of lexemes to align with different grammatical contexts or meanings without altering their word category. These contexts include number (singular and plural), person (first, second, third), and tense (past and present).

In the field of English morphology, the morpheme is considered the most fundamental unit among the five identified linguistic components (Berry, 1977; Bauer, 1983; Farinde & Ojo, 2000; Mahant et al., 2023). Inflectional morphemes are instrumental in language structure, signaling tense, number, and other grammatical relationships within sentences (Brown, 1973). For ESL learners, proficiency in these morphemes is crucial for constructing grammatically accurate and contextually relevant sentences (Dulay et al., 1982).

B. Challenges in Inflectional Morpheme Acquisition

Numerous studies highlight the difficulties ESL learners face in acquiring and correctly using inflectional morphemes. Error Analysis (EA) studies, including those by Corder (1981), identify these morphemes as frequent sources of errors in ESL writing. Kazazoğlu (2020) and Eng and Lim (2005) emphasize first-language interference as a primary factor contributing to inflectional morpheme errors among ESL learners.

Several factors influence the acquisition order and accuracy of inflectional patterns, including the formal complexity of an inflectional marker (Clark, 2003), its relative salience, and the "bathtub effect," which facilitates peripheral word recognition (Demaree et al., 2004). Distinguishing between errors and mistakes in language acquisition is crucial for effective pedagogical strategies. While learners often self-correct mistakes, errors indicative of systemic competence deficiencies typically require targeted interventions (Corder, 1982; Çetereisi & Bostancı, 2018; Keshavarz, 2015). Research by Manihuruk (2022) and Gardner et al. (2021) further confirms the prevalence of inaccuracies in inflectional morphemes, particularly in present and past tense inflections across diverse native language backgrounds.

C. Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA), introduced by Corder (1981), is a fundamental approach for identifying, categorizing, and interpreting language errors, including those related to inflectional morphemes. This methodology sheds light on ESL learners' error patterns, helping educators develop targeted instructional strategies (James, 1998). EA examines learners' cognitive processes in recognizing or coding input from the target language, providing insights into second language acquisition (Erdogan, 2005).

Richards and Schmidt (2010) argue that EA systematically identifies, classifies, and interprets unacceptable language forms in learners' production data. Analyzing errors provides valuable feedback to learners, reveals language acquisition strategies, and informs foreign language study methodologies (Davies & Pearse, 2002).

D. Pedagogical Implications and Future Directions

Understanding inflectional morpheme errors in ESL writing has significant pedagogical implications. Insights from such research can inform instructional materials, curricula, and strategies tailored to ESL learners' needs (Ellis, 2008). Future studies could explore the effectiveness of various teaching methodologies in enhancing inflectional morpheme acquisition and usage among ESL learners.

Ellis (1998) highlights the importance of understanding second language acquisition processes for practical applications in language teaching, such as syllabus design, material development, and language testing. Abbasi et al. (2023) underscore the impact of English instruction volume on acquisition order, emphasizing the need for targeted language instruction focusing on specific morphemes. Recognizing potential first-language interferences in L2 learning can help instructors adapt teaching approaches to address specific linguistic challenges.

The acquisition and correct use of inflectional morphemes remain significant challenges for ESL learners. Through systematic analysis using methodologies such as Error Analysis and leveraging technological tools, educators and researchers can gain deeper insights into these errors, leading to targeted interventions that enhance ESL learners' language proficiency. Given the existing literature, there is a noticeable gap in research on inflectional morpheme acquisition among Filipino ESL learners, particularly in Eastern Visayas. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the types of errors ESL Grade Eleven students make when using inflectional morphemes in English.

III. METHODS

A. Participants and Design

The study was conducted with 160 Grade Eleven students from San Jose National High School, selected using a complete enumeration approach. This choice was motivated by the desire to capture a comprehensive dataset from the population of students enrolled in four distinct sections—Bartending (Section Prudence), Cookery (Section Honesty), Bread and Pastry (Section Diligence), and Food and Beverages (Section Hope). By including all students from these sections, the researchers ensured that the data would reflect the entire spectrum of linguistic abilities and common error patterns within the school's eleventh grade.

The decision to include the entire Grade Eleven cohort was based on complete enumeration, a method appropriate for moderate-sized populations where comprehensive data collection is feasible. Given the manageable size of the cohort and the objective of capturing a broad range of error types, the researchers opted for this inclusive approach rather than a sampling strategy. This choice not only maximized the representativeness of the data but also enhanced the study's reliability by providing a robust foundation for statistical analysis.

Data collection was limited to three meetings, each lasting three hours, to align with the students' academic schedules and avoid excessive disruption to their regular curriculum. This time frame was sufficient to collect meaningful data while accommodating the students' existing school commitments. The three-session structure enabled students to engage with the task of writing under conditions that allowed for reflection and revision, which are essential in detecting consistent language errors. This approach enhanced the validity of the data collected.

During the study, researchers provided guidance to participants to support their understanding of the task and minimize anxiety, which could otherwise impact their writing performance. This assistance was limited to clarifying task instructions rather than influencing the content of the students' writing. By offering support, the researchers aimed to create a comfortable environment where students could focus on writing naturally, thus producing authentic samples that reflect their actual language proficiency. This approach aligns with ethical research practices, ensuring participants' well-being without compromising data integrity.

Grammarly software was chosen as the primary tool for error detection, specifically for its effectiveness in identifying grammatical issues, including those related to inflectional morphemes. The use of Grammarly was supported by previous studies (Almusharraf & Alotaibi, 2021, 2022), which affirm its reliability and utility in ESL research contexts. Grammarly's automated feedback provides an efficient, consistent, and impartial method of pinpointing linguistic errors, offering insights that manual analysis alone might miss due to human oversight or bias. However, Grammarly's limitations in interpreting nuanced errors necessitated subsequent qualitative analysis, which was conducted to provide context and depth to the initial findings.

In analyzing these errors, the research also utilized Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Structure Taxonomy, providing a systematic framework for classifying and understanding the types of inflectional morpheme errors present in students' essays. This combined quantitative and qualitative approach—using Grammarly for initial detection and the taxonomy for classification—ensured both accuracy and depth in examining students' language use, ultimately offering a comprehensive understanding of their challenges with inflectional morphemes.

B. Instrument

The researcher utilized Writing Prompts as the primary data collection tool. These prompts consisted of essay topics that students were prompted to write about. The topics included: 1) students' experiences during the Pre-assessment in their specific specializations (bartending, cookery, bread and pastry, and food and beverages), detailing activities they engaged in during and after the Pre-assessment; 2) completing the narrative "Once there was a newly born baby..."; and 3) sharing their thoughts and feelings about the trend of spending more time in front of computers and relying heavily on email or instant messaging for communication rather than face-to-face interactions.

C. Data Gathering Procedure

In eliciting data, the researchers prepared writing prompts with the topics: 1) students' experiences during the Pre-assessment in their respective specializations (bartending, cookery, bread and pastry, and food and beverages (things they did during and after the Pre-assessment; "Once there was a newly born baby; and Spending hours in front of computers and communicating more by e-mail or instant messaging than in person.

Since there were three prompts, each of these was given to the participants in every meeting. Each participant had an hour to write the essay. The administration of the prompts took three meetings for a total of 3 hours to complete the data gathering. The prompts were administered individually to the participants. While one of the researchers was introducing the activity and making sure that each student could follow the instructions of written activity, the other researchers had to observe and extend assistance when necessary, making the participants comfortable and highly engaged in the activity throughout the entire process.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal significant trends in the types of errors eleventh-grade students at San Jose National High School made with inflectional morphemes. Each category—nouns, adjectives, and verbs—demonstrates specific areas of difficulty, with variations in the frequency and types of errors providing insights into underlying linguistic challenges and potential instructional needs.

A. Errors in Inflectional Morphemes for Nouns

Table 1 presents errors in inflectional morphemes for nouns, where plural (-s, -es) errors dominated at 72.22% of all noun-related mistakes. This high incidence suggests a pattern of noun-verb disagreement, such as in "Computer have a side effect" and "Some user are." Additionally, errors were common in plural noun forms preceded by determiners, indicating a lack of awareness in using plurality markers correctly (e.g., "Some of teenager" instead of "Some teenagers"). The missteps in possessive (-'s, -s') morphemes, making up 27.78% of errors, indicate some students struggle to express possession accurately (e.g., "father money" instead of "father's money").

TABLE 1
ERRORS IN INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES FOR NOUNS

Inflectional morphemes	Sample extracted sentence with error	Frequency of errors	Percentage
Plural (-s, -es)	<i>Computer have a side effect.</i>	13	72.22
Possessive (-'s, -s')	She always joined my other <i>cousin's</i> when they are playing.	5	27.78
Total		18	100

Regarding inflectional morphemes for nouns, the majority of errors made by students involved pluralizing morphemes (-s and -es). It was observed that the nouns used as subjects often did not agree with their corresponding verbs (e.g., ingredients are, Computer have, some user are). Additionally, students failed to apply the plural form of nouns preceded by modifiers and determiners that indicate plurality (e.g., Some of teenager, some user, some question, lot of drink, three question, those person).

For possessive inflectional morphemes (-'s, -s'), students frequently omitted the possessive marker to indicate ownership (e.g., father money instead of father's money). Conversely, there were instances where students incorrectly applied possessive morphemes in place of plural morphemes (e.g., She always joined my other cousin's when they are playing). Another notable error involved the misuse of the nominative pronoun she, which was made possessive (she's) instead of using the correct possessive pronoun or pronominal adjective her (e.g., She's laughter can make the people smile too).

These patterns align with findings by Akande (2003), who observed similar trends among ESL learners, highlighting noun-verb agreement and possessive form application as persistent challenges. Such errors may stem from syntactic transfer from the learners' first language (L1), particularly if their L1 lacks explicit markers for noun plurality or possessiveness. This suggests that these linguistic features should be prioritized in targeted instruction.

Furthermore, the observed errors are consistent with previous research (Kazazoğlu, 2020; Eng et al., 2020; Gayo & Widodo, 2018), which identified L1 interference as a predominant source of mistakes among ESL learners. The interplay between L1 influence and limited exposure to English grammar underscores the need for instructional strategies that explicitly address these recurring issues in pluralization and possessive constructions.

B. Errors in Inflectional Morphemes for Adjectives

Errors in adjective inflectional morphemes were concentrated entirely in comparative forms, with 100% of the errors involving improper use of the comparative suffix (-er). Students tended to use "more" with the comparative (e.g., "more happier"), indicating confusion between using -er and the comparative marker "more." This redundancy suggests a lack of conceptual clarity in English's morphological rules regarding comparatives, as students seem to overgeneralize the "more + adjective" structure, possibly due to a simpler comparative structure in their first language.

TABLE 2
ERRORS IN INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES FOR ADJECTIVES

Inflectional morphemes	Sample extracted sentence with error	Frequency of errors	Percentage
Comparative (-er)	They feel very thankful because God gave them a very special gift that make their life <i>more happier</i> .	4	100.00
Superlative (-est)	No errors found.	0	0.00
Total		4	100

For inflectional morphemes for adjectives, students struggled to correctly apply the comparative adjective form for words like happy, weak, and easy (e.g., happier, weaker, easier). Instead, they added the word more before these adjectives (e.g., more happy, more weak), reflecting a lack of understanding about when to use the comparative adjective morpheme -er versus the comparative marker more. Additionally, one student combined both the comparative marker more and the comparative morpheme -er (e.g., more happier), resulting in redundancy. No errors were observed in the use of the superlative morpheme -est.

This study revealed that errors involving inflectional morphemes for adjectives were the least frequent in students' essays compared to other types of inflectional morphemes. These findings align with Akande (2003), which similarly noted that inflectional morphemes for adjectives, particularly the superlative morpheme -est, were rarely utilized in students' written work. The infrequent usage of superlatives appears to correlate with the low incidence of errors involving this form, potentially due to limited exposure or application of superlatives in students' daily language interactions.

The scarcity of errors involving superlative forms highlights an opportunity to contextualize comparatives and superlatives in real-world communication scenarios to enhance student familiarity and usage. These observations also underscore the influence of the learners' first language on their patterns of inflectional morpheme errors in ESL contexts. The challenges noted in using comparative and superlative forms point to the need for targeted, contextualized instruction to reinforce these grammar rules.

Furthermore, numerous studies support the implementation of eclectic, practical teaching methods to reduce student errors in real-life contexts (Alam et al., 2020; Alam et al., 2022; Alam et al., 2023; Mahant et al., 2023). Productive language skills, such as writing, require authentic practice that can be achieved through communicative strategies and

activities. These activities provide students with platforms to engage in meaningful language practice, thereby improving their grasp of grammatical structures (Alam & Hameed, 2023). Encouraging real-life application of comparatives and superlatives through interactive and communicative exercises can help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical usage, ultimately enhancing student proficiency.

C. Errors in Inflectional Morphemes for Verbs

The errors in verb inflectional morphemes, detailed in Table 3, reveal the most substantial difficulties for students, with past tense (-d, -ed) and third-person singular present (-s, -es) errors accounting for the highest frequency. Errors in past tense (58.15%) often involved inconsistent tense usage within sentences, reflecting challenges in maintaining temporal coherence (e.g., "I wash the frying pan then started heating it"). The frequent use of base verbs in third-person singular contexts (e.g., "She sleep very calmly") indicates that students struggle with subject-verb agreement, possibly due to first-language interference, where similar rules may be absent.

TABLE 3
ERRORS IN INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES FOR VERBS

Inflectional morphemes	Sample extracted sentence with error	Frequency of errors	Percentage
3rd Singular Present Agreement (-s, -es)	She <i>sleep</i> very calmly	141	39.61
Past Tense (-d, -ed)	Then after that, I <i>wash</i> the frying pan then started heating it	207	58.15
Past Participle (-en)	No errors found.	0	0.00
Present Participle (-ing)	I <i>roaming</i> all around the market	8	2.25
Total		356	100

The majority of errors committed by students involved the use of inflectional morphemes for verbs. Among these, past tense morphemes (-d, -ed) were the most problematic, accounting for 58.15% of the total errors. These errors often reflected inconsistencies in tense within sentences, such as, "Then after that, I wash the frying pan then started heating it." Additionally, misuse of past tense forms in infinitive constructions (e.g., "to asked," "to saved," "to cooked," "to removed") was frequently observed. Errors in the third-person singular present morphemes (-s, -es) were also prevalent (39.61%). Students struggled with subject-verb agreement, often using the base form of verbs with singular subjects, as in "She sleep very calmly..." and "She acts like she know what she doing".

For the present participle morpheme (-ing), which constituted 2.25% of the errors, the omission of auxiliary verbs when forming continuous tenses was common. For example, "So, his father trying hard to be as a mother and a father to Ariel" and "I roaming all around the market." Conversely, no errors were recorded for the past participle morpheme (-en).

These findings align with the research by Usama et al. (2022), who identified persistent difficulties among ESL learners with various inflectional morphemes, including third-person singular present (-s), past tense (-ed), progressive (-ing), past participle (-en), and others. Similar trends were noted in earlier studies (Kazazoğlu, 2020; Eng et al., 2020; Gayo & Widodo, 2018), which highlighted first language (L1) interference as a significant factor contributing to these errors.

The observed challenges underscore the critical influence of a learner's native language on their grammatical competence in ESL contexts. For example, difficulties in forming continuous tenses (e.g., "I roaming all around the market") suggest limited exposure to structures that require auxiliary verbs and modification of main verbs. Studies by Alam et al. (2020, 2022, 2023) and Mahant et al. (1977) emphasize the importance of using communicative, real-world strategies to facilitate grammar acquisition. Activities such as role-plays, storytelling, and collaborative writing can provide learners with meaningful opportunities to apply grammatical rules in authentic contexts.

This study aligns with prior research in emphasizing the role of L1 interference and underscores the necessity of diverse instructional methods to address specific grammatical gaps. By focusing on these areas, educators can help students develop greater confidence and accuracy in their use of inflectional morphemes, thereby enhancing their overall language proficiency.

D. Summary of Inflectional Morphemes Frequently Committed by ESL Learners

Table 4 synthesizes the frequency of errors across all inflectional morpheme types, highlighting that verb inflectional morphemes—particularly past tense and third-person singular present—are the most problematic for students, collectively accounting for over 90% of verb errors. This concentration suggests that verb inflectional morphemes should be prioritized in ESL curricula, particularly for L2 learners facing difficulty in differentiating temporal distinctions and agreement rules.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY TABLE OF INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES FREQUENTLY COMMITTED BY ESL LEARNERS

	Inflectional Morphemes	Frequency	Percentage
Nouns	Plural (-s, -es)	13	3.44
	Possessive (-'s, -s')	5	1.32
Adjectives	Comparative (-er)	4	1.06
	Superlative (-est)	0	0.00
Verbs	3 rd Present Agreement (-s, -es)	141	37.30
	Past Tense (-d, -ed)	207	54.76
	Past Participle (-en)	0	0.00
	Present Participle (-ing)	8	2.12
Total		378	100

As shown in the table, over half (54.76%) of the inflectional morpheme errors committed by the students involved the past tense morphemes –d and –ed, making these the most frequently observed errors among all inflectional morphemes. Notably, the present study offers a new insight: the 3rd person singular present tense morphemes –s and –es emerged as the second most challenging for ESL learners to acquire.

Regarding nouns, the majority of errors were associated with pluralizing morphemes (–s and –es). Common mistakes included incorrect noun-verb agreement, such as "ingredients is" and "Computer have." Additionally, errors often occurred when students failed to use plural forms preceded by modifiers and determiners that signal plurality (e.g., "Some user," "three question," "those person").

For adjectives, errors primarily involved the use of comparative forms. Students frequently replaced the comparative morpheme –er with the marker "more," as in "more happier." Additionally, redundant constructions such as "more happier" were observed. However, no errors were noted for the superlative morpheme –est.

In the case of verbs, the most challenging morphemes were the past tense markers –d and –ed, as evidenced by tense inconsistencies and misuse in sentences like "Then after that, I wash the frying pan then started heating it." Errors in the 3rd person singular present tense morphemes –s and –es were also common, with students failing to establish subject-verb agreement (e.g., "She sleep very calmly"). Additionally, students often omitted auxiliary verbs when using the present participle morpheme –ing (e.g., "I roaming all around the market").

The findings of this study hold significant implications for ESL teaching and curriculum development. Understanding the specific challenges ESL learners face with inflectional morphemes can inform the creation of targeted instructional materials and strategies to enhance language acquisition outcomes. By addressing identified error patterns and focusing on problematic morphemes, educators can design more effective and engaging teaching methods to improve grammatical accuracy and fluency in English writing.

The high frequency of noun- and verb-related errors highlights these areas as priorities for instructional intervention. Adjective-related errors, while less frequent, point to the need for reinforcing comparative and superlative structures. These findings underscore the importance of contextualized practice in ESL instruction, as supported by Alam and Hameed (2023), who emphasize the role of real-world communication scenarios in reinforcing correct usage patterns.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined inflectional morpheme errors among ESL learners, uncovering specific challenges that impact their language proficiency and usage. The analysis showed that the most challenging morphemes for students were the past tense markers "-d" and "-ed," which likely reflects the writing prompts used, requiring participants to employ past-tense forms. Additionally, frequent errors with third-person present agreement morphemes "-s" and "-es" were noted, suggesting these forms present a second, significant difficulty for learners. This finding contrasts with prior studies, such as those by Burt and Dulay (1973) and Bailey et al. (1974), which identified these morphemes as typically acquired later in language learning.

The study's findings hold practical implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers, particularly in enhancing English language instruction at the senior secondary level, a crucial phase for students' academic and real-world language skills. This study, however, has limitations due to its sample size and demographic scope, as it involved a single urban school in Region 08, Leyte, Philippines. Future research would benefit from broader and more varied participant samples to improve the generalizability of results. Additionally, since this study focuses exclusively on inflectional morphemes, future studies should examine other linguistic aspects to deepen our understanding of ESL learners' language patterns.

Several recommendations arise from these findings to aid language instruction. First, it is essential for language teachers to focus on enhancing students' understanding of subject-verb agreement, plurals, and past participles, as these areas presented frequent errors. A targeted focus on these grammatical features could help address persistent gaps in students' language comprehension. Second, highlighting the structural differences between Filipino and English language systems could mitigate errors caused by interlingual interference, specifically by reducing negative transfer from Filipino grammatical rules. Lastly, to ensure consistency in error analysis, it is recommended that future studies employ a single qualified reviewer to identify and categorize errors, as multiple reviewers can lead to conflicting judgments. This approach can streamline the review process and improve the accuracy of data collection.

In sum, error analysis provides valuable insights into learners' challenges, helping educators design effective instructional materials and strategies. Addressing these identified areas could significantly support ESL learners in their journey toward language proficiency, equipping them with essential skills for both academic success and effective communication.

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