



**Grammatical Errors in the Business Correspondence
Corpora of Sophomore BSBA Students**

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Abstract

This study draws from the tradition of Corpus Linguistics and attempted to determine the extent grammatical errors manifest in the business correspondence corpora composed by Sophomore BS Business Administration students of Pangasinan State University-San Carlos City Campus, located in San Carlos City, Pangasinan. The study was conducted within the academic year 2017-2018. Error analysis was delimited to types of errors pertaining to verb tense (VT) and subject-verb agreement (SGA). A specialized assessment tool was employed to gauge students' extent of susceptibility to commit grammatical errors that range from "Low" (minimum), "Average", to "High" (maximum). Moreover, a balanced population of male and female students were purposively taken as participants of the study. The students were initially profiled in terms of their socio-demographic information (sex and first language) and their language learning characteristics (exposure to authentic business correspondence materials; extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence; and attitude toward business correspondence composition). Furthermore, the study attempted to determine factors potentially associated to students' susceptibility to commit grammatical errors in their business correspondence composition. Inferential statistics was employed, such as MANOVA and correlational statistical tool. Accordingly, the students' extent of grammar errors was differentiated on the basis of their sex and first language, while their language learning characteristics were statistically correlated to their extent of grammar errors.

On account of the research findings, the male and female respondents have either “Tagalog, Pangasinan, or Ilokano” as their first language. Moreover, they have a moderate to high frequency of exposure to authentic business correspondence materials within the school and outside the school. Students’ self-report revealed that they encounter certain authentic business correspondence materials more frequently than the others. The students were also found to have a moderate to high extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence within the “school setting” and “outside the school setting”. Depending on the setting, students’ opportunities to write certain types of business correspondence occur more frequently than the others. Furthermore, the students exhibit a “strongly positive” attitude towards business correspondence composition.

The students vary in their extent of errors along verb tense and subject verb agreement in their composition of certain types of business correspondence. Sex and first language do not differentiate students’ extent of grammatical errors in business correspondence composition. Exposure to authentic business correspondence materials and extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence are not significantly related to students’ extent of “verb tense” and “subject-verb agreement” errors in business correspondence composition. However, exposure to authentic business correspondence materials is significantly related to students’ extent of subject-verb agreement errors in composing order letters.

On the merits of the research findings, the study offered a practical output, i.e. a prototype of learning activities that can alleviate students’ grammar difficulties in their composition of business correspondence. The study highly recommends the use of this material as an instructional supplement, along with a set of other recommendations that presuppose actions to be taken by school administrators and English language teachers. Recommendations are also addressed to future researchers to deal on certain gaps left by the study; or otherwise an improvement of its methodology and choice of variables.

Keywords: grammatical errors, business correspondence corpora

Introduction

Communication is key in every aspect of life. In the scholarly and academic pursuits engaged in by students, the skills relevant to communication are indispensable for coping successfully with academic requirements, and intermittent negotiations they encounter with their teachers and the various departments in their school’s administration. In its more specific context in Business Communication, the latter has an even more pronounced importance as the

student prepares for his employment and career prospects after finishing college education. Whether one is starting out in business or are further along in one's career curve, there are specific business communication skills necessary for success (Han, 2017). One important dimension of English business communication with its relatively independent set of skills pertains to "business correspondence". Students need to hone competitive skills in business correspondence.

Thomas et al. (1996) defines business correspondence as the "means the exchange of information in a written format for the process of business activities". Business correspondence can take place between organizations, within organizations or between the customers and the organization. To delineate its specific concern, business correspondence esoterically refers to the "written communication between persons". Hence oral communication or face to face communication is not considered within the technical limits of business correspondence (Thomas et al, 1996). This is the specific field that signifies to the theme of this study.

According to McCullum (2015), there are seven (7) skills that every college student should learn before graduating. The author also draws these skills from insights informed by employers. One of these is "business writing skills". The author indicates that business writing skills are so important that students have to possess them before they can even get an interview for a job. Candidates need to be able to get the attention of hiring managers through a well-written cover letter and resume to get a foot in the door to compete for any job. When they land the job, workers must be able to demonstrate business writing skills -- such as drafting reports, professional emails, or memos -- in order to do their job well. Although some students may mistakenly believe that if they're entering certain fields, like science and technology professions, they do not need to focus so much on the written word, having business writing skills can make a big difference in how they progress in their careers. Thus, in order to make themselves attractive to employers, students exert efforts to acquire competitive skills in preparing business correspondence. Some students opt to take specific courses in business writing. While others who need extra help with this kind of writing also turn to their school's career development center or tutoring resources to get more practice.

Doyle (2018) also concurs with the above imperative set on college students in his paper devoted to the "Top Skills Employers Seek in College Grads". Billed on the third rank of importance is "Communication Skills". Doyle initially discusses these skills in their general context, saying that regardless of the job that one is applying for, employers will expect applicants to have excellent written and verbal communication skills. Depending on the position, a job seeker will need to be able to communicate effectively with employees,

managers, and customers in person, online, in writing, and on the phone. Moreover, Doyle seemed to highlight more specifically the importance of the written aspect of business communication and in that regard, he emphasizes that a job seeker's cover letter will often be the first place an employer will review one's writing abilities. In addition to demonstrating "grammar skills", an applicant will also be showing how he / she can compose a letter that is to the point and, hopefully, interesting to read.

In the context that this study highlighted the importance of business correspondence particularly as a set of skills important to college students majoring in Business Administration, Emma's (2018) article published in the Houston Chronicle, one of the largest and most respected publications in the United States passes to be a good read for BS Business Administration students for them to appreciate the relevance of business correspondence skills in their substantive area. Emma contends that:

"Communication consistently ranks among the top five soft skills employers look for when choosing new hires. And in a world where face-to-face is becoming less and less, that communication more often occurs through the written word. If you want your business to succeed, make certain you and your employees have a firm grasp on the written word."
(Emma, 2018)

Further expounding her point, Emma indicates that "You cannot sell (or do business) without words". At the heart of every good product is a great story that your customers will want to buy time and again. That's where marketing comes in. Whether you're preparing packaging for products or writing the script to a television ad, you need compelling words that represent you well. And it is not the quality of words that matters; it's the point they make.

In a separate paper by Emma (2018) on the "Importance of Good Writing Skills in the Workplace", she also emphasized on the point that with emails, notes, letters, texts and Tweets, most people spend a fair amount of time at work communicating via the written word. Whether you are messaging a colleague, writing to your manager, or crafting the company newsletter, your writing skills can boost or hinder your career easily, even if you do not have a "writing" profession. Basically, writing skills make a difference in how you come across.

There can be more than the above premises to establish the importance of business correspondence skills and how it signifies directly to the career path assumed by graduates of Business Administration majors. On top of that considerations are also notes on the challenges encountered by students and professionals alike when it comes to their concrete outputs and

composition of business correspondence. This fact is highlighted in one of the important articles published by “Emphasis Training”, which is the leading Business Writing Company in the United Kingdom. The company also offers specialist business writing training and consultancy services to both public and private sector organizations around the world.

The article published by Emphasis Training (1997) on “Getting it Write: The ten most common business writing mistakes and how to avoid them” emphasizes that one of the most highlighted errors that affect the integrity and efficiency of business correspondence is that grammar mistakes. As explained in the article, the sad truth is that many companies appear resigned to wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars each year while their employees struggle for hours to produce badly written, poorly structured documents. Worse still is that much of this content doesn’t ever get read. It is very easy to make a hash of business writing. Reports and proposals are often written in a hurry, cobbled together at the last minute – with little thought about the impression they will give or the impact they will make. Time pressures and stress levels are not always avoidable however, and there is no real reason why people should be able to write well. Writing is a skill that needs to be learnt like any other, but even the most reluctant writers can improve their business documents by learning to avoid the most common “grammar mistakes”. The article enlists grammar errors in the first rank of the eminent mistakes observed in business writing.

Concurring with the above emphasis on the grammatical errors as a highlight of poor proficiency in business correspondence skills, Parker (2018) also came up with an inventory of these common grammar errors derived from authentic corpora from a collection of business documents. He notes that many business documents contained errors on “contractions”, the use of ‘possessive pronouns”, the indication of nouns in their “plural form” among others. The rest of what he noted are mistakes in the use of punctuation, commonly misused and confused words, and misspellings.

As to the specific issue raised in this study that looks into the verb tense errors in the business correspondence corpora of BSBA students, it draws from an inventory of the common grammatical errors in business writing as posted in the FluentU Business English Blog (<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/business-english/>) as contained in the article “10 Business English Writing Mistakes You can Easily Avoid”. Ranked ninth in the list is the set of errors pertaining to “verb tenses”. The article further emphasizes that the presence of grammatical errors in business correspondence breeds negative business image. Accordingly, the article states that it is important to create a good image of yourself and your company when writing to your co-workers, customers, clients and business partners. You want them to think well of you

and your company. The goal is for your reader to think you and your company are professional, responsible, intelligent and trustworthy. If you sound professional in your business writing, your reader will take you seriously. A good way to sound professional is to use more formal language in your writing. In business, you may be dealing with people from many different countries and cultures. So it is important that your message be clear, grammatically accurate, concise (the message is all about the main point) and easy to understand.

In addition to the above, this study also takes to analyze the subject-verb agreement errors found in business correspondence. This particular grammar item is the subject of Gaertner-Johnston's (2013) article "Do your subjects and verbs agree?" published in "Business Writing: Talk, Tips, and Best Picks for Writers on the Job". According to the author, "the most common errors seen in the writing samples of smart, successful people is a lack of subject-verb agreement. People are using singular verbs with plural subjects, and plural verbs with singular subjects. Errors are popping up everywhere". The article lifts actual samples drawn from authentic business correspondence corpora.

As an English language teacher to BSBA students, particularly in their courses related to writing and business communication, the above noted emphases on errors related to verb tenses and subject-verb agreement are also those that are commonly observed in the business correspondence compositions of the students. Thus explained the central focus of this study's analysis of the errors along these areas. This is a further attempt to possibly characterize the nuances of the errors committed by the students and chart them into classifications, as well as the extent of the errors committed under each category. This can be treated as a predictive model to guide teachers engaged in handling the same courses as to the likelihood of these types of grammatical errors that college students commit. The study also looked into potential learner-related variables that may be associated to the susceptibility of students to commit such type of errors as well as the volume of such errors. These insights to be gained can be treated as inputs to the improvement of the instructional design of subjects that cater to developing students' skills in business correspondence. Otherwise, the prospective findings of this study can be used to develop a matrix of criteria as bases in formulating intervention strategies such as supplemental learning activities which this study also aimed.

The methodological framework of this study aligns to the research tradition of error analysis, and anchored on the field of corpus linguistics since it used actual compositions of business correspondence generated by the students who were tapped as the participants of the study. According to Meyer (2002):

“[...] corpus linguistics brought about a revolution in the linguistic field. It is revolutionary in the sense that it deals with the study of real language data and no longer with the linguist’s intuition. Under corpus studies, linguistics confirms its scientific character through the complete and accurate analysis of real language. Corpus linguistics is also a serious scientific method because it deals with large quantities of data.”

As for the reason of selecting “Error Analysis” (EA) as the methodological approach in this study, Ellis (2003) justifies EA research by saying that in analyzing errors we can obtain information about how a language is learned, errors reflect the learner internal constructs, which for Selinker constitute an independent language system called interlanguage (Selinker, 1972 in Ellis, 2003), and the amount of knowledge a learner has of a language. Ellis add that the evaluation of the competence of a learner goes beyond the analysis of errors alone, focus on other aspects such as avoidance of difficult structures is an indicator of the progress made in the learning of a language. The analysis of errors is however crucial in the SLA field because it allows the observation of actual learner output and gives SLA researchers the possibility to explain how learning progresses. Thus, Ellis concludes that error analysis is important because it provided the researcher with a methodology to study learner language.

Anchored on the above, this study concentrated on the study of learner errors, but errors are not to be considered as language learning defects but as part of the strategies developed by learners in the process of acquiring grammatical proficiency in writing business correspondence.

Methodology

Study Design

This study adopted the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. As to the qualitative aspect of the research, it employed “text corpus analysis” since the items of analysis to be taken are “written corpora” based on the business correspondence compositions of BSBA students. The use of written corpora constitutes one of the types of corpus analysis on the basis of the material object analyzed (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). On the basis of the formal object of analysis, this study took up the design for “corpus-based linguistic analysis” (Bieber, 2012), to differentiate it from the rest of the other perspectives of analysis that also utilized corpus analysis. The focus of the error analysis was grammar, specifically on the structures and usage of verb-tense and subject-verb agreement as manifested in the subject

corpora. As such, it lies on the level of Linguistic Analysis based on the matrix of Bieber (2012).

On the quantitative aspect of the research, this study employed descriptive and inferential research methods. Descriptive research was engaged when there was a need to describe characteristics of a population or a phenomenon of interest. The characteristics used to describe the situation or population was usually some kind of categorical scheme also known as descriptive categories (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). Descriptive research was applied to this study as it engaged in the description of the profile of the research participants along socio-demographic and language learning variables. Moreover, quantitative procedures presupposed in the conduct of the error analysis especially in the interest to determine the extent of errors manifest in the corpora. Quantification was done by registering actual quantities (with their percentile rates) registered into the types of errors on verb-tense and subject-verb agreement.

In addition to the above, inferential method was also employed. The latter presupposed the use of statistical tools for examining the relationships between variables within a sample, and therefrom made generalizations or predictions about how those variables related within a larger population (Cole, 2018). Many social research resort to inferential statistics as it would be too costly or time-consuming to literally study an entire population of people. Inferential statistics invokes the use of samples in order to enable the representation of huge populations. Techniques that social scientists use to examine the relationships between variables in inferential statistics included, but are not limited to, linear regression analyses, logistic regression analyses, MANOVA, correlation analyses, structural equation modeling, and survival analysis. This study employed inferential method typically adopted in many social researches as this study also falls within the category of a social research. In one of its research questions, the use of correlational statistics was necessitated to determine levels of significance in relationship between the research participants' profile and the extent of their grammatical errors (for each type error) in verb-tense and subject-verb agreement as manifested in their business correspondence corpora. Correlation was subsumed under a class of statistical relationships involving dependence, though in common usage it most often referred to how close two variables were to having a linear relationship with each other. According to Shields & Rangarajan (2013), correlations were useful to indicate a predictive relationship that can be exploited in practice. However, in general, the presence of a correlation was not sufficient to infer the presence of a causal relationship.

Respondents of the Study

The target respondents or participants of this study were randomly selected sophomore (college) students enrolled in the degree program: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) of Pangasinan State University San Carlos Campus, located in San Carlos City, Pangasinan, during the academic year 2017-2018. They served as the primary sources of research data. These data corresponds to this study's "phenomenon of interest", the latter referred to the specific items that were analyzed in the study (McAuley et al., 2007). In this study, the phenomena of interest included the following: (a) socio-demographic and language learning variables, which would accounted for based on the profile of the BSBA students, and (b) grammatical errors in business correspondence corpora (i.e. verb-tense and subject-verb agreement related errors) which would be based on the business correspondence compositions generated by the BSBA students. No other primary data were sourced elsewhere.

The sample was limited to a total of 36 students. Random sampling was used to account for a balance in the population of male and female participants, otherwise the rest of the procedures for the identification of participants was done by random sampling. The names of the male and the female students were listed separately. Under each list, electronic raffling was used to randomly select the participants under each gender category until the maximum of eighteen (18) participants was achieved for each group for a total of 36 participants all in all.

The main reason for limiting the scope of participants was because the study presupposed the employment of an intricate corpus analysis instrument that charged enormous effort from the researcher in closely analyzing the students' use of grammatical cohesion devices in their essay compositions. Considering ordinary human capacity, and in conjunction with the restricted time frame to complete this research, the scope of the research population was thus set as such. This sampling design was also adopted in the previous studies reviewed by the researcher which were indicated in the "Related Studies" section of Chapter 2 of this research proposal, where it was noted in these studies that their respondent population ranged across five (5) to fifteen (15). Thus, with the proposal to accommodate 36 students for this study, it has even far exceeded the scope set in other parallel studies. The larger population was accommodated in this study is in anticipation of its use of correlational statistics, which does not lend to be effective in a very small population.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to administering the data-gathering instruments, permission was officially sought from the Campus Executive Director of the research locale. The sample communications

pertaining to this secured permission to conduct the study was attached in Appendix D. After the content-validation of the research instruments, the researcher then approached the concerned teacher/s handling the students negotiated with them and requested their assistance in scheduling the sessions for the data-gathering procedure. The instruments were administered one at a time, in different periods. The Survey Questionnaire on Learner Profile was administered first. It should take a separate session to administer the “Business Correspondence Corpus Generator” which was expected to be tedious for the students to deal with. The researcher gathered the respondents in a common place in their school, in an environment conducive for their writing composition. The participants would made to complete all the letters in, at least 45 minutes. The researcher personally presented throughout the procedure to address any clarification from the respondents.

In each of the above-mentioned sessions for administering the instruments, data were collected immediately at the end of the sessions. The sets of data were then collated by the researcher using spreadsheets. When all data sets have been completely organized, the researcher started with the statistical processing of the data sets with the assistance of a statistician. The researcher finally proceeded to the actual writing of the research findings, after she has obtained the statistical processing results.

Results and Discussions

This study draws from corpus-based linguistic analysis determined the extent grammatical errors that are manifest in the business correspondence corpora composed by sophomore BS Business Administration students of Pangasinan State University-San Carlos City Campus. The error analysis was delimited in the observation of errors along verb tense (VT) and subject-verb agreement (SGA). A specialized assessment tool was employed to gauge students’ extent of susceptibility to commit grammatical errors that range from “Low” (minimum), “Average”, to “High” (maximum). Moreover, a balanced population of male and female students were purposively taken as participants of the study. The students were profiled in terms of their socio-demographic information (sex and first language), as well as their language learning characteristics (exposure to authentic business correspondence materials; extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence; and attitude toward business correspondence composition).

In this study’s attempt to determine factors potentially associated to the students’ susceptibility to commit grammatical errors in their business correspondence composition, inferential statistics was employed, specifically MANOVA and correlational statistical tool.

Accordingly, the students' extent of grammar errors were differentiated on the basis of their sex and first language. On the other hand, their language learning characteristics were statistically correlated to their extent of grammar errors. These procedures led to the confirmation or rejection of the study's hypotheses, tested at 0.05 level of significance.

On the merits of relevant research findings, this study proposed a prototype of learning activities that can be exploited as an instructional supplement with the aim of reducing students' grammar difficulties in business correspondence composition. In selecting the contents emphasized in the learning activities, the students' typical traits were considered, thereby sensitizing the activities to the specific learning needs of the students in the research locale.

1. Socio-Demographic and Language Learning Profile

of the Sophomore BSBA Students

a. Socio-Demographic Information

The participants / respondents of this study are male and female sophomore BSBA students, purposively selected in equal proportion (i.e. each sex respectively comprising 50% of the research population). In terms of the students' "first language", they are divided into speakers of three (3) regional languages namely "Ilokano, Pangasinan, and Tagalog". Many of them (18 or 50%) registered "Tagalog" as their first language, while the others reported "Pangasinan" (17 or 47.2%) and "Ilokano" (1 or 2.8%) as their first language.

b. Language Learning Characteristics

The students' exposure to authentic business correspondence materials apply to two settings, i.e. "in the school" and "outside the school". In the school setting, the students' exposure to these materials range from "Moderately Frequent" (minimum) to "Highly Frequent" (maximum). This generally applies to ten (10) different types of business correspondence materials. Moreover, the students' have the most frequent encounter of certain authentic business correspondence materials, such as "application letters, letters of recommendation, letters of inquiry, and letters of acknowledgment (acknowledging receipt)". In contrast the students are least exposed to "complaint letters".

Outside the school setting, the students' exposure to authentic business correspondence materials range from "Moderately Frequent" (minimum) to "Highly Frequent" (maximum). This generally applies to ten (10) different types of business correspondence materials. Moreover, the students' have the most frequent encounter of certain authentic business

correspondence materials, such as “application letters, letters of recommendation, and sales letters”. In contrast the students are least exposed to “complaint letters”.

The students’ encounter of “application letters” and “recommendation letters” appear highly dense in both school setting and outside the school setting.

The students’ extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence occur in both within the “school setting” and “outside the school setting”. In the school setting, their writing opportunities range from “Moderately Frequent” (minimum) to “Highly Frequent” (maximum). Moreover, the students’ have the most frequent opportunities to write certain types of authentic business correspondence, such as “application letters, letters of recommendation, letters of acknowledgment, and sales letters”. In contrast the students have least opportunities to write “cover letters and order letters”.

Outside the school setting, the students’ writing opportunities range from “Moderately Frequent” (minimum) to “Highly Frequent” (maximum). Moreover, the students’ have the most frequent opportunities to write certain types of authentic business correspondence, such as “application letters, letters of recommendation, letters of acknowledgment, and resignation letters”. In contrast the students have least opportunities to write “cover letters and office memoranda”.

The students’ opportunity to write “application letters, recommendation letters, and letters of acknowledgment” are evident in both school setting and outside the school setting.

Generally, the students exhibit a “strongly positive” attitude towards business correspondence composition. As major highlights of this positive attitude, the students perceive that business correspondence is: (a) important in their student academic life; (b) relevant to their future career; and (c) useful in their later professional dealings with fellows in the workplace.

2. Extent of Grammatical Errors Committed by the Students in their Business Correspondence Corpora

a. Errors in Verb Tense (VT)

The students’ extent of errors in VT when it comes to their corpora for “letter of inquiry” (LI) range from “Low” (minimum) to “High” (maximum). Half of the research population (50%) registered an “Average” extent of errors in VT in their LI corpora. The rest of the students have “Low” (47.2%) and “High” (2.8%) extent of VT errors in their LI corpora. In terms of the students’ VT errors in their corpora for “follow-up letter” (LF), majority of them (66.7%) registered a “Low” extent of errors. Some students (30.6%) manifested an

“Average” extent of VT errors, and only one student (2.8%) was noted to have a case of a “High” extent of VT errors. Finally, in the students’ VT errors in their corpora for “order letter” (LO), majority of them (52.8%) registered a “Low” extent of errors. Some students (38.9%) manifested an “Average” extent of VT errors; whereas three (3) students (8.3%) were noted to have a “High” extent of VT errors.

There is consistency in the pattern of students’ VT errors regardless of the type of business correspondence they are composing.

b. Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement (SGA)

The students’ extent of errors in VT when it comes to their corpora for “letter of inquiry” (LI) range from “Low” (minimum) to “High” (maximum). In terms of their LI corpora, majority of the students (72.2%) registered a “Low” extent of SGA errors. A small number of students (25%) registered an “Average” extent of SGA errors, whereas only one (1) student (2.8%) registered a “High” extent of SGA errors. A similar pattern is observed in the students’ SGA errors in LF writing. Majority of them (27 or 75%) registered a “Low” extent of SGA errors, while the rest have extents of SGA errors categorized as “Average” (22.2%) and “Low” (2.8%). Finally, on the students’ SGA errors in LO writing, majority of them (69.4%) registered a “Low” extent of SGA errors, while the rest have extents of SGA errors categorized as “Average” (22.2%) and “Low” (8.3%).

There is consistency in the pattern of students’ SGA errors regardless of the type of business correspondence they are composing.

3. Difference in the Students’ Extent of Grammatical Errors

Based on their Sex and First Language

a. Sex and Grammatical Errors

The students’ extent of grammatical errors is not significantly differentiated on the basis of “sex”. This finding is true to the case of “VT errors” (Wiks’ Lambda: 0.920) or “SGA errors” (Wiks’ Lambda: 0.879). Thus, the hypothesis of the study is rejected.

b. First Language and Grammatical Errors

The students’ extent of grammatical errors is not significantly differentiated on the basis of their “first language”. This finding is true to the case of “VT errors” (Wiks’ Lambda: 0.962) or “SGA errors” (Wiks’ Lambda: 0.964). Thus, the hypothesis of the study is rejected.

**4. Relationship between the Extent of Grammatical Errors
in Business Correspondence Composition
and Language Learning Variables**

a. Exposure to Authentic Business Correspondence Materials and Extent of Verb Tense Errors in Business Correspondence Composition

There is no significant relationship between the students' exposure to authentic business correspondence materials and their extent of verb tense (VT) errors in business correspondence composition. This goes true across students' accounts in the different types of business correspondence namely, "Letter of Inquiry"; "Follow-Up Letter", and "Order Letter".

b. Extent of Writing Opportunities in Business Correspondence and Extent of Verb Tense Errors in Business Correspondence Composition

There is no significant relationship between the students' extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence and their extent of verb tense (VT) errors in business correspondence composition. This goes true across students' accounts in the different types of business correspondence namely, "Letter of Inquiry" "Follow-Up Letter", and "Order Letter".

c. Exposure to Authentic Business Correspondence Materials and Extent of Errors along Subject-Verb Agreement in Business Correspondence Composition

There is a significant or positive relationship between the students' exposure to authentic business correspondence materials and their extent of subject-verb agreement (SGA) errors in business correspondence composition. However, this finding goes true only in one type of business correspondence, i.e. "Order Letter". As to the two other types of business correspondence (i.e. Letter of Inquiry and Follow-Up Letter), no positive correlation was found.

d. Extent of Writing Opportunities in Business Correspondence and Extent of Errors along Subject-Verb Agreement in Business Correspondence Composition

There is no significant relationship between the students' extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence and their extent of subject-verb agreement (SGA) errors in business correspondence composition. This goes true across students' accounts in the different types of business correspondence namely, "Letter of Inquiry" "Follow-Up Letter", and "Order Letter".

**5. Recommended Learning Activities that can help
Reduce Grammar Difficulties in Business
Correspondence Composition**

The prototype learning activities serves as an instructional supplement intended to alleviate students' grammar difficulties in their composition of business correspondence. The target of the learning activities is the BSBA sophomore students. The research findings provide the theoretical framework on the contents of the activities, particularly the findings on: (1) students' exposure to authentic business correspondence materials; (2) students' extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence; and (c) students' extent of grammatical errors in their business correspondence composition (i.e. errors along verb tense and subject-verb agreement).

Conclusions

Based on the merits of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The sophomore BSBA students are male and female, who have either “Tagalog, Pangasinan, or Ilokano” as their first language. They have a moderate to high frequency of exposure to authentic business correspondence materials within the school and outside the school. Depending on the setting, students encounter certain authentic business correspondence materials more frequently than the others. Moreover, they have moderate to high extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence within the “school setting” and “outside the school setting”. Depending on the setting, students' opportunities to write certain types of business correspondence occur more frequently than the others. Finally, the students exhibit a “strongly positive” attitude towards business correspondence composition.

2. The students vary in their extent of errors along verb tense and subject verb agreement in their composition of certain types of business correspondence.

3. Students' sex and first language do not differentiate their extent of grammatical errors in business correspondence composition.

4. Exposure to authentic business correspondence materials and extent of writing opportunities in business correspondence are not significantly related to students' extent of “verb tense” and “subject-verb agreement” errors in business correspondence composition. However, exposure to authentic business correspondence materials is significantly related to students' extent of subject-verb agreement errors in composing order letters.

5. Learning activities that can alleviate students' grammar difficulties in their composition of business correspondence can be formulated based on inputs from the students'

language learning profile and the assessment of their grammatical errors in business correspondence composition.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. On the basis of the findings on the sophomore BSBA students' exposure to authentic business correspondence materials (within and outside the school), relevant mechanisms, policies, strategies, projects and activities are encouraged to be formulated or established by the school, with the joint initiative of the school management and the teachers, in order to further enrich the students' access to authentic business correspondence materials, as well as create more opportunities for them to practice business writing more frequently.

2. On the finding concerning students' extent of errors along verb tense and subject verb agreement in their composition of certain types of business correspondence, concerned teachers are encouraged to have their data bank and inventory of the common grammatical errors committed by students as bases for focusing their instruction on the pertinent English language rules that students are more challenged to grasp and deploy in their writing of business correspondence.

3. Future researchers may explore an alternative set of variables that can be hypothesized to differentiate students' extent of grammatical errors in business correspondence composition.

4. Future researchers may explore an alternative set of variables that can be hypothesized to relate significantly to students' extent of grammatical errors in business correspondence composition. Nevertheless, on this study's finding that "exposure to authentic business correspondence materials" is significantly related to students' extent of subject-verb agreement errors in composing order letters, this phenomenon can be exploited by teachers to maximize the beneficial effects of enhancing students' exposure to authentic materials in English which they adopt as auxiliary instructional materials.

5. On account of this study's output, which is a proposed set of learning activities aimed to alleviate students' grammar difficulties in their composition of business correspondence, this material is highly recommended for the use of the teachers of Business English, whether for the benefit of the institution of this study's research locale or other institutions. The material can be piloted to validate its potency as an intervention material or as an instructional supplement.

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