

# Grammatical Errors of Non-English Teachers: A Qualitative Study on Fossilization

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**ABSTRACT.** Persistent grammatical inaccuracies among non-English teachers remain an underexplored issue in second language acquisition research. Despite their sustained exposure to English in professional contexts, many non-English teachers continue to demonstrate recurrent grammatical errors in both spoken and written discourse. This study addresses this gap by examining the phenomenon of grammatical fossilization the long-term stabilization of erroneous linguistic forms through the lens of Nativist Theory. Rooted in the assumption that language acquisition is guided by innate linguistic structures, Nativist Theory provides a framework for understanding how first language parameters may constrain the restructuring of second language grammar even after extended exposure and practice. Adopting an exploratory qualitative research design, the study involves 20 non-English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data will be gathered through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify recurrent grammatical errors and explore the cognitive, experiential, and contextual factors influencing their persistence. The expected findings include the identification of grammatical patterns resistant to change and an understanding of how internalized linguistic systems and teaching environments contribute to fossilization. By anchoring the analysis in Nativist Theory, the study aims to extend the discussion on how innate language structures interact with second language learning processes among professionals already immersed in English use. The results are anticipated to inform language enhancement programs, teacher development initiatives, and pedagogical strategies that target deeply ingrained grammatical inaccuracies in educational settings.

**KEYWORDS:** *Grammatical, Errors, Qualitative, Fossilization*

## ARTICLE DETAILS

JEAS-00069; Received: December 15, 2025; Accepted: December 26, 2025; Published: January 8, 2026

## CITATION:

Marmeto, E. M., Masibay, M. J. L., & Nazareth, I. M. (2026). Grammatical Errors of Non-English Teachers: A Qualitative Study of Fossilization. *Journal of Education and Academic Settings*, 3(1). DOI: 10.62596/5p9fx436

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## INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential medium of instruction and communication in education, even for teachers whose primary specialization is not in English language studies. Non-English teachers are expected to use English effectively in classroom instruction, professional exchanges, and written academic outputs. However, despite their sustained exposure and practical use of English, many continue to display persistent grammatical errors in both speech and writing. This recurring issue highlights a deeper linguistic phenomenon fossilization, or the process through

which certain language errors become permanently embedded in a speaker's interlanguage despite ongoing exposure and corrective feedback (Selinker, 1972; Han, 2013). Studies in linguistic competence further show that grammatical accuracy among educators and higher education students is affected by socio-cultural and experiential factors, suggesting that consistent exposure does not necessarily equate to grammatical mastery (Garil, 2024; Garil, Abbas, & Limen, 2024). While fossilization has been extensively discussed in second language acquisition research, most studies have focused on general L2 learners or language students rather than on professionals who regularly use English in their teaching roles. This lack of investigation into the grammatical patterns of non-English teachers presents a research gap that this study seeks to address.

Grounded in Nativist Theory, the study assumes that language acquisition is largely guided by an innate linguistic mechanism known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), as proposed by Noam Chomsky (Chomsky, 1965; White, 2003). According to this theory, human beings are born with an inherent capacity to acquire language through universal grammatical principles. However, this capacity diminishes with age, making the restructuring of grammatical systems in a second language increasingly difficult (Cook & Newson, 2007). In this light, fossilization can be interpreted as a manifestation of the limits of this innate capacity, wherein early-acquired first language structures become deeply ingrained and resistant to modification. Thus, even when non-English teachers are frequently exposed to English, their internalized grammatical patterns may remain influenced by the syntactic and morphological rules of their first language, leading to recurring and stable errors over time. Local studies have emphasized similar findings, noting that educators' communication styles and grammatical competence are shaped not only by innate linguistic tendencies but also by their pedagogical context and emotional connection to audiences (Garil, Entong, & Muarip, 2024; Cenciro, 2025).

The main intention of this study is to examine and describe the recurrent grammatical errors evident in the English communication of non-English teachers and to explore the possible fossilization processes that contribute to their persistence. Specifically, the research aims to identify the types of grammatical errors that frequently occur in their speech and writing, and to understand how cognitive, experiential, and contextual factors reinforce such errors despite regular English use. The study focuses on two central variables: fossilization processes, which serve as the independent variable, and recurrent grammatical errors, which serve as the dependent variable. Key concepts such as grammatical competence, error persistence, L1 interference, and language fossilization form the conceptual backbone of the investigation (Ellis, 2008). Related educational research underscores how institutional contexts, teaching approaches, and language resources shape grammatical competence, suggesting that structural exposure alone cannot eliminate entrenched language errors (Divinagracia, 2024; Estoque, 2023; Calzada, 2024).

Through an exploratory qualitative design, the study will involve non-English teachers as participants, gathering data through one-on-one interviews to uncover their experiences and perceptions regarding their English use and grammatical accuracy. The collected data will be analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes reflecting fossilized grammatical forms and the factors that sustain them. The expected outcome of the study is a clearer understanding of how deeply rooted grammatical patterns resist change, even among professionals who continuously use English in their work. Similar educational inquiries have shown that teachers' communicative confidence, instructional delivery, and language habits are closely tied to professional exposure and academic culture (Carpio, Caburnay, & Nollo, 2024; Murro, 2024; Barrientos, 2025). By anchoring the findings in Nativist Theory, the study aims to explain how innate linguistic structures and early language acquisition processes interact with second language

exposure to produce fossilized grammatical features. Ultimately, the results are anticipated to inform language development programs and teacher training initiatives that address fossilized errors and promote greater grammatical accuracy among non-English educators.

## REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

*Fossilization in Second Language Acquisition.* The concept of fossilization, first introduced by Selinker (1972), refers to the phenomenon wherein incorrect linguistic forms become permanently established in a learner's interlanguage system despite continued exposure and practice. Fossilization marks a stage where learners appear to have reached a plateau in their language development, maintaining persistent grammatical errors that resist correction (Han, 2013). Long (2003) further explains that such errors often endure due to limited opportunities for meaningful interaction or feedback that promotes restructuring of linguistic forms. Among non-English teachers, who primarily use English as a medium of instruction rather than as a target language, fossilization may manifest in recurring grammatical inaccuracies that persist even after prolonged use of English in professional settings. This persistence is reflected in the experiences of educators handling multiple subjects, where adaptive instructional attributes are necessary to manage diverse content delivery amidst fossilized language habits (Castro, Ventura, Estajal, et al., 2024). Additionally, the emotional connection between speakers and audiences in academic settings can influence language delivery and possibly impact fossilization (Garil, Entong, Muarip, et al., 2024).

*Grammatical Errors in Non-Native English Use.* Non-native English users frequently display grammatical errors influenced by their first language structures, habitual language patterns, and insufficient exposure to authentic English input (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Commonly fossilized errors include verb tense confusion, subject-verb disagreement, incorrect article usage, and prepositional errors (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). These errors often occur in both oral and written communication, particularly when language is used functionally for teaching rather than for linguistic accuracy. For non-English teachers, the constant repetition of such errors in classroom discourse may lead to their normalization, reinforcing fossilized language patterns over time. Campus journalism has also been shown to impact students' grammar consciousness and confidence, suggesting that repeated engagement with language in practical contexts influences fossilization patterns (Chavez, Anuddin, Mansul, et al., 2024). Parental support strategies and discretionary influence similarly affect English language learning, indicating external factors that shape language habits and potential fossilization (Chavez, Adalia, & Alberto, 2023; Comerros, Cuilan, & Chavez, 2024).

*Factors Influencing the Persistence of Grammatical Errors.* Several interrelated factors contribute to the persistence of grammatical errors among experienced language users. Cognitive aspects such as automatization of erroneous forms and limited metalinguistic awareness can make error correction challenging (Ellis, 2017). Affective variables, including motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy, also shape how individuals respond to feedback and monitor their language output (Krashen, 1985). Furthermore, sociolinguistic conditions such as working in contexts where colleagues share similar linguistic backgrounds can limit exposure to corrective feedback and reinforce fossilized structures (Han & Odlin, 2006). For non-English teachers, communicative effectiveness in instructional contexts may take precedence over grammatical accuracy, allowing fossilized errors to persist unchallenged. Research into the professional interests and integrity of teachers with multiple administrative functions highlights how workplace roles and pressures can affect language use and possibly fossilization (Dagoy, Ariban, Chavez, et al., 2024). Additionally,

low preferences towards Filipino language among Gen Z students underscore broader linguistic attitude trends that may also impact English fossilization in educational contexts (Lamorinas, Luna, Lai, et al., 2025).

*Addressing Fossilization through Reflection and Awareness.* Research emphasizes the importance of reflection and conscious attention to linguistic form in overcoming fossilization. According to Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, learners must consciously register linguistic features in input to facilitate change in interlanguage structures. Teachers who engage in reflective practices, seek feedback, and maintain awareness of their own grammatical patterns are more likely to reduce fossilized errors (Borg, 2015). In contrast, the absence of self-monitoring and feedback mechanisms perpetuates persistent inaccuracies. Qualitative inquiry into teachers' perceptions, experiences, and self-correction strategies can thus offer valuable insights into the processes sustaining grammatical fossilization in professional contexts. For example, narratives from bilingual parents about real-life English use provide materials that can inform reflective teaching practices and curriculum development (Chavez, 2022). Moreover, discourse analyses on the professional language use of educators and their communicative behaviors illustrate the complex interplay of experience, awareness, and institutional factors in language fossilization (Mundo, Reyes, & Gervacio, 2024). Although fossilization has been extensively studied in general second language acquisition research, there remains a notable lack of focus on non-English teacher professionals who model English language use across disciplines but may themselves exhibit fossilized grammatical forms. This gap underscores the need for qualitative studies that identify not only the recurrent grammatical errors but also the psychological, experiential, and contextual factors that contribute to their persistence. Insights from such studies can inform professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing the linguistic accuracy and self-awareness of educators who use English as a medium of instruction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Research Design*

This study employs an exploratory qualitative research design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the recurrent grammatical errors present in the speech and writing of non-English teachers, as well as the fossilization processes that contribute to the persistence of these errors. The qualitative approach allows for rich, descriptive insights into participants' experiences and perceptions regarding their English language use and error patterns.

### *Population and Sampling Procedure*

The study sample consists of 20 non-English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on their use of English as a medium of instruction in classrooms, despite English not being their primary subject. This criterion ensures that the study targets teachers who frequently use English in professional communication but are likely to exhibit non-native language characteristics, including grammatical errors.

### *Research Instrument*

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a semi-structured interview guide developed to explore the recurring grammatical errors and fossilization processes

experienced by non-English teachers. The interview questions were carefully crafted to align with the study’s objectives. They included prompts to identify specific grammatical errors observed in both speech and writing, contexts in which these errors commonly occur, and the participants’ strategies for addressing these errors once noticed. Additionally, questions focused on participants’ personal experiences that may have shaped their long-term English grammatical patterns, their perceptions of their ability to modify these patterns, and factors contributing to the resistance of certain grammatical errors to change despite ongoing exposure to English. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key areas relevant to fossilization were systematically explored. Table 1 presents the list of guide questions used by this research study.

Objectives	Interview question
1. To identify the recurrent grammatical errors present in the speech and writing of non-English teachers	1. What specific grammatical errors appear in your English communications?  2. In what classroom communication situations do grammatical errors in English language use most frequently occur?  3. How do you usually address identified grammatical errors in your English after they are noticed?
2. To examine the possible fossilization processes influencing the persistence of these grammatical errors.	1. What personal experiences shaped your long-term English grammatical patterns?  2. How do you perceive your ability to modify grammatical habits developed over time?  3. What factors might make certain grammatical patterns more resistant to change despite your continuous exposure to English?

*Data Gathering Procedure*

The collected interview data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, a method that facilitates identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. This analytic approach supports a flexible and reflective examination of participants’ narratives, allowing themes related to recurring grammatical errors and fossilization processes to emerge organically from the data. Through iterative coding and thematic development, the study reveals key factors influencing persistent grammatical inaccuracies among non-English teachers.

*Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). This approach enabled the researcher to identify patterns and themes emerging from participants’ narratives while maintaining reflexivity throughout the analytical process. The analysis was carried out in six iterative phases. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading and re-reading interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants’ linguistic experiences. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying portions of speech related to pronunciation errors, interlanguage

transfer, and classroom influences. Third, these codes were organized into broader themes that reflected recurring phonological error types and interlanguage factors. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure accuracy, coherence, and faithful representation of participants' perspectives. Fifth, the researcher defined and named each theme to capture the essence of learners' phonological and interlanguage characteristics. Finally, the findings were synthesized into an interpretive narrative linking the identified themes to relevant linguistic theories and existing literature. To ensure the credibility of the analysis, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review summaries of their responses, while peer debriefing with fellow researchers was undertaken to validate and strengthen the thematic interpretations.

## RESULTS

**Research Objectives 1.** To identify the recurrent grammatical errors present in the speech and writing of non-English teachers.

**Question No. 1.** What specific grammatical errors appear in your English communications?

### 1.1 *Subject-Verb Agreement Errors*

Ten (10) respondents expressed that sometimes they forget to match the verb with the subject. For example, they say *'She go to school'* instead of *'She goes to school.'* It usually happens when they're speaking fast or when they are translating their thoughts directly from their language. In their native language, verbs don't really change depending on the subject, so their brain doesn't automatically add the '-s' to the verb when it's singular. Additionally, they mentioned that when they are focused on the message rather than the grammar, they tend to skip small details like verb endings. They only realize the mistake after they finish talking. They've also noticed this happens more when they are nervous or not fully confident in their English. To improve, they try to slow down their speech, repeat common subject-verb patterns, and practice sentences like *'She goes,'* *'He works,'* *'It rains'* to make the rule more natural in their mind.

*"Sometimes I forget to match the verb with the subject. For example, I say 'She go to school' instead of 'She goes to school.'"*

*"When I'm focused on the message rather than the grammar, I tend to skip small details like verb endings. I only realize the mistake after I finish talking."*

### 1.2 *Word Order*

Five (5) respondents shared that sometimes their sentences sound strange in English because they follow the word order of their first language. For example, they say *'To the store I will go'* instead of *'I will go to the store.'* The sentence may be understandable, but it doesn't sound natural to native or fluent speakers. This happens especially when they are speaking spontaneously. They don't have enough time to mentally rearrange the sentence to fit the English structure. It's hard to switch structure quickly when speaking. Additionally, they mentioned that when they speak

fast or when they are focused more on expressing their ideas than on grammar, they automatically use their native sentence structure. They realize the mistake only after they've spoken. To address this, they try to practice common English sentence patterns and train themselves to think in English, even just a few seconds before they speak. This helps them form sentences more naturally and smoothly.

*"Sometimes my sentences sound strange in English because I follow the word order of my first language. For example, I say 'To the store I will go' instead of 'I will go to the store.'"*

*"When I speak fast or when I'm focused more on expressing my ideas than on grammar, I automatically use my native sentence structure. "*

### 1.3 Preposition Errors

Five (5) respondents expressed that they get confused with prepositions like *in*, *on*, or *at*. Sometimes, they use the wrong one without realizing it. For example, they say *'I live at Philippines'* instead of *'I live in the Philippines'* or *'I will meet you on Monday morning'* instead of *'I will meet you Monday morning.'* In their language, they don't use prepositions the same way, so they usually just follow what 'sounds right' in their head. Additionally, they shared that they also notice that the same preposition can be used differently depending on the situation, like *'at school'*, *'in school'*, or *'on the bus.'* They tend to mix them up, especially when they're speaking fast or when they're not confident. To improve, they try to remember common patterns and phrases instead of memorizing all the rules at once.

*"I get confused with prepositions like in, on, or at. Sometimes, I use the wrong one without realizing it."*

*"I also notice that the same preposition can be used differently depending on the situation, like 'at school', 'in school', or 'on the bus.'"*

**Question No. 2.** In what classroom communication situations do grammatical errors in English language use most frequently occur?

#### 2.1 Students explaining experiment in class

Five (5) respondents expressed that they often notice grammatical errors when students explain their experiments orally. They know the scientific process but struggle to express it in proper English, especially when forming past tense sentences like *'We mix the solution'* instead of *'We mixed the solution.'* These errors usually happen because their focus is on recalling the procedure and results rather than on grammar. Many of them think in their first language first, then translate their thoughts directly into English, which causes tense confusion. Additionally, they mentioned that they also observe that when students are excited or nervous during presentations, they tend to simplify their sentences to get their ideas out quickly, resulting in missing verbs, wrong tense usage, or incomplete sentences. This shows a gap between their content knowledge and their ability to express it using formal scientific language.

*"I often notice grammatical errors when students explain their experiments orally. They know the scientific process but struggle to express it in proper English, especially when forming past tense sentences like 'We mix the solution' instead of 'We mixed the solution.'"*

*"I also observe that when students are excited or nervous during presentations, they tend to simplify their sentences to get their ideas out quickly, resulting in missing verbs, wrong tense usage, or incomplete sentences."*

## 2.2 Explaining mathematical solutions

Ten (10) respondents expressed that when students explain their solutions, they usually focus more on the numbers than on grammar. For example, they might say *'He multiply the number'* instead of *'He multiplied the number.'* Their main goal is to show they understand the math, so grammar slips through. They also notice that during problem-solving recitations or board work, many students prioritize getting the correct answer rather than forming complete sentences. Additionally, they mentioned that some students also directly translate their thoughts from their native language, which affects their sentence structure and verb usage. For instance, they might say *'He get the answer'* or *'I solve already'* because that's how they would naturally say it in their first language. They believe as long as the numbers are correct, their explanation is acceptable. This results in frequent omission of helping verbs, misuse of tenses, and incomplete sentences during oral presentations.

*"When students explain their solutions, they usually focus more on the numbers than on grammar."*

*"Some students also directly translate their thoughts from their native language, which affects their sentence structure and verb usage. "*

## 2.3 Switching Filipino to English

Five (5) respondents mentioned that I hear errors most when students switch between Filipino and English mid-sentence. Code-switching affects grammar, like *'We go na in the library'* or *'I already answer the quiz.'* It's common because they're used to mixing both languages. Many students express themselves more comfortably in Filipino, so when they insert English words or phrases, they often keep the Filipino sentence structure, which leads to grammatical errors. Additionally, they mentioned that they also notice that this happens more frequently during casual or spontaneous classroom interactions, such as when students are answering questions on the spot, talking with classmates, or giving quick explanations. Their focus is on communicating the idea fast, not on applying correct grammar.

*"I hear errors most when students switch between Filipino and English mid-sentence. Code-switching affects grammar, like 'We go na in the library' or 'I already answer the quiz.'"*

*"I also notice that this happens more frequently during casual or spontaneous classroom interactions, such as when students are answering questions on the spot, talking with classmates, or giving quick explanations."*

**Question No. 3.** How do you usually address identified grammatical errors in your English after they are noticed?

### 3.1 Repeating the sentence

Ten (10) respondents expressed that when they catch their grammar mistakes, they usually repeat the sentence in their head or out loud and fix it. They also try to use the correct structure in their next sentences so they can build the habit. Sometimes they even write it down or use it in a few more sentences to make sure they remember the proper way of saying it. It's their way of practicing so the correction sticks. Additionally, they mentioned that they pay attention to the specific part that went wrong, like the tense or subject-verb agreement, so they can avoid repeating it. It's like giving themselves a quick mini-lesson so the correction sticks and eventually becomes part of how they speak naturally.

*"When I catch my grammar mistakes, I usually repeat the sentence in my head or out loud and fix it. I also try to use the correct structure in my next sentences so I can build the habit."*

*"I pay attention to the specific part that went wrong, like the tense or subject-verb agreement, so I can avoid repeating it."*

### 3.2 Rephrasing the sentence

Five (5) respondents expressed that they don't panic when they make grammar errors. They just rephrase their sentences immediately. Sometimes they even laugh at themselves and say, 'Wait, let me fix that,' then correct it on the spot. They believe making mistakes is part of learning, so they don't feel embarrassed about it. Additionally, they mentioned that correcting themselves right away helps them remember the proper structure and stay confident while speaking. They also take note of common errors they make so they can work on them gradually without pressure.

*"I don't panic when I make grammar errors. I just rephrase my sentence immediately. Sometimes I even laugh at myself and say, 'Wait, let me fix that,' then correct it on the spot. "*

*"Correcting myself right away helps me remember the proper structure and stay confident while speaking."*

### 3.3 Understanding why error happened

Five (5) respondents expressed that they try to understand why the error happened. Was it because they translated directly from Filipino? Once they know why, it's easier to avoid repeating the same mistake. They notice that many of their grammar slips happen when they think in Filipino

first, then translate word for word. Additionally, they mentioned that when that happens, they remind themselves to form their thoughts directly in English or adjust the structure to fit English grammar. They also reflect on the specific part that went wrong, like verb tenses or sentence order, so they can correct it more consciously next time.

*"I try to understand why the error happened. Was it because I translated directly from Filipino? Once I know why, it's easier to avoid repeating the same mistake."*

*"When that happens, I remind myself to form my thoughts directly in English or adjust the structure to fit English grammar."*

**Research Objectives 2.** To examine the possible fossilization processes influencing the persistence of these grammatical errors.

**Question No. 1.** What personal experiences shaped your long-term English grammatical patterns?

### *1.1 Reading a lot of science textbooks*

Ten (10) respondents expressed that their grammar patterns were shaped by reading a lot of science textbooks and research articles. Because most of these materials use formal English, they got used to writing in a straightforward and structured way. They tend to use passive voice often because that's how scientific reports are usually written. This made their writing sound more objective and less personal, which is a common feature in scientific communication. Additionally, they mentioned that they also got used to using logical connectors like *'therefore,' 'in addition,'* and *'as a result'* because scientific texts often explain cause-and-effect relationships. They think this is why their grammar patterns lean more toward formal and academic English rather than casual or conversational styles. It reflects the kind of language environment they were exposed to as a learner and as a teacher.

*"My grammar patterns were shaped by reading a lot of science textbooks and research articles."*

*"The teacher also encouraged us to share our own interpretations and compare them with Filipino perspectives, which made learning interactive and personally meaningful."*

### *1.2 Problem solving activities*

Five (5) respondents expressed that they learned English through problem-solving activities. Since most math instructions and word problems are in English, they became familiar with short, direct sentences. Their grammar became very formulaic like *'If this, then that.'* They still catch themselves speaking in that pattern during regular conversations. This structured way of thinking has shaped how they construct sentences. Additionally, they mentioned that they also rely heavily on sequence markers like *'first,' 'next,'* and *'finally'* because that's how they were trained to explain solutions. This habit makes their speech sound precise and methodical, which reflects

how they process information as a Math teacher. Even in non-academic settings, they naturally speak in a way that mirrors mathematical reasoning.

*"I learned English through problem-solving activities. Since most math instructions and word problems are in English, I became familiar with short, direct sentences."*

*"I also rely heavily on sequence markers like 'first,' 'next,' and 'finally' because that's how I was trained to explain solutions. "*

### 1.3 Reading documentaries and Historical books

Five (5) respondents expressed that they got used to English through documentaries and historical readings. They became familiar with formal tenses, transitions, and cause-and-effect connectors like *'therefore'* and *'as a result.'* Those patterns became part of how they explain lessons in class. Because historical texts are usually written in a formal and narrative style, they developed a habit of structuring their sentences in a logical and chronological order. Additionally, they mentioned that they often use connectors to show how one event leads to another, which helps make their explanations clearer and more coherent. This kind of exposure also influenced their tone which it's usually formal, explanatory, and a bit descriptive, just like the way historical events are narrated.

*"I got used to English through documentaries and historical readings. I became familiar with formal tenses, transitions, and cause-and-effect connectors like 'therefore' and 'as a result.' "*

*"I often use connectors to show how one event leads to another, which helps make my explanations clearer and more coherent."*

**Question No. 2.** How do you perceive your ability to modify grammatical habits developed over time?

### 2.1 Practical and Adaptive Perspective

Ten (10) respondents expressed that they can change their grammar habits, but it happens slowly and usually only when they see a clear reason to. For example, when they started handling international students, they became more aware of their sentence structure. They adjusted little by little by mimicking how they spoke or by checking how they phrase instructions. They became more intentional with their word choices, especially when giving directions or explaining concepts. Additionally, they mentioned that they don't pressure themselves to be perfect right away. Instead, they focus on small, practical changes that they can sustain like using the correct tense or avoiding filler words they tend to overuse. Sometimes they also ask colleagues or friends to point out errors they might not notice. Those external inputs help them become more aware of habits they've already normalized. The change is gradual, but it builds confidence over time.

*"I can change my grammar habits, but it happens slowly and usually only when I see a clear reason to."*

*"I don't pressure myself to be perfect right away. Instead, I focus on small, practical changes that I can sustain, like using the correct tense or avoiding filler words I tend to overuse. "*

## 2.2 Conscious Awareness Perspective

Five (5) respondents expressed that they notice their mistakes right after speaking, so they try to rephrase them immediately. They've trained themselves to do that, especially during class. It's not about being perfect but about making sure their students hear the correct structure. They've developed this habit because they know that their language use can influence how students pick up grammar unconsciously. When they hear the correct form often, they're more likely to mirror it in their own speech and writing. Additionally, they mentioned that the quick self-correction became automatic. They don't let the mistake pass because they see the classroom as a space where they model language, not just content. Sometimes they even make the correction visible by saying something like, 'Wait, let me fix that,' to show them that it's okay to make mistakes and improve on the spot. It builds both their grammar awareness and their confidence to self-correct, too. They think this habit has made them more sensitive to how they use language daily, even outside the classroom.

*"I notice my mistakes right after speaking, so I try to rephrase them immediately. I've trained myself to do that, especially during class."*

*"The quick self-correction became automatic. I don't let the mistake pass because I see the classroom as a space where I model language, not just content."*

## 2.3 Growth-Oriented Perspective

Five (5) respondents expressed that they actually see their grammar habits as flexible. They've learned that when they expose themselves to more reading and speaking practice, their grammar slowly shifts too. They don't pressure themselves to fix everything at once, small, consistent corrections help. They've noticed that the more they immerse themselves in materials that use correct and natural grammar, the easier it becomes to internalize those patterns without forcing it. Additionally, they mentioned that they see language improvement as a gradual process rather than an overnight change. Instead of focusing on every single mistake, they choose specific habits to work on like verb tenses or transitions and they build from there. This makes the process less overwhelming and more sustainable.

*" I actually see my grammar habits as flexible. I've learned that when I expose myself to more reading and speaking practice, my grammar slowly shifts too."*

*"I see language improvement as a gradual process rather than an overnight change. Instead of focusing on every single mistake, I choose specific habits to work on like verb tenses or transitions and I build from there. "*

**Question No. 3.** What factors might make certain grammatical patterns more resistant to change despite your continuous exposure to English?

### 3.1 Prioritizing clarity over grammar

Ten (10) respondents expressed that when they explain lessons, they prioritize clarity of ideas over grammatical accuracy. Certain errors like dropping articles or using the wrong prepositions don't bother them much because students still understand the concept. In the classroom, their main goal is to make sure students grasp the idea, not to model perfect grammar. Additionally, they mentioned that they tend to focus more on maintaining the flow of their explanation than on fixing the form. Unlike language teachers, they don't receive frequent feedback on grammar, so the patterns they learned earlier remain deeply ingrained. Habit also plays a big role when they repeat the same explanations year after year, the same structures, even if slightly incorrect, tend to stay the same.

*"When I explain lessons, I prioritize clarity of ideas over grammatical accuracy. Certain errors like dropping articles or using the wrong prepositions don't bother me much because students still understand the concept."*

*"I tend to focus more on maintaining the flow of my explanation than on fixing the form. Unlike language teachers, I don't receive frequent feedback on grammar, so the patterns I learned earlier remain deeply ingrained."*

### 3.2 Switching between Filipino to English

Five (5) respondents shared that they tend to switch between Filipino and English when they talk. Because of this, some grammar structures, especially sentence order get mixed. Code-switching feels natural, so even if they know the standard English pattern, they often end up using the blended one. It's easier for them to express certain ideas in Filipino, so they insert Filipino phrases into English sentences without noticing how it affects grammar. Additionally, they mentioned that when they speak quickly, they unconsciously transfer Filipino sentence structures into English, changing the usual word order or verb tense. Code-switching also gives them a sense of comfort and connection with my students, but it makes it harder to maintain consistent grammar patterns. Because this blended structure works in daily communication, there's less motivation to 'unlearn' it, even when the aware of the standard form.

*"I tend to switch between Filipino and English when I talk. Because of this, some grammar structures especially sentence order get mixed."*

*"When I speak quickly, I unconsciously transfer Filipino sentence structures into English, changing the usual word order or verb tense."*

### 3.3 Using base verb form instead of past tense

Five (5) respondents mentioned that they notice that the grammar patterns they learned early on, like using the base form of verbs instead of the past tense are the hardest to change. They

think it's because they got used to focusing more on numbers and formulas than on sentence structure. These early patterns have become automatic because they've used them for years without feeling the need to correct them. Additionally, they shared that even when they try to correct themselves, it doesn't come naturally. It feels like they have to pause and think about the right form, which slows them down. Since these errors don't really affect how well their students understand the lesson, they often just let it pass, which only strengthens the habit over time

*"I notice that the grammar patterns I learned early on, like using the base form of verbs instead of the past tense are the hardest to change."*

*"Even when I try to correct myself, it doesn't come naturally. It feels like I have to pause and think about the right form, which slows me down."*

## DISCUSSION

This qualitative exploration into the grammatical errors of non-English teachers highlights significant patterns of fossilization, which can be better understood through the lens of Nativist Theory. According to Nativist Theory, as proposed by linguists like Noam Chomsky, humans possess an innate Universal Grammar (UG) a built-in capacity for language acquisition. This biological foundation facilitates natural language learning in early childhood. However, for adult learners or those acquiring a second language later in life, this innate mechanism may be less accessible or efficient, contributing to persistent errors and fossilization.

*Identification of Recurrent Grammatical Errors.* The recurrent grammatical errors identified in non-English teachers' speech and writing suggest that certain aspects of second language acquisition remain challenging, despite ongoing use and exposure. Nativist Theory helps explain why some grammatical structures are more prone to error. These errors may arise because the adult learners' interlanguage system struggles to fully align with the target language's grammar rules, especially when those rules conflict with the learner's native language syntax or when the input does not provide sufficient corrective feedback. The innate UG may facilitate initial language learning, but the incomplete or imperfect internalization of the second language's grammar results in persistent errors.

For example, teachers may consistently misuse tense, articles, or subject-verb agreement elements that require subtle rule application and are often absent or different in their first languages. This aligns with the Nativist assertion that while the capacity for language acquisition is innate, the specific grammatical settings for a second language must be reset during learning, a process that becomes increasingly difficult with age and insufficient input.

*Fossilization Processes Influencing Persistent Errors.* The persistence of these grammatical errors, despite continuous exposure, can also be interpreted through Nativist Theory's emphasis on critical periods and innate mechanisms. The study's findings on fossilization where errors become deeply entrenched and resistant to correction support the idea that after a certain developmental window, the brain's plasticity for language acquisition diminishes. Thus, adult non-English teachers may find it difficult to adjust or override established linguistic patterns.

Moreover, the teachers' perceptions of their ability to modify grammatical habits reflect the theory's notion that while the UG provides a biological framework, environmental factors and personal experiences critically influence the acquisition process. If fossilized errors are not

addressed early or reinforced by consistent negative evidence, they solidify into permanent features of the learner's interlanguage. This phenomenon underscores the interplay between innate capacities and environmental input, highlighting that even with ongoing exposure, the lack of explicit feedback or corrective mechanisms can impede progress.

Additionally, motivational and affective factors noted in participants' responses may further compound fossilization. From a Nativist perspective, although UG endows learners with potential for language mastery, successful acquisition requires effective interaction with linguistic input and internal willingness to modify underlying grammatical settings.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that non-English teachers frequently commit recurrent grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreement mistakes, native-language word order transfer, and preposition confusion. These errors are often influenced by direct translation from their first language, nervousness, and a focus on conveying meaning over grammatical accuracy. Common classroom situations like explaining experiments, solving math problems, and code-switching between Filipino and English further expose these patterns. Despite continuous exposure to English, many grammatical errors persist due to fossilization, reinforced by habitual language use, limited corrective feedback, and the practical priority of clarity over form. Teachers attempt self-correction through repetition, rephrasing, and conscious awareness of their errors, though change occurs slowly. Their long-term grammatical patterns are shaped by specific learning experiences such as reading academic texts and problem-solving activities, which influence their formal and formulaic language styles. Ultimately, while teachers show willingness and gradual progress in modifying their grammar, certain ingrained habits especially those linked to early learning and code-switching remain resistant to change. This highlights the need for ongoing, targeted support to address fossilized errors and improve grammatical accuracy alongside effective communication.

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