

**GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY AND FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE IN
LEARNING ENGLISH AMONG SASTE STUDENTS OF
ST. PAUL UNIVERSITY PHILIPPINES**

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ABSTRACT

First language interference is seen as a major factor affecting English language proficiency. This study aimed at determining the participants' grammar proficiency and the extent of first language (L1) interference with pronunciation and intonation of American English. The participants consisted of purposively selected 120 college students. They were asked to answer a grammar proficiency test, read 10 sentences for intonation proficiency, and a paragraph for pronunciation proficiency. Data consisted of the results generated by the grammar, intonation, and pronunciation tests. A contrastive analysis was conducted examining the extent of interference caused by L1 such as Iloco, Ibanag, Itawes, and Tagalog in learning English. Results revealed that first language greatly interfered with the pronunciation of the participants. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference in the extent of first language interference among students according to profile variables. Furthermore, the research found out that whatever first language the students speak, this has no effect on grammar proficiency level. There is a significant relationship between proficiency and intonation, while there is no significant difference between proficiency level and pronunciation. To raise the level of proficiency of the students on grammar, the researchers recommended that English teachers may provide activities to enhance students' abilities on subject-verb agreement. Activities such as identifying errors, editing erroneous texts, and other activities that could help the students become more knowledgeable regarding subject-verb agreement are also recommended.

Keywords: *First language, interference, language interference, proficiency*

INTRODUCTION

In a country where English is learned as a second language (L2), as in the case of the Philippines, first-language (L1) speakers find difficulties in mastering the grammatical rules as applied to phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax. Speaking English as a second language (ESL) effectively can be a challenge. Thus, if people are experiencing difficulties remembering pronunciation, grammar rules, and the like, there are very good reasons why. Lauridsen (n.d.) points out:

While it is no secret that learning a new language takes time, practice, and dedication, many are increasingly surprised to learn that no amount of private practice, no stack of flashcards, and no amount of immersed reading in a second language can prepare someone to communicate like a native speaker. This is primarily due to the fact that languages are our portal to the very thoughts and ideas and objects that make up our world, and they simultaneously produce and reinforce cultural knowledge. Even with a perfect accent or a nuanced regional vocabulary, second language learners are often faced with some common obstacles to language acquisition (para. 1).

In the 21st century, linguistic minorities exist through immigration and adoption of languages not previously used by local speakers. Ever since they developed the ability to speak, children come to adopt the language that their parents speak. Which is called mother tongue or L1. As children grow up, they learn different languages, but sometimes, they tend to mispronounce words, or they mix up our L1 with their L2, or worse, they cannot express themselves properly. Their L1 is what they are used to in speaking; therefore, they end up being tongue-tied when they encounter new words.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the term used to refer to the ability to learn a language other than the L1. L1 is assimilated at a young age while L2 is acquired later on. The L2 learning environment includes everything the language learner hears and sees in the target language. One example is when a person in an environment in which

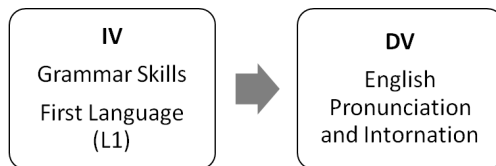
another language is present, and he or she interacts with people using this language.

It may include a wide variety of situations such as exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversations with friends, reading street signs and newspapers, as well as classroom activities, or it may be very sparse, including only language classroom activities and a few books (Bhela, 1999, p. 22).

In human interactions, people come to understand other people's languages, and they begin to learn how to speak them. As they socialize with one another especially in school where English is commonly used, they come across problems with organizing coherent structures when speaking, relying on their L1 structures in the English language, showing a gap between gathering knowledge and producing orally. In cases where the gap increases and becomes more complex to solve, the possibility of L1 interference comes into existence.

As language major teachers, the researchers thought it would be a learning opportunity for them to look into the influence of L1 on L2 among students of the School of Arts, Sciences, and Teacher Education. Since these students come from different places, they vary in speech patterns, accent, and intonation. The researchers were interested to determine whether the students' first language (L1) interfered with their oral production of English, their L2.

Conceptual Framework



The study used the IV-DV framework, where IV is the independent variable, which includes the participants' grammar proficiency and first language (L1), while DV is the dependent variable, which includes the participants' English pronunciation and intonation.

The researchers examined the participants' grammar proficiency by administering a grammar test to them, as well as identified their first language. They determined the extent to which the participant's grammar proficiency and first language interfere with their English pronunciation and intonation.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the L1 interference with learning the English language among selected Teacher Education students. Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What is the profile of the participants in terms of:
 - 1.1 Year Level, and
 - 1.2 First Language (L1)?
2. What is the participants' grammar proficiency level?
3. Is there a significant difference in the participants' grammar proficiency level when grouped according to profile variables?
4. What is the extent to which the participants' L1 interferes with their English along:
 - 4.1 Intonation, and
 - 4.2 Pronunciation?
5. Is there a significant difference in the participants' English intonation and pronunciation proficiency level when grouped according to profile variables?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the participants' grammar proficiency and the extent of their L1 interference and their L2 proficiency?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, the researchers used the quantitative approach. Specifically, they utilized the descriptive-correlation method to determine the extent to which L1 interferes with L2 (English) learning among native speakers of Tagalog, Ilocano, Ibanag, and Itawes. The survey method was also used to collect information about the L2

proficiency of the participants. The correlation method was used to determine the relationship between L1 interference and L2 proficiency of the participants.

Participants of the Study

There were 120 college participants in this study—all from the School of Arts, Sciences, and Teacher Education (SASTE) of St. Paul University Philippines. Purposive sampling was used, that is, the researchers purposively selected SASTE students who speak Ilocano, Itawes, Ibanag, and Tagalog. Among the 120 participants, 35 speak Ilocano, 35 speak Tagalog, 30 speak Itawes, and 20 speak Ibanag.

Instrumentation

The tool for intonation and pronunciation was adopted from Dr. Malana's (2011) dissertation. Thus, it is already standardized. For the grammar proficiency, the English Proficiency Test was prepared by the School of Arts, Sciences, and Teacher Education.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part one focused on the profile of the participants; part two was a grammar test meant to determine the proficiency level of the Ilocano, Ibanag, Tagalog, and Itawes speakers. Moreover, the test contained items aimed at determining the proficiency level of the participants along intonation and pronunciation.

To determine the extent of the participants' L1 interference, an oral test was given. This was to ascertain the participants' ability to read sentences with correct English vowel and consonant sound production. If the sounds were not pronounced correctly, they were marked wrong. On the other hand, the English Proficiency Test consisted of 60 items to test the grammar proficiency of the participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers asked permission from the participants to conduct the study. When approval was obtained, the researchers personally

interviewed and tested the participants using the instruments.

There was one session for data collection and test administration for each participant to give him/her enough time to answer the questionnaire, as well as to ensure the reliability of the data and information gathered. The participants were tested by course and year level. They answered a 60-item test for grammar proficiency. Also, they were given 10 sentences to read—each representing an intonation pattern for a particular kind of sentence. They were also asked to read a passage with critical vowel and consonant sounds, the passage being anonymously written, short, and easy to understand.

To ensure the accuracy of the survey, it was recorded for reference and validation of unclear responses. One researcher facilitated the survey while the other recorded the responses of the participants. The data gathered were checked by the researchers.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants were statistically analyzed. The t-test and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were utilized to determine if there was significant difference in the level of proficiency of the participants and the extent of L1 interference, and significant relationships, respectively. The descriptive interpretation was utilized to determine the extent of interference. Frequency and percentage were also used to describe the profile of the participants. Mean was utilized to determine the level of proficiency and the extent of first language interference.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Participants

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Participants when Grouped According to First Language

First Language	Frequency	Percentage
Ilocano	35	29.17
Itawes	30	25.00
Ibanag	20	16.66
Tagalog	35	29.17
Total	120	100.00

Table 1 shows that 29.17% or 35 of the participants speak Ilocano, whereas 25% or 30 of the participants speak Itawes. Moreover, the data show that 16.66% or 20 of the participants speak Ibanag and that the remaining 29.17% or 35 of the participants speak Tagalog. This further shows that students who speak Ilocano and Tagalog have the highest frequency. This may be because Tagalog and Ilocano are the first and third most-spoken languages in the Philippines, respectively. Ilocano is spoken mostly in the provinces of La Union, Ilocos, and Cagayan Valley. Moreover, Itawes speakers have the second highest frequency, followed by Ibanag speakers.

Proficiency Level of the Participants

Table 2

Grammar Proficiency Level of the Participants According to Year Level

Year Level	Grammar Proficiency				Total
	Below Basic (13-24)	Basic (25-36)	Proficient (37-48)	Advanced (49-60)	
First Year	5 4.17%	13 10.83%	11 9.17%	1 .83%	30 25.00%

(table continues)

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Table 2 (continued)

Second Year	7 5.83%	12 10.00%	10 8.33%	1 .83%	30 25.00%
Third Year	0 .00%	11 9.17%	17 14.17%	2 1.67%	30 25.00%
Fourth Year	0 .00%	12 10.00%	17 14.17%	1 .83%	30 25.00%
Total	12 10.00%	48 40.00%	55 45.83%	5 4.17%	120 100.00%

Based on Table 2, 10.83% or 13 first-year students are at basic proficiency level (25-36) in terms of grammar; 9.17% or 11 first-year students are proficient (37-48), 4.17% or 5 have below basic proficiency (13-24), and .83% or 1 is advanced (49-60). Among the second-year students, 10% or 12 have a basic proficiency, 8.33% or 10 are proficient, 5.83% or 7 are at basic proficiency level, and .83% or 1 is advanced. Among the third-year students, 14.17% or 17 are proficient, 9.17% or 11 have a basic proficiency, 1.67% or 2 are advanced, and none has below basic proficiency. For the fourth-year students, 14.17% or 17 are proficient, 10% or 12 are at basic proficiency level, .83% or 1 is advanced, and none has below basic proficiency.

Among all the participants, the third year have the most number with “advanced” proficiency, followed by the first year, second year, and fourth year with the same frequency. The third year and fourth year have the most number of “proficient” participants, followed by the first year, then the second year. The first-year participants have the most number with “basic” proficiency, followed by the second year and fourth year who scored the same, and then the third year. The second-year participants have the most number in terms of “below basic” proficiency, followed by the first year.

Further, the table reveals that 55 participants are proficient, whereas 48 are at a basic proficiency level. Twelve students have below basic proficiency, and five are advanced. Among all of them, third-year participants are proficient. Generally, most of the participants are proficient in grammar.

Table 3
Grammar Proficiency Level of the Participants According to First Language

First Language	Grammar Proficiency				Total
	Below Basic (13-24)	Basic (25-36)	Proficient (37-48)	Advanced (49-60)	
Ilocano	4 3.33%	13 10.83%	15 12.50%	3 2.50%	35 29.17%
Itawes	1 .83%	13 10.83%	16 13.33%	0 .00%	30 25.00%
Ibanag	3 2.50%	5 4.17%	11 9.17%	1 .83%	20 16.67%
Tagalog	4 3.33%	17 14.17%	13 10.83%	1 .83%	35 29.17%
Total	12 10.00%	48 40.00%	55 45.83%	5 4.17%	120 100.00%

Table 3 reveals that among the Ilocano group, 12.50% or 15 are proficient, 10.83% or 13 have a basic proficiency, 3.33% or 4 are at below basic proficiency level, and 2.50% or 3 are advanced. For the Itawes group, 13.33% or 16 are proficient, 10.83% or 13 have basic proficiency, .83% or 1 participant is at below basic proficiency level, and none is advanced. For the Ibanag group, 9.17% or 11 are proficient, 4.17% or 5 have basic proficiency, 2.50% or 3 are at below basic proficiency level, and .83% or 1 is advanced. For the Tagalog group, 14.17% or 17 have basic proficiency, 10.83% or 13 are proficient, 3.33% or 4 participants are at below basic proficiency level, and .83% or 1 participant is advanced.

Among all the participants, the Ilocano group has the highest frequency for the advanced category, followed equally by the Tagalog and the Ibanag groups; none in the Itawes group is under the advanced category. The Itawes speakers have the highest frequency for “proficient,” followed by the Iloco speakers, the Tagalog, and lastly

the Ibanag. The Tagalog group has the highest frequency for “basic” proficiency, followed equally by the Ilocano and Itawes groups; the Ibanag speakers have the lowest frequency for “proficient.” The Ilocano and Tagalog groups have the highest frequency for “below basic” proficiency, followed by the Ibanag group, and then the Itawes.

Moreover, 55 participants are proficient while 48 participants have basic proficiency. Twelve students are at below basic proficiency level, and five are advanced. More than half of the Ilocano and Itawes speakers are proficient. In general, the majority of the participants are at the proficient level.

Extent to which the First Language Interferes with Learning the English Language

Table 4
Extent of First Language Interference with L2 Intonation According to Year Level

Year Level	Intonation				Total
	Limited Extent (7-8)	Moderate Extent (5-6)	Great Extent (3-4)	Very Great Extent (0-2)	
First Year	0 .00%	16 13.33%	14 11.67%	0 .00%	30 25.00%
Second Year	0 .00%	14 11.67%	15 12.50%	1 .83%	30 25.00%
Third Year	0 .00%	9 7.50%	20 16.67%	1 .83%	30 25.00%
Fourth Year	5 4.17%	11 9.17%	14 11.67%	0 .00%	30 25.00%
Total	5 4.17%	50 41.67%	63 52.50%	2 1.67%	120 100.00%

Table 4 shows that third-year participants have the highest

frequency (16.67%) for “great extent” to which L1 interferes with their L2 intonation, followed by the second year (12.55%), the fourth year and first-year who have the same frequency. It also reveals that first-year students have the highest frequency (13.33%) for “moderate extent,” followed by the second year (11.67%), the fourth year (9.17%), and finally third year (7.50%). Fourth-year participants excel in intonation while most of the third year has a low score. This implies that the third-year students are the greatly interfered in terms of intonation.

Table 5
Extent of First Language Interference with L2 Intonation According to First Language

First Language	Intonation				Total
	Limited Extent (7-8)	Moderate Extent (5-6)	Great Extent (3-4)	Very Great Extent (0-2)	
Ilocano	2 1.67%	11 9.17%	2 16.67%	2 1.67%	35 29.17%
Itawes	1 .83%	15 12.50%	14 11.67%	0 .00%	30 25.00%
Ibanag	2 1.67%	8 6.67%	10 8.33%	0 .00%	20 16.67%
Tagalog	0 .00%	16 13.33%	19 15.83%	0 .00%	35 29.17%
Total	5 4.17%	50 41.67%	63 52.50%	2 1.67%	120 100.00%

Based on Table 5, Ilocano language has the highest frequency (16.67% or 20) for “great extent” to which their L1 interferes with L2 intonation, followed by Tagalog (15.83% or 19), then Itawes (11.67% or 14), and Ibanag (8.33% or 10). It also reveals that the Tagalog language has the highest frequency (13.33% or 16) for “moderate extent,” followed by Itawes (12.50% or 15), then Ilocano (9.17% or

11), and Ibanag (6.67% or 8). Most students did not get items 2, 6, 5, and 4. These sentences should be uttered with a falling intonation but the students uttered otherwise. The data imply that among the participants, the Ilocano and Tagalog speakers are the ones greatly interfered in terms of intonation.

Table 6
Common L2 Intonation Mistakes of the Participants According to First Language

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
Ilocano	28	7	12	5	9	10	20	22	25	19
Itawes	26	5	17	3	8	2	14	19	20	21
Ibanag	19	7	7	10	7	3	10	14	11	10
Tagalog	35	8	15	3	8	6	15	27	22	16
Total	108	27	51	21	32	21	59	82	78	66

Table 6 reveals that for the Ilocano group, most students did not get items 4, 5, and 6. These sentences are “Can you see it, Jose?”, “It’s now an owl, isn’t it?”, “What could it be?”, respectively. The sentence “Can you see it, Jose?” should be said with a falling intonation since it is a direct address. It has a difference with the sentence “Can you see Jose?” The latter should be said with a rising intonation. For the Itawes group, most students did not get items 6, 4, and 2. These sentences are “What could it be?”, “Can you see it, Jose?”, “Is that a giant bird or a plane?” respectively. For the Ibanag group, most students did not get items 6, 2, 3, and 5. These sentences are “What could it be?”, “Is that a giant bird or a plane?”, “It could be an eagle, a hawk or a vulture.”, “It’s now an owl, isn’t it?” respectively. The sentence “Is that a giant bird or a plane?” is an example of a question expressing a choice. The statement receives a non-final intonation. The students said it with a final rising intonation. The sentence “It could be an eagle, a hawk or a vulture.” is an example of a statement giving the word or phrase in series. This kind of sentence always receives the rising intonation except for the last item in the series which receives a glide. For the Tagalog group, most students did not get items 4, 6, 5, and 2. These sentences are “Can you see it, Jose?”, “What could it be?”, “It’s now an owl, isn’t it?”, “Is that a giant bird or a plane?” respectively.

Table 7
Total Score of Participants per Item

Items	Total Score
#1 Look!	106
#2 Is that a giant bird or a plane?	27
#3 It could be an eagle, a hawk, or a vulture	51
#4 Can you see it, Jose?	20
#5 It's not an owl, is it?	32
#6 What could it be?	20
#7 If it comes closer, I'll be able to tell.	55
#8 Is it an endangered species?	83
#9 I really don't know.	78
#10 It's carnivorous, isn't it?	68

Table 7 shows that a great number of the participants got items 1, 8, and 9 correctly. These sentences are "Look!", "Is it an endangered species?", and "I really don't know." respectively. Most students did not get items 4, 6, and 2. These sentences are "Can you see it, Jose?", "What could it be?", and "Is that a giant bird or a plane?" respectively. The sentence "Can you see it, Jose?" should be said with a falling intonation since it is a direct address. It has a difference with the sentence "Can you see Jose?" The latter should be said with a rising intonation.

Meanwhile, the sentence "What could it be?" was not properly said because most of the participants stressed the word "be," uttering it with a rising intonation. The stress should be on the word "it." The sentence "Is that a giant bird or a plane?" is an example of a question expressing a choice. The statement receives a non-final intonation.

Generally, all of the participants performed relatively low in the test on intonation. This may be due to their lack of competence in L2 intonation; they have the tendency to apply the rules of L1 intonation to L2 intonation. This is over-generalization. As described by Richards (1973), over-generalization is the application of a newly learned target-

language rule form or context. In this study, it is the application of the L1 rule to the target language. The fossilization of the participants' first language also contributed immensely to their inability to utter the sentences with proper intonation, which is a linguistic skill indispensable especially in oral communication. Different intonations give different meanings. If intonation is not applied correctly, the intended meaning may change when it reaches the listener or receiver.

Table 8
Extent of First Language Interference with L2 Pronunciation According to Year Level

Year Level	Pronunciation			Total
	Moderate Extent (31-45)	Limited Extent (16-30)	Very Limited Extent (0-15)	
First Year	3 2.50%	26 21.67%	1 .83%	30 25.00%
Second Year	8 6.67%	20 16.67%	2 1.67%	30 25.00%
Third Year	5 4.17%	22 18.33%	3 2.50%	30 25.00%
Fourth Year	2 1.67%	21 17.50%	7 5.83%	30 25.00%
Total	18 15.00%	89 74.17%	13 10.83%	120 100.00%

Based on Table 8, first-year participants have the highest frequency (21.67% or 26) for “limited extent” to which their L1 interferes with their L2 pronunciation, followed by the third-year participants (18.33% or 22), then the fourth year (17.50% or 21), and the second year (16.67% or 20). The data also show that second-year participants have the highest frequency (6.67% or 8) for “moderate extent,” followed by the third year (4.17% or 5), then the first year (2.50% or 3), and lastly the fourth year (1.67% or 2).

When grouped according to year level, the participants whose L1 interfered with their L2 pronunciation the most are the first year. Meanwhile, the participants whose L1 interfered with their L2 pronunciation the least are the fourth year. Items 1, 4, and 9 have the highest number of errors committed by first-year participants. These sounds are “ð” (voiced th) that can be found in words “that,” “them,” “there,” “the,” “enthusiastic,” and “other”; “ʒ” sound that is found in words “person,” “friends,” “is,” “optimism,” “enthusiastic,” “criticize,” and “presence”; and “ɔ” sound that is found in the words “prosperity,” “only,” “other,” “on,” “worry,” “noble,” and “trouble.” Items 1, 4, and 2 have the highest number of errors committed by second-year participants. Similar to the first-year participants, they produced incorrectly the sounds “ð” (voiced th) and “ʒ,” including the sounds “θ” (voiceless th) that is found in words “nothing,” “health,” “something,” “everything,” and “think.” Items 1, 4, and 2 have the highest number of errors committed by third-year participants, committing errors similar to those committed by the second year. Items 1, 4, and 9 have the highest number of errors committed by the fourth-year participants. Like the first-year participants, they mispronounced words containing “ð” (voiced th), “ʒ,” and “ɔ.”

The results show that the participants mispronounced words containing the sounds “ð,” “ʒ,” “ɔ,” and “θ.”

Table 9

Extent of First Language Interference with L2 Pronunciation According to First Language

First Language	Pronunciation			Total
	Moderate Extent (31-45)	Limited Extent (16-30)	Very Limited Extent (0-15)	
Ilocano	5	27	3	35
	4.17%	22.50%	2.50%	29.17%
Itawes	4	24	2	30
	3.33%	20.00%	1.67%	25.00%

(table continues)

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Table 9 (continued)

Ibanag	3 2.50%	16 13.33%	1 .83%	20 16.67%
Tagalog	6 5.00%	22 18.33%	7 5.83%	35 29.17%
Total	18 15.00%	89 74.17%	13 10.83%	120 100.00%

Data in Table 9 reveal that Ilocano language has the highest frequency (22.50 or 27) for “limited extent” to which it interferes with the participants’ L2 pronunciation, followed by Itawes (20.00% or 24), then Tagalog (18.33% or 22), and lastly, Ibanag (13.33% or 16). The data further reveal that the Tagalog language has the highest frequency (5.00 or 6) for “moderate extent” to which it interferes with L2 pronunciation, followed by Ilocano (4.17% or 5), then Itawes (3.33% or 4), and Ibanag (2.50% or 3). The participants’ L1 has limited to a moderate extent to which it interferes with their L2 pronunciation.

Table 10

Common L2 Pronunciation Mistakes of Participants According to First Language

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	#13
Ilocano	177	127	0	142	0	59	4	93	116	93	3	0	36
Itawes	171	81	1	126	0	53	0	86	102	82	0	0	39
Ibanag	96	55	1	26	0	23	0	70	75	55	0	0	38
Tagalog	164	113	1	128	0	32	27	83	109	77	0	0	59

Table 10 shows that items 1, 4, and 2 have the highest number of errors committed by the Ilocano group. These sounds are “ð” (voiced th) and “ʒ”; the sound “θ” (voiceless th) that is found in words “nothing,” “health,” “something,” “everything,” and “think.” Items 1, 4, and 9 have the highest number of errors committed by the Itawes group. These sounds are “ð” (voiced th) that can be found in words “that,” “them,” “there,” “the,” “enthusiastic,” and “other”; “ʒ” sound that is found in words “person,” “friends,” “is,” “optimism,” “enthusiastic,” “criticize,” and “presence”; and “ɔ” sound that is found in the words “prosperity,” “only,” “other,” “on,” “worry,” “noble,” and “trouble.”

Items 1, 9, and 8 have the highest number of errors committed by the Ibanag group. These sounds are “ð” (voiced th). In addition to this are “ɔ” in “prosperity,” “only,” “other,” “on,” “worry,” “noble,” and “trouble”; “i” in “peace,” “meet,” “feel,” “cheerful,” “creature,” and “fear.” Items 1, 4, and 2 have the highest number of errors committed by the Tagalog group. These sounds are “ð” (voiced th) and “3.” In addition to these is the sound “θ” (voiceless th) found in “nothing,” “health,” “something,” “everything,” and “think.”

Item 1 has a percentage of 84.44%, followed by item 2 (62.83%), and item 4 (56.19%). These items have the most number of mistakes committed by the participants. All in all, the participants had difficulty in producing the sounds “ð” (voiced th), “θ” (voiceless th), “3,” “ɔ,” and “i.”

Just as the “U” was sounded like “u” and vice versa, the capital “I” and the small letter “i” were also confused. The schwa sound is also mispronounced in words “about,” “when,” and “can”; “e” (ey) sound instead of “i” in the word “creature.” Apparently, the sounds involved in the test were sounds not mostly found, if not at all found, in the L1 of the students. The absence of the sounds makes it difficult for them to pronounce words in English. Therefore, where the sound is present, the participants did not usually commit error; where the sound is absent, the participants committed the error. This is supported by Malana’s (2011) findings when she looked into the first language interference among selected CSU students.

In addition, the substitutions made by the students to particular sounds mentioned earlier such as “d” for the voiced th “ð,” “t” for voiceless th “θ,” “u” for “U” and vice versa, and “s” for final “st” contributed to the commission of the error. In his Speech Learning Model, Flege (1987, 1995) mentioned an observation to consider in the contrastive analysis of various language groups and their L2 English production. He said that nationalities with a vastly different phonetic inventory from English often find it easier to produce an acceptable phonetic target in the L2 than a nationality whose L1 contains contrasting sounds.

Analysis of Variance on the Grammar Proficiency of Students when Grouped by Profile Variables

This study hypothesized that the first language does not significantly affect the participants' performance in L2 grammar proficiency when grouped according to profile variables. The grammar proficiency of the students when grouped according to year level has a probability value of 0.056, which means that the year level does not make a difference in the grammar performance between the groups of participants. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. Moreover, the proficiency of the participants when grouped according to the first language has a probability of 0.501, which means that L1 does not make a difference in the performance between the groups of the participants. This means that whatever L1 the students speak, this does not affect their grammar proficiency level. This supports Bulusan et al. (2014) in their findings after they measured the grammar proficiency of first-year SASTE students. They found that age or year level does not affect students' grammar proficiency.

Analysis of Variance on the Extent of L1 Interference Among Participants when Grouped by Profile Variables

This study hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the extent of L1 interference with L2 intonation among the participants when grouped by profile variables. However, when grouped according to year level, there is a significant difference in the extent of L1 interference among students in terms of intonation; thus, the researchers rejected the hypothesis. This implies that the year level of the participants affects their L2 intonation. Moreover, the higher the year level, the greater the extent of interference in terms of intonation. There is no related study that confirms or refutes this finding.

On the other hand, when grouped according to first language, there is no significant difference in the extent of L1 interference among students in terms of L2 intonation; hence, the researchers accepted the null hypothesis. This implies that the participants' L1 does not affect their intonation when speaking in English. Moreover, Tagalog

and Ilocano have a great difference from English in terms of intonation based on the findings. However, no related study confirms or refutes this.

Moreover, this study hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the extent of L1 interference with L2 pronunciation among students when grouped by profile variables. The results show that when grouped according to year level, there is no significant difference in the extent of L1 interference among students in terms of pronunciation; thus, the researchers accepted the null hypothesis. This implies that the year level of the participants does not affect their L2 pronunciation. No related study refutes or confirms this discovery.

Conversely, when grouped according to first language, there is a significant difference in the extent of L1 interference among students in terms of L2 pronunciation; hence, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis. This implies that the participants' L1 affects their L2 pronunciation. This may be due to the fact that there are English sounds that are not present in the Ilocano, Tagalog, Itawes, and Ibanag phonology. This supports the findings of Malana (2011). She inferred from the total mean of the Ilocano students (5.85), the Ibanags (6.75), and the Itawes (7.8)—with an over-all total mean of 6.8—that their L1 had greatly interfered with their L2 pronunciation. In addition, this confirms the findings of Kuehn (2015) that interference from a student's L1 is mostly in the form of pronunciation and sentence structure errors.

Significant Difference Between the Grammar Proficiency Level and the Extent of L1 Interference of the Participants

The researchers hypothesized that there is no significant difference between the grammar proficiency level and the extent of L1 interference among the participants. As the results show, there is a significant relationship between L2 grammar proficiency and L2 intonation; therefore, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis. This suggests that the more grammatically proficient a person is in L2, the better he or she speaks with proper L2 intonation. There is no related study that confirms or refutes this finding. Moreover, it

was hypothesized that there is no significant difference between the grammar proficiency level and the extent of L1 interference among the participants. The findings show that there is indeed no significant difference between grammar proficiency level and L2 pronunciation; hence, the researchers accepted the null hypothesis. There is no related research that confirms or refutes this discovery.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was an exploration of grammar proficiency and L1 interference in learning English as L2. The researchers concluded that grammar proficiency in L2 influences correctness in L2 intonation. The higher the year level does not mean that people are better speakers. Also, the absence of certain sounds in L1 causes difficulty in speaking English. Even though Ibanag is a widely spoken language in Cagayan, Ilocano dominates the place. In addition, the participants' year level and L1 do not affect grammar proficiency in L2 by any means. L2 Intonation is solely affected by L1 and not by year level.

Moreover, the first language greatly interferes with L2 pronunciation. Most of the participants could not correctly produce the "3" sound due to their unawareness of the rules of L2 phonetics. Most of the participants could not pronounce words with "θ" (voiceless th) and "ð" (voiced th) because these are not found in the phonology of Ibanag, Itawes, Ilocano, and Tagalog. Almost all of the students could not differentiate whether the sentences are said with a rising or falling intonation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

English teachers may provide activities aimed at raising students' proficiency level in L2 grammar particularly on subject-verb agreement, such as identifying errors, editing erroneous texts, among others.

Other researchers may investigate other correlates of English

language proficiency aside from grammar skills, e.g., L1 strategies for ESL learning like code-switching, language borrowing, and translating.

Also, future researchers may further investigate students' L1 interference with their L2 by giving sequential pictures to determine their ability in telling a story in an organized and logical manner.

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