

## An Error Analysis of Subject-Verb Agreement in GEC102 Students' Sentences: Basis for a Learning Guides

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v6i4.1254>

| Nor-Ain Hassan Alim |

MSU – Lanao National College  
of Arts & Trades, Marawi City,  
Philippines

[norhain.alim@gmail.com](mailto:norhain.alim@gmail.com)



This work is licensed  
under a Creative Commons Attribution-  
ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

### ABSTRACT

The study's objectives were to give a learning guide and assess the respondents' subject-verb mistakes in the sentences. The study specifically aimed to address the following questions: What is the age and sex profile of the respondents? Which of the respondents' sentences include subject-verb errors? And what kind of learning guide is needed? The frequency count and simple percentage were employed in the analysis of the collected data to identify subject-verb mistakes in the sentences and to ascertain the profiles of the respondents. Moreover, the study's respondents were MSU–Lanao National College of Arts and Trades BEED-1A and BSED-1A students enrolled in GEC102 (Purposive Communication) during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year. The findings unveil that the majority of the respondents made mistakes with the sentences: (1) He always go (goes) to church on Sunday, with 79.49% errors; (2) In the morning, Inez drink (drinks) two cups of coffee, with 61.54% errors; and (5) Min Ju and her brother does (do) not talk to each other, with 84.62% errors. The results also imply that they erred in the action verbs' singular and plural forms. It is recalled that an action verb is plural in its root form. Additionally, it becomes singular when -s or -es is added to the verb. On the other hand, few of the respondents made a mistake on sentence (8) "The police is (are) coming right now," with 28.21% errors. This may indicate that most of them were proficient in using the linking verbs. The findings showed that even if the majority of respondents made mistakes in just three (3) out of ten (10) sentences, it was still advised to give the respondents a learning guide.

### KEYWORDS

Error; subject-verb; learning guide

### INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a system of rules governing both spoken and written versions of a language. Grammar rules determine many aspects of a language, such as what order words are placed in a sentence; subject-verb agreement; tenses (past, present, future, etc.); and more. Grammar is used in communication in order to maximize clarity and effectiveness (Stephens, 2023). Grammatical errors are parts of a text that do not follow standard grammar rules. Some examples include errors involving parts of speech, word order, subject/verb agreement, and verb tense consistency (Calderwood, 2023).

In the study of Pandapatan (2020) entitled Analysis of the Subject-Verb Agreement Ability among Indonesian English Major Students as EFL Learners, it reveals that a lot of students commit mistakes in choosing the right verb that agrees to the subject. This finding implies interference of first language and second language as parcel in mastering the

subject-verb agreement which results to struggle and confusion among the learners. Lack of emphasis on grammar practice in writing is also a reason in applying the rules especially the basics. Moreover, cultural difference is a barrier in interpreting the sentences wherein the learners' vocabulary is limited. Suggested instructional strategy is a regular practice of the rules in the form of drill.

Proficiency in subject-verb agreement is indicative of one's grammatical competence. According to Khan (2025), subject-verb agreement is more than just a grammar rule; it is essential for clear communication. When subjects and verbs match correctly, the message is easy to understand. Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cause confusion. For example, a business proposal with grammatical errors can make the whole document seem unprofessional and raise doubts about the writer's expertise. Understanding subject-verb agreement also builds confidence in writing and speaking. It helps people express their ideas clearly. In today's digital world, clarity is crucial—an incorrect verb form can weaken even strong arguments.

The researcher had noticed that some college students have grammatical errors in their sentences, especially subject-verb agreement, which can affect the clarity of the statement. In constructing a sentence, the subject must agree with its verb to convey a clear message. Having proper knowledge of the rules of subject-verb agreement is significant. It is therefore that the researcher conducted the research to analyze the subject-verb errors of the respondents in the sentences and to provide a learning guide that would support enhancing their knowledge on the rules of subject-verb agreement.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

One of the key components of English grammar is the subject-verb agreement. This work is supported by citations to these facts. When writing a paper, it is helpful to keep in mind that verbs must always agree with the subject in both number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, or third). This type of agreement helps to ensure that a paper will be accurate, clear, and stylistically correct (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2025). The subject of a sentence and its verb must always agree in number (one, two) and person (first, second, third). A lack of agreement can drastically change the meaning of the sentence. Keeping the subjects and verbs in agreement can be as easy as identifying the subject wherever it is located, or as tricky as remembering a few rules (Agnes, 2023).

In the study of Pangga et al. (n.d.), they investigated sorts of error on subject-verb agreement encountered in theses, the error frequency of subject-verb agreement, and the causes of errors of subject-verb agreement. Written language production is the major requirement of a thesis writing. However, sentence types necessarily become the starting points of determination to the correct subject-verb agreement. The research applied a descriptive method with qualitative approach. The data of this research were collected from the corpus of 6 theses submitted to English Language Study Program in Academic Year 2017/2018. The data were manually sorted out by separating subject-verb agreement errors from other types of error. The result showed that there are 6 major forms of subject-verb agreement which comprised 170 errors. Of 6 forms, "3<sup>rd</sup> singular subject" was the most frequent encountered in theses. In contrast, "double subject" was the least frequent error form. The errors were caused by "interlingual errors" and "intralingual errors."

Grammatical errors have its roots in these following theories, as cited in the following: (1) The Standard Theory: students make errors because they do not fully comprehend the grammatical patterns of English, as well as the idiomatic expressions and the conventions of usage. Students simply lack knowledge; (2) The L1-Interference Theory: multilingual writers commit errors when they over-generalize the grammatical patterns of their native

language (L1) to English. Similarly, this theory suggests that students will transfer the grammatical patterns of native dialects of English into their school writing; (3) The Speech-Based Theory: many students write in ways that are closely modelled on the way they talk or the way people around them talk. Standard written English differs substantially from speech, which is fragmentary and halting, and which is aided by para-language and contextual clues; (4) The “Competence versus Performance” Theory: students commit many errors that they know how to identify and fix. Their performance in the writing task misrepresents their actual competence – their true knowledge of the language. Errors emerge when writers are tired or distracted, when they simply fail to invest enough time, or even when they do not know how to use their word processing software effectively. Other times, the brain hiccups. This theory is usually attributed to the early work of Noam Chomsky; and (5) The Complex Ideas Theory: students who otherwise write grammatically clean prose make more errors and write more clumsily when they are asked to write about complex ideas or use academic registers that they can not fully control. The complexity of the writing task overloads their ability to process syntax (Grammarteaching, 2013).

### RESEARCH METHODS

The researcher used the descriptive-survey research method. A descriptive survey is suitable whenever the subjects vary among themselves and one is interested to know the extent to which different conditions and situations are obtained among these subjects. This survey signifies the gathering of data regarding the present conditions (Paler-Calmorin, 2016). A structured questionnaire from ESLlibrary.com Grammar Practice Worksheets was the primary tool used in gathering data. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part contained the profile of the respondents. The second part dealt with the identification of subject-verb errors in the sentences.

The study's objectives were to develop a learning guide and to assess the respondents' subject-verb agreement errors in sentences. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the respondents' age and sex profile, identify sentences containing subject-verb errors, and determine the type of learning guide needed. Frequency count and simple percentage were employed in analyzing the collected data, as these statistical techniques are commonly used in descriptive studies to summarize respondent characteristics and error distribution (Nassaji, 2015; Pandapatan, 2020). Moreover, the respondents of the study were BEED-1A and BSED-1A students of MSU–Lanao National College of Arts and Trades enrolled in GEC102 (Purposive Communication) during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Respondents of the Study

<b>Course</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
BEED – I	18
BSED – II	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>

The respondents were the GEC102 (Purposive Communication) BEED-1A and BSED-1A students of MSU–Lanao National College of Arts and Trades during the first semester, academic year 2025–2026. Table 1 shows the total number of respondents from each section. Purposive communication is about writing, speaking, and presenting to different

audiences for various purposes. It equips students with the tools needed for critical evaluation and decoding of various texts, symbols, and gestures, thereby enhancing their ability to convey messages effectively (Dziak, 2022).

**Table 2.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17 – 18 years old	10	25.64
19 – 20 years old	24	61.54
21 years old and above	5	12.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 displays that 10 or 25.64%, of the respondents were in the age bracket of 17–18 years old; 24 or 61.54%, were in the age bracket of 19–20 years old; and five (5), or 12.82%, were 21 years old and above. The finding reveals that majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 19–20 years old. During this stage of life, young adults further develop their critical thinking skills, form relationships based on shared values and belief systems, modify their risk taking behaviors and make decisions based on future consequences (Seedlingmentors, 2022).

**Table 3.** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	10	25.64
Female	29	74.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 confirms that 10 or 25.64%, of the respondents were males and 29 or 74.36%, were females. The finding shows that the majority of the respondents were females. No wonder that, according to the report of Brago (2023), in terms of education, at age 16, girls are more likely to be on track with their schooling than boys (85 percent of girls vs. 75 percent of boys).

**Table 4.** Respondents' Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Sentences	Errors	Percentage
1. He always go (goes) to church on Sunday.	31	79.49
2. In the morning, Inez drink (drinks) two cups of coffee.	24	61.54
3. The professors at this college is (are) nice, but they give us too much homework	19	48.72
4. One of my teachers were (was) sick yesterday.	14	35.90
5. Min Ju and her brother does (do) not talk to each other.	33	84.62
6. Economics were (was) my major when I was in college.	16	41.03
7. Every day offer (offers) a chance to learn something new.	18	46.15
8. The police is (are) coming right now.	11	28.21
9. Farid have (has) four brothers and one sister.	17	43.59
10. In the hot summer weather, 12 miles are (is) too long to run.	18	46.15

Table 4 discloses the respondents' errors in subject-verb agreement in every sentence. In the following sentences: (1) He always go (goes) to church on Sunday, 31 or 79.49% of the respondents committed errors; (2) In the morning, Inez drink (drinks) two cups of coffee, 24 or 61.54% errors; (3) The professors at this college is (are) nice, but they give us too much homework, 19 or 48.72% errors; (4) One of my teachers were (was) sick yesterday, 14 or 35.90% errors; (5) Min Ju and her brother does (do) not talk to each other,

33 or 84.62% errors; (6) Economics were (was) my major when I was in college, 16 or 41.03% errors; (7) Every day offer (offers) a chance to learn something new, 18 or 46.15% errors; (8) The police is (are) coming right now, 11 or 28.21% errors; (9) Farid have (has) four brothers and one sister, 17 or 43.59% errors; and (10) In the hot summer weather, 12 miles are (is) too long to run, 18 or 46.15% of them committed errors.

The findings unveil that the majority of the respondents made mistakes with the sentences: (1) He always go (goes) to church on Sunday, with 79.49% errors; (2) In the morning, Inez drink (drinks) two cups of coffee, with 61.54% errors; and (5) Min Ju and her brother does (do) not talk to each other, with 84.62% errors. The results also imply that they erred in the action verbs' singular and plural forms. It is recalled that an action verb is plural in its root form. Additionally, it becomes singular when -s or -es is added to the verb. On the other hand, few of the respondents made a mistake on sentence (8) "The police is (are) coming right now," with 28.21% errors. This may indicate that most of them were proficient in using the linking verbs.

Furthermore, many of the respondents made mistakes in sentences (3) The professors at this college is (are) nice, but they give us too much homework, with 48.72 errors; and (4) One of my teachers were (was) sick yesterday, with 35.90 errors. It appears that the respondents were unable to recognize the subject phrase's basic topic. In sentences (6) Economics were (was) my major when I was in college, with 41.03 errors; and (10) In the hot summer weather, 12 miles are (is) too long to run, with 46.15 errors, some also made mistakes. This means that the respondents forgot that nouns in plural form require singular verb and measures take singular verb. Moreover, students in GEC102 are required to review subject-verb agreement. Even though the majority of them only committed mistakes in three out of ten sentences, many of them did so in other sentences. This suggests that the responders lack sufficient knowledge of the fundamentals of English grammar. Giving them a learning guide is advised so they may go over the subject-verb rules.

Grammatical errors have their roots in (1) *the Standard Theory*, which states that students make errors because they do not fully comprehend the grammatical patterns of English, as well as the idiomatic expressions and the conventions of usage. Students simply lack knowledge; and in (2) *the "Competence versus Performance" theory* states students commit many errors that they know how to identify and fix. Their performance in the writing task misrepresents their actual competence—their true knowledge of the language. Errors emerge when writers are tired or distracted, when they simply fail to invest enough time, or even when they do not know how to use their word processing software effectively. Other times, the brain hiccups. This theory is usually attributed to the early work of Noam Chomsky (Grammarteaching, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings showed that even if the majority of respondents made mistakes in just three (3) out of ten (10) sentences, it was still advised to give the respondents a learning guide. This is to improve and fix their subject-verb mistakes. It is mentioned that college students ought to understand the fundamentals of English grammar. Subject-verb agreement is just as important as other grammatical rules since without it, the sentence would make an ambiguous statement that could lead to misunderstandings or inaccurate information. The fundamental rule is that the verb and subject must agree. The verb must be singular if the subject is singular. Similarly, the verb must be plural if the subject is plural.

Nonetheless, the following are suggested and recommended: (1) constant composition and reading stories should be done by the students as a study habit. Constant practice

would improve skills in a certain thing; (2) English teachers should develop the grammatical skills of the students. Inclusion of journal writing or diary can improve composition skills and English vocabulary of the students. Oral sentence construction should be done in English class as a drill before the lesson proper starts, and (3) for the curriculum maker, the English grammar subject should be given more time than other subjects. Students' textbooks and teachers' guides should go hand-in-hand for a more effective learning process. Modules and self-learning kits may be designed to address errors in grammar.

## REFERENCES

- Agnes Scott College (2023). Subject-Verb Agreement. <https://www.agnesscott.edu/center-for-writing-and-speaking/handouts/subject-verb-agreement.html>
- Brago, P. I. (2023). Study shows girls fare better than boys in school. Philstar Global. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/10/12/2303071/study-shows-girls-fare-better-boys-school>
- Calderwood, B. (2023). *Grammatical errors: Overview & examples*. Study.com. <https://study.com/learn/lesson/grammatical-errors-overview-examples-common-mistakes.html>
- Dziak, M. (2022). *Purposive communication*. EBSCO Research Starters. EBSCO Information Services. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/communication-and-mass-media/purposive-communication>
- ESL Library. (2020). *Subject-verb agreement grammar practice worksheets*. <https://esllibrary.com>
- Grammarteaching. (2013). *Where do errors come from?* <https://grammarteaching.wordpress.com/2013/04/01/where-do-errors-come-from/>
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania. (2025). Subject-verb agreement. <https://www.iup.edu/writingcenter/writing-resources/grammar/subject-verb-agreement.html>
- Khan, M. (2025). *Subject-verb agreement*. Efficient English Scholar. <https://www.efficientenglishscholar.com/subject-verb-agreement/>
- Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>
- Pandapatan, A. (2020). Analysis of the subject-verb agreement ability among Indonesian English major students as EFL learners. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 5(2), 127–143. <https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v5i2.8135>
- Pangga, W., Sudarsono, & Bunau, E. (2019). An error analysis on subject-verb agreement encountered in theses. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa*, 8(9), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.26418/jppk.v8i9.35259>
- Paler-Calmorin, L., & Calmorin, M. A. (2007). *Research methods and thesis writing* (2nd ed.). Rex Book Store.
- Seedling Mentors. (2022). *Developmental characteristics of nineteen to twenty-one years old*. <https://www.seedlingmentors.org/developmental-characteristics-of-nineteen-to-twenty-one-year-olds-young-adults/>
- Seedling Mentors. (2022). *Developmental characteristics of nineteen to twenty-one years old*. <https://www.seedlingmentors.org/developmental-characteristics-of-nineteen-to-twenty-one-year-olds-young-adults/>