Exploring Cross-linguistic Influence
from L1 Tagalog to L2 English in Article Use

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the use of English articles among L1 Tagalog-speaking learners within the framework of cross-linguistic influence. The study employs a descriptive research approach using content analysis to explore the nature of errors in depth. Two stages of writing tasks were administered to to purposively sampled 42 pre-service teachers aged 16–18 over 15 weeks. Grounded in error analysis, the findings revealed that addition errors were most prevalent, explained through stimulated recall interviews. These results provided reflective insights into the learners' use of the L1 feature instead of the target language. The study also identified factors such as translation, overgeneralization of rules, misunderstanding of countability, and issues with specificity and definiteness. These findings shed light on the relevance of error analysis and cross-linguistic influence in understanding linguistic challenges, informing targeted instruction, and promoting focused practice on article usage. By addressing these issues, educators can enhance learners' English proficiency and foster culturally responsive language instruction in diverse classrooms.

Keywords: English articles, cross-linguistic influence, error analysis, Tagalog

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Introduction

With the need to be equipped with pedagogical practices and strategies, pre-service teachers are gradually prepared to possess competent skills to succeed in varied environments. As global literacy and communicative competence gain importance, future English teachers need to possess a thorough understanding of the English language and insights into the challenges presented by diverse classrooms where each learner brings unique linguistic backgrounds, experiences, and learning needs. Linguistic challenges such as those encountered in achieving grammatical competence pose significant challenges for pre-service teachers in English. It is a practical demand that English educators be proficient with the use of English language, as this directly influences how they will handle the complexities of teaching article use in their future classrooms.

Thus, error analysis is critical for understanding how language learners acquire, use, and encounter challenges with linguistic structures. While errors in structures like articles may seem minor compared to other challenges, they have far-reaching effects on overall communicative competence. Mohammadi (2021) reported that article usage is one of the common errors in English writing. Some students are found to exhibit difficulty expressing their ideas in formal English. Muller and Schmid (2023) indicated that direct teaching of article rules and communicative tasks greatly enhances learners' precision in the use of the language. These indicate that correcting article errors can improve grammatical skills, thus contributing to achieving communicative competence.

Khejeri et al. (2022) claimed that difficulties with English article usage identify the individual as a non-native speaker and an indicator of poor command of the language. Hence, the problem with the English article indicates inadequate mastery of the language, affecting both spoken and written English. Recent studies documenting the impact of L1 on L2 communication highlight how learners apply linguistic structures from their L1, frequently leading to errors due to structural differences. Heritage and Monte (2022) pointed out that the considerable structural differences between L1 and L2 signify the extent of challenges in learning the second language. Errors can either serve as a source of learning or cause difficulty among learners (Chen, 2022); hence, when the learners overproduce or underproduce certain grammatical structures, they reflect the similarities or incongruence between the native language and the L2. Pre-service teachers who encounter challenges similar to those of second language learners may find these beneficial for L2 English instruction.

As pre-service teachers aim to enhance their English proficiency, they may discover that mastery of specific grammatical structures, such as articles, is essential in achieving fluency and effective communication. Wang (2021) highlighted a significant connection between English proficiency and teaching effectiveness. Evidently, teachers with strong English proficiency are more adept at teaching lessons and engaging students effectively. Hence, the current study explores the possible cross-linguistic influence of L1 Tagalog on L2 English article use. The study intends to discover and analyze patterns of errors in the use of English articles. Furthermore, the study uses stimulated recall to acquire an understanding of the learners' decision-making process and uncover the possible causes of errors in the use of the article. Understanding how these errors occur allows educators to effectively assist students in

navigating these obstacles through the proper use of English articles, ultimately improving their English skills.

Literature Review

Southeast Asia is a highly diverse region with 11 independent nations and more than 1,200 languages spoken in the area. The need to balance English as an international language with national and local languages in the region is evident in varying language policies and practices among the countries constituting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Kosonen, 2017). In ASEAN, English has evolved into a lingua franca, and its use has been nativized in some countries and continues to spread in others. English has been key in developing the ASEAN identity (Hashim & Leitner, 2021).

English is considered a second language and one of the official languages in the Philippines, in addition to Filipino. It is also taught in the entire curriculum, from elementary through college and graduate levels. In the teacher education program at the tertiary level, pre-service teachers in English are gradually prepared to become proficient in English, as they are responsible for shaping the language skills of future generations. However, Alaga-Acosta (2022) pointed out that state universities and colleges in the Philippines produce thousands of teacher education graduates, including future teachers with communication difficulties. This is in consonance with Torreces and Brillantes (2022) who found that English proficiency among pre-service English teachers is at the beginning and early intermediate levels. Moreover, grammatical error is considered a critical difficulty among Filipinos, which demonstrated a broader decline in language skills

(Gomez, 2017; Saavedra, 2020). Addressing these challenges enables future teachers to grasp the linguistic knowledge crucial for quality instruction. However, achieving this proficiency proves difficult, particularly for Filipino speakers who often struggle with correctly using English due to their distinct linguistic background. A significant challenge is that features of local languages, including articles, lack direct grammatical structures in English. This creates linguistic challenges among learners as they must grasp new linguistic concepts.

Cross-linguistic Influence

Linguistic challenges, such as errors in English articles, happen when learners rely on familiar linguistic structures of their native language. This phenomenon is referred to as cross-linguistic influence (CLI). Cross-linguistic influence, often referred to as language transfer, is the influence of one's knowledge of a language in understanding another (Chen, 2022). Several studies claim the presence of transfer as learners attempt to approximate their production in the target language.

Acquisition of English Article

In ASEAN, where English is used alongside a landscape of diverse languages of its nations, it is noteworthy to investigate how differences between linguistic features of L1 and L2 English could result in challenges in learnability. In the use of English articles, specifically, Crosthwaite (2016) cited multiple studies within the Asian context where the article-less systems of L1 Mandarin Chinese, Korean, and Thai appeared to have contributed to the overuse of the definite article in L2 English. In the Philippine context, Mabuan (2015) investigated blog posts of 88 Filipino learners of English and discovered

that errors in article usage were one among the pervasive grammatical errors. Crosthwaite and Choy (2016) explored the use of L2 English articles among Filipino speakers, focusing on how they mark specificity in L2 English. The study revealed that Filipino English learners considered zero articles to be the most correct and definite articles to be the least. It also shows that they need some help with article use beginning at the pre-intermediate level but find more incredible difficulty using definite articles in general situations. Such investigations are few. There is a lack of studies done locally on L1-L2 transfer. Barrios and Bernardo (2012) contribute to this gap by exploring the case marking of L1 Chabacano and L1 Cebuano learners of L2 Filipino. The study shows that the actancy structure affects how easily learners acquire case-marking rules. With the limited literature on English articles among Filipino learners, this study is relevant in pointing out that similarities or differences between the mother tongue and the target language may affect the acquisition of grammatical items among learners.

The Article System in Tagalog and English

The article system is an essential area of grammar in Tagalog and English, influencing how meaning is constructed and conveyed. English, considered a stereotypical 'article' language with definite, indefinite, and zero articles, is generally used based on whether the object referent is a singular definite, singular indefinite, plural, or mass noun (Crosthwaite & Choy, 2016). In Tagalog, the article is combined with nouns to denote the type of reference formed, clarifying its meaning in context. Generally, the articles state the grammatical specificity of the noun, helping to differentiate between specific and non-specific references. In

this context, they consider Tagalog a language that uses articles in the L1 feature, with *ang* marker as a definite article. The *ng* and *sa* markers can indicate certainty dependent on whether the intended referent is topical or non-topical.

Recent studies on the influence of L1 have identified significant challenges in learning L2 grammar, which parallel the difficulties other ASEAN countries face. Some studies acknowledge the general influence of L1, such as Alaga-Acosta (2022) and Torres and Brillantes (2022), on Filipino learner's grammar proficiency. However, insufficient research focuses on the specific transfer issues related to Tagalog. Although there is a growing body of work on error analysis and cross-linguistic influence, studies have not adequately addressed the distinct grammatical features of L1 Tagalog, especially in the use of articles. There is a limited exploration of how cross-linguistic influence from L1 Tagalog shapes the learners' understanding and use of articles. This gap suggests a need for more in-depth studies that consider the cross-linguistic influence in the acquisition of English grammar among Filipino learners, mainly focusing on how the differences in the L1 and L2 article systems may affect the learning process.

Frameworks of the Study

This study is anchored on an error analysis framework to identify the errors in article use among L1 Tagalog pre-service teachers. Error analysis carefully examines, categorizes, and derives interpretations from the identified errors. Stimulated recall complements the error analysis framework to validate the occurrence of article errors and provide qualitative explanations, offering introspective perspectives on the

possible causes of errors. This allows learners to reflect on their errors, further explaining them. Furthermore, the study considers cross-linguistic influence, highlighting how learners' L1 influences and interacts with their second language. This helps understand how structural differences between L1 Tagalog and English contribute to errors in using English articles. This analysis of errors through the lens of cross-linguistic influence illustrates how the learners' L1 shapes their acquisition of a language (Chen, 2022). By integrating these elements, the study proposes that errors committed by pre-service teachers in written compositions shed light on the types of errors in using English articles and provide insights for their occurrences as they are linked to how the learners' L1 interacts in the acquisition of English articles.

Research Questions

The study is mainly guided by an error analysis framework to identify and categorize the written language output of pre-service teachers. Combined with stimulated recall, it offers insights to clarify why specific errors occur. These errors were analyzed in relation to the learners' L1 structures to identify patterns of cross-linguistic influence. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What errors in English articles do pre-service teachers commit in their written compositions?

2. What factors contribute to the occurrence of errors in the use of English articles?

Participants

The participants were 42 pre-service Tagalog teachers aged 16–18, 9 males and 33 females selected through purposive sampling. They had ten years of English language exposure from pre-elementary to high school and are native Tagalog speakers with English as their second language. Although the sample is small, it reflects various areas in the Philippines where Tagalog is the first language and English is a second language. Moreover, they are currently in a critical transitional stage of becoming pre-service teachers, linking their learning difficulties to their future roles as educators. The main objective of the study is exploratory; therefore, it requires a smaller, more manageable sample size for a thorough examination of error types and patterns (Subedi, 2021).

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design appropriate for analyzing written language data that focuses on specific language phenomena such as errors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Though the study is qualitative, the primary goal is to identify and categorize data instead of generating themes. Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) noted that content analysis does not consistently produce themes and may conclude at the category level. The participants in the study were tasked to complete two writing tasks on given topics: "Life without _____" and "What makes me happy." Both topics encourage them to describe objects, people, or concepts that require the article, making them ideal for observing how these participants handle the article system in different contexts.

Table 1

Taxonomy of Errors Adapted from Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982)

Category	Examples	Explanation
Omission	The sun is (*the*) center of the solar system.	The article *the* is missing in the sentence.
	I saw (*a*) movie last night.	The article *a* is omitted.
Addition	She likes *the* ice cream.	There is an addition of article *a/the* in the sentences.
	I need *a* advice.	
Misformation	He gave *a* orange.	Use of incorrect article *a* instead of *an*.
Misordering	You live happy and contented *a* life.	The article *a* is incorrectly placed.

Additionally, 10-20-minute stimulated recall interviews were conducted among ten randomly selected participants to understand their article choices and potential causes of errors in the written compositions. The stimulated recall was done immediately after the writing task to capture the participants' responses. They were tasked to reflect and verbalize their thoughts to generate data revealing their understanding or misunderstanding of using English articles. Due to the limited number of participants in the stimulated recall, this second part of the methodology elicited individual reflections about their thoughts as they were writing. Thus, this part was largely exploratory and did not further identify prominent themes. The researchers recorded the participants' responses and, from there, came up with five common factors that contribute to errors in article usage.

Despite the absence of an ethics approval code at the time of the study, ethical standards were followed. The participants were informed of the purpose, risks, and benefits of their participation in the study and were given the right to withdraw at any point at no disadvantage to them. The researchers also sought permission from the school principal and advisers to conduct the study. Additionally, all data, including the written tasks at both stages, were anonymized to protect the participants' identities and to maintain confidentiality.

Data were reviewed several times to identify deviant structures based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's surface structure taxonomy.

This taxonomy categorizes errors into addition, omission, misformation, and misordering. Addition errors occur when learners include unnecessary elements in their sentences. Omission error involves the absence of necessary components. Misformation errors happen when learners use incorrect forms. Lastly, the misordering error occurs when learners arrange words incorrectly in a sentence. The frequency of each error type was recorded, and the results from both writing stages were tabulated, compared, and evaluated. Refer to Table 1 for the different types of errors, sample sentences for each type of error, and causes of errors.

Findings

Analyzing pre-service Tagalog teachers' written compositions reveals different errors in English articles.

Table 2

Distribution of Surface Structure Taxonomy of Errors

Types of Errors	Stage 1 Writing task Frequency	Percentage	Stage 2 Writing task Frequency	Percentage
Addition	80	65.57%	58	65.91%
Omission	32	26.23%	21	23.86%
Misformation	8	6.56%	8	9.09%
Misordering	2	1.64%	1	1.14%
Total	122	100%	88	100%

Table 2 presents error distribution during two writing stages at 15-week intervals. It shows that addition errors occur frequently across both stages, while omission errors remain relatively consistent. Misordering and misformation have minimal changes, with lower percentages and slight variations.

Table 3

Different Types of Errors

Addition Error

*I wonder what is a life without these things

*we could measure the meaning of the true happiness

*when we have a friends, we know and learn good or bad thing

Omission Error

*without ? friend

*using ? gadget is part of our daily lives

*? best friend is a person

Misformation Error

* if you don't feel a love, there's big part of your life that is missing

*they wanted to get good jobs to fulfil a needs of their families

*food is a basic need of a people

Misordering Error

*you live happy and contented a life

*I wonder what is a life is without these things

*happiness is not only the way

Addition errors occur most frequently in both stages, while misordering is the least frequent. The addition error accounts for over half of all errors in both stages. This error occurred when students incorrectly used definite and indefinite articles instead of zero articles. On the other hand, omission errors comprise a substantial portion of the errors and rank second among the most frequent errors. The misformation error is the least common in both stages. Misformation errors generally occur when learners express their intentions in rapid sentences, leading to this error.

Factors that Contribute to Errors in Article Usage

These factors present a significant influence on the underlying causes of errors in English articles among pre-service Tagalog teachers:

Influence from L1 Tagalog

Pre-service Tagalog teachers find it difficult to grasp the concept of English articles, often omitting them or misusing 'a', 'an', and 'the' possibly due to L1 influence. This difficulty likely arises because Tagalog lacks the distinction between definite and indefinite articles. Further, the stimulated recall data reveals that translation

in L1 is prevalent among participants, with seven out of ten (70%) Tagalog learners relying on their native language in English writing. Sample recall episodes illustrate this tendency, showing that they often literally translate the intended meaning of articles from Tagalog to English.

Student 3

R: When you are writing, how do you compose in English?

SN3:   *Nagsusulat po muna ako ng Tagalog saka ko po tina-translate sa English.*

'I write in Tagalog first, then I translate to English.'

R: If you use translation in your writing, what is the article *the* here in your essay?

SN3:   *Parang ang <u>the</u> ay <u>ang</u>.*

'<u>*The*</u> is like <u>*ang*</u>.'

Most addition errors involve the insertion of an article where Ø article should be used. For instance, in student 10's written output, '*ang buhay*' is translated for 'a life,' demonstrating a lack of awareness of when to use the article.

Overgeneralization of Rules

The learners also showed overapplication of the rules regarding article use. They use '*the*' before all singular nouns, even in contexts in which articles are unnecessary.

SN 30 *we are all covered with <u>the</u> fear.*
SN 10 *We could measure the meaning of <u>the</u> true happiness.*

Misunderstanding of Countability

Learners also struggle with the concept of countable and uncountable nouns, resulting in errors. Cases where the definite article *the* is used before the noun phrases instead of Ø article:

SN35 *it lets you hear the melody of <u>the</u> nature*
SN38 *education is important for people from all <u>the</u> walks of life*

Specificity and Definiteness

Learners find it challenging to determine when to use definite articles (e.g. '*the*' for specific references versus indefinite articles). This reflects a transfer error made by unnecessarily adding articles to most noun phrases in their writing. Below are some examples:

SN4   *when we have <u>a</u> friends*
SN24 *<u>a</u> <u>parents</u> that will give you advices about life*

The error *a parents who will support your needs* shows the addition of article *a* instead of Ø article. In English, article *a* is not used with plural countable nouns when referring to specific or general nouns. However, the learner incorrectly adds article *a*, treating the plural noun as indefinite. Crosthwaite and Choy (2016) declared that Tagalog uses the *ang* marker for non-definite generic reference. Most learners struggled to correctly use *a* or *an* correctly, showing difficulty understanding indefiniteness. This is likely because the Tagalog markers *ang, ng,* and *sa* can signal both definiteness or indefiniteness depending on the context. Furthermore, the confusion with article *a* may be because of translation strategy. For example, in student 30's translation, 'We are all covered with the fear,' the student directly translated

from Tagalog, which led to awkward phrasing. Despite the small sample size and its focus on written errors among L1 Tagalog learners, which restricts the generalizability of the results, these factors call for a more in-depth analysis within the scope of this exploratory study. Furthermore, the findings also provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions to address this problem.

Discussion

Distribution of Surface Structure Taxonomy of Errors and Different Types of Errors

The error distribution remained stable after 15 weeks, suggesting that L1 influence continued and affected learners' use of articles. The findings highlight the prevalence of addition error among preservice teachers adding articles in their written compositions even when unnecessary. Omission error accounts for a significant portion of errors and is relatively consistent across both stages. Misformation and misordering errors are relatively rare, suggesting that learners have a better grasp of forming words and constructing sentences. The total errors indicate that both groups have significant errors, highlighting ongoing challenges in achieving proficiency in English writing, especially in using articles. Misformation errors suggest gaps in learners' understanding of word structure. Thus, instruction should focus on teaching article rules, such as word formation exercises to help pre-service teachers use articles correctly in different contexts. Learners can be given L2 instruction, such as activities on rearranging words to form coherent and grammatically correct structures and syntactic drills to reinforce the use of correct articles. Providing corrective feedback during drills can also help learners reinforce

the information acquired. They may also be exposed to contextualized language practice (Khejeri et al., 2022). All these can help learners internalize the correct use of grammatical items in their compositions. Based on the findings, the written composition of pre-service Tagalog teachers suggests a potential misunderstanding of grammatical structures. Without targeted instruction or intervention during this period, learners may find it difficult to fully grasp the correct use of articles.

Pre-service teachers' English writing demonstrates the influence of L1 Tagalog in their use of articles in their written compositions. Chaudhary and Zahrani (2020) noted that the occurrence of error at the word level identified the use of articles as one of the frequently occurring errors in English writing. One may likely acquire the structure of the target language depending on resemblances and differences of L1 with the target language (Heritage & Montle, 2022). This highlights the potential influence of L1 in acquiring grammatical items like articles. This persistence emphasizes the need to address these linguistic challenges in acquiring English articles early on.

Factors that Contribute to Errors in Article Usage

Error analysis of pre-service teachers' English writing suggests the influence of L1 Tagalog as a significant element that influences errors in article usage. Puspita and Suswanto (2023) noted that EFL/ESL learners depend on their knowledge when learning a new language. Many errors occur because learners assume that the two languages are similar, leading to errors in their first language. Park (2023) pointed out that when L1 characteristics are present but differ structurally in L2, they pose challenges for

learners, as seen in pre-service Tagalog teachers. The regular inclusion of articles in noun phrases suggests cross-linguistic influence, as learners tend to apply the L1 characteristic instead of the target language. Additionally, the reflective information shows that they depend on the L1 when writing in English, frequently leading to mistakes. Under these conditions, students must recognize their L1 and L2 distinctions. Gaining insight into the structural distinctions between L1 and L2 would certainly enhance the proficiency and precision in the target language.

Implications of the Study

The findings strengthen our understanding of English article usage patterns and tendencies among Tagalog learners in the Philippines, which contribute valuable insights in addressing similar linguistic challenges across the ASEAN. The findings derived from the study enable teachers to develop more focused lessons on grammar items and to create exercises and activities addressing challenges students frequently encounter with English articles. Additionally, the study impacts the improvement of instructional materials and refinement of assessment tools in teaching English, focusing on areas where L2 learners typically encounter difficulties. This ensures a more tailored, supportive, and effective teaching and learning experience for pre-service teachers and learners across the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to investigate the possibility of crosslinguistic influence in the written compositions of L1 Tagalog pre-service teachers, focusing on specific language issues that arise from differences in both languages. It sought to understand the overproduction of articles, a phenomenon prevalent in pre-service teachers' writing, by analyzing written language output and reflective data. The analysis identified omission, misordering, and misformation errors, with addition errors frequently occurring in written productions. The findings can inform more effective pedagogical strategies tailored to the needs of Filipino learners, helping them enhance their English proficiency as they prepare to become future educators. Additionally, the introspective data identified that pre-service teachers resort to L1 translation to approximate the target language. This underlies the need for a nuanced understanding of how learners' languages influence the learning of a grammatical item, which can inform more effective error correction strategies.

The study demonstrates that pre-service L1 Tagalog teachers encounter critical challenges in acquiring English articles. The systematic patterns of errors highlight the influence of the first language. The findings indicate that while learners improve over time, the linguistic difference between Tagalog and English creates persistent obstacles that must be addressed. Primary grade Tagalog learners of L2 English who are found to have challenges in article use might benefit from an intervention program to promote awareness of the structural differences between their L1 and L2 in article use. Practitioners can provide explicit structural language teaching in the classroom by explaining and emphasizing the differences. It would be insightful to see whether the article's use in L1 and L2 is represented in teaching materials or practices. In addition, to improve the learners' proficiency in article usage, it is recommended that curriculum and instructional strategies that address the challenges associated with article usage for L1 Tagalog learners be developed. This

will require designing instructional materials that integrate explicit comparisons between Tagalog and English in articles. This could include focused exercises, explicit teaching of article rules, and contextualized practice drawing on learner experiences.

On a wider scale, this discussion makes theoretical and practical implications about language learning among non-native learners of English in the ASEAN, particularly pre-service teachers who are training to become L2 or foreign English teachers from non-English L1 backgrounds. In a region where English is positioned as a major language amidst diverse national and local languages, students who are training to become English teachers may find challenges especially when structural differences exist between their native language and English. Particularly for teacher education in English, cross-linguistic examinations into these potential difficulties, as well as consciousness-raising of morphosyntactic differences between the L1 and the L2 in instruction may help address these challenges for the learner.

The study involved only a limited number of participants and focused only on written production; hence, to address these limitations, future research should aim for a larger sample with varying levels of proficiency to enhance the generalizability of the findings across different groups of learners. Additional collection methods such as oral production would help validate the occurrence of similar errors among L1 Tagalog learners of L2 English for a more comprehensive understanding of cross-linguistic influence on the use of articles.

Future research could build on the current study to refine the analysis of errors in L2 learning by classifying errors at a granular level.

Moreover, future investigations can include cognitive processes like metalinguistic awareness and language learning strategies to understand how various factors influence error patterns.

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Statements and Declarations

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