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Deviant Grammatical Features of Philippine English: Acceptance among Educated Philippine English Users

Via Amor B. Perillo¹, Joyline N. Saldo², Joseph B. Quinto³

^{1,2} Department of English, Benguet State University, Philippines

³ College of Arts and Humanities, Benguet State University, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Research on Philippine English (PhE) has documented recurrent grammatical deviations; however, how educated users evaluate these forms across teaching sectors remains under-investigated. This study examines the frequency and distribution of these features in student texts, their perceived acceptability among educated PhE users, and differences in acceptance across teaching classifications. A corpus of 76 opinion articles from a state university in Northern Luzon spanning up to a ten-year period (2014–2024) was analyzed. Descriptive statistical procedures identified 601 grammatical deviations across 11 structural categories. To assess acceptability, a validated survey was administered to basic education, higher education, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, with an external auditor ensuring analytic rigor. Findings indicate that these deviations are frequent and broadly acceptable among respondents, suggesting their functional integration into educated PhE usage. Inferential analysis revealed no significant difference in acceptance between basic and higher education teachers; however, EFL teachers demonstrated significantly lower levels of acceptance, highlighting the influence of exonormative orientations in EFL settings. Overall, this study provides empirical support for the argument that recurrent deviations constitute emerging features of Standard PhE. It contributes to the codification of localized norms while underscoring the pedagogical and sociolinguistic implications of grammatical variation in World Englishes.

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Corresponding Author:

Joseph B. Quinto

College of Arts and Humanities, Benguet State University, Philippines

Email: j.quinto@bsu.edu.ph

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, English has been strategically integrated into national educational frameworks to drive scientific innovation and economic advancement, underscoring its remarkable structural and functional adaptability (Garass, 2025). Beyond its role in institutional curricula, the language operates as a global lingua franca that bridges communication across heterogeneous linguistic settings, serving as an indispensable social necessity for international interaction and global market penetration (Madrid & Julius, 2020). This global utility is particularly pronounced in corporate environments,

where English functions as the standardized medium for negotiating complex contracts, formulating multilateral agreements, and managing operations within multinational corporations and international trade networks (Agustina et al., 2024; Gerardino et al., 2023). Consequently, the imperative to acquire and refine proficiency in English has become paramount for individuals and institutions striving to sustain competitiveness amidst accelerating global progress (Hosan et al., 2022).

Within the Asian context, the institutionalization of English as a lingua franca has facilitated the emergence of distinct, structurally diverse institutionalized variations (Halim, 2016). As conceptualized by Flores (2024) and Schneider (2014), these localized varieties are heavily substrated by indigenous languages, resulting in systematic innovations across phonological, lexical, and orthographic domains. Such regional forms are highly discernible because speakers naturally integrate structural elements of their first languages into their English production (Jain et al., 2022; Pan, 2019). This evolutionary trajectory demonstrates that the domain of English has fundamentally transcended its traditional Inner Circle boundaries, transforming the language into a pluricentric phenomenon heavily concentrated in Asia (Kirkpatrick, 2022). In Southeast Asia specifically, localized varieties—such as Malaysian, Singaporean, and Brunei English—have developed through widespread, highly adaptive usage by non-native speakers whose linguistic outputs are shaped by both their native typologies and immediate communicative ecologies (Magpale & Ferrer, 2025). Far from being deficient, these emerging varieties possess unique stylistic and syntactic paradigms analogous to those found in British and American English (Dimaculangan & Gustilo, 2017), illustrating that the rise of World Englishes is a natural consequence of global linguistic nativization (Dimaculangan, 2018).

In the Philippines, the historical trajectory of English began with American colonization, after which the language evolved into a firmly established institutionalized second language (Bernardo & Madrunio, 2015; Borlongan, 2017). Through decades of contact with local languages across formal and informal domains, this contact situation culminated in the formation of a distinct variety known as Philippine English (PhE) (Dimaculangan, 2018; Quinto, 2024). Crucially, PhE is not merely a collection of random deviations from Standard American English; rather, it is recognized as a legitimate, autonomous variety characterized by its own phonological accent, idiomatic expressions, and nativized discourse patterns shaped by the nation's unique sociocultural and historical matrix (Bolton et al., 2024; Borlongan, 2022; De Castro, 2020). Although PhE grammar exhibits structural departures in subject-verb agreement, lexical selection, verb morphology, determiner usage, prepositional complementation, pronominal reference, and aspectual consistency (Boas, 2020), these features are conceptualized not as errors, but as systematic variations that are gradually stabilizing as standard features within the PhE paradigm (Hernandez, 2022).

Empirical descriptions of PhE morphosyntax document specific recurring innovations, such as the pluralization of mass nouns (e.g., equipments, furnitures), non-standard prepositional complementation (e.g., discuss about the topic), and the use of past-tensed forms in continuous aspectual contexts (Galves & Celesio, 2024).

Additional variations include non-standard subject-verb concord with plural subjects, determiner omission driven by first-language interference, and distinct conventions in punctuation, capitalization, and word formation (Cardona, 2024). While these structures diverge from traditional exonormative rules, they increasingly constitute the stabilizing core of localized usage. This stabilization is particularly observable in media discourse; as Cavanlit (2022) notes, print publications frequently display grammatical features unique to localized varieties, driven by substratum influence and audience design strategies. Features such as article omission, non-standard concord, and unconventional adverbial placement—observed in both Philippine and Pakistani newspaper editorials—demonstrate that localized varieties effectively fulfill high-stakes communicative and ideological functions within their respective sociolinguistic contexts (Buriro et al., 2023; Cavanlit, 2022). Ultimately, print media serves as a critical repository of these linguistic adaptations, reflecting local cultural identities and institutionalized communicative strategies (Xiong et al., 2022).

To theoretically contextualize these localized usages, Kachru's three-way categorization clarifies the crucial distinction among errors, deviations, and innovations (Pešková & Chládková, 2026). Errors represent performance-based mistakes in phonology, grammar, or pragmatics that typically occur during initial language acquisition and remain unacceptable in any localized variety (Apresjan, 2024). Conversely, deviations refer to agreed-upon structural shifts within a speech community that adhere to local syntactic rules while shifting semantically relative to exonormative standards (Almohawes, 2024). Innovations encompass creative, rule-governed structures that emerge through sustained situational use and achieve regularized acceptance within educated circles (Borlongan, 2011). Regrettably, non-standard uses in Outer Circle contexts are often mislabeled as "errors" by educators and linguists adhering rigidly to Inner Circle norms (Zhang, 2022). Disentangling these constructs is essential for validating socially structured linguistic variations influenced by region, class, and context (Sharma, 2024), thereby establishing that Outer Circle variants reflect legitimate, systematic linguistic patterns rather than accidental learner deficiencies.

To operationalize this distinction, D'Souza's sociolinguistic criteria applied to PhE, positing that an innovative form constitutes a valid feature of a localized variety if it is widespread, systematic, rule-governed, and employed by competent, educated speakers in formal discourse (Hernandez, 2024). Applying these criteria reveals that many morphosyntactic structures conventionally labeled as "errors" are regularized features of Standard PhE (Hernandez, 2023; Sousa-Silva, 2022). Building upon this theoretical baseline, the present study addresses a critical research gap: while previous studies have documented grammatical innovations in PhE, empirical inquiry into how these forms are perceived and accepted by educated users—particularly across diverse pedagogical sectors—remains scarce. To address this gap, this study investigates the frequency of grammatical innovations in student publications and evaluates their level of linguistic acceptability among educated PhE users to determine their status as emerging standard features. Specifically, this inquiry addresses three central research questions: (1) what is the frequency and distribution of these grammatical innovations across 11 structural

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classifications within two official student publications at a leading state university in Northern Luzon; (2) what is the level of linguistic acceptability of these features as perceived by basic education, higher education, and EFL teachers; and (3) is there a significant difference in acceptability levels among these three teaching classifications?

2. METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design to systematically delineate the empirical characteristics and distributional phenomena of grammatical features within Philippine English (PhE). Specifically, the design quantified the frequency of grammatical deviations, evaluated linguistic acceptability among educators, and examined statistically significant variance across distinct teaching cohorts. Data were drawn from a corpus compiled from two official student publications at a prominent state university in Northern Luzon, spanning a ten-year timeframe (2014–2024) for the long-standing publication and a three-year period (2021–2024) for a newly established outlet. This longitudinal architecture enabled the identification of enduring grammatical patterns across successive student writer cohorts, thereby establishing historical precedence—a critical benchmark identified by Gonzales (2024) for distinguishing legitimate localized features from idiosyncratic learner errors. To maximize analytical depth, the investigation focused exclusively on editorial and column sections, as these opinion-oriented genres showcase spontaneous, authentic syntactic choices that yield richer insights into systematic linguistic variation than heavily edited news articles.

Complementing the textual data, the survey component investigated educated PhE users—conceptually defined as individuals who have completed formal English education and demonstrate structural and functional proficiency across academic and social domains. Utilizing a hybrid of purposive and convenience sampling techniques, a total of 180 educators across public and private institutions in Benguet, Philippines, were recruited. The sample was equally partitioned into three distinct groups (n=60 per cohort): basic education teachers, higher education faculty, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors. Selection was governed by rigorous inclusion criteria requiring that participants:

- held an active appointment within one of the three targeted teaching classifications;
- were currently practicing within the province of Benguet; and
- provided formally written informed consent.

Data collection was operationalized through a dual framework comprising a corpus analysis matrix and a subsequent survey questionnaire. The questionnaire, designed to assess feature acceptability on a 4-point Likert scale, underwent content validation by a PhD-credentialed language specialist to guarantee conceptual clarity and alignment with the study's research objectives. Following validation, a pilot study was executed with 20 graduate students at a state university. The pilot evaluation demonstrated robust internal consistency, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70, thereby confirming the psychometric readiness of the instrument for large-scale deployment.

The operationalization of the study proceeded across two sequential phases. Phase One entailed securing physical and digital publication archives from official advisers. While an initial structural screening mapped potential innovations across a wide spectrum of operational categories—including adverbs, articles, conjunctions, nouns, prepositions, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, verbals, capitalization, Filipino terminologies, possessiveness, punctuation, redundancy, sentence formation, lexical items, and word formation—a rigorous filtering process was applied. Adhering strictly to D'Souza's sociolinguistic criteria, which mandate that legitimate localized features must be widespread, systematic, rule-governed, and employed by competent speakers, the taxonomy was refined to 11 final categories: subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, nouns, verb tenses, pronouns, conjunctions, verbals, punctuation marks, standard expressions, and lexical terminologies. Extracted instances were systematically logged using a structural tally matrix. To reinforce coding objectivity and analytical rigor, an external auditor from the University of the Philippines-Baguio—an expert in Philippine English scholarship—audited the extraction process.

In Phase Two, the validated survey was administered to evaluate feature acceptability across the target cohorts following formal administrative coordination with Benguet educational authorities. Participants received comprehensive information sheets detailing the project scope, voluntary participation terms, and data privacy safeguards. To address the research questions, the compiled data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics: frequency counts and percentage distributions mapped feature density within the corpus, mean scores and standard deviations measured acceptability levels, and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) determined whether acceptability varied significantly across teaching classifications. The study adhered strictly to ethical standards; all respondents granted explicit voluntary consent and retained the right to withdraw without prejudice. Furthermore, the overall research protocol received formal institutional ethics approval following a comprehensive two-month review process prior to full-scale data collection.

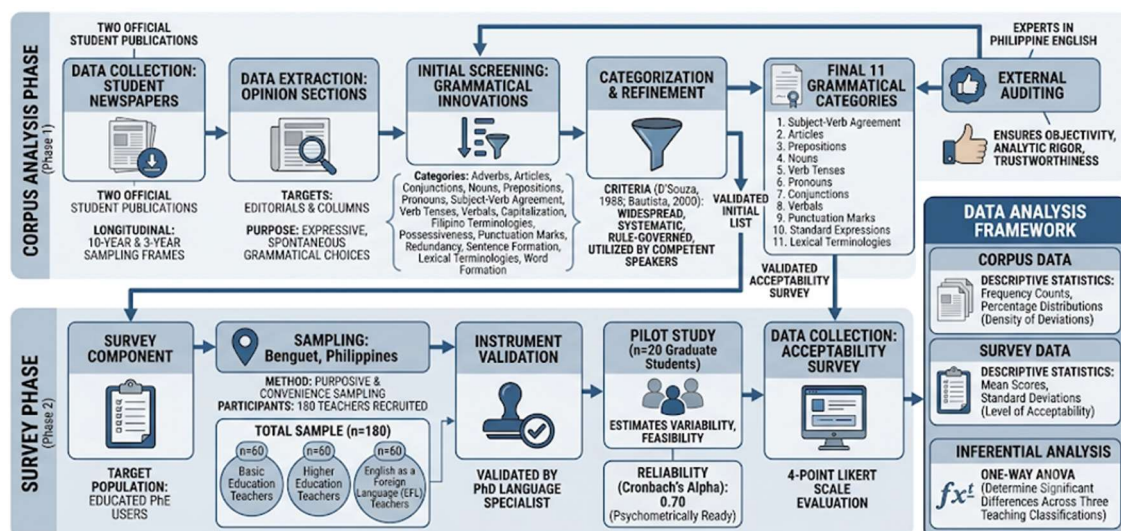


Figure 1. Quantitative Descriptive Research Design

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Deviant Grammatical Features

After analyzing the 76 opinion articles from the Itangguyob and The Mountain Collegian, a total of 601 instances of deviant grammatical features were identified across the eleven features. As shown in Table 1, prepositions occurred 158 times (26.29%), followed by articles occurring 87 (14.48%), standard expressions occurring 62 (10.32%), subject-verb agreement occurring 59 (9.82%), noun 58 (9.82%), pronoun occurring 41 (6.82%), tenses of verbs occurring 35 (5.82%), lexical terminologies occurring 33 (5.49%), conjunction occurring 31 (5.16%), punctuation marks occurring 29 (4.83%) and verbals occurring 8 (1.33%).

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Deviant Grammatical Features

Deviant Grammatical Features	Frequency	Percentage
Preposition	158	26.29%
Articles	87	14.48%
Standard Expressions	62	10.32%
Subject-Verb Agreement	59	9.82%
Noun	58	9.65%
Pronoun	41	6.82%
Tenses of Verbs	35	5.82%
Lexical Terminologies	33	5.49%
Conjunction	31	5.16%
Punctuation Marks	29	4.83%
Verbals	8	1.33%
Total Number	601	100%

The empirical analysis of 76 student-generated opinion articles yielded a total of 601 instances of grammatical deviations across 11 distinct structural categories, providing a comprehensive map of localized morphosyntactic variation in student writing. Prepositions emerged as the most dominant category (n=158, 26.29%), driven predominantly by non-standard usage in general relations and reason (n=97, 61.39%), followed by determiner anomalies (n=87, 14.48%) characterized by article omissions and redundant insertions, non-standard expressions (n=62, 10.32%) involving fixed idiomatic formulations, subject-verb agreement discrepancies (n=59, 9.82%), and noun modifications (n=58, 9.65%). The remaining structural categories exhibited lower yet systematically consistent frequencies, including pronominal mismatches (n=41, 6.82%), verb tense inconsistencies (n=35, 5.82%), non-standard lexical selection (n=33, 5.49%), conjunction usage (n=31, 5.16%), and punctuation omissions (n=29, 4.83%), while non-standard verbal structures represented the least frequent category (n=8, 1.33%), restricted entirely to gerund constructions.

Level of Acceptance of the Identified Deviant Grammatical Features

After analyzing the mean acceptance scores of the three teacher groups, basic education, higher education, and EFL teachers—variations across the eleven grammatical features were observed. Specifically, higher education has the highest overall mean of 2.73 (acceptable), followed by the basic education teachers with a mean

of 2.65 (acceptable), while EFL teachers had the lowest mean of 2.49 (somewhat acceptable).

Table 2. Summary of the Level of Acceptance of Deviant Grammatical Features

Grammatical Category	Basic Education Teachers (n=60)	Higher Education Teachers (n=60)	EFL Teachers (n=60)
Nouns	2.91 (Acceptable)	3.06 (Acceptable)	2.77 (Acceptable)
Verb Tenses	2.74 (Acceptable)	2.71 (Acceptable)	2.41 (Somewhat Acceptable)
Articles	2.70 (Acceptable)	2.61 (Acceptable)	2.47 (Somewhat Acceptable)
Pronouns	2.70 (Acceptable)	2.82 (Acceptable)	2.66 (Acceptable)
Standard Expressions	2.66 (Acceptable)	2.81 (Acceptable)	2.57 (Acceptable)
Lexical Terminologies	2.66 (Acceptable)	2.81 (Acceptable)	2.51 (Acceptable)
Punctuation Marks	2.61 (Acceptable)	2.57 (Acceptable)	2.28 (Somewhat Acceptable)
Verbals	2.61 (Acceptable)	2.87 (Acceptable)	2.57 (Acceptable)
Subject-Verb Agreement	2.56 (Acceptable)	2.55 (Acceptable)	2.39 (Somewhat Acceptable)
Prepositions	2.54 (Acceptable)	2.63 (Acceptable)	2.40 (Somewhat Acceptable)
Conjunctions	2.50 (Somewhat Acceptable)	2.58 (Acceptable)	2.35 (Somewhat Acceptable)
Composite Mean (SD)	2.65 (0.08) (Acceptable)	2.73 (0.11) (Acceptable)	2.49 (0.04) (Somewhat Acceptable)

The descriptive analysis of the survey data revealed distinct patterns of linguistic acceptability toward the 11 grammatical innovations across the three teaching cohorts. Basic education teachers demonstrated general acceptance of the features, yielding a composite mean of 2.65 ("SD"=0.08), with non-standard noun usage receiving the highest acceptability rating (M=2.91), followed sequentially by verb tenses (M=2.74), articles (M=2.70), pronouns (M=2.70), standard expressions (M=2.66), lexical terminologies (M=2.66), punctuation marks (M=2.61), verbals (M=2.61), and subject-verb agreement (M=2.56). Within this cohort, prepositions (M=2.54) also fell within the acceptable threshold, whereas conjunctions generated the lowest evaluation (M=2.50), indicating a "somewhat acceptable" rating. In comparison, higher education teachers exhibited the highest overall tolerance, recording a composite mean of 2.73 ("SD"=0.11), where all 11 structural categories were deemed acceptable; within this group, nouns similarly achieved the highest mean (M=3.06), followed by verbals (M=2.87), pronouns (M=2.82), standard expressions (M=2.81), lexical terminologies (M=2.81), verb tenses (M=2.71), prepositions (M=2.63), articles (M=2.61), conjunctions (M=2.58), and punctuation marks (M=2.57), while subject-verb agreement marked the lowest baseline of acceptance (M=2.55).

Conversely, EFL teachers displayed a more critical evaluation, yielding a significantly lower overall mean of 2.49 ("SD"=0.04), which denotes an aggregate

rating of "somewhat acceptable." Although this EFL cohort accepted nouns ($M=2.77$), pronouns ($M=2.66$), verbals ($M=2.57$), standard expressions ($M=2.57$), and lexical terms ($M=2.51$), they classified the remaining six categories—specifically articles ($M=2.47$), verb tenses ($M=2.41$), prepositions ($M=2.40$), subject-verb agreement ($M=2.39$), conjunctions ($M=2.35$), and punctuation marks ($M=2.28$)—as only somewhat acceptable, underscoring a more rigid adherence to exonormative standards.

Table 3. Least Significant Difference (LSD)

Teaching Classifications	Mean (Group)	Level of Acceptance
Basic Education	2.65 a	Acceptable
Higher Education	2.73 a	Acceptable
EFL	2.49 b	Somewhat Acceptable

Descriptive analysis revealed distinct patterns of acceptance scores across the three teaching cohorts. Higher education teachers demonstrated the highest mean level of acceptance ($M=2.73$), closely followed by basic education educators ($M=2.65$). Conversely, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers reported the lowest mean score ($M=2.49$). To rigorously evaluate the statistical significance of these observed mean variations, a post-hoc comparison was executed employing the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test.

The post-hoc LSD test confirmed the alternative hypothesis, indicating significant group-wise disparities in acceptance levels. Specifically, pairwise comparisons demonstrated no statistically significant difference between higher education and basic education teachers; consequently, both groups were assigned the same homogeneous subset label ("a"). In contrast, EFL teachers exhibited a significantly lower acceptance profile, forming a distinct subset labeled ("b"). A comprehensive breakdown of these statistical groupings and subset classifications is presented in Table 3.

Discussion

Building upon empirical evidence from 76 student texts revealing 601 structural deviations—predominantly in prepositions, articles, and standard expressions—the analysis demonstrates that these anomalies function as systematic patterns rather than isolated errors. This internal consistency directly aligns with De Souza and Preece's (2004) foundational framework, which posits that innovative features attain legitimacy within institutionalized varieties when they are widespread, systematic, rule-governed, and employed by competent speakers. Within this study's parameters, these metrics confirm that the identified variations represent stable, developing components of usage rather than unmediated cognitive lapses.

Extending this systemic view, prepositional variations emerged prominently through non-standard substitutions, omissions, and insertions, which can be structurally elucidated by cross-linguistic substratum transfer. As Paz (2022) observes, Filipino languages utilize a generalized, multi-functional prepositional framework—such as the locative marker "sa"—that map onto multiple English prepositions depending on

contextual pragmatics. This fundamental typological distance leads bilingual writers to overgeneralize or omit specific forms, demonstrating that these occurrences reflect predictable first-language transfer and the stabilization of a localized linguistic norm within Philippine English (PhE) rather than sheer deficiency.

This process of structural nativization is further corroborated by a broader body of variationist literature documenting systematic innovations across educated discourse registers. For instance, Cavanlit (2022) identified recurring non-standard patterns in editorials, Villanueva (2016) mapped consistent shifts across a million-word corpus, and Hernandez (2024) reported regular non-standard subject-verb concord in scholarly writing. This perspective is reinforced by Dimaculangan and Sarmiento (2025), who demonstrated that such deviations are highly integrated in ESL master's theses, and by Fragio (2024), who observed consistent grammatical variation across social media registers, collectively framing PhE as an internally coherent system.

Conversely, this variationist paradigm faces persistent challenges from traditional error-analysis frameworks that interpret morphosyntactic departures through a deficit lens of incomplete second-language acquisition. Studies such as Munder (2024) and Gildore et al. (2023) frequently categorize these occurrences as mechanical orthographic flaws or pedagogical gaps stemming from limited target-language exposure. However, by documenting under-resourced features—such as non-standard lexicons, punctuation, and gerund usage—that fulfill D'Souza's criteria across the dataset, the present study contends that these emerging elements constitute legitimate, intelligible extensions of Standard PhE (D'souza et al., 2020).

Bridging these structural findings with sociolinguistic realities, the legitimacy of these innovations is mirrored in the attitudinal data gathered from local educators. Basic education teachers exhibited broad acceptance of these features, aligning with Dangilan and Asuncion (2023) regarding growing pedagogical openness, while Mangalus (2021) demonstrated that World Englishes training can mitigate prescriptive anxieties. Similarly, tertiary instructors displayed high linguistic tolerance, echoing literature on higher education faculty who recognize PhE's validity (Babanto et al., 2023; Barrie et al., 2025). As Tamco (2022) notes, while standard forms remain the benchmark for formal writing, localized features are widely accepted in semi-formal registers as a diglossic compromise.

Despite these receptive trends, ideological tensions persist due to a lack of conceptual familiarity with World Englishes among some ESL practitioners (Gustilo & Dimaculangan, 2018; Dimaculangan, 2022) and broader concerns regarding economic competitiveness and preparedness (Gepila et al., 2023). Consequently, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in this study maintained conservative attitudes, prioritizing structural accuracy and adhering to exonormative standards (Al-Zoubi, 2018). In contrast, the multilingual matrix of Philippine classrooms fosters structural flexibility through translanguaging (De Los Reyes, 2018; Gatil, 2021), explaining why domestic educators display significantly greater acceptance than their EFL counterparts. Ultimately, having met D'Souza's criteria, these 11 grammatical features signify an

evolving, dynamically nativized trajectory of Standard Philippine English within communicative repertoires.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the deviant grammatical features presented namely nouns, tenses of verbs, articles, pronouns, standard expressions, lexical terminologies, punctuation marks, verbals, subject-verb agreements, prepositions, and conjunctions were accepted by teachers in both basic and higher education, suggesting their integration into academic and everyday communication among educated Filipino English users. These deviant grammatical features, on the other hand, were somewhat acceptable according to EFL teachers. This indicates that the deviant grammatical features were quite unacceptable in formal, academic, and professional English, even though they might occur in informal writing or speech. Using analysis of variance (ANOVA), the results of this research show that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers were more conservative in their acceptance of the identified deviant grammatical features, whereas higher education teachers and basic education teachers showed more openness of towards the deviant grammatical features. The difference of acceptance among the educated Philippine English users shows that instructional environments like English only setting for EFL and multilingual classrooms for basic education teachers and higher education teachers play an important role in shaping teachers' acceptance of the deviant grammatical features. Generally, the lack of awareness or exposure to Philippine English could explain the conservative perceptions of EFL teachers, which makes them less aware of the deviant grammatical features. These patterns show how teachers' acceptance and adoption of Philippine English in different educational contexts is influenced by their varying awareness levels.

This study has examined only two university-based student publications and the analysis focused on the opinion sections of the newspaper, so future research may examine a wider range of local publications by focusing on other sections such as news, features, entertainment, or sports. Next, the researchers surveyed basic education teachers, higher education teachers, and EFL teachers with 60 respondents per teaching category. Therefore, future studies may focus on surveying English teachers or other educated Philippine English users such as linguists, journalists, editors, and reporters to capture broader perspectives on the acceptability of deviant grammatical features. Afterwhich, researchers may also explore the differences in the level of acceptance across these educated Philippine English users to understand how these users vary in accepting deviant grammatical features.

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