A Descriptive Analysis of Grammatical Errors on Social Media Posts

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ABSTRACT

In today's society, social media has become a pioneering platform for online communication. While it has been used to build interpersonal communication, it also creates an avenue for users to post, comment, and share what they like, regardless of the unintentional or intentional use of grammar errors. This also allows others to scrutinize their work online. This study involves descriptive analysis of grammatical errors on social media posts, which is anchored on the Social Media Engagement Theory. This explains how individual participation in social media causes unconsciously adopted grammatical structures and language patterns by observing influencers and social media interactions. Furthermore, this study employs the Social Information Processing Theory to better understand the behavior of users as they interact online to gather meaningful connections and how their adaptation affects their future online engagements. In this study, online posts were gathered, analyzed, and interpreted from various online apps, including Facebook and X (Twitter). Key findings indicated that most online posts share some similarities in terms of grammar errors. These themes include grammar, capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure, formality and informality, and word choice. These errors, influenced by digital trends and a casual approach to grammar, covering punctuation, formality, and word choice, highlight the need to maintain proper language use online for clear and professional communication.

Keywords: Social Media, Grammar Errors, Grammar Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Publicly sharing content on social media exposes users to a wider audience that may scrutinize, criticize, and judge their posts based on context, tone, and grammar. These responses can offend or educate someone who uses social media as something they can diatribe to. Posts with heavy grammatical errors are prone to negative evaluation that can directly affect the user's self-perception and overall digital space experience. Since most of the users of social media are students, Cantina (2022), explained that most students commonly made errors in punctuation and capitalization, with some even struggling with correct word spelling. She noted that these mistakes reflect a lack of understanding of the basic rules that govern written English, such as capitalization, punctuation, and typography, which are not typically relevant in spoken language. As a result, students find it difficult to apply English grammar rules effectively in writing.

In Indonesia, a recent study by Sihotang et al. found that social media has become a major part of daily life. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are widely used for entertainment and communication. Most Indonesian users write posts in English, but their posts often contain grammatical errors. Such errors include omission, addition, misordering, and misformation of words. As a result, their posts can appear awkward and poorly structured.

In a study by Corral (2017), she examined grammar mistakes made by Grade 8 students in their Facebook posts, focusing on verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and prepositions. It was found that many students often use incorrect verb forms like "sleeeped" instead of "slept", mismatched subjects and verbs such as "she walk", instead of "she walks", and others. Additionally, these errors were mainly caused by the influence of the students' first language and their lack of full understanding of English grammar rules. This shows the importance of giving students more practice and real-life ways to use English correctly.

Locally, particularly in the Davao region, social media is widely used by students, often as a space for practicing English. However, this informal setting tends to reveal frequent grammar errors in their posts. Pascual (2019) found that first-year college students in Davao del Norte displayed low oral proficiency in English, specifically in grammar and vocabulary. This suggests that many students struggle with correct language use despite the constant and easy exposure. The study highlighted how students lacked mastery of basic grammatical structures, which may be influenced by factors such as limited practice in real-life communication, over-reliance on informal platforms, and interference from their first language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past few decades, social media and the internet have expanded rapidly. Continually growing and updating their features for better use. This evolution has opened the doors for easy communication, easy access to information, and the spread of information throughout the world, which is widely relevant and used in this generation. Additionally, the study of Kullolli and Trebicka (2023) highlights the critical role social media plays in identity formation and social interaction of Generation Z. These platforms serve not just as communication tools but spaces for self-expression, creativity, and community building.

With this, many users engage in the social media platforms, and constant errors have emerged, such as grammatical errors, spelling, tone, and even the use of words. Due to this number of errors, researchers and grammar analysts have extended their research to know how these posts show errors. Just like the study of Yadagiri (2020), which reveals significant shifts in writing, affected by the digital communication usage. Younger users, specifically, students, showed an increasing use of informal grammar. For instance, improper use of abbreviations, non-standard punctuation, and fragmented sentences. The study suggests that communication happening in digital platforms prioritises speed and brevity over proper grammar and seldom follows grammar rules. Due to this frequent use of digital communication and the adoption of informal grammar will lead the users to incorporate these informal conventions into their writing.

Moreover, the presence of errors in terms of grammar on social media platforms reflects community preferences in deviating from Standard English (Armayanti & Kamal 2024). People from different demographics are influenced by different factors, often leading to unconventional language patterns, slang and punctuation errors. According to Al-Jarrah et al. (2019), many students now prefer using digital tools in social media, often using them to familiarize themselves with the language. However, this would also mean that they are exposed to the disadvantage in grammar competence despite actively using it in real life (Heng 2020).

Theoretical Basis

Social Media Engagement Theory suggests that individual active participation and interaction on social media influence user behavior. According to Adalia (2025), this explains the relevance of grammar among college students in terms of academic and social media interactions. Students unconsciously adopted grammatical structures and language patterns by observing influencers and social media interactions emphasizing clarity and tone over strict grammar rules. While formal settings provided structured guidance, informal environments influenced grammar use through social norms and the desire for effective communication. In Rahmani's (2024) study, the prevalence of rapid social interactions on social media has changed the way we communicate and led to the emergence of text-speak, the primary communication style of the net-generation. This has explored the grammatical errors experienced by ESL learners at various proficiency levels, illuminating the specific challenges inherent in their language acquisition process.

Social information processing is a theoretical framework which highlights how people use internet-based communication to develop connections (Walther 2023). Concerning the grammar, it also explains how adaptation in social platforms affects users' interpretation of cues, such as word choices, which influences their goals, potential responses, and decisions. Errors, particularly in word choice, significantly shape reactions on social media, determining whether a user replies correctly, ignores the post, or imitates the language used. This theory assumes that the processes involved have significant consequential implications in education. As new linguistic interaction appear, users adapt what they find on online platforms. This often garners criticisms on their linguistic literacy, as they start preferring to use slangs, abbreviations and other expressive features over

standard English words (Tamanno 2024). In Swan's (2017) study in particular, it was explained how this internet language affects their academic writing and speaking styles in language learning settings. It causes confusion in grammar structures. This exposure, for ESL, can be challenging as it hinders their ability to use the language with communicative effectiveness in written and spoken contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design with an aim to analyze the grammatical errors of users on social media. A qualitative content analysis approach was used to systematically examine the linguistic patterns in user-generated content. The study targeted active online users by collecting a purposive sample of public posts from popular social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Data were gathered over four days, ensuring a diverse representation of users' demographics. Posts were selected based on relevance, public accessibility, and the presence of written content suitable for grammatical analysis. The collected data were then categorized and analyzed to identify common themes and frequencies of grammatical errors, with particular attention to syntax, punctuation, and word usage.

DISCUSSION

Grammar

Grammar is a foundation of good and effective communication between individuals, as it helps people to understand the information being conveyed. Having proper and correct grammar ensures the credibility of the message and avoids misunderstanding between two or more people communicating. It also reflects the writer or speaker's academic and professional history, as it helps to perceive the speaker's or writer's competence and intelligence. This confirms that grammar should be used properly, whether in speaking and writing English in the real world or the digital world. This can be shown in the excerpts below:

"'companies' be force selling pieces of 'holy' sculptures to people and when failed to pay or doesn't have any money to pay, you'll be spouting threats and go guilt tripping? the irony of you people pisses me off " - PP1"trust me it's just little" - PP2
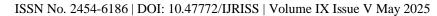
"Receiving this kind of message from my 10 year old cousin whom I treat like my own child warms my heart. I know she cannot understand my rants but she is trying her best to comfort me in her own ways. Love you so much fretz" - PP3

"Crying rn cause they do not deserve this. No one does. 2017 trauma flashbacks. Magsirado na kayo MAMA. Your awards are still bought." - PP4

"I love you! my heart know's, but do you love me?no you dont!" - PP5

As shown in the excerpts, it proves that posts are prone to ungrammatical structure. Grammatical errors are often found in social media posts, especially from users whose first language is not English. In a study by Sihotang et al. (2021), they explained that errors occurred due to a lack of understanding about the structure of English and writing the language. Users just post using the language, intending to create rumors without considering that it may cause fatal irregularities. Additionally, some social media users do not care about their grammar when posting about their feelings or opinions, thinking that it is alright to keep ignoring the importance of using proper grammar in the language.

For this reason, Najman (2021) found that users make grammatical errors in texting, affecting their spoken communication. This is because social media users often ignore the error and do not even bother to correct it, as it confuses them. In addition to Najman's findings, he emphasizes four types of grammatical errors often found in social media posts: nouns, verbs, tenses, and subject-verb agreement, which he impeccably explained.

Capitalization

Capitalization is a rule that indicates writing a word with its first letter as an uppercase letter and the remaining letters as lowercase. Capitalization is fundamental when it comes to writing in many languages, not only that it give sentences their proper beginning also nouns and specific grammatical elements. Capitalization also showcases a sign of formality and professionalism.

"I love you! my heart know's ,but do you love me?no you dont!" – PP1

"without me, my riffle is useless, without my riffle I am useless" – PP2

"It feels so surreal listening to this song without feeling hurt. It hurts but it does not hurt that much hahahshaha. I'm getting there. I feel sad about it but i am so thankful i am getting there." – PP3

"As much as i can i do not really want fretz to experience what i experienced. No parents during pta meeting. No parents during giving of certs for honors. So as much as i can, if i can ditch my class. I would." – PP4

" WAHHHHHHHHHHHH*kilig much Jacques and Cloud" – PP5

In addition to this, according to Linden J., Observations are made about the scope and connotations of these forms of nonstandard capitalization, and parallels are drawn to other, less orthography-dependent structures with similar meanings. These findings are then considered in the broader context of Internet-based language with the goal of examining the relationship between spoken language and written language in the Digital Age. The nearest example is this sentence "I love you! my heart know's ,but do you love me?no you dont!" showing that writing in smaller case letters might have once become a trend in the digital world expressing emotion.

On the other hand, technology has altered communication methods and has rapidly influenced the English language. Traditional communication methods have changed due to technology, which has made language more approachable and informal. Slang, abbreviations, emojis, and sentence fragments are new language forms brought about by the growth of texting, social media, and online communication. Although technology has facilitated faster and more effective communication, it has also caused a shift from standard grammar and language usage, particularly among younger generations.

Punctuation

Punctuation is the system of marks used in writing to separate sentences and clarify meaning by indicating pauses, stops, and the relationship between ideas. The following are social media posts displaying mistakes in the use of punctuation. This confirms the need to practice proper punctuation as it could alter meaning and delivery, turning it into awkward sentences.

"Its stupid to talk about things you're not. Be yourself and you'll be fine" – PP1

"I love you! my heart know's ,but do you love me?no you dont!" – PP2

"With matching watching and reacting of AMNSE PARODY!!" – PP3

"trust me it's just little" -PP4

"As much as i can i do not really want fretz to experience what i experienced. No parents during pta meeting. No parents during giving of certs for honors. So as much as i can, if i can ditch my class. I would." – PPP5

Social media platforms are informal spaces where grammatical rules, especially punctuations, are frequently neglected, following specific trends such as what users call 'pogi typings.' Sihotang et al. (2021) found that omission errors, such as missing apostrophes and commas, are common in online posts, resulting in awkward and unclear sentences. For instance, in PP1: "Its stupid to talk about things you're not," the absence of an apostrophe in "Its" reflects a contraction error, which aligns with the patterns observed in their study.

Moreover, Yuliah et al. (2020) similarly observed that incorrect punctuation leads to sentence fragments and run-ons, reducing readability. The case of PP2: "I love you! my heart know's ,but do you love me?no you dont!" demonstrates several issues, including misused apostrophes, improper spacing, and missing capitalization. These errors undoubtedly mirror the findings that improper punctuation is widespread in social media writing and affects the clarity and structure of users' expressions.

Sentence Structure

Sentence structure is how words are organized in a sentence to create grammatically correct and meaningful phrases and clauses. The following are the social media posts showing that individuals may make mistakes in sentence structure. This indicates there is a necessity for one to have a better grasp and exercise of proper grammar when using online platforms.

"and if time comes that I will burst into anger and tears, do not ask me why." – PP1

"I couldn't say but I can do and I achieved" - PP2

"companies' be force selling pieces of 'holy' sculptures to people and when failed to pay or doesn't have any money to pay, you'll be spouting threats and go guilt tripping? the irony of you people pisses me off " – PP3

"just came across a nice thought, "when we always think about how something should be and not what it could be, we lose the chance to discover something new." – PP4

"there's more to mining than what the social platforms show and that's a valuable knowledge i gained today. thank you, USeP! it is indeed eliminating prism!" – PP5

In terms of sentence structure, as seen in the statements above, users tend to have errors in constructing their posts in social media, which results in awkward structure and delivers an unclear message. Many studies have shown that social media users often make grammar mistakes in sentence structure due to the informal nature of online communication. One study by Cantina (2022) investigated how college students write blog posts on social media, revealing that many of them make common grammar mistakes. These include using wrong punctuation, not capitalizing properly, misuse of verb tenses and incomplete or poorly structured sentences. She believed that these errors happen because people often view social media as a casual space, leading them to disregard grammar rules. As students are used to informal online conversations, they tend to carry this casual style in their blog writing, which affects their adherence to proper writing conventions.
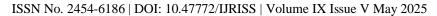
Formality And Informality

Formality refers to the extent of seriousness and adherence to the rules, thus using proper use of words and structured language specifically used in an academic setting or writing. Informality means using casual language and grammar. This can be found when we talk or interact with friends or family. In this context, we will focus more on the grammar, analyzing the text we gathered on social media posts, showing the mistakes in formality and informality.

"To the man I loved before.(char) . I just want you to know that I loved you since the day we were officially together ❤(2017) " – PP1

"'companies' be force selling pieces of 'holy' sculptures to people and when failed to pay or doesn't have any money to pay, you'll be spouting threats and go guilt tripping? the irony of you people pisses me off " – PP2

"gagi, my sadness was immeasurable yesterday, but i got to buy 2 battle pass in one night, even had extra 399 to spend on spins or even buy another bp vault, all thanks to the sponsor HAHAHAHA a gift like this saves a life— at least for me :pp " – PP3

"Seeing you taking pictures w/ other girls, is so damn painful." – PP4

"ME IN ETHICS BE LIKE" – PP5

To further support a study by McCulloch's explores how digital communication has led to the evolution of informal language, incorporating elements like emojis, abbreviations, and expressive punctuation. These features, while enhancing emotional expression, can weaken clarity and professionalism in formal settings. For instance, the use of "char 😜" in the first statement shows these trends.

On the other hand, Perez-Sabates in 2018 examines how language style on social media often leans toward informality, utilizing colloquial expressions and emoticons to fit in and have a connection among users. At the same time, in informal contexts, such language may be perceived as unprofessional in formal communication. Moreover, the noticeable casual tone and use of emoticons in the provided statements reflect that this informal style is common on social media platforms.

Word Choice

Word choice refers to the selection of words used in any interaction. It explains, clarifies, and broadens topics for easier understanding. Without sufficient skill in word choice, it may lead to ambiguity, and the words may not deliver the intended meaning that the source intends to share or may not be the appropriate words for specific situations.

"And for those who had people come to them for such consultations or release, don't you ever dare belittle their feelings. " – PP1

"'companies' be force selling pieces of 'holy' sculptures to people and when failed to pay or doesn't have any money to pay, you'll be spouting threats and go guilt tripping? the irony of you people pisses me off " – PP2

"there's more to mining than what the social platforms show and that's a valuable knowledge i gained today. thank you, USeP! it is indeed eliminating prism! " – PP3

""Okay lang, I am so sanay na to my Hieght" " – PP4

"ME_ohh myghaaadddd sheetttt ommggggg!!! Sannnnnna ooooolllllll with matching sipa and kick sa unan." – PP5

As shown in the quotations above, the observable errors range from the clarity of words to the word choice. This proves how ambiguous word choices are often seen and used in social media. In terms of word choice errors, the most common error is the use of incorrect articles and verb forms, which results in awkward phrasing and ambiguous meaning. According to Nga and Quynh (2021), word choice is an essential component of any interaction. The style of communication is determined by the word choice. As Rao (2018) stated, without sufficient skills in this regard, listeners would find it very hard to understand, especially for second language learners. Weak word choice produces ambiguity and dooms a speaker's work to fall short of expectations or fail to deliver its message entirely.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this study reveals a prevalent pattern of grammatical errors in social media posts, particularly among students. Issues in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, formality, and word choice reflect the strong influence of digital communication norms. The informal and fast-paced nature of online platforms often encourages linguistic shortcuts that, over time, may weaken users' grasp of standard English conventions and hinder academic writing proficiency.

Hence, in response, educational institutions should consider integrating social media discourse analysis into language instruction to bridge informal digital habits with formal writing skills. Establishing digital literacy programs that emphasize grammatically sound communication, alongside contextualized grammar workshops using authentic online content, can foster greater language awareness. These efforts will help reframe social

media as a tool for enhancing, rather than diminishing, students' linguistic competence and academic communication.

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