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Syntactic analysis in Filipino AFAM hunters facebook group posts

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Abstract - Nowadays, by the use of English language on Facebook, Filipinos – especially Filipino AFAM Hunters – are easily able to communicate with foreigners, forging connections through online dating and social interaction. Highlighting global trends, Filipinos more likely to use Facebook, the nation's most popular social media platform, to interact with various nationalities and express their intentions and emotions. This connects with what Abrazaldo (2023) says about how colonial mentality affects Filipinos' online dating choices, which often leads to relationships with foreigners who are thought to be financially stable and socially mobile. Banuag (2024) and Estremera (2021) both point out that informal language, creative sentence structures, and code-switching are common in these online spaces. This shows that clarity and contextual meaning are more important than strict grammatical rules. This study used Morley's (2006) syntactic framework and Rahmawati and Rachmi's (2022) analytical steps, where researchers examined 15 Facebook posts from the Filipino AFAM Hunters group to identify the most common syntactic deviations and patterns from Standard American English. Results from data analysis have revealed that frequent deviations involve punctuation and capitalization errors, run-on sentences, missing articles, and subject-verb disagreement. These data emphasize how users prioritize message clarity over grammatical accuracy, which is normal in informal online communication. The results also indicate that the socio-economic background and age of these users may affect their English proficiency. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for more extensive research in the future to examine more posts across additional social media platforms to have a better understanding of how people linguistically behave in the online landscape.

Keywords: syntactic deviations, social media syntax, facebook language, nonstandard English, online dating

1. Introduction

In this digital age where everything is fast and easy, online dating has become the easiest and newest avenue to find a relationship through the use of the internet and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Skype. There are even apps that are exclusively for dating, like Tinder and Bumble.

According to datareportal.com, the Philippines ranks 6th worldwide in terms of the number of Facebook users. This data shows how active Filipinos are in using social media, Facebook in particular. This social media platform enables every user to interact with other

nationalities and express their feelings freely through posting it as it is one of the features of Facebook. Users are also allowed to join "groups", where they can find people with the same interests. A significant example of these online interactions is the trend of Filipinos joining groups that enable them to connect with foreigners, especially Americans.

Some Filipinos are more likely to engage in relationships with Americans, commonly referred to as Foreigners or AFAMs (A Foreigner Assigned in Manila). Aside from seeking true love, a significant motivation for these relationships is the potential financial benefits. The Philippines ranks as the fifth poorest country in Southeast Asia based on GDP per capita, which is approximately US\$4,130. Due to widespread economic challenges, many Filipinos face financial difficulties, including limited access to education. As a result, some Filipino adults, particularly those in their 30s and above, seek relationships with AFAMs as a means to improve their socioeconomic status.

Language use among these Filipino adults does not necessarily adhere to American English standards; rather, effective communication and mutual understanding are their primary concerns. On social media platforms such as the "AFAM Philippine" group page, many Filipino users employ non-standard grammatical structures and patterns. Their language is often focused more on conveying meaning and context than on following formal grammatical rules.

Romantic relationships abroad, commonly with white or American men. The colonization of the Philippines resulted in this practice and gave birth to ideas of race, beauty, and power. White men are normally perceived by many Filipinas as not only financially secure but also socially mobile and as providing opportunities for self-transformation (Arnado, 2019; Nemoto, 2006, as cited in Abrazaldo, 2023, pp. 18–21). Marrying foreigners is described by some women as "marrying up," which means having more privileges unavailable which reveals how colonial mentality affects preferences in dating, looking deeper at economic motives with identity and desire (Abrazaldo, 2023, pp. 26–27).

Online dating, as defined by the Cambridge Online Dictionary, is the use of the internet as a means of sharing information about oneself or responding to others in starting a romantic relationship. It has become a popular platform as a result of more accessible use of the internet and the rise of social media. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype are crucial in transcending geographical borders in bridging connections and communication, forming relationships. Despite these advantages, studies show a cautious view towards online dating, as a survey conducted among Nigerian doctoral students has shown that most respondents have knowledge about online dating but still prefer physical dating, as they consider trust and the risks along online relationships. Nonetheless, online dating remains a medium in modern courtship, especially among youths who heavily use social media for social and romantic interactions. (Aaron et al., 2015)

Filipino Facebook posts and captions often feature code-switching among Filipino, English, and occasionally Spanish, reflecting a translingual practice rooted in historical language contact and contemporary bilingual literacy (Estremera, 2021). The reasons behind such code-switching include highlighting particular topics, emphasizing messages, expressing group identity, clarifying communication, meeting specific lexical needs, excluding outsiders, conveying emotions, and aligning with current language trends (Banuag, 2018). In the context of online dating, code-switching usage in social media is crucial in communication, as it allows users to express their identities more freely. Code-switching behavior helps individuals connect more authentically, which commonly leads to enhanced relationship-building by reflecting shared cultural backgrounds and emotional implications.

Social media has paved the way for informal and creative sentence structures where users are allowed to play around with grammatical rules to adapt to the dynamic and expressive nature of online interaction. Studies conducted about codeswitching in Facebook posts show that users often practice language mixing, shortening sentences, and using emojis or slang, which reflects the digital communication function features (Riparip, 2024, pp. 469–471). These practices demonstrate how online syntax differ from formal writing, as message clarity and humour are more prioritized by the users over complying with grammar rules. Analysing these dynamic and

unique sentence structures plays an important role, as it explains how patterns of digital language evolve, especially in groups like AFAM Hunters where online communication influences identity and connections.

Age plays an important role in acquiring a language, which states that younger learners tend to acquire skills more easily. Filipinos, who are simultaneous bilinguals, are able to speak and comprehend English fluently (Santos et al., 2022). However, Suarez (2020, in Santos et al., 2022) mentioned that there is a decline in Filipino English proficiency due to inadequate quality input both inside and outside the classroom. Years ago, students who are now in their 30s and 40s had the opportunity to be taught by native English speakers, which imparted to them a stronger and more fluent command of the language compared to the learners today.

Additionally, social class also plays a crucial role in English proficiency. Shamim (2011) mentioned that learners from higher socio-economic levels perform better compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds because of better privileges and opportunities, such as early exposure to second language learning and access to private courses. In relation to this, learners from poorer backgrounds, such as many AFAM hunters, are more likely to have weaker English communication skills. Limited financial resources factor restricts access to quality education, which in turn contributes to the deterioration of their English proficiency and affects how they interact online.

Several studies analyse how Filipinos use English (and mixed codes) on Facebook in terms of grammar, syntax, and lexis. Fragio and Protacio (2025) used a corpus-based approach to describe lexical and grammatical features in senior high school students' Facebook posts, counting nouns, verbs, modifiers, and function words and relating frequency patterns to syntactic relations such as cohesion, argument structure, and clause linking.

Their findings on pronoun dominance, frequent prepositions, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs highlight how users build cohesive, complex clauses in informal online contexts. Dimaculangan and Sarmiento compiled a 50,000-word corpus of ESL teachers' and students' Facebook posts and Messenger conversations to examine word-formation creativity in "FB Philippine English" (Dimaculangan & Sarmiento, 2024).

While primarily morphological, they also show that borrowed and code-mixed items are integrated into English clause structures, reinforcing the view that social media English in the Philippines is an emergent register with its own syntactic and pragmatic norms (Dimaculangan & Sarmiento, 2024). Malon's analysis of Filipino-Visayan English in Facebook posts explicitly considers syntax and semantic relations alongside lexical and graphological aspects (Malon, 2023). Using content analysis, the study documents localized syntactic and semantic patterns (e.g., non-standard word order, calqued structures) as distinctive features rather than "errors" within a World Englishes framework (Malon, 2023).

Monderin and Go, working across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, quantified Netspeak lexical patterns (e.g., abbreviations, homophones) in Filipino comments on popular culture accounts (Monderin & Go, 2021). Although focused on lexis, their evidence of platform- and domain-specific variation suggests that syntactic choices may also be sensitive to topic (e.g., politics vs. entertainment) and medium (Monderin & Go, 2021). Salvacion and Limpot examined "Filipino Netspeak" in a closed Facebook group, describing linguistic features such as compounding, blending, abbreviations, unique orthography, unconventional punctuation, and emojis (Salvacion & Limpot, 2022).

Their discourse-analytic approach shows how creative forms are embedded in interactional turns, which is crucial for any future syntactic analysis of group-based communities like AFAM-hunter groups (Salvacion & Limpot, 2022). Cabantac-Lumabi focused on backward slang forms like "lodi" and "werpa" in Facebook statuses, employing lexical analysis and Optimality Theory to argue that these items function within a "grammar of novel items" in Philippine English (Cabantac-Lumabi, 2020).

This demonstrates how innovative lexicon becomes syntactically routinized in everyday posts. Grandez et al. (2023) analysed Generation Z slang on Facebook, identifying multiple word-formation processes (coinage, blending, clipping, affixation, reduplication, spelling change). Although morphological, the study shows how youth slang terms can fulfill different syntactic roles (nouns, verbs, adjectives) in online discourse (Grandez et al., 2023).

Direct syntactic analysis of social media language is emerging. Afreh et al. examined syntactic complexity in political Facebook posts using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, finding a strategic predominance of declarative clauses, complex sentence structures, and non-finite clauses to achieve precision and engagement in political messaging (Afreh et al., 2024).

Their methodology – manual clause parsing and sentence-type classification – offers a model for analysing clause structure and information packaging in any Facebook genre. Gonzales investigated adverb placement in infinitival constructions in Twitter-style Philippine English, using a 135-million-word corpus and Bayesian modelling (Gonzales, 2024).

Although based on Twitter, it demonstrates that fine-grained syntactic variation in Philippine English online can be modelled with both language-internal and social factors (age, sex, geography, time), which could be adapted to Facebook corpora and to gendered communities such as AFAM-hunter groups (Gonzales, 2024). Tabotabo et al. studied the Cebuano filler “kuan” in social media content, showing that it can occupy multiple syntactic slots (subject, verb, object, complements) in online speech-like discourse (Tabotabo et al., 2024). This highlights how pragmatic particles and fillers in Philippine languages become syntactically multifunctional in digital communication.

Vacalares et al. examined lexical variations of Misamisnon Bisaya in Facebook posts and argued for future work on phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects of regional varieties (Vacalares et al., 2024). This underlines the importance of regionally grounded syntax in Philippine social media research.

Gendered and stance-related language practices on Facebook are also relevant to AFAM-hunter communities, which are often gendered and relational. Ravago et al. compared disagreement strategies of Filipino and Chinese professionals on Facebook, showing that users employ direct and indirect syntactic strategies (declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives, negation, downtoners) and specific lexical markers (modal verbs, discourse markers) in gender-differentiated ways (Ravago et al., 2024). These findings are directly applicable to examining conflict, teasing, or boundary-setting in AFAM-hunter group discourse.

Frace's qualitative analysis of gendered language in Facebook status updates documented word compounds and blends, abbreviations and acronyms, creative punctuation, and stylized spelling among male and female high school students (Frace, 2024). While lexico-graphological, it underscores how gender shapes stylistic and interactional choices in youth Facebook communication.

Rivera and Adriatico, and separately Asarcon et al., studied sexist language on Facebook pages of female celebrities, identifying overt and indirect sexism as well as linguistic features like non-standard capitalization, reduplicated letters, acronyms, and interjections (Rivera & Adriatico, 2022; Asarcon et al., 2024).

These analyses show how stance and evaluation are encoded syntactically and graphologically in comments, relevant for any study of romantic, sexualized, or racialized discourse. Suico's discourse analysis of fraudsters' Facebook posts in networking businesses identified typical linguistic elements such as simple sentence structures, second-person pronouns, high-pressure imperatives, and supportive pronouncements (Suico, 2024). These persuasive syntactic patterns may parallel recruitment or “pitching” language in AFAM-hunter spaces. Banuag's (2020) study of code-switching in Facebook posts and comments documented forms (tag, intra-word) and pragmatic reasons (group identity, emphasis, exclusion, emotion)

For AFAM-hunter groups, similar Tagalog-English or regional code-switching likely marks in-group solidarity and stance toward foreign men. Beyond syntax narrowly defined, several works examine how Filipino social media users innovate lexically and morphologically, shaping the syntactic resources available in online discourse. Studies on Netspeak and

emerging lexical patterns show frequent use of abbreviations, homophones, emojis, and non-standard orthography in Filipino social media comments (Salvacion & Limpot, 2022; Monderin & Go, 2021). Bautista et al. (2025) (semantic and morphological analysis of Filipino social media lexicon) and Aquino et al. (2025) on Filipino political sentiment (Filipino social media) similarly foreground the need for models and descriptions attuned to localized online language, although detailed content is not available here (Bautista et al., 2025; Aquino et al., 2025)

Based on these language and social factors, basically, this research aims to analyze the behavior of how Filipino AFAM Hunters use the English language in their Facebook posts. It prioritizes identifying the common syntactic structures and deviations found in their posts and understanding how socio-economic background and age affect their proficiency in using English online. This research aims to discover new insights into how social background influences their English use on social media. This research aims to discover new insights into how social background influences their English use on social media.

2. Method

2.1 Participants/Corpus

This study analysed language usage, focusing on code-switching and syntactic structure, within the Filipino AFAM Hunters in the Facebook group. The data corpus was sourced from the Facebook group "Afam Philippines (Foreigner and Filipino Dating)," which currently comprises around 904,700 members, including both Filipinos and foreigners looking for relationships. For analysis, 15 Facebook posts with substantial user engagement were randomly selected from this group. As in similar qualitative studies, the researchers considered the concept of data saturation in their sampling to determine when to stop collecting data.

2.2 Ethical Consideration

Following the selection of the corpus, the researchers ensured confidentiality and ethical compliance with the data gathering and analysis. The posts were publicly available in the Facebook group; therefore, no formal approval from the participants for the analysis of their posts was obtained. The researchers, however, removed all personally identifiable information, including the participants' names and photos, and any other private information, in order to protect the individuals whose posts were published online when analysed.

In the collection of corpora and the duration of the research, the dignity, rights, and safety of online users were given utmost regard. The data was used entirely for academic purposes, and the researchers did not make any interpretations that may be harmful or discriminatory to individuals.

In addition, the Gender and Development (GAD) framework also guided the research strictly to ensure that the data corpus did not contain any biases (in language, analysis, or final interpretations) against any specific gender. All posts, regardless of the author's (post author's) gender, age, and/or socio-economic status, were regarded equally.

2.3 Data Analysis

In the syntactic analysis, the researchers were guided by the following steps (Rahmawati & Rachmi, 2022; Morley, 2006, as cited in Evha et al., 2019): (1) Segmentation I – Identify boundaries of clauses/words within the posts. (2) Classification I – Classify each word according to its part of speech. (3). Segmentation II – Identify phrases. (4) Classification II – Classify syntactic categories (subject, predicate, object, complement, adjunct). (5) Grammatical Functions – Compare the functions of each clause with prescriptive grammar. (6) Identifying Deviations – Note errors like subject-verb disagreement, omissions, tense misuse, fragments, and ill-formed sentences. (7) Drawing Structures – Illustrate diagrams to show both standard and deviant patterns.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

For data gathering, the researchers chose 15 post captions from the Filipino Afam Hunters Facebook group page. These data were analysed syntactically, and through the analysis, the following types of errors were identified. The table below highlights specific captions, the observed deviations, and the proposed sentence patterns.

Table 1: Proposed sentence patterns

Posts' Captions	Features that Deviate from the Standard American English	Sentence Pattern
Good noon everyone Ofelia Eugenio from Nueva ecija 50 years old and I'm wedow	missing verbs, punctuation; unclear subject referencing; spelling error "wedow"	S + A + C
Hello a pleasant day to of us here I'm carina from Philippines..	wrong prepositions, missing article, capitalization, punctuation	A + S + P + C + A
Single need true love	missing subject, incomplete sentence	S + P + O
Hi i am single filipina women im looking for serious relationship 😊	noun agreement error ("women" for "woman"), missing punctuation, wrong verb	A + S + P + C + S + P + O
Hi handsome my single. Age 31. I want to have a serious husband	fragmented clauses, missing linking verbs, article error	S + P + C
I am single and looking for a life partner to be with. 😊	correct structure with minor redundancy	S + P + C + A
Hello everyone thanks for accepting me on the group I'm single and searching for a serious and long term relationship 🤝 kindly text me	run-on sentence, missing punctuation, capitalization error	A + S + P + C + A
Hi I'm Rain Almonte 48 yrs old single mom have 2 kids but they already big now I'm from philippines	run-on sentence, missing punctuation, article error, word form ("big" → "grown")	S + P + C + A
hello everyone I'm here single mom from Philippines if u interested in serious about life pm me but if u not serious don't pm me because i have no time for that thank you	run-on sentence, wrong verb form, inconsistent capitalization	A + S + P + C + A
Hellodear I'm single mom from Philippines 45 year's old I need partner of my life	wrong spelling ("Hellodear"), missing articles, punctuation errors, possessive error ("year's")	A + S + P + C + A
I miss my chat partner. He didn't feel like he was caught by his wife 🤔🤔🤔🤔	informal expression, mixed tone, missing article ("his wife"), slang	S + P + O
Hi hilo im 50 cagayan im a widow	repetition ("hi hilo"), missing prepositions, punctuation errors	A + S + P + C
Hi I am newbe here looking for friends and maybe more I am from philipines.	spelling error ("newbe"), missing punctuation, capitalization errors	S + P + C + A
I really need serious relationship that will end up to marriage	article error ("a" before "serious relationship"), preposition error ("to" → "in")	S + P + O + A
I'm Philippine women? single, widow She is looking tired 😊	subject-verb disagreement, plural error ("women" → "woman"), punctuation error, adjective misuse ("tired-looking")	S + P + C

As shown in the table, the data gathered commonly demonstrates syntactic deviations in run-on sentences, punctuation, missing articles, subject-verb and noun agreement, spelling, and prepositions. Additionally, the sentence pattern **A + S + P + C + A** is commonly found among the posts. This result aligns with the related literature, which highlights social media's impact on

language use transformation, allowing users to express their message with clarity and emotions rather than grammatical accuracy (Riparip, 2024). Furthermore, this finding relates to studies of language decline influenced by age and socio-economic factors, since many Filipino users of online dating platforms such as Facebook are part of older generations and lower socio-economic backgrounds who receive inadequate English language education (Santos et al., 2022; Shamim, 2011). These aspects led to the informal use of grammar in posts, demonstrating that communication in social media platforms focuses on emotional expression over rules of grammar.

3.2 Discussion

The present syntactic analysis of posts from Filipino “AFAM hunters” Facebook groups can be situated within broader work on Filipino social media discourse and Facebook-based interaction. First, Facebook interactions among Filipinos are consistently shown to be highly expressive, informal, and creatively structured, with syntax and lexis adjusted to social goals rather than to standard norms. Studies of Philippine English in Facebook posts reveal rich use of verbs and nouns to convey actions, emotions, and evaluations, with adjectives and adverbs supporting expressivity and stance-taking (Fragio & Protacio, 2025).

Filipino users draw on non-standard spelling, code-switching, clippings, and punctuation play (e.g., repeated letters, unconventional capitalization) as graphological and syntactic resources for emphasis and affect rather than mere “errors” (Malon, 2023; Fragio & Protacio, 2025). In AFAM hunter groups, similar syntactic looseness—elliptical clauses, fragmentary sentences, or clause chaining—is likely part of a broader strategy to create intimacy, humour, and in-group solidarity, not simply a lack of grammatical control.

Second, interactional and pragmatic work on Filipino Facebook discourse shows that syntax is tightly bound to relational work. In disagreement sequences, Filipino users alternate between direct and indirect strategies, often relying on interrogatives, declaratives, and imperatives that are syntactically simple but pragmatically rich (Ravago et al., 2024). Filipino males tend to be more direct and corrective, while females more often combine direct negation with softeners (e.g., downtoners, sarcastic questions) 1. In AFAM-focused groups, this gendered patterning can be expected to surface in flirting, teasing, and gatekeeping posts, where syntactic choices (e.g., direct imperatives vs. hedged questions) index gendered identities, boldness, or modesty. The group’s courtship orientation may amplify directness, but indirect and playful syntactic forms likely remain important for face-saving and social cohesion.

Third, Facebook-based Filipino communities use language to construct shared representations of identity, aspiration, and mobility (Umel, 2024). Migrant-focused groups, for example, weave recurrent topics and recurrent phrasings that crystallize communal ideas and values (Umel, 2024). AFAM hunter groups can be read similarly: syntactic patterns such as repeated templates (“Sana all + [NP/VP]”, “Looking for + [AFAM descriptor]”) are not random but become formulaic constructions that encode shared fantasies, norms, and moral boundaries. The mixed use of Filipino, English, and sometimes other languages, noted as a key challenge in computational analyses of Filipino Facebook data (Umel, 2024) is also integral to AFAM hunter group syntax, where code-switching within clauses and across clause boundaries performs stance, sophistication, or cosmopolitan identity.

Finally, regional and sociolectal variation in Philippine English on Facebook indicates that local syntactic innovations are emerging as stable features, not mere deviations 4. Studies of Visayan English in social media show distinctive syntactic and semantic patterns driven by localization and online interaction 4. AFAM hunter groups, being niche and highly networked, are likely incubators of similarly distinctive constructions (e.g., recurrent vocatives, address forms for foreigners, or patterned uses of modals and aspect markers) that, over time, may solidify into recognizable micro-variety features.

Overall, the syntactic patterns in Filipino AFAM hunters' posts should be interpreted as socially motivated choices embedded in Philippine English's evolving online ecology. They participate in broader trends of expressive, relational, and identity-building uses of syntax on Facebook, shaped by gender, culture, and the specific goals of the community (Ravago et al., 2024; Umel, 2024; Malon, 2023; Fragio & Protacio, 2025).

4. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from this study based on the findings and analysis of data. The captions from Filipino Afam Hunters show syntactical errors such as inaccurate punctuation, mistakes in spelling, and a lack of subject-verb agreement, which shows limited mastery of grammatical rules. The most used sentence pattern observed followed the A + S + P + C + A sequence, and despite the given deviations, their sentences remain generally understandable, focusing more on clear communication or connecting with foreigners rather than strict grammatical accuracy.

These patterns of syntactic deviations may be affected by socioeconomic background and age or generation. Many group members of the Filipino AFAM Hunters are old and come from less advantaged backgrounds. These two factors reflect that they have limited English proficiency due to limited opportunities to learn the language in schools, which results in errors in their online posts. Considering the results and the limitations of the study, the following are recommended.

The corpus for future studies should include a wider range of captions from Filipino Afam Hunters online platforms, specifically on Facebook, getting examples with both syntactically correct and frequent errors in spelling and punctuation. Analysing multiple posts per user will improve the reliability of findings. This will help track real language use and better identify which specific deviations are most common; and

Future researchers may gather data from additional online platforms where Filipinos and foreigners interact, such as Instagram, TikTok, and dating applications, to compare syntactic patterns across different digital spaces. In this study, data were collected only from Facebook, which provided a limited view of the varieties of linguistic behaviours. Expanding data sources to multiple platforms will offer broader insights into how the medium, context, and audience shape English usage and syntax.

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