

Does Grammar Matter to Gen Z? Analyzing Their Interest and Attitude Toward Grammar in Everyday English Conversations

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored whether grammar still matters to Generation Z by analyzing their interest and attitudes toward grammar in everyday English conversations. Specifically, the study examined how Gen Z individuals express grammar awareness, what attitudes they hold toward grammatical correctness, and how these perspectives influence their actual conversational practices. Guided by the theories of Communicative Competence, Language Attitude, and Sociolinguistic Variation, the study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Twenty-five purposively selected Gen Z undergraduate students from selected higher education institutions in the Ilocos Region and Eastern Visayas, Philippines participated in semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that participants demonstrated context-dependent grammar awareness, becoming more conscious of grammatical accuracy in formal and professional interactions while adopting relaxed language practices in casual conversations. Participants also associated grammar with credibility, clarity, and self-confidence, although many prioritized communicative effectiveness and conversational comfort over strict grammatical correctness. Furthermore, the study found that participants intentionally adjusted their grammar depending on audience, social setting, and communicative purpose. These findings suggest that Gen Z does not reject grammar entirely; rather, they treat it as a flexible communicative resource shaped by context and interactional needs. The study highlights the evolving role of grammar in contemporary communication and emphasizes the importance of contextualized language instruction in modern English education.

Keywords: Generation Z, grammar attitudes, conversational English, language variation, communicative behavior

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in human communication, shaping how individuals construct meaning, express identity, and negotiate social relationships. In English language use, grammar has traditionally been regarded as a fundamental component of clarity, coherence, and communicative competence. However, contemporary communication practices have evolved alongside rapid technological and social changes, particularly among younger generations. Generation Z (Gen Z), often characterized as

digital natives, engage in diverse and dynamic linguistic practices that challenge conventional norms of language use (Alruthaya et al., 2021). Their exposure to varied communicative environments has contributed to shifting perceptions of language, including how grammar is valued and applied in everyday interactions.

Recent studies suggest that Gen Z's engagement with language is shaped by fluid, context-dependent practices rather than rigid adherence to formal grammatical rules. For instance, research indicates that Gen Z learners often prioritize clarity, tone, and communicative intent over strict grammatical accuracy, especially in informal settings (Adalia et al., 2025). Similarly, studies on digital English practices highlight how the use of abbreviations, code-switching, and simplified structures reflects both linguistic creativity and adaptation to contemporary communication demands (Lutfiana & Permatasari, 2025). These evolving practices point to a broader transformation in how grammar is perceived—not merely as a set of rules, but as a flexible resource shaped by context and purpose.

Despite these developments, grammar continues to hold institutional importance, particularly in academic and professional domains. Empirical evidence shows that formal learning environments still reinforce grammatical correctness as a marker of credibility, competence, and academic success (Demir, 2021). Moreover, language attitudes research demonstrates that Gen Z individuals are capable of shifting between informal and formal registers depending on communicative expectations, indicating an awareness of grammatical norms even when they choose not to strictly follow them (Suyitno, 2025). This suggests a complex relationship between grammar knowledge, attitudes, and actual usage, rather than a simple decline in grammatical concern.

However, a critical gap remained in the literature. While existing studies have examined Gen Z's language practices in digital environments or their general language attitudes, there is limited qualitative research that explores how Gen Z individuals themselves interpret the importance of grammar and how these interpretations influence their everyday conversational practices. Much of the current research relies on quantitative measures or focuses on specific contexts such as classroom interaction or online communication, leaving a lack of in-depth, experience-based insights into how grammar is negotiated in daily, real-life conversations (Harmaini, 2026; Ivenz, 2024). Furthermore, there is insufficient understanding of how “interest” and “attitude” toward grammar manifest in actual communicative behavior.

Addressing this gap is essential for developing a more nuanced understanding of language use among contemporary learners. Language is not only a system of rules but also a social practice influenced by identity, context, and interaction. Studies on linguistic identity among Gen Z highlight how individuals actively negotiate their language choices in response to social expectations, cultural influences, and personal expression (Suizo, 2024). These findings underscore the need to examine grammar not merely as a technical construct but as a socially situated phenomenon shaped by users' perspectives and experiences.

This study is anchored in three complementary theoretical perspectives that explain how grammar is perceived and used in everyday communication. First, Communicative Competence Theory proposed by Dell Hymes (1972) emphasizes that effective communication goes beyond grammatical accuracy to include appropriateness, context, and meaning, suggesting that speakers may prioritize communicative success over strict adherence to rules. Second, Language Attitude Theory, as discussed by Wallace Lambert (1967), explains how individuals' beliefs and evaluations about language influence their linguistic behavior, making it relevant in examining how Gen Z's perceptions of grammar shape their usage. Third, Sociolinguistic Variation Theory advanced by William Labov (1972) highlights that language use varies depending on social context, audience, and purpose, supporting the idea that grammar in everyday conversations is fluid and context-dependent. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how Gen Z negotiates grammar not merely as a fixed system of rules but as a flexible communicative resource shaped by context, attitudes, and social interaction.

In response to these gaps, the present study sought to explore whether grammar matters to Gen Z by analyzing their interest and attitudes toward grammar in everyday English conversations. Specifically, it aimed to investigate (1) how Gen Z individuals perceive the importance of grammar, (2) how they express

their attitudes toward its use, and (3) how these perspectives influence their actual communication practices. Specifically, it endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. How do Gen Z individuals express their interest in grammar during everyday English conversations?
2. What attitudes do Gen Z individuals exhibit toward the use of grammar in everyday conversations?
3. How do these interests and attitudes influence their actual grammar use in conversational settings?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar as a Context-Dependent Communicative Resource

Recent sociolinguistic research consistently demonstrates that grammar is not used as a fixed set of rules but as a context-sensitive resource shaped by social interaction. Studies emphasize that linguistic variation is a natural and systematic feature of language, influenced by situational factors such as audience, setting, and communicative purpose. For instance, Stollhans (2020) explains that language users are exposed to multiple forms of variation, including non-standard grammatical structures, which are functionally appropriate in specific contexts rather than inherently incorrect. Similarly, Wigdorowitz (2022) argues that contextual linguistic diversity directly affects how individuals perceive and produce variation, highlighting that sensitivity to grammar shifts depending on the communicative environment. These findings reinforce the idea that grammar is dynamically negotiated in interaction rather than rigidly applied.

This perspective is further supported by contemporary sociolinguistic scholarship, which frames language as inherently variable and socially embedded. Wang et al. (2023) note that modern sociolinguistics has expanded its understanding of language as a multimodal and context-driven system of meaning-making, where variation plays a central role in authentic communication. In line with this, recent work by Childs (2025) highlights that grammatical variation is strongly influenced by social meaning and interactional factors, demonstrating that speakers adjust grammatical forms to align with social identities and communicative goals. Together, these studies establish that grammar functions as a flexible communicative resource, shaped by context and social dynamics. However, while these studies explain how variation occurs, they provide limited insight into how individuals—particularly Gen Z—interpret and rationalize their grammar use in everyday conversations, which remains an important gap addressed by the present study.

Attitudes Toward Grammar and Perceived Relevance

Recent research indicates that learners' attitudes toward grammar are context-sensitive and evaluative, rather than uniformly positive or negative. In applied linguistics, grammar continues to be associated with correctness and credibility, especially in formal communication; however, its perceived importance often shifts in informal settings. For example, Ken Hyland and Jiang (2021) found that students recognize grammatical accuracy as essential for academic writing and professional communication, yet they tend to adopt more flexible language practices in everyday interaction. Similarly, Jean-Marc Dewaele and Li (2020) highlight that learners' emotional and social orientations toward language significantly influence their engagement with grammatical norms, suggesting that attitudes toward grammar are shaped not only by knowledge but also by affective and contextual factors. These studies show that grammar is still valued, but its relevance is situationally negotiated.

Further evidence suggests that attitudes toward grammar are influenced by both educational experiences and communicative environments. In a study on language beliefs among university students, Zhang (2023) reported that learners often view grammar as important for accuracy but not always necessary for effective communication, particularly in peer-based interactions. Likewise, Lee (2022) found that

students consciously adjust their level of grammatical accuracy depending on their audience and purpose, reflecting an awareness of when grammar “matters.” These findings align with the view that attitudes toward grammar are not fixed but are shaped by practical communicative needs and social expectations. However, while these studies identify general patterns in attitudes, they largely rely on survey-based or quantitative approaches, leaving a gap in understanding how learners themselves articulate and justify these attitudes in real conversational contexts—an aspect that the present study seeks to explore.

Discrepancy Between Grammatical Knowledge and Conversational Language Use

Recent studies suggest that possessing grammatical knowledge does not necessarily result in consistent grammatical accuracy in everyday communication. Contemporary language users, particularly younger speakers, often demonstrate awareness of standard grammatical conventions while simultaneously choosing to modify or simplify them in actual interaction. According to Römer and Garner (2021), learners frequently exhibit a distinction between their formal understanding of grammar and their spontaneous language production, especially in conversational contexts where fluency and immediacy are prioritized over accuracy. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2020) argues that grammar should not be viewed merely as a static body of rules but as a dynamic resource influenced by communicative purpose and context. These findings indicate that grammar use in real-life interaction is shaped not only by competence but also by practical and social considerations.

This discrepancy is further evident in studies examining informal communication among younger generations. For instance, Sultana and Dovchin (2021) found that young language users often intentionally deviate from standard grammar to express identity, solidarity, and social belonging within peer interactions. In the same vein, Vessey (2022) explains that conversational language naturally accommodates flexibility, including grammatical reduction and simplification, as part of authentic discourse practices. These studies collectively suggest that grammatical choices in conversation are often deliberate rather than accidental, reflecting speakers’ adaptation to communicative goals and social environments. However, while existing literature acknowledges the gap between grammatical knowledge and actual usage, there remains limited qualitative research exploring how Gen Z individuals personally explain and rationalize these differences in their everyday English conversations, thereby justifying the need for the present study.

Gen Z’s Language Practices in Contemporary Communication

More studies show that Gen Z’s communication practices are strongly influenced by contemporary digital and social environments, resulting in evolving language patterns that challenge traditional notions of grammar and formality. In a phenomenological study involving Filipino Gen Z participants, Minoza et al. (2024) found that young individuals actively negotiate their linguistic choices depending on social interaction, cultural exposure, and communication purpose, demonstrating that language use is deeply connected to identity and social belonging. Similarly, Lutfiana and Permatasari (2025) observed that Gen Z frequently employs abbreviations, slang, code-switching, and simplified grammatical structures in online and conversational communication, reflecting preferences for efficiency, creativity, and relatability. These findings suggest that contemporary communication practices encourage flexible and adaptive uses of grammar rather than strict adherence to conventional rules.

Moreover, research further indicates that Gen Z’s language behavior is shaped by evolving communicative norms and technological exposure. Marzona (2025) explains that digital interaction has accelerated linguistic change among younger generations, encouraging informal and expressive language forms that prioritize speed and interpersonal connection. In the same vein, Sohid and Rifai (2022) found that Gen Z learners generally exhibit positive attitudes toward English but vary in their language behaviors depending on social background, experience, and communicative environment. These studies collectively demonstrate that Gen Z’s grammar use cannot be separated from the broader realities of modern communication, where linguistic flexibility and contextual adaptation have become increasingly normalized. However, while existing literature discusses general language practices, limited studies

specifically explore how Gen Z personally perceives and rationalizes their grammar use in everyday English conversations, thereby reinforcing the relevance of the present study.

Audience and Situational Influence on Grammar Use

Studies in contemporary linguistics suggest that individuals adjust their grammar use depending on the audience, setting, and purpose of communication. Language behavior is often shaped by social expectations, leading speakers to shift between formal and informal grammatical patterns across contexts. According to Tagg (2021), conversational language in peer interaction tends to favor informality, simplified structures, and spontaneous expression, while more formal settings encourage greater attention to grammatical correctness and linguistic precision. Similarly, Nguyen and Hamid (2022) found that university students consciously modify their language use when communicating with teachers, classmates, or professionals, demonstrating an awareness of audience expectations in grammar use. These findings indicate that grammatical choices are not random but are strategically adapted according to situational demands.

This audience-sensitive use of grammar is further reinforced by research on linguistic accommodation and communicative behavior among younger speakers. Dooly and Vinagre (2021) explain that language users naturally adjust their linguistic forms to maintain social connection and communicative appropriateness during interaction. In the same vein, Al Zidjaly (2023) argues that informal communication environments often normalize relaxed grammatical conventions, particularly among younger generations who prioritize interpersonal engagement over strict correctness. These studies collectively suggest that grammar use is heavily influenced by the relationship between speakers and listeners, as well as by the communicative context itself. However, although previous studies acknowledge the role of audience and situation in shaping language behavior, limited qualitative research has explored how Gen Z individuals personally explain these adjustments in their everyday English conversations, which the present study seeks to investigate.

The reviewed literature collectively demonstrates that grammar in contemporary communication is increasingly viewed as a flexible and context-dependent aspect of language rather than a strictly fixed system of rules. Existing studies consistently show that language users, particularly younger generations, adjust their grammatical choices according to communicative purpose, audience, and social setting. Research further reveals that attitudes toward grammar are shaped by perceived relevance, with grammatical accuracy often prioritized in academic and professional contexts while becoming more relaxed in informal interaction. Moreover, previous studies indicate a noticeable discrepancy between grammatical knowledge and actual conversational usage, suggesting that speakers may intentionally simplify or modify grammar to achieve efficiency, express identity, or maintain social connection.

The literature also highlights that Gen Z's language practices are strongly influenced by modern communication environments and evolving linguistic norms. Studies emphasize that audience awareness, interpersonal relationships, and situational demands significantly affect how grammar is used in everyday interaction. Despite these contributions, most existing studies rely on quantitative approaches, corpus analyses, or generalized discussions of digital communication, resulting in limited qualitative exploration of how Gen Z individuals themselves perceive, interpret, and rationalize their grammar-related behaviors in real conversational contexts. Furthermore, few studies integrate the dimensions of grammar use, language attitudes, communicative context, and conversational practices within a single qualitative inquiry. Hence, the present study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth exploration of Gen Z's interest and attitudes toward grammar in everyday English conversations, focusing on how these perspectives shape their actual communicative practices.

METHODS

Research design and Locale

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore whether grammar matters to Gen Z by examining their interest and attitudes toward grammar in everyday English conversations. This design is appropriate as it allows for the collection of rich, straightforward descriptions of participants' perceptions and language practices within natural communicative contexts, without imposing complex theoretical interpretations. As noted by Sandelowski (2000), descriptive qualitative research is suitable when the objective is to provide a comprehensive summary of phenomena in the everyday terms of those who experience them. The study was conducted in selected higher education institutions in Ilocos Region and Eastern Visayas, Philippines, a linguistically diverse setting where English is widely used in academic and interpersonal communication, making it an appropriate locale for examining grammar use in authentic conversational contexts.

Respondents and Sampling Design

The respondents of this study consisted of 25 Gen Z undergraduate students aged 18–22, selected from higher education institutions in Ilocos Region and Eastern Visayas, Philippines. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, as they met specific inclusion criteria: (1) belonging to the Gen Z cohort, (2) currently enrolled in college, and (3) actively using English in both academic and everyday conversational contexts. This sampling technique was appropriate for identifying information-rich participants who could provide relevant insights into grammar use, interest, and attitudes in real-life communication. As explained by Palinkas et al. (2015), purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to select participants who possess specific characteristics and experiences that align with the objectives of the study, thereby ensuring depth and relevance of the collected data.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The study utilized a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument to elicit in-depth insights into Gen Z's interest and attitudes toward grammar in everyday English conversations. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, allowing participants to freely describe their perceptions, experiences, and actual language practices while enabling the researcher to probe for clarification and depth when necessary. To ensure content validity, the instrument was subjected to expert validation by specialists in English language teaching and research, who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews, conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms depending on participants' availability. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy. The collected data were transcribed verbatim for analysis. This approach is consistent with qualitative research practices, as semi-structured interviews provide flexibility while generating rich, detailed data grounded in participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, enabling the systematic identification and interpretation of patterns related to Gen Z's interest and attitudes toward grammar in everyday English conversations. Following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis involved familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, generating initial codes, organizing codes into potential themes, and refining these themes to ensure coherence and relevance to the research objectives. This process allowed for the extraction of meaningful insights grounded in participants' lived experiences. Alongside data analysis, ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifiable information, while all data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. These measures were implemented to uphold participants' rights, dignity, and well-being during the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1: How do Gen Z individuals express their interest in grammar during everyday English conversations?

Q1: How conscious are you of your grammar when speaking English in everyday conversations? Why?

Theme 1: Grammar Awareness Depends on Conversational Context

Eighteen out of the 25 participants expressed that they become conscious of their grammar only in specific conversational situations, particularly when interacting with teachers, professionals, unfamiliar individuals, or during academic discussions. Participants explained that grammar is less monitored in casual conversations with friends because mutual understanding is considered more important than grammatical correctness. However, they reported becoming more careful with their grammar when they believe the interaction requires professionalism, credibility, or a positive impression. These responses suggest that Gen Z participants do not completely disregard grammar; rather, they selectively prioritize it depending on the communicative context and audience involved.

One participant stated, *"I usually don't think too much about grammar when I'm talking to my friends because we understand each other anyway."* Another participant shared, *"When I'm speaking with professors or people I'm not close with, I try to be more careful because grammar affects how people see you."* These excerpts illustrate that grammar awareness among participants is influenced by social expectations and perceived formality within the interaction.

The findings support the Sociolinguistic Variation Theory of William Labov (1972), which explains that language use naturally changes according to social setting, audience, and communicative purpose. Similarly, Tagg (2021) emphasized that conversational language often becomes less formal in peer interaction, while formal settings encourage greater linguistic monitoring. The present findings agree with these perspectives, demonstrating that Gen Z participants adjust their grammatical attention according to contextual demands rather than applying the same level of grammatical accuracy in all conversations. This finding implies that grammar consciousness among Gen Z is shaped more by situational appropriateness than by strict adherence to linguistic rules. Their selective attention to grammar reflects adaptive communication strategies that prioritize both social connection and communicative effectiveness depending on the conversational environment.

Theme 2: Grammar Consciousness Reflects Self-Confidence in Communication

Eleven out of the 25 participants associated their awareness of grammar with their level of confidence when speaking English. Participants explained that being conscious of grammar helps them avoid embarrassment, misinterpretation, or negative judgment during conversations. Several respondents admitted that they mentally monitor their grammar because they fear making mistakes in front of others, especially when speaking in English fluently is often associated with intelligence or competence. This indicates that grammar awareness among Gen Z is not only linguistic but also emotional and psychological, as it influences how confident they feel in interpersonal communication.

One participant explained, *"I pay attention to my grammar because I don't want people to think I'm bad at English."* Another respondent shared, *"Sometimes I overthink my grammar while speaking because I'm scared of saying something wrong."* These statements reveal that grammatical consciousness is closely connected to self-perception and fear of social evaluation during communication.

The findings support the Language Attitude Theory of Wallace Lambert (1967), which suggests that individuals' beliefs and attitudes toward language influence their communicative behavior. The responses also align with the findings of Dewaele and Li (2020), who emphasized that emotional factors such as anxiety, confidence, and social pressure significantly affect language performance and linguistic choices. The present study similarly demonstrates that grammar awareness among Gen Z is partly driven by emotional concerns related to self-image and communicative acceptance. The implication of this finding suggests that

grammar use among Gen Z cannot be viewed solely as a matter of linguistic competence. Their consciousness of grammar is also shaped by social pressure and personal confidence, highlighting the importance of creating communicative environments where learners can use language without excessive fear of judgment or criticism.

Theme 3: *Some Participants Prioritize Message Delivery Over Grammatical Accuracy*

Nine out of the 25 participants expressed that they are not highly conscious of grammar during everyday conversations because they prioritize delivering their message clearly rather than speaking with perfect grammatical accuracy. Participants explained that as long as the listener understands their point, minor grammatical mistakes are not considered a serious concern. For these respondents, communication effectiveness is measured more by clarity and connection than by adherence to formal grammar rules. This reflects a practical and communicative approach to language use commonly observed in informal conversational settings.

One participant remarked, *"I focus more on expressing my thoughts clearly than making every sentence grammatically correct."* Another participant stated, *"As long as people understand what I mean, I don't really worry too much about grammar mistakes."* These responses suggest that some Gen Z individuals view grammar as secondary to the overall purpose of communication, especially in casual interactions.

The findings align with the Communicative Competence Theory of Dell Hymes (1972), which emphasizes that successful communication involves not only grammatical competence but also the ability to convey meaning appropriately within social contexts. The results also support the findings of Stollhans (2020), who explained that language users often adapt linguistic forms based on communicative needs and situational appropriateness rather than strict grammatical conformity. The present findings therefore suggest that Gen Z participants value functional communication and interpersonal understanding over grammatical perfection in everyday conversations. This finding implies that grammar among Gen Z is often treated as a supportive component of communication rather than its central objective. Their emphasis on message delivery highlights the evolving nature of conversational English, where communicative efficiency and social interaction frequently take precedence over formal grammatical precision.

Q2: How do you usually react when you notice grammatical mistakes in your own English conversations?

Theme 1: *Immediate Self-Correction During Conversations*

Fifteen out of the 25 participants shared that they usually correct themselves immediately whenever they notice grammatical mistakes while speaking English. Participants explained that self-correction helps them avoid misunderstanding and maintain clarity during conversations. Others mentioned that correcting themselves has become a habit because they want to sound more fluent, competent, or socially presentable when communicating in English. This indicates that many Gen Z individuals still value grammatical accuracy, particularly when they become consciously aware of their mistakes during interaction.

One participant stated, *"When I notice a grammar mistake, I usually correct myself right away because it bothers me if I leave it wrong."* Another participant explained, *"I try to fix it immediately so the conversation sounds clearer and more organized."* These responses suggest that self-correction functions both as a communicative strategy and as a reflection of personal standards in language use.

The findings support the Communicative Competence Theory of Dell Hymes (1972), which emphasizes that effective communication involves not only delivering meaning but also adjusting language appropriately within interaction. The responses also align with the findings of Dewaele and Li (2020), who noted that language users often become highly aware of linguistic performance due to emotional and social

considerations tied to communication. The present findings therefore indicate that grammar awareness among Gen Z remains active, particularly when participants perceive mistakes as affecting clarity or self-presentation. This finding implies that many Gen Z individuals still maintain a degree of grammatical sensitivity despite the increasing informality of everyday communication. Their tendency to self-correct suggests that grammar continues to hold personal and communicative value, especially in maintaining confidence and conversational effectiveness.

Theme 2: Ignoring Minor Grammatical Mistakes in Casual Conversations

Eight out of the 25 participants expressed that they usually ignore minor grammatical mistakes during conversations, especially when the interaction is informal or fast-paced. Participants explained that constantly correcting themselves can interrupt the flow of communication and make conversations feel unnatural. For these respondents, maintaining comfort and spontaneity in interaction is more important than achieving perfect grammatical accuracy. This suggests that some Gen Z individuals view grammar as flexible in casual communication, particularly when meaning is still clearly understood by the listener.

One participant shared, *"If it's just a small mistake, I usually let it pass because stopping to correct myself feels awkward."* Another respondent explained, *"I don't really react that much unless the mistake changes the meaning of what I'm saying."* These responses indicate that participants selectively evaluate the importance of grammatical accuracy depending on the effect of the mistake on communication.

The findings align with the Sociolinguistic Variation Theory of William Labov (1972), which explains that language behavior naturally varies across social contexts and communicative situations. The results also support the observations of Tagg (2021), who noted that informal conversational settings often encourage relaxed grammatical structures in favor of conversational fluency and interpersonal engagement. The present findings therefore suggest that Gen Z participants prioritize communicative ease and natural interaction over constant grammatical monitoring in everyday conversations. This finding implies that grammatical flexibility has become normalized in casual communication among Gen Z. Rather than interpreting grammatical lapses as failures, participants often view them as acceptable parts of spontaneous interaction, provided that communication remains effective and socially comfortable.

Theme 3: Emotional Reactions Toward Grammatical Mistakes

Seven out of the 25 participants revealed that noticing grammatical mistakes in their conversations often triggers emotional reactions such as embarrassment, frustration, or self-consciousness. Participants explained that even minor errors can make them feel uncomfortable, particularly when speaking with fluent English speakers or in situations where they fear being judged. Some respondents shared that they tend to overthink their speech after realizing they made a grammatical mistake, showing that grammar awareness is closely tied to emotional and social experiences in communication.

One participant admitted, *"I get embarrassed sometimes because I feel like people might judge how I speak."* Another respondent stated, *"When I notice a mistake after saying it, I keep thinking about it even after the conversation ends."* These excerpts demonstrate that grammatical mistakes are not always treated casually, as they can affect participants' confidence and emotional comfort during interaction.

The findings support the Language Attitude Theory of Wallace Lambert (1967), which explains that attitudes toward language strongly influence communicative behavior and self-perception. The responses also align with Dewaele and Li (2020), who emphasized that emotional variables such as anxiety and fear of evaluation significantly affect second-language communication. The present findings similarly reveal that grammar consciousness among Gen Z is connected not only to language competence but also to emotional sensitivity and social perception. This finding implies that grammar remains socially meaningful among Gen Z despite the increasing informality of modern communication. The emotional responses associated with grammatical mistakes suggest that English proficiency continues to influence confidence, identity, and perceived social competence in conversational settings.

Objective 2: What attitudes do Gen Z individuals exhibit toward the use of grammar in everyday conversations?

Q1: *What are your thoughts about using correct grammar in casual English conversations?*

Theme 1: Correct Grammar Reflects Respect and Good Communication

Fourteen out of the 25 participants viewed correct grammar as an important component of respectful and effective communication, even in casual English conversations. Participants explained that using proper grammar helps avoid misunderstandings and creates a better impression during interaction. Although they acknowledged that casual conversations do not always require perfect grammatical accuracy, they still believed that making an effort to speak properly reflects attentiveness, education, and consideration toward the listener. For these respondents, grammar was not simply about following rules but about communicating clearly and responsibly.

One participant expressed, *“Using correct grammar shows that you actually care about how you communicate with people.”* Another respondent stated, *“Even in casual conversations, I think good grammar helps people understand each other better.”* These responses suggest that participants associate grammar with conversational clarity and social respect rather than with strict formality alone.

The findings support the Communicative Competence Theory of Dell Hymes (1972), which emphasizes that effective communication involves using language appropriately according to social context and communicative purpose. The results also align with Hyland and Jiang (2021), who found that grammatical accuracy continues to be associated with credibility and competence, particularly in interactions where individuals seek to maintain positive social impressions. The present findings therefore indicate that many Gen Z individuals still attribute social and communicative value to correct grammar despite the growing informality of contemporary conversations. This finding implies that grammar remains relevant among Gen Z, not necessarily as a rigid standard, but as a communicative tool that contributes to mutual understanding and interpersonal respect. Their responses demonstrate that casual communication does not automatically eliminate awareness of linguistic responsibility in conversation.

Theme 2: Grammar Is Important, but Communication Matters More

Ten out of the 25 participants expressed that while correct grammar is beneficial in conversations, it should not become more important than the actual message being communicated. Participants emphasized that casual conversations are meant to feel natural and comfortable, making perfect grammar less necessary as long as understanding is achieved. Several respondents explained that excessive focus on grammatical correctness can make interactions feel forced, intimidating, or less genuine. This suggests that many Gen Z individuals value communication effectiveness and interpersonal connection more than strict grammatical precision in everyday conversations.

One participant remarked, *“Good grammar is nice, but I think being able to express yourself clearly matters more.”* Another respondent explained, *“Sometimes people focus too much on grammar that they forget the point of the conversation.”* These excerpts illustrate that participants perceive grammar as supportive rather than central to meaningful interaction.

The findings reflect the principles of the Communicative Approach in language use, which prioritizes meaning-making and successful interaction over constant grammatical accuracy. The responses also support the observations of Stollhans (2020), who explained that language users naturally adapt grammatical forms according to communicative needs and social context. In the present study, participants demonstrated that grammar is often evaluated based on its practical contribution to communication rather than its strict correctness alone. This finding implies that Gen Z individuals tend to adopt a balanced perspective toward grammar in casual conversations. While they recognize its role in promoting clarity, they also believe that conversations should remain spontaneous, relatable, and centered on authentic interaction rather than linguistic perfection.

Theme 3: Casual Conversations Allow Greater Grammatical Flexibility

Eight out of the 25 participants believed that casual English conversations do not require strict grammatical accuracy because informal interaction naturally allows more relaxed language use. Respondents explained that when speaking with friends or peers, they often prioritize comfort, humor, and conversational flow over constructing perfectly grammatical sentences. Some participants even described grammatical looseness as part of how their generation communicates authentically, especially in spontaneous discussions where overly formal speech may sound unnatural or distant. This perspective reflects an understanding of grammar as adaptable rather than fixed within all communicative situations.

One participant commented, *“If I use super formal grammar with my friends, it honestly sounds weird and too serious.”* Another respondent shared, *“Casual conversations are supposed to feel easy, so I don’t think every sentence needs to be grammatically perfect.”* These responses indicate that participants associate relaxed grammar with conversational intimacy and social ease.

The findings resonate with the Sociolinguistic Variation Theory of William Labov (1972), which explains that linguistic forms shift according to social relationships and interactional settings. The results also parallel the work of Tagg (2021), who noted that informal communication environments encourage conversational styles that favor spontaneity and relational closeness over linguistic formality. The present findings therefore suggest that many Gen Z individuals intentionally adjust their grammatical strictness to align with the social atmosphere of casual interaction.

This finding implies that grammatical flexibility has become a socially accepted feature of everyday communication among Gen Z. Rather than viewing informal grammar as a deficiency, participants appear to interpret it as a practical and socially appropriate way of sustaining natural and engaging conversations.

Q2: Do you think grammar still matters in today’s generation? Why or why not?

Theme 1: Grammar Remains Important for Professional and Academic Credibility

Sixteen out of the 25 participants believed that grammar still matters in today’s generation, particularly in academic, professional, and formal communication settings. Participants explained that correct grammar continues to influence how individuals are perceived in terms of intelligence, competence, and professionalism. While they acknowledged that casual conversations today are more relaxed, they emphasized that grammar becomes important in situations where clear and credible communication is expected. For many respondents, grammar remains relevant because it affects opportunities, impressions, and the seriousness with which a person is taken by others.

One participant stated, *“People may not care that much in casual chats, but grammar still matters when you’re applying for jobs or speaking professionally.”* Another respondent shared, *“Good grammar makes you sound more educated and confident, especially in important conversations.”* These responses indicate that participants associate grammatical accuracy with social credibility and communicative professionalism.

The findings support the observations of Hyland and Jiang (2021), who explained that grammatical competence continues to function as a marker of credibility and authority in academic and professional discourse. The results also align with the Language Attitude Theory of Wallace Lambert (1967), which suggests that attitudes toward language influence how speakers evaluate themselves and others in communication. In the present study, participants demonstrated that despite the informality of modern communication, grammar still carries symbolic value in contexts where social evaluation and performance are involved. This finding implies that Gen Z does not necessarily reject grammar as irrelevant. Instead, participants appear to recognize its continuing importance in situations tied to achievement, reputation, and formal interaction, suggesting that grammar retains both practical and social significance in contemporary communication.

Theme 2: Grammar Matters Less Because Modern Communication Prioritizes Understanding

Eleven out of the 25 participants expressed that grammar has become less important in today's generation because modern communication focuses more on speed, convenience, and mutual understanding than on strict grammatical correctness. Participants explained that contemporary conversations, especially among younger people, often rely on shortened expressions, informal structures, and mixed language forms that remain understandable despite grammatical imperfections. Several respondents noted that people today are generally more accepting of grammatical lapses as long as the intended message is communicated effectively. This reflects a shift in how grammar is valued within fast-paced and highly interactive communication environments.

One participant explained, *"Nowadays people care more about getting the message across than making every sentence perfect."* Another respondent commented, *"A lot of conversations today are quick and informal, so grammar doesn't always feel like the priority anymore."* These responses suggest that participants perceive communication efficiency and accessibility as more relevant than maintaining strict linguistic accuracy in everyday interaction.

The findings correspond with the perspective of Dell Hymes (1972), who emphasized that successful communication depends on appropriateness and meaning-making rather than grammar alone. The results also support the observations of Tagg (2021), who noted that digital and conversational communication environments encourage flexible language practices that prioritize immediacy and interpersonal connection. The present findings therefore indicate that many Gen Z individuals interpret grammar as only one component of effective communication rather than its defining standard. This finding implies that the communicative culture of today's generation increasingly values adaptability and efficiency in language use. While grammar remains recognized, its importance appears to be moderated by the realities of contemporary communication, where conversational flow and accessibility often outweigh formal correctness.

Theme 3: Grammar Still Matters Because It Prevents Miscommunication

Eight out of the 25 participants emphasized that grammar continues to matter because it helps ensure clarity and prevents misunderstandings during conversations. Participants explained that incorrect grammar can sometimes distort meaning, confuse listeners, or make messages difficult to interpret, particularly in serious or sensitive discussions. Although respondents acknowledged that minor grammatical mistakes are common in casual communication, they still believed that basic grammatical accuracy plays an important role in organizing thoughts and expressing ideas more effectively. This perspective highlights grammar as a practical tool for maintaining communicative precision rather than simply a formal requirement.

One participant stated, *"Grammar matters because sometimes one wrong sentence can completely change what you're trying to say."* Another respondent shared, *"Even if conversations are casual, proper grammar still helps people understand each other better."* These responses demonstrate that participants associate grammar with conversational clarity and effective message delivery.

The findings align with the Communicative Competence Theory of Dell Hymes (1972), which recognizes grammatical competence as one component necessary for meaningful communication. The results also parallel the findings of Nguyen and Hamid (2022), who observed that language users tend to adjust their grammatical choices to ensure communicative appropriateness and comprehension across different audiences. In the present study, participants similarly viewed grammar as valuable when it contributes to clearer and more organized interaction. This finding implies that despite the growing acceptance of informal language practices, Gen Z individuals still acknowledge the functional importance of grammar in sustaining mutual understanding. Their responses suggest that grammar remains relevant not only as a linguistic convention but also as a communicative mechanism that supports clarity and reduces ambiguity in conversation.

Objective 3: How do these interests and attitudes influence their actual grammar use in conversational settings?

Q1: How do your views about grammar affect the way you communicate with friends, classmates, or other people?

Theme 1: Grammar Awareness Encourages More Careful Communication

Thirteen out of the 25 participants explained that their views about grammar make them more mindful of how they communicate with different people. Participants shared that when they believe grammar is important, they tend to organize their thoughts more carefully, choose their words intentionally, and avoid expressions that may create misunderstanding. Several respondents noted that they become more attentive to their grammar when speaking with classmates, teachers, or individuals they are not closely familiar with because they want to communicate more clearly and leave a positive impression. This suggests that personal attitudes toward grammar directly shape the level of linguistic monitoring participants apply during conversations.

One participant shared, *“Because I think grammar matters, I try to speak more properly when I’m talking to people I respect.”* Another respondent explained, *“I become more careful with my sentences when I want people to understand me clearly.”* These responses indicate that grammar awareness influences not only language structure but also communicative behavior and self-presentation.

The findings align with the Language Attitude Theory of Wallace Lambert (1967), which explains that beliefs about language shape how individuals behave in communication. The responses also support Hyland and Jiang (2021), who found that grammatical accuracy is often associated with professionalism, competence, and credibility in social interaction. The present findings therefore demonstrate that participants’ positive attitudes toward grammar encourage more deliberate and controlled communication practices. This finding implies that grammar-related beliefs continue to influence conversational behavior among Gen Z individuals. Rather than treating grammar as detached from real interaction, participants appear to integrate their linguistic attitudes into how they manage clarity, impression, and social appropriateness during communication.

Theme 2: Relaxed Attitudes Toward Grammar Promote Informal Communication Styles

Ten out of the 25 participants shared that their casual views about grammar allow them to communicate more freely and naturally with friends and peers. Participants explained that because they do not consider perfect grammar necessary in everyday conversations, they feel more comfortable using simplified expressions, slang, shortened sentences, or mixed language forms during interaction. Several respondents mentioned that focusing too much on grammar can make conversations feel stiff or less genuine, especially in close social relationships. This indicates that participants’ relaxed attitudes toward grammar directly shape a more informal and spontaneous communication style.

One participant remarked, *“I don’t really stress about grammar when talking to my friends because I want the conversation to feel natural.”* Another respondent explained, *“If I keep thinking about grammar too much, it feels like I’m not talking normally anymore.”* These responses show that participants associate conversational comfort with reduced grammatical monitoring.

The findings support the Sociolinguistic Variation Theory of William Labov (1972), which explains that speakers naturally adjust language depending on social relationships and communicative settings. The responses also align with Tagg (2021), who noted that informal communication environments often encourage flexible and conversational language practices rather than rigid linguistic structures. The present findings therefore suggest that Gen Z individuals intentionally adapt their grammar use to maintain conversational ease and social connection. This finding implies that grammar attitudes significantly influence the tone and style of interaction among Gen Z individuals. Their preference for relaxed language in peer communication reflects an evolving communicative culture where authenticity, comfort, and relational closeness are often prioritized over strict grammatical correctness.

Theme 3: Grammar Views Influence Audience-Based Language Adjustment

Nine out of the 25 participants revealed that their opinions about grammar affect how they adjust their language depending on whom they are speaking with. Participants explained that they tend to use more grammatically structured English when interacting with authority figures, unfamiliar people, or individuals they perceive as fluent English speakers. In contrast, they become more relaxed with grammar when communicating with close friends or peers who share the same conversational style. These responses indicate that participants consciously modify their grammar use to match social expectations and relational dynamics within conversations.

One participant stated, *"I change the way I speak depending on the person because some people are more particular about grammar."* Another respondent shared, *"With my friends, I speak more casually, but with professors I try to sound more proper and grammatically correct."* These excerpts demonstrate that grammar use among participants is closely tied to audience awareness and social adaptability.

The findings reflect the principles of Communication Accommodation Theory proposed by Howard Giles (1973), which explains that speakers adjust their language patterns to fit social situations and interpersonal relationships. The results also support Nguyen and Hamid (2022), who found that university students alter their linguistic behavior depending on audience expectations and communicative context. In the present study, participants similarly demonstrated that their grammar use is shaped by their perceptions of social appropriateness and interactional expectations. This finding implies that grammar among Gen Z functions not only as a linguistic system but also as a social resource used to navigate different conversational environments. Their ability to shift grammatical styles across audiences reflects communicative adaptability and awareness of contextual norms in everyday interaction.

CONCLUSION

This study explored whether grammar still matters to Gen Z by examining their interest, attitudes, and actual grammar use in everyday English conversations. The findings revealed that Gen Z individuals do not completely disregard grammar; instead, they negotiate its importance depending on context, audience, communicative purpose, and interpersonal dynamics. Participants demonstrated strong awareness of grammar in formal, academic, and professional interactions, while adopting more relaxed and flexible language practices in casual conversations with peers. Their responses showed that grammar remains socially and communicatively significant, particularly in maintaining clarity, credibility, confidence, and positive self-presentation. At the same time, many participants prioritized authenticity, conversational comfort, and message delivery over strict grammatical precision in informal settings.

More importantly, the study offers a deeper insight into how grammar is perceived by today's generation. Rather than viewing grammar as a rigid set of prescriptive rules, Gen Z participants treated it as a situational and adaptive communicative resource. The findings suggest that grammar use among Gen Z is not simply a matter of linguistic competence but also a reflection of emotional awareness, social identity, audience sensitivity, and communicative strategy. This challenges the common assumption that younger generations are becoming careless or indifferent toward grammar. Instead, the study reveals that Gen Z possesses a contextual understanding of language, where grammatical choices are intentionally adjusted according to social expectations and relational goals.

The bigger picture emerging from this study is that contemporary communication is undergoing a shift from rigid correctness toward functional and relational communication. In the age of rapid interaction, digital communication, and evolving linguistic norms, grammar remains relevant, but its role has become increasingly flexible and purpose-driven. Gen Z appears to value grammar not as an absolute standard applied uniformly across all contexts, but as a communicative tool that gains or loses importance depending on the situation. This indicates that language use today is becoming more adaptive, socially negotiated, and interaction-centered.

Consequently, the study highlights the need for educators and language practitioners to reconsider how grammar is approached in English instruction. Instead of framing grammar solely as a set of fixed rules to memorize, language education should recognize the realities of contextual communication and teach students how to strategically use grammar across different communicative environments. Ultimately, the findings contribute to contemporary discussions on language evolution by demonstrating that grammar still matters to Gen Z—not because they seek perfection, but because they understand when, why, and for whom grammar becomes important.

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