

# Error Analysis and Its Relevance to Teaching ESL Composition

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## Abstract

The present paper attempts to establish the most common types of errors that Spanish students of 1st and 2nd year of Bachillerato make in ESL compositions, as well as to identify those that are produced due to the interference from Spanish into English. Once the data was collected, the errors were classified according to the following categories: spelling, vocabulary, grammar-syntax and punctuation. Next, the quantification of errors was also undertaken. The results of this study show that the Spanish students of Bachillerato produced the following mistakes most frequently: (1) spelling, (2) the incorrect use of commas, (3) the use of prepositions, (4) the incorrect use of words according to their lexical meaning, (5) the articles in English, (6) the number of nouns, (7) subject-verb agreement, (8) the use of adverbs, (9) word order and (10) the use of verb tenses. This paper can help teachers to be more aware of the most typical errors made by Spanish-speaking students in order offer activities that could assist them to master concepts in English that they find most difficult and problematic.

**Keywords:** Error analysis, Interlanguage, Interferences, Writing, University entrance exam

## 1. Introduction

Being aware of the type and nature of students' errors is a very important tool for teachers in order to measure the level of learning achieved. Thanks to the publication of *The significance of learner's errors* by Corder (1967) the negative vision of the error, which ruled in most of the teaching language methods, shifted in a positive way and mistakes started to be considered inevitable for the language learning process to succeed. Therefore, this paper attempts to identify the main features of the Interlanguage and classify the errors produced in writing compositions by Spanish students in Secondary Education, specifically in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Bachillerato. During those years, Spanish students prepare for the university entrance exams in which they are required to write a 150 word composition in English.

Most of the research studies on analysis of errors made by Spanish students in written assignments was conducted in their lower secondary years. Accordingly, there is not much data on the writing skills of Spanish students of Bachillerato and this is the reason of the selection of this group of informants for the present study.

English has become a very important subject in the current syllabus of the Spanish education system in the last decade; English language has reinforced its role as the most prominent worldwide language, especially due to its significant influence in international media, business and politics. Nonetheless, most of the Spanish students have a low level of English and find it difficult to speak and write in English fluently.

Therefore, it is important that English teachers encourage students to be more interested in English language and offer dynamic activities focused on the most problematic concepts in the target language. Interlanguage and Error Analysis studies grant knowledge on those most problematic concepts that Spanish-speaking learners of English tend to struggle with.

## 2. Contrastive Linguistics and its Relevance to Language Teaching

The following chapter offers an overview of Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis and Interlanguage, the three Contrastive linguistic theories that can be particularly helpful in identifying and understanding the main causes of learners' errors.

### 2.1 Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis hypothesis is a research approach which is supported by the Behaviourism theory and was mostly used in the 60's.

Behavioural linguists such as Fries and Lado claimed the habits, which were acquired when learning the mother tongue, are transferred into a second language acquisition. Therefore,

Contrastive Analysis studies pair of languages and identifies the similarities and differences between them, as well as it tries to explain why some structures of the foreign language are more difficult to acquire than others.

Hence, Contrastive Analysis theory admits that "those elements which are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult" (Lado, 1957:2).

Positive and negative transfer or interference are important Contrastive Analysis concepts. As such, learners transferring those components from their mother tongue to the target language, will have completely successful productions. On the other hand, whether there are many differences between the linguistic structures or not, interferences could appear and might cause errors in the learner's production.

As Santos Gargallo (1993:35) claims: "a linguistic interference is produced when a learner uses phonetic, morphological, syntactic or lexical features of the native language (L1) when speaking or writing in the target language (L2)". When a Spanish speaker says in English: "people is nice", he/she is transferring from Spanish language the singular form of 'people' (*la gente es simpática*), whereas in English language, the word 'people' is plural.

By comparing the linguistic features of both languages, Contrastive Analysis could predict the most complex structures for learners, and teachers could try to prevent the production of those typical errors. According to it, the errors are produced exclusively due to the first language interference.

The procedures which Contrastive Analysis follows are:

1. To describe and compare the first language and target language's linguistic-systems.
2. To determine their differences and similarities.
3. To select the most complex and difficult structures of the target language.
4. To predict possible errors.
5. To design teaching methods and materials which are suitable to prevent the errors produced by negative transfers from the first language.

However, Contrastive Analysis can only predict and explain the errors which are caused by interferences. Nevertheless, there are psychological, pragmatic, teaching and learning factors which can cause errors which Contrastive Analysis does not consider. Besides, it has also been criticised for only focusing on the analysis of sentences without taking into consideration the context or the communicative function.

These limitations of Contrastive Analysis contributed to its weakening and deterioration in 1970 and it began to be substituted by Error Analysis.

Nevertheless, despite the criticism, it is important to recognize the contributions made by Contrastive Analysis to the research on the Second Language Acquisition. It innovated and set up the first model of linguistic analyses aimed to the detection and prevention of errors made by learners. It also determined the importance of being aware of the first language and teaching methods in order to comprehend the foreign language learning process.

## 2.2 Error Analysis

Error Analysis was instituted by S. P. Corder in the late 60's. This new linguistic approach was an alternative to Contrastive Analysis which was declining during that period.

Corder established Error Analysis by explaining that the mistakes produced by learners are a necessary learning tool. In other words, he thinks that errors are positive and unavoidable. This was such a new and innovative perspective because, according to Behaviourism, errors are considered as a failure which had to be avoided since they might delay the learning process.

Therefore, Error Analysis encompasses the sources of errors and implies a step forward regarding Contrastive Analysis. Error Analysis also considers:

That many learner errors are produced by learners making faulty inferences about the rules of the new language (...) These errors can be divided into three sub-categories: overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, and the hypothesizing of false concepts, reflected a learner's competence at a certain stage and thereby differed from learner to learner. (Rustipa, 2011:18).

Richards (1971) divided the errors produced in the acquisition of English as a second language in these four categories:

1. Overgeneralization.
2. Ignorance of rule restriction.
3. Incomplete application of rules.
4. False concepts hypothesized, deriving from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language.

Hence, the aim of Error Analysis is to study and describe the communicative production of learners instead of just comparing a pair of languages. As Fernández (1997:18) claims:

The basis of Error Analysis is not the comparison of a pair of languages as in Contrastive Analysis. Otherwise, Error Analysis is based on learners' real productions. Thus, this fact allows studying native languages which are not described or known for researchers

The basis of Error Analysis is not the comparison of a pair of languages as in Contrastive Analysis. Otherwise, Error Analysis is based on learners' real productions. Thus, this fact allows studying native languages which are not described or known for researchers.

Error Analysis methodology follows the following procedures:

1. Data Collection

The data has to be selected from speech productions or written materials produced by the learner.

2. Identification of errors

To follow this step properly, researchers should have a clear definition of the concept of error. According to Lennon (1991:182), an error is "a linguistic form or combination of forms which in the same context and under similar conditions of production would, in all

likelihood, not be produced by the speakers' native speakers counterparts". Besides, according to Corder (1967), it is also important to distinguish between errors and mistakes. He defines mistakes as errors of performance. They are unsystematic and due to physical states, memory lapses and all sort of psychological factors such as tiredness. Thus, mistakes or unsystematic errors do not reflect the knowledge of the language. However, systematic errors or errors of competence determine the level of knowledge of the language.

### 3. Classification

Once the systematic errors have been identified and collected, the researcher should classify them in different types in order to facilitate the analysis. There are many different classification criteria, however, the most common ones are: linguistic, etiologic, communicative, pragmatic and cultural.

Then, a qualitative analysis of the errors obtained should be conducted in order to identify and diagnose their possible sources.

1. Statement of the frequency of error types (through a quantitative analysis).
2. Establishment of the most problematic areas in the target language.

Hence, Error Analysis is essential for second language teaching and learning since it provides a lot of useful information about the learner's knowledge of the target language. Besides, as Corder (1967:167) claims, the diagnosis of errors can be important in three different ways:

First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing (...). Thirdly (...), they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn (...). The making of errors then is a strategy employed both by children acquiring their mother tongue and by those learning a second language.

The accurate methodology of Error Analysis involves a lot of benefits such as the ones mentioned by Khansir (2012:1029):

1. Devising remedial measures.
2. Preparing a sequence of target language items in classrooms and textbooks with the difficult items coming after the easier ones.
3. Making suggestions on the nature or strategies of second language learning employed by both first and second language learners.

Nevertheless, despite its many advantages, Error Analysis had also been criticised by some linguists. The main criticism is focused on "misdiagnosing student learning problems due to their "avoidance" of certain difficult L2 elements" (Rustipa, 2011:19). Some learners do not

use some structures of the target language in order to avoid mistakes. Thus, they will only use the structures which they know they will be completely correct. Hence, the problem of Error Analysis lays in its ignorance to what the learner does right as it only focuses on the errors produced by the student. Many linguists and researchers consider both types of productions (wrong and right answers) as equally valid and relevant. In spite of the criticism, the importance of Error Analysis has to be taken into account since it has been proven to be a very useful tool in that helps both teachers and students to be aware of the origin of errors, as well as the most difficult aspects of the target language. Knowing and understanding the causes of errors might facilitate their prevention and the design of proper teaching methodology and materials.

### 2.3 Interlanguage

Selinker (1972) introduced the concept of Interlanguage to define the independent and unique linguistic system of the learner of a foreign language. This linguistic system is different to both first language's and target language's systems. Thus, Interlanguage is systematic since it contains its own rules and it is also variable because its rules can vary depending on the learner's development of the language.

Hence, "Interlanguage is viewed as a separate linguistic system, clearly different from both the learner's 'native language' (NL) and the 'target language' (TL) being learned, but linked to both NL and TL by interlingual identifications in the perception of the learner" (Tarone, 2006:747).

Other linguistics such as Richards (1971), Nemser (1971) and Corder consider Interlanguage as a continuum which extends from the native language to the target language since it is in constant movement as it changes at the same time the learner's knowledge does. Besides, Interlanguage's complexity increases when learners achieve full competence in the target language.

NATIVE LANGUAGE... IL1... IL2... IL3... ILn... TARGET LANGUAGE
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Interlanguage hypothesis represents an improvement in the Second Language Acquisition field since it studies and analyses both errors and right constructions. Therefore, it differs from the other models (Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis) in its complete analysis of the total production of the learners.

As it has been mentioned, the Interlanguage is an independent linguistic system which is characterized by the following features:

#### A. Fossilization

Fossilization is a process which does not allow the eradication of errors. Selinker (1972) noticed "that 95% of L2 (target language) learners failed to reach the same level of L1 (native language) competence from his observation" (Wei, 2008:127).

Baralo (1994: 6) defines this process as: “a mechanism in which the speaker is prone to keep some elements, rules and linguistic subsystems of the native language in his/her interlanguage when speaking a second language”. Thus, this phenomenon might be the source of the production of fossilized mistakes, no matter the learner’s age or the quantity of instruction received.

Fossilization might occur at any level (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic or pragmatic). Besides, according to Selinker (1972), this process might be caused due to: “language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of target language” (Ellis, 1999:351 cited in Wei, 2008:128).

Nevertheless, the source of fossilized errors has not been totally clarified yet. There are countless causes such as anxiety, high level of acculturation, lack of motivation, unsuitable received input or even when the learner is dealing with unknown topics. However, it is clear that language transfer is caused when the native language owns more universal and less marked features than the target language.

Fossilized errors are recognized since they occur at the highest stages of Interlanguage. It is essential to identify this type of errors because they hinder the learner’s full competence in the target language.

#### B. Permeability

Interlanguage is also characterized by its permeability. This means that Interlanguage might include grammatical systems of any other languages, such as native language’s grammar. Therefore, permeability is the cause of errors produced by hipergeneralization of the native language’s grammar rules. However, some linguists, like Muñoz Liceras (1986), establish that permeability is a feature of all grammars (native and non-native). In other words, this is not an exclusive characteristic of Interlanguage since it can also be found in the linguistic system of the native language.

#### C. Systematicity

Systematicity implies that every Interlanguage has its own grammatical system. This system is completely independent from the grammars of the native and target language. This is proven due to the coherence of learners’ productions when they are in a specific stage of their learning process. Alexopoulou (2010: 6) defines it as: “a linguistic system which owns a specific grammar and in which its clauses (considered as diverted from the L1’s grammatical view) are correct for the learner’s language perspective”.

#### D. Variability

Interlanguage is also variable; it is a system which is always changing since it is in a developing process and receives new input constantly. Each learner develops a different interlanguage due to this variability factor. Besides, it allows evolution depending on the learning stage of student. Therefore, it involves a creative concept of language.



### 3. Empirical Study

#### 3.1 Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

##### 3.1.1 General Objective

The general objective of the present work is to identify the main features of the IL by classifying the errors produced in the written compositions of a group of Spanish students in Secondary Education, specifically, in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of *Bachillerato*.

The procedures which are followed in order to achieve this goal are:

1. To identify the errors produced in the written compositions by using the Error Analysis methodology, since it is more complete and accurate than the methodology used by the Contrastive Analysis.
2. To classify the errors according to grammatical categories.
3. To identify the errors produced due to interference with the Spanish language.
4. To state the frequency of errors types.
5. To establish the most complex areas of English for Spanish students of *Bachillerato*.

##### 3.1.2 Specific Objectives

Therefore, the specific objectives are:

To collect, classify (according to the grammatical categories), describe and analyze the errors produced in English compositions written by Spanish students of *Bachillerato*.

To identify the errors caused by transfer from Spanish language in order to obtain information about the learning process when writing in English as a Second Language (ESL).

To determine the most problematic areas of English language for Spanish students of *Bachillerato*.

##### 3.1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions have been outlined in order to achieve the objectives already presented:

1. Which are the most frequent errors produced in the writing compositions of a group of Spanish students in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of *Bachillerato*?
2. Which are the types of errors produced due to the linguistic interference with the Spanish language? Which is the percentage of these errors?
3. Which are the most complex and difficult aspects of the English language for the Spanish students of *Bachillerato*?
- 4.



### 3.2 Research Methodology

#### 3.2.1 Research Design

The present work involves a primary research. Hence, the type of design is descriptive and observational while the approach is heuristic, inductive and exploratory. It also involves a holistic perspective since the collection of data is fulfilled in the first place. Once the data has been collected through the written compositions, we will proceed to the identification and description of the errors. At the end of the work, final conclusions will be explained. They will be drawn from the description of the collected data and we expect them to contribute to the research field of Second Language Acquisition (ASL) and to facilitate the elaboration of a wider study.

Thus, the methodology is both qualitative and quantitative. It is qualitative due to the identification and description of the data collected and quantitative because we will quantify and assess the errors produced by the participants. Besides, the study is cross-sectional since the completion of the test took place at a specific moment.

#### 3.2.2 Description of the research variables

The product variable comprises the total amount of errors gained in the written compositions of the participants. Nevertheless, the context variable is invalidated since all the participants share the same native language and a common profile. They are all Spanish students of Bachillerato who received similar ESL instruction.

This study does not include presage variables such as age and gender since they are not relevant for the current research. Besides, process variables are not included either because all the participants have to write the same type of text in the same context.

#### 3.2.3 Sample

The sample is composed of 10 students from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Bachillerato. This sample is very homogeneous since they are all Spanish students between 16-18 years old who study in high schools of Madrid. Another aspect that they have in common a long period of time which they have been studying English and most of them take extracurricular English

lessons. There are only 10 participants due to the limited length of the present work and the most important criteria to select them was their grade, age and Spanish being their native language. These 10 students fulfill the most common profile of a Spanish student of

Bachillerato in Madrid. Therefore, despite the limitation of the sample, the results which will be obtained could be adapted to the majority of Spanish students who are studying their last years of school.

#### 3.2.4 Context

The data collection was conducted in May 2015. The context was natural and outside the school because all the tests were done during the extracurricular lessons of ESL.

The participants received suitable instructions for the test and they were also told that their level of English was not going to be assessed. It was important to warn the students about this fact so that they were not too stressed or cautious about producing errors. In fact, they all knew they were participating in a research about the most typical errors of Spanish students of Bachillerato when writing in English. All the participants completed the test in 45 minutes approximately without any kind of help.

### 3.2.5 Data Collection Tools

The main aim of the present study is to analyze the linguistic productions obtained through written material. Therefore, it has been decided to use the following tools in order to collect the data.

#### 3.2.5.1 Questionnaire of personal details of the students

The participation in the research was anonymous, however, students have been asked to fulfil a brief questionnaire to obtain information about their academic profile and their experience and linguistic development in ESL.

#### 3.2.5.2 Written Assignment

The participants of the present study had to write a composition in English between 100-150 words on the following topic: *Do you think Spanish teenagers are addicted to their mobile phones? Give reasons for your answer.*

The selection of the topic was made based on the fact that all the students of Bachillerato have to prepare for the University Entrance Exam and this question was already offered in the September 2013 exam at the Complutense University. Besides, all the participants are adolescents who are concerned with the use of mobile phones and the issues which they involve. Therefore, this question can increase the motivational factor of the students and it is also considered to be very appropriate for this task research in order to be fulfilled properly by the participants of the present study and obtain reliable data.

### 3.2.6 Research Procedures

#### 3.2.6.1 Identification, description and classification of errors

The first procedure was to obtain the data through the task described in the previous section. Once the data has been collected, the errors which have been diagnosed are described and classified. In order to follow this procedure, the answers of the participants are transcribed to facilitate their analysis. Then, the identified errors are classified according to the following linguistic categories: spelling, grammar-syntax and lexical. Besides, the errors originated by interferences with Spanish as a native language have already been identified. Finally, quantification of the errors obtained has been carried out, with their corresponding percentages, according to the following formula:

$$\text{Errors quotient} = \frac{\text{Number of errors}}{\text{-----}}$$

Number of words

#### 4. Data Analysis

This section is focused on answering the research questions of the present work by displaying and interpreting the results obtained.

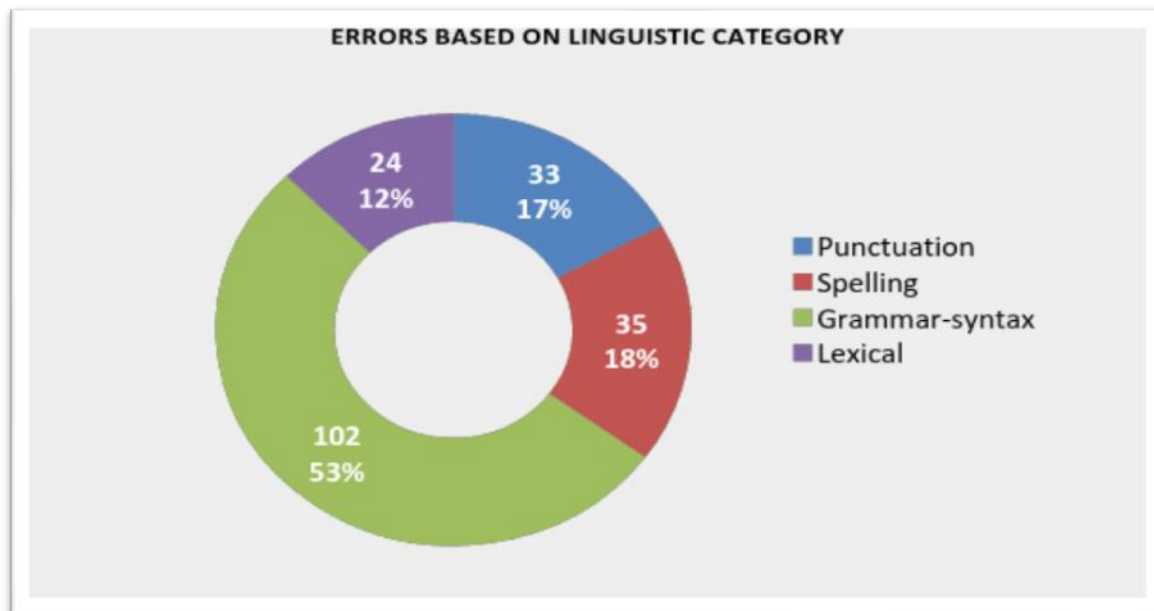
##### 4.1 First Question Research

*Which are the most frequent errors produced in the written compositions of a group of Spanish students in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Bachillerato?*

This first question is answered through the presentation of the total count of the data gained. Then, a second quantification is also shown, pointing out the errors obtained according to their linguistic categories in order to establish which are the most frequent errors produced in the compositions written by Spanish students of Bachillerato.

##### 4.1.1 Errors based on Linguistic Category

The total amount of words analyzed for the present work is 1272 and we have identified 194 errors. Most of them belong to the grammar-syntax level as they constitute a percentage of 53% from the total amount of errors. Then, the next category with a high frequency is spelling, one due to its 18%. In third place, the punctuation errors appear more frequently than the lexical ones as their percentage is 12%.



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Figure 1. Errors based on linguistic category

These are logical findings since the grammar-syntax level is the most difficult category for Spanish students of ESL. English and Spanish have different grammar rules which confuse students when writing or speaking in English. The following most frequent errors are the ones produced in the spelling category. This is also an expected result since Spanish and

English are completely different orthographically. Spanish students are used to writing the words exactly as they sound whereas the English language has very specific spelling rules which confuse students.

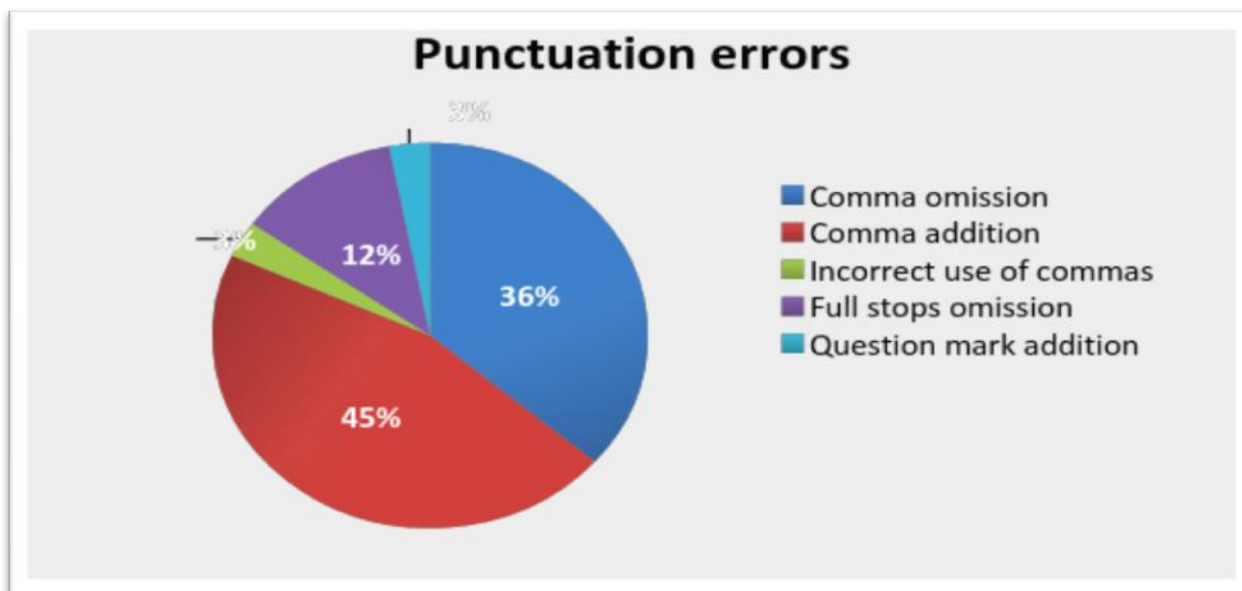


Figure 2. Punctuation errors

Punctuation errors are not originated by interference with the Spanish language (except the addition of the question mark at the beginning of the question). These types of errors are caused by confusion or lack of knowledge of the punctuation rules in English, especially in the use of commas. This fact is understandable because punctuation rules and their usage are not taught in the ESL lessons. Therefore, students have no knowledge on how to apply punctuation marks properly in a composition or essay written in English.

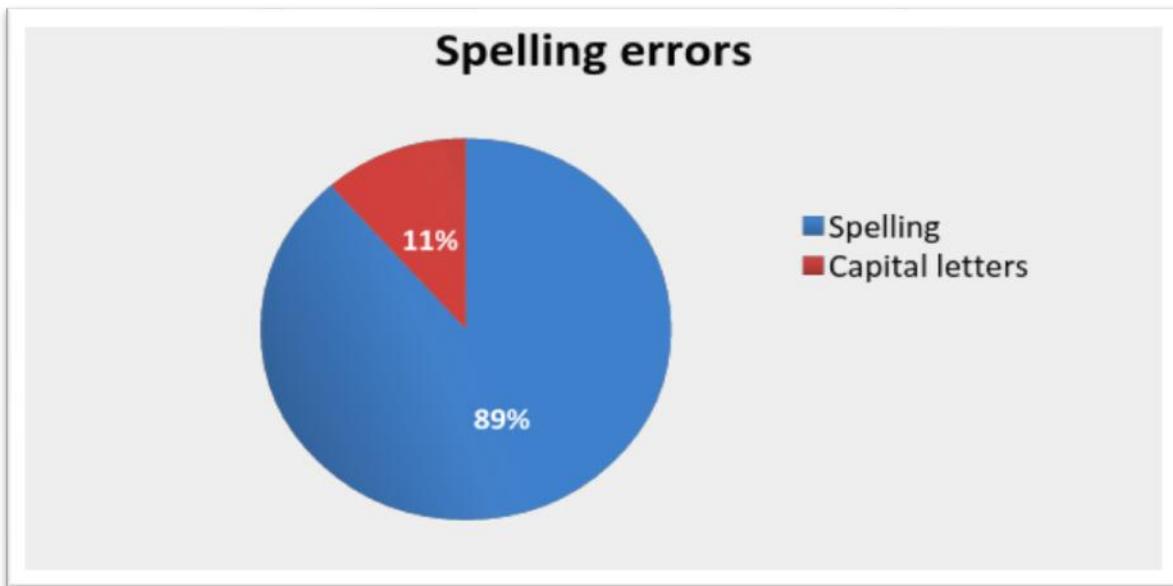


Figure 3. Spelling errors

As it has been mentioned previously, most of the mistakes produced at the spelling level are due to interference with the Spanish language because of the different rules in English. However, there is a small percentage of misspellings due to interference with the capital letter rules in Spanish.

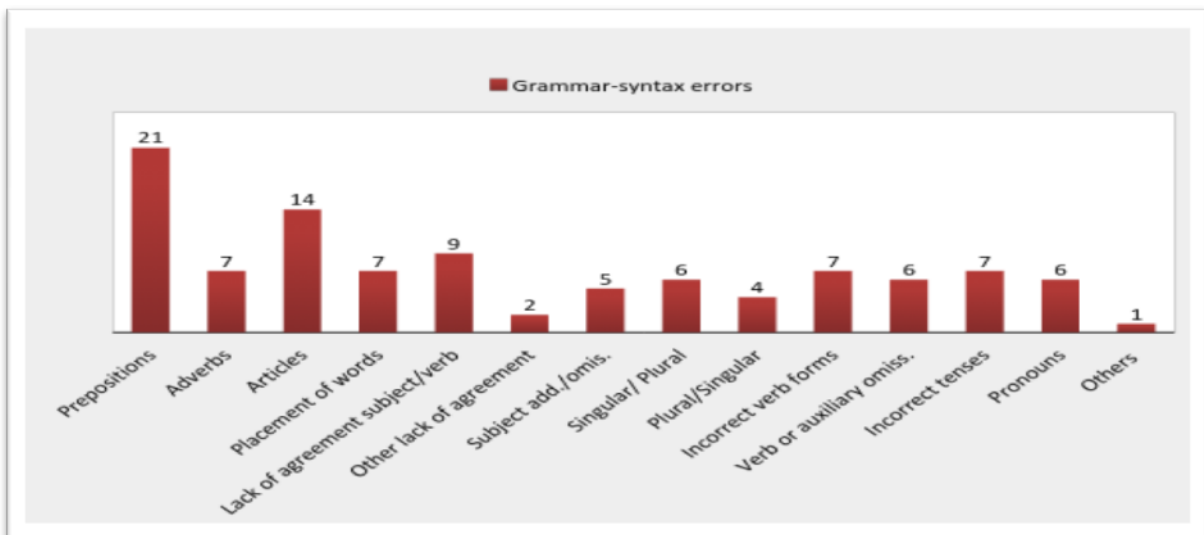


Figure 4. Grammar-syntax errors

It has already been shown that the grammar-syntax level is the most difficult category for Spanish students who study ESL. There is a lot of confusion with the grammatical and syntactical rules in spite of being very important and emphasized concepts of the English curriculum in most Spanish schools.

The most frequent error inside this category is the incorrect use of prepositions in English with

a percentage of 20.58% of the total of grammar-syntax errors. The incorrect use of prepositions in English is also caused by interference with the Spanish language since the participants used the same prepositions they would use in a Spanish grammatical construction. The incorrect use of articles is the second most frequent error; its percentage is 13.72%. The confusion in the use of articles is caused by negative transfer from Spanish into English, especially when they add the definite article before a noun phrase. However, these errors might also be produced by the lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of the English rules, in particular the use of definite and indefinite articles. The third most frequent error is the lack of agreement between subject and verb. This error is caused by confusion, slip and absence of practice with English grammar. This error is not produced by interference. The next most frequent errors are the incorrect use of adverbs, the wrong placement of words, production of incorrect verb forms and the wrong use of tenses such as past simple and present simple.

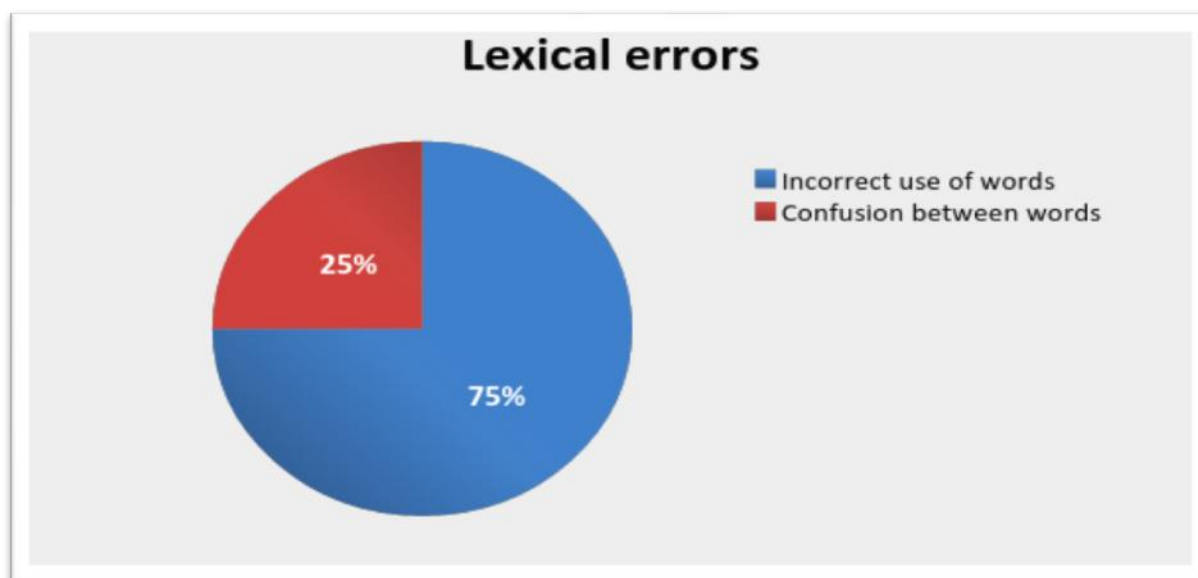


Figure 5. Lexical errors

Most of the lexical errors have been originated by interference with the Spanish language because the participants have translated many expressions directly from Spanish into English. The second type of lexical error has been produced by the confusion with English words used in a wrong context or form. Therefore, these errors are not considered interlingual.

#### *4.2 Second Question Research*

Which are the types of errors produced by linguistic interference with the Spanish language? Which is the percentage of these errors?

The interlingual or interference errors caused by linguistic transfer with the participants' native language which have been identified in this study entail 44% of the total errors. Therefore, it has been quantified as a total of 85 errors out of 194. This result means that Spanish students of Bachillerato frequently use their native language constructions as a communicative strategy when they struggle with difficulties in the target language. Nevertheless, most errors are still

produced by confusion or lack of knowledge of the rules in English. The percentages of the different types of interference errors are displayed bellow:

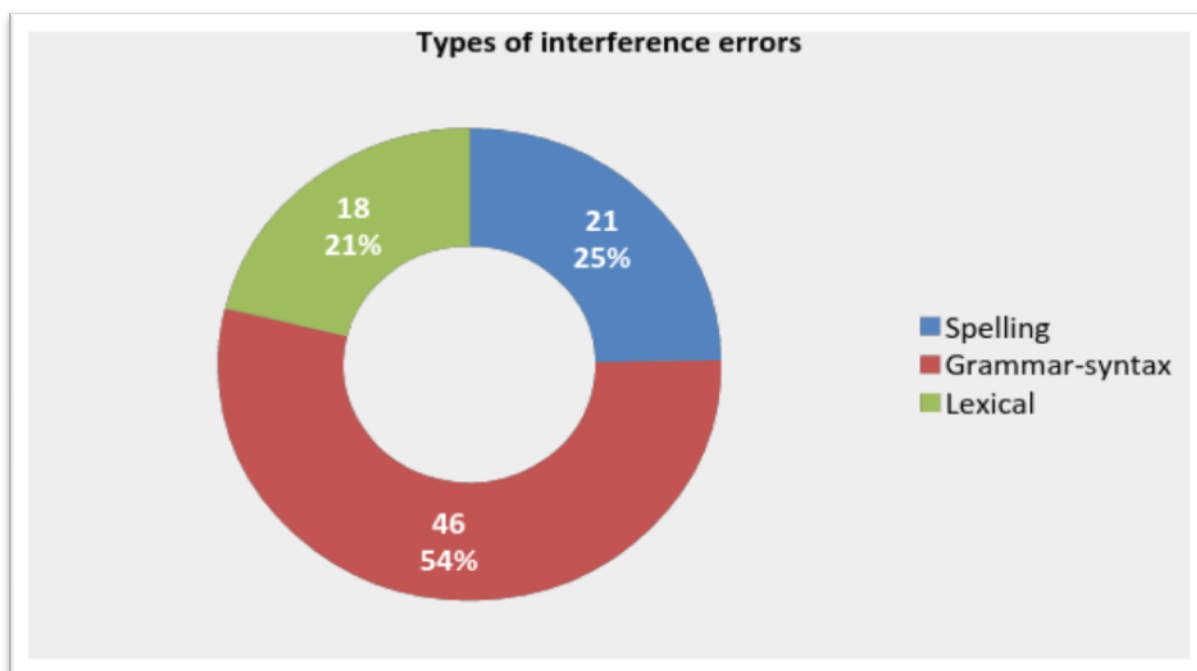


Figure 6. Types of interference errors

Hence, as it can be observed in the chart, these results coincide with the most frequent errors according to their linguistic category since more than half of the interference errors are also produced at the grammar-syntax level. The second place is also for the spelling category and the last one for the lexical errors. These results confirm the difficulties that Spanish students have with English grammar that is even more problematic than the spelling or the correct use of words. The following chart shows the grammar-syntax errors produced by interference with the Spanish language:



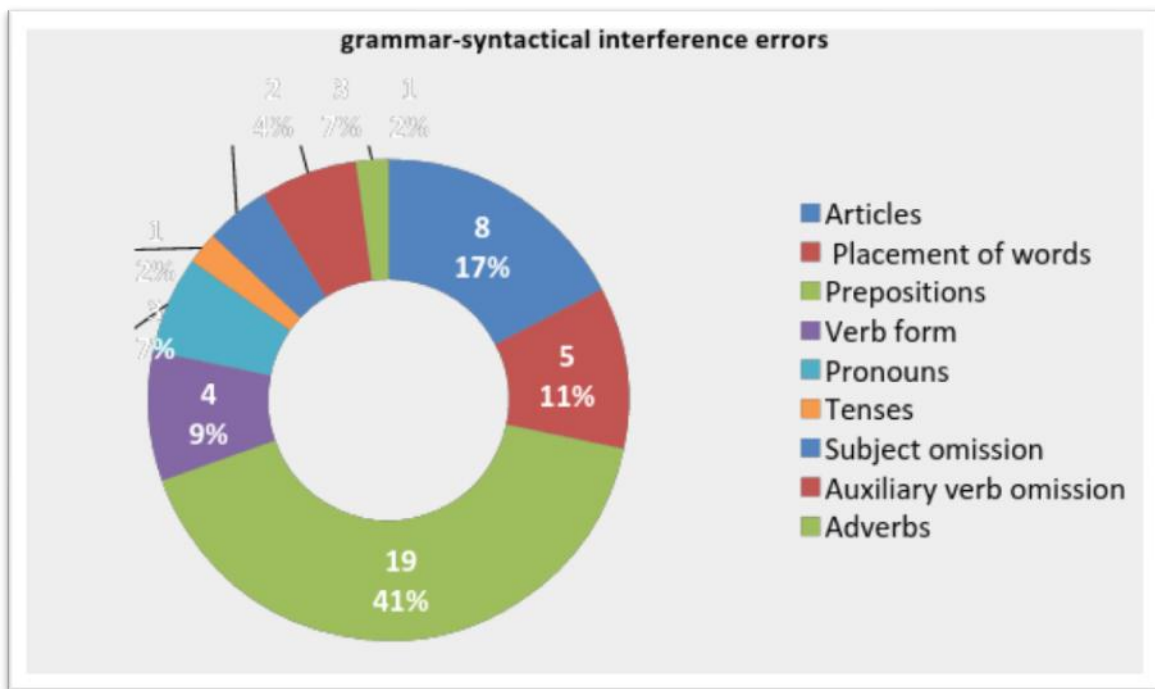


Figure 7. Grammar-syntactical interference errors

As it can be observed, prepositions were the most common category with 19 cases, which accounts for 41% of all mistakes. This is caused due to the differences in the use of prepositions between Spanish and English. Students have no knowledge of how to use prepositions properly in English, thus, their communicative strategy consists of using the prepositions in the same way as they do when communicating in Spanish. The next category is the use of definite and indefinite articles in English since students are also prone to use the articles in English following the grammatical rules of Spanish articles without taking into account the differences in the correct use of articles in both languages.

The third category of errors produced by interferences is the wrong placement of words. This linguistic concept is very common among Spanish students of ESL who use the flexible patterns and word order of the which Spanish language. The fourth category is the wrong use of verb forms. This type of error is originated by the difficulty that students face when using infinitives or gerunds and the scarcity of the rules that they could apply to distinguish the use of both forms.

#### 4.3 Third Question Research

Which are the most complex and difficult aspects of the English language for the Spanish students of Bachillerato?

According to the results obtained in this study, the ten most frequent errors which were identified in the compositions written by 10 Spanish students of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Bachillerato are the following:

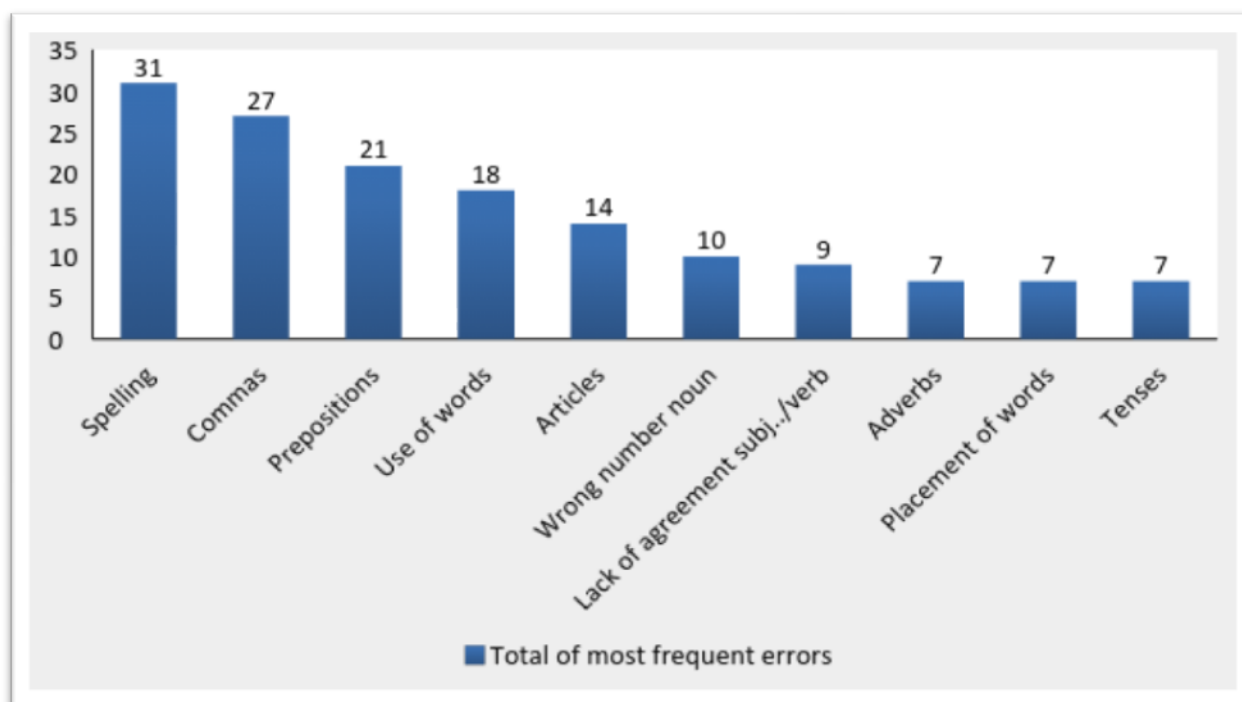


Figure 8. The most frequent errors

Therefore, it can be considered that these errors are the most difficult aspects of the English language for the Spanish students of Bachillerato.

## 5. Conclusions

The main objective of the present paper was to identify the main features of the interlanguage and to classify the errors produced by Spanish students of Bachillerato in ESL. Once the data was collected, analyzed and quantified, it was determined that the grammar-syntax and spelling mistakes were most common -, whereas the punctuation and lexical categories present a lower frequency of errors. These results coincide with the findings obtained in other studies such as Ib áñez Moreno (2011) and D éz-Bedmar (2011) who also observed that a majority of errors are produced at the grammar-syntax level.

Regarding the most frequent grammar-syntax errors, the incorrect use of prepositions was the cause of most of the errors. This result also coincides with other reviewed Error Analysis studies. For instance, Abushibab (2009) identified 179 grammatical errors and 50 of them were caused by the wrong use of prepositions. Zawahreh (2012) also found many errors in the wrong use of prepositions in English. Other types of errors which also coincide with the ones obtained in other studies are: the wrong use of articles, incorrect adverbial placement and lack of agreement between the subject and the main verb. The lexical errors have also been pointed out in other studies such as the inappropriate selection of vocabulary and the items used incorrectly in the place of others.

The second objective of this paper was focused on establishing the percentage of errors produced due to interferences with Spanish. According to the results of this study, 44% of the

errors were caused by transfer from Spanish into English while the remaining percentage of errors is caused due to the confusion and overgeneralization of English rules. These are also the reasons mentioned by the authors of similar studies such as Mar ín Serrano (2013) who claims that the sources of the production of the errors were the influence of the L1, confusion with the L2 and the wrong use of learning and communicative strategies.

The third objective was established in order to detect the most difficult and problematic aspects of English for the Spanish students of Bachillerato in their written compositions. Thus, according to the data collected, the ten most difficult areas for the participants are: spelling of words, the use of commas, the use of prepositions, the correct use of words according to their lexical meaning, the articles in English, the number of nouns, the agreement between subject and verb, the use of adverbs, word order and the use of verb tenses.

The current findings might help ESL teachers of Spanish students to use a suitable methodology in order to master the most difficult aspects of English and help them to speed their learning process.

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