OVERVIEWING AND CHARACTERIZING FOSSILIZATION ERRORS IN

INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH STUDENTS AT UNIVERSIDAD DE NARIÑO

By

Hamilton Obando Valdés

José Benavides Pantoja

Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial

Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of B.A in

English and French and English and Spanish programs

Linguistics and Languages Department

University of Nariño

June 2015

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Universidad de **Nariño**
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS

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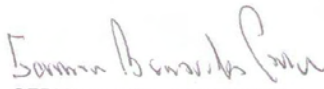
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RESUMEN

El presente documento ofrece las principales características del fenómeno de fosilización expuesto en la escritura ya que este podría influenciar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en estudiantes de nivel intermedio en el departamento de lingüística e idiomas en la Universidad de Nariño.

Este documento también aborda la importancia del análisis y la categorización de los errores fosilizados encontrados en los estudiantes. Adicionalmente, este trabajo de campo encierra las diferentes percepciones de distintos autores en relación a interlenguaje y fosilización ya que sus contribuciones pueden permitir a docentes y estudiantes la prevención e identificación de errores y así evitar la fosilización desde etapas tempranas de aprendizaje. Algunas técnicas para trabajar en este asunto también son propuestas como recomendaciones a ser implementadas en el salón de clases.

Conjuntamente, este documento también concientiza a docentes y estudiantes de sus propios errores y podría sugerir que los actores de la educación en la Universidad de Nariño implementen nuevos planes de estudio, teniendo en cuenta las conclusiones de este trabajo.

ABSTRACT

The present document offers the main characteristics of the fossilization phenomenon exposed to the written skills as it might influence the process of learning-teaching in intermediate students at the Linguistics and Languages Department in Universidad de Nariño.

The importance of categorizing and analyzing the fossilize errors found on the students is also addressed in this paper. Additionally, insights from different authors regarding interlanguage and fossilization are considered in this fieldwork as their contributions may allow teachers and students to identify and prevent errors and thus to solve fossilization from early stages of learning. Some techniques to work on this matter are also proposed as recommendation to be implemented in the classrooms.

Moreover, this paper makes teachers and students conscious of their errors and it will suggests that stakeholders of education at Universidad de Nariño implement new curricula taking into account the findings on this paper.

OVERVIEWING AND CHARACTERIZING FOSSILIZATION ERRORS IN INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH STUDENTS AT UNIVERSIDAD DE NARIÑO

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.   Introduction

When learning a second or foreign language, learners face difficulties regarding sounds, vocabulary, structure and grammar. These difficulties are understandable because learners have already acquired their own language. Therefore, the structures of the first language are mastered and fixed. Rustipa (2011) explains that learners transfer their own language habits into the second language which will cause most of the errors.

The Contrastive Analysis Theory, coined by Fries, says that these errors appear due to the different elements present in the target language and absent in the native language (Fisiak, 1981). As the contrastive analysis focuses on different elements between the target and the native language, its researchers focus on how those difficulties can be relieved and overcome in order to help learners see evident results in learning.

However, not all the problems can be mentioned by the contrastive analysis, which focuses on the different elements of the target language. Then, the error analysis theory appears in the 1960s, coined by Corder. This theory focuses on the actual errors students make in the classroom rather than focusing on all of the different elements between the two languages, which can be countless.

Focusing on the errors was a great advance in developing language teaching and learning. Learners showed their difficulties and thus teachers could apply the correct methodology behind the different theories to mitigate them. Errors are actually the evidence of the students'

internalizing the language. In the developmental process, students make errors and then they correct them as they advance in their learning process. According to Selinker (1992) cited by Ho (2003) "errors are the device that learners use to internalize the target language". The error shows evidence that in fact the student is acquiring the language.

In this paper, error fossilization will be treated to demonstrate the main categories where error fossilization occurs more frequently. The elements will be restricted to only a few needed for this study.

1.1. Research problem

The English language is considered an important language today. It offers a set of opportunities for people. This language is needed for commerce marketing and education. Many countries have already adopted it as a second official language while others have only just begun to introduce it into their educational curricula.

However, some speakers are not fluent in this language which is needed to pursue a career in their lives. These non-fluent speakers might be facing fossilization problems which hamper the proper development of the L2.

This paper, then, studies the relation between those problems and it also provides a general overview of their incidence in language learning. The population used in this study has Spanish as first language. They are students in at intermediate English level in the Linguistics and Languages Department at University of Nariño. They have essentially no contact with the target language outside the classroom. Besides, those students come from different institutions with different learning backgrounds, but they all have the same feedback and exposure to the language in the classroom. However, these L2 students find it difficult to express themselves in the written

form and thus the appearance of L2 errors is evident. It is a concern of this paper to expose what

fossilization errors are the most common in the student's writing ability.

According to Van Els et al. (1984) "errors are like sin, they need to be avoided and

overcome but their presence is to be expected at any time". Then, it is important to be prepared to

tackle the problem which is more a feature in L2 classrooms.

Richards et al. (1992) also give an argument about the concept of error in language:

> (In speech or writing of a second or foreign language learner) the use of a
> linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item, a SPEECH ACT, etc.) in a way
> which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or
> incomplete learning. A distinction is sometimes made between an error, which
> results from incomplete knowledge and a mistake made by a learner when writing
> or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness or some
> other aspect of PERFORMANCE…

According to this author, Students are found to make errors in utterances rather than

mistakes. Errors need to be treated applying effective strategies. They imply a process which

needs to be carried out during a given time period. Some teachers apply traditional methods to

deal with the phenomenon. They correct the errors made by the student at the moment of

speaking. There are alternative forms to correct those errors and this study will provide some of

those alternatives to deal with fossilization in the classroom

Fossilization is viewed as the reappearance of incorrect grammatical utterances after

being treated in different manners. This persistence of errors after its dealing is a phenomenon

that worries language teachers. Teachers concern about the mastering of L2 rules after proper

instruction. That is why error fossilization needs to be studied.

Nakuma (1998) also gives his own description of fossilization as a state of permanent

failure by part of an L2 learner when it comes to acquire correctly an L2 feature. Not only are this

errors deviant from L2 but they are also immutable to the correct form no matter the amount of

exposure to the correct target language.

In 2001, Hamilton gives his own notion of the phenomenon of fossilization in the

following view:

> Even with the strongest motivation and the most effective teaching, many learners
> reach a plateau. Errors which should have been eradicated re-emerge with
> dispiriting regularity. What is puzzling about this phenomenon is not so much that
> learners make errors, this is inescapable. It is that errors occur in areas where
> students should be proficient.

Hamilton's view of fossilization reinforces the description that is being made about the

current phenomenon. Fossilization is one element inside the notion of interlanguage which is

broader. James (1998), citing Selinker, explains that interlanguage is the learners own version of

the target language only spoken by L2 learners.

Interlanguage is, therefore, the type of language which has borrowed elements and differs

both from the first language and the target language. Interlanguage is known by systematic errors

and students' lack of vocabulary and hesitant speech (Kilfoil and Van der Walt, 1989)

Taking into account the definitions given previously, fossilization is a phenomenon in the

concept of interlanguage. The borrowed aspects studied will be found to be from Spanish, the

native language of the population for this study. Some of the borrowings will not be possible and

that is where the errors are found. Also, it can be evident that those errors persist in the

classroom. That persistence is going to be analyzed in this project as a phenomenon that impedes

the further development of the target language.

1.2.   Research question

What are the most common errors intermediate English students at Universidad de Nariño present at the moment of writing and to what extent they are fossilized?

1.3.   Hypothesis

The main hypothesis for this study is that all intermediate students have fossilized errors despite the large amount of exposure to the language across different courses included in the curriculum.

1.4.   Justification

This paper was developed as a need to study the students' errors in the written language which tend to be present during all the learners' learning process. The repeated phenomenon of error fossilization in university students regarding teaching and learning needs to be studied as it might benefit English students, teachers and practitioners in general. They might get benefits as focusing on correcting the actual errors and the application of techniques to improve the learning experience. Also, language researchers may bring new ways to address fossilization problems either to avoid or to mitigate them.

It is thought that a study of this phenomenon will lead to improvements in language teaching because the most common errors are brought about and teachers may work to deal with them. The actual feedback given by the teacher also needs to be analyzed so that the paper may show whether there is fossilization in the classroom. Teachers in intermediate level at University of Nariño are puzzled by the continuing fossilized errors found in the written language by part of

the students. It seems that no matter what the exposure in different forms to the target language is, some wrong structures are persistent throughout the teaching and learning curriculum.

1.5.   Objectives

1.5.1. General objective

To describe the most common errors of fossilization intermediate students at the linguistic department in Universidad de Nariño make at the moment of writing.

1.5.2. Specific objective

•   To categorize the most common errors students make

•   To analyze the results taking into consideration theoretical background and research data.

•   To propose some strategies to avoid fossilization in teaching.

1.6.   Limitations

One of the possible limitations is the lack of time. Sometimes teachers do not have time during their classes to allow students take the tests, which is the instrument for this study. Thus, it is necessary to choose teachers willing to help in this research with extra time for students to take the tests.

1.7.   Definition of Terms

1.7.1. SLA (Second Language Acquisition)

Ellis (1997) defines SLA as "The systemic study of how people acquire a second language (often refer to an L2)"

1.7.2. TL (Target Language)

Target Language is the one that students learn besides having incorporated their mother tongue. It is also referred as to L2 (Second language). (Ellis, R. 1997)

1.7.3. L2 (Second Language)

L2 is defined as the additional language people acquire or learn. It is called L2 no matter if it is the third, fourth, etc. language to be learnt. It is also called a target language (TL). (Saville-Troike, 2005)

1.7.4. Interlanguage

Selinker (1972) defines interlanguage as "the type of language produced by nonnative speakers in the process of learning a second language or foreign language. This interlanguage is not the correct but yet it has characteristics of the learner L1 and the TL but it does not resemble to any of the languages in mention"

1.7.5. Language Transfer

(Also known as L1 interference, linguistic interference, and cross meaning) In SLA, it refers to the learner's conscious capacity to apply L1 language forms into theL2 during the process of learning. Ellis, R. 1997.

1.7.6. Fossilization

According to Selinker (1972) fossilization is the phenomenon in which learners of an L2 make errors and keep them as correct forms into their Interlanguage. Those errors are difficult to

correct no matter the amount of feedback the learner receives, they go back to the error again and again.

1.7.7. Writing skill

Writing involves encoding of a message of some kind: that is we translate our thoughts into language (putting language into words). (Byrne, 1988)

1.7.8. Tenses

"the semantic concept of time reference (absolute or relative), ... may be grammaticalised in a language, i.e. a language may have a grammatical category that expresses time reference, in which case we say that the language has tenses." (Comrie, 1985).

1.7.9. Agreement

Agreement refers to a word that changes form depending on the context of others words to which it relates. It implies an inflectional change, and usually involves making changes according to grammatical category (gender or person). Therefore a word "agrees" between different words or parts of a sentence. (Algeo, 2009)

1.7.10. Articles

Richards et al (1992) define the article as a word that is used to with a noun to show whether such noun has a definite or indefinite sense. In English the articles are the definite *the* and the indefinite *a, an.*

1.7.11. Pronouns

They are defined as "the words that may replace a noun or a noun phrase" (Richards et al, 1992). In this study, Errors with pronouns, involve the omission of a pronoun, the use of an unnecessary pronoun and the use of an incorrect pronoun.

1.7.12. Prepositions

It expresses a relation between two entities, one being represented by the prepositional complement of the various types of relational meaning. These relationships include those of time, position, direction, and various degrees of mental and emotional states. (Quirk et al, 1985)

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.   Introduction

This chapter constitutes the theoretical basis for this study. It focuses on informing about the concepts of interlanguage and fossilization. These two concepts will be discussed broadly and evaluated critically with pertaining arguments.

2.1.   Antecedents

The University of Nariño has been developing the process of teaching English taking into account the needs and progress of the students. This has favored students in the development of certain competences in the target language (English). The competences to be developed include Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. However, the enhancement of the writing skills process in the L2 causes problems in students because the target language differs substantially from the L1. And, these types of problems impede students to reach a proficient level of written English. Such proficiency at writing in the L2 is a grade marker to succeed academically in the context in mention.

For non-native English learners, the writing process tends to be influenced by factors that could either harm or facilitate that process. For this study the most important phenomena are interlanguage and fossilization, which are two intertwined concepts. The purpose of this chapter is, then, to review literature concerning interlanguage hypothesis and error fossilization. The information mentioned herein comes from sources that deeply enlighten the importance of these factors as common phenomena in writing development. It includes different statements of the main authors and arguments in relation with L2 writing skills.

2.2.   The Interlanguage Hypothesis

The Interlanguage Hypothesis (IH) argues the fact that the language produced by the L2 learner is filled with utterances similar to those produced by native speakers. However, they behave as "translations" from the L1 structures to the L2. Instead of being correct, this interlanguage is a new and separate system. It is a system which Selinker calls interlanguage, (Frith, 1977). For Selinker (1972) "the interlanguage hypothesis" occurs when "There exists a separate linguistic or psycholinguistic system (interlanguage) which forms in the mind of the learner and may take the form of a pidgin and which may develop into a language in its own right." Thus, L2 learners' language differs from both the mother tongue and the target language. The final language produced by learner shares properties with both of them (Cohen and Robbins, 1976).

The need of identifying this aspect in the field of L2 teaching lies in observing whether learners produce the appropriate language. This permits analyzing the learner's version of the target language or interlanguage, "a term suggesting the half-way position it holds between knowing and not knowing the target language" (James, 1998).

In order to analyze further the interlanguage hypothesis Weinreich, Selinker, Nemser and Corder offer different definitions. Such definitions are taken from important researchers on this field. However, it is important to clarify that different terms are used to refer to interlanguage. Weinreich (1953), for example, refers to interlanguage as "interlingual", Nemser (1971) as the "approximate system", Corder (1971) refers to what he calls "transitional competence" and "idiosyncratic dialect" and Selinker (1972) as "the learner's intermediate language system". All

these terms refer to the language used by the learners which is rather incomplete and they attempt to master.

2.2.1. Weinreich and the interlanguage

Weinreich's contribution to interlanguage is derived from the term "interlingual." This term refers to the language system that the foreign language learners create based on the information they have been exposed to. The term interlingual was coined in Weinreich's book *Languages in Contact* published in 1953. Thus, Weinreich is claimed to be the first researcher who studied this phenomenon. In his book Weinreich displayed his prodigious knowledge of European languages. His main conclusion was that there are certain structural conditions that are likely to be transferred from language to language at the moment of learning the L2.

Not only was Weinreich primarily interested in classroom language learners, but also in the way languages influence mutually when they come in contact. To this influence is what he called interference. The influence is from the native language to the target language. Weinreich's gave a psychological or psycholinguistic explanation for language interference. He suggested that "any speaker of two languages will tend to identify sounds, words, structures and meanings in one language with corresponding elements in the other language."

2.2.2. Nemser and the interlanguage

Nemser (1971) referred to the interlanguage phenomenon in his term "approximative system." He defined it as "the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilize the target language." Thus, he argued the proximity between the elements of the native language and the target language. That is the cause for the interference existing in the two languages, he claims.

Nemser (1971) mainly explained that there are some structures not present in either the L1 or the L2. Although this approximated system gradually approaches the target language, it rather blends with it totally; sometimes, it reaches a solid structure.

> "Learning a language at a given time is the patterned product of a linguistic system […] distinct from [NL] and [TL]" (Nemser, 1971).

Nemser additionally argues that such approximate systems vary in character in accordance with proficiency level, learning experience, communication function and personal learning styles.

According to Nemser, the approximate system develops in stages from the first attempt to use the target language to the most advanced. "The approximate system of one learner will coincide with that of another learner at the same level in proficiency with some variations due to different learning experiences" (Roodt 1993). Roodt reinforces the idea proposed by Nemser regarding the learners' own experiences and preferences for learning.

2.2.3. Corder and the interlanguage

A notion of interlanguage was also observed in *The Significance of Learners Errors* by Pit Corder (1967). He describes "transitional competence" as the linguistic ability of foreign language learners to advance in their process of learning. Corder coined the term "transitional competence" to indicate the essential dynamism and flux of the language learner's evolving system. Corder focused his attention on error from the perspective of language processing and language acquisition. In his paper he stressed the learner's positive cognitive contribution to learning. That means, his view was that the learner is engaged in a process of discovering the language.

Consequently, in *Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis* (1971), Corder referred to the interlanguage system as an "idiosyncratic dialect". This concept regarded the interlanguage system governed by rules (an interlanguage) and the language product based on existing rules. Corder argued that the language of L2 learners is a special type of dialect. Corder (1981) describes the learner's language as follows:

> "The spontaneous speech of the second language learner is a language and has a grammar. Secondly, since a number of sentences of that language are isomorphous with some of the sentences of his target language and have the same interpretation, then some, at least, of the rules needed to account for the learner's language will be the same as those required to account for the target language. Therefore the learner's language is a dialect in the linguistic sense: two languages which share some rules of grammar are dialects".

In general terms, a dialect, for Corder, is consider as the spontaneous utterances of a number of sentences that have the same interpretation of the rules and are similar to the target language. The learner's language is, therefore, unique but it could be mingled with the target language (TL) at some point in the learning process. This can result in the hampered and obstructed development of the learning process.

2.2.4. Selinker and the interlanguage

The term interlanguage was first introduced into the literature field by Selinker, in his book *Interlanguage* published in 1972. Selinker is considered, then, as the father of this term deeply highlighted in this study. Although Nemser (1971) and Corder (1971) had already exposed the interlanguage concept earlier, the theory received its full expression in Selinker's view.

Selinker (1972) says interlanguage refers to the mental processes when learners create a unique language model in the utterances regarding L2 learning. He adds that "the set of

utterances for most learners of a second language is not identical to the hypothesized

corresponding set of utterances which would have been produced by a native speaker of a target

language had he attempted to express the same meaning as the learner." These two sets of

utterances prove the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the speech of the learner

what is called interlanguage; interlanguage is similar neither to the L1 nor to the L2 (Selinker

1972).

Continuing to explain broader the concept of interlanguage, Selinker (1972) provide the

three main characteristics of the concept:

The first is *permeability*. Language is permeable in the sense that rules that constitute the

learners knowledge at any stage are not fixed, but are open to editing.

The second is *dynamism*. And this author explains that Interlanguage is a dynamic system

that rather adapts (slowly) new hypotheses to the target language system. That is, rules that

govern the L1 continue to gradually extend over a range of linguistic contexts in the L2. Rules do

not stay fixed in only one context but they begin to be overgeneralized.

The third is the *systematization of "interlanguage"*. This characteristic is analyzed since

the process of learning a language is developed throughout phases. Each phase is organized to

give the language the characteristic of being systematic. Both the L1 and the L2 reflect a set of

rules that can be deduced and described.

Variability is another characteristic of interlanguage. This characteristic is found when

learners apply rules for communication to take place. The communication is given in contexts

and so, the same rule may vary from context to context. Also, the same rule may be transferred

into various contexts for the sake of communication. Learners care only about being understood

rather than on communicating grammatically correct. Therefore, interlanguage is variable (Dickerson, 1975; Huebner, 1979).

In 1972, Selinker claims that interlanguage depends on five central processes which appear from the way how first language acquisition proceeds; they are:

1. Language transfer

2. Transfer of training

3. Strategies of L2 learning

4. Strategies of L2 communication

5. Overgeneralization of L2 rules

The term *Language transfer* refers to the process of displaying features of the L1 into the L2. It is also one of the principal causes of fossilization, if not treated on time and correctly. For Selinker (1972), language transfer is one of the central processes which produce what he calls fossilized competences and which are central to the L2 learning process. These processes cause fossilization and the combinations of these processes produce "entirely fossilized IL (interlanguage) competence" (Selinker in Richards 1974). Language transfer, therefore, is one of the causes of fossilization of interlanguage structures.

This central process is present in learners who transfer the forms and meanings of their native language into the L2 when speaking.

As it is discussed above, transfer is one of the causes of error fossilization since students make use of incompatible structures between the two languages. Richards et al. (1992) refer to two types of transfer, negative transfer and positive transfer. Positive transfer helps learning and occurs when both the native language and the target language have similar elements and forms

that fit in any of them. Negative transfer is known also as interference. Interference is another

phenomenon similar to interlanguage. It refers to the use of a "native-language pattern or rule

which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language" (Richards et al 1992). The

elements from the students' L1 are transferred into the L2. Thus, if they do not have proper

instruction, they might present error fossilization problems.

Another part of the transfer process is known as *Transfer of training*, especially negative

transfer. It is due to the effects of wrong instruction which fosters language rules that are not part

of the L2. In other words, Selinker (1972) refers to the process resulting from teacher-induction

errors which are common when a language item has been presented or practiced improperly.

Herein appears a new term known as *induced errors*. Stenson (1983) first spoke of this

term to refer to learner errors; errors which are the result of being misled during the teaching

process and instructors fail to "give definitions, examples, explanations and arrange practice

opportunities" (James, 1998).

Some of these interference errors presented by the L2 learners might be the product of

Strategies of L2 learning as well. The term is based on the perception that these learners apply

strategies including various attempts to simplify the target language system. A case in point is

when the learner 'simplifies' English so that the verbs *do* and *make* are used in the same form,

yielding sentences such as "I'm making my homework". *Strategies of L2 communication* are

found in speakers that focus primly on getting meaning across rather than grammar accuracy. The

main purpose is, then, to communicate.

Applying L2 learning strategies involves other subsequent problems. *Overgeneralization*

of L2 rules is one of those problems. This overgeneralization is located when the learner attempts

to use L2 rules in shapes beyond permitted by the TL. Learners apply a given rule in areas where it is not applicable and incorrect. Selinker proposes an example of overgeneralization which is extending the "-ed" morpheme to form the past tenses of all verbs (e.g. *"choosed"). Or extending the "s" morpheme to form plurals to nouns which do not admit it (e.g. *"mans").

2.3.   Transfer and interference in interlanguage

Interference is the concept that involves any influence of the L1 over the acquisition of the L2. Transfer, then, is part of the phenomenon of interference. Ellis (1997) argues that there are two types of transfer: positive and negative. Positive transfer occurs only when the relation between patterns in the two languages matches well and helps facilitate students' learning. But this term has been discussed before with the view of another researcher (*See point 2.2.4*). Positive transfer, in other words, should be enhanced to help learners create a habit formation. On the other hand, negative transfer is discussed to be a phenomenon that can obstruct the correct process of language learning. This type of transfer needs to be avoided as it can lead to create wrong structures of the language and therefore, fossilization errors.

Eventually, Rod Ellis (1997) explained that interlanguage, especially transfer, is the interference existing between L1 and L2 structures. Also, based on Selinker (1972), Ellis adds that interlanguage is defined as "a unique linguistic system". This is because students of foreign language use patterns of the L1 when communicating in the L2. This creates a new structure which differs from the L1 but also from the L2 creating a "hybrid" language. Taking into account these considerations, Ellis states that a large number of errors in the target language have grounds on the transfer process; this is mainly because the interference between the two languages (NL & TL) is always present and both teachers and students must be conscious in order to deal with it.

Instead of remarking the disadvantages of language transfer, Fromkin and colleagues have an important view that helps understanding a particular advantage of transfer:

> "He that understands grammar in one language understands it in another as far as the essential properties of grammar are concerned. The fact that he can't speak, nor comprehend, another language is due to the diversity of words and their various forms, but these are the accidental properties of grammar."(Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2003)

Fromkin states the advantage of transfer more than clear. Having the structure of the L1 not only presents problems, but, it is also a valuable tool since learners know how a language works. In addition, the ability to learn is always available in terms of grammar. Fromkin alludes that grammar is grasped by L2 learners even though they cannot speak it accurately. The problems here are, therefore, only regarding vocabulary and elements that are proper to each language.

Fromkin (2003) refers to interlanguage in terms of the Unitary System hypothesis. This hypothesis says that a child often creates one vocabulary necessary in his native tongue and only one grammar for it. This is the reason why bilingual children (also Learners of a second language) lean towards to combining the two languages in order to complete their speech (or writing), especially lexicon from both languages. Fromkin et al. (2003) discuss an example in which a Spanish-English child may have the word "agua" instead of "water", which is the correct word in English but he does not know it yet, and so he might utter/write sentences like "I need agua" instead of "I need water" and vice versa. This example gives a clear explanation that the learner has developed one lexicon and grammar. For learners of the second language, the amount of lexicon in the L2 is limited while the extent of vocabulary of their L1 can be limitless. The phenomenon and factors described above is the reason for interlanguage to take place during the L2 learning process.

Fromkin also discusses that the L1 influence is experienced in syntax and morphology. This sort of influence can show transfer phenomenon of a particular piece of grammar. "For example, a Spanish speaker acquiring English might drop subjects in non-imperative sentences because it is possible in Spanish" (Fromkin, Victoria A. et al. 2003). Also, L2 students tend to make word order errors during their development. Morphological and grammatical errors such as number and gender case are common. One of the causes for all the factors above is "the little amount of correct teaching that can lead to fossilized errors difficult to undo".

It is also discussed that transfer may be concerned with a number of behaviors that result from the mixture of input in the target language and a series of characteristics of human language (Selinker, 1992). Many of these behaviors may be consequence of repetition and memorization of language items. If there is a correct transfer it is thought to be a reward and the student will continue to repeat the same patterns in related situations. If the connection is not compatible, then, reinforcement and correction to avoid repeating is needed. Furthermore, Doughty and Long (2003) discuss that transfer "spawns from behaviorist theories" because language learning appears to have relation with acquiring new habits.

2.4.   Fossilization

Fossilization is another important characteristic of interlanguage. Ellis (1985) gives a definition of Fossilization:

> "It occurs in most languages and cannot be remedied by further instruction. Fossilized structures can be realized as errors or as correct target language forms. If, when fossilization occurs, the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature X in his interlanguage has assumed the same form as in the target language, then fossilization of the correct form will occur. If, however, the learner has reached a stage in which feature Y still does not have the same form as the target language; the fossilization will manifest itself as an error".

For this author both correct and incorrect forms of the L2 can fossilize but the difference lays on the advantage or disadvantage they offer. For Ellis fossilization is not necessarily permanent. Selinker (1974), in his view, says that fossilization can take place at any stage of the learning process, even at a very early stage. Nonetheless, Selinker agrees with Ellis that it is not only errors that may become fossilized but that 'correct things' can also become fossilized, especially if 'they are caused by other processes rather than language transfer'.

Another pertinent view of fossilization is given by Rutherford (1989) who describes fossilization as "near- universal failure to attain full target-language competence". This view has been discussed before relating to students who have not reached a complete grasp of the target language due to the interference between languages. In this regard, Barnard (1995) defines fossilization as a process which is an interlanguage phenomenon.

2.4.1. Krashen and fossilization

In order to explain better the concept of fossilization, Krashen (1985) proposed what he called the Input Hypothesis. Based on Richards et al (1992), Krashen agrees that the Input Hypothesis states that language acquisition will take place if the learner does not understand the input language which contains linguistic items that are beyond the learner's present linguistic competence. Learners understand such language by using reminders in the situation. Eventually, the ability to produce language would emerge naturally, and it needs not be taught directly.

Krashen then suggests some possible causes of fossilization:

- Insufficient quantity of input

- Inappropriate quality of input

- The affective filter

- The output filter

- The acquisition of deviant forms.

Insufficient input seems to be the main cause of fossilization; it emerges when learners may cease progress simply because they have stopped acquiring new and comprehensible input. For instance, little access to native speakers, books written in the target language and other material resources. Inappropriate quality of input refers to the case of a person whose input is sufficient but is of the wrong kind. This input is filled with routines and patterns and has a limited range of vocabulary and little new syntax. The affective filter hypothesis is for Krashen (1985) "a mental block that prevents acquirers from utilizing the comprehensible input they receive for language acquisition". He also explains that when the affective filter is 'up' the learner may understand what he hears or reads but input will not reach the language acquisition device. This suggests then that the acquirer is not motivated, lacks self-confidence or is anxious; the learners also consider that their performance in the target language might be a place where his weaknesses will be revealed. The output filter hypothesis prevents acquired rules from being used in performance. Krashen (1985) also mention that the factors responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the output filter are just those factors responsible for the input or affective filter. Acquisition of deviant forms is seen when learners are "exposed nearly exclusively to imperfect versions of the second language" (Krashen 1985). Some students are exposed to a second language in extreme foreign language situations.

These possible causes of fossilization might be present in different ways. Krashen (1985) suggests that the acquisition of intermediate forms can be prevented by providing good comprehensible input from the very beginning.

2.4.2. Fossilization in interlanguage

Here in this point it is possible to say that fossilization is a linguistic phenomenon that has linguistics items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a Native Language will tend to keep in their Interlanguage relative to a particular Target Language. Nemser (1971) also identified the Interlanguage equivalent of fossilization as a system of "permanent intermediate systems and subsystems." Fossilizable structures, rules or other items are also known as errors. Fossilization indicates the usage of forms during the L2 performance that are not the adequate from the correct target language form. In addition, it is also believed that fossilized structures are 'fixed' to the incorrect form no matter the input of the language to be learned.

Therefore, "interlanguage" is also close to explain the process of fossilization into L2 learners proposed by Nemser (1971) and Selinker (1972) Cited by Cook, V. 1993.

2.5.   Contrastive analysis hypothesis

This hypothesis was first founded by Lado, R. (1957) referring to the processes learners carry at the moment to learn or produce the TL. Contrastive Analysis states that there are some similarities between the Native Language and the Target Language which permits learners acquire TL structures more easily. Though, there are also differences which may hamper the process.

> "In the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning…those elements that are similar to the

(Learner's) native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult. (Lado, R. 1957).

Now, this hypothesis reflects some characteristics of language transfer since it focuses on the differences and similarities between languages. As Lado (1957) explains, the similarities make language learning easier. Students may encounter then a factor to take advantage of. However, the difficulties can hamper the process of learning and it is there where teachers and students may be conscious to avoid negative transfer and fossilization problems later.

2.6. Writing in the second language

Language Transfer is only found in Second or foreign Language Learning. It is not possible to encounter such phenomenon when learning a first language since it is developed in a natural way with no previous structures that may impede the normal acquisition. This idea is reinforced by the study of the patterns of written discourse of languages by Kaplan (1966) in which he found that every language follows a unique structure. Unique means that it differs from other languages which have their own patterns but it can also be similar to the patterns of related languages.

> "English discourse was schematically described as proceeding in a straight line, Semitic writing in a zigzag formation, "Oriental" written discourse in a spiraling line, and so forth" Kaplan (1966:14), cited by Brown, H.D. 1994.

According to this citation, Spanish is considered to have the form of the oriental (spiral) written discourse and most Spanish learners carry the rhetorical form of the Spanish written discourse and apply it into the English written language which has the form of a straight line. This argument suggests that Spanish learners of English also transfer some cultural aspects such as the manner of delivering a message. These students may well encounter barriers at the moment to learn to write in such language (Brown, H.D. 1994). Hence, any language learner is potentially

expected to find difficulties in the written discourse due to the interference that occurs between L1 and L2 (according to "patterns of written discourse," Kaplan, 1966).

Analyzing the development of writing skills and the process by which students cope with it, it is important to study some other authors' ideas about this issue. For instance, Lenneberg (1967) explains that writing is a learned behavior because it exists only in a literate society. It differs from speaking since everybody can speak naturally as they learn to walk. But writing has to be learned and rehearsed. This author compares writing to swimming which is only learned "only if someone teaches us" to do so (cited by Brown, 1994). In this sense, Lenneberg is cited for his important idea of comparing writing as any skill to be developed. It is possible to infer that to develop any skill (which is not innate as writing) it is necessary to put practice upon it. However, writing is a step by step process which can take longer for some students.

Elbow (1973) explains in one of his essays that the ability to write is usually a mystery for most people. Then, he adds that this mystery could be only solved taking into account the old 'faculty' psychologists' idea which says that there is a special 'writing faculty' present in most people but absent in some of them. According to some linguists, the difficult part to be explained lies on the problem of writing in head first (making a plan). However, the author affirms that Writing is a two-step process where you first figure out your meaning and then you reflect it using your L1. After this process you put it into language. It is useful to establish what you, as a writer, want to say. Don't start writing until you have previously made a good plan; use the outline tool as a major source. The important fact of this model is to set the main ideas to keep control of the writing in order to avoid making nonsense out of the final message. In short, it is necessary to have certain strategies in mind when writing. A good writer always makes a plan to foresee probable problems and have the chance to proofread them in a self-feedback.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

3.   Introduction

This chapter deals with the description and explanation of the research methodology and procedures used during the development of this fieldwork in order to test reach the objectives proposed in chapter 1. The aims of this chapter are: describe the design of the study, describe the sampling design and techniques, explain data collection procedures and describe data analysis procedures.

3.1.   Research method and design

The research method used in this study is mainly quantitative. Richards et al. (1992) refer to quantitative research as "the procedure which gathers data in a numerical form". Quantitative research advocates the use of statistics and controlled measurement. As a result, this quantitative approach is regarded as reliable and objective.

The research design of this study will be considered as analytic approach. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) define an analytic approach as "one that identifies a single factor or a cluster of factors. It focuses on a more specific aspect of language proficiency, for example, pronunciation". An analytic approach means that the "second language phenomenon is analyzed in its constituent parts and one or a cluster of these constituent parts are examined in greater detail to the exclusion of other factors" (Seliger and Shohamy 1989). In fact, this project focuses on a single factor which is error fossilization in the written English at University of Nariño beginner students. The selection of certain errors to the exclusion of others is also analytical since there are parts of the language necessary for the study; agreement is a case in point.

This study also depicts a descriptive design at a major scale. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (1993), a research using a descriptive design "simply describes an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterize individuals or a group". This study describes phenomena that occur naturally without the intervention of an experiment. However, the researcher exercised some control of factors in the research context by randomly selecting the subjects, selecting the language data to be collected and choosing the method of measurement. Finally, According to Nunan (1992:3) quantitative research is "obtrusive and controlled, generalizable, outcome oriented and assumes the existence of "facts" which are somehow external to and independent of the observer". In this sense, this study uses quantitative data collected through counting each kind of error per 250 words of each student's writing oriented to gather a certain types of errors.

3.2.   The setting and corpus of the study

English is one of the needs in a Colombian setting since the immersion of the bilingualism plan presented by the Ministerio de Educación Nacional in 2006 proposes to form citizens able to communicate and be competent globally to create connections with the rest of the world. In Colombia English is taught since primary school. The majority of students speak Spanish as native language which at the same time might interfere with their learning of English. However, the amount of English instruction at school is not sufficient to determine the most common errors students make. High school students and even university students continue to make the same errors despite the instruction given at university level.

The researchers are particularly intrigued by the consistency in which certain errors occur in the written work of students at University of Nariño. These students learn English under the

same conditions and circumstances as the others and thus they understand this process of

learning. One of the areas of great difficulty is writing. Corder (1981) mentioned that "Writing

contributes to enabling students to clarify and structure their own thinking and enables them to

communicate with a wider audience than the one which they are in daily contact with. In other

words, writing is a process which includes planning, developing, reviewing, editing and

presenting" and the means to reach the meaning here is also important. As a result, writing will

be considered as a way of reproducing spoken language in different manner, intertwining the four

language skills.

       The students who are the focus of this study are two homogeneous groups that speak

Spanish as their first language. The average age of students may vary ranging from 20 to 30 years

old. Students are registered in English and Spanish and English and French programs where

learning English is their primary purpose. Subsequently, they have to take reading and writing as

a separate subject. This area is which this study will focus on. It's important to consider that these

students share the same culture, customs, values and norms and the only language spoken outside

the classroom is merely Spanish. They come from different parts of the city and its rural areas.

       As it is said above, students have contact with English only in the classroom and for that

reason the University of Nariño has supplied English textbooks, cassettes, CDs, books; found in

the library. Students, therefore, do not have to struggle to gain access to the kind of materials

needed for their learning. A few students do have occasionally practice conversations during their

leisure time, watch TV programs or movies and listening to music and sometimes these same

activities are repeated in class for the sake of input source. Teachers also play an important input

role. They are required to instruct their students using only English. Most of these teachers at

University of Nariño are all Spanish mother tongue speakers who learned English language in the

same foreign language context as their students. The implications of this situation are that these teachers do not provide native-like models for their students.

For the selection of the corpus of language and following the strategies proposed by Ellis (1995), a sample of written work was collected from 80 students. These students are in fourth and fifth semester at University of Nariño. These students were provided with the topic for writing "Write a 250-word composition (approximately) about your last vacation. Provide as many details as possible about it. Also, describe how your dream vacation would be. Say who you would like to spend it with, where, what you would do, and so on" in which they have 30 minutes to complete this task. (Ellis 1997). They had to start with an outline, then a first draft and a final draft.

3.3.   Statistical procedure

A simple statistical procedure has been used for this study. After counting all the errors for each category, the total number of errors was worked out in an average number. The statistical significance of errors made by the students was determined by means of the tables and graphics using Excel-Microsoft which evaluates the outcome variables of the sample.

3.4.   The study population

The total population of this study is composed by 80 students at intermediate English level in University of Nariño they were enrolled in the English and Spanish and English and French programs. Students registered in the English and French program that are in fifth semester count 41 in total, including 17 female and 24 male students. Students registered in the English and Spanish program that are in fourth semester count 39 in total, including 25 female and 14 male students.

3.4.1. Sample

The sample for this study makes reference to the same number of population students mentioned above. Although, Mulder (1989) defines sample as "group which is selected from the population while remaining as representative as possible", this study needed to use the total population as representative. Each one of the sample students was required to write one paragraph of 250 words.

3.5.   Procedure and development of test application

The method used in this study to collect data is a test which Seliger and Shohamy (1989) define as:

> "A procedure used to collect data about the subject's ability in and knowledge of the second language in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, metalinguistic awareness and general proficiency".

The written exercise used to collect data for this study was designed to obtain information concerning the types of errors focus of this study. The written exercise elicits the use of tense, agreement, article, prepositions and pronouns.

The test was applied during the semester A-2015. The students had 30' time to finish the assigned task. Students wrote under examination conditions with the supervision of the researchers. This was done to make sure that students did not receive any assistance inside or outside the classroom. This also excluded the possibility of previous preparation.

3.5.1. Reliability

De Vos (2000:85) defines reliability as the accuracy or precision of an instrument, in this regard Richards (1992) says that reliability in testing is: "a measure of the degree to which a test

gives consistent results .A test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or when it is used by different people". Thus, the researchers consider that the test would bring results to be analyzed (the different types of errors under investigation) and that the method to be used to collect data is also reliable. This test will allow students to use their improvised language rather than structured or standardized that might elicit more specific speech. Consequently, the amount errors obtained from the tests represent the students' language knowledge.

3.5.2. Validity

Richards (1992) defines validity in testing as "the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for the purposes for which it is intended". In this study the test applied to the students had an expected outcome based on which errors this paper needs to work on.

Inside the concept of validity, Macmillan and Schumacher (1993) make a difference between internal and external validity. Internal validity expresses "the extent to which extraneous variables have been controlled or accounted for". External validity refers "to the generalization of the results, that is, the extent to which the results and conclusions can be generalized to other people and settings". Internal validity was ensured by the fact that the data were collected in a controlled natural classroom setting and under examination conditions. This study also has external validity in the sense that the results can be generalized to the population of all intermediate students.

3.5.3. Data capturing

The researchers counted the 250 words in the test of the student and numbered the errors in the

exercise. Each error was recorded by means of a mark under the error category. The

researchers counted the total number of errors made by each learner separating and

classifying them.

3.5.4. Data analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics.

According to Huysamen (1998) the main purpose of descriptive statistics is to reduce large

amounts of data to facilitate the drawing of conclusions about them. Thus, the results pertaining

to identification of the most common errors will be presented by means of a bar graph and tables

which will show the frequency of errors made by the learners.

CHAPTER VI: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.   Introduction

This chapter explores the results of the data relating to this paper. The analysis is done both qualitatively and quantitatively giving a detailed presentation of the most common errors that reflect fossilization. This last phenomenon is entirely addressed to determine the extent to which it occurs in students of further education at Universidad de Nariño. The errors are classified as they are obtained and given their standard writing. In addition, to reach the first objective of this work, the errors are presented in a chart in order to write the number of occurrences of each kind of error and presented with a description.

4.1.   Identification of errors

The identification of the errors is possible due to the application of the written test in which errors were encountered. The errors are written down into two charts: fourth and fifth semester. Each error has its correct equivalent in standard written English. As the students tested are at intermediate level, it was necessary to put the errors in context to make the error clearer. After observing the tests the errors displayed below were the most significant and representative for the purpose of this study. For this reason the total number was reduced.

ENGLISH AND SPANISH PROGRAM	
Erroneous sentence	**Correct equivalent**
I ENJOY so much look the nature	I ENJOYED so much to look at the nature
I can walk around the city	I could walk around the city
I have time to practice	I had time to practice
It SHOULD be have a lot of things	It WOULD be TO HAVE a lot of things
If is possible I would like GET a job	If IT is possible I would like TO GET a job
I DON'T HAD vacation	I DIDN'T HAVE vacation
I WAS VISITING some places	I VISITED some places

It's a reason FOR PROTECT my eyes	It's a reason FOR PROTECTING my eyes
Then when FINISHED	Then when IT WAS FINISHED
I would like TRAVEL to Islas Canarias	I would like TO TRAVEL to Islas Canarias
She KNOW many things about the "salsa" music	She KNEW many things about "salsa" music
I'll like to ride ON motorbike	I'D like to ride motorbike
I NEVER SEE the sea before	I'D NEVER SEEN the sea before
The last December I VISIT Samaniego	Last December I VISITED Samaniego
Also I LEARNING about animals	Also I LEARNED about animals
I WAS VISIT to my family	I VISITED my family
The things that we wanted DO	The things that we wanted TO DO
When I HAD FINISH my vacations	When I FINISHED my vacation
I needed RESOLVE a trouble	I needed TO SOLVE a trouble
All SHARE nice moments	We all SHARED nice moments
When us STAY there	When we STAYED there
I would like JOIN with them	I would like TO JOIN them
I traveled to my town FOR VISITED my family	I traveled to my town FOR VISITING my family
in this time we WERE CELEBRATED parties	at that time we CELEBRATED parties
I think STAY all the time with my son	I think ABOUT STAYING all the time with my son
We ARE JOINED and I enjoyed every moment	We JOINED and I enjoyed every moment
This COULD BE better	This COULD HAVE BEEN better
Other of places that I visited IS	Other places I visited WERE…
I REMEBERED that	I REMEMBER that
I WILL LIKE TRAVELED with all my family	I WOULD LIKE TO TRAVEL with all my family
Ate chicken FOR CELEBRATE the new year	WE ate chicken TO CELEBRATE the new year
We WERE TO DANCE	We WENT TO DANCE
Always I HAVE WANT to go to Roma	Always I HAVE WANTED to go to Roma
I have dream with VISIT it	I have dreamed of VISITING it
I WILL CAN DO it	I WILL BE ABLE TO DO it
We CAN DO RYDE in bicycles	We CAN RIDE bicycles
I DID NOT EVER WAS there	I HAVE NEVER BEEN there
The environment in two places ARE nice	The environment in two places WAS nice

People in this town IS friendly	People in this town WERE friendly
We NEVER BEFORE LIVED that experience	We HAD NEVER LIVED that experience before
We could see TO SING to the band	We could see the band SING
We COULD TO SHARE this experience	We COULD SHARE this experience
I HAD TO PRESENTED some tests	I HAD TO PRESENT some tests
Without BE worry	Without BEING worried
I WAS WORK in a barbershop	I WORKED in a barbershop
I'd like TRAVEL my sister because with she	I'd like TO TRAVEL with my sister because with her
I WAS SPEND in much money	I SPENT too much money
I WOULD LIKE TRAVEL EEUU	I WOULD LIKE TO TRAVEL TO EEUU
For the future I LIKE TO VISIT	For the future I'D LIKE TO VISIT
This is one of my favorite ACTIVITY	This is one of my favorite ACTIVITIES
My mother cook Christmas food	My mother cooked Christmas food
People was celebrating	People were celebrating
In that place there WAS many games	In that place there WERE many games
We WAS to visit the zoo	We went to visit the zoo
This country HAVE interesting places	This country HAS interesting places
CITY of Colombia like Medellin or Cartagena	CITIES of Colombia like Medellin or Cartagena
I can eat MANY food	I could eat A LOT OF food
This place NOBODY KNOW	This place NOBODY KNOWS
In THIS PLACES	In THESE PLACES
EVERYTHING WERE fine	EVERYTHING WAS fine
EVERYBODY WERE shouting	EVERYBODY WAS shouting
THE last year I went to Popayan	Last year I went to Popayan
She know many things about THE "salsa" music	She knew many things about "salsa" music
On December 30	On December THE 30th
When we arrived went to friends house	When we arrived we went to A friend's house
We went to cinema	We went to THE cinema
They like THE soccer	They like soccer
We rode TO horse	We rode A horse
I played with them all time	I played with them all THE time
To learn vocabulary and the grammar of THE English	To learn vocabulary and grammar of English
I am in THE fourth semester	I am in fourth semester
My dream vacation would be in THE country	My dream vacation would be in A country

where	where
To have A new memories	To have new memories
All people are very kind	All THE people were very kind
This celebration are the uniques in all OF year	This celebration is the unique in THE year
In the end of year	At the end of THE year
We took the metro for Return	We took the metro for THE return
I just slept THE all day	I just slept all day
He is love of my life	He is THE love of my life
IN 15th December	THE 15th of December
There we enjoyed AN amazing landscape	There we enjoyed THE amazing landscape
I went to visit TO my family	I went to visit my family
ON December	IN December
I played a soccer championship	I played IN a soccer championship
I went to ride IN my bicycle	I went to ride my bicycle
I enjoy so much LOOK the nature	I enjoyed so much to look AT the nature
My last vacation I was in Pasto	ON my last vacation I was in Pasto
I enjoyed to have time my-self	I enjoyed to have time TO myself
Travels IN foreign countries	Travels TO foreign countries
I was IN home	I was AT home
I enjoyed OF carnival	I enjoyed the carnival
I'd love a vacation IN this.	I'd love a vacation LIKE this.
I would like to go IN America	I would like to go TO America
FOR to understand the world	To understand the world
I dream travelling	I dream OF travelling
IN THE last vacation	Last vacation
We arrived TO the house	We arrived IN the house
People OF this country	People FROM this country
We practiced some OF football	We practiced some football
We spoke THE our experiences	We spoke ABOUT our experiences
And to visit a lot places	And to visit a lot OF places
I have a lot of money FOR buy things for my family	I have a lot of money TO buy to my family
IN my last vacations	ON my last vacation
I'll travel to La Union FOR celebrate	I'll travel to La union TO celebrate
IN MIDDLE night	AT midnight
To know more about OF my career	To know more about my career
I have dream WITH visit it	I have dreamed OF visiting it
Other people stopped "La Cabalgata"	Other people stopped AT "La Cabalgata"

I dream my vacation IN a beach	I dream of my vacation AT a beach
Swimming the sea	Swimming IN the sea
I came back TO MY home	I came back home
I ate a lot OF IN that day	I ate a lot that day
I was my girlfriend	I was WITH my girlfriend
We went OUT Ipiales	We went TO Ipiales
My ears were NEAR to explode	My ears were ABOUT to explode
IN the first days	The first days
I wash the dish IN two o'clock	I washed the dishes AT two o'clock
I was TOGETHER my family	I was WITH my family
At the end of year stayed at home	At the end of the year I stayed at home.
If is possible I would like get a job	If IT is possible I would like to get a job
I was with THEY went to visit the churches	I was with THEM. WE went to visit the churches
THERE were bored days	THEY were boring days
When we arrived went to friends house	When we arrived WE went to a friend's house
All share nice moments	WE all shared nice moments
When US stay there	When WE stayed there
Because is occupation	Because IT is an occupation
Our family and ME were to "Las Lajas"	Our family and I went to "Las Lajas"
The carnival THIS was wonderful	The carnival was wonderful
Ate chicken for celebrate the new year	WE ate chicken to celebrate the new year
I'd like travel my sister because with SHE...	I'd like to travel with my sister because with HER...
That's very important for MY	That's very important for ME
Because IT place has a wonderful places	Because THIS place has wonderful places
My last VACATIONS WERE amazing	My last VACATION WAS amazing.
I MADE the homework	I DID homework
I PINTED the house. I spend all time painting it	I PAINTED the house. I spent all the time…
To know YOUR wonderful people and YOUR culture	To know ITS people and ITS culture
We WAS TO visit the zoo	We WENT TO visit the zoo
After we visited IT city	After we visited THIS city
I want to know new PERSONS	I want to know new PEOPLE
My VACATIONS will be FANTASTICS	My VACATION will be FANTASTIC
It is one of my BETTER HOBBY	It is one of my BEST HOBBIES

ENGLISH AND FRENCH PROGRAM	
Erroneous sentence	**Correct equivalent**
It IS a grateful experience	It WAS a grateful experience
I can SAID	I can SAY
People could be CONECT with HIS costums	People could be CONNECTED with THEIR costumes
I was interested TO learning English	I was interested IN learning English
Her way TO walk	Her way OF walking
I rather visit historical places	I WOULD rather visit historical places
I hope been traveling to France	I hope TO be travelling to France
That's for BEEN practicing	That's for practicing
I decided work with my family	I decided TO work with my family
He normally USE to work	He normally USED to work
I HAVE never been there before	I HAD never been there before
I'd like enjoy the beach	I'd like TO enjoy the beach
I couldn't travel as I LOVE	I couldn't travel as I LOVED
He TALKS me about Mexico	He TALKED TO me about Mexico
I did many things that I'VE never though I WILL do	I did many things that I HAD never thought I WOULD do
In that city we HAVE a good experience	In that city we HAD a good experience
My dream has been TRAVEL	My dream has been TRAVELLING
It was great FOR meet new people	It was great TO meet new people
We HAVE WERE SHARE most of moments	We HAVE SHARED most of THE moments
I had to CLEANING UP the rooms	I had to clean up the rooms
I prefer stay at home and relax	I prefer TO stay at home and relax
We went TO dancing	We went dancing
I met new FRIEND	I met new FRIENDS
My last vacation WERE at Ecuador	My last vacation WAS in Ecuador
I learnt too MUCH things	I learnt too MANY things
The people IS friendly	The people ARE friendly
But IN few DAY later	but few DAYS later
I went out 6th January	I went out THE 6th OF January
I taught English to A little children	I taught English to little children
Where we had THE dinner	Where we had dinner
THE most of my vacations	Most of my vacation
IN THE last vacation	Last vacation
I worked handicap person	I worked WITH a handicap person
And also suitable option	And also A suitable option
To beach	To THE beach
That is THE better place to visit	That is A better place to visit
We went to visit THE historical places	We went to visit historical places
Presidents' house	THE presidents' house
I want to go Florida	I want to go TO Florida
Every single thing ON there	Every single thing there

IN my last vacation	ON my last vacation
AT the middle of vacation	IN the middle of vacation
I stayed IN her home	I stayed AT her home
I tried to know much as possible	I tried to know AS much as possible
I worked every day TO make up	I worked every day At make up
I went out 6th January	I went out THE 6th OF January
The rest ON my vacation	The rest OF my vacation
I think ABOUT OF cultural custums	I think ABOUT cultural costumes
We went IN a trip	We went ON a trip
I wait for a while FOR look her ayes	I waited for a while TO look AT her eyes
I had to take care my little brother	I had to take care OF my lithe brother
IN the last week	The last week
Most time stayed at home	Most OF THE time I stayed at home
I hadn't seen him AFTER four years	I hadn't seen him FOR four years
We talked many things	We talked ABOUT many things
It was very far OF the city	It was very far FROM the city
We went to visit some OF other friends	We went to visit some other friends
I want to become closer to THE nature	I want to become closer to nature
ON December	IN December
AGAINST THAT the other's toughts	DESPITE the other's thoughts
We decided to camp near FROM the river	We decided to camp near the river
I hope to start with it IN this year	I hope to start with it this year
we stayed here AT Pasto	We stayed here IN Pasto
I could visit TO my grandmother	I could visit my grandmother
They were kind WITH me	They were kind TO me
They didn't have signal IN their phones	They didn't have signal ON their phones
My last vacation	ON my last vacation
He TALKS me about Mexico	He TALKED TO me about Mexico
AT 8th January	ON 8th OF January
I've dreamt nice landscapes	I've dreamt OF nice landscapes
Travelling IN AN airplane	Travelling BY airplane
A little town near TO Ipiales	A little town near Ipiales
IN THE last vacation	Last vacation
I went out January 4th	I went out IN January THE 4th
IN my next vacation	ON my next vacation
…but AT the end I could accomplish it	…but IN the end I could accomplish it
I worked handicap person	I worked WITH a handicap person
We were IN "Las Lajas"	We were AT "Las Lajas"
But IN few DAY later	but few DAYS later
INSTEAD its dangers	DESPITE OF its dangers
People THE others places	People FROM other places
When we arrived Ecuador	When we arrived IN Ecuador
I went out with THEIR	I went out with THEM
But at night was a little scary	But at night IT was a little scary
My family and ME enjoyed Christmas	My family and I enjoyed Christmas

People could be CONECT with HIS costums	People could be CONNECTED with THEIR costumes
I was with family	I was with MY family
When my boyfriend visited me went out…	When my boyfriend visited me WE went out…
Spending time with THEY is comfortable	Spending time with THEM is comfortable
I could do something OF them	I could do something FOR them
So for me was a great experience	So for me IT was a great experience
THESE day we had problems	THAT day we had problems
I visited my grandfather and THEY were very happy	I visited my grandfather and HE was very happy
…helping my mom because IT is pregnant	…helping my mom because SHE is pregnant
THIS places were nice	THESE places were nice
I would like to spend time with my friends or better with the person YOU love	I would like to spend time with my friends or better with the person I love
I did so MUCH things	I did so MANY things
I ASIST AT different events	I ATTENDED TO different events
It REMEMBERED me	It REMIND me
All the things I lived were UNIQUES	All the things I lived were UNIQUE
My VACATIONS WERE	My VACATION WAS
ANOTHER beautiful places	OTHER beautiful places
In comparation with Cali	In comparison with Cali
Hear in Colombia	Here in Colombia
To know beautiful places	To see beautiful places
I BECOME relaxing	I BECAME relaxed
The most of time	Most of the time
Meet new cultures	Learn about new cultures
That is not completely fun but not hard	That is not completely fun or hard either
No matters if it is near Pasto	No matter if it is near Pasto

SPELLING ERRORS	
Pinted	Painted
Custums	Costumes
Diches	Dishes
Resolve	Solve
Were to	Went to
Environments	Environment
Ryde	Ride
Costums	Costumes
Toughts	Thoughts
Greit	Great
Comparation	Comparisson
Matters	Matter
Hear	Here

4.2. Statistical data

4.2.1. Error frequency

Table 1: Errors frequency for English and Spanish program

	Number
Tense	88
Agreement	17
Article	34
Preposition	92
Pronoun	24
Other	14
Total	269

Table 2: Error frequencies for English and French program

	Number
Tense	40
Agreement	8
Article	30
Preposition	77
Pronoun	25
Other	24
Total	204

Figure 1: Graphic presentation of error frequency for program
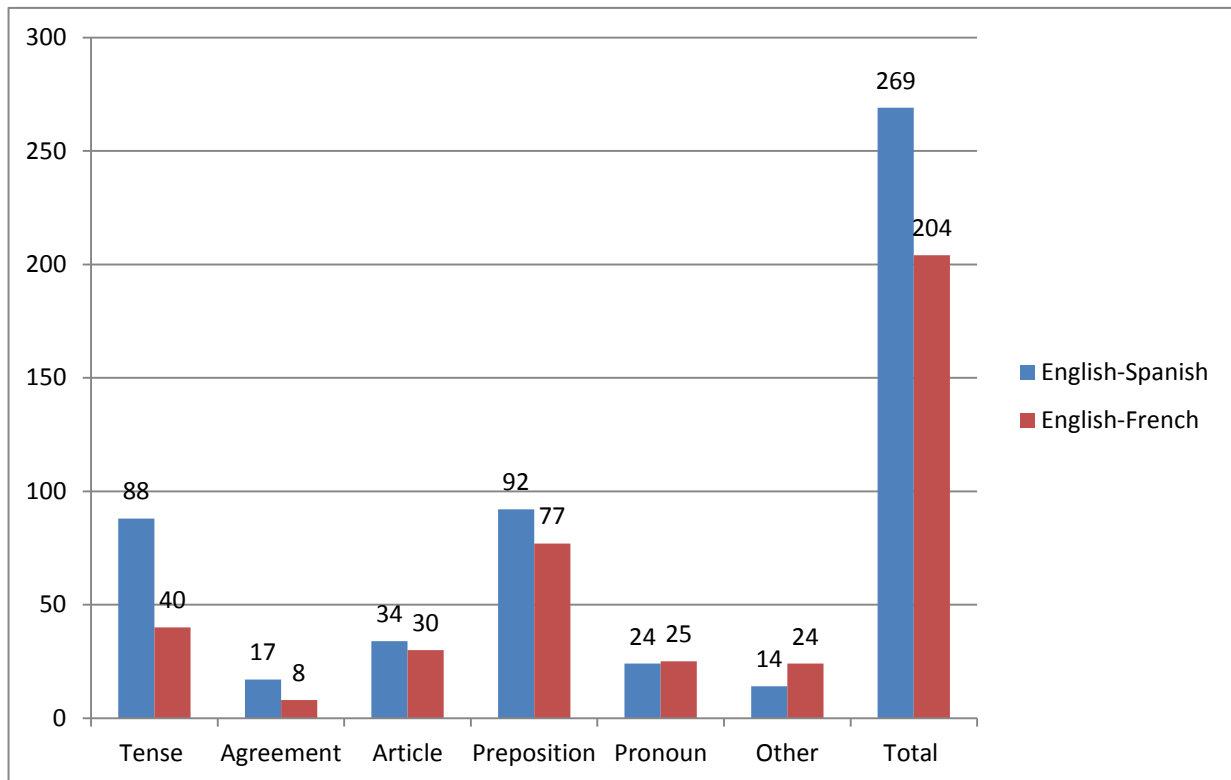
Figure 1.1: Graphic presentation of error frequency for program (percentage)
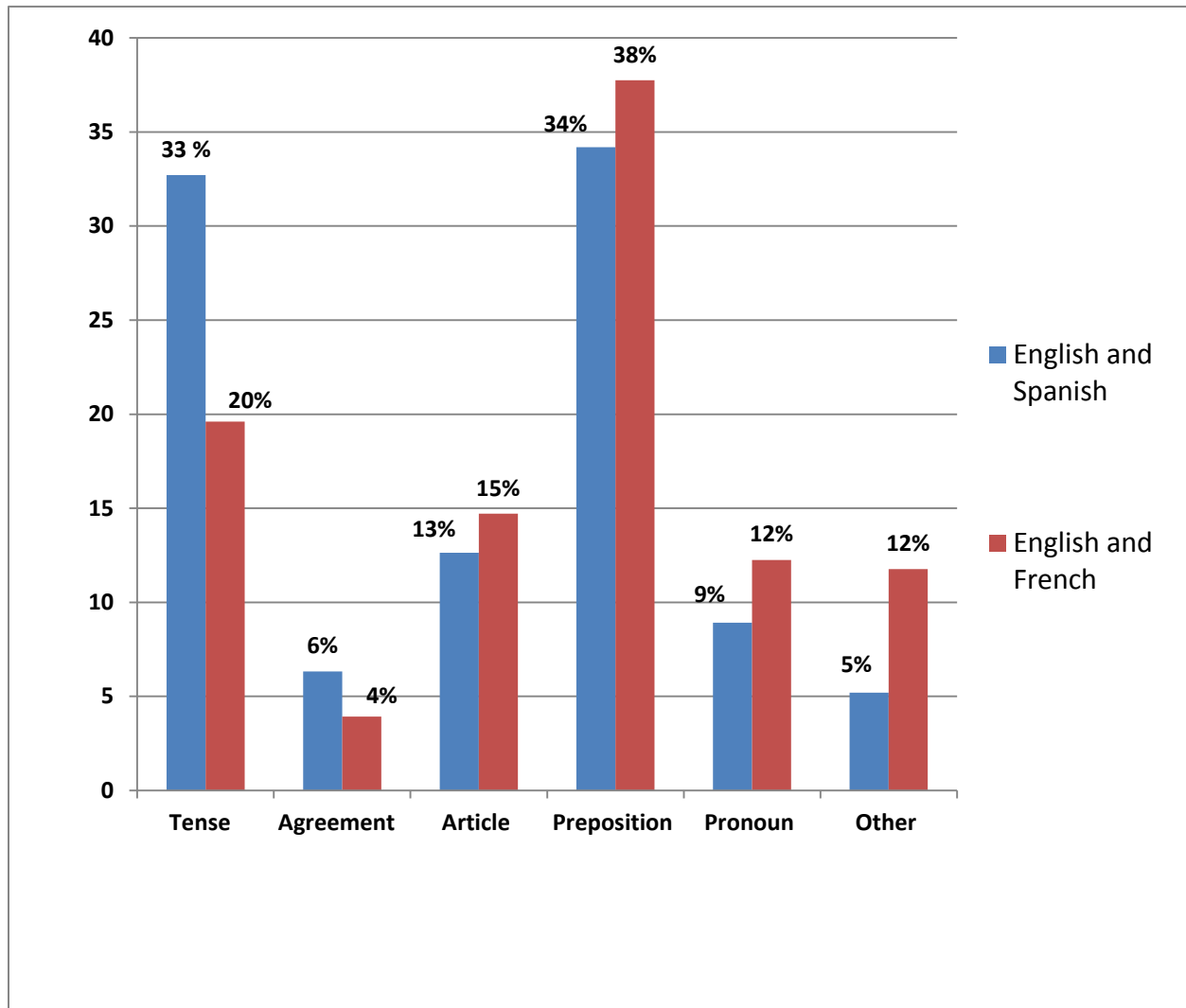
Table 3: Total of error frequencies

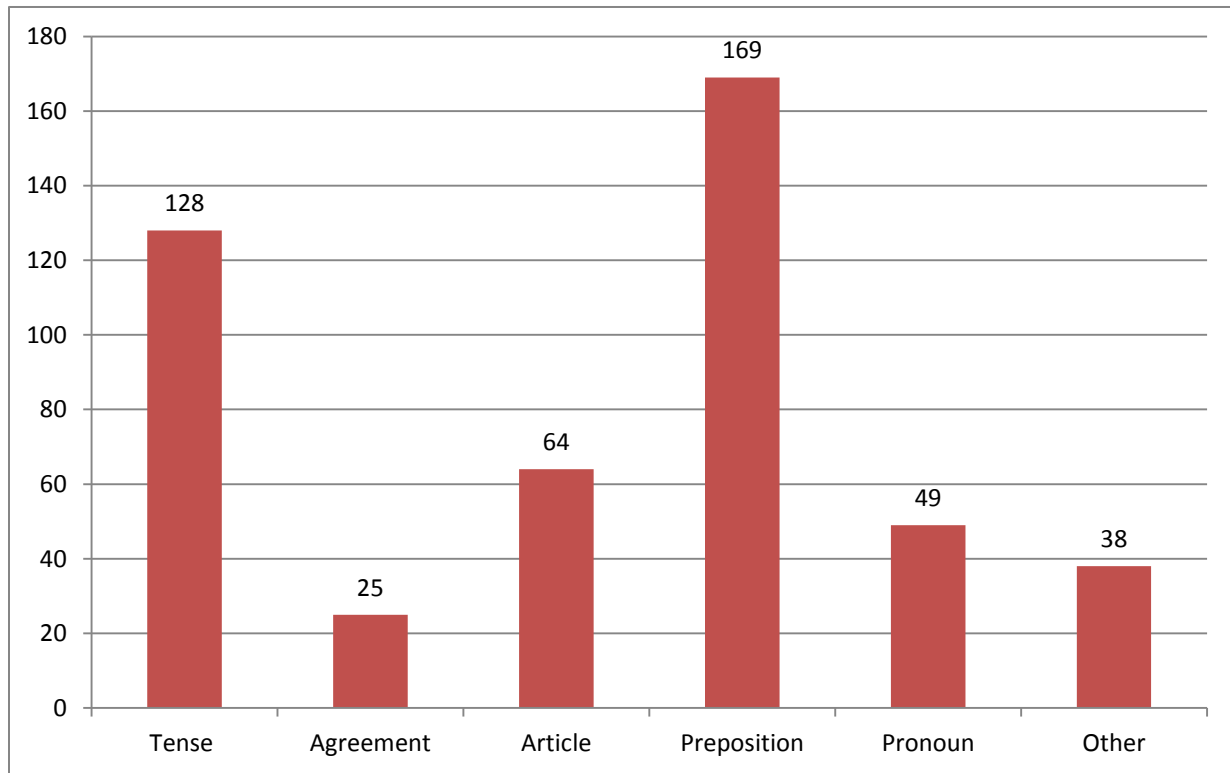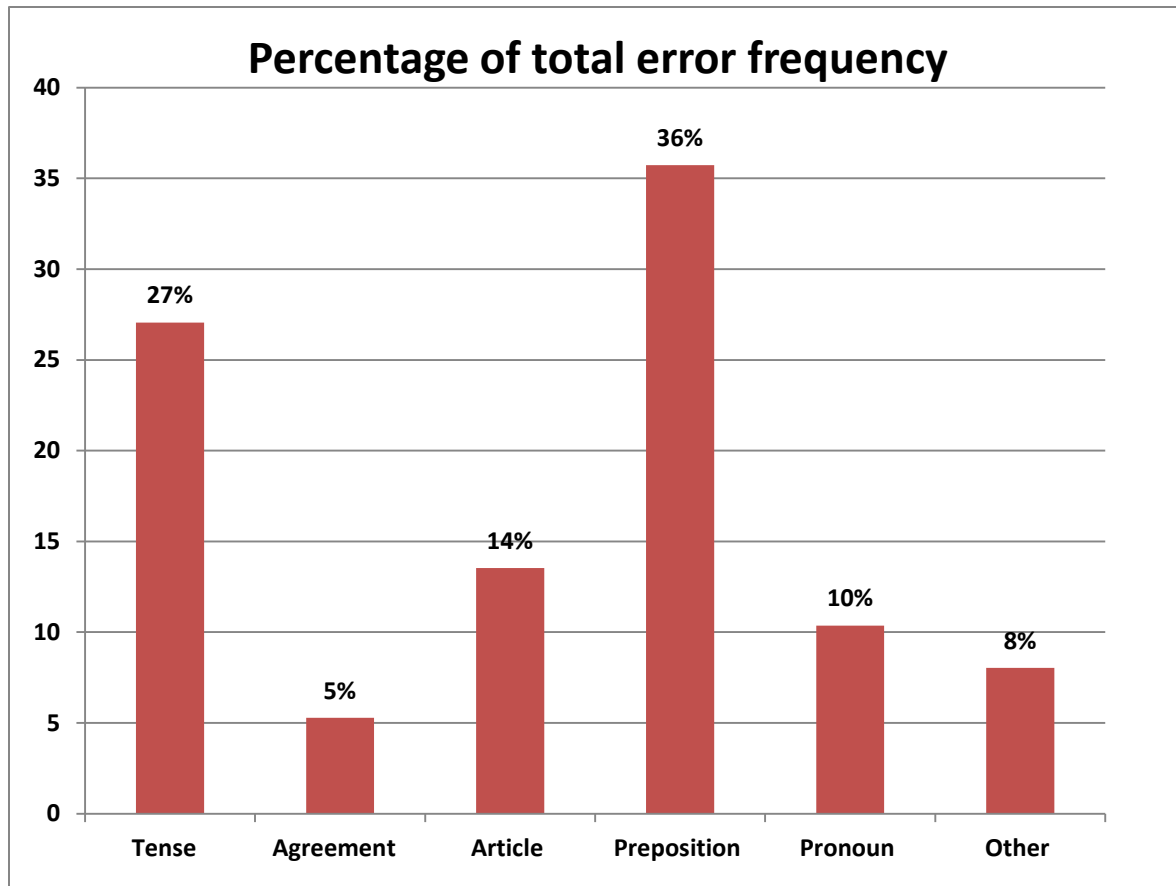| Categories	Frequencies
Tense	128
Agreement	25
Article	64
Preposition	169
Pronoun	49
Other	38
Total	473

Figure 2: Graphic presentation of total error frequencies

Figure 2.2: Graphic presentation of total error frequencies (percentage)

4.2.2. Discussion of error frequency

The results in table 1, table 2 and figure 1 reveal the performance of intermediate level students in writing. Also, it is possible to observe the categories where errors occur more frequently (tense, agreement, article, preposition and pronoun categories). The test was applied to two groups and so it is possible to see the difference of error frequency between those tow groups. In addition, it was necessary to add a new category where other important errors were counted. However, those other category errors did not involve a large number. The difference of error frequency serves to visualize that all students at this level might have experienced different quantity and feedback on their input and output. If it is observed in the figure above (figure 1), the maximum difference is found in the tense error category between the two groups tested. These differences among students suggest that other variable such as language aptitude could make some students more vulnerable to error fossilization. According to Robinson (2013), higher aptitude for second or foreign language determines a successful adjustment to "instructed or naturalistic exposure" to the L2 which can be measured by faster progress towards the proficiency at the end of a course of instruction. In this sense, the English and Spanish students made more errors than the fifth semester and therefore they are more susceptible to fossilization. The biggest difference is observed in tense error category and the smallest in pronouns.

Although the amount of errors obtained from the sample is large, the most representative ones were analyzed and worked over. All the examples mentioned above were enclosed in the different categories and they revealed that they would be made due to different factors such as lack of knowledge, attention, interest, misunderstanding of the rules, lack of (written-oral) practice inside or outside classroom, lack of feedback, etc. In fact, there is not a specific factor associated with the presence of errors when learning a second language but the inference is that

perhaps the presence of transfer would be a possible cause to such mistakes. As it was discussed

in chapter 2, transfer can affect single words, phrases or sentences because learners tend to

correlate their native language structures to the second language in order to express the different

ideas they want to come across with.

4.3.   Error analysis

This section includes a detailed description of the error presented with the most

representative examples and its possible causes. Also, the correct equivalent will be discussed,

only if necessary.

4.3.1. Errors related to tense

The findings obtained from the applied test show that most of the errors made by the

learners are theoretically fossilized structures. There is a remarkable amount of tense errors

produced by the students and a considerable quantity of these errors seems to be impervious to

exposure to the English language.

The following examples of errors extracted from the essays of the students reveal a

common variety of errors and an interlanguage that could be found on a set of deviant rules.

Evidently, the errors committed by the learners have not been eradicated by the two years or two

years and a half exposure to English.

TENSE ERRORS	
I ENJOY so much look the nature	I ENJOYED so much to look at the nature
I can walk around the city	I could walk around the city
I have time to practice	I had time to practice
It SHOULD be have a lot of things	It WOULD be TO HAVE a lot of things
If is possible I would like GET a job	If IT is possible I would like TO GET a job
I DON'T HAD vacation	I DIDN'T HAVE vacation

I WAS VISITING some places	I VISITED some places
It's a reason FOR PROTECT my eyes	It's a reason FOR PROTECTING my eyes
Then when FINISHED	Then when IT WAS FINISHED
I would like TRAVEL to Islas Canarias	I would like TO TRAVEL to Islas Canarias
She KNOW many things about the "salsa" music	She KNEW many things about "salsa" music
I'll like to ride ON motorbike	I'D like to ride motorbike
I NEVER SEE the sea before	I'D NEVER SEEN the sea before
The last December I VISIT Samaniego	Last December I VISITED Samaniego
Also I LEARNING about animals	Also I LEARNED about animals
I WAS VISIT to my family	I VISITED my family
The things that we wanted DO	The things that we wanted TO DO
When I HAD FINISH my vacations	When I FINISHED my vacation
I needed RESOLVE a trouble	I needed TO SOLVE a trouble
All SHARE nice moments	We all SHARED nice moments
When us STAY there	When we STAYED there
I would like JOIN with them	I would like TO JOIN them
I traveled to my town FOR VISITED my family	I traveled to my town FOR VISITING my family
in this time we WERE CELEBRATED parties	at that time we CELEBRATED parties
I think STAY all the time with my son	I think ABOUT STAYING all the time with my son
We ARE JOINED and I enjoyed every moment	We JOINED and I enjoyed every moment
This COULD BE better	This COULD HAVE BEEN better
Other of places that I visited IS	Other places I visited WERE…
I REMEBERED that	I REMEMBER that
I WILL LIKE TO TRAVELED with all my family	I WOULD LIKE TO TRAVEL with all my family
Ate chicken FOR CELEBRATE the new year	WE ate chicken TO CELEBRATE the new year
We WERE TO DANCE	We WENT TO DANCE
Always I HAVE WANT to go to Roma	Always I HAVE WANTED to go to Roma
I have dream with VISIT it	I have dreamed of VISITING it
I WILL CAN DO it	I WILL BE ABLE TO DO it
We CAN DO RYDE in bicycles	We CAN RIDE bicycles
I DID NOT EVER WAS there	I HAVE NEVER BEEN there

The environment in two places ARE nice	The environment in two places WAS nice
People in this town IS friendly	People in this town WERE friendly
We NEVER BEFORE LIVED that experience	We HAD NEVER LIVED that experience before
We could see TO SING to the band	We could see the band SING
We COULD TO SHARE this experience	We COULD SHARE this experience
I HAD TO PRESENTED some tests	I HAD TO PRESENT some tests
Without BE worry	Without BEING worried
I WAS WORK in a barbershop	I WORKED in a barbershop
I'd like TRAVEL my sister because with she	I'd like TO TRAVEL with my sister because with her
I WAS SPEND in much money	I SPENT too much money
I WOULD LIKE TRAVEL EEUU	I WOULD LIKE TO TRAVEL TO EEUU
For the future I LIKE TO VISIT	For the future I'D LIKE TO VISIT
It IS a grateful experience	It WAS a grateful experience
I can SAID	I can SAY
People could be CONECT with HIS costums	People could be CONNECTED with THEIR costums
I was interested TO learning English	I was interested IN learning English
Her way TO walk	Her way OF walking
I rather visit historical places	I WOULD rather visit historical places
I hope been traveling to France	I hope TO be travelling to France
That's for BEEN practicing	That's for practicing
I decided work with my family	I decided TO work with my family
He normally USE to work	He normally USED to work
I HAVE never been there before	I HAD never been there before
I'd like enjoy the beach	I'd like TO enjoy the beach
I couldn't travel as I LOVE	I couldn't travel as I LOVED
He TALKS me about Mexico	He TALKED TO me about Mexico
I did many things that I'VE never though I WILL do	I did many things that I HAD never thought I WOULD do
In that city we HAVE a good experience	In that city we HAD a good experience
My dream has been TRAVEL	My dream has been TRAVELLING
It was great FOR meet new people	It was great TO meet new people
We HAVE WERE SHARE most of moments	We HAVE SHARED most of THE moments
I had to CLEANING UP the rooms	I had to clean up the rooms
I prefer stay at home and relax	I prefer TO stay at home and relax
We went TO dancing	We went dancing

Use of auxiliary verb – (to be) to form the past tense

(1)   We **are joined** and I enjoyed every moment

(2)   I **was spendin** much money

(3)   I **was visit** to my family.

(4)   We **were celebrated** parties

The examples above show that the learners have either mastered the rules regarding the formation of the past tense of regular verbs by adding the **–ed** suffix to the infinitive or the rule regarding irregular verbs. In these examples, it appears that learners have adopted the approach that the auxiliary was/were is used before any verb to form the past tense without changing the form of the main verb. In addition, students sometimes confuse the negative form of the simple past tense using the verb "be" as the auxiliary instead of "did". This fact would be present as learners didn't have enough practice on simple past verbs different from "be". Also, the verb be is highly practiced at university as it is supposed to be an important verb and so students can not dispose of it assertively.

Use of the past tense after the infinitive particle TO

(1)   I **will like to traveled** with all my family

(2)   I **had to presented** some tests

(3)   We prepared the party **to received** all the people.

Learners have little difficulty in using the correct tense of the verb that follows the infinitive. The examples above are evidence for a tendency to use the past tense of the verb after

the infinitive – to. Students seem to understand that if they want to talk about a past action they

need to put all verbs in past, even after the infinitive particle "to". Referring to errors involving

the infinitive, Finn (1996) states that students find difficulty in overcoming these errors, no

matter how often this type of mistake is pointed out to them.

Use of the wrong tense after a preposition (For, To, About, On, etc)

 (1)   I traveled to my town **for visited** my family

(2)   We went **to dancing**.

(3)   I had **to cleaning up** the rooms.

(4)   That's for **been** practicing.

(5)   Ate chicken **for celebrate** the New Year

        All of the examples above represent a wrong use of the tense (form of the verb). In

example (1), the student wrote the verb in past tense when actually it should have been written in

gerund. It reflects the problem addressed in the point immediately above referring to the infinitive

use. Students think that it is necessary to put all verbs in past. In this example the particle *to* for

the infinitive is not even present. The opposite case is in example (2) where there is the particle *to*

but the verb is in gerund (incorrect). In this case the correct equivalent form of the verb is its base

form *dance*. Also, some students tend to use the same gerund after the infinitive particle *to* as it is

displayed in example (3). In this case the base form of the verb is needed. Example (3) is a

special case because it presents addition of the incorrect form of the verb. First, the verb *be* after

the preposition for must be in gerund and, second it is totally unnecessary. In example (5) again

the verb must be in gerund. Most of these errors are due to the wrong use of the preposition and

the correct form of the tense after it. This problem might be caused by the lack of practice on verbs that have different forms after certain prepositions and particles. Also, students seem to fail to identify and distinguish the different tenses and it is because they might have received little input and feedback. The use of the gerund is commonly used by L2 learners (Corder, 1974) though there is no an obvious relation between the Spanish use of progressive tense and its English counterpart. So, there is no foundation for transfer in this case.

Omission or addition of infinitive particle *to*

(1)   I **prefer stay** at home and relax

(2)   I **visited to** my family

(3)   The things that we **wanted do**

(4)   We **could to share** this experience

(5)   I'd **like travel**

The infinitive is a tense used in English when a second verb is needed. Most of the time the particle *to* is called for and in some cases it is unnecessary. In the examples above, there are two phenomena pertaining to the infinitive particle *to:* omission and addition. In examples (1), (3) and (5) the phenomenon of omission is noticeable. Then, there are errors in those sentences because after verbs like *prefer, like* the following verb is required to have the particle *to* for the infinitive, or it can be placed in gerund form, as a substitute. On the other hand, examples (2) and (4) refer to the phenomenon of addition. This phenomenon means that the item added must not be there under any circumstances.

The cause of the errors in this case could be due to metaphrase, or literal translation, especially form Spanish to English. If the verbs *prefer, want* and *like* are analyzed with their equivalent in Spanish, they don't have a particle before a second verb. Meanwhile, the verb equivalent to *visit* does have such particle equivalent to the infinitive *to* in Spanish. So, these errors are an evident case of interlanguage.

Wrong use of the tense

Most of the tense errors are made because students do not know how to use a tense accurately. They usually ignore the tense and/or its rules and what is more, they don't know when to use it. As a result, students will surely make errors when using tenses.

 (1)   I **don't had** vacation

(2)   I **was visiting** some places

(3)   Then when **it finished**

(4)   I never **see** the sea before

(5)   Also **I learning** about animals

(6)   My dream has been **travel**

(7)   It **doesn't** very expensive

(8)   I **don't use to do**

(9)   I **enjoy** so much look the nature

Example (1) reflects an error not expected at this level. The only basis for this kind of error is the lack of grammar feedback and practice on past tense in which the correct form of the

auxiliary is *did (not)* and the main verb must be in its base form. Then, the correct equivalent is *I didn't have vacation*. A similar error is found in examples (7) and (8). But in this case there is a substitution of the auxiliary. In both cases the auxiliary *do* is used instead of *be*. In example (7) the foundation for such error is not clear while in example (8) the reason is that the student might have ignored the meaning of the expression *be used to doing*.

There is another factor in example (3). These students might not know about the other tense needed in this case, so they try to use the most similar to come across with their meaning. Then, the correct tense is the verb in passive form, *it was finished,* which these students seem to disregard. The problem in example (2) is merely context meaning because the sentence is in past progressive when in fact it should have been written in simple past to refer to an action that took place at a certain moment. Hence, it is possible to infer that the student knows the tense but he or she ignores its use. This same phenomenon is visible in example (4) where the past perfect ought to have been used to talk about an action that happened or not before the occurrence of the other: *I hadn't seen the sea before*. It is clear that the student ignored such information at the moment of writing this sentence. In example (5) the student didn't either use the auxiliary needed or ignore the simple past form. In the first case the verb *be* is called for in past while in the second the form of the verb is incorrect; in effect, the simple past form of the verb is required. And in example (6) the main verb *travel* is incorrect which is required to be in progressive form. Finally, the most common of errors and the least expected is found in example (9) where the inflection *–ed* is compulsory for the past of regular verbs. In the context where this error was found, it was easily inferred that the student wanted to talk about last vacation, and then it was found to be erroneous.

It is clear from the examples discussed above that tense errors characterize a major problem for learners. The frequency of errors in this category attests to this fact. This might have

been due to the nature of the test administered since it contributed to the preponderance of these errors itself. The test (essays) required free writing rather than discrete - point - tests which would have tested the same number of items for each type of error. Students wrote full sentences. All the sentences analyzed contain one verb or more, so there are more possibilities for tense error to befall. Therefore, it is coherent to encounter a large number of tense errors.

Despite their similar exposure to English, It is clear, that the students differ widely in assimilating tenses. Language aptitude, higher intelligence, learning styles or reading habits can be some of the actual causes.

However, none of these errors can be ignored because some of them should not exist at this point. They need to be worked over in order to be overcome. If attention is not paid to them, these may continue to happen and probably be fossilized, if they are not already.

4.3.2. Errors related to Agreement

The agreement errors extracted from the tests reveal that the learners have neither mastered the rule regarding Subject-verb, Verb-noun agreement nor Noun-pronoun agreement in terms of number, person, gender, etc. in fact, it's a meaningful problem at intermediate level because they must be already mastered. Some examples on this matter are found below.

AGREEMENT ERRORS	
This is one of my favorite ACTIVITY	This is one of my favorite ACTIVITIES
My mother cook Christmas food	My mother cooked Christmas food
People was celebrating	People were celebrating
In that place there WAS many games	In that place there WERE many games
We WAS to visit the zoo	We went to visit the zoo
This country HAVE interesting places	This country HAS interesting places
CITY of Colombia like Medellin or Cartagena	CITIES of Colombia like Medellin or Cartagena

I can eat MANY food	I could eat A LOT OF food
This place NOBODY KNOW	This place NOBODY KNOWS
In THIS PLACES	In THESE PLACES
EVERYTHING WERE fine	EVERYTHING WAS fine
EVERYBODY WERE shouting	EVERYBODY WAS shouting
I met new FRIEND	I met new FRIENDS
My last vacation WERE at Ecuador	My last vacation WAS in Ecuador
I learnt too MUCH things	I learnt too MANY things
The people IS friendly	The people ARE friendly
But IN few DAY later	but few DAYS later

(1)   My mother **cook** Christmas food

(2)   People **was** celebrating

(3)   In that place there **was** many games

(4)   This country **have** interesting places

(5)   I can eat **many** food

(6)   This place **nobody know**

(7)   **Everything were** fine

(8)   **Everybody were** shouting

(9)   My last vacations **were** at Ecuador

(10)   I learnt too **much** things

The examples show that the learners' have partial understanding when using the rules

regarding agreement. The first example (1) is a third person conjugation error which lacks the

subject-verb agreement, this error must no longer be committed; also this error is a tense error it

was also classified as a agreement error. Example (2) is a really interesting error. Spanish speakers tend to use the word "people" in singular as it is in Spanish, but in English it is a plural noun though it does not have the –s inflection. Examples (3),(4) and (9) are Verb-noun errors since there is not correct agreement between the nouns "games", "country" and "vacation" with the verbs "was", "have" and "were". The noun "vacation" was a special case since there was a big number of students using this noun in plural but it does not exist. Examples (5) and (10) reveal problems using the quantifiers "many" and "much" in agreement with the number. "Many" is used with countable nouns as *things, books, pencils, etc.* and "much" is used with uncountable nouns e.g. *milk, rice, water, etc.* The correct equivalent for (5) is *I can eat **a lot of** food* for "a lot of" is a countable or uncountable quantifier. Examples (6), (7) and (8) are errors pertaining to Noun-verb agreement as the indefinite pronouns everybody, anybody, everything, anything, etc. are singular so the correct form of the verb must be in agreement with the noun.

All the errors mentioned above are evidence to conclude that learners have yet to master the rules regarding agreement. It could appear that students are only moving from L1 to L2 and then the errors are product of interlanguage. But at this level, students have already received all feedback and the degree of fossilization will be present, the use of the plural noun "people" in singular or the use of the noun "vacation" in plural are cases in point to bear in mind.

At intermediate level fossilized structures such as agreement errors are in fact something to worry about. Teachers and students must pay close attention avoid and remove these kinds of errors as they might become fossilized errors.

4.3.3. Errors related to articles

ARTICLE ERRORS	
THE last year I went to Popayan	Last year I went to Popayan
She know many things about THE "salsa" music	She knew many things about "salsa" music
On December 30	On December THE 30th
When we arrived went to friends house	When we arrived we went to A friend's house
We went to cinema	We went to THE cinema
They like THE soccer	They like soccer
We rode TO horse	We rode A horse
I played with them all time	I played with them all THE time
To learn vocabulary and the grammar of THE English	To learn vocabulary and grammar of English
I am in THE fourth semester	I am in fourth semester
My dream vacation would be in THE country where	My dream vacation would be in A country where
To have A new memories	To have new memories
All people are very kind	All THE people were very kind
This celebration are the uniques in all OF year	This celebration is the unique in THE year
In the end of year	At the end of THE year
We took the metro for Return	We took the metro for THE return
I just slept THE all day	I just slept all day
He is love of my life	He is THE love of my life
IN 15th December	THE 15th of December
There we enjoyed AN amazing landscape	There we enjoyed THE amazing landscape
I went out 6th January	I went out THE 6th OF January
I taught English to A little children	I taught English to little children
Where we had THE dinner	Where we had dinner
THE most of my vacations	Most of my vacation
IN THE last vacation	Last vacation
I worked handicap person	I worked WITH a handicap person
And also suitable option	And also A suitable option
To beach	To THE beach
That is THE better place to visit	That is A better place to visit
We went to visit THE historical places	We went to visit historical places
Presidents' house	THE presidents' house

Mastering the system of English articles is also other of the difficulties faced by intermediate students. Although students have been trained to select a/an, the, or zero article, they tend to use them erroneously. The errors found in the tests concerning article enclose the following categories: Omission of article, Addition of article and Substitution of article.

Omission of article

(1)   On December *30th

(2)   When we arrived went to *friend's house

(3)   We went to * cinema

(4)   I played with them all * time

(5)   All * people are very kind

(6)   We took the metro for * return

(7)   He is *love of my life

(8)   I worked * handicap person

(9)   And also * suitable option

(10)   To * beach

(11)   * Presidents' house

The examples mentioned above deal with the omission of both: definite and indefinite articles. It is possible to say that these errors are present as there are no similar structures in the students' mother tongue, Spanish. Nonetheless, all these errors can be also explained in terms of

"context complexity" since the learners are possibly unable to apply the rules in different a

context, they probably cannot recognize the difference between proper nouns and common nouns

and so the difference between countable and uncountable nouns. Some other students may over

generalize the fact that most proper nouns do not take an article because English language rules

explicitly state that no article is used before singular proper nouns but indeed they need an article,

this is the case of example (11) **The** Presidents' house.

Addition of article

(1)   **The** last year I went to Popayan

(2)   She know many things about **the** "salsa" music

(3)   They like **the** soccer

(4)   I am in **the** fourth semester

(5)   I just slept **the** all day

(6)   I taught English to **a** little children

(7)   Where we had **the** dinner

(8)   **The** most of my vacations

(9)   In **the** last vacation

(10)   We went to visit **the** historical places

Based on the errors found in this category it is possible to state that the definite article

"*The*" is more present on the errors described above. It can be explained as Spanish speakers tend

to translate this article to *"el"* or *"la"* but actually it is not necessary in all the sentences.

Example (7) is an interesting case since the learner used a definite article with the plural form of the noun "*children"*.

Substitution of article

(1)   My dream vacation would be in **the** country where

(2)   There we enjoyed **an** amazing landscape

(3)   That is **the** better place to visit

The examples above show that students tend to hesitate whether or not to use a definite or indefinite article. Example (1) needs an indefinite article since the writer does not know the name of the country while example (2) needs the definite article as the writer mentioned the place and he enjoyed the view. Example (3) is similar to the first one.

It is important to mention that the phenomenon of fossilization could take place if any of these errors are not detected and studied to remove them

4.3.4. Errors related to prepositions

I want to go Florida	I want to go TO Florida
Every single thing ON there	Every single thing there
IN my last vacation	ON my last vacation
AT the middle of vacation	IN the middle of vacation
I stayed IN her home	I stayed AT her home
I tried to know much as possible	I tried to know AS much as possible
I worked every day TO make up	I worked every day At make up
I went out 6th January	I went out THE 6th OF January
The rest ON my vacation	The rest OF my vacation
I think ABOUT OF cultural custums	I think ABOUT cultural costumes
We went IN a trip	We went ON a trip
I wait for a while FOR look her ayes	I waited for a while TO look AT her eyes
I had to take care my little brother	I had to take care OF my lithe brother
IN the last week	The last week

But ASIDE FROM the plans	But BESIDES the plans
Most time stayed at home	Most OF THE time I stayed at home
I hadn't seen him AFTER four years	I hadn't seen him FOR four years
We talked many things	We talked ABOUT many things
It was very far OF the city	It was very far FROM the city
We went to visit some OF other friends	We went to visit some other friends
I want to become closer to THE nature	I want to become closer to nature
ON December	IN December
AGAINST THAT the other's toughts	DESPITE the other's thoughts
We decided to camp near FROM the river	We decided to camp near the river
I hope to start with it IN this year	I hope to start with it this year
we stayed here AT Pasto	We stayed here IN Pasto
I could visit TO my grandmother	I could visit my grandmother
They were kind WITH me	They were kind TO me
They didn't have signal IN their phones	They didn't have signal ON their phones
My last vacation	ON my last vacation
He TALKS me about Mexico	He TALKED TO me about Mexico
AT 8th January	ON 8th OF January
I've dreamt nice landscapes	I've dreamt OF nice landscapes
Travelling IN AN airplane	Travelling BY airplane
A little town near TO Ipiales	A little town near Ipiales
IN THE last vacation	Last vacation
I went out January 4th	I went out IN January THE 4th
IN my next vacation	ON my next vacation
…but AT the end I could accomplish it	…but IN the end I could accomplish it
I worked handicap person	I worked WITH a handicap person
We were IN "Las Lajas"	We were AT "Las Lajas"
But IN few DAY later	but few DAYS later
INSTEAD its dangers	DESPITE OF its dangers
People THE others places	People FROM other places
When we arrived Ecuador	When we arrived IN Ecuador
I went to visit TO my family	I went to visit my family
ON December	IN December
I played a soccer championship	I played IN a soccer championship
I went to ride IN my bicycle	I went to ride my bicycle
I enjoy so much LOOK the nature	I enjoyed so much to look AT the nature
My last vacation I was in Pasto	ON my last vacation I was in Pasto
I enjoyed to have time my-self	I enjoyed to have time TO myself
Travels IN foreign countries	Travels TO foreign countries
I was IN home	I was AT home
I enjoyed OF carnival	I enjoyed the carnival
I'd love a vacation IN this.	I'd love a vacation LIKE this.
I would like to go IN America	I would like to go TO America

FOR to understand the world	To understand the world
I dream travelling	I dream OF travelling
IN THE last vacation	Last vacation
We arrived TO the house	We arrived IN the house
People OF this country	People FROM this country
We practiced some OF football	We practiced some football
We spoke THE our experiences	We spoke ABOUT our experiences
And to visit a lot places	And to visit a lot OF places
I have a lot of money FOR buy things for my family	I have a lot of money TO buy to my family
IN my last vacations	ON my last vacation
I'll travel to La Union FOR celebrate	I'll travel to La union TO celebrate
IN MIDDLE night	AT midnight
To know more about OF my career	To know more about my career
I have dream WITH visit it	I have dreamed OF visiting it
Other people stopped "La Cabalgata"	Other people stopped AT "La Cabalgata"
I dream my vacation IN a beach	I dream of my vacation AT a beach
Swimming the sea	Swimming IN the sea
I came back TO MY home	I came back home
I ate a lot OF IN that day	I ate a lot that day
I was my girlfriend	I was WITH my girlfriend
We went OUT Ipiales	We went TO Ipiales
My ears were NEAR to explode	My ears were ABOUT to explode
IN the first days	The first days
I wash the dish IN two o'clock	I washed the dishes AT two o'clock
I was TOGETHER my family	I was WITH my family

Based on figure 1 it is possible to mention that there is a big quantity of preposition errors in comparison with the other categories. It also reflects that Intermediate students struggle with prepositions almost all the time. These errors occur since a single preposition can have several meanings and different prepositions can be used with the same meaning. Preposition errors are displayed in the following categories: Omission, Addition and Substitution of preposition.

Omission of preposition

(1)   I enjoy so much look* the nature

(2)   *My last vacation I was in Pasto

(3)   I enjoyed to have time * my-self

(4)   I dream * travelling

(5)   I want to go * Florida

(6)   I tried to know * much as possible

(7)   I went out -6th * January

(8)   I had to take care * my little brother

(9)   Most * - time stayed at home

(10)   We talked * many things

(11)   He talks * me about Mexico

(12)   Instead * its dangers

(13)   People * the others places

(14)   When we arrived * Ecuador

The errors above suggest that students have still problems using prepositions in combination with the noun/verb/adjective they go with for instance the verb *"look"* is always followed by the preposition **at** when it means watch*,* the verbs *"dream"* and *"care"* are followed by the preposition **of,** this preposition is also used to indicate reference, an amount or things which relate each other. Take a look at example (7) in which **of** is used to talk about months and example (9) to talk about time as well. The adverb *instead* works as a preposition if it is followed

by the particle *of* example (12) is the case. The preposition *with* is used to indicate being

involved in something or someone it was erroneously omitted in example (3). The preposition *to*

is used, inter alia, to indicate the place, person, or thing that someone or something moves

towards some place. It was incorrectly omitted in example (5) and (11). Three words preposition

are very common in written English, however only one example on that was appointed. It can be

visible in example (6). The verbs *think* and *Talk* are always followed by the prepositions *about* or

of, example (10) shows an erroneous usage of this verb. The preposition *from* is referred to

someone who was born in a country. It was omitted in example (13). It is also important to

mention Example (2) as this erroneous sentence was present many times along the revision of the

tests. The researchers found this error very interesting to bear in mind as there is no basis for this

error since the preposition *on* is used in English with its equivalent *en* in Spanish.

Substitution of preposition

(1)   On December

(2)   Travels in foreign countries

(3)   I'd love a vacation in this.

(4)   I would like to go in America

(5)   People of this country

(6)   I have a lot of money for buy things

        for my family

(7)   In my last vacations

(8)   In middle night

(9)   I have dream with visit it

(10)   We went out Ipiales

(11)   My ears were near to explode

(12)   I wash the dish in two o'clock

(13)   I was together my family

(14)   In my last vacation

(15)   At the middle of vacation

(16)   I stayed in her home

(17)   I worked every day to make up

(18)   The rest on my vacation

(19)   We went in a trip

(20)   I hadn't seen him after four years

(21)   It was very far of the city

(22)   We stayed here at Pasto

(23)   They were kind with me

(24)   They didn't have signal in their phones

(25)   Travelling in an airplane

(27)   …but at the end I could accomplish it

(28)   We were in "Las Lajas"

Substitution refers to the use of the wrong preposition or another word different to a preposition instead. For instance, students have learned that the preposition *on* is used with dates and days of the week. So they over generalize this rule and use it with months where it is erroneous and its correct equivalent is the preposition *in* (see example 1). In some cases some verbs need a preposition before its noun or gerund and students tend to the wrong one. This factor is evident in examples (2), (4), (5) and (9). Also, literal translation from Spanish plays a significant role at the moment of choosing the correct preposition. In examples (23), (25), (14), students translated the exact equivalents from Spanish to English and the result is a sentence that gives the idea of having been written by a non-native writer. On the other hand, the replacement of a preposition may either change the meaning of the sentence or give an incorrect impression. For example, in sentence (27) the student used *at the end* when the correct form was *in the end*. So, in context, this sentence is wrong because the preposition is not the correct one for this case. In this same manner, the substitution of prepositions may produce erroneous sentences or change the meaning of it.

Addition of unnecessary preposition

(1)   I went to visit **to** my family

(2)   I went to ride **in** my bicycle

(3)   I enjoyed **of** carnival

(4)   **For** to understand the world

(5)   **In** the last vacation

(7)   We practiced some **of** football

(8)   I came back **to** my home

(9)   **In** the first days

(10)   Every single thing **on** there

(11)   **In** the last week

(12)   We went to visit some **of** other

friends

(14)   I hope to start with it **in** this year

(16)   A little town near **to** Ipiales

(17)   But **in** few day later

(18)   I think **about of** cultural custums

Besides omitting and substituting prepositions, adding unnecessary prepositions is common among learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). In some cases some prepositions are placed after a verb which does not need it because in the L1 it would sound correct (example 1, 2, 3). Other case is to place prepositions next to another preposition which does not accept it as in examples (4), (16) and (18). And to finish, prepositions are placed where they have no reason to be in (examples 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 17).

Finn (1996) contends that prepositions are a problem not only for second language learners. For this author one problem is the lack of contact with the target language and the other is that learners rely on their mother tongue in order to use a similar sounding preposition (metaphrase). For Ngara (1983), most errors are a result of "incomplete learning" which means that speakers "half-learned a structure, a word or an expression or any other feature of the target language that is only partially correct". Ngara adds that errors in this category exist because learners confuse all prepositions and over generalize their use because of expressions they were exposed to. Finally, they forget the correct prepositions that go with those expressions; but again, it is due to the lack of enough input.

4.3.5. Errors related to pronouns

At the end of year stayed at home	At the end of the year I stayed at home.
If is possible I would like get a job	If IT is possible I would like to get a job
I was with THEY went to visit the churches	I was with THEM. WE went to visit the churches
THERE were bored days	THEY were boring days
When we arrived went to friends house	When we arrived WE went to a friend's house
All share nice moments	WE all shared nice moments
When US stay there	When WE stayed there
Because is occupation	Because IT is an occupation
Our family and ME were to "Las Lajas"	Our family and I went to "Las Lajas"

The carnival THIS was wonderful	The carnival was wonderful
Ate chicken for celebrate the new year	WE ate chicken to celebrate the new year
I'd like travel my sister because with SHE...	I'd like to travel with my sister because with HER...
That's very important for MY	That's very important for ME
Because IT place has a wonderful places	Because THIS place has wonderful places
I went out with THEIR	I went out with THEM
But at night was a little scary	But at night IT was a little scary
My family and ME enjoyed Christmas	My family and I enjoyed Christmas
People could be CONECT with HIS costums	People could be CONNECTED with THEIR costumes
I was with family	I was with MY family
Spending time with THEY is comfortable	Spending time with THEM is comfortable
So for me was a great experience	So for me IT was a great experience
I visited my grandfather and THEY were very happy	I visited my grandfather and HE was very happy
…helping my mom because IT is pregnant	…helping my mom because SHE is pregnant
THIS places were nice	THESE places were nice
I would like to spend time with my friends or better with the person YOU love	I would like to spend time with my friends or better with the person I love

Although the quantity of errors is small, students still tend to have difficulties in this category at this level. Most students wrote using only the first person singular which limited the use of other pronouns and so the identification of such errors was limited. Nonetheless, there are some examples using the different pronouns in an incorrect form.

Omission of pronoun

The errors made suggested a tendency to translate sentences from Spanish to English. The following examples prove this fact:

(1)   At the end of year *stayed at home

(2)   If *is possible I would like get a job

(3)   Ate chicken for celebrate the New Year

In these three examples there is clearly literal translation from Spanish to English because there is no pronoun in either the dependent or independent sentence. There is a common phenomenon in Spanish speakers to remove the pronoun in the sentence because it is inferred from the conjugation of the verb. And to certain extent, students seem to translate this phenomenon. This phenomenon is called the Tacit Subject where the subject is not written but is already implied. In English such phenomenon does not exist because the verb maintains the same form for most of the persons.

Substitution of pronoun

Other common error among intermediate students is the use of the erroneous pronoun. This is observed in the following examples:

(1)   Spending time with **they** is comfortable

(2)   My family and **me** enjoyed Christmas

(3)   I went out with **their**

(4)   That's very important for **my**

(5)   I'd like travel my sister because with **she**...

(6)   When **us** stay there

Examples (1), (3), (4) and (5) reflect the problem of the wrong use of the pronoun after a preposition. In these cases the object pronoun *them, me, and her* are required in standard English.

In this case students ignore this type of pronouns and so they use the most similar to convey their meaning. Although, there is no obvious reason for this error at intermediate level, it is possible to infer that these students did not have enough input and practice on pronouns during the time immediately previous.

On the other two examples (2 and 6) there is also use of the wrong pronoun. In these two cases object pronouns are used instead of subject pronouns which are required. The reason is the same as the case indicated above. It is necessary to clarify that students in fact do know about the object pronouns but they lack understanding regarding their use.

Noun-pronoun agreement

Other cases such as unnecessary pronoun, agreement of pronoun and noun were present at a small scale.

(1)   […] helping my mom because **it** is pregnant

(2)   I visited my grandfather and **they** were very happy

(3)   The carnival **it** was wonderful

The first example (1) reveals a lack of agreement of the dependent sentence with that of the independent one. The second example (2) also exposes the lack of agreement between the object of the first sentence and the subject of the second in which the object is retaken as the main subject. So, there is no agreement in number. In example (3) the addition of an unnecessary pronoun is observed. Roos (1990) attributes errors in the use pronouns to interference from the

first language. Example (3) is a direct transfer of the Spanish language use of both the noun and

the pronoun.

4.3.6. Other errors

My last VACATIONS WERE amazing	My last VACATION WAS amazing.
I MADE the homework	I DID homework
I PINTED the house. I spend all time painting it	I PAINTED the house. I spent all the time…
To know YOUR wonderful people and YOUR culture	To know ITS people and ITS culture
We WAS TO visit the zoo	We WENT TO visit the zoo
After we visited IT city	After we visited THIS city
I want to know new PERSONS	I want to know new PEOPLE
My VACATIONS will be FANTASTICS	My VACATION will be FANTASTIC
It is one of my BETTER HOBBY	It is one of my BEST HOBBIES
I did so MUCH things	I did so MANY things
I ASIST AT different events	I ATTENDED TO different events
It REMEMBERED me	It REMINDED me
All the things I lived were UNIQUES	All the things I lived were UNIQUE
My VACATIONS WERE	My VACATION WAS
ANOTHER beautiful places	OTHER beautiful places
In comparation with Cali	In comparison with Cali
Hear in Colombia	Here in Colombia
To know beautiful places	To see beautiful places
I BECOME relaxing	I BECAME relaxed
The most of time	Most of the time
Meet new cultures	Learn about new cultures
That is not completely fun but not hard	That is not completely fun or hard either
No matters if it is near Pasto	No matter if it is near Pasto

In this category, some errors not belonging to any of the other categories are analyzed.

These errors appeared to deserve attention because they show an extent of fossilization and

interlanguage in general.

The first aspect encountered in this set of errors is the tendency of students to pluralize the

noun *vacation*. This is due to the direct translation of its equivalent from Spanish. This error is

common in students at all levels. The analysis then suggests that this might be fossilized because its wrong use has been accepted among teachers and students. Even though some native speakers use the plural form of this noun, it is not permitted in formal written English.

A second feature is the wrong use of some verbs. For example, the use of *make* instead of *do* is frequent among the essays of students. *I **made** the homework* is a sentence produced by some of the students tested. This is also an error that persists beyond intermediate levels and can be fossilized because what matters is the meaning rather than the grammatically accurate verb. In this same sense, other students wrote the past form of *be* when *go* was essential. *We **was to** visit the zoo* was written instead of *we **went to** visit the zoo* which is the most suitable in this case. Other examples include **to know** *beautiful places* and ***Meet** new cultures.*

False cognates were also found in the writing of some students in sentences such as *it **remembered** me, I **assisted** at different events* or *I **resolved** some troubles.* The verb *remember* has its equivalent in Spanish where it can be used for the equivalent sentence in their L1. In English, though, one thing is *remember* and the other is *remind*. This latter is called for in the sentence. Also the verb *assist* can be confusing because it sounds similar in Spanish and students tend to use it equally. But in English the meaning of this verb changes radically. In Spanish this verbs means, to go to a particular event or attend while in English it means help.

As a final point, there are some errors similar to the previous exposed. They are not numerous but they represent a degree of fossilization if not treated correctly soon. The examples herein include the use of *other, another, much, many, best,* and *better.* Also it was possible to identify some spelling errors which are persistent and are shown in the table below.

SPELLING ERRORS	
Pinted	Painted
Custums	Costumes
Diches	Dishes
Environments	Environment
Ryde	Ride
Costums	Costumes
Toughts	Thoughts
Greit	Great
Comparation	Comparisson
Matters	Matter
Hear	Here

4.4.   Analyzing fossilization from the categories

This section gathers the six categories previously examined and mentioned so as to draw

some possible conclusions regarding the classified errors. Since the purpose of this paper is to

analyze and count the total errors students at intermediate level make when writing in relation to

the fossilization phenomenon, it is important to identify that there are different causes for the

formation of such phenomenon.

The researchers observe an imminent relationship among interlanguage, interference and

fossilization. In the first one, errors are present because learners borrow patterns from the mother

tongue or they extend patterns from the target language. Selinker (1972) coined the term

'interlanguage' to refer to the separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that

has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language. It is neither the

system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the

two. Interference is the transfer or borrowing of patterns from the target mother tongue it can

affect single words, phrases or sentences since learners tend to correlate their native language

structures to the new language in order to express their different ideas they apparently feel more confident. These two aspects were present all along the errors made by the students.

Regarding fossilization, it could also have both internal and external grounds. The former might include a psychological factor enclosing learning styles, age, etc. And the latter could be related to the mother tongue influence over the L2, the amount of L2 input, and the lack of a context to practice the L2 outside the classroom. In this sense, it is important to note that the role of teachers should be to stimulate students to learn and to correct errors when needed. Although the amount of errors obtained from the sample is bigger, they reveal that fossilization have been taking place. If these errors are not detected or corrected they could present a higher difficulty to be corrected at later stages. Students and teachers must be ready to detect and correct these errors to remove them.

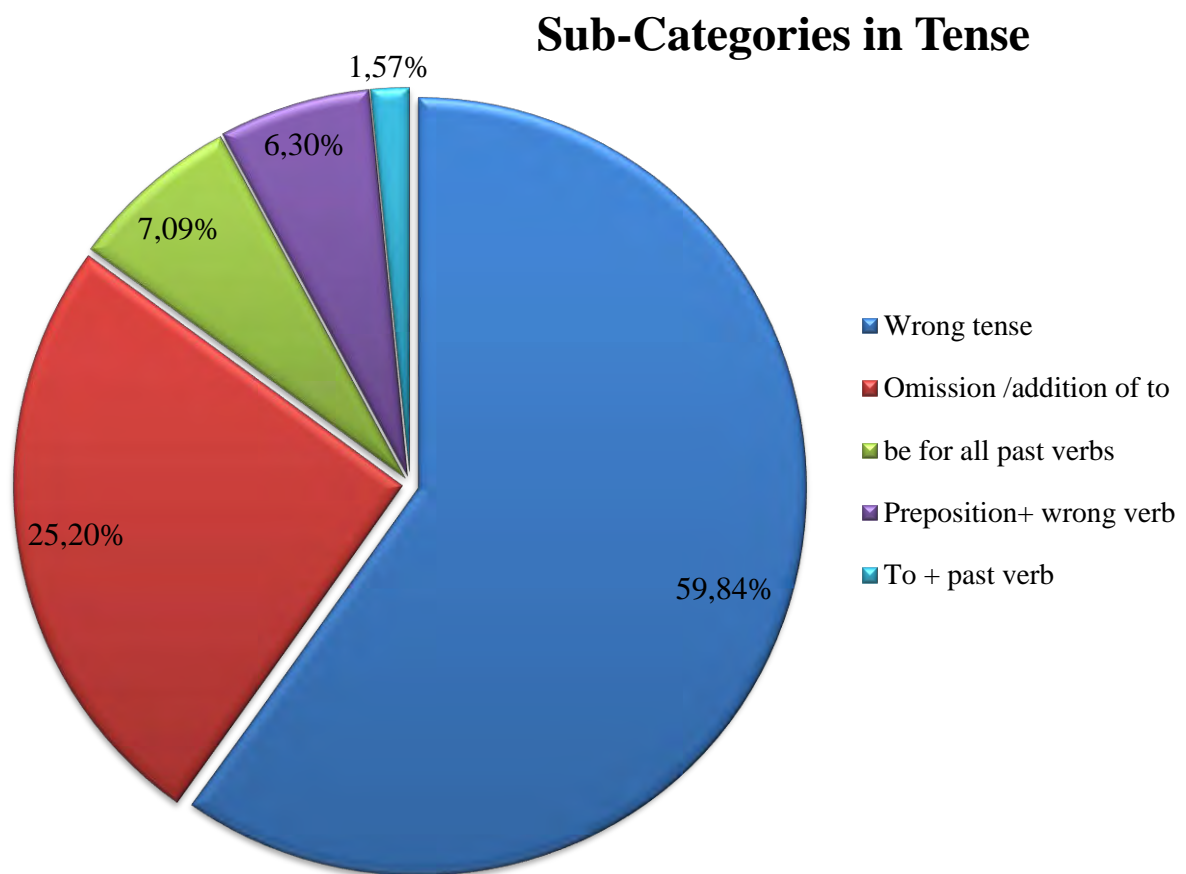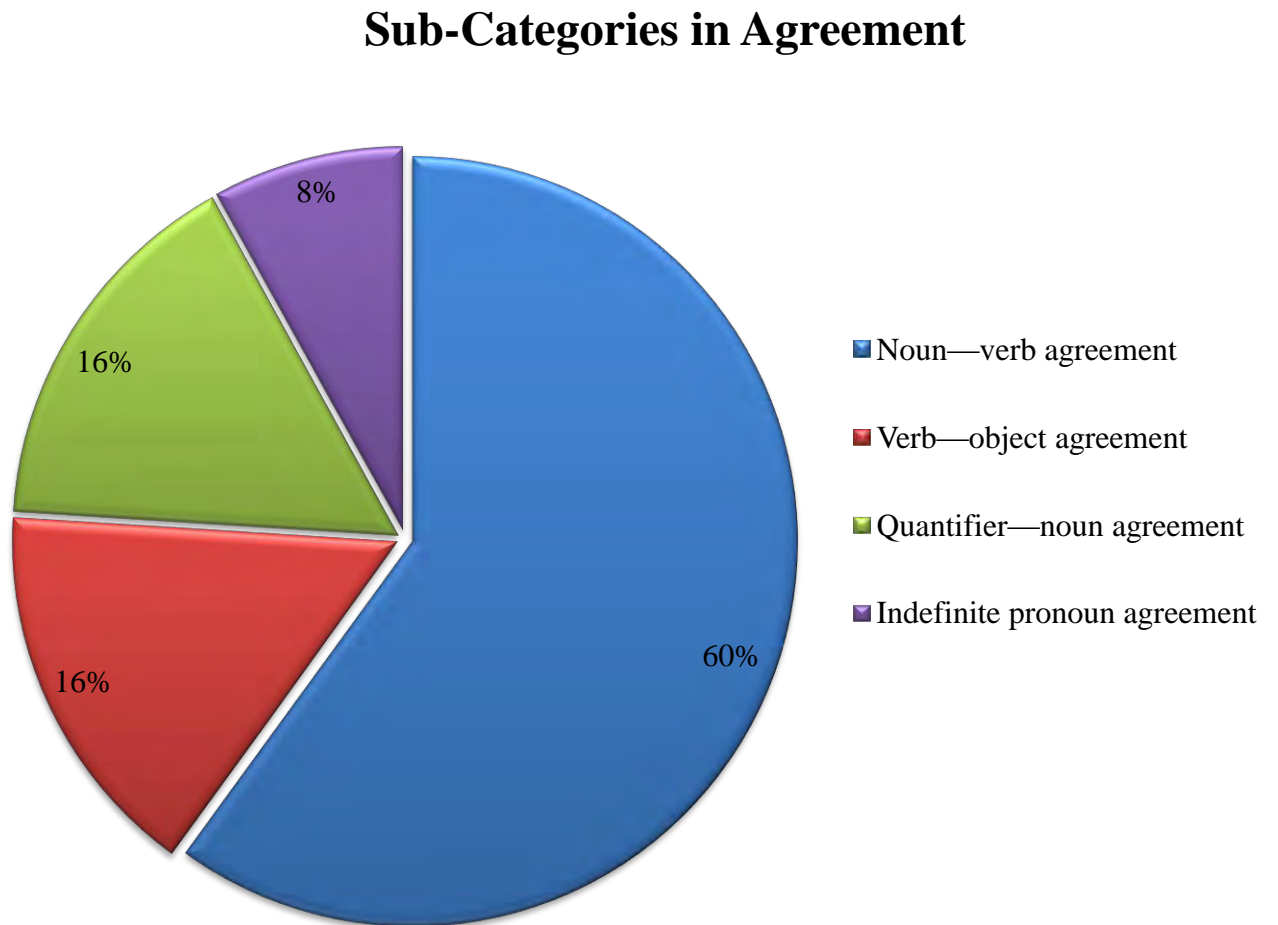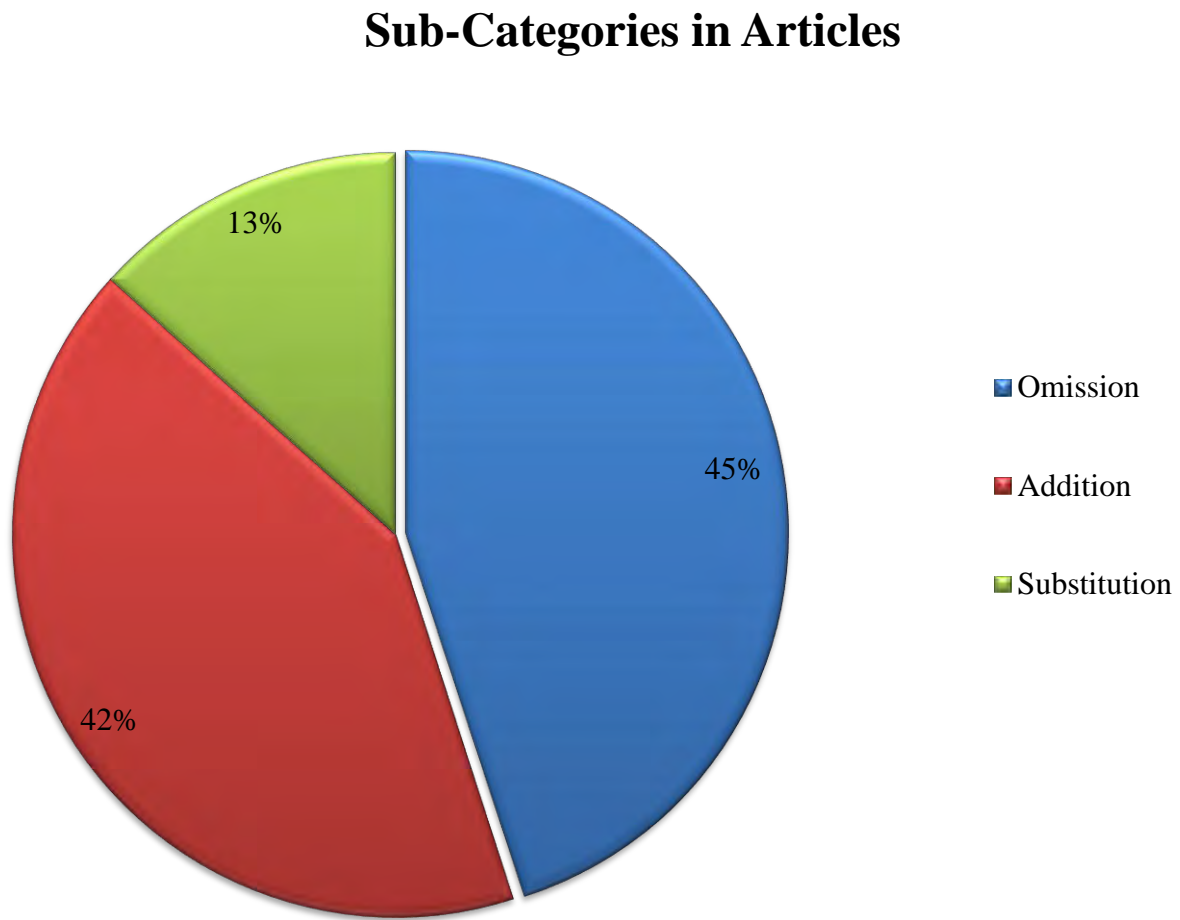**4.5. Graphic representation of error categories**

Figure 3: Tense errors

Sub-Categories in Tense

- Wrong tense
- Omission /addition of to
- be for all past verbs
- Preposition+ wrong verb
- To + past verb

1,57%
6,30%
7,09%
25,20%
59,84%

Figure 4: Agreement errors

Sub-Categories in Agreement

Figure 5: Article errors

Sub-Categories in Articles

Figure 6: Preposition Errors

Sub-Categories in Prepositions

Figure 7: Pronoun errors

Sub-Categories in Pronouns

- Omission of pronoun
- Substitution of pronoun
- Noun-pronoun agreement
- Addition of pronoun

Figure 8: Other errors

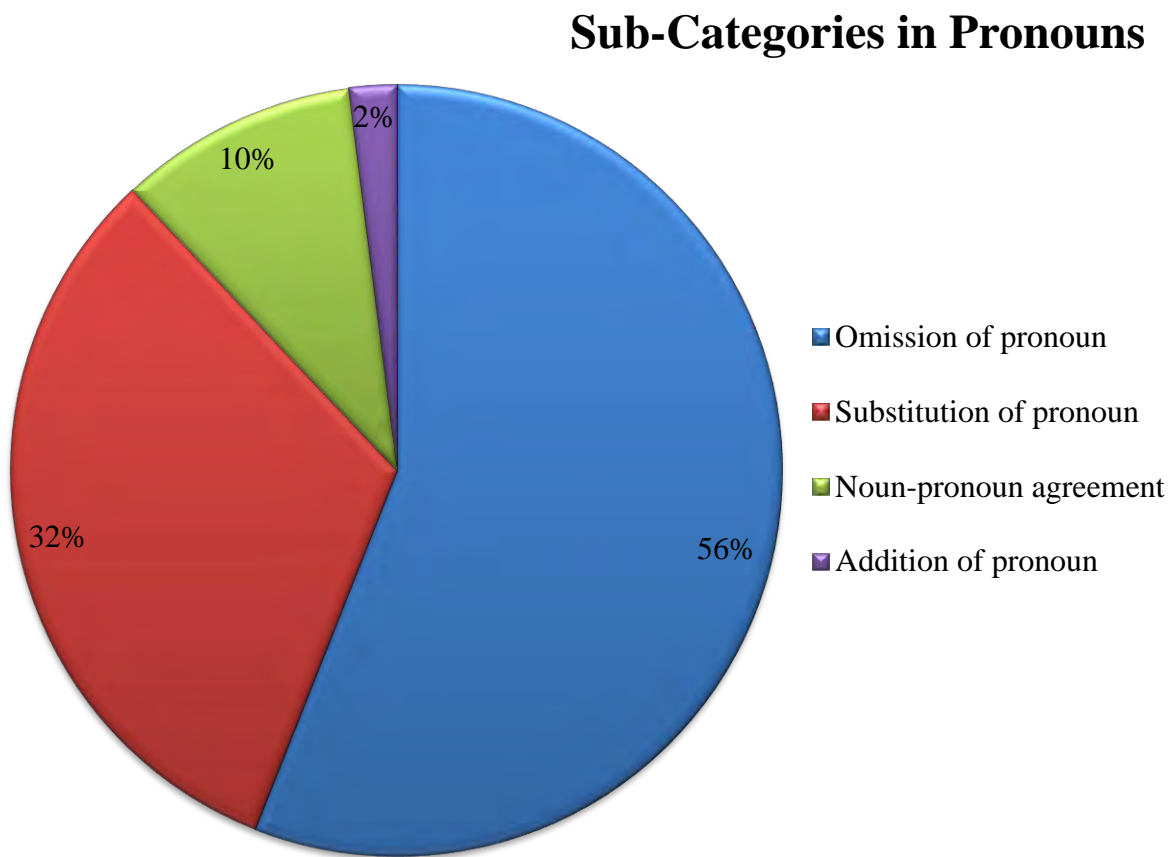## Sub-Categories in other Errors

- Plural overgeneralization
- False cognates
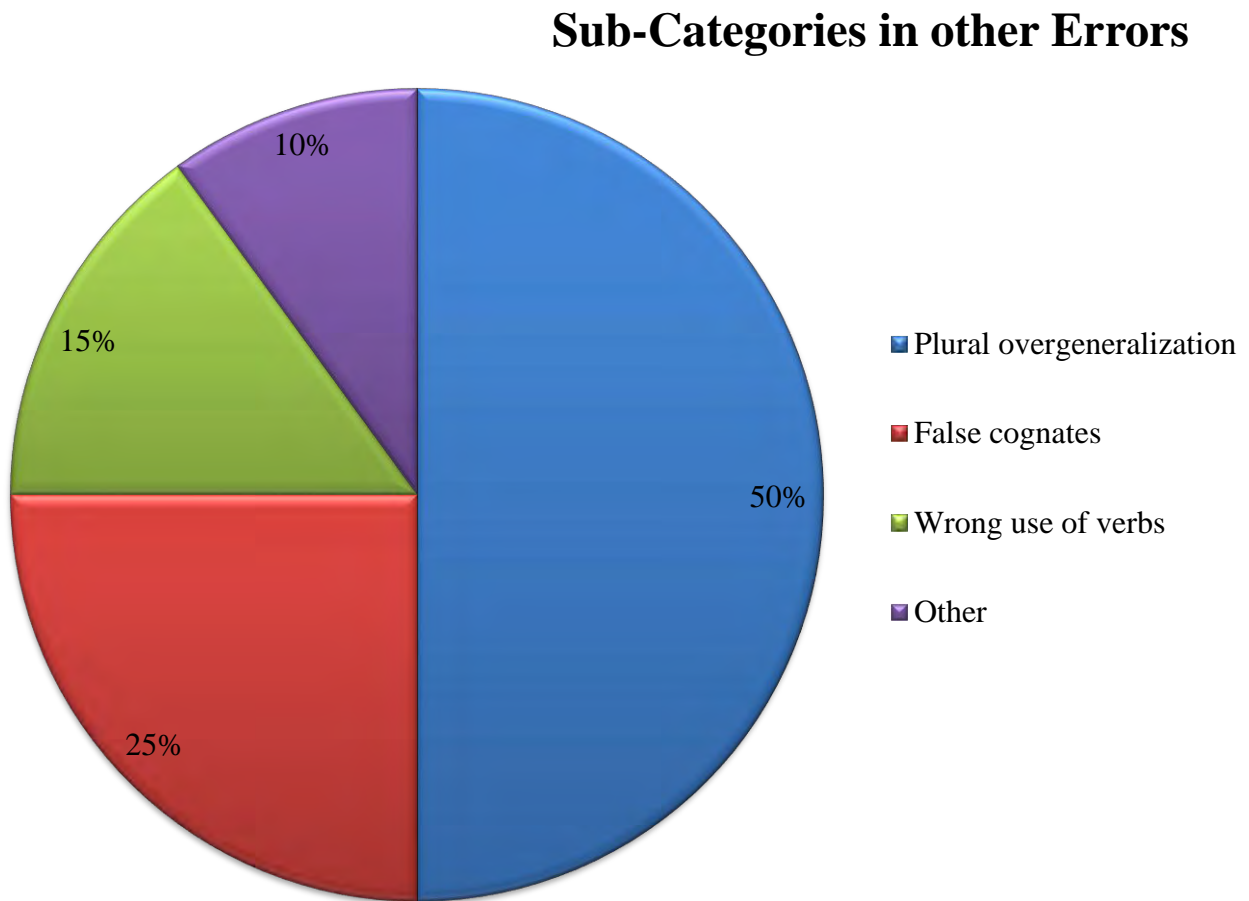- Wrong use of verbs
- Other
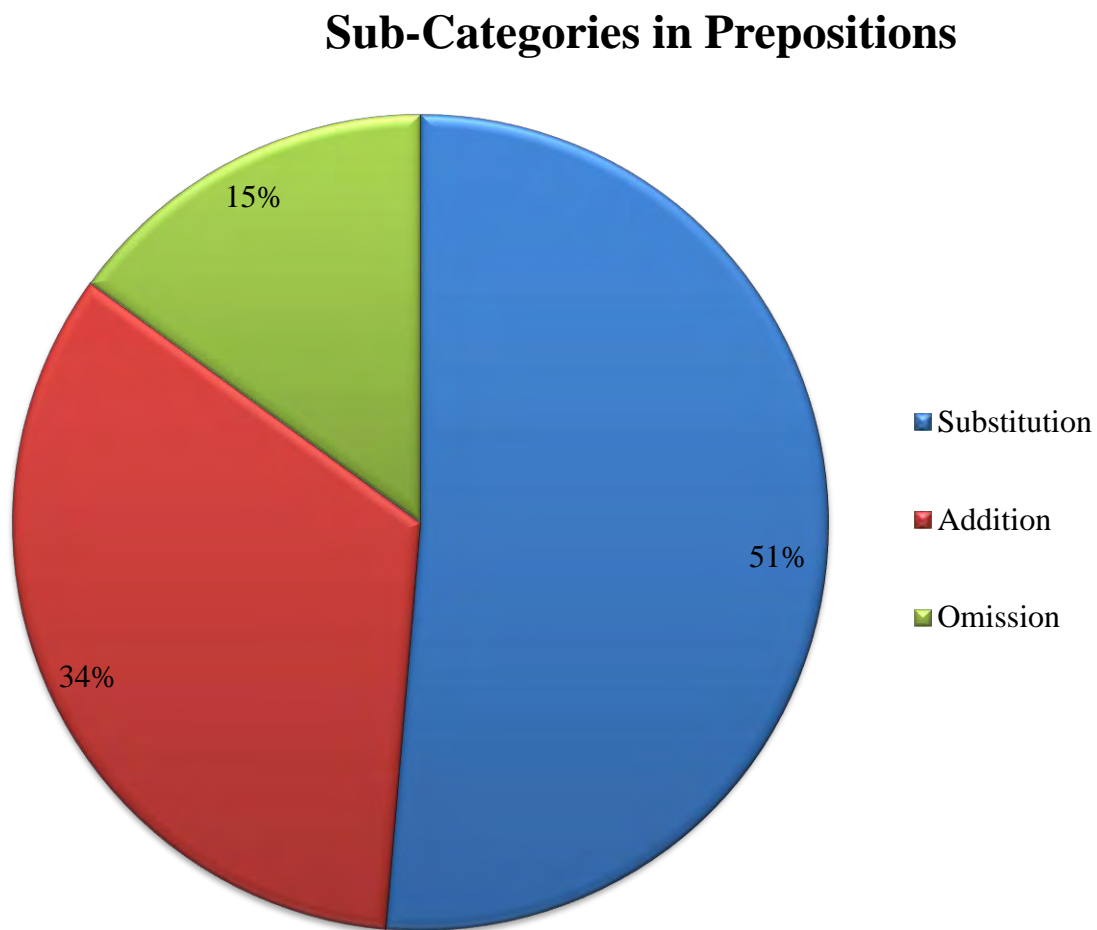
4.6.   Discussion of findings

The main findings in this study regarding the factor of error fossilization have relation with the central hypothesis which refers to statistical differences of general errors among the categories previously analyzed. The hypothesis seeks to prove that at intermediate level some errors are already fossilized due to interlanguage interference. Other findings are discussed regarding the relation between errors in each category and their incidence. To explain better, the incidence refers to the category which represents the major frequency. This incidence provides information about the part of language that must be worked upon. In this case it is tense, agreement, article, preposition or pronoun.

The major incidence or the category where the errors prevailed in number was the preposition errors category. Prepositions are a difficult topic to master in English since they have several meanings in different contexts. For these reasons it is problematic for foreign learners. Koffi (2010) argues that prepositions have a polysemic principle which means that they have multiple meanings. Therefore, students are confused about which preposition they should use in certain cases. Prepositions can be used in different manners for different contexts and the same context can be expressed through the use of different prepositions. Even If students studied the oral speech of native speakers, they are unable to grasp the use of the preposition because oral speech is sometimes variable. Lam (2009) says that these words are difficult to recognize in oral speech because they have very few syllables and native speakers rarely emphasize them. What is more, these foreign speakers do not use the L2 outside the classroom or they limit their knowledge only to use it in exams.

The incidence of this category at intermediate students suggests that the errors herein could present a degree of fossilization. This is due to the preposition characteristics explained before. Some students are found to insist on the omission, addition and substitution of the correct preposition and teachers overlook, especially the substitution phenomenon. This is a major problem since prepositions give different meanings to the words they are attached to.

At University of Nariño the teachers are Spanish speakers who learned English as a second or foreign language. This is a disadvantage because these teachers may have the same problems as students regarding preposition usage. So, instead of correcting their students, they might be reinforcing interference fostering the fossilization of errors. Moreover, in the errors found in this category the major problem is that students tend to do literal translation from Spanish which means that they have had little work on this area. As a result, they insist on using wrong structures that they have created themselves without any assistance.

The second category with significant incidence of errors is the tense category. In this category students struggled deciding on how to use a determined tense, the suitable form of the verbs, and the agreement of the main verb or the auxiliary. These are some of the sub-categories found regarding tense errors. The word tense refer to the grammatical tenses existing in a language which help the speaker talk about actions or states at a certain point in the timeline.

One of the major problems students present at writing regarding tense is the wrong use of the verb. In other words, they do not know what tense to use properly to talk about events in time. For example, in the sequence of tenses they use one sentence in past and the other in future. So the meaning of the writing falls into nonsense.

Following the order of incidence, articles played an important role in the output writing of students. The phenomena of omission, addition and substitution of articles were present as in preposition errors. The substitution was done regarding the use of indefinite and definite articles. Also some prepositions were written instead. The problem here also lies on direct translations form L1. For example, some students tend to suppress of the indefinite article before a profession expressed in singulars. In Spanish such fact is common and so students make negative transfer in this case.

In the categories discussed above there are significant differences obtained from the tests applied. Preposition errors and tense errors occupy the major incidence while the lowest incidence is found in agreement. It is found, then, that students at intermediate level present low mastery using prepositions and tenses and a high one at agreement. The category of agreement was analyzed taking into consideration some phenomena such as agreement between the subject and the verb, the object of the verb, quantifiers, inter alia. Among these, students still struggle with the subject (noun) verb agreement which is represented by a 60 percent of the total agreement errors. Although this category has the lowest incidence, the incidence of subject and verb agreement is still present. At this level students have received all input considering all types of agreement; therefore, the factor of fossilization might be in process.

As well as students have problems with the agreement of subject and verb, they also present them in verb and object agreement. In statements expressed with there is and there are in were found some errors in agreement. It might be due to a translation of meaning since in Spanish such deference in the verb does not exist. Students also tend to use some nouns with quantifiers which do not fit. For example, they use much with plural countable nouns and many

with uncountable nouns producing statements such as I shared many time with my family and, I learned much things. These examples are significant because they represent errors that ought to have been removed during the first year of study. Otherwise, they might fossilize as in this case. The same explanation could be applied to the agreement between nouns in the same sentences. Students produce sentences which are not correct. A case in point is the sentence I visited my grandfather, they were happy. In this example, the error is by reason of the agreement between the object of the first sentence and the pronoun of the second. Fortunately, there is no fossilization in this case, and these errors can be corrected making the student aware of this error and providing constant feedback. The agreement between verbs and indefinite pronouns has the lowest incidence into this same category. Also, this error is owing to the Spanish interference and could be corrected only with practice.

The obstacles regarding the use of pronouns were also of little incidence. The pronoun error category was analyzed regarding the factors of omission, substitution and addition. However, the omission factor was prominent in this category. This factor was discussed earlier in this chapter and it is attributed to Spanish interference.

Agreement and tense errors are significant and can hamper the process of learning. In this research, agreement presented the least incidental category; nevertheless, its problems must be solved to avoid fossilization. Regarding tense errors, this category was the second most incidental and it really needs urgent solution or the student will never express correctly in the target language. Miller (2005) says that tense and agreement errors can be minimized through proofreading, and so the work of teachers must be providing correct input and constant feedback in order to enhance correct use of language.

The relation between the numbers of errors in the different categories does not attempt to make teachers focus only in the first in the ordered list above. In fact these categories chosen for the study have all the aim to be subject of attention in class practice.

As for the purpose of this paper, it is evident that all of the errors presented before have a degree of fossilization in the minds of students because those errors should not be current at this point of learning.

Some of the errors obtained can be seen as developmental errors when in fact they are already fossilized. Nonetheless, all those errors represent the struggle students have when attempting to use impeccable English. They use incorrect forms of language repeatedly which are found in almost any paper regarding foreign or second language errors.

4.7.   Some techniques to lessen and avoid fossilization errors

This section focuses on giving some techniques to lessen, stabilize and avoid the phenomenon of fossilization present in intermediate students at Universidad de Nariño. Hereinafter, the reader will find the most suitable techniques to be adapted not only for students but also for teachers or people into this matter.

Increase the quantity of L2 input

In foreign language teaching and learning it is suitable for students to be provided with L2 input from the very beginning of their learning process. This input must be gradually given to students and it must be focused on quantity and quality. The importance of implementing input into the classrooms is noticeable as this material could be varied from newspaper, articles,

posters, advertisements, guides, workbooks, etc. Teachers must keep students in touch with the

language using different material which sparks the interest to learn something. This accumulation

of input also involves the relevant cultural knowledge; then, this input must provide correct usage

of the language as expressions, tenses, articles, preposition, pronouns, etc. All these linguistic

factors should be highlighted to get the student's attention. Short but practical exercises like

writing definition of words, sentences or chunks for personal dictionaries play an important role

regarding learning and teaching.

The following paragraph taken from "The body" (1982) by Stephen King will be taken as

an example of input to be used in class:

> "One day when Teddy <u>was</u> eight, his father <u>had got</u> angry with him for breaking a plate. His
>
> mother <u>was</u> out at work. Teddy's dad <u>took</u> him <u>over</u> to the big oven at the back of the kitchen
>
> and <u>pushed</u> the side of Teddy's head down against one of the burner plates. He <u>held</u> it down
>
> for about ten seconds. Then he <u>pulled</u> Teddy up by the hair and did the other side. Then he
>
> <u>called</u> the hospital and <u>told</u> them to come and fetch his boy. Then he <u>sat </u>down in front of the
>
> TV with his gun across his knees. When Mrs. Burroughs from next door <u>came to ask</u> if
>
> Teddy was OK - she had heard the screaming- Teddy's dad <u>pointed</u> the gun at her. Mrs.
>
> Burroughs <u>left</u> the Duchamp house at roughly the speed of light and <u>called</u> the police."

The previous paragraph shows the structure of sentences, the past tense using regular and

irregular verbs, information regarding the correct use of prepositions and a considerable amount

of vocabulary and expressions. Given this passage, the teacher may ask the students to investigate

the vocabulary and provide an English definition, look for the base form of the verbs and write

their own sentences using this new vocabulary and verbs. It will allow students to practice for

mastering their learning.

Avoid literal translation

Although some words or phrases tend to be similar between the L1 and the L2, it is

necessary to clarify learners that the other language is mostly different. The translation of

phrases, words or sentences could bring disadvantages when developing the writing process and

so writing errors will appear. Most of the time translation is worthless and self-defeating. Instead

of using translation as a learning tool, it will be suitable to start teaching or learning the different

"chunks" the language has in order to become familiar with the language and create an

independence of language. Here are some chunks of language:

See you soon/later
Take/have a seat
Have a nice day/morning/afternoon/night!
How do you do?
How've you been to …?
I arrived in …
You're welcome!
The 1st of January
I think about/of that.
I see what you mean but I don't agree.
I mean

By the way…

Sort of

In December

You know

Let's see/go!

What time is it?

I agree / I disagree

At 4 o'clock

That's quite right

And another thing is…

Before I forget

The day after tomorrow

In my opinion

On the other hand…

To rely on …

On vacation ….

It is about time to …

Chunks mentioned above appear in different ways and they include common collocations,

idioms and phrasal verbs. They have specific meanings; they also use different articles,

prepositions and different verbs. In addition, chunks will be used in both written and spoken

English teachers might take them as an excuse to introduce a certain topic or to explain certain facts. It is undoubtedly a proper step in learning-teaching.

Focusing on errors and giving feedback

Making mistakes is not a sign of failure. According to the interlanguage theory errors are necessary since they suggest that the L2 language learner is attempting to work with the L2 while moving away from the L1 (May B. 1977). Teachers must know how to deal with these mistakes so as not to become errors. To make sure of that, teachers must control and carefully observe all the exercises proposed in the classrooms, in order to confront the possible errors that will appear and clarify them since the very beginning, remember that Prevention is more significant than defossilization. The researchers suggest that the exercise proposed in this field work may be effective for other intermediate learners. Teachers might extract each of the errors found and analyze and explain to students in order to avoid that students will make them again, although it is a consuming time exercise it is worthy. The reader will find the address of the exercise below:

> *Write a 250-word composition (approximately) about your last vacation. Provide as many details as possible about it. Also, describe how your dream vacation would be. Say who you would like to spend it with, where, what you would do, and so on.*

Giving feedback will certainly prevent the formation of fossilization. Teachers should always provide feedback after learners complete a task. Through feedback teachers may also encourage and stimulate students to continue to learn while at the same time it tells learners to make changes and modifications.

Improving motivation

Enhancing motivation might be seen as an important factor to take into consideration when learning or teaching. Therefore, teachers should stimulate students' enthusiasm by different kinds of activities and praises. It is important to encourage pupils to learn more and more about the target language, as learning is a never ending process. In addition, teachers should always take a positive attitude towards students' errors and mistakes, blame them less and encourage them to correct their mistakes. It enhances self-confidence learning a foreign language, but also helps teachers take a correct attitude toward students' mistakes, facilitate them to analyze the mistakes and develop an accurate methodology to correct, reduce and remove errors.

Short but practical clues to correct errors

- Exercises regarding conjugation of different verbs serve to know and use the different tenses in specific situations.

- Mix correct and incorrect sentences on the board and ask students to identify the mistakes and explain the wrong part.

- Self-assessment or teacher assessment is quite important although peer-assessment will be more significant for students.

- Keep personalized "fossil" diaries and dictionaries where students or even teachers record their particular errors with their correct equivalent.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

5. Introduction

This final chapter gives a short overview of the complete study. It summarizes the major findings of the study and it also draws some possible contributions to better understand the phenomenon of error fossilization in the context of Spanish speaking students of intermediate level in the English and French and English and Spanish programs at Universidad de Nariño.

After analyzing the students' free composition it is possible to state that grammatical error fossilization is present among the students and it should be treated with important detail, as it may impede the development of other language skills. Typical grammatical errors should be observed and treated correctively so as to remove them; thought errors are a natural development of interlanguage.

The findings pertaining to preposition, tense, article, pronoun and agreement error support the main hypotheses for this study as there was a considerable amount of errors found on these areas. Nonetheless, the preposition category was the most predominant in number. Despite that learners have a considerable amount of L2 input (Krashen, 1985), as they use English as a means for other four subjects in their program, they tend to make these errors frequently. Some of these errors present in each category might be considered to be inexistent at intermediate level since students have been receiving instruction for long time.

It was thought that the main errors were to be found in the category of agreement but indeed this figured among the categories with least incidence of errors. In relation to this, the category of prepositions presented the most of the total errors.

Regarding the theoretical background, some extent of fossilization was found (Nemser 1971, Selinker, 1972). There were errors that persisted in the written production of students. Agreement errors have a degree of fossilization because students still make such errors even though this area has been highly practiced and proofread.

It was remarkable to note that literal translation was probably one of the most used resources among intermediate students. This resource tends to confuse learners because the learner uses the L1 structures, words or phrases in the L2 writing. Although, translation is a common language learning strategy, students must be conscious that the L1 and L2 differ considerably. Then, translation requires students to have reached a suitable level of knowledge in the target language regarding rules of the different structures and use of each part of the speech (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, articles, etc). In addition, the pupil must be responsible enough to explore for the real equivalent of the word, phrase and sentence between the two languages. Otherwise, negative transfer is done and fossilization is in the process of materializing.

Although it was not the aim of this study, the test results reveal that there are differences between the two groups which took the test. English and French program students make significantly less errors than English and Spanish program students. These differences were obtained at the moment of the quantification of the total of errors.

Some of the errors discussed in the section of findings are impermeable to correction and are considered to be fossilized or potentially fossilizable.

It is significant to note that the categories of tense and agreement errors showed statistical difference between the two groups tested in this study. Although, it is interesting to note that in both programs students had problems with prepositions.

Some of the sentences produced by students were difficult to understand since they were formed by translations but they did not seem Spanish or English. It has characteristics of the learner L1 and the TL but it does not resemble any of the languages in mention (Selinker, 1972).

The differences between the two groups revealed that students have different proficiency levels and learning experiences since they have personal learning styles. Also they use the language for different communication functions and so the mastery of the language is found in certain parts of it.

Any individual learning an L2 tends to make over generalizations of L2 rules. In addition, these learners use similar strategies for learning such as literal translation and use of cognates.

Finally, it is important to consider that errors are inevitable and a natural step in learning a language. That is the reason why teachers must avoid negative attitudes towards errors. Instead, they must give feedback and correct the errors with accuracy. Then, the techniques for correcting errors become a need for all L2 teachers and practitioners in general.

5.1. Contribution of the study

This study has mainly a pedagogic contribution. In general, this study contributes to a better understanding of the fossilization phenomenon at intermediate levels of further education. The findings of the study emphasized common erroneous features in the written English. Consequently, the study could help students and teachers to focus on errors. So, teachers can easily guide students to produce fewer written errors, especially in the categories analyzed in this paper.

There is no doubt that special techniques or strategies are needed to address the problem of grammatical error fossilization and to arrest the prolongation of specific errors. Such

techniques can help internalize and stabilize correct language structures since early stage so that errors at intermediate levels are widely minimized. For this reason, the role of the teacher is to properly guide students through the path of learning and knowledge.

In addition to the contributions above, the results obtained also serves as evidence that there are differences in proficiency between the two main English programs at Universidad de Nariño. Therefore, in the long term such difference could be overcome.

Although the findings in this study are based on the analysis of a sample of students at intermediate level, it is important to note that such findings are common in all Spanish speakers who learn English as a foreign language regarding the interlanguage features.

5.2. Implications for classroom teaching

The techniques described in this paper are practical ideas to lessen and avoid the phenomenon of fossilization. These procedures could be implemented by teachers and students.

It is appropriate to give students the opportunity to write frequently, giving feedback and correcting them when necessary. Teachers must choose gradually the input and give the students the elements needed to improve their performance. Most significantly, students need time to assimilate key elements including spelling, grammatical structures, verb conjugation, articles, preposition, etc. in order to combat error fossilization.

Both teachers and students must pay attention to the writing process in general and teachers must assist students to develop strategies and form correct habits in order to achieve a standard language production.

In the classroom it is important to make students conscious about their own errors and so they must be motivated to correct themselves form instructions from the teacher. This consciousness-raising approach can help students be conscious of the different features of the language through the use of drills, grammar instruction and other techniques focused on the form of language.

Since English students at Universidad de Nariño have limited access to real English and practice, teachers are required to give their students as much exposure to correct forms of the language as possible. This implies that teachers should be good models to learners because students at starting levels absorb both good and wrong structures which may lead to errors fossilization. The real practice in this case may include watching television programs in the target language to work the language features that need to be addressed. The reading of newspapers and listening to radio broadcasts can be highly helpful and motivating at the same time. This real practice needs to be challenging for students following the "*i+1*" hypothesis stated by Krashen (1985). In this hypothesis "*i*" is the language input and "*+1*" is the next stage of language acquisition which represents the new knowledge and therefore, it is the challenge.

A last implication is that teachers need to use an integrated approach to language focusing on the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In this manner what can be wrongly used in speaking can be proofread in writing and vice versa. Also the receptive skills serve as input which provides students with the correct form of the language they have to use in the productive skills.

5.3. Further recommendations

Researchers may recommend a discrete-point test to guide students to make certain types of errors and then results might have yielded on those specific errors, although this study focused on obtaining the common errors found on free writing.

Other researchers might consider this study as a basis to develop a more extensive work where techniques are applied to analyze their efficiency at error correction. Thus, it would be helpful to identify which techniques are most suitable for certain errors.

Some of the techniques to be implemented in the classroom in order to discourage errors and fossilization were mentioned in this study (*See chapter 4)*. However, considering the prevalence of preposition errors, increasing the quantity of L2 input, focusing on errors and giving feedback can be suitable and useful techniques. (Krashen, 1985; Akhter, 2007). These techniques can be applied to treat any types of errors but they can be focused especially on preposition errors because of the content they address.

Equally important is the role of teachers as they are required to implement and innovate the existent techniques on language teaching. This means that teachers have to be highly qualified and knowledgeable about the area where students are found to have difficulties. In addition, all English practitioners must be conscious of when, how, and by whom the errors should be corrected. In consequence, the role of the teacher is complemented by that of the student. Both of them are active members in the process of learning and most significantly in error correction (Allwright, 1991).

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APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENT

Test number ◯

Universidad de Nariño, Departamento de Lingüística e idiomas – Instrumento trabajo de grado.

La presente actividad tiene por objetivo obtener información relacionada con el manejo del Inglés en la escritura. Esta actividad nos permitirá obtener resultados que serán manejados de forma anónima y solamente se utilizarán para obtener conclusiones sobre la temática a investigar; sus fines son exclusivamente investigativos. Asimismo, cabe aclarar que la participación en este estudio no tiene ninguna incidencia en sus calificaciones. ¡Gracias por su colaboración!

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female Age: _____

University: _____ Semester: _____

Program: _____

Write a 250-word composition (approximately) about your last vacation. Provide as many details as possible about it. Also, describe how your dream vacation would be. Say who you would like to spend it with, where, what you would do, and so on.

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