

Negative Lexical and Syntactic Transfer on EFL Learners' Written Production

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Resumen

El aprendizaje de un lenguaje es un proceso natural para los seres humanos el cual les permite comunicarse con otros sin dificultad. Sin embargo, cuando se trata de otro sistema lingüístico, la labor se vuelve aún más compleja ya que demanda a los estudiantes a pasar por una serie de etapas para lograr un óptimo dominio de cierto idioma, proceso conocido como interlenguaje. Durante ésta progresión, varios mecanismos cognitivos interactúan, siendo uno de ellos la interferencia del lenguaje. Por lo tanto, cuando se aprende una segunda lengua (L2), los estudiantes se enfrentan a una variedad de retos como la transferencia de estructuras de su lengua nativa (NL). Este proceso se vuelve más complicado cuando se trata del aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) ya que los aprendices encuentran diversidad de obstáculos debido a la transferencia negativa desde su primer lenguaje (L1). Basándose en esta premisa, un estudio cuantitativo fue realizado con el propósito de investigar la presencia de transferencia negativa del primer lenguaje con respecto a léxico y sintaxis en inglés en la producción escrita en estudiantes de primer ingreso del Diplomado en Inglés de la Universidad Nacional (UNA), Sede Regional Brunca. Este pretende identificar palabras y estructuras transferidas negativamente, con la intención de ofrecer un mejor entendimiento del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Con el fin de cumplir con los objetivos principales, se aplicaron tres instrumentos, siendo el de recolección de artefactos el núcleo del análisis. La recolección de materiales escritos da comprensión de la transferencia negativa lexical y sintáctica. Así, los ejemplos lexicales proporcionan suficiente evidencia de la presencia de interferencia con respecto a ortografía, categoría gramatical, y uso incorrecto de artículos; y los sintácticos explican inconsistencias en relación al orden de palabras y desacuerdo de tiempo y número. Después de analizar la información, la transferencia de lenguaje parece ser un proceso innegable a nivel sintáctico y lexical el cual evidencia la transferencia negativa del primer lenguaje como un proceso común de interferencia.

Palabras clave: interlenguaje, transferencia, transferencia negativa, léxico, sintaxis

Abstract

Learning a language is a natural process for human beings; it allows people to communicate with others without difficulty. However, learning other linguistic systems is a more complex undertaking. Indeed, people go through a series of stages of language proficiency development referred to as interlanguage. During this progression, several cognitive mechanisms take place, being language interference one of them. Hence, when learning a second language (L2), students endure a variety of challenges such as transfer of structures from their native language (NL). This process becomes more complex when dealing with the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) since learners encounter an array of obstacles due to negative transfer from their first language (L1). Based on this assumption, a quantitative study was performed with the purpose of investigating the presence of L1 negative transfer regarding lexis and syntax in English written production in first year English Associate Program students from the Universidad Nacional (UNA), Brunca Extension. It aimed at identifying negatively transferred words and structures with the intention of offering insight into the EFL learning and teaching process. In order to meet the main objectives, three instruments were administered, being the artifact collection the core of the analysis. The collection of written material yields understanding of negative transfer concerning lexis and syntax. Likewise, the former provides ample evidence of the presence of interference regarding spelling, part of speech, and article misuse, and the latter sheds light on syntactic inconsistencies in terms of word order, and number and tense disagreement. After analyzing the data, language transfer appears to be an undeniable process at the syntactic and lexical level which authenticates negative L1 transfer as a common type of interference.

Key words: interlanguage, interference, negative transfer, lexis, syntax

1. Introduction

When learning a second language, a learner develops an idiosyncratic system which lies in between his mother tongue and the target language, this process is called interlanguage. In fact, it was regarded as a dynamic system that is created by the interaction of several factors formed by five central processes that have been attributed to it; one of these processes is negative language transfer (Selinker, 1972, p. 35). The purpose of the following research is to analyze L1 negative transfer in written production as an important source of evidence of the interlanguage system that exists in the development of students' target language. This study is based on the collection of reliable data from the administration of several research instruments and the collection of artifacts with the aim of categorizing students' most common errors in written production. Furthermore, samples gathered will be identified and explained in order to help English teachers in EFL classrooms understand, correct, and if possible -at any extent - timely deal with language interference coming from L1 negative transfer when attempting to communicate in a written mode in the target language. The following sections address the problem and its importance which are essential to justify why this issue is worth analyzing. Subsequently, the general and specific objectives are acknowledged as a means to frame the study. Finally, various possible constraints that can limit the study are scrutinized.

1.1. The Problem and its Importance

Learning is a process that occurs in all human beings. It can be done without any formal instruction like leaning to walk, or it can demand the need of formal instruction instead. However, learning can turn into a more complex process, especially when the learning of another language is involved since different factors and variables such as transfer are present. Odlin described transfer as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired” (as cited in Arabski, 2011, p.16). This definition clearly states the fact that transfer is an influence that will frequently be present in the process of learning a foreign language. Transfer that occurs as a result of similarities in both languages is known as positive transfer. However, when the two languages, the one acquired and the one learned, have differences between them, negative transfer appears. In other words “more similarities between two language systems produce more positive transfer, whereas more language distance may lead to more negative transfer” (Wang & Liu, 2013, par. 4). This argument highlights the importance to focus on negative transfer as a process that affects learning; hence, its effects on writing may be identified.

In this paper, L1 negative transfer will be analyzed in terms of written production only. Through different experiences with different learning contexts, it has been noticed that negative L1 transfer is found in the early stages of learning. It is common to identify native structures syntactically transferred into the target language in written production. In this sense, Grabe and Kaplan argued that “native language and the second language negatively influence how an L2 writer organizes the written discourse in the second language” (as cited in Hui, 2010, p. 98). This reinforces the idea that the differences among languages disrupt the process of learning in terms of written production. That is why, it is important to investigate the main areas of writing in which negative L1 transfer interferes and decreases learning as a way to help students overcome such hindrance. As teachers, it is necessary to understand that the mother tongue will have an impact in the learning process, but it is also essential to know the areas in which it is most often present, in this case written production.

This topic is relevant to the field of teaching because it helps teachers be aware of the mechanisms involve in the learning of a foreign language, at the same time, it provides instructors with the necessary understanding to contrast the effects of negative transfer in students, and take advantage of the positive transfer as well. Even though, there has been a lot of controversy in regard to the influence of transfer in the learning process; it has been proved that transfer does have an effect in such process, and that it is most of the time negative caused by the variances between languages. Different authors have supported the importance of L1 transfer in an EFL context, and it has raised its relevance from a practical and theoretical perspective because it is an issue that affects the learning of a foreign language, and it is worth to be analyzed and discussed as an intrinsic part of the teaching process. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the most common negatively transferred words and structures to provide insight in the EFL learning and teaching process.

1.2. General Objective

To investigate the presence of negative L1 transfer regarding lexis and syntax in EFL students' written production in the first year of the English Associate Program at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Perez Zeledon Campus.

1.3. Specific Objectives

- To gather free writing samples from first year students in the EFL Associate Program.
- To analyze the data obtained from the artifacts in terms of lexis and syntax.
- To identify the most common negative L1 transfer patterns in first year students in the English Associate Program.

1.4. Possible Constraints

When carrying out a research study on language features, many aspects are influential and can have negative implications in the flow of the investigation; therefore, characteristics as the contact time with the target language learner, the willingness of the participants to provide the appropriate answers, and the extraction of results from substantial data might not be in favor of the aims and objectives of the research project. Next, these limitations are explained separately.

1.4.1. Contact time

Due to the fact that the present project has a cross-sectional style, the contact time with the students will be shortened. This may be a critical aspect for the sufficient collection of reliable data since contact time will be limited to the administration of an instrument; this may lead to a restricted amount of usable information having as a result an inadequate quantity of valuable material of L1 transfer samples as to draw pertinent outcomes related to the analysis of interlanguage processes, specifically negative transfer. A practical solution to this problem is the design of accurate and well-administered instruments as to collect the necessary data to reach the objectives of the research.

1.4.2. Willingness of the participants

One relevant variable in the collection of data for a research study is the willingness of the participants to be involved effectively in the process at the moment of administering the instruments and collecting the artifacts. In many situations, students are not willing to provide their work for study purposes because of feelings of shame, insecurity or simple reluctance. Likewise, participants may feel constrained to do the task which leads to inaccurate answers, careless answers, or even no answers at all. This may be a problem when gathering a satisfactory sum of data or language samples to really state a conclusion in regard

to negative transfer. A plausible solution for this constraint is to remind participants that all data collected has academic purposes and to indicate in the instruments used that the information gathered is absolutely anonymous.

1.4.3. Substantial data

The administration of well-prepared instruments is a useful data collection technique for research studies; nonetheless, even if the instruments are precise, it cannot be assumed that students will actually present interference problems. After the administration of the instruments, the researchers may detect that there are not enough language samples to suffice determinant conclusion about the effects of L1 transfer into the target language and as part of the interlanguage existence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Implications in Language Learning

Learning languages has become a necessity for many people around the world; however, this process can be long and difficult for many. In fact, Brown (2007) referred to learning a second language by stating that “[it is] a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of the first language into a new language, new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting” (p.1). Learning a new language requires dedication, practice, and understanding about the intricacies met in the process. Moreover, there are many variables which may affect the learning development. Shoebottom (2014) outlined some of these variables; they can be internal such as age, motivation, and personality; others can be external and deal with the curriculum, instruction and access to native speakers (para. 3-14). The latter point is of great significance in the EFL context and affects learners directly.

2.2. Implications for EFL Students

Students of English as a second language do so in countries or areas where English is spoken natively. On the contrary, Brown (2007) remarked that learners of English as a foreign language learn it in their native culture with not many direct opportunities to use the language outside the classroom (p. 205). In this sense, EFL students may face harsher circumstances since their only sources of input are the teachers and the materials used during instruction. Some students can also benefit from target language media, but it is not a widespread resource. Therefore, the language teacher plays a central role in EFL instruction. Teachers become bridges between the target content and the students’ learning. Harmer (2007) stressed that teachers need to be able to create and support rapport, and know a lot about the subject matter. Also, language instructors must keep abreast of new developments in teaching and learning (p. 30). Even when the teacher does a good job, it is the learners themselves who must take advantage of everything being provided by the educator and make it work for their benefit. Once students have taken language in their hands and realize that

they are the constructors of their own leaning, production in the target language appears and aspects of their interlanguage start to show.

2.3. Interlanguage Development

Learners' language can show characteristics that are unique and that are different from the target and native languages; Ellis (1997) referred to interlanguage as "a mental system of L2 knowledge" (p. 310). The concept of interlanguage has served as a basis to explain the process of language development in learners. The first attempts to produce language will most likely have many traces of the students' native language, and it will progress to be more target language-like. Selinker (as cited by Ellis, 1997) remarked that learners create their own linguistic system and claimed that there are certain premises to target language learning; the most important ones for the purpose of this study being: Learners' grammar is permeable and transitional, and the employment of learning strategies to build interlanguage data. The former deals with the flexibility that interlanguage has of being influenced by external factors and to be modified through rule addition. The latter focuses on variability presented in each individual learner's interlanguage by the use of their own tools to construct language (pp. 33-34). It is, therefore, imperative to analyze interlanguage in more detail with the intention of understanding EFL learning in a holistic fashion. To do so, it is significant to hone in on one of the five central psycholinguistic processes involved in interlanguage development: language transfer.

2.4. Language Transfer

When analyzing interlanguage in the EFL context, it is key to comprehend the processes that underlie this idiosyncratic linguistic system. Selinker (1972) identified five central processes to interlanguage. The first, and the one that is to be the basis for this project, is language transfer, where the native language is responsible for the fossilization of linguistic items, which are part of the interlanguage. Thus, it is crucial to examine the types of transfer present in the process. Transfer can either be positive, or negative. Positive transfer facilitates target language performance while negative, also called interference, hinders communication. In this sense, Lado (as cited in Cook, 1993) alleged that when faced with transfer of structures, one must worry about the differences between the languages; the similarities can take care of themselves (p. 13). In fact, positive transfer would be hard to identify since it will take the form of the target language, and it could be difficult to distinguish it from already acquired linguistic forms; especially in languages that share some similarities as English and Spanish.

2.5. Negative Transfer in Context

English and Spanish are two languages that, owing to their widespread use around the world and their importance, come into contact when learners of one attempt to learn the other. At first, they may seem immensely different, but as learners start to use it, they find several similarities that can be employed in positive transfer processes. Some of these similarities are lexical, grammatical, and syntactic but are limited as a cause of linguistic disparity. Indeed, Spanish is a Romance language and English belongs to the Germanic family, which makes

them quite different in nature. Lexical items are rather troublesome among learners; in effect, English spelling is a difficult aspect to master by Spanish speakers. Swan and Smith (2001) argued that Spanish high correspondence between sounds and letters makes getting acquainted with English irregular spellings a challenge (p. 96). Negative transfer is also found in syntactic structures. English and Spanish have clear cut differences regarding the construction of sentences, the placement of particles, adjective order, and the use of auxiliaries. Swan and Smith (2001) observed that Spanish is freer in terms of word order; it marks number and gender in both adjectives and nouns, and Spanish does not use modal auxiliaries (p. 98). Such differences can be identified in learners' difficulty to construct English-like utterances.

The importance of identifying transferable items in EFL students lies on the possibility language instructors can have to better understand their students' interlanguages, and to appropriately deal with errors. Indeed, teachers may have more chances to avoid linguistic items from fossilizing; thus, helping students attain higher proficiency levels in their target language.

3. Methodology

Before analyzing the data, it is important to refer to the methodology employed by providing information in regard to the research design, and the setting and subject of study. This investigation follows a quantitative approach. In these types of studies, as expressed by Gall, Gall and Borg, the researcher “develop[s] knowledge by collecting numerical data on observable behaviors of samples and then conduct numerical analysis on the collected data” (as cited in Barrett, 2007, p. 48). This means that the information gathered will be quantified to support the aim of the investigation. According to Earl Babbie (2010), the main characteristics of quantitative studies are:

- The results are representative of a population.
- Data is analyzed in terms of numbers and statistics.
- Studies can be replicated since it uses larger sample sizes (p.1).

In the case of the scope, it is descriptive because “subjects are usually measured once” (Babbie, 2010, p.1). This is done through the use of a set of instruments administered to a specific population to gather the necessary information to support this research. In fact, three different instruments were designed: One for the teacher; one for the students; and one for artifact collection. Regarding the setting and subjects of study, this research takes place at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Perez Zeledon Campus; the target population is students from the same institution. The sample population is students from the Associate Program; this group is composed of sixteen students, and their ages range from eighteen to early twenties. The sampling method is convenience sampling. According to Kenneth Ross (2005), this type of sampling is “used to describe a sample in which elements have been selected from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the

researcher” (p.7). In this case, the researchers are familiar with this setting, and the teacher was open to let investigators administer the instruments.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The main purpose of this investigation is to analyze the effects of negative transfer on students’ writing. In order to gather relevant information to support the research objectives, three instruments were administered: One to the sample population, one to the teacher, and one related to artifact collection. The results of these instruments are triangulated in order to fulfill the objectives of the study. The following analysis presents a compilation of the most relevant data obtained.

First, an inventory of lexical transfer errors found in the students’ written production is presented. It illustrates errors in spelling, parts of speech, and misuse of articles (see appendix 1. Second, samples from syntactic transfer errors were also collected and quantified (see appendix 2).

4.1. Difficulty When Writing in English

The majority of the students asserted that they agree to have some difficulty when producing written language. The first question deals with their general acuity with regard to the complexity that writing in English may have. In fact, writing, just like speaking, is a productive skill, so its mastery is usually delayed owing to lack of input. Only a six percent has selected “neutral” and no participant chose disagree or strongly disagree; this tendency emphasizes that writing, due to its complexity, may be subject to negative transfer from the mother tongue (see appendix 3). This information is supported by the teacher who thinks that negative transfer is present in most, if not all linguistic areas; phonology and syntax being the most clearly identified. This fact emphasizes students’ perception and at the same time, reinforces the idea that it is hard for students to produce target language forms. If the inventory of students’ main mistakes is analyzed, it is noticeable that students do have problems when writing in English, especially when it is related to spelling. The majority of the learners’ setbacks are related to spelling because of the interference from the L1.

In fact, spelling is a complicated linguistic aspect to master in the target language, and abundant spelling mistakes are usually found in students’ compositions, especially at lower levels. The students questioned have agreed that spelling is a complex aspect to overcome. Most of them have expressed that spelling is a common mistake in their writing (see appendix 4). As a matter of fact, in the analysis done to the writing samples, it is clear that students have serious problems regarding spelling, and that the majority of them are attributed to language transfer since they represent common spellings of the native language. Spelling is, unquestionably, an important source of mistakes in students’ writing, and it shows relevant characteristics of the native language, supporting the fact that L1 interference is present at the moment of producing written target language forms, particularly at lower proficiency

levels. The teacher also agreed on this fact by mentioning that negative transfer is present throughout the learning process, but it diminishes in intensity as the learners advance.

4.2. Use of Parts of Speech in the Target Language

Parts of speech are a troublesome point in students' writing. Gaining mastery of the use of correct parts of speech is an intricate task when learning English. Most of the surveyed students expressed that they are often corrected on this matter; placement of suffixes and prefixes as well as the lack of vocabulary combine to make this point a transferable structure. Students either use the wrong part of speech or transfer its uses from their native language to fill in the knowledge gap (see appendix 5). Thus, the error inventory from the students' writing samples illustrated that they have difficulties using possessive and personal pronouns since they are used randomly most of the time since in Spanish, there is no clear distinction in this aspect of language. For this reason, students rely on the Spanish form, often misleading the reader from the intended message. The teacher also cited that negative transfer can be a significant source of deviant forms, like the case of parts of speech in which a word can change the overall meaning of the sentence.

4.3. Problems Regarding the Use of Articles

Article use also seems to be a source of transfer to the target language. Spanish use of definite articles to refer to personal nouns, as opposed to English preferable use of possessive adjectives, can cause major difficulty. In English, articles are not pluralized as opposed to Spanish. Students proved to have troubles when using articles in the target language, especially when the word that follows is plural, since they tend to use an indefinite article. This fact clearly evidences the misuse of articles because, in the target language, the construction *a(n)+plural noun* is not possible; however, in the mother tongue it is a possible structure as in “unos tamales.” It is clear how the vast majority of students are aware of article misuse. It is important to analyze how much article mishandling affects students' written production (see appendix 6).

4.4. Subject-verb Agreement in the Target Language

Subject-verb agreement is a particular linguistic form in English. Although it may seem easy if compared to other languages, it has proved to be difficult, mainly in adult learners. In fact, verb inflections such as simple present third person singular have been regarded as a late acquired form. In their opinion, the students have clear problems related to subject-verb agreement. Some difficulty may come from native-language transfer. By analyzing the written samples, it is evident how negative transfer affects students' writing since students tend to pluralize adjectives, and in the target language, it is not correct (see appendix 7). It was very common to find constructions such as “important” in which not only adjective, but also quantifiers were given a plural form as in “muchs”. Both structures are impossible in English, and they are the result of negative transfer from the L1. The teacher also believed that negative transfer is the influence that the native language has in the target language, reinforcing this view.

4.5. Word Order in the Target Language

Many participants believed that word order is complex in the target language because English word-order has many differences from Spanish syntactic patterns. For this reason, it may result in a frequently transferred item. The respondents considered word-order as a usual mistake in their writing; fifty percent of the students believe it is almost always difficult for them; thirty one percent of them think word order is always a problem while only thirteen percent of the surveyees deemed it as somewhat difficult. Since Spanish is much more flexible than English, students may fail to provide the correct forms. In the writing samples analyzed, it was observed that students tend to translate literally what they want to say. Another important finding is the omission of pronouns in sentence which is not permitted in the target language. If these two features are compared, it is noticeable the effect of negative transfer in the L2 writing because this omission is allowed in the L1. The teacher regarded this issue as interference from the L1; and this aspect is the responsible for making students produce deviant forms in the target language.

4.6. Is Spanish a Source of Mistakes According to Students?

Students do not attribute all their mistakes to native structures only. However, it is evident that the students considered many of their mistakes as transfer from the native language. The influence that the already acquired linguistic system has on the target language may be significant when the students attempt to produce written material, but it may not be the only source of mistakes made by students. Nonetheless, it is important to remark that a great amount of students do believe that their mother tongue is responsible for their mistakes in the target language. This is supported by the 83% of students between the categories almost always and always (see appendix 8). At the end, the teacher affirmed that syntactic negative transfer is very common among language students, and he suggested that interference can only be minimized through exposure to input and explicit grammar instruction.

5. Conclusions

After analyzing the samples that were collected, it was observed that most of the students have a clear tendency to use faulty structures when producing written tasks. Errors were found at different syntactic and lexical categories, and they exemplify that language transfer is an undeniable process happening to each individual while developing foreign language skills. As found, negative language transfer affects some areas more than others; for example, in the case of lexis, spelling was the category where the most quantity of errors was found. An important aspect about these examples is that they clearly demonstrated that there is a strong influence from the mother tongue into the process of learning a foreign language. Thus, it can be pointed out that negative L1 transfer is one of the most common types of interference when students try to produce written texts in the target language.

Another example of the influence of negative transfer in the learning process of a foreign language is the inaccurate use of parts of speech. It was noticed that some of the

students made use of inappropriate words when writing paragraphs. Students make use of words as possessive adjectives for different purposes as the real English usage, but the use is not standard. One relevant aspect that was identified in this category is that some of the students made use of adjectives either as adjectives or as nouns as they would in Spanish statements with words like “cansado” or “aburrido” with a specific pattern. Moreover, an aspect that was detected is that language transfer also disturbs the natural learning because learner’s make use of several structures that they have in their native language as part of their production in the target language, which can be clearly observed in their repetitive misuse of articles. Several deviant structures were identified in this category. The analysis proved that students used Spanish constructions when attempting to write articles in English. As it was detected, they attempted to use definite and indefinite articles, but generally tracing their usage back to their already acquired language system; that is, Spanish; in fact, students constructed English sentences, following the Spanish usage leading them to have language errors.

The second area examined was syntax; and only two categories were analyzed; in this case, word- order and disagreement in number and tense. In the former, most examples indicated a solid evidence of the negative transfer reflecting Spanish word-order. Students, in several cases demonstrated that they write sentences in the L2 by applying Spanish word order rules and structures replicating that of their mother tongue’s, some of the sentence organizations that demonstrate this issue are: adverb placement or word-by-word translation, in which negative transfer can be easily distinguished. The latter is related to the disagreement in number and tense; in this instance, learners exhibited pluralization of quantifiers and also pluralization of adjectives, procedures that cannot be applied to the English language but that are extensively common in the first language; thus, one more time it can be assumed that negative transfer taken from Spanish is an irrefutable source of L2 errors, and that it affects written production at different levels as syntax and lexis.

Problems in writing tasks are a clear issue during language learning. After the analysis of the results, it is suggested that teachers take action by addressing the most problematic features in the classes. Since spelling is the area where most students have problems with, it is recommendable that the teacher employs more activities to expose students to the differences that Spanish and English spelling patterns have; either during the lesson or as homework, students may benefit from activities that can raise awareness of such differences. In the case of parts of speech usage, teachers can promote grammar understanding through specific exercises that pinpoint problematic areas. As of syntax problems, helping students to master word order and subject-verb agreement seems to be the goal. Constant practice can improve writing drastically, and not all of the students’ writing piece need to be reviewed by the teacher; self and peer assessment can help students get feedback in a less intrusive manner promoting confidence and favoring practice.

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Appendix 1

Table 1 Inventory of Lexical Errors Found in Students' Written Production			
<i>Lexis</i>			
<i>Type of data</i>	<i>Type of error</i>	<i>Errors Found</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Written samples	Spelling	1.swimming	1. Lack of consonant doubling, not common in Spanish.
		2.pudin (pudding)	2. Spelled as Spanish word.
		3.spanish	3. No capitalization of languages in Spanish.
		4.contry	4. Spanish pronunciation correspondence.
		5.Augosto	5. It comes from the name of the Spanish month <i>Agosto</i> .
		6.critmas	6. The spelling sequence <chr> is not present in the Spanish inventory.
		7.a interesting person	7. In the L1, no distinction is made if the next word starts with a vowel.
		8.carrer	8. Transfer from the L1 is used to refer to a university major.
		9. father name	9. Lack of apostrophe, not used in Spanish.
		10.delicios	10. Lack of the diphthong <ou>, not commonly used in the L1.
		11.dinamic	11. Use of the Spanish spelling reference from the word <i>dinámico</i> .
		12.he preferes	12. Use of spelling forms similar to those in the mother tongue: <i>prefiere</i> , <i>prefieres</i> , <i>preferencia</i> .
		13.visite	13. Use of Spanish spellings for English words.
		14.intereses	14. Direct use of Spanish word "intereses" to refer to <i>interests</i> .
		15.lenguajes	15. Clear Spanish spelling interference from the word <i>lenguajes</i> . Written exactly as in Spanish.
	Parts of speech	1.Your address (his address)	1. Generalization of possessive adjectives (<i>Spanish use of "Su" to refer to she/he/you</i>).
		2.Him job	2. The use of an object pronoun, instead of a possessive one (<i>Spanish use of "Su" to refer to she/he/you</i>).
		3. Because is bored for him.	3. Wrong usage, the person uses not only a Spanish structure, but also an adjective as a noun.
		4. It was good but so tired.	4. The use of a wrong adjective form whereas in Spanish there is only one adjective form.

Table 1 continued

Written samples	Misuse of articles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The next week 2. ...is celebrating the Holy Week 3. Take a vacations 4. Want to cook a tamales. 5. The sports 6. He hates the Mexican food. 7. Joshua works as medical assistant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1, 2. Use of article not used in English but obligatory in Spanish. 3. Literal translation from Spanish: <i>Tomese unas vacaciones</i>. In Spanish articles can be pluralized as opposed to English. 4. Missuse of the indefinite article. Spanish <i>una/unas</i> usage transfer. 5. Article not needed in the target language as opposed to the L1. 6. Article use as in a Spanish structure, not in the target language. 7. Omission of the indefinite article <i>a</i>; not needed in the L1.
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Note. Data obtained from the artifacts collected: Unplanned written English production.

Appendix 2

Table 2
Inventory of Syntax Errors Found in Students' Written Production

<i>Syntax</i>			
<i>Type of data</i>	<i>Type of error</i>	<i>Errors Found</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Written samples	Word order	1. I want that you visit my country. 2.the most part of the time 3. because is delicious. 4. my mom cooks leg pork. 5. he is single still. 6. but is very hard to walk. 7. since is holy week	1. Wrong order of words by cause of word-by-word translation: <i>Yo quiero que usted visite my país.</i> 2. Literal translation from the L1: <i>la mayor parte del tiempo.</i> 3. The learner uses the exact word order as s/he would use in the Spanish sentence. 4. Use of Spanish word order. 5. Use of Spanish word order for adverb placement. 6. Omission of the pronoun as in Spanish structures where it is not necessary. 7. Omission of subject, possible in Spanish.
	Disagreement in number and tense	1. he practices sport and have a good job. 4. it has much nature. 5. the firsts 6. muchs 7. differents languages 8. favorites hobbies 9. a little things 10. Importants	1. Use of sport (<i>deporte</i>) as a non-count noun known in Spanish. 4. literal translation from: <i>Tiene mucha naturaleza</i> ; causing disagreement. 5. In the L1, <i>primero</i> can be pluralized as opposed to English. 6. Transfer of pluralization of quantifiers in Spanish as in <i>muchos</i> . 7. Transfer of pluralization of adjectives in Spanish as in <i>diferentes and favoritos</i> . 8. The same as number 7. 9. In the native language, there is no distinction between a “little” (+ noncountable noun) and “a few” (+ countable nouns). 10. Spanish plural forms being used to pluralize adjectives.

Note. Transfer Errors related to Syntax in EFL students' written production.



Appendix 3

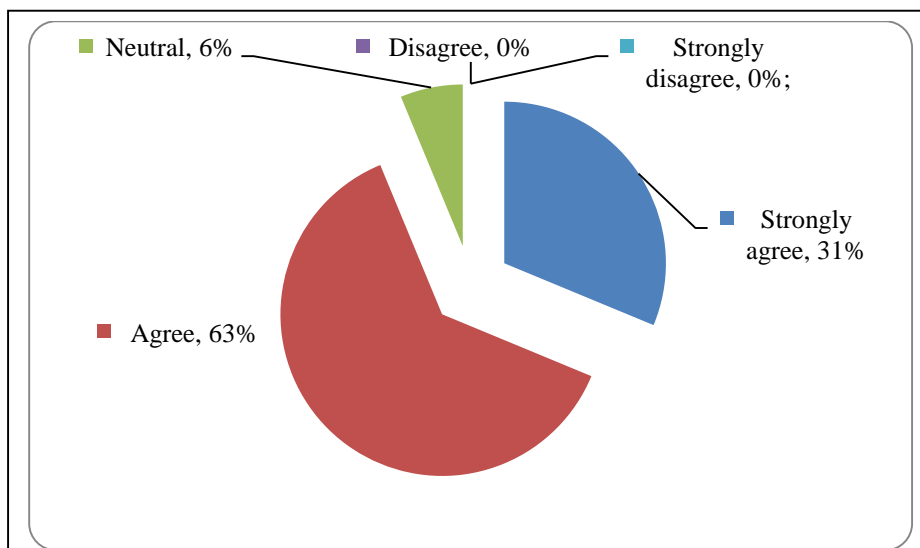


Figure 1. Difficulty when writing in English. Data taken from "Questionnaire #1: Questionnaire for Students." This figure represents the students' perception about how difficult writing in English is for them.

Appendix 4

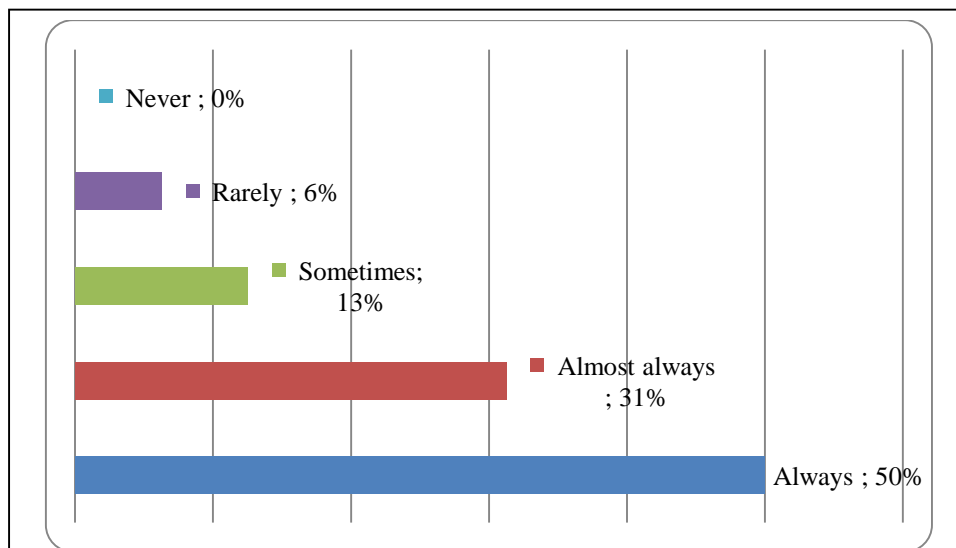
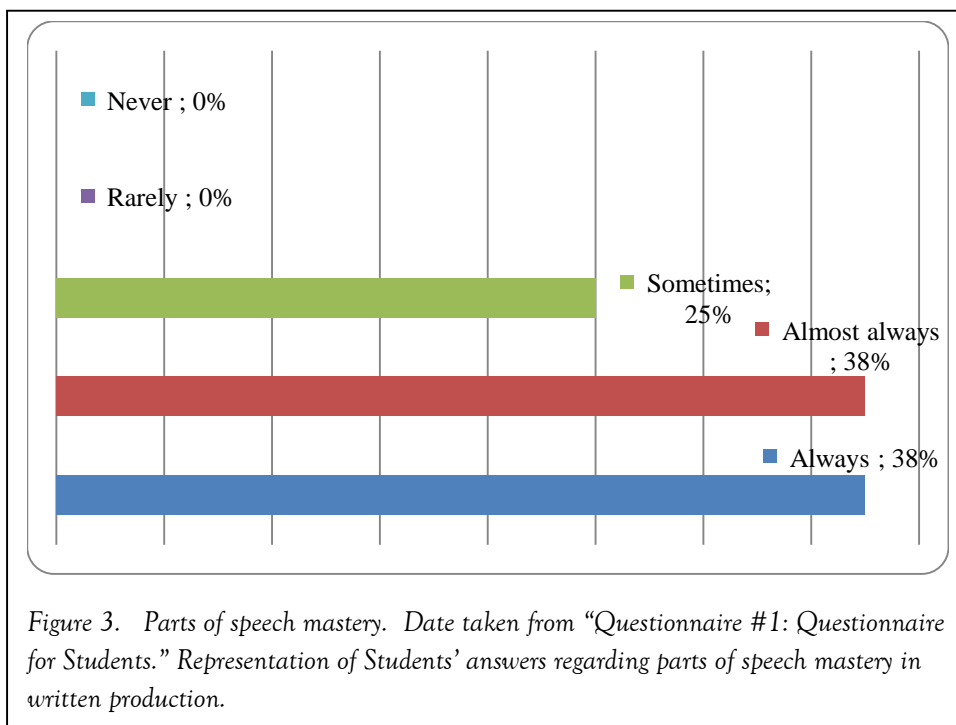


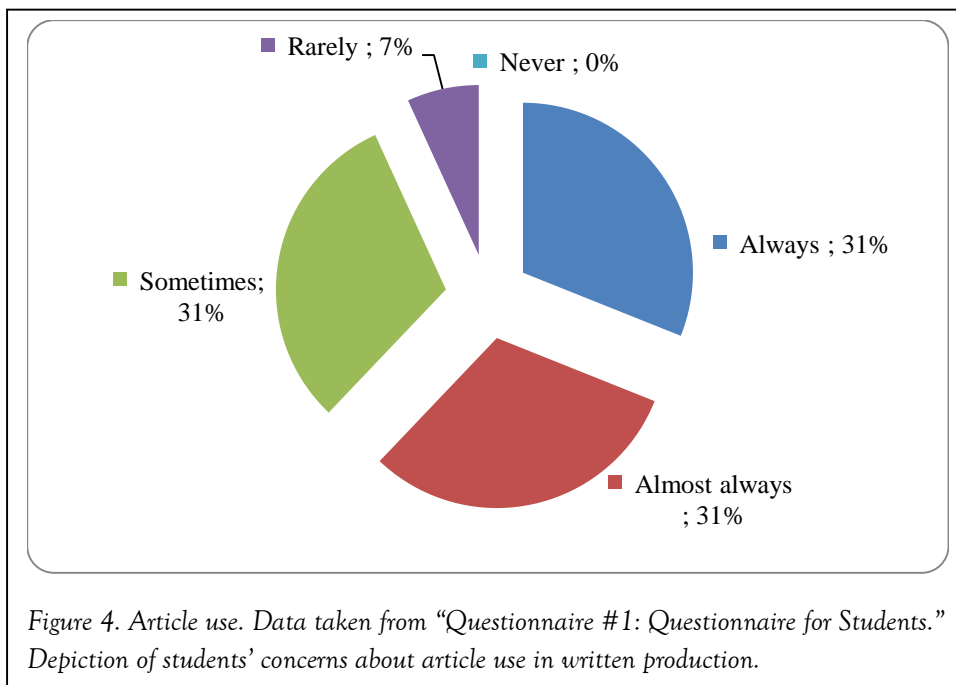
Figure 2. I make mistakes regarding spelling when writing in English. Data taken from "Questionnaire #1: Questionnaire for Students." This figure explains Students' answers concerning spelling pattern complexity in their target language written production.



Appendix 5

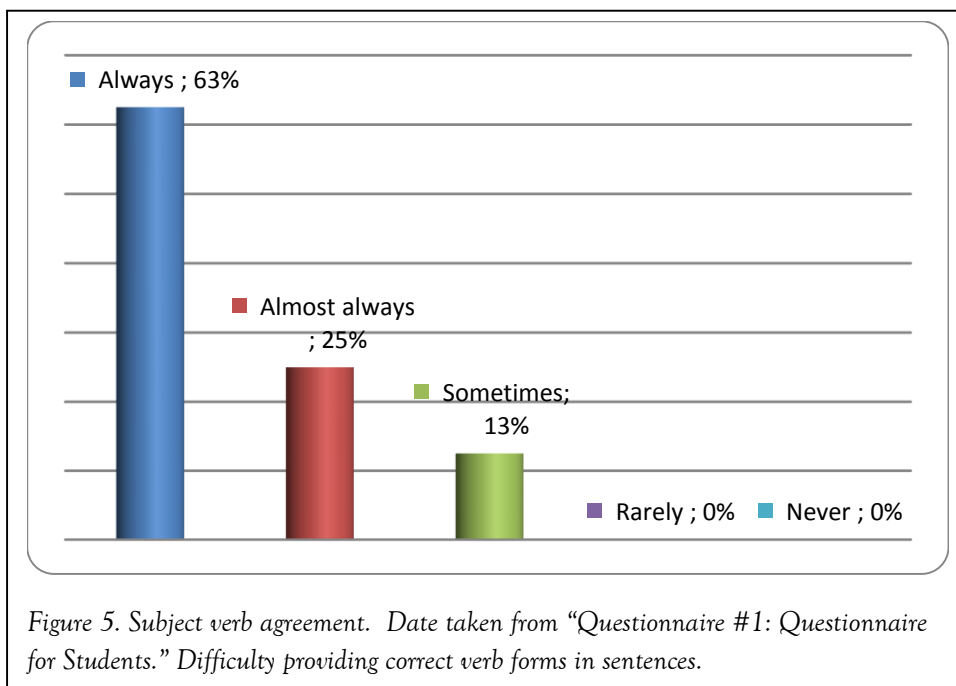


Appendix 6





Appendix 7



Appendix 8

