UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TÍTULO DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN MENCIÓN INGLÉS

Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

AUTOR: De Angelis Soriano, Luigi Efraín

DIRECTOR: González Torres, Paúl Fernado, Mgtr.

CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO GUAYAQUIL

2017

Aprobación del Director del Trabajo de Titulación

Magíster.

Paúl Fernando González Torres

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill realizado por: De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, enero de 2017

f.

Declaración de Autoría y Cesión de Derechos

"Yo De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín declaro ser autor del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo el Mgtr. González Torres Paúl Fernado director del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

Adicionalmente, declaro conocer y aceptar la disposición del Art.88del Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja que en su parte pertinente textualmente dice: "Forman parte del patrimonio de la Universidad la propiedad intelectual de investigaciones, trabajos científicos o técnicos y tesis de grado que se realicen a través, o con el apoyo financiero, académico o institucional (operativo) de la Universidad"

f.
Autor: De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín
Cédula: 0913769956

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the memory of Ana Soriano, my mother, who has been my support and inspiration since I was a child. I try to imitate her passion, courage and strength always in my life. In many ways, I feel that this is the result of imitating such valuable qualities.

I dedicate this work to the members of my family and my closest friends too, who encourage me every day to overcome obstacles and be the best version of myself. Their support means a lot to me.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the contribution of the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja for all the academic support provided during my whole career, and, especially, during the development of this research study. This includes all my professors and tutors, who always treated me with kindness and openness.

Likewise, I want to acknowledge the support of the educational institution that opened its doors to me, so I could do all the fieldwork required for this research study.

Contents

List of graphs

Abstract

The research topic of this study is Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill. Its purpose is to know and examine the errors that EFL students commit when writing. The research process follows a design of mixed methods with an emphasis on description. The setting was a public high school located in Guayaquil. The participants were 90 students from the second year of senior high-school and five EFL teachers. The procedure involved the administration of an EFL writing test and questionnaires. The aspects considered for the quantitative analysis were the amount of errors, their frequency, and their respective percentages. For the qualitative analysis, the aspects considered were the characteristics of the grammatical, content, and mechanical errors. In both quantitative and qualitative analysis the answers provided by the participants, through the questionnaires, were also considered. The general conclusion of this study is that the most frequent error, combining the three variables taken into account, is the omission of transition words.

Keywords: EFL, writing, errors, grammatical errors, content errors, mechanical errors, mixed methods, quantitative, qualitative, description

Resumen

El tema de investigación es Errores en la destreza de escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera por parte de estudiantes de colegios públicos en el Ecuador. Su propósito es conocer y examinar los errores que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera cometen en su escritura. La investigación sigue un diseño de método mixto enfatizando la descripción. El lugar donde se desarrolló fue un colegio público de Guayaquil. Los participantes fueron 90 estudiantes del segundo año de Bachillerato y cinco profesores de inglés. El procedimiento involucró administrar una prueba de escritura en inglés y cuestionarios. Los aspectos considerados para el análisis cuantitativo fueron la cantidad de errores, su frecuencia y sus porcentajes. Para el análisis cualitativo, se consideraron características de los errores gramaticales, de contenido y de aspectos mecánicos. Las respuestas de los participantes, en cuestionarios, fueron también consideradas. El estudio concluye que el error más frecuente, combinando las tres variables, es la omisión de palabras indicadoras de transición.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera, errores, errores gramaticales, errores de contenido, errores de aspectos mecánicos, método mixto, cuantitativo, cualitativo, descripción

Introduction

The research topic of this study possesses remarkable importance in the context of EFL education. Writing is an activity that requires a set of skills and cognitive capacities that other communicational tools do not (Bhatnagar et al., 2012; National Center for Education Statistics in Johnson, 2014). Likewise, the messages conveyed in written form tend to overcome limitations like time, space and materials (Del Longo et al., 2014). For these reasons, writing is a particularly complex means of communication that demands attention to form and content in order to be learned and performed adequately in a foreign language. Therefore, the study of the most common EFL writing errors committed by high school students provides the opportunity to describe and analyze the state of the art of EFL writing.

The theme that delimits this research work is Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill. The research questions that narrow the scope of this study are: 1) Which error has the highest percentage in each variable?, 2) Which is the most frequent error in the students´ written texts?, 3) How do students and teachers perceive errors in EFL writing? In consequence, all the analysis conveyed through this research aims to answer these specific queries that give it shape and also define its magnitude.

There are previous studies that contribute with enough material in order to find references, contexts and elements of comparison in relation to the ideas developed through the present research work. For instance, Phuket et al. (2015) explore the major sources of errors occurred in the writing of EFL learners, concluding that interlingual errors are predominant in comparison to other kinds of mistakes. Moreover, Moqimipour et al. (2015) aim to examine the writing errors produced by Iranian students due to the influence of their native language in three writing genres, concluding that the predominant errors are: singular/plural form, verb tense, and subject-verb

agreement. Finally, Cabrera et al. (2014) present a research study with the purpose of investigating the influence of Spanish as mother tongue in the writing skills of several high school students, concluding that the highest level of first language interference occurred in invented words, position of adjectives, and word order. These are some examples of the studies taken into consideration for the consolidation of ideas in this work.

This study has the potential to benefit several professionals and members of the academic community. First, it includes conclusions and recommendations with a direct impact in the practices of teachers and authorities in the high school where the fieldwork was done. Then, it suggests a methodological path and provides ideas in order to interpret quantitative and qualitative data that are useful not only for the understanding of this work, but also for planning further research projects around the same theme. Additionally, it provides guidance to other teachers and authorities, not involved directly in this process, in order to conduct independent research projects in their educational institutions or directly implement the suggestions provided. Finally, this study provides a rich starting point for further research oriented to expand the analysis of the central topics by applying other perspectives such as a case study to analyze the implementation of the recommendations in a particular classroom, or an action research study to find solutions around the conclusions in a cooperative manner.

There is a methodological limitation that must be considered. Due to the size of the sample, the results are generalizable only in the context of the high school where the fieldwork was done. By no means it is possible to infer that all high schools in Guayaquil present the same situation. However, this study can be considered as a piece of a whole if further research is done and it still contains relevant information that provides a solid starting point and suggestions for other contexts, as explained in the paragraph above.

Chapter I: Literature Review

The present section contains a detailed analysis of the different theories developed by scholars and a revision of recent studies related to the research topic of this project. Notions around the definition, importance and process of writing; an examination of coherence, cohesion and unity; as well as an academic discussion about the elements of writing in general and the errors in EFL writing in particular are tackled along this review.

Writing.

Bhatnagar and Bhatnagar (2012) deconstruct and explain the prevailing notion of writing. First, these authors state that writing is a mode of communication that takes place at a later stage in the intellectual development of the individual. Second, they note that writing is formally taught when children are at school; this means, when they are involved in an expanded social sphere beyond home and family. Finally, they mention that, unlike listening and speaking, writing as a tool is more complex because it involves a coordination of mental capacities and physical organs that requires an advanced degree of corporal and cognitive development.

Therefore, based on the information above, it is safe to assume that writing is not a simple and natural process, but one that is complex and consciously constructed. In fact, writing is the last of the four language skills to be developed by the individual. The reason seems to be in agreement with a developmental learning process in which learners acquire abilities progressively. At school, learners are taught within an aural frame first, later they start reading and writing. In consequence, it is accurate to say that writing is secondary within the context of the learning process. Through the following lines, the concept of writing will be developed in a more detailed manner.

Definition.

Johnston (2011) provides a simple definition of writing by stating that it consists on the letters or symbols imprinted on a surface representing the sounds of a language. In other words, this author focuses on the symbolic nature of the graphemes that make writing possible and their semantic relationship with the particular language in which they function. Johnson (2014) cites the definition developed by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2012, which considers the purposeful, multifaceted and complex nature of writing. According to this definition, it is an act of communication served by multiple possibilities in terms of linguistic resources and technological tools.

Del Longo and Cisotto (2014) emphasize on the elements of the definition of writing that make communication transcendent. As stated by these authors, writing amplifies the boundaries of communication in time, place and mode, as well as it widens its purpose. After the invention of writing its goal is not restricted to communicative tasks only, but it also covers cognitive operations like thinking, reasoning and learning. They reinforce the criterion of complexity and highlight qualities that are inherent to it, like the permanence of the written message and the fact that writing can be produced through a variety of means.

Considering the notions presented above, writing can be defined as a human, taught and complex act aimed to express ideas, generally in a permanent manner, through inscribed symbols representing sounds that acquire sense in the context of a language. This representation can be made through a variety of tools like ink and paper or a word processor in a computerized system, and demands the coordination of cognitive and physical abilities.

Importance.

According to Silva (2016), in the sphere of foreign language education, writing is an important skill. This author recognizes globalization as a phenomenon that demands a fluent and

efficient communication across languages, while the pivotal role of Internet in current communication requires it to be performed in written form. Following this reasoning, the importance of writing resides on the context of a globalized world where Internet is dominant in aspects like education, politics, social relations and, especially, communication.

Grabe (2001) presents the different levels in which writing functions. By doing this, the author shows the importance of writing as a skill from multiple points of view. Some of the levels mentioned by Grabe (2001) are writing to state knowledge, to compose and recount, to privilege perspectives and use evidence selectively, and to compose in new ways and figuratively. These different levels inform about the importance of writing, enabling human beings to operate socially and intellectually along a variety of communicational settings.

As stated by Al-Mahrooqi, Vijay and Roscoe (2014), EFL writing is one of the most important aspects of language teaching. These authors explain the importance of the skill by using the example of English teaching in Oman. In this Middle Eastern country, English teaching has received attention and legislative support due to its importance regarding business, technology, education and mass media. Since a considerable amount of communication in the mentioned fields occurs in written form, EFL writing plays a relevant role. This criterion is generalizable to all the other nations where English as a foreign language has an impact in economy and society.

In summary, the skill of writing is directly related to the state of current society. On one hand, in the context of globalization and the Internet era, writing in English is necessary. On the other, writing in native and/or foreign language allows people to communicate through a rich variety of intentions and with multiple purposes. For these reasons, in communities where English is an essential factor in matters that affect social and economic development, teaching EFL writing is fundamental in order to tackle all the possibilities that the language offers.

The writing process.

Wingersky, Boerner and Holguin-Balogh (2009) explain the nature of writing as a process. They say that writing is a set of steps that make possible the discovery, organization and communication of ideas to a reader. Unlike speaking, the writer does not count on gestures and facial expressions to convey these thoughts; however, the advantage of writing is that, since it is a process, there are stages in which the message can be gradually built, well thought and polished before presenting the final product.

According to the aforementioned authors, the stages of the writing process are prewriting, organizing, revising, drafting, editing and writing the final piece. Prewriting is the phase in which the path is traced and ideas are gathered. During the organizing stage, the writer provides a logical structure to the ideas that are going to be presented in written form. Drafting is the moment in which the sentences are composed and placed in paragraphs. Revising implies checking with care the written material, adding and giving form to ideas in a more polished manner. Editing is the part of the process in which the writer detects mechanical problems and solves them. Writing the final piece is the synthesis of the whole process and implies the presentation of the final product. All these steps must be considered as part of the writing process.

Snow and Evans (2013) introduce the idea of the *writing process approach* as an emphasis that emerged among educators in the 1970s and 1980s, becoming a core element in composition instruction. Awareness of the process is relevant for an effective learning in this area, something that has been associated to second and foreign language acquisition too. Hodson and Jones (2012) state that, when examining writing as a process, it is compulsory to guide students into a reflection on what they have learned and the most important areas of development. From this perspective, writing instruction is more than merely teaching how to inscribe characters with a

symbolic meaning; it is training learners on how to follow a logical process in order to achieve a planned result.

Finally, it is important to understand that EFL writing instruction consists not only of teaching how to develop a language skill, but also of how to think and act in an organized and gradual manner. Learners must develop an understanding of the process itself as well as the qualities attached to it, such as patience, order and the ability to think, plan and reason logically. The ideas explained so far confirm the purposeful, multifaceted and complex nature of writing stated by the definition provided by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2012.

Coherence, Cohesion, and Unity.

As previously stated, writing is a complex act aimed to communicate ideas and thoughts. In order to achieve the standards to write competently and reach the aforementioned goals, it is necessary to analyze some basic principles that are applicable to any written text in English. No matter if it is English as a first, second or foreign language, texts require coherence, cohesion and unity to make sense and reach their communicative and intellectual objectives. That is the rationale behind including these criteria in most EFL writing instructional programs. The following paragraphs are devoted to a thorough explanation of each one of them.

According to McDonald, Salomone, Gutiérrez and Japtok (2016), coherence is the element that demands clarity within the connections between ideas in a piece of writing. These authors highlight the importance of this criterion in order to produce texts in which the ideas make sense and also anticipate that the lack of coherence leads to messages that are impossible to understand. Following the reasoning of these authors, a text might contain a set of words without flaws in spelling and punctuation; however, if it lacks the appropriate connections between ideas it will be incoherent. Dascalu (2014) agrees with the aforementioned authors by confirming the notion of

cohesion as "... the links that hold a text together and give it meaning..." and clarifying "... the mere use of semantically related words in a text does not directly correlate with textual complexity" (p. 15).

Marsen (2013) says that cohesion relies on the combination of the portions of a text, resulting in a logical and adequate flow and transition from one to another. As stated by this author, the text must flow naturally from sentence to sentence, from paragraph to paragraph and, in lengthier documents, from chapter to chapter. Cohesion is the criterion concerned with this particular issue in writing.

Although coherence and cohesion aim at different aspects related to writing, they are sometimes confused. Canale (2013) states the difference between both concepts, which is useful in order to avoid misconceptions. According to this author, while coherence is concerned with the relations amid a variety of meanings within the text, cohesion deals with the logical structure of the ideas resorting to devices such as pronouns, parallel structures and conjunctions. In summary, coherence upholds the clarity of meaning of the text, and cohesion affirms its logical and chronological progression.

Winkler and Metherell (2012) refer to unity as the rhetorical principle concerned with keeping the whole text focused on the thesis selected by the author. For instance, if the document is an essay with a thesis built around the influence of socialism in Ecuadorian literature of the Twentieth Century, all the paragraphs must be constructed around the discussion of this particular thesis. In other words, by reaching unity within the text, the writer avoids distractions and does not overlook the core of the reasoning and the argumentative efforts that the specific writing project represents. Lepionka (2008) agrees with the criterion of the mentioned author, stating that "Unity is the quality of centrality and relevance, or belongingness" (p. 118).

As we can infer from the gathered information, coherence, cohesion and unity are

important criteria for quality writing. They are common to any type of writing instruction in English, as a first, second or foreign language. Several authors (Canale, 2013; Dascalu, 2014; McDonald et al., 2016) agree on the importance of all three occurring simultaneously in the text: coherence for the meaning, cohesion for the structure, and unity for the concision. And since a text without understandable meaning, logical structure, and concision of ideas is a deeply flawed one, the EFL learner must consider coherence, cohesion, and unity in order to achieve effective writing.

Elements of Writing.

Besides the principles of coherence, cohesion and unity, quality writing must be taught and developed in accordance with rules that guarantee the respect of these principles as well as the structural and formal aspects related to an organized text that is the product of a process. Some elements of writing that make the organization of the text possible are the interaction of the topic sentence and its supporting sentences at the paragraph level, transition words that lead to an adequate flow of the ideas, correct punctuation, spelling and capitalization, and grammar in EFL writing. Through the following lines, these notions will be explained in detail.

Topic sentence.

Scarry and Scarry (2014) explain that the topic sentence contains the main idea of the paragraph and is its most general sentence. These authors clarify that even if in most cases the topic sentence appears at the beginning of the paragraph, it could be placed in other positions like the middle or the end. Wilson and Ferster Glazier (2013) agree with the ideas expressed by the aforementioned authors and add that the topic sentence must include a subtopic of the right size, so it can be developed within the limits of a paragraph. What these authors suggest implies the complexity of writing a topic sentence and the necessity of engaging students in a whole cognitive process.

According to Martin (2009), students often struggle with generating a topic sentence. This author attributes the problem to inertia, nerves and anxiety. If this happens, the author suggests that learners must continue writing the rest of the document, and then they will have more elements to build an adequate topic sentence. This problem evidences the complexity of the task of writing a topic sentence and the need of adequate strategies to overcome it.

Building a topic sentence is a process in which the writer organizes his/her thoughts and responds to the structural demands of an organized text, which, according to research, is not an easy task for many students (Grover, 2013). The topic sentence keeps the paragraph focused on an idea; thus, provides unity to the text (Lepionka, 2008). Not a simple operation at all, building a topic sentence synthesizes several of the ideas presented along this literature review, such as the complex nature of writing as an act of human communication, as well as the principles of coherence, cohesion and unity.

Supporting sentences.

According to Feng-Checkett and Checkett (2013), supporting sentences provide specific details that explain, clarify and define the main topic as stated in the topic sentence. These authors explain that these sentences must showcase a variety of styles in order to contribute with the rhythm of the written text. Finally, they mention that through specific details, these sentences make possible the development, and also the expansion, of the main idea.

According to the aforementioned authors, supporting sentences are all in service of the topic sentence, which means that all of them are constructed in a way that avoids unwelcome deviations. For these authors, supporting sentences should reflect a variety of styles to demonstrate the link between several pieces of information creating a flow. In summary, an adequate set of supporting sentences contributes to keep the focus of the text on the central idea by providing additional information that enriches the topic.

Transition words.

According to Walter (2016), the words and phrases that guide a reader from one idea to another are as important as the topic sentence and supporting sentences mentioned above and they are more crucial in written than in spoken communication. Walter (2016)explains that there is a variety of transition words and their use is attached to the degree of formality of the communication setting. Finally, the author says that these words are aimed to lead the reader through the path of the text; in other words, their purpose is to orient the reading process.

DeCapua (2016) explains that transition words represent a way in which two or more clauses can be connected and these connections are of different kinds. This author says that the meaning of the connection is given by the transition word employed. Some examples of the transition words classified in accordance with their purpose are: contrast (however, nevertheless, nonetheless), addition (furthermore, moreover, likewise) and result (therefore, consequently, accordingly). Following this reasoning, it is possible to infer that the importance of these words relies on the fact that they specify and make possible connections of multiple types between ideas through the text.

To sum up, transition words are important and have specific purposes like conveying contrast, addition and result; however, all of them have one general goal that is connecting ideas along the text. In EFL writing the concept is relevant because students are challenged to incorporate this particular set of terms to their lexicon and understand its instrumental function and the singular meaning of each one of the words comprised in it. Finally, it is important for learners to develop an understanding about transition words because they facilitate the correct implementation of the principles of coherence and cohesion within the writing process.

Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

The three concepts; punctuation, spelling, and capitalization; are pivotal for the writing

process because the written final product must succeed not only from a content point of view but also from the perspective of those aspects that facilitate the understanding of the text and its meaning. According to Lindner (2005), punctuation and capitalization are not simple setsof rules to be memorized; they are mechanics that change the connotation of sentences. As stated by Burnett and Myers (2004), accuracy in spelling makes easier the process of reading a piece of writing. Through the following lines, notions of these concepts will be explained.

Bain (2015, p. 285) refers to punctuation as a "matter of convention" and as part of advanced literacy. Harvey (2003) explains that punctuation consists on the use of signs that help to understand and express what is written. Harvey (2003) implies that punctuation reflects history because it has changed along centuries. According to this author, new signs have emerged and different writing styles have been consolidated until the current times, evidencing that punctuation is dynamic. Anyway, this author remarks that besides the changing nature of punctuation, the most important aspect is its purpose: it guides the reader through the text and helps him/her understand the message. It can be concluded that punctuation is an advanced and conventional aspect of writing that serves the specific purpose of clarifying intentions and meanings for the reader through the use of standard signs that provide sense to the reading process.

Spelling is the conventional part of writing related to orthography; that is, the choice of characters made by the writer in order to configure the words. Since this is a conventional and formal construct, there are correct and incorrect configurations. From an experience with Serbian EFL students, Danilovic (2010) concluded that strong spelling instruction can lead to a development in difficult areas of the language. This author identified the following strategies to raise spelling consciousness: reasoning by analogy, exploration of derivational patterns and etymology, proofreading and self-correction, homophones and morphological rules. In

conclusion, spelling represents another matter of convention that the learner needs to master in order to produce written text and it can be taught formally through strategies.

Capitalization is related to spelling and punctuation in the sense that it is also a mechanical feature of writing. It consists on the use of capital letters within the written text. It is not an arbitrary element of writing because there is a standard set of rules that the EFL learner requires mastering. Capitalization has an impact in the clarity of the text and the enhancement of the experience of the reader (Ruday, 2013).

In conclusion, punctuation, spelling and capitalization are part of writing because they address the formality and acceptable standards that mark the distinction between a correct and an incorrect text. The concepts presented above allow us to infer that these mechanical features are associated to sets of rules that must be imparted consciously to the EFL learner. Additionally, it is important to remark that punctuation, spelling and capitalization affect the meaning of the parts that form the message; thus, the EFL writing learner requires knowing the rules that govern them in order to produce a text that can be properly understood by the reader.

Grammar in EFL writing.

According to Greenbaum and Nelson (2013), grammar is a set of rules aimed to guide the process of combining words in order to form larger units with meaning. These authors explain that, in a determined native language, grammar makes explicit all the rules that govern what the native speaker learned naturally, just through the use of the language. They also state that grammar is a central component of language, right in the middle of the system of sounds and written symbols and the system of meanings of a singular language. For an EFL learner these rules are like a manual to understand how English works and in the case of writing they are key when it comes to the production of quality texts. However, there are different positions and ideas regarding grammar in EFL writing.

The vulnerable position of grammar in EFL writing instruction is detrimental for the learning process. Ferris (2016) states that, generally, EFL writing teachers do not receive appropriate training in the field of English grammar. This author explains that, traditionally, grammar has received a marginal treatment or has been neglected in EFL writing classes. This is considered by Ferris (2016) as a missed opportunity for the students and counterproductive for their performance as writers and foreign language learners. As stated by this author, the lack of adequate grammar instruction in EFL writing classes has highlighted the need to rethink the current situation and give grammar the importance it deserves in the given context.

The importance of grammar in the context of writing classes is reinforced by other authors. For example, Benjamin and Golub (2016) suggest, for the configuration of effective writing workshops, that grammar instruction is relevant for the development of basic elements of writing such as meaning, elaboration, structure and conventions. They encourage grammar instruction as long as it addresses the accomplishment of clarity and coherence in the production of texts. Likewise, according to Lee (2016), there is enough research work that suggests the important role that grammar plays in writing instruction. By referring to study a study carried out by Berman (1994) among Icelandic EFL students, the author supports the position that grammatical proficiency in the native language facilitates the process of transferring skills in the foreign language.

There are also authors who do not encourage grammar instruction since the beginning. Herder and Clements (2012) explain the fluency-first approach in EFL writing classes. Through their explanation, they argue that the mentioned approach encourages the immediate production of written text by the learners, without any sort of error correction or formal grammar teaching. However, it is important to mention that they do not completely disregard grammar instruction because they explicitly mention that in later stages the learner devotes time to organization and

grammar.

Considering the ideas expressedabove, grammar plays an important role in the context of EFL writing instruction and this must be considered in the classroom. Even though an EFL writing lesson should not become a grammar focused one, it is necessary to find the right balance in order to avoid overcoming a crucial element. Grammar as a source of relevant knowledge for the EFL writing learner must be carefully considered within the lessons' plans and developed while carrying out the activities designed for the enhancement of the skill of writing (Ferris, 2016; Craig, 2013).

As a summary, it is appropriate to highlight the importance of the elements of writing that make possible the production of formally and structurally written texts. Building adequate topic sentences and supporting sentences is a complex operation deeply connected with the rhetorical principles of coherence, cohesion and unity. Transition words facilitate the flow of the text, while the emphasis on punctuation, spelling, and capitalization provides the opportunity to adapt it to the accepted standards of quality writing. Finally, careful attention to grammar in this context fulfills the expectation of an integral formative process aimed to obtain the clearest and most precise results from the EFL writing learners.

Errors in EFL Writing.

After reviewing the concept of writing, its rhetorical principles and its most important structural and formal elements, it is necessary to present some ideas related to a topic of interest in the field: errors in EFL writing. Learners who have shaped their ideas and developed their skills within a determined language are expected to face some difficulties of varied nature. Pawlak (2014) suggests that, through the course known as writing conferences, teaching the writing process is a propitious milieu to identify and address the errors that naturally emerge while producing text in a foreign language and to see error identification as an opportunity to

provide meaningful information to the students and design strategies to solve problems that are usually normal. This idea is supported by Ferris (2011), who suggests the benefits of in-class mini-lessons on language that can help students to understand aspects of the foreign language that are troublesome. The following lines are devoted to an explanation of the causes and types of errors that usually appear in the EFL writing instruction process.

Causes.

Regarding the causes of errors in EFL writing, Agustín (2011) states that current research leads to two claims comparing proficiency level and error occurrence: first, that when proficiency increases, error production decreases; second, that when proficiency increases, the type of errors produced changes. The first claims leads to believe that the proficiency level might be a cause of errors in EFL writing because when the former increases the latter decrease. However, the second claim offers a different perspective, making us infer that the lack of a determined proficiency level in the target language is not per se a cause of the errors because they just evolve according to the complexity of the linguistic structures mastered by the learner.

James (2013) identifies some causes of error in general language learning that affect EFL writing. One of the causes is, as the author calls it, ignorance. It has to do with the lack of knowledge of a specific aspect of the target language. This lack of knowledge can be related to a word, a grammatical structure or any other element that is relevant for the language use. The same author mentions that another cause of error, derived from ignorance, is avoidance. In this case, the learner relies on the words and structures that he/she already knows, consciously avoiding the use of more adequate forms of the language in a given situation. Ignorance and avoidance are two sources of error that are not at all infrequent in EFL writing.

Another cause of error in EFL writing is negative transfer. According to Nowacek (2011), it consists of the inappropriate application of previously acquired knowledge. The defined

18

situation is a common cause of error in EFL writing because the learner already has an amount of knowledge acquired through the use and formal instruction of his/her native language. As stated by Wu (2016), there is enough research that evidences the detrimental impact of the native language in the written production in the foreign language. However, this author also recognizes the positive impact that native language has within the foreign language learning process. In consequence, it is important to observe that even though native language is a major cause of error in EFL writing through negative transfer, it cannot be automatically disregarded because positive transfer also happens.

Being unfamiliar not only with the target language but also with the context in which writing happens seems to be another cause of error. According to Li and Dell-Jones (2014), the lack of familiarity of a group of EFL learners with online writing processes caused errors in the production of written text during a collaborative writing project using Wikipedia. This cause of error highlights the need of familiarizing learners with the different contexts in which writing takes place in order to prevent them from committing mistakes along the writing process.

In summary, there are multiple causes of error in the context of EFL writing. One of the causes can be a poor proficiency level. Another one can be ignorance and avoidance of the foreign language elements. Another strong possibility consists on negative transfer of the knowledge acquired via the native language of the learner. Finally, lack of awareness of the context in which writing occurs might influence negatively the written production of the learner. Other sources of errors can be inferred from the types of errors described through the following lines.

Types of errors.

In a general way, Ferris (2011) states that there are some errors much more common in EFL learners than in English native speakers. This author categorizes some of these errors as

verb tense and aspect issues, the use of articles and other determiners, noun endings, errors in word form and word order. According to Ferris (2011), this variety of errors demands a careful preparation from the instructor in areas related to grammar and syntax. This represents an interesting starting point in order to understand this important matter.

In a more specific manner, Al-Mahrooqi, Vijay, and Roscoe (2014) refer to two types of errors that often occur in EFL writing: intralingual and interlingual. Intralingual errors are the ones that take place within the target language and can be caused by factors such as the overgeneralization of English rules and the intrinsic difficulty of some structures in English. Interlingual errors are the ones provoked by the interference of the mother tongue, they are closely associated to negative transfer, a concept already explained in previous paragraphs.

According to the aforementioned authors, interlingual errors are mainly syntactical and they can take place through a variety of forms such as wrong word order, omission of subject, no subject-verb agreement, sequence of tense, use of articles, prepositional errors, among others. This particular problem shows that the differences between the languages involved in the process play an important role in the definition of the errors that take place at an interlingual level. On the other hand, intralingual errors happen when the learner overgeneralizes an English rule, ignores rule restrictions, applies the English rules in an incomplete manner, among other cases. It is evident that the errors at the intralingual level are the product of lack of appropriate knowledge of the target language and the difficulties it represents for the learner.

To conclude, errors in EFL writing are expected and can be of different natures. The interlingual errors are the ones that are directly associated to the interference of the native language in the learning process. While not all the influence of the native language is negative, it is important to address the errors that it might cause in the form of negative transfer. On the other hand, the intralingual errors are the ones that do not require the interference of any native

20

language, but are linked to the natural complications that learning a new language represents. These errors need to be addressed to in order to guarantee an adequate transference of knowledge.

After gaining theoretical awareness around paramount topics in the field, it is convenient to explore the findings that other researchers have reached while conducting studies aimed to analyze topics related to errors in EFL writing. The following paragraphs are dedicated to a succinct and pertinent presentation of current research work oriented to the elucidation of this theme.

A Phuket and Othman (2015) study had the purpose of exploring the major sources of errors occurred in the writing of EFL learners, it was focused on the types of errors and the linguistic levels in which they took place. The methodology consisted of the analysis of forty essays written by Thai students. The most relevant conclusion of this study was that interlingual errors were predominant in comparison to other kinds of mistakes. Therefore, this study confirms the interference of the native language and its occasionally negative impact in the development of EFL writing.

Moqimipour and Shahrokhi (2015) research aimed to examine the writing errors produced by Iranian students due to the influence of their native language in three writing genres: narration, description and comparison/contrast. The methodology emphasized on the study of 65 paragraphs written by the students based on error analysis and the contribution of 15 teachers with enough experience in the field of TEFL. The results of this research showed that from a list of 12 common errors, the predominant ones were three: singular/plural form, verb tense, and subject-verb agreement, all of them caused by the influence of the mother tongue of the learners.

Cabrera, Gonzalez, Ochoa, Quiñónez, Castillo, Solano, Espinosa and Arias (2014) presented a research study with the purpose of investigating the influence of Spanish as mother

tongue in the writing skills of several high school Ecuadorian students. The methodology comprised the selection of 351 students and 42 teachers from both private and public high schools located in Loja, Ecuador. The instruments applied for this research were a student's questionnaire, a written test, and a teacher's questionnaire. Some of the conclusions of this study were that the usage of grammar structures and vocabulary are among the most difficult areas for Ecuadorian EFL writing students; that the highest level of first language interference occurred in invented words, position of adjectives, and word order; and, that there is still a lack of strategies to overcome the problem of interference of the Spanish language in spite of the awareness among teachers.

Correa, Martínez, Molina, Silva, and Torres (2013) presented a study aimed to examine the impact of feedback in the organization and the content of written tasks among EFL learners. The participants were students from subsided Chilean schools and teachers. The method wasa case study and the approach was qualitative. Instruments to gather information were mainly a structured interview and a written task performed in class. The main conclusion of the study was that the feedback from the teacher had a positive impact on the EFL learner, increasing the motivation and improving the results in the writing process.

DeMichele (2015) article had the goal of exploring the impact of short form improvisational theater in writing fluency. The article comprises the process of two quasi-experimental action research studies measuring the writing quantity after the exposition of the students to improvisational theater. The results of the studies showed that the amount of writing increased among students from urban and suburban areas.

Zhan (2015) presented a study aimed to research about the errors found in the writings of Chinese EFL learners. The methodology was based on error analysis of texts written by Chinese students in English. The conclusion of the study is that the most frequent errors are associated to

tense and verb form, spelling, use of English words and phrases, use of Chinese-English expressions, singular/plural form of nouns, and parts of speech.

The study conducted by Gulznar, Jilani and Choudhary (2013) had the purpose of exploring the causes of poor writing among Pakistani students, while following constructive feedback through the error analysis system. The methodology was defined as experimental. The conclusion of this study is that writing errors can be minimized through constructive feedback.

The research conducted by Muir and Xu (2011) had the objective of exploring pragmatic failure into the writing of young EFL learners in mainland China. The methodological process included the analysis of 34 in-class compositions written by the students. The authors found that causes of pragmatic failure are limited language proficiency and native language pragmatic transfer.

The information gathered from the studies presented above enriches the present literature review and provides a methodological support in order to apply adequate instruments, as well as it facilitates the process of choosing a sample for the fieldwork and a fair research method. Likewise, reading other research works done in the field helps in order to analyze creative means to approach the object of study.

Chapter II: Method

After developing the central concepts that are relevant for this study through the literature review, it is necessary to specify the method applied in order to fulfill the goals of the present research project. Therefore, the main aim of this section is to provide clear and detailed information about the setting and participants, as well as the procedures followed to accomplish the research objectives. The following lines are dedicated to the aim of this section.

Setting and participants

The fieldwork planned for this research project was conducted in a public educational institution located in the South of Guayaquil. The institution is big, with six different courses for the second year of senior high-school. Students receive classes from Monday to Friday in the afternoons.

The population considered for this study comprises students of three courses of second year of senior high-school, and EFL teachers as well. The number of students who participated is 90 (50 female, 40 male). The number of teachers who cooperated is five (4 female, 1 male).

Procedures

With the identification of the three variables that guide this research work and keeping in mind the questions that it seeks to respond, the process of building the literature review was focused on the central topic of the project. During this stage, priority was given to updated publications with academic merit. Therefore, the literature review comprises books that stimulate academic discussion with pertinent conclusions drawn by experts in the field, most of them based on the extensive analysis of research work previously done. Also, academic articles found in journals were considered for this part of the process in order to reflect the state of the art

regarding errors in EFL writing. Among the resources employed in order to complete this stage are: physical books, Google Scholar, Google Books, and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC).

Then, it is relevant to mention the design frame used for this work. The orientation, in this case, was a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches because the information gathered through the instruments (the test administered to the students and the questionnaires responded by teachers and students) had numeric and non-numeric components. Part of this information was represented in percentages, but there were parts of text that required a qualitative type of analysis. In consequence, the study agreed, from the beginning, with a mixed methods research design, clearly focused on description. The research questions required from the researcher to describe the three phenomena included within them; in other words, an understanding on what is currently happening around EFL writing errors in the particular setting.

Fieldwork was done personally and involved several steps. The first step consisted on identifying a public high school that fulfilled the specifications established for this study. This was done visiting several high schools located in a specific area in Guayaquil (South). Then, access was granted by the principal of the selected school, after explaining him the ethical frame of the project. Next, EFL writing tests and questionnaires were administered. This last step was the most representative within this stage of the process. Each one of the three courses selected was visited and direct explanations were given to the participants. In each course, the test administration process lasted 20 minutes, while questionnaires were responded in approximately 30 minutes.

The following instruments were applied as part of the procedure: 1) A questionnaire for students consisting of twelve questions. This instrument focused on self-perception regarding EFL writing abilities, errors, causes of the errors, and class management. The questions dealt

with the opinion of learners about the importance of EFL writing, how the EFL writing class is

carried out, and the frequency and reasons behind committing errors within the three variables. 2)

An EFL writing test in which students were challenged to write a paragraph about their favorite

singer. Students were given 20 minutes to write the paragraph and develop their ideas in 100-150

words. 3) A questionnaire for English teachers consisting of twelve questions. Most of the items

were adapted directly from the questionnaire aimed to the students. It was designed to analyze the

perception of teachers regarding their learners and their own teaching process.

The program Excel was used for the tabulation of the results. First, a table was designed to

classify and count the errors in the EFL writing tests. The table allowed the visualization of

frequencies per variable and type of error. After counting all the occurrences, frequencies were

determined and the percentages were calculated per each type of error. The same table was used

to obtain frequencies and percentages per each variable, as well as for the total number of errors

detected. Second, for the tabulation of the data gathered through the questionnaires, two tables

were designed (one for the responses of teachers and the other for the responses of students).

Similarly, the answers for each question were counted independently in order to obtain

frequencies and percentages. In the items that required ranking answers from 1 to 6 or from 1 to

7, measures of central tendency were used in order to determine the mode and the mean, which

was useful in terms of comprehension and presentation of the results.

The main aspects considered for the data analysis are related to the nature of the

information. Quantitative information was analyzed through descriptive statistics criteria,

especially the calculation of frequency and the application of measures of central tendency.

Besides, most of the quantitative data was converted into percentages in order to visualize in an

adequate way the differences among the results, per variable and in total terms. Qualitative

information was analyzed through careful reading of the texts, focusing the attention on

grammatical, content and mechanical aspects. In the case of the EFL writing tests, they were carefully read in order to identify errors and classify them appropriately. Also, during the process, examples of errors were extracted to facilitate the analysis of the results. In the case of the questionnaires, qualitative information was also carefully treated, extracting, checking and comparing similar and differing answers of teachers and students. Later, they were examined in order to appreciate what the results suggested in the context of the research questions.

Finally, what kept all the process in order and oriented was the presence of the following research questions: 1) Which error has the highest percentage in each variable?, 2) Which is the most frequent error in the students´ written texts?, 3) How do students and teachers perceive errors in EFL writing? They suggested, during the whole process, a strong component of description and the simultaneous consideration of quantitative data (to respond the first and the second one) and qualitative information (to respond the third one). Along the research process, all the attention was given to these research questions to avoid distractions of any sort.

Chapter III: Results and Discussion

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

The core interest of the present research project is to analyze the variables of grammar, content and mechanical errors in the context of EFL writing among students enrolled in public high schools in Ecuador. Keeping in mind the core interest of the project, an EFL writing test and questionnaires aimed to learners and teachers were administered in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The results obtained after following the aforementioned procedure constitute the focal point of this section. The text that follows, seeks to show the errors with highest percentages of occurrence in each variable; the most frequent error; and the perceptions of learners and teachers concerning errors in EFL writing. It is necessary to mention that, from the 90 students who participated in the study, 19 of them left the EFL writing test in blank.

Form of the language: Grammar

GRAPH 1

Form of the language: Grammar
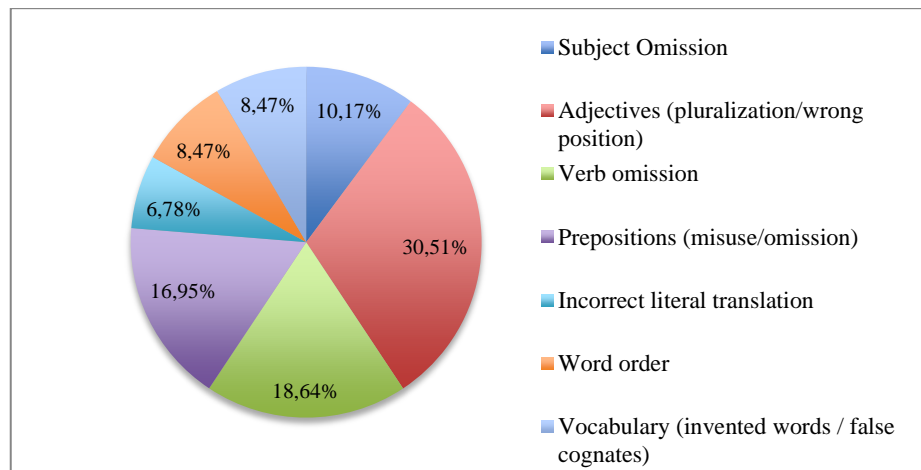
Author: De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín
Source: EFL writing test

According to several authors (Ferris, 2016; Benjamin and Golub, 2016; Lee, 2016), there is a strong bond between grammar and EFL writing. For example, Lee (2016) cites earlier studies that suggest that learners with more grammatical proficiency commit less errors in their writing and transfer in a more efficient way the organizational writing skills from their native language to the foreign one. Likewise, the findings of previous studies conducted in Ecuador and other countries (Cabrera et al., 2014; Zhan, 2015) indicate that grammatical errors are among the mistakes that EFL writing learners commit within the texts they produce. For these reasons, the variable *Form of the language: Grammar* has been considered for this project in order to analyze the most frequent errors that take place among EFL students from public high schools in Ecuador. The following lines are devoted to the analysis of the results displayed in Graph 1.

The most frequent grammatical error consists of the pluralization/wrong position of adjectives. There is a significant difference between the percentage of occurrence of this type of error and the others. In fact, it is the only type of error that surpasses the 30% out of the total identified within the analyzed variable. A sentence written by one of the participants that exemplifies this type of error is: "my music favorite is..." The placement of the adjective (favorite) is incorrect because in English its position is before the noun (music). Nonetheless, in this case the student has done the opposite. Even though this error does not affect significantly the comprehension of the message, it is necessary to specify that the correct form of the sentence is "my favorite music is..."

The second most frequent grammatical error is verb omission. In percentage, it is significantly lower than the most frequent, but out of the other errors it is still considerably representative. An example obtained from the writing activity developed by the participants is: "He from Venezuela." The sentence is incorrect because it does not include a verb expressing action, state or relation in order to complete its sense. Although the inclusion of a pronoun (He),

29

an adequate preposition (from) and a noun referring to place (Venezuela) contributes to a relative understanding of the idea, this error affects the comprehension of the message because a key element of the sentence is missing. "He is from Venezuela" is the correct version. As it can be evidenced, through the use of the verb "to be", the sentence makes sense and seems complete.

The third position, based on the percentages obtained, is the type of error known as misuse/omission of prepositions. In the context of the whole group of errors detected, it registers an important level of representativeness. One of the sentences extracted from the writing samples is: "Reik in the beautiful music." The use of a preposition (in) instead of a verb qualifies as misuse. The preposition "in" is used before a noun that refers to space or place. However, this is not the case of the sentence because the noun "music" does not refer to space or place. This error affects the comprehension of the message in a significant manner because does not allow the reader understand what the writer means. Even to correct the sentence it is necessary to guess the intention of the writer. In this case, a sensible correction involves replacing the misused preposition and the article with a verb. "Reik plays beautiful music." is a version of the sentence without grammatical errors.

Considering the percentages showcased, the type of error known as subject omission holds the fourth position. Its representativeness is considerably lower when compared to the types of errors explained above. From the written texts produced by the participants, a sentence that exemplifies this error is the following: "Like their musics." It can be noticed that the grammatical construction misses a subject because it does not explicit who performs the action suggested by the verb "like." This particular error does not affect in a substantial way the comprehension of the message because the sense of the sentence can be inferred by a conscious analysis of its context. "I like their music." is the correct form, including the pronoun "I" indicating the subject who performs the action.

The fifth position in the rank of grammatical errors is shared by two types: word order and vocabulary (invented words/false cognates). Both types of errors are expressed in the same percentage of occurrence and they are not considerably representative in the context of the whole group of errors. On one hand, an example of word order error is the following sentence: "She is beautiful and years old 50." The order of the expression used to refer to the age of people is reversed. Even though the mistake is evident, the message can be understood by the reader because all its elements are there. The correct order is "She is beautiful and 50 years old." On the other hand, an instance of vocabulary error is: "My favorite cancions is 'You You'." In this case, using the Spanish language background, the student has invented a word (cancions) in order to complete the sense of the sentence. The message can be easily understood by a Spanish speaker; however, it might be much more difficult to understand by an individual with no Spanish language background. The correct version of this sentence is "My favorite song is 'You You'."

The sixth grammatical error in order of frequency is incorrect literal translation. Taking in consideration all the errors detected, its representativeness is low. An example of this type of error is the following sentence: "They are five integrants." In Spanish the word used to refer to the people who are part of a band is "integrantes." In English when referring to the people who are part of a band the accurate term is "members." Due to pragmatic reasons, the use of the term "integrants" seems odd in the context of the sentence and reveals an incorrect literal translation. The appropriate form of the sentence is "They are five members."

The questionnaires administered among students and English teachers reveal interesting information about their perceptions concerning grammatical errors. Regarding the frequency of their own grammatical mistakes, the responses of the surveyed students, with their respective percentages, are: sometimes (38.88%), often (22.22%), rarely (22.22%), always (12.22%), and never (4.44%). This data indicates that a vast majority of the participants is conscious about

31

writing with grammatical errors on a regular basis. The results partially agree with the opinion of the English teachers surveyed for this project. Three out of the five teachers who participated consider that students always commit these types of errors, while two of them express that they commit them sometimes. With 59 grammatical errors extracted from the samples, it is safe to assume that the perception of students and English teachers is accurate.

At the moment of specifying the origin of their grammatical errors, students graded and ordered a group of several reasons using a scale from 1 (least important) to 6 (most important). According to them the most important reason, with an average score of 3.87 out of 6, is that learning English grammar is difficult. The second most important reason, with an average score of 3.81 out of 6, is that teachers do not include feedback in the writing activities. The third most important reason, with an average score of 3.71 out of 6, is that they do not consider grammar important for writing English.

On the other hand, teachers responded the same question in a different way. With an average score of 5.20 out of 6, they considered that the most important reason is that teachers do not highlight the grammar errors of the students in their pieces of writing. Then, with an average score of 4.60 out of 6, the second most important reason according to them is that they do not include feedback in the writing activities. Finally, with an average score of 4.20 out of 6, the third reason identified by teachers is that students do not understand the grammar explanations.

These results show agreement in the part related to the lack of feedback. However, while students find the difficulty of the subject the major cause of their errors, English teachers think that not highlighting grammar errors is the most important one. Also, the results of the questionnaires indicate that teachers and students see the importance of grammar in writing in different ways. All these reasons, reflecting the perceptions of both sides of the educational experience, must be considered as a whole and not in an isolated manner because possibly all of

them are related to the errors detected in the pieces written by the students.

Finally, Ferris (2016, p. 222) argues that "Grammar in the writing class is often addressed haphazardly or neglected entirely," and adds that "This is more than a missed opportunity for student writers. It is counterproductive to their development as writers and productive users of English as a second/other language." This criterion is relevant in the light of the outcome of the fieldwork, especially the lack of feedback and the poor consciousness about the importance of grammar in the EFL writing class detected through the questionnaires. The grammatical errors committed by the students in concordance with all the gathered data confirm the assertion made by the aforementioned author.

Content: Topic sentence, supporting sentences, transition words

GRAPH 2

Content: Topic sentence, supporting sentences, transition words

Author: De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín
Source: EFL writing test

33
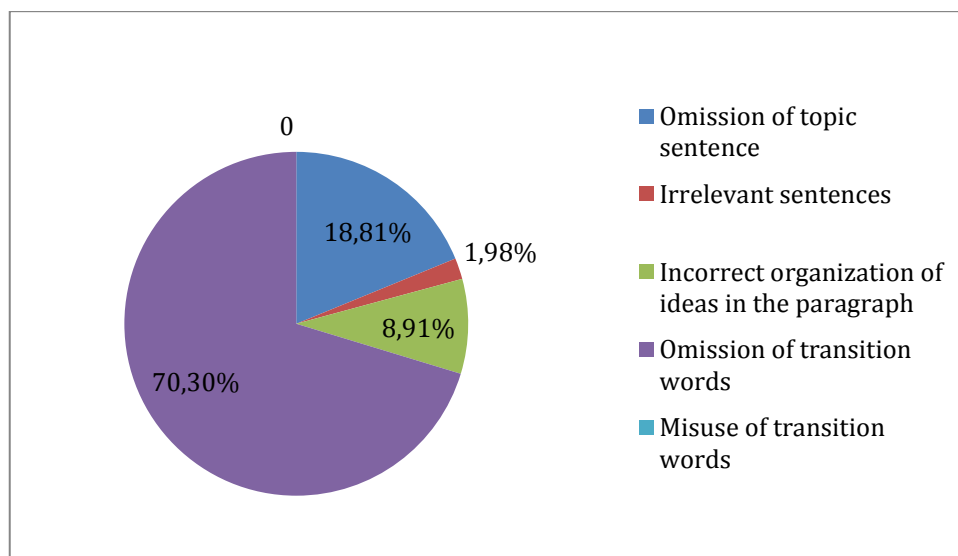
There is unanimity among authors concerning the fact that coherence is the element of writing that provides a sense of connection between the ideas displayed through a piece of writing (Canale, 2013; Dascalu, 2014; McDonald et al., 2016). Likewise, there is agreement regarding cohesion as the element that allows the text to flow efficiently from one idea to another (Canale, 2013; Marsen, 2013). The same way, there is enough theory suggesting that unity is the element that keeps the text oriented towards a central idea (Winkler et al., 2012; Lepionka, 2008). Usually, these three principles can be materialized in concrete terms through a good topic sentence, pertinent supporting sentences, effective transition words, and an overall careful organization of the paragraphs. This part of writing is comprised in the variable *Content*, which has been considered for this project in order to analyze the most frequent errors that take place among EFL students from public high schools in Ecuador. The following lines are dedicated to the analysis of the results displayed in Graph 2.

The most frequent content error detected is the omission of transition words. This error has a visible significance in the context of the whole variable with a percentage that is more than 70% out of the total number of errors of this kind. In most of the cases, the analyzed paragraphs contain basic and independent ideas. Besides, they are formed through simple structures. In consequence, most of the pieces avoid the use of transition words. The following is an excerpt from a paragraph written by one of the students that participated in this study:

> My favorite singer is Justin Bieber. He is handsome and I like his music. He is tall and your eyes are brown. His hair is black your parents are Patty Mallete and CrisBieber. Justin have 22^t years old your birthday is on february 24. He is live in Canada. Your favorite hobby is sing.

The following is a style correction of the paragraph including transition expressions. Some changes have been made; nonetheless, the essence of the text has been kept:

> Justin Bieber is my favorite singer for two reasons. First, he is handsome. He is tall and his eyes are brown. Second, I like his music. His favorite activity is singing. In fact, I like Justin so much that I know everything about him. For example, I know that his parents are Patty Mallete and CrisBieber, that he is 22years old and his birthday is on February 24th.

In the style correction displayed above, a controlling idea has been incorporated to the topic sentence. This simple improvement has allowed the presentation of ideas in a more organized way, benefiting from transition expressions such as "First", "Second", "In fact" and "For example." In general, this type of content error does not affect the comprehension of the message in a significant manner because, if the sentences are clear and complete, it is possible to understand what the writer tries to convey. However, the lack of appropriate transitions makes the comprehension of the message more difficult and affects the coherence of the text.

The second most frequent content error is the omission of topic sentences. Noticeably less frequent than the first one in the rank, this type represents almost 20% of the total number of errors detected within this variable. Therefore, it is important and representative for the purpose of this analysis. One example is a text in which the student writes "Janis Joplin" to start developing his paragraph. It is possible to infer that the writer confuses a title with a topic sentence, omitting the latter and substituting it by inserting just the name of his favorite singer. "My favorite singer is Janis Joplin" or "Janis Joplin is my favorite singer for several reasons" qualify as topic sentences because they convey complete ideas and lead the reader to identify the

main point of the paragraph. The lack of a topic sentence might not affect the comprehension of the message in a severe way, especially if there are elements in the text that help the reader to infer the main idea, but definitely, it affects its unity, misleading the reader and altering the orientation of the text.

The third most frequent content error is the incorrect organization of ideas in the paragraph. In the context of the whole group of errors detected, it registers a low level of representativeness. In order to exemplify this kind of error, an entire paragraph, from the ones written by the students who participated in this study, is reproduced through the following lines:

Reik in the beautiful music there sentimth in the adolescent. The sentimth of music grape the Reik! There singer is tall, a music the caracter. Twitter the happy in the music, singer, actories, very beutiful in the city the parents, children,

The presence of many ideas is detected in the text. The writer alludes to the beauty of the music, its target and the feelings that it produces. She also tries to describe the vocalist and writes about some characteristics of the members of the band. Spelling errors aside, the organization of the ideas is presented in such a convoluted and careless manner that the comprehension of the message is definitely affected. The paragraph requires several readings in order to be barely understood. In fact, the paragraph suffers from other errors that together worsen the problem that it represents for the reader. Through the following lines an alternative corrected text is presented:

Reik is my favorite band because its music is beautiful and shows the feelings of the teenagers through songs. First, I think that Reik's music is beautiful because the melodies are pleasant and romantic. I feel good when I listen this music. Additionally, I

think that Reik shows the feelings of the teenagers because the songs are about love and

the things that happen to young people. The vocalist of the band is tall and shows

character when he sings. In their Twitter account, the members are happy, they sing and

act, and are admired by children and their parents.

With the inclusion of a topic sentence the text seems more organized. In the correction

process some changes were made in order to connect the ideas with the main topic of the piece.

In the original paragraph there are many ideas expressed in a disorganized manner. In the

corrected version the ideas are conveyed following an order that takes into account the purpose

of the text. Therefore, this second version is easier to comprehend and, formally, respects the

rhetorical principles of coherence, cohesion and unity.

The fourth position in the rank of content errors is occupied by the one catalogued as

irrelevant sentences. The percentage of occurrence of this error is low, so it is not representative

in the context of the whole group. An example of this type of error can be found in the following

group of sentences: "My favorite singer Katy Perry is perfect, beautiful. Beyonce is a pop singer.

I like Let it Go and Maley Cruz." The student starts stating that her favorite singer is Katy Perry,

but later introduces irrelevant sentences that affect the content of the paragraph by randomly

referring to artists and a song that are completely unrelated to what she stated from the beginning.

The irrelevant material within the text affects the comprehension in the sense that it is difficult to

understand who actually is the favorite singer of the student. In this case, the irrelevant sentences

not only have a negative effect in the style of the writing, but also make the message unclear.

After discussing each one of the types of errors detected within the variable *Content*, it is

necessary to analyze and discuss the information obtained through the questionnaires

administered for this project. Concerning the frequency of their own content errors, the responses

of the surveyed students, with their respective percentages, are: often (41.11%), sometimes (32.22%), rarely (13.33%), always (8.88%) and never (4.44%). According to this information, most students know that content errors are often committed, which agrees with the frequency detected in the tests. English teachers expressed their opinion too. Three out of the five teachers who participated in the questionnaire consider that students sometimes commit these types of errors, while one says that always, and one that often. With 101 content errors identified from the samples, it seems that the perception of the students is more accurate than the one sustained by the teachers, being often the most approximate frequency adverb to describe the amount of errors committed within this variable.

When identifying the origin of their content errors, students graded and ranked a group of several reasons using a scale from 1 (least important) to 7 (most important). According to them the most important reason, with an average score of 4.17 out of 7, is that they do not consider that content errors have any impact in the development of their writing skill. The second most important reason, with an average score of 4.13 out of 7, is that the teacher does not highlight or correct these types of errors in their pieces of writing. Finally, the third most important reason according to the students, with an average score of 4.05, is that they forget to include the elements of content (topic sentence, supporting sentences, transition words) when they write.

Following a similar procedure, English teachers responded the same question. With an average score of 6.20 out of 7, they find that the most important reason is that teachers do not highlight or correct the content errors of the students in their pieces of writing. Then, two reasons share the second position according to teachers. With an average score of 5.60 out of 7, they consider that the concept and role of elements in writing such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, organization of ideas, and use of transition words are not explained in class, as well as they think that the correct use of these elements do not have any impact on the development of

the writing skill of their students.

These results show the shared notion among teachers and students that constructing topic sentences and supporting sentences, organizing ideas and using transition words do not have relevance for the development of the skill of writing in English. Both, teachers and students, also agree that the lack of correction and highlighting of content errors is another important reason that motivates their occurrence. Finally, opinions differ concerning other reasons. On one hand, teachers think that the elements of content are not explained in class. On the other, students perceive that they commit content errors because they forget to use elements such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, among others. At this point, it is important to reinforce the idea that all the reasons perceived by teachers and students must be taken into consideration because they all might have an impact in the phenomenon.

To conclude, there are some theoretical elements related to content errors that must be considered. According to Shiyab and Halimi (2015, p. 6), "While cohesion is about the unity of the text created by the use of linguistic devices, coherence is about whether or not such unity makes sense." Likewise, Lepionka (2008, p. 118) explains the bond between quality writing and the elements of content, and clearly states: "All the sentences in a paragraph relate to the point set out in the paragraph's topic sentence or thesis statement. In prose, irrelevancies, tangential remarks (...) and brainstorming on the page can all compromise unity." Consequently, there is enough academic support that highlights the importance of producing texts with coherence, cohesion and unity through the observance of elements such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, transition words and an adequate organization of ideas. As we have evidenced through the analysis of the information obtained, the lack of content elements of writing leads to texts in which sentences do not make sense and messages are difficult to understand.

Mechanical: Lack of punctuation, incorrect punctuation, spelling mistakes, capitalization

GRAPH 3

Mechanical: Lack of punctuation
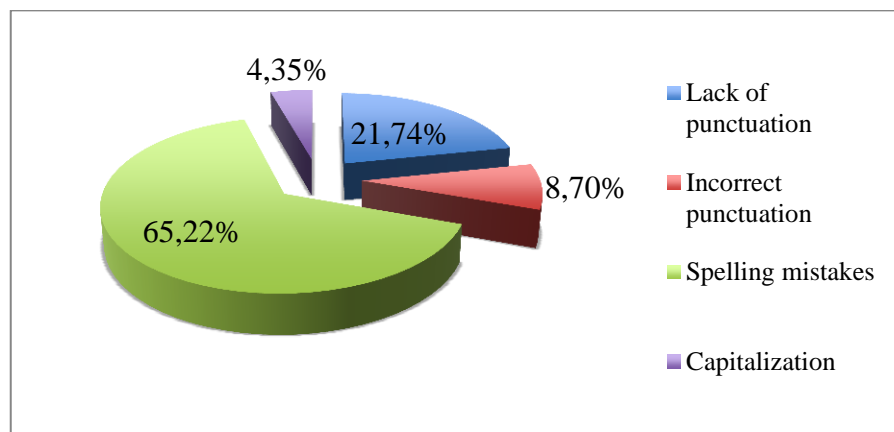
Author: De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín
Source: EFL writing test

According to Wingersky et al. (2009), writing is a process and, as such, comprises several steps that imply progression. In several of the steps involved in this process the student must consider the mechanical aspects of writing. However, it is in the phase of editing in which major corrections and improvements are made in order to agree with the rules of punctuation, spelling and capitalization. Considering mechanical aspects is important because errors in punctuation and spelling can change the sense of a expression or the meaning of a word. Besides, they provide a sense of formal correctness to the text. Due to its importance, these errors have been considered for this project in order to analyze their frequency among EFL students from public high schools in Ecuador. Further explanation about the results displayed in Graph 3 is provided below.

The most frequent mechanical error detected is the one categorized as spelling mistakes. More than half of the cases within this variable correspond to errors regarding spelling, which makes it the most representative type in this category. An example of this type of error occurs in

the following sentence extracted from a text written by one of the students who participated in this study: "This person is talt." The student wants to express that her favorite singer is "tall", but the incorrect spelling makes the message unclear. The corrected version of the sentence is "This person is tall." Besides this example, there are many cases detected of spelling mistakes associated to adjectives. Other words like "handsome", "beautiful" and "short" are written with spelling errors through the different texts analyzed for this project. In most cases, these errors affect the comprehension of the message because they make the writing ambiguous or difficult to understand.

The second most frequent mechanical error is the lack of punctuation. It is moderately representative within the group of mechanical errors detected in the texts written by the students who participated in this study. The following is an example of a text in which this type of error takes place:

My favorite singer is Jean Carlos Canela is white sings baladas have 27 years old have a baby and his name is Nicolas Canela Spino.

In the example, the lack of punctuation is evident. A reader can mentally fill the blanks to understand the sense of the text. However, the lack of punctuation makes this task difficult. A corrected version is proposed through the following lines:

My favorite singer is Jean Carlos Canela. He is 27 years old, he is white and sings romantic songs. He has a baby named Nicolas Canela Spino.

The corrected version of the paragraph includes periods and a comma to separate ideas. As

a result, the writing seems more organized and is easier to read.

The third most frequent mechanical error is incorrect punctuation. In the context of the whole group of errors detected, it registers a low level of representativeness. An example of this type of error is the paragraph reproduced below:

The name of my favorite singer is David, he like me because is a big singer and a big person, his artistic name is MC-Davo and is very famous.

In the example, the student uses commas to separate the sentences that are part of the paragraph. This is incorrect because the punctuation mark required to end of an idea that is complete and constitutes a sentence is the period, not the comma. The following lines are devoted to a corrected version of the text, which improves not only punctuation, but also grammatical details:

The name of my favorite singer is David. I like him because he is a big singer and a big person. His artistic name is MC-Davo. He is very famous.

The corrected text evidences a correct use of the punctuation marks. Therefore, the pauses are adequate and independent ideas are appropriately separated with periods that mark the ending of each one of the sentences of the paragraph.

The fourth position in the rank of mechanical errors corresponds to mistakes related to capitalization. The percentage of occurrence of this error is very low, so it is not representative in the context all the samples examined. Omission of capital letters can be observed in these two sentences: "I like tory lanez. his songs are incredible." In the first sentence, the student does not

use capital letters to write the name of the artist. This is incorrect because in English, as well as in Spanish, capital letters are required to refer to people by their names. In the second, the student starts the sentence omitting the use of the capital letter. This is incorrect because in English, like in Spanish, sentences must start with capitals. The correct form of these sentences is: "I like Tory Lanez. His songs are incredible." The errors of this sort, identified in the pieces written by the students who participated in the project, do not affect the comprehension of the message. Certainly, these errors have an impact on the writing style, but the reader can understand the message in spite of them.

Analyzed all the mechanical errors, it is the appropriate instance to discuss their frequency. With respect to their own mechanical errors, the responses of the students, and their respective percentages, are: often (27.78%), sometimes (27.78%), rarely (23.33%), always (13.33%) and never (7.78%). Considering the data gathered, most students have a perception that places them in the middle of the scale. In consequence, most of them think that they commit mechanical mistakes with a frequency that goes from sometimes to often, with an important portion of the population indicating that they rarely commit them. English teachers who participated in the study agree with the majority of students. Three out of the five participants think that students often commit these types of errors, while the other two believe that they commit them sometimes. With a total of 46 mechanical errors detected among the whole population, it seems highly probable that, in the scale used for this study, the frequency is between sometimes and often.

In order to identify the origin of their mechanical errors, students graded and ranked a group of several reasons using a scale from 1 (least important) to 7 (most important). According to them the most important reason, with an average score of 4.35 out of 7, is that they perceive that their teacher does not highlight or correct these types of errors in the pieces of writing of the students. The second most important reason, with an average score of 4.13 out of 7, is that the

importance of elements such as punctuation, capital letters, and spelling is not explained in the class. Finally, the third most important reason according to the students, with an average score of 3.95, is that there are not writing activities related to mechanical aspects in the class.

English teachers responded the same question ranking their opinions in the same scale in order to clarify the reasons that cause the mechanical errors committed by EFL writing learners. With an average score of 6.80 out of 7, they admit that the most important reason is that elements in writing such as punctuation, capital letters, and spelling are not explained in the class. Then, the second most important reason, with an average score of 5.60 out of 7, is that they do not highlight or correct these types of errors in the pieces of writing of their students. Finally, the third most important reason according to the surveyed teachers, with an average score of 3.8 out of 7, is that there are not writing activities related to the practice of mechanical aspects in class.

The results obtained show that teachers and students agree on their perceptions regarding the reasons behind mechanical errors in EFL writing. Both, learners and teachers, are conscious about the need of more explanation and corrective feedback regarding mechanical aspects of writing. Likewise, their opinions suggest that there is a lack of adequate activities aimed to practice and reinforce the mechanical elements of writing. Since there is consensus in the perception of the problem, it is relatively easier to draw a path in order to solve it.

Danilovic (2010, p. 98) emphasizes on the need of more than mere foreign language exposure to tackle mechanical errors in the EFL class. This author says: "Effective spelling instruction could offer facilitation and guidance needed for the mastery of hard spots, as well as a variety of strategies for the development of a spelling conscience." Likewise, Craig (2013, p. 103) refers to the importance of mechanical aspects of writing: "The immediate response to a student draft is to (…) address sentence-level errors of syntax, punctuation, usage, and spelling." Nonetheless, this author recommends to avoid focusing all the feedback in mechanical errors

because other aspects might be neglected.

The most frequent error in EFL writing

GRAPH 4

The most frequent error in EFL
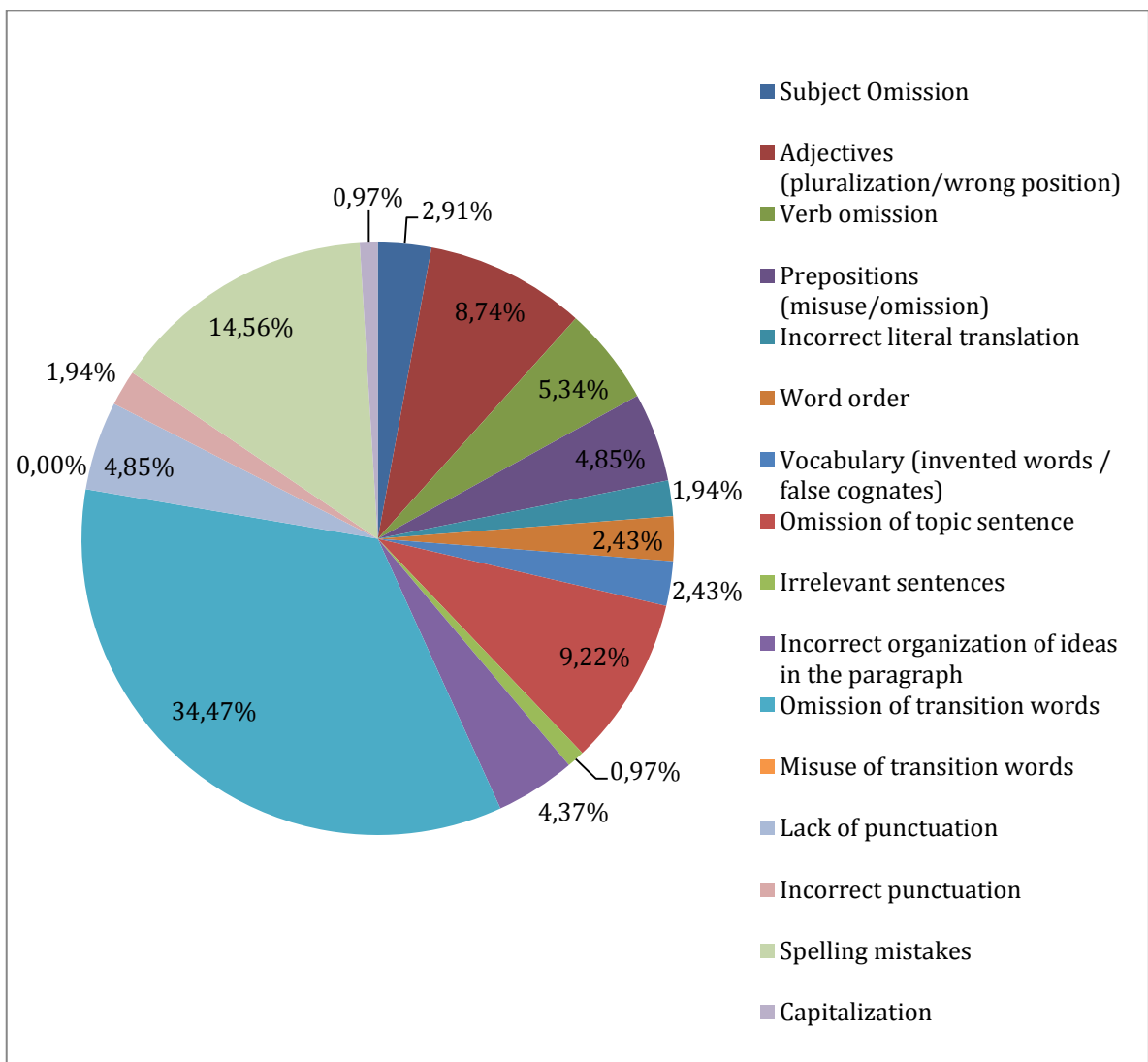
Author: De Angelis Soriano Luigi Efraín
Source: EFL writing test

According to the information collected during the research process, the most frequent error in EFL writing is the omission of transition words. This mistake represents 34.47% of the total percentage of errors detected along the analysis of the three variables considered for this study. In order of frequency, the second and third positions are occupied by spelling mistakes and omission of topic sentence, respectively. However, both represent considerably lower percentages than the omission of transition words.

In order to analyze this result, it is appropriate to reveal the outcome of the questionnaire conducted among students; particularly, the responses to the questions aimed to EFL writing in general. First, 55.56% of the respondents recognize that they do not like writing in English. One of the students who responded in this negative sense stated: "It is difficult." Anyway, 92.22% of the surveyed students believe it is important to learn how to write well in English. One of the participants mentioned: "For a good job, it is necessary to know English and how to write it well." Then, 57.77% of the surveyed population considers that the errors associated with EFL writing actually have an impact on the communication of the message. Finally, a 77.77% out of the total of surveyed students assures that they apply the corrections provided by their English teacher.

Correspondingly, English teachers answered similar questions. Three of the five surveyed teachers believe that students like to write in English. Then, the five teachers consider that it is important for their students to write accurately. Regarding this aspect, one of the teachers said: "Yes, because it is better for their learning, and vocabulary, and later they can get a job." Moreover, four out of the five teachers who participated in this study think that students write their texts based on the feedback included in previous writing tasks. Finally, the five teachers assure that they give feedback to their students when they make writing errors.

Also, other sections from the questionnaire showcase relevant information that contributes

to a better understanding of the problem in general. Responding one of the questions from the questionnaire, most students, 35% out of the total, say that sometimes teachers ask them to do writing activities in class. On the contrary, most teachers, four out of five, respond the same question by saying that they often ask students to develop this kind of activities. Besides, 64.44% out of the total number of students, reveal that their EFL writing level is mediocre. In the light of the errors detected in the paragraphs written by the students who participated in this research project, it seems that their self-perception is accurate and they need to increase their level. However, the perception of teachers seems more positive, and less realistic, in the sense that they consider that the level of EFL writing among their students is intermediate.

The data gathered through the aforementioned instruments, provides elements for the analysis of the most frequent error in EFL writing. In general terms, both teachers and students show an appropriate level of self-consciousness regarding the importance of EFL writing as a tool and as an element for the comprehension of the message. Likewise, they both recognize the merit of the correction of errors in class. However, their differing opinions are the ones that suggest a context for the problem that can lead to determine its causes.

There are several aspects in which perceptions slightly differ. First, a majority of students state that they dislike writing, while a majority of teachers believe they like doing this activity. If instructors think that learners are actually enjoying the activities and contents of the class, when this is not true, this could lead to the consolidation of practices that do not motivate students. Second, most teachers consider that they often ask students to do EFL writing activities in the class, while students think that this happens sometimes, not often. This discrepancy suggests that instructors might consider that the amount of classwork they prepare and develop in the class is enough, while students perceive that they need to develop EFL writing activities with more frequency. Finally, most students consider that their EFL writing level is mediocre, while most

teachers categorize them in an intermediate level. This differing opinion deserves attention because it might suggest that instructors prepare their lessons based on a wrong perception regarding the real abilities of the learners.

Taking in consideration what the data collected suggests in general, we can infer that part of it has a particular influence on the most frequent error in EFL writing: the omission of transition words. In this sense, the lack of enjoyment from students, the possible need of more activities in the class, and a confusion regarding the actual EFL writing level of learners are indications of the problem. For example, one student, like many others, says that writing in English for her "Is confusing and difficult." This claim is perfectly understandable, in the measure that, among other difficulties, using transitional expressions requires mastering specific vocabulary and understanding rhetorical principles such as coherence and cohesion. Thus, it is safe to assume that learners need to feel confident about their role as writers, as well as they need to practice as much as possible in an environment according to their actual English level in order to overcome the most frequent error detected in this study.

The criterion examined above mostly agrees with the theoretical development related to this topic. In this respect, DeCapua (2016, p. 285) explains:

> ... Learners need practice in understanding and using different transition words and phrases. This, again, is difficult given the relatively infrequent use of many of these transition words and phrases in spoken and informal written English. Repeated exposure and practice to formal texts will help learners become more aware of the use and subtleties of meaning of the transition words.

According to the aforementioned author, using transition words is intrinsically difficult due

to their lack of application in spoken and regular language. Consequently, DeCapua(2016) reinforces the need of constant practice. This criterion was already exposed in precedent lines, after analyzing the results provided by the general part of the questionnaire. Then, it is natural to infer that a possible lack of enough practice in class can be one of the main reasons behind the omission of transition words among the participants.

Additionally, it is necessary to remember that this type of error is part of the variable of *Content*. Therefore, it is pertinent to revise the perceptions of teachers and students related to this variable in order to connect ideas with the information shared through this section. In the questionnaires, a vast majority of students recognize that they often commit content mistakes, while most teachers consider that this happens sometimes. Strikingly, both teachers and students admit that they perceive that these errors are committed because elements of content do not have relevance for the development of the skill of writing in English. Lack of feedback regarding these errors is mentioned by both sides as a reason.

Finally, the data related to these perceptions supplements the results linked to the general questions and the idea posed by DeCapua (2016). Therefore, there are enough indications suggesting an interaction of a variety of reasons such as dislike from the part of the learner, lack of practice, absence of feedback, and indifference when it comes to integrating the different points of view with the findings regarding the omission of transition words as the most frequent error in EFL writing.

CONCLUSIONS

The error that has the highest percentage in the variable of grammar is the one categorized as adjectives: pluralization/wrong position. Its percentage of occurrence is 30.51%, which is the result of the analysis of 59 errors. Several written samples suggest that students tend to imitate the word order of their mother tongue, which could be confirmed after further research. The data indicates that possible reasons that intensify the problem are the lack of adequate feedback from teachers and the perception, among students, that grammatical aspects are difficult.

The error that has the highest percentage in the variable of content is the omission of transition words. Its percentage of occurrence is 70.30%, which is the result of examining 101 errors. Most paragraphs written by the students indicate that simplistic writing is the reason why transition words are omitted. This situation must be analyzed in the light of the answers to the questionnaires, which suggest that both teachers and students are not aware of the impact of the elements of content in the written product, and there is a lack of corrective feedback in the class.

The highest percentage registered in the variable of mechanical errors is the one categorized as spelling mistakes. Its percentage of occurrence is 65.22%, resulting from the study of 46 errors. Most of the errors detected are related to adjectives; this suggests that there is a particular struggle with the vocabulary that concerns to this part of the speech. The answers to the questions asked to teachers and students indicate that the lack of corrective feedback, practice and explanations in the class are among the factors that increase the magnitude of the problem.

The most frequent error observed in the texts written by the students, combining the three variables considered, is the omission of transition words. This single type of error represents 34.47% of the 206 EFL writing mistakes detected. The analyzed paragraphs evidence that most students do not pay special attention to the cohesion and coherence of their texts, they just write

their ideas in separate sentences. Therefore, they do not use transition words in the writing that they produce. As it was already mentioned, lack of feedback and the perception that content errors are not relevant may be among the main causes of this phenomenon.

The perception of errors in EFL writing among students involves two aspects. Regarding frequency, most learners perceive that errors occur in this manner: grammar (sometimes), content (often), and mechanical (either sometimes or often). Regarding the causes, the majority attribute them to the difficulty of English grammar, for the grammatical errors; that they do not consider they have any impact, for the content errors; and, lack of correction, for the mechanical errors.

The perception of errors in EFL writing among teachers involves two aspects too. Concerning frequency, most instructors perceive that errors occur in this manner: grammar (always), content (sometimes), and mechanical (often). Regarding the causes, the majority attributes them to lack of correction or highlighting, for grammatical errors and content errors; and, that elements of mechanics in writing are not explained in the class, for mechanical errors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding grammatical errors, it is recommended to do further bibliographical research in order to analyze how the mother tongue, or any other factor, is affecting the way in which learners write the adjectives. This would be the first step of a relatively long way towards the discovery of concrete solutions aimed to decrease the high occurrence of errors such as the pluralization/wrong position of adjectives.

As for content errors, it is strongly suggested to design a specific plan in order to study in a deeper way and give more emphasis to the rhetorical principles of coherence, cohesion and unity. This would be a preliminary stage aimed to raise consciousness among teachers and students about the importance of transition words and their role in the context of the EFL writing class.

Concerning mechanical errors, it is advised to do further research in the classroom identifying if there are patterns repeated when students commit spelling mistakes. An idea in this sense is to pay attention to parts of the speech that tend to be more problematic than others, interference of the mother tongue of the students, and cases in which spelling errors appear steadily in spite of permanent corrective feedback.

Regarding the most frequent error observed in the texts written by the students, it is recommendable to emphasize on the ways in which the omission of transition words affects the clarity and flow of the message. This can be done through the presentation of cases in which the lack of transitional expressions is evident. This can be seen as a next step, following the second suggestion of this section, in order to invite students to participate actively in the process.

In the matter of how students perceive their own errors, it is advisable to do further research in the classroom and study the correlation between the reasons perceived by the students and the frequency through variables with the actual results of the tests. If the reasons perceived by

students can be confirmed, this could be a solid start to design lesson plans aimed to straightforwardly tackle the flaws that are provoking the growing proportion of errors.

      With respect to how teachers perceive the errors of their students, it is a suggestion to organize working sessions. During these working sessions, it is recommendable to facilitate a space of dialogue in which teachers can expand their thoughts about the frequency and reasons behind the errors in EFL writing, as well as they can receive feedback based on the perceptions of their students. This could lead to major improvements in planning and class management.

REFERENCES

Agustín, M. (2011). *Lexical errors and accuracy in foreign language writing*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., Vijay, T., & Roscoe, A. (2014). *Methodologies for effective writing instruction in EFL and ESL classrooms*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Bain Butler, D. (2015). *The other side of plagiarism: using research to develop EFL/ESL scholarly writers*. Boston, MA: Walter De Gruyter.

Benjamin, A., &Golub, B. (2016). *Infusing grammar into the writer's workshop*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bhatnagar, N., &Bhatnagar, M. (2012). *Effective communication and soft skills: strategies for success*. Noida, India: Dorling Kindersley.

Burnett, C., & Myers, J. (2004). *Teaching English 3-11: the essential guide*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Cabrera, P., González, P., Ochoa, C., Quiñónez, A., Castillo, L., Solano, L., Espinosa, F., & Arias, M. (2014). Spanish interference in EFL writing skills: a case of Ecuadorian senior high schools. *English Language Teaching, 7*(7), 40-48. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1076023.pdf

Canale, M. (2013). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In Richards, J., & Schmidt, R. (Eds.), *Language and communication*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Correa, R., Martínez, M., Molina, M., Silva, J., and Torres, M. (2013). The impact of explicit feedback on EFL high school students engaged in writing tasks. *PROFILE, 15*(2), 149-163. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1053720.pdf

Craig, J. (2013). *Integrating strategies in EFL/ESL university contexts: a writing across-the-curriculum approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Danilovic, J. (2010). An insight into Serbian EFL learners' difficulties with spelling at tertiary level: a pilot study. In Rata, G. (Ed.), *Language education today: between theory and practice* (pp. 88-100). Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Dascalu, M. (2014). *Analyzing discourse and text complexity for learning and collaborating*. New York, NY: Springer.

DeCapua, A. (2016). *Grammar for teachers: a guide to American English for native and non native speakers* (2nded). New York, NY: Springer.

Del Longo, S., &Cisotto, L. (2014). Writing to argue: writing as a tool for oral and written argumentation. In Klein, P., Boscolo, P., Kirkpatrick, L., &Gelati, C. (Eds.), *Writing as*

a learning activity (pp. 15-43). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

DeMichele, M. (2015). Improv and ink: Increasing individual writing fluency with collaborative improv. *International Journal of Education & the Arts, 16*(10). Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1069848.pdf

Feng-Checkett, G., &Checkett, L. (2013). *The write start: sentences to paragraphs with professional and student readings* (5thed). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Ferris, D. (2016). Promoting grammar and language development in the writing class: why, what, how, and when. In Hinkel, E. (Ed.), *Teaching English grammar to speakers of other languages* (pp. 222-245). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ferris, D. (2011). *Treatment of error in second language student writing* (2nded). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Grabe, W. (2001). Notes Toward a Theory of Second Language Writing. In Silva, T., & Matsuda, P. (Eds.), *On Second Language Writing*. (pp. 39-58). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Greenbaum, S., & Nelson, G. (2013). *An introduction to English grammar* (3rded). New York, NY: Routledge.

Gulznar, M., Jilani, S., & Choudhary, Z. (2013). Constructive feedback: an effective constituent

for eradicating impediments in writing skills. *English Language Teaching, 6*(8),21-32. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1077089.pdf

Harvey, M. (2003). *The nuts and bolts of college writing*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Herder, S. & Clements, P. (2012). Extensive writing: a fluency-first approach to EFL writing. In Muller, T., Herder, S., Adamson, J., & Shigeo Brown, P. (Eds.), *Innovating EFL teaching in Asia* (pp. 232-244). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hodson, P., & Jones, D. (2012). *Teaching children to write: the process approach to writing for literacy* (2nded). New York, NY: Routledge.

James, C. (2013). *Errors in language learning and use: exploring error analysis*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Johnson, D. (2014). *Reading, writing, and literacy 2.0: teaching with online texts, tools and resources, K-8.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Johnston, J. (2011). A passion about writing. In Lynch, D., & Knight, B. (Eds.), *Issues in contemporary teaching volume 2* (pp. 43-64). Brisbane, Australia: AACLMP Press.

Lee, I. (2016). EFL writing in schools. In Manchón, R. and Matsuda, P. (Eds.), *Handbook of Second and Foreign Language Writing* (pp. 113-140). Berlin, Germany: Walter de

Gruyter.

Lepionka, M. (2008). *Writing and developing your college textbook* (2nded). Gloucester, MA: Atlantic Path Publishing.

Li, M., & Dell-Jones, J. (2014). Innovative Wiki Ways: Engaging Students in Collaborative Writing Processes. In Li, S., & Swanson, P. (Eds.), *Engaging language learners through technology integration: theory, applications and outcomes* (pp. 210-236). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Lindner, M. (2005).*English language and composition*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: The Career Press.

Marsen, S. (2013). *Professional writing* (3rded). New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan.

Martin, L. (2009). *Strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwell Press.

McDonald, S., Salomone, W., Gutiérrez, S., &Japtok, M. (2016). *The writer's response: a reader's based approach to writing* (6thed). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Moqimipour, K., &Shahrokhi, M. (2015). The impact of text genre on Iranian intermediate EFL students' writing errors: an error analysis perspective*, International Education Studies, 8*(3), 122-137. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1060921.pdf

Muir, P., &Xu, Z. (2011). Exploring pragmatic failure into the writing of young EFL learners: a critical analysis. *English Language Teaching, 4*(4), 254-261. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081190.pdf

Nowacek, R. (2011). *Agents of integration: understanding transfer as a rhetorical act*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Pawlak, M. (2014). *Error correction in the foreign language classroom: reconsidering the issues*. New York, NY: Springer

Phuket, P., & Othman, N. (2015). Understanding EFL students' errors in writing. *Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(32), 99-106. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083531.pdf

Scarry, S., & Scarry, J. (2014). *The writer's workplace with readings* (8[th]ed). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Silva, T. (2016). An overview of the infrastructure L2W. In Manchón, R. and Matsuda, P. (Eds.), *Handbook of Second and Foreign Language Writing* (pp. 19-35). Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.

Snow, M., & Evans, N. (2013). *Principles and practices for response in second language writing: developing self-regulated learners*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Walter, J. (2016). *Building writing skills: the hands-on way*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Wilson, P., & Ferster Glazier, T. (2013). *The least you should know about English: writing skills* (11[th]ed). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Wingersky, J., Boerner, J., & Holguin-Balogh, D. (2009). *Integrating reading, writing and grammar skills* (6[th]ed). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Winkler, A., & Metherell, J. (2012). *Writing the research paper: a handbook* (8[th]ed). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Wu, S. (2016). *The use of L1 cognitive resources in L2 reading by Chinese EFL learners*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Zhan, H. (2015). Frequent errors in Chinese EFL learners' topic-based writings. *English Language Teaching, 8*(5), 72-81. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1075251.pdf

ANNEXES

8. Anexos

El presente material ha sido reproducido con fines netamente didácticos, cuyo objetivo es brindar al estudiante mayores elementos de juicio para la comprensión de la materia, por lo tanto no tiene fin comercial.

ANNEX 1

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

TRABAJO ESCRITO

Género: Femenino (   )   Masculino (   )

OBJETIVO: Obtener información sobre el tipo de errores que se cometen en la escritura en inglés de un párrafo.

INSTRUCCIÓN: Escriba un párrafo sobre el tema: "My favorite singer"

ESTRATEGIA: El párrafo debe contener un mínimo de 100 a 150 palabras en un tiempo de 20 a 25 minutos. Incluya la información necesaria para dar a conocer cuál es su cantante favorito, las razones, y las características de este/esta.

My favorite singer

GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN

La Universidad Católica de Loja

ANNEX 2

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Género: Masculino ( ) Femenino ( )

1. ¿Le gusta escribir en inglés?
Sí ( ) No ( )

Por qué?

_____

_____

2. ¿Considera importante aprender a escribir correctamente en inglés?
Sí ( ) No ( )

Por qué?

_____

_____

3. ¿Con qué frecuencia desarrolla Ud. actividades de escritura en inglés en el aula?
Siempre ( ) Frecuentemente ( ) A veces ( ) Rara vez ( ) Nunca ( )

4. ¿Considera que su nivel de escribir en inglés es....?
Muy bueno ( ) Bueno ( ) Regular ( ) Malo ( )

¿Por qué?

_____

_____

5. ¿Cree que los errores que se cometen al escribir inciden para que los demás comprendan el mensaje de su texto escrito?
Sí ( ) No ( )

¿Por qué?

_____

6. Cuando Ud. escribe sobre un tema nuevo ¿Aplica las correcciones que hizo su profesor en sus escritos anteriores?

Sí (   )   No (   )

¿Por qué?

_____

_____

7. Marque con una X la frecuencia con la que Ud. comete errores gramaticales cuando escribe en inglés:

TIPO DE ERROR	SIEMPRE	FRECUENTE MENTE	A VECES	RARA VEZ	NUNCA
GRAMATICALES (omisión de sujeto, pluralización de adjetivos, incorrecto uso u omisión de preposiciones, traducción incorrecta, palabras inventadas, etc.)					

8. Enumere del 1 al 6 las razones por las que Ud. comete errores de gramática cuando escribe en inglés? Siendo 1 la menos importante y 6 la más importante.

No se presentan actividades de escritura para aplicar los temas gramaticales del inglés aprendidos en clase.   (   )

Su profesor no señala los errores gramaticales que Ud. ha comete cuando escribe en inglés.   (   )

Su profesor no explica los errores gramaticales cometidos en su escrito.   (   )

Considera que la gramática no es importante para escribir correctamente en inglés   (   )

Le resulta difícil aplicar la gramática inglesa cuando escribe sobre un tema.   (   )

Las explicaciones gramaticales de su profesor no son fáciles de comprender.   (   )

Otra (especifique): _____

9. Marque con una X la frecuencia con la que Ud. comete errores de contenido cuando escribe en inglés:

TIPO DE ERROR	SIEMPRE	FRECUENTE MENTE	A VECES	RARA VEZ	NUNCA
ERRORES DE CONTENIDO (Relacionados con: omisión de la oración principal, oración principal mal planteada, oraciones secundarias que no se relacionan con la oración principal, oraciones mal ordenadas, oraciones mal conectadas, oraciones sin conexión entre sí.)					

64

10. Enumere del 1 al 7 las razones por las que Ud. comete errores de contenido cuando escribe en Inglés? Siendo 1 la menos Importante y 7 la más Importante.

Su profesor de inglés no explica sobre la función de la oración principal, oraciones secundarias, organización de ideas, conexión y secuencia de ideas en el proceso de escritura   (   )

No hay práctica sobre el uso de los elementos mencionados durante las actividades de escritura en la clase de inglés.   (   )

Son difíciles de aplicar los elementos de contenido al momento de escribir.   (   )

Olvida aplicarlos cuando escribe sobre un tema.   (   )

Son elementos que tampoco los aplica cuando escribe en español   (   )

Usted considera que los errores de contenido (pregunta anterior) NO influyen para que su escrito esté correctamente redactado.   (   )

Su profesor no corrige este tipo de errores en su escrito.   (   )

Otra (especifique): _____

11. Marque con una X la frecuencia con la que Ud. comete errores mecánicos cuando escribe en Inglés:

TIPO DE ERROR	SIEMPRE	FRECUENTE MENTE	A VECES	RARA VEZ	NUNCA
ERRORES MECÁNICOS (relacionados con: el incorrecto uso u omisión de signos de puntuación, uso incorrecto de mayúsculas, palabras mal escritas)					

12. Enumere del 1 al 7 las razones por las que Ud. comete errores mecánicos cuando escribe en Inglés? Siendo 1 la menos Importante y 7 la más Importante.

Su profesor no explica la importancia del uso de signos de puntuación, mayúsculas, palabras bien escritas, etc. en la redacción de un texto en inglés.   (   )

No hay práctica sobre el uso de los elementos antes mencionados en la escritura de un texto en inglés.   (   )

Le resulta indiferente el uso o no de los elementos mencionados anteriormente.   (   )

Son elementos que Ud. tampoco los aplica cuando escribe en español   (   )

Son difíciles de aplicar estos elementos al momento de escribir en inglés.   (   )

Olvida aplicarlos cuando escribe sobre un tema en inglés.   (   )

Su profesor no corrige este tipo de errores en su escrito.   (   )

Otra (especifique): _____

¡Gracias por su colaboración!

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLES

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear teacher,

The aim of this brief questionnaire is to obtain information concerning your opinion about your students' errors in EFL writing skill.
The following information will only be used for academic/research purposes. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible based on the following questions:

Gender: Male ( )   Female ( )

1. In your opinion, do your students like to write in English?

        Yes ( )   No ( )

Why?

_____

_____

2. According to your opinion, is it important for your students to write in English accurately?

        Yes ( )   No ( )

Why?

_____

_____

3. How often do you ask your students to do writing activities in class?

        Always   ( )   Often ( )   Sometimes   ( )   Rarely ( )   Never   ( )

4. Which is your students' writing level?

        Advanced   ( )   Intermediate ( )   Beginner   ( )

Why?

_____

66

5. Do your students write a piece of writing based on the feedback that you have included in their previous writing tasks?

Yes ( )   No ( )

Why?

_____

_____

6. Do you give feedback to your students when they make writing errors?

Yes ( )   No ( )

Why?

_____

_____

7. How often do you find grammar errors in your students' piece of writing?

TYPE OF ERROR	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
GRAMMAR ERRORS (subject omission, adjectives: pluralization/ wrong position, verb omission, prepositions: misuse/ omission, incorrect literal translation, word order, vocabulary: invented words / false cognates, etc.)					

8. Number from 1 to 6 the causes why your students make grammar errors when they write in English. (1= the least important, 6= the most important).

Grammar contents are not explained in writing activities   ( )
You do not highlight your students' grammar errors in their piece of writing   ( )
You do not include feedback in your students' writing activities   ( )
Grammar is not considered by your students as an important element to write accurately ( )
Learning grammar is difficult for your students   ( )
Your students do not understand your grammar explanation   ( )
Others (Which one?): _____

9. How often do you find content errors in your students' piece of writing?

TYPE OF ERROR	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
CONTENT ERRORS: Omission of topic sentence, irrelevant sentences, incorrect organization of ideas in the paragraph, omission of transitions words, misuse of transitions words					

10. Number from 1 to 7 the causes why your students make content errors when they write in English. (1= the least important, 7= the most important).

The concept and role of elements in writing such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, organization of ideas, and use of transition words are not explained in class. ( )
There is not any writing activity, related to the practice of the aforementioned elements, to do in class. ( )
It is difficult for your students to identify and include these elements in a paragraph. ( )
Your students forget to include these elements when they write. ( )
These elements are not important for your students neither in Spanish nor in English ( )
The correct use of these elements do not have any impact on the development of their writing skill. ( )
You do not highlight or correct these type of errors in your students' piece of writing. ( )
Others (Which one?): _____

11. How often do you find mechanical errors in your students' piece of writing?

TYPE OF ERROR	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
MECHANICAL ERRORS: Lack of punctuation, Incorrect punctuation, Spelling mistakes, Capitalization					

12. Number from 1 to 7 the causes why your students make mechanical errors when they write in English. (1= the least important, 7= the most important).

The importance of elements in writing such as punctuation, capital letters, and spelling is not explained in class.( )
There is not any writing activity related to the practice of the aforementioned elements in class. ( )
The use of these elements is not important for your students when they write. ( )
These elements are not important for your students neither in Spanish nor in English ( )
It is difficult for your students to include these elements in a paragraph. ( )
Your students forget to include these elements when they write. ( )
You do not highlight or correct these type of error in your students' piece of writing. ( )
Others (Which one?): _____