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INGLÉS**

**Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill**

**TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

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2017

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El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: **Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skill**, realizado por **Moreira Zambrano Marilyn Giovanna**, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto, se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, septiembre de 2017

f) .....

## DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to Isabella and Emmanuel, my children, who inspire me to study and be a better person in order to help and support them in the future.

I also dedicate this work to my whole family, who has always been there for me giving me all their love and support. Thank you very much.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on Ecuadorian public high school students' errors in EFL writing skills. It seeks to provide an overview of the most common errors made by EFL students in the following areas: form of language, content, and mechanics. In addition, this study describes, analyzes, and interprets the results of errors made by EFL students in their English classes, as well as explaining the pertinent perceptions of the teachers and students regarding this topic. For the purpose of this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been employed. The quantitative method was used to determine the frequency of errors found in written samples and the qualitative method was used to analyze the perceptions of students and teachers about the reasons errors in writing have been made. The main instruments were questionnaires and worksheets for written samples, provided to eighty-one students and five teachers. The results obtained demonstrate that patterns of error are consistently found in the writing of EFL students and that there is a lack of writing practice in their pertinent English classes.

**KEY WORDS:** writing skills, grammar errors, EFL, EFL students.

## **RESUMEN**

Este estudio se centra en errores de estudiantes de secundaria pública ecuatoriana en habilidades de redacción escrita en inglés. Proporciona una visión general de errores más comunes cometidos por estudiantes en las siguientes áreas: forma de lenguaje, contenido y mecánicos. Además, describe, analiza e interpreta los resultados de errores cometidos por estudiantes en clases de inglés, así como explica las percepciones de profesores y estudiantes sobre este tema. Para los fines de este estudio, se han empleado métodos cuantitativos como cualitativos. El método cuantitativo se utilizó para determinar la frecuencia de errores encontrados en muestras escritas y el método cualitativo se utilizó para analizar las percepciones de estudiantes y profesores sobre las razones de estos errores en la escritura. Los instrumentos fueron cuestionarios y hojas de trabajo, proporcionadas a ochenta y un estudiantes y cinco maestros. Los resultados obtenidos demuestran que se encuentran patrones de errores constantes en la escritura de los estudiantes y que hay una falta de práctica de la escritura en sus clases de inglés.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** habilidades de escritura, errores de gramática, EFL, estudiantes de EFL

## INTRODUCTION

Writing skills play an important role as it contributes to improve communication skills; to make the thoughts of the writer clear; and to develop the creativity and beliefs of the writer. When learners perform writing activities, they use both sides of the brain at once. This skill deserves to be developed because through proficient writing, in all its forms, learners can properly communicate their ideas in English. Furthermore, writing is considered to be one of the most complex processes of communication as writers need to master a great amount of grammar rules, vocabulary, and they require the mastery to develop a well-written sample in any genre.

The aim of the present study is to investigate and analyze the errors of Ecuadorian students in EFL writing skills to provide an overview of the most common errors made by public high school students. The study will focus on the following areas: form of language, content, and mechanics. In order to achieve this goal, the following three questions have been used to guide this study which error has the highest percentage in each variable? Which is the most frequent error in the students' written texts? and the third is to establish how the errors in EFL writing are perceived by teachers and students.

Many studies about this research topic have been conducted around the world. One interesting study is the one developed by Mi-Young (2013), whose main purpose was to find the most frequent errors made by students when writing. The analysis has two categories: form-based and meaning-based errors in the English language. Form-based methodology encourages students to emphasize on the linguistic function of a word. Meaning-based methodology; on the other hand, intends to indicate the significance of a word through the use of objects and mental images. The most common errors found were related to the use of articles and grammar. The conclusion was that new methods for writing an essay are actually available for all writers around the world.

Another study is Faysal, Mulya, and Syamsul (2017), whose aim was to depict the most common errors made by high school students in Indonesia. The most common errors found were on selection, omission and addition in strategy taxonomy. Issues with linguistic word forms were articles, nonfinite verbs, verb tenses plurals and prepositions.

Finally, Liu (2013) researched syntactic errors in English essays that university students commit. Liu analyzed ninety essay samples and questionnaires. It was found out that errors in tense and voice were the most common. The errors tend to decrease depending on the task, and the errors were made due to differences between their mother tongues, Chinese and English.

The present study will enhance teacher's ability to help students improve their writing skills. Given the knowledge they will gain about student's writing errors, teachers will be able to use the suggested activities to exercise and improve their student's writing. This in turn will help students, since their teachers will now be able to provide specific feedback, which will allow a clear path for improvement in their writing.

Certain obstacles of mentionable significance have had restricting implications on the results of the study. A noticeable amount of students made it apparent that they were unwilling to participate in the study, while a number of students wrote apology letters in Spanish stating that they were not in command of a sufficient level of English to write paragraph in the language. Moreover, those who did only wrote a small number of sentences. Additionally, the questions posed to teachers and students were not clearly understood by the recipients, even when explained repeatedly. Hence, the responses acquired did not correspond correctly to the questions asked.

**CHAPTER I:  
LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section of the study presents theoretical support to underpin the following research topics: writing, coherence, cohesion and unity, as well as elements of writing and errors in EFL writing. So the complete chapter presents the positions of several authors in this respect. Moreover, it introduces previous studies, which include similar areas of analysis.

## **1.1. Writing Skill**

Writing is a form of communication that allows students to put their feelings and ideas on paper. Moreover, it allows them to organize their knowledge and beliefs into convincing arguments, and to convey meaning through well-constructed texts. In its most advanced form, written expression can be as vivid as a work of art. As children learn the steps of writing, and as they build new skills upon old, writing evolves from the first simple sentences to elaborate stories and essays. Spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and organization come together and grow together to help the student demonstrate more advanced writing skills each year (Baker, 2002).

### **1.1.1. Definition.**

Writing is considered a productive skill, and Foster (2012) says that this is one of the most difficult skills for learners because they need to know the rules of the language in order to achieve a great writing sample in any genre.

In addition, Clark (2012) argues that writing is a process that allows people to express their thoughts and feelings. This perspective comes from the expressivism theory, and “teachers adhering to the expressivism philosophy tended to assign essays concerned with personal experiences and self-reflexion, the goal being to enable students to discover their own personal voice that would result in authentic writing” (p. 15). Also, cognitive psychology conceives that writing is influenced by mental structures, so this ability is different for everyone. At the same time, cognitive psychology argues that it is important for people to write about their experiences and feelings. Such exercises enable learners to have a personal encounter with this ability. In both cases, writing is a process that uses symbols and structures to communicate ideas in society (Richards, 2008).

For that reason, it is important to practice and develop writing skills. Harmer (2007, p.92), in his studies says that “this reflection or thought process does not happen in an impromptu dialogue. When teaching writings skills, it is important to distinguish between two types of writing, namely writing for learning purposes and writing for the enjoyment of writing.

Coulmas (2015) argues that writing is a technology of the mind: a complex system that is changing all of the time because its development depends on each culture and historical point. Thus, people can see the history of each language and find the changes that languages have had throughout history.

### **1.1.2. Importance.**

In the modern world, writing is one of the most vital processes because through this process, humanity leaves their knowledge and ideas printed in each society, as propounded by Durant and Fabb in 2014. The contemporary world keeps writing as a system for communicating. According to Hannay (2016), most people are confronted with writing samples every day. This shows that writing is one of the most significant sources of consumable ideas. Moreover, since there are writers producing every kind of writing sample every day, people, thus, have access to a wide variety of information coming from different perspectives.

Moreover, Hannay (2016) argues that the process of globalization has made writing (especially English) a tool to socialize, work, and study. Academic studies and theory books are written in English, or at least they are translated to English. Besides, job opportunities are expanded when people are able to use English. Those who write in English can have access to international jobs and functioning mostly through the Internet.

### **1.1.3. The writing process.**

Writing is a complex process because it does not only require thinking about a specific topic; it requires passing through various stages in order to have a good sample. Johnson (2016) says that there are different views about the number of stages that this process should have and it differs depending on the writing genre. However, there are similarities among them, which cannot be omitted.

Before writing, during stage one: research to gather data, it is important to know what people are going to write. When people ask this question, they can see that research is crucial for the writing process. Through research, they can gather different points of view in respect to the topic on which they want to write. With this, one may understand and contrast different positions and data, and, with it, establish one's own position. This personal position will be the conductive thread throughout the piece and it will be presented behind the lines of the produced document. This stage should motivate writers to be engaged with their own interests, in order to

achieve a harmony between the writing activity and their thoughts. Furthermore, this stage should provide enough data on the main topic as to enable the writer to use this information as a base for the writing exercise.

During predraft the stage two: is the moment of the writing process when people need to come back from the universe of ideas they engaged with in stage one. Stage two urges them to focus on the structure of their writing; this exercise allows people to have a general idea about the complete text. Johnson (2016) argues that there are five ways to develop a strong predraft: brainstorming and lists, brainstorming and grouping, semantic webs, talking, and power writing.

Brainstorming and lists encourage people to write out their ideas without thinking too deeply. When people complete the list they have to organize the information in patterns and groups. When this is done, they will have an initial outline to start their work. In the case of brainstorming and grouping, people have to write the topic of the writing exercise on the top of the sheet of paper and commence from there. Then, they must organize the information, keeping the conceptual ideas, in order to achieve quality in their writing. Finally, they have to organize this conceptual information in sections, and if the activity was made correctly, people should have the ability to delineate some paragraphs (Johnson, 2016).

Semantic webs are visual tools where people draw a circle in the middle of the sheet of paper and write the topic in it. Then, people draw three or four new circles around the first one, becoming branch nodes. Finally, each node will have four ideas of which will be presented on paragraphs later in the document. Johnson (2016) adds the action of talking as a way to build a predraft. According to Johnson, when people talk, they have to organize their ideas and feedback with colleagues or friends to accumulate the general and specific ideas that they will develop in their writing. Finally, power writing is a method that works with your consciousness. People have three minutes to write every idea around the main topic. It does not matter if it is correct or incorrect because in this exercise the most important aspect is the application of creativity. When the three minutes ends, people have to organize their ideas and then begin to write.

Besides, the stage three: first draft is the first document that people produce. People should not expect to write well in this stage because the idea is to confront the paper and to lose the fear of writing. In this first attempt, people will compile all the knowledge they have on the topic, in order to delineate the principal ideas in the writings.



Moreover, stage four: Revision is the most important stage because it is here where the text significantly improves due to the repeated reassessment of the writer. Thus, this stage dictates if people have to take away some content or if they have to deepen some of the ideas. Due to this, it is clear that this stage contributes to great writing. Thus, the number of revisions that a text has will be the measure of the quality as it means that people have reorganized ideas, rewritten some paragraphs, rethought the arguments, etc. It is important to note that this stage, the grammar is not revised because it will be addressed in stage five.

Finally, stage five edit: in this stage, people see the correct use of grammar, punctuation, word usage and citations, as Johnson (2016) mentions. Editing helps to have a good writing sample because those rules around grammar allow people to have a text that is easy to understand. Finally, Johnson includes a sixth stage, which is sharing and publishing. This is the point when the writing has achieved an excellent level and they can share the document to readers.

## **1.2. Coherence, Cohesion and Unity**

Regarding coherence, it is one of the writing features that must be considered in order to produce a good piece of writing. When writers are producing, they know that their work has to be coherent. Therefore, coherence is the rhetorical aspect of the text. It means that there are ideas on the table that require a high level of coherence in order to be understood by readers. If it is not possible in a text, the document will not be clear, and the writer will not be able to achieve her or his goal. This relationship is present when each element supports the main idea or proposed thesis (Campos & Fad, 2014).

Thus, Hannay (2016) indicates that writing should be coherent because it is the factor that allows the link for communication between writers and readers. The author also says that it is important to present ideas as one entity, and that those should be presented in a smooth progression in order for the readers to follow the text more easily.

Besides, coherence is related to the text and the context. Campbell (2008) says that “coherence involves connections between the discourse and the context in which it occurs” (p. 6). The author also argues that recipients, as she calls the readers, play an important role at the moment of giving coherence to a text. Campbell (2008) says that each recipient has different experiences in their lives; meaning that each person has different sets of knowledge,

experiences, and motivations that influence the perceived sense of coherence. In this case, it is extremely important that writers develop a coherent writing sample because it gives a clear framework for readers.

Campbell (2008) says that he has found some texts with low-coherence, and he infers that it is because writers are not completely concentrated in the production of the text. Therefore, the lack of attention in this essential feature of writing is evident.

Another aspect is cohesion. It has to be present along the text. It means that all the structure of the text has to contain the correct words and structures between sentences and paragraphs in order to be cohesive. In this respect, Cuffey (2015) defines cohesion as:

“Conceptual interrelationship of the parts of a work” (p. 67), so when a text presents cohesion it creates continuity among the structures of each paragraph, each clause, and it makes an organized and logical text for readers.

Following Grigorenko (2012), cohesion is the “adequate use of phrase grammar and connectors. Sentences use and include main ideas in each one of the sentences” (p. 390). In the same way, (Kenneth, 2015) argues that cohesion “is a surface structure notion that has references to the linguistic devices by which a text creates continuity, dealing exclusively with the relation that it obtains among the sentences and clauses of the text” (p. 74). In other words, cohesion is the connections between the elements of the text; these elements can be words, sentences, or clauses. It is important to note that cohesion is present when there is a dependent relation between the elements of the texts (Bahaziq, 2009).

Following Bahaziq (2009), cohesion does not include only grammatical aspects, it also includes vocabulary. Additionally, the author says that there are two aspects that cohesion analyzes: grammatical and lexical. Grammatical cohesion analyzes four categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctions. Lexical cohesion analyzes: reiteration and collocation.

Grammatical cohesion is emphasized in grammar uses throughout a text. In this case, reference is presented when people can interpret an idea only by the presence of other elements in the text. Hence, the devices used in this category are: pronouns, articles, demonstratives and comparatives. In the case of substitution, it appears when people replace a word with another in order to give more meaning to the idea. There are three types of substitution: nominal, it replaces a noun for another; verbal replaces verbs; and clausal changes the complete clause for another. Ellipsis category eliminates items that are unnecessary in the

text and conjunction analyzes the correct use of transition words to link sentences (Bahaziq, 2009).

On the other hand, lexical cohesion analyzes the vocabulary that a writer chooses to explain ideas. Lexical cohesion refers to reiteration category, which studies words that have the same meaning in a text. Collocation studies the combination of nouns and adjectives (Bahaziq, 2009).

Finally, unity in writing refers to the wholeness of the text. This means that there is a main idea that is developed in the whole text. In the case of a paragraph, there is unity when supporting sentences and conclusions that are focused in one central idea. So unity “describes whether or how the parts are all tied to a center” (Kenneth, 2015, p. 78); in a composition case, all paragraphs have to be related with the central idea in order to achieve unity in the text.

A text is more coherent if it has semantic unity and this is obtained by assigning some theme or topic to the discourse or to a fragment of the discourse because *semantic coherence* refers to the ability to use the broader context of a story or sentence, and the semantic relationships between words to aid understanding and interpretation of spoken and written language (...). For example, a text with unity may be helped along or act in larger stories, or themes that frame the more specific details (Mooney & Evans, 2015, p. 75).

Thus, unity is a feature of writing where irrelevant sentences are avoided in each paragraph in order to have the main idea extend throughout the text. Therefore, writing sample can have supporting sentences, but these have to be connected with the main topic. Such supporting sentences can also be a proposal for the paragraph, or the text if that is the case. It is important to know that to achieve unity in a text writers have to know elements that a paragraph or an essay has to contain in order to avoid ideas that are not related to the central idea of the writing (Hunter, 2009).

### **1.3. Elements of Writing**

Writing is a way of communicating in which one is not able to express ideas through gestures and body language. To this extent, writers use several tools to weave a coherent work as specific structures and words, to go from one idea to another, or from one paragraph to another one in a well-organized way (Walter, 2015).

The structure of a single paragraph is that of an entire essay. The topic sentence of a paragraph should include all main points of the paragraph. The subsequent sentence should discuss the first reason or main point followed by an example sentence or phrase. Next would be the second reason or main point followed by an example sentence or phrase. The concluding sentence summarizes and restates the main points to support the topic sentence.

Walter (2015) explains that there are different kinds of writing samples that require specific styles of writing. Thus, each kind of writing has specific purposes, and each one has different structures. To write a news article, people need to develop one to two paragraphs because they need to keep the attention of the reader. In the case of a technical text, however, writers need to prepare concise paragraphs and they have to avoid irrelevant information because they cannot generate distractions outside of the main topic. In contrast with a novel, writers can use more details in each paragraph. The following are the elements of writing.

#### **1.3.1. Topic Sentence.**

Topic sentence is a result of a controlling that idea, it is a sentence that introduces the main topic and it lets the reader know what the writing is going to focus on. That is why this first sentence has to be clear and precise. If topic sentences comply with this requirement, it is going to be easier to understand what the writer wants to express (Connelly, 2012).

In the same way, Clifford (2007) says that, "each paragraph needs its own topic sentence to let the reader know what is being discussed. The topic sentence is often in the first sentence, but you can experiment with placing them in the middle or at the end of your paragraphs as well" (p. 69).

Topic sentences are general because they allow giving details in the next sentences. Yet, topic sentences also have to be specific in order to explain the main idea in a few sentences. The measure has to be precise. Additionally, a topic sentence has to include the topic and the writer's point of view on the main issue (Connelly, 2012).

In addition, Rashid (2014) indicates that there are two ways to write a topic sentence. The first one is directly from the title, and the second one consists of summarizing the supporting sentences. In the second case, Rashid explores the outline and then looks for answers to each supporting sentence in which to conclude a topic sentence.

#### **1.3.1. Supporting Sentence.**

Supporting sentences are sentences that support the topic sentence. These ideas have to be relevant in order to add details to the paragraph. The goal of supporting ideas is to persuade the reader that the point of view of writer is correct (Clifford, 2017). Connelly explains,

“The sentences that follow should provide additional information, observations, examples, or quotations” (Connelly, 2012, p. 46), so these add concrete evidences in the text.

Personal observations serve as a source of sound evidence because these come from experiences that demonstrate realities about people, situations, places, or things. Facts are evidence that others have developed, documented or examined by another. Furthermore, statistics are numbers that quantify a situation. Supporting sentences have to create a visual image about what the writer wants to show to the readers, implying that the way to write supporting sentences has to be effective, meaningful and interesting (Connelly, 2012).

Rashid (2014) explains that supporting sentences have to be focused on the topic, if they do not; it generates ambiguity in the paragraph. The author argues that it is important to add transition words in order to give flow to the paragraph.

### **1.3.3. Transition words.**

Transition words are used to link sentences in order to let the reader know when the text is going to change. Transition words, thus, allow the reader to understand the specific moment when the text is going to pass from one idea to another. Azar and Hugen (2009) explain that these words show the relationship between the second and the first idea, and it helps to generate coherence and consistency in the paragraph.

On the other hand, DeCapua (2017) expresses that there are different kinds of transition words because each one has a different meaning, so these are interchangeable. Each transition word is used with different objective. Moreover, the use of these depend on what the writer wants to express, and what the writer considers appropriate in order to give coherence and cohesion to each paragraph. There are several transition words which are classified by the objective they pursue in order to achieve a logical relationship between sentences. These classifications are as follows: addition, cause and effect, comparison, contrast, concession, conclusion, emphasis, example, repetition, and time or square.

In this degree, when a writer expresses addition, he uses: moreover, furthermore, finally, in addition to. When articulating cause and effect the writer employs: therefore, consequently, thus, as a result, for this reason. For comparison the writer will utilize: likewise, similarity, in the same way, in the same manner, when demonstrating contrast, the author will employ: however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, in contrast, on the other hand, on the contrary. When indicating concession, a writer will use: of course, to be sure, granted, naturally, no doubt. When denoting conclusion, the author will make use of: therefore, in short, in conclusion, to summarize, on the whole, as I have demonstrated, as the data shows. To indicate emphasis, the author will utilize: in fact, indeed; example, for instance, for example, in particular, specifically, namely. To

demonstrate repetition, the writer will employ: in other words, to repeat, again, as mentioned early. To articulate time or sequence, the author will utilize: first, second, third, then, next, finally, afterwards, and meanwhile. It is important to note that transition words can be placed at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the sentence (Azar and Hugen, 2009).

#### **1.3.4. Punctuation.**

Punctuation is the rhythm of writing. It allows the writer to give a great experience to the reader because punctuation marks the beat of the reading. Each symbol in punctuation are different and their importance establishes the kind of control that it has in the experience of reading. Punctuation marks are: period (.), comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), quotation mark (“...”), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), ellipsis (...), apostrophe (’), parenthesis ( ), and hyphen (-) (Lukeman, 2005).

While the period is used to convey the completion of an idea or to end fragments in a bulleted list, the comma is used to indicate a brief time. The comma usually has two uses: it is used to separate series that have more than three words, phrases, clauses, or numbers; and it is also used to add information between sentences. The semicolon is used in three cases. The first one is to separate two related clauses that lack coordinating conjunctions. The second is to separate dependent clauses in series if these are long. The third is to separate two independent clauses if these are joined by coordinating conjunctions when one of these contain a comma. And the colon is used when writer is going to list one group of elements (Lukeman, 2005).

Quotation marks are used when the writer brings in a textual citation from other people. The question mark is used at the end of a question. The exclamation mark is used when the writer wants to show a powerful emotion such as surprise. On the other hand, ellipsis is used to show that there is not sufficient information as to generate expectations for the reader. The apostrophe is used in written English to illustrate that there is a contraction and also that there is a compound adjective in the text. Parenthesis is usually used to add information in the sentence. Hyphen is used to join a compound adjective (Azar and Hugen, (2009); Lukeman, (2005)).

#### **1.3.5. Spelling.**

Spelling is the correct way to write words. Spelling includes “being able to segment a spoken word into individual sounds or phonemes and selecting the correct letter or letter group to represent each one” (Waugh & Warner, 2015).

Spelling is a challenge to English learners because of word pronunciation. It is difficult to read in a correct way when English has a specific phoneme system, which differs with Spanish in spite of sharing the same alphabet and graphemes. Kress (2005) explains that spelling is “an abstracted set of words related to sequences of letters” (p. 2), and the author explains that there

is a difference between accurate spelling and correct spelling. Accurate spelling is used when people write in the same way they pronounce the word, in spite of it not being the correct spelling.

In writing, correct spelling is necessary because it allows people to communicate. Without it, it would be impossible for writers to express what they want to readers. So accurate spelling, better known as misspelling, shows a lack of knowledge on the alphabetic code of the language. Thus, it is an ability that writers have to develop (Waugh & Warner, 2015).

#### **1.3.6. Capitalization.**

Capitalization refers to the correct use of capital letters in writing. Ruday (2013) expresses that capitalization is necessary to enhance the reader's experience and to provide clarity in the writing. To capitalize properly, a set of rules needs to be followed. With correct writing, one must capitalize the first letter in the first word of a sentence. Additional capitalizations include the pronoun I, proper nouns, titles that come before names, days of the week, months of the year, holidays, and name of countries, nationalities, and specific languages.

#### **1.3.7. Grammar in EFL writing**

The grammar knowledge is essential for writers, but it is a challenge for English as Foreign Language learners. Ahmed and Abouabdelkader (2016) explain that it is difficult for learners to write in English if it is not their first language. They argue that:

A number of factors were reported to affect the development of students' education in general and writing in particular. For example, socio-cultural factors included students' rhetorical pattern, expressing social values in writing, L1 transfer into L2, and the incomplete understanding is the socio-cultural background target. (Ahmed and Abouabdelkader, 2016)

EFL learners are called to master their grammar. This is the reason why learners have to know the following topics in order to achieve excellent writing: correct use of tenses, correct use of adjectives, adverbs, articles, verbs, clauses, noun phrases, conjunctions, connectors, plurals, pronouns, and subjects, among others (Azar and Hugen, 2009).

#### **1.4. Errors in EFL writing**

Error is a notion that has been changing over time. In writing, errors are necessary because through those learners understand how to write in a correct way. Llach (2011) explains that errors are predictors of writing quality, even when knowing that writing is difficult in any

language, especially for non-native learners, and in this case for EFL learners. There are several kinds of errors that learners make while writing (Kress, 2008).

Grammar errors are associated with incorrect use of grammar rules. Subject omission, vocabulary, word order, misuse or omission of prepositions, incorrect literal translation, pluralization, wrong position of adjectives, and verb omission are the most common errors that are analyzed in research. Ackah (2016) argues that “with a good grasp of the concepts of grammar, we can avoid committing serious errors in both of our writing and oral usages of the language” (p. 10).

Content errors are obstacles to understand the ideas of writers. Omission of transitions, incorrect organization of ideas in the paragraph, omission of topic sentence, irrelevant sentences, and misuse of transition words are content errors (Leech & Svartvik, 2013).

Mechanical errors are errors that have different impact depending on the kind of writing. It is not perceived by the reader if the writing has several pages, but if there is a mechanical error in a letter it is going to be perceived as a lack of instruction by the reader (Stephen & Hooper, 1992). Carnevale and Teukolsky (2015) argue that this kind of error makes an understandable text, and errors associated to punctuation, spelling, and capitalizations are mechanical errors.

Some writers are comma-phobic neglecting to insert commas where they belong. Other writers are comma-happy, sprinkling them here, there, and everywhere. A command of punctuation doesn't makes you an awesome writer; it makes you a writer who is proficient in one of the conventions of writing (Carnevale and Teukolsky, 2015, p. 23).

As the authors mention the correct use of punctuation, spelling, and capitalizations are necessary, and this is one of the most essential requirements for writing.

The last part of this chapter includes some previous studies that researchers have developed on errors committed in writing.

Nazim and Ahmad (2012) investigated writing problems that Arabian students commit, and seek to teach English in a better way in Najran. The authors applied questionnaires to high school students and teachers to know their perceptions about it. To contrast they chose a group of students in order to develop a writing exercise, which was analyzed later. The researchers found that the learners made frequent errors in the following areas: conventions, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and language usage.



Another study was the one conducted by Sampson (2012) who studied the effects of writing the correct form above each error, and writing symbols to self-correction with EFL university students. The author worked with a small group of students, they developed essays and then the researcher analyzed the information contained in those texts. The findings were that students made errors persistently in the following aspects: spelling, verb tense and word choice.

Liu (2013) researched about syntactic errors in English essays that students at university commit. They analyzed ninety essay samples and questionnaires and the most relevant findings were: errors in tense and voice were the most common. The errors tend to decrease across the tasks, and errors were made because differences between their mothers tongue, Chinese, and English.

Mi-Young (2013) looked for errors made in Korean student essays. The analysis counts two main categories: form-based and meaning-based errors in English language. The findings showed that the most common errors made were in the uses of articles and grammar. The conclusion was that most of the learners made errors. Additionally, this study addresses teachers to involve new methods to teach students the appropriate way to write essays.

Garza (2014) studied EFL learners' major problems in writing samples. This study sought the distribution of the messages of students; the goal of the study was analyzing the nature of writing errors made by students in school. To achieve this, the author used writing samples from students to categorize the kind of errors made by students. Findings showed that the most common error was interlingua/transfer errors, then developmental/transfer errors. The study addresses teachers to use technology as a tool to improve students' writing.

Faysal, Mulya and Syamsul (2017) studied the most common errors made by high school students in Indonesia They had a sample of the writings of nineteen students that were analyzed by researchers. The most common errors found were on selection, omission and addition in strategy taxonomy. Moreover, in linguistic were word forms, articles, nonfinite verbs, verb tenses plurals and prepositions.

The study showed that these students had several problems in writing paragraphs because they were not familiar with the rules of writing. They lacked a basic knowledge of grammar and they had difficulty supporting their ideas. One final suggestion for teachers is that they should help familiarize their students with grammar structures and rules, correct spelling

and punctuation, as well as to encourage them to have an extensive vocabulary. All of these skills are important as being able to order their ideas and introduce them into writing world (Chin, 2000).

**CHAPTER II:**

**METHOD**

## **2.1. Setting and participants**

The study was carried out in a public school located in northern Quito, the capital of Spanish speaking Ecuador. In Ecuador, English is taught as a foreign language and at this specific school, in their second year of high school, the students receive 6 hours of English classes each week. Eighty-one students, of which forty-three were females and thirty-eight were males, were chosen to be a part of the study. The average age was between 16 and 17. Additionally, the study included five EFL public school teachers, three which were female and two which were male.

## **2.2. Procedures**

The first step of this study was to look for information in order to support the following topics: writing skill, the writing process, coherence, cohesion, and unity, elements of writing, and previous studies. Previous studies related to the researched topic were also considered in order to have a broader idea about what has been done around the world.

The next step was to carry out the study. To do so, two methods were employed. The qualitative method had questionnaires with the same 12 questions for students and teachers, in order to receive information about their perspectives. The information about their perspectives came in the following aspects: form of language, contents, and mechanical. The quantitative method had a work sheet for writing samples in which students were asked to write a paragraph of 100-150 words in 20 minutes. This tool allows for the measuring of the frequency of errors in the three areas of study: form of the language, content, and mechanical. It was necessary to find a public high school that allowed the utilization of this study with teachers and students as well as the use of its classrooms. Moreover, it was a prerequisite that the public high school had three classes within the same grade level and had five or more EFL teachers.

After samples were compiled, the information was tabulated from the corrected writing samples to quantify the types of mistakes made by the students. Simultaneously, writing samples were checked and corrected, this process allowed the author to select a group of samples for conducting the analysis of the current study. The questionnaires were used to gather the qualitative perceptions of the students and teachers on the errors made in writing. The data collected was subsequently interpreted, leading the author to make conclusions based on the obtained results. Finally, recommendations were proposed to give contributions to public high schools.

**CHAPTER III:**

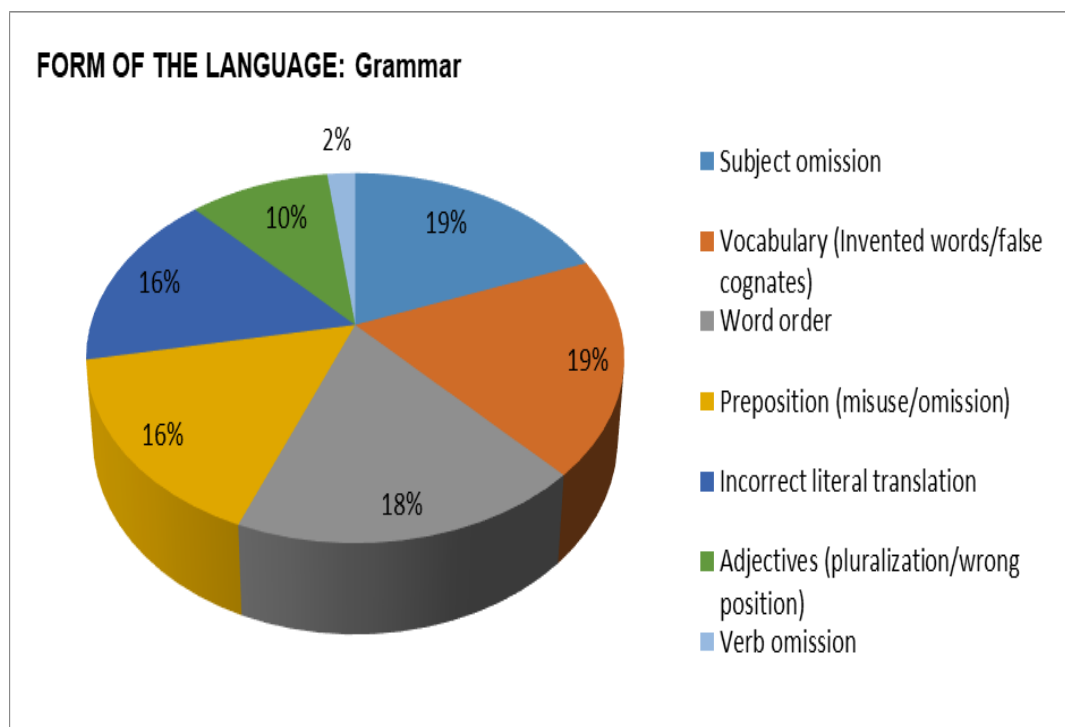
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

This chapter contains information obtained from the surveys provided to teachers and students. It includes the review of three specific aspects of writing errors: form of the language, content, and mechanical. Therefore, these results show percentages in each variable, the frequency of errors in students' written texts, and the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the findings.

### 3.1. Form of the language: Grammar

GRAPH 1



Author: Marilin Moreira.

Source: Written samples tabulation, 2017.

For communicating effectively through writing, it is necessary to be able to use the rules of English language correctly. In fact, there is an intrinsic relationship between writing and grammar. In order to write, people use grammar rules that are the base on the language. Accordingly, it is impossible to have any kind of communication if writers do not know grammar rules (Llach, 2011). However, everybody is able to learn grammar rules in order to improve their communication in English and especially in writing skills. It is necessary to note that grammar errors or form of language errors are necessary for EFL learners in order to develop the capacity to correct their own errors by themselves (Kress, 2008).

In the present study, errors in form of language were considered as: subject omission, vocabulary, word order, misuse or omission of prepositions, incorrect literal translation, pluralization and wrong position of adjectives, and verb omission.

*Subject omission* is the most common error found in the written samples, as well as vocabulary variable. It made up 19% of the total number of errors in form of language. The following example was selected to illustrate this error:

“My favorite singer is Abraham Mateo because is a composer.”

This example presents two independent clauses joined by a conjunction, but in the second clause the subject was left out. One of the basic patterns to write a sentence is: subject + verb + complement, but this grammar rule was neglected by the student. As the example shows, in the second clause the student omitted a pronoun that had to replace the noun “Abraham Mateo”. Although the absence of the pronoun is grammatically incorrect, it does not render the sentences completely unintelligible. It does, however, provide the reader with an extra challenge when seeking to interpret the text. Consequently, it is necessary to highlight that failing to use the subject correctly can, due to the structure of the English language, alter the comprehension of the message that the student sought to convey. The way the student avoided to use the pronoun can arguably be traced to and explained by the structure of the Spanish language, the mother tongue of the student. The correct way to write this sentence is:

‘My favorite singer is Abraham Mateo because he is a composer.’

*Vocabulary* constituted 19% of the total errors committed in the written samples, as shown in Graph 1. Together with subject omission, it is the most common error committed by EFL students in public schools. Invented words and false cognates were analyzed as part of vocabulary category. This error was found in the following sample:

“Who has the soso sentiments, listen the music the one republic.”

In this example, two clauses separated by a comma are shown. In the first clause, the student tried to describe a specific feeling; he used the word “soso” as an adjective. This word, however, does not exist either in the Spanish language or in English. Furthermore, he also used the word “sentiments” instead of feelings. This shows that the student invented these words with the intention to communicate in the target language. The mistake committed makes the sentence confusing and it influences the way in which the message is understood. On the other hand, the second clause is incorrect because it is not using the correct pattern to write a sentence and this information is not adding something relevant to complete the message. Consequently, it generates confusion. Evidently, to expand the vocabulary of students it is vital

for writing because a rich vocabulary is necessary to communicate ideas in a proper way. So the correct way to write this sentence is:

He has good feelings.

*Word order* is the third most common error as a form of language. It made up 18% of the total errors made by students. The following example clearly shows how students commit this error in writing exercises.

“I listen Yandel always however my parents like rock.”

This example shows two independent clauses separated by the adverb “however”. In the first clause, the student did not know how to properly order the words. The adverb of frequency “always” is wrongly used in the sentence. The grammar rules, in this case, demand that this kind of word goes before the main verb in the sentence. So it can be said that these mistakes in word order generate confusion for the reader. The correct way to write this sentence is:

I always listen to Yandel. However, my parents like rock music.

*Preposition omission* makes up 16% of the total errors made by students in the form of language category. This average is among the five highest in this section. In this regard, studies have shown that the use of preposition is difficult even for advanced EFL students. The following sample shows the error:

“The band consist in four members.”

Prepositions show “the relationship that exists between a noun or a pronoun to another word” (Kress, 2008, p. 200). In this case, the student used the preposition of place “in” instead of the preposition “of”, which expresses a relation of numbers. Despite the presence of this error, the message is understandable and it does not alter the meaning of the clause in a deep way. The correct version of the previous example is the following:

The band consists of four members.

*Incorrect literal translation* amounts to 16% of the total errors made by EFL public school students. This is also one of the most common errors in this category. Literal translation refers to the action of translating a word from one language to another without paying heed to whether the message retains its intended meaning, or the correct use of grammar. The following is an example of this error made by students:

“He have a pitbull dog color brown”

In this example, the student presents a clause that shows incorrect usage of the basic pattern of a sentence in English because he made a literal translation from Spanish. This error generates confusion and difficulties to understand the message. In this case, the word “brown”



has to go before the noun “pitbull”, and the words “dog” and “color” should be deleted in order to make the sentence understandable. So this example should be written in the following way:

He has a brown Pitbull.

*Adjectives error* was one of the least common errors found in the samples analyzed. Only 10% of writing exercises presented this error. This result demonstrates that less students make errors in this category. The following example shows that students write the adjective after the noun, which is incorrect.

“My favorite singer is Enrique Iglesias because is person excellent.”

The example shows two clauses joined by the conjunction “because”. It is important to see that adjectives allow writers to describe a noun or pronoun (Kress, 2009). In the second clause, it is missing a noun or pronoun and there is a misuse of the adjective in its position. The adjective “excellent” has to go before the noun “person”. Despite this error, the message of the sentence is understandable. The correct version should be the following:

My favorite singer is Enrique Iglesias because he is an excellent person.

Concerning *omitted verbs*, it was found that a few students commit mistakes due to omission of verbs; in fact, only 2% of them presented this error. It is important to mention that subject omission had the highest percentage in this section. From this result, it can be inferred that students know the general pattern to write sentences because most of them know the use of verbs in a sentence. The following example includes an omitted verb mistake:

“My favorite singer Yandel.”

This example shows that the student did not use a verb in the sentence. Verbs show actions or describe the state of being of a subject. In this case, the absence of a verb inhibits our ability to understand the message because it is difficult to know what action is happening. In this case, the verb “to be”, conjugated as “is”, needs to be before the noun “Yandel”. The correct way to write this sentence is:

My favorite singer is Yandel.

Based on the obtained results, it is evident that EFL public school students made errors in all areas studied in the section form of language. The data collected through questionnaires support this finding. The majority of respondents agreed that students have several problems in grammar when they write. Moreover, teachers expressed that the most common errors that student made are related to word order, invented words, and omission of verbs. This matches with the analysis previously developed.

On the other hand, both teachers and students agreed that learners commit errors when writing because they do not give the necessary importance to English grammar. They believe

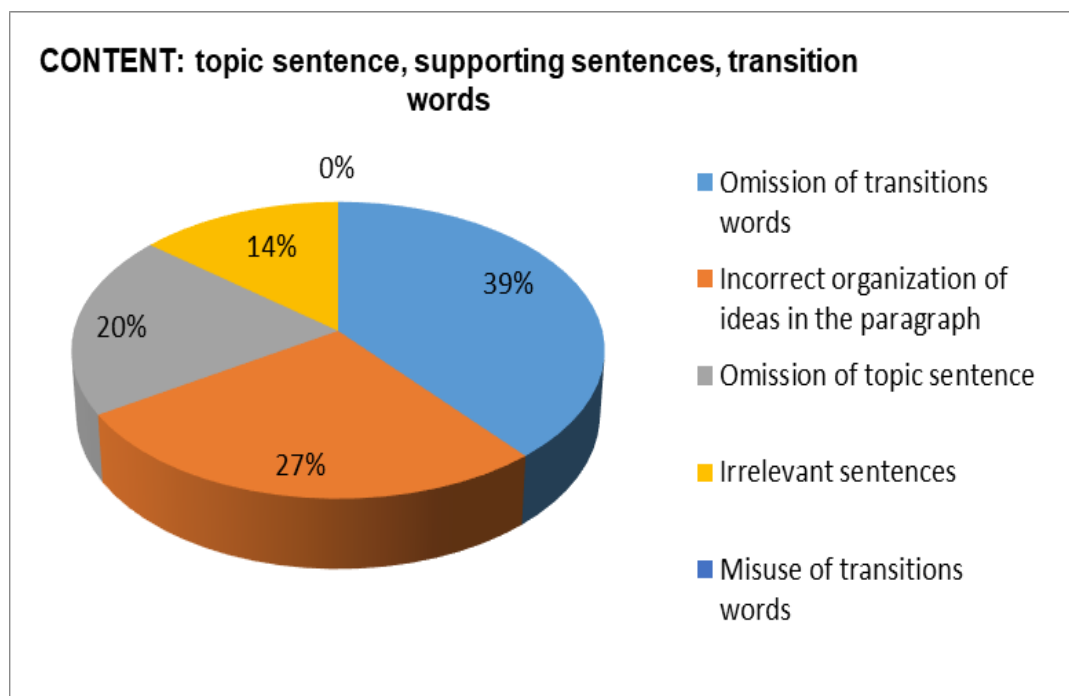
students find grammar insignificant for writing, which is an incorrect perception because grammar is imperative to improve one's writing.

Additionally, students argue that they do not have writing activities to apply grammar topics in English classes and teachers do not point out grammatical errors. However, teachers express that it is common that students do not include feedback in their writing activities. In any case, it concludes that learning grammar is difficult for students, as the teachers stated in the questionnaires.

These findings show that the motivation of the students and the planning of the teachers are important to improve the quality of the students' writing. Grammar is necessary to develop the ideas and knowledge of the students in a correct way, especially when English has become a global language. In this respect, Mustafa (2016) has found that "writing is the most complicated skill because it requires much concentration, conscious efforts and practice in all its steps, composing, developing and finalizing. Until finishing the final draft, many intensive revisions are usually required" (p. 40). If students are not motivated to develop this skill, it is difficult to achieve this aim.

### 3.2. Content: Topic sentence, supporting sentences, transition words

GRAPH 2



Author: Marilin Moreira.

Source: Written samples tabulation, 2017.

Mustafa (2016) argues that writing “is the ability of arranging ideas and/or information into sentences or paragraphs and making effort to connect ideas cohesively and coherently from one paragraph to another by following rules of language.” In this respect, the correct usage of content variables such as topic sentence, supporting sentences and transition words are required to give coherence and cohesiveness to the writing. Writing has a special relationship with content variable because it is what gives movement and rhythm to the text. Therefore, the correct usage of this tool provides writers an opportunity to explore how to express themselves through written text. Thus, this section contains the results of analysis process of EFL students’ writing in the following matters: omission of topic sentence, irrelevant sentences, and misuse of transition words.

The first variable to be analyzed is *omission of transition words* and it is the most common type of error made by EFL public school students. It made up 38% of the total errors in this category. It is important to mention that only one student used transition words, but he did not use them properly. In this regard, Sedita (2013) says that transition words help writers make connections among sentences and paragraphs. As a result, if students do not know how to use them, they will face difficulties. The following example illustrates the error committed by students:

“My favorite singer es Kanne is my person in actua in a WWE is man in the family in the person the under taker party animals”

The example shows a phrase that contains some errors that make it difficult to understand the correct message. The lack of transition words does not allow for transmitting the message properly; this applies even to the understanding of grammatical composition of this phrase. This error makes it notably difficult for the reader to understand the sentence. In fact, it requires a transition word in order to provide meaning to the sentence and to be correctly written. The correct version of the sentence should be:

“My favorite singer is Kanne, and he acts in the WWE. In addition, he takes care of animals”

*Incorrect organization of ideas* made up 27% of the total errors made by students in their writings. Throughout the study, it was found that this error is present in almost all the written samples and that students do not have the skill to write their ideas in a coherent way. The following example shows it:

“I don’t have a favorite singer, I have a favorite group, the name is “Orquesta Guayacan”, this group do music of salsa, and salsa is my musical rythm favorite, my group favorite

have sons as “El más rico beso”, is a group of Colombia, your sons are very entertainment, with a good rhythm.”

This example demonstrates that students commit mistakes when it comes to the incorrect organization of ideas. Grammar has many rules, which help students in order to achieve good written results. When writing, it is essential to add conjunctions, transition words, as well as commas and semicolons to organize ideas. This kind of error generates interference in the comprehension of the message, but it does not alter the understanding of the message too much. It should be:

I don't have a favorite singer, I have a favorite band instead, which is called “Orquesta Guayacan”. This group makes salsa music and it is my favorite rhythm. My favorite group has songs such as “El más rico beso”. Also, this band is from Colombia, and its songs have good rhythm. Thus, they are very entertaining.

*Omission of topic sentences* is the category with the third highest percentage of errors. It was found out that 20% of the written samples contain this error. It clearly shows that English teachers are not providing enough information to students in order to learn and to apply the correct writing process. The topic sentence is the first part to start a paragraph. The following example shows the omission of topic sentence:

“He's famous. I'm enjoyed listen singer, he is very important listen the song and write the list. He is very handsome and sisters. Loved the song “La boda” writing for he.”

This example illustrates how students omit topic sentences in their writing. Instead, they list ideas without correct punctuation and without a correct use of conjunctions or transition words. It does not allow the reader to understand the message. Additionally, it is clear that this kind of error makes the comprehension of the message difficult because the reader does not get the main idea of the written sample. The correct way to write it would be:

My favorite singer is the famous Cosculluela. I enjoy listening to his songs; he is very important and handsome. I love the song “La boda” which was composed by him.”

*Irrelevant sentences* amounted to 14% of the total errors in content section. The study shows that students usually use irrelevant sentences without coherence in their writings. The following example shows a student writing with some ideas that could be omitted:

“My favorite singer is Movimiento Original is a sing more relaxed is a movement cultural important of a culture is moment of relax a paint is a form of inspiration original.”

This example shows several ideas without a logical structure and some of those fragments of sentences are irrelevant. This error makes the understanding of the general message difficult because irrelevant sentences obscure the meaning that the writer seeks to convey. In order to

give meaning to the complete sentence the irrelevant sentences need to be removed. The correct way to write this sentence is:

“My favorite band is Movimiento Original. I listen to them to relax and to paint. This band inspires me.”

*Misuse of transition of words* was not presented in any writing sample. Questionnaires distributed to students and teachers provided information about this issue. The findings showed that students do not receive information about the usage of transition words in their English classes.

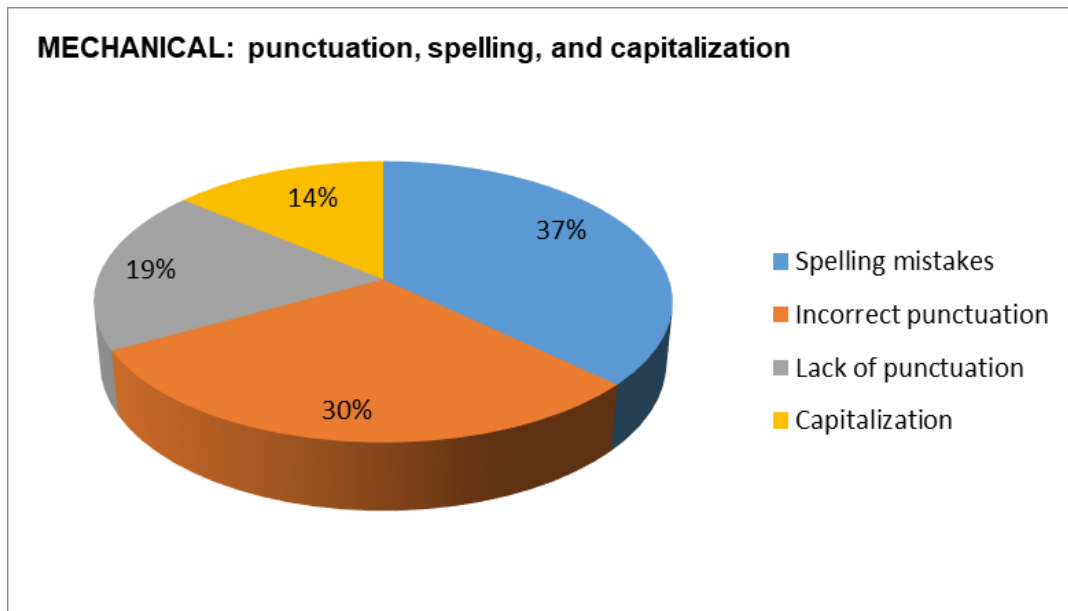
Both students and teachers agreed with the perception that EFL students usually commit errors in content and it is because students do not have enough education on this topic. In the questionnaires given to the students, they expressed that they often made errors because EFL teachers do not teach this topic at school. As a result, students do not practice the correct use of these words, nor do they know how to make use of content aspects.

As mentioned earlier, teachers once again expressed that they do not include feedback on their writing exercises. It is a crucial factor because if teachers do not do it, students are not able to understand the usage of content variables in order to improve their writing skills. Teachers argue that students made these types of errors because students do not consider grammar an important element in writing. However, teachers are called to show students the benefits and importance of content in writing. Additionally, teachers declared that learning content elements are difficult for their students to understand. This is an evident fact, as this analysis has shown, but the difficulties are not an excuse to leave this decisive knowledge away from students. In fact, it is an opportunity to improve this aspect of writing.

Johnson (2016) argues that writing is a process, and it “involves two separate and diametrically opposed cognitive processes generating ideas and evaluating ideas”. The findings showed that students do not have writing practice, so they do not know how to develop a paragraph or composition in any genre. Students are nor familiar with the writing process, the use of topic sentences, supporting sentences, or transition words.

### **3.3. Mechanical: Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization**

#### **GRAPH 3**



Author: Marilin Moreira.

Source: Written samples tabulation, 2017.

Punctuation, spelling, and capitalization are mechanical types of errors in writing. The overcoming of these errors are essential to develop well-presented ideas or knowledge. The mechanical rules of grammar allow students to express properly what they feel in a writing composition. This is particularly the case of punctuation. This aspect is part of this study because it has been shown that students from all over the world commit errors in this aspect, even in their mother tongue.

*Spelling mistakes* was the most common error in the aspect concerning the mechanical: punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. It constitutes 37% of the total of errors found in writing samples. Spelling mistakes refers to orthography and it is a typical error when writers are focused on the content and not on the form of writing. This is an aspect of formal grammar that should not be forgotten among writers. The sample below illustrates it:

“I am entusiastich were listen music Karol”

This example shows a spelling mistake error in the word ‘enthusiastic’, and the possible causes can be a lack of proficiency by the student or that the student had no time to proofread. Despite this error, it does not interfere with the understanding of the message because the sentence structure is correct and it makes the sentence understandable. The correct way to write this sentence is:

I am enthusiastic when I listen to Karol’s music.

*Incorrect punctuation* was the second most common error found, and it made up 30% of the total errors committed by students. This error usually appears when EFL students do not have a satisfactory command of punctuation rules and when they only write fragments. The following example shows the incorrect punctuation errors:

“My favorite singer is Alex Turner, I think he is awesome, he is 32 years old, he play the guitar, is the vocalist in Artic Monkeys and is the vocalist, he live in United Kingdmon, he is my favorite singer because he inspired me for going to be better person, and he band do really good music, my favorite song is “RU Mine”, Alex in actually don’t do music because he is recess and in the next year he and he band do new music and promicionated new album, and I really hope, he come soon and do a show-concert in the capital.”

The sample shows a paragraph without the correct use of punctuation. The punctuation serves to clarify the meaning of the text, and it allows writers to properly separate ideas contained in writing. When punctuation errors are committed, it is difficult to understand when an idea starts and when it is finished. This kind of error also discourages readers to continue along the text because it generates confusion. Yet, despite this, the paragraph is understandable. The presence of this error does not change the understanding of the general message, but it does make it hard to read. In this case, students should have written the example in the following way:

‘My favorite sing1er is Alex Turner. I think he is awesome. He is 32 years old, and he plays–guitar. At the same time, he is the Artic Monkeys’ vocalist, and he lives in the United Kingdom. Alex inspires me to be a better person, and his band makes really good music; my favorite song is “RU Mine”. Currently, Alex doesn’t make music because he is outside for recess, but next year he and his band will make new music and they will promote their new album. I really hope, he comes soon and performs in the capital.’

*Lack of punctuation* was the third most common error made by students. It made up 19% of the total errors in mechanical variables. The following sample shows:

“My favorite singer es Kanne is my person in actua in a WWE is man in the family in the person the under taker party animals”

This example does not contain any punctuation marks. This error makes it difficult to understand the message because it is impossible to recognize the ideas that are being built in this paragraph. The correct way to write this sentence is:

“My favorite singer is Kanne, and he acts in the WWE. In addition, he takes care of animals”

*Capitalization* is the least common error made by students in their writing samples. It amounted to 14% of the total errors in the mechanical variable. Sometimes capitalization in English is confusing for students because they tend to use the rules from their mother tongue, but English capitalization has its own rules. In this way, writers need to capitalize “I”, names of countries, national nouns and adjectives, proper nouns, names of institutions, names of festivals, and the first letter in a sentence. The following sample shows the misuse of capitalization:

“My favorite singer is group “Binomio de Oro” is to beautifully, Dancing to the music in my (...)”

The example shows how to capitalize proper nouns in this case “Binomio de Oro”. However, the student also capitalized “Dancing”, which is incorrect because this word is not located at the beginning of a sentence. Nor is it a proper noun, a day of the week, nor a month of the year. Nonetheless, this error does not influence the understanding of the message that the writer wants to show. In other words, capitalization in this sample does not alter the comprehension of the message. The correct way to write this sentence is:

‘My favorite band is “Binomio de Oro”, it is beautiful for dancing.’

Both teachers and students agreed that mechanical errors are not explained by EFL teachers at school and that there are no activities in classes to develop this aspect of writing skill. Consequently, when students face off this kind of activity they usually forget how to apply this knowledge in their writing. Additionally, when mechanical errors appear in writing samples, teachers tend not to highlight or correct this aspect of writing during class.

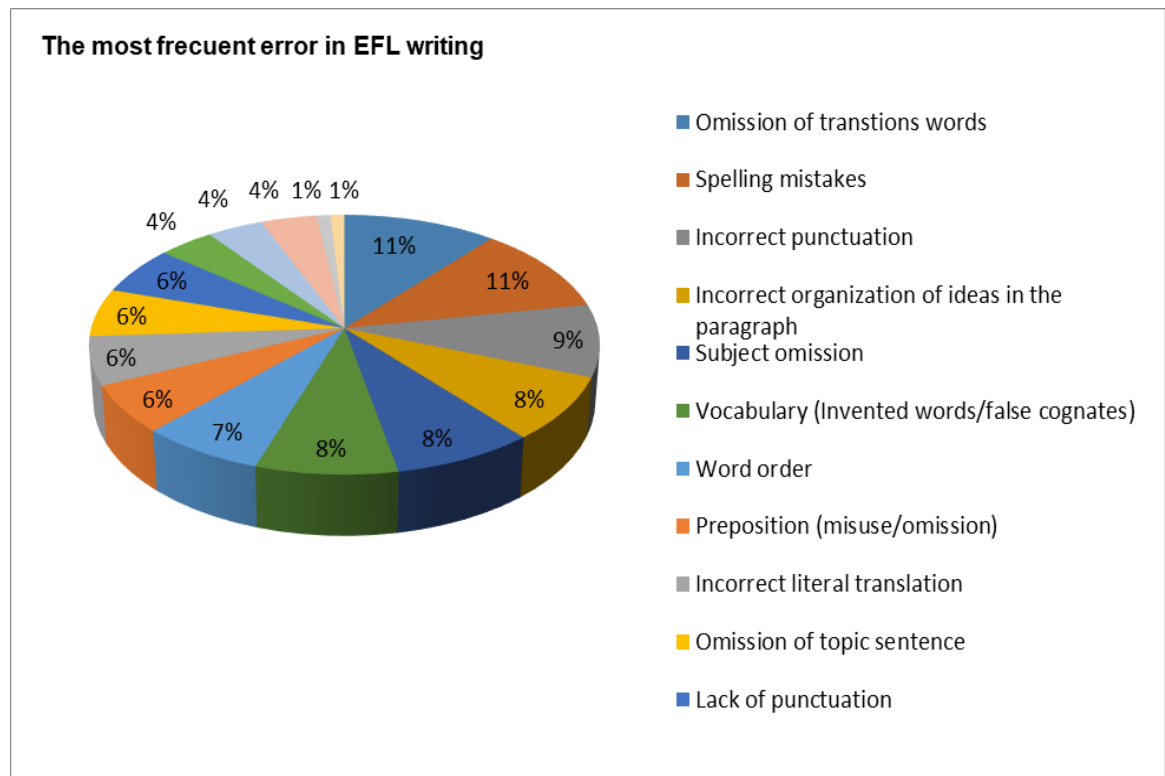
It is important to mention that students recognized mechanical aspects as a weakness not only in English but also in Spanish writing. That is to say, mechanical errors are not important for students either in Spanish or in English, and it is difficult for them to include these elements in a paragraph.

Nazim (2012) argues that mechanical process is an essential part of writing. However, most EFL students do not understand the importance of it for the writing process and EFL teachers do not explain this topic properly in their classes.

### **3.4. The most frequent error in EFL writing**

#### **GRAPH 4**





Author: Marilin Moreira.

Source: Written samples tabulation, 2017.

As Graph 4 shows, the most frequent errors found in EFL students writing samples were omission of transition words and spelling mistakes, both which amounted to 11%. In the case of omission of transition words, teachers determined that they do not highlight or correct this error, in concordance with the perceptions of the students. Students recognized that their teachers do not explain the use of transition words. It was found that spelling mistakes made by EFL students are committed because students usually forget the correct way to write words in English. Furthermore, their teachers do not have good feedback to correct those errors in English classes. In this regard, Binti (2016) explained that these kinds of errors are usually committed because students do not have the complete knowledge of the target language. It implies that students who are beginning to learn a language are not able to write without errors because writing is a complex process that requires several ingrained tools.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to this study, subject omission is the most common error committed by EFL learners in form of language aspect. Students commit this mistake because there are not enough writing activities for them to understand the importance of the correct use of subjects in writing.

Related to the content aspect, the most common error for EFL learners is the omission of transition words. It shows that students have trouble in joining sentences or phrases together, which is vital for the message to have sequence and coherence.

Spelling mistakes is the most common error committed by EFL students in the mechanical aspect. This error is committed mainly because of native language interference and also because students do not receive a good explanation from the teacher about the rules to use for spelling in English writing.

The study managed to identify specific fields in which errors were the most recurrent and prominent. The results demonstrated that subject omission; omission of transitions words; and spelling mistakes are the most frequent and leading errors committed by EFL students. The study indicates that the errors in written English, and the perception of English as a difficult language to write in, stems from lacking vocabulary with the students, preventing them from articulating their ideas properly. This deficit, in return, appears to be traced to the student not sufficiently practicing their English writing skills, thus limiting their ability to develop them.

Teachers do not provide activities that involve the development of writing skills in the classroom. In fact, the activities performed are more concerned with speaking skills rather than writing skills.

Teachers perceive that students do not have the habit to study at home, which becomes problematic because their time at school is not enough to develop many of the required activities.

Students commit errors when writing in English due to their poor knowledge on grammar and lack of practice. These aspects highly affect their performance in English writing and they are the main reason students feel demotivated because they believe they cannot do it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding subject omission, it is suggested that teachers should be conscious about the importance of the correct use of subjects in sentences in order to be able to teach and prepare the students to apply them in sentences.

EFL teachers should teach students about the role transition words have in the writing process and they should show a list of these words in order to invite learners to use them in their writing activities. This way, students will be aware about the importance of using transition words in written samples.

Teachers should invite students to read different kinds of books according to the age of the students or short stories in order to improve the spelling of words. Reading is necessary because it allows students to remember the correct way words are written.

Students should find out ways to improve their writing skills at home because the time at class is not enough to learn English. A good habit for students is to solve writing exercises at home, writing sentences or summaries about a story. As more time and effort at home is dedicated to this subject matter, one's skills can be expected to improve over time. New ways of learning how to write English, such as exercises outside of class, will allow the students to develop their writing skills more rapidly.

The study indicates that a different mentality is required, both from the student and the teacher, in order to allow for improvements in the academic results seen in English learning. A different mentality in the sense that teachers must help foster better studying habits among students through how the learning of the language is perceived. Teachers should aspire for students to perceive the learning of English as easy, simple and as a source of enjoyment. Students, on their side, should learn to see learning English as a pivotal opportunity to improve their professional opportunities in their near future.

To communicate effectively through writing, it is necessary to be able to use the rules of the English language correctly.

Writing is a skill that must be practiced. The consistent exercise of writing in the classroom is essential for the development of a proficient writer.

Teachers should make sure to keep up the motivation among students for learning writing skills in English. It is necessary because writing is a medullar part of the English language; so the development of activities that motivate students to write is important.

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## **ANNEXES**



Annex N° 1: Teacher's questionnaire



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

**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?**

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

Yes ( ) No ( )

**Why?**

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**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?**

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**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?**

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

Yes ( )    No ( )

**Why?**

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

<b>TYPE OF ERROR</b>	<b>ALWAYS</b>	<b>OFTEN</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>RARELY</b>	<b>NEVER</b>
<b>GRAMMAR ERRORS</b> (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?):

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

<b>TYPE OF ERROR</b>	<b>ALWAYS</b>	<b>OFTEN</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>RARELY</b>	<b>NEVER</b>
<b>CONTENT ERRORS:</b> 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 **mentioned 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?):

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

TYPE OF ERROR	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
<b>MECHANICAL ERRORS:</b> 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?):

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Annex N° 2: Written work



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

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GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN

Annex N° 3: Student's questionnaire



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?

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2. ¿Considera importante aprender a escribir correctamente en inglés?

Sí ( ) No ( )

Por qué?

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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?

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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?

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

Sí ( ) No ( )

¿Por qué?

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

TIPO DE ERROR	SIEMPRE	FRECUENTEMENTE	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	FRECUENTEMENTE	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.)					

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	FRECUENTEMENTE	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)					
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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!

Annex N° 4: Writing sample 1

My favorite singer  
is MOVIMENTO ORIGINAL IS A SING MORE RELAXED IS AN  
MOVIMENT CULTURAL IMPORTANT OF A CULTURE IS MOVEMENT  
OF RELAX A WRITE A PAINT IS AN FORM OF INSPIRATION  
ORIGINAL

Annex N° 5: Writing sample 2

Who has the same sentiments, listening music the  
One republic.

Annex N° 6: Writing sample 3

I listen yandel always however mine parents like rock

Annex N° 7: Writing sample 4

OUTBOY: ROB is a pop punk band of Chicago  
Illinois Formed in 2001. The band consist (in)  
four members.

Annex N° 8: Writing sample 5

My favorite singer  
My favorite singer is Alex Turner, I think he is awesome, he is 32 years old, He play the guitar, is the vocalist in Arctic Monkeys and is the vocalists, he live in United Kingdom, he is my favorite singer because he inspired me for going to be better person and he band do really good music, my favorite song is "R U Mine", Alex is actually don't do music because he is recess and in the next year he and he band do new music and promocionated new album, and I really hope he come soon and do a show-concert in the capital.

Annex N° 9: Writing sample 6

He have a pitbull dog color brown

Annex N° 10: Writing sample 7

my favorite singer  
My favorite singer is Enrique Iglesias because is a person excellent  
and know sing very good. But not all songs liked. The songs

Annex N° 11: Writing sample 8

My favorite singer Yandel  
dance the body me know it like

Annex N° 12: Writing sample 9

My favorite singer  
My favorite singer es Konne is my person in actua in  
a WWE is man in the family in the person the  
under taker. party animals

Annex N° 13: Writing sample 10

My favorite singer

I don't have a favorite singer, I have a favorite group, the name is "Orquesta Guayacan", this group do music of salsa, and salsa is my musical rhythm favorite, my group favorite have songs as "El más rico beso", is a group of Colombia, your songs are very entertainment, with a good rhythm.

Annex N° 14: Writing sample 11

OSWALDIA.

He's famous. I'm enjoyed listen singer, He's very important listen the song and write the list.

He's very handsome and sisters.

I loved the song "la boda" writing for he.

Annexe N° 15: Writing sample 12

My favorite singer is Abraham Mateo because is a long singer and compositor

Annex N° 16: Writing sample 13

I am enthusiastic were listen music Karol g is

Annex N° 17: Writing simple 14

My favorite singer  
My favorite singer is Alex Turner, I think he is awesome, he is 32 years old, He play the guitar, is the vocalist in Arctic Monkeys and is the vocalists, he live in United Kingdom, he is my favorite singer because he inspired me for going to be better person and he band do really good music, my favorite song is "R U Mine", Alex is actually don't do music because he is recess and in the next year he and he band do new music and promociated new album, and I really hope he come soon and do a show-concert in the capital.