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ESPECIALITAT DE LLENGUA I LITERATURA I ENSENYAMENT D'IDIOMES: ANGLÈS

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN AND ORAL ERRORS IN THE ENGLISH-AS-A-FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

MA DISSERTATION

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<u>Abstract</u>

This study lies within the area of Second Language Acquisition and Error Analysis by analysing the oral and written errors that 1ESO students –whose L1 is either Catalan or Spanish - make in the English-as-a-foreign-language classroom. The purpose of this study is to analyse what type of written and oral errors students of this level make and, afterwards, classify these errors into transfer or developmental errors in order to find out to what extent the L1 influences the students' production.

In the present study, written data were obtained from some compositions that students were asked to write and oral data were collected by observing the students' oral production in the English lessons during my first internship period. Results showed that the most common type of error concerns grammatical errors both in written and oral production. In the same way, at the level of 1ESO students, developmental errors are more common than transfer errors. The study thus shows that the vast majority of errors are developmental errors because students of this level are still learning new structures, and they are, hence, speculating about the use of these structures. Due to this fact, most of the errors that students make concern grammatical errors.

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Introduction

The field of Error Analysis in Second Language Acquisition has been widely studied in the last decades. However, the present study aims to find out, firstly, what written and oral errors students of 1ESO -whose L1 is either Spanish and Catalan- make and, secondly, to observe what the nature of these errors is (that is, developmental or transfer errors).

In order to conduct this study, the students of the four groups of 1ESO of IES Vicent Sos Baynat were asked to hand in some compositions that they wrote in the first semester in order to be analysed. In addition, oral mistakes were gathered by writing down all types of errors students made either while participating in class, correcting their homework, asking for doubts or reading. Afterwards, individual interviews were conducted in order to make students reflect upon the oral errors they had made and, thanks to their answers, we could differentiate between transfer and developmental errors. Finally, both written and oral errors were analyzed and classified into different categories.

The study is divided into two main parts. The first part comprises the first chapter, which focuses on transfer and language development, and in the second chapter some literature about Error Analysis is provided. As for the second part of this study, the research study is explained with a brief explanation of the procedure followed, the setting and the participants. In the last part of the study, the results of the study are analysed. Results have shown that the most common type of oral and written errors among students of 1ESO concerns grammatical structures as students seem to have problems with auxiliaries, negative structures and use of articles, among others. In addition, since students of this level are still learning new structures, most of the errors are developmental errors as students speculate about the use of the structures that they have been recently introduced.

PART I
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1

TRANSFER AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

1.1 - Language transfer. Definition and taxonomy

During the last few decades, the topic of Language transfer (henceforth, LT) or Cross-Linguistic Influence (Sharwood & Kellerman, 1986) has been crucial in the field of Second Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics since it affects the production of language of any second language learner. However, to understand what LT is, it is essential to have a clear idea of what Second Language Acquisition (SLA henceforth) refers to. According to Ellis (1991: 5) "SLA is the study of how learners learn an additional language after they have acquired their mother tongue. […] The focus has been on how L2 learners acquire grammatical structures, such as negatives or interrogatives". Nevertheless, in order to acquire new grammatical structures, learners may rely on the structures that they have already acquired in their L1 and, because of that, LT takes place. Throughout history, this topic has been widely studied and improved by linguists such as Selinker, Krashen or Odlin, among others.

Regarding the meaning of LT, Odlin (1989: 27) defines it as "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired". Faerch & Kasper (1987: 112) also provide another definition by stating that LT is "a psychological procedure by means of which L2 learners activate their L1 knowledge in developing or using their interlanguage." According to a recent study carried out by Bardovi-Harlig and Sprouse (2017: 1), transfer is known as "the influence of the learner's native language" into the language he/she is learning". In this article, they also state that transfer has normally a relationship with proficiency since the higher the proficiency of the student is, the less amount of interlanguage in the production of the target language.

Taking the above definitions into consideration, it is worth highlighting that all the authors agree that language transfer occurs when the learner establishes conscious or unconscious relationships between the native language and the target language without being aware if these relationships are or not applicable in the target language that they are learning. All languages have some vocabulary, pronunciation or some grammatical aspects that may be similar to another language. Likewise, all languages are different among themselves. Ellis (1991: 37) suggests that "learners L1 may facilitate the developmental process of learning a L2, by helping them to progress more rapidly along the 'universal' route when the L1 is similar to the L2". These differences and similarities

have a significant effect on SLA and LT since they can help the learner to acquire some grammatical structures or new vocabulary in an easier way. However, they can also confuse the learner and lead him to a misuse of a grammatical structure. Lado was one of the first authors who pointed out this fact:

> We assume that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult" (Lado, 1957: 2).

According to a study carried out by Taylor (1975, cited in Odlin, 1989), there is a significant relationship between proficiency and transfer since learners who have a low proficiency tend to rely more on their native language and, therefore, there is more language transfer in their language production. However, as learners increase their proficiency, they normally become more aware of the correct forms of the target language and the amount of transfer is, therefore, reduced.

In this paper we are going to use the words error and mistake interchangeably. Therefore, we are not taking into account the difference between these two terms put forward by Erdogan (2005). At this point, it is important to differentiate between two different types of linguistic terms referring to transfer: positive transfer and negative transfer.

1.1.1– Positive transfer

Positive transfer takes place when the native language and the target language share features that may facilitate the acquisition of the target language (Odlin, 1989). This is the reason why positive transfer is also known as "facilitation" (Gass and Selinker, 2008: 94). Similarly, Ellis (1991: 22) states that "transfer will be positive when the first and the second language habits are the same […] the similarities between languages facilitate rapid and easy learning." In other words, the closer two languages are, the easier it is for the learner to acquire a language as all the common features facilitate the production and the acquisition of this language. Owing to these language similarities, and as Odlin (1989: 36) agrees, "the time needed to develop good reading comprehension, […] and similarities in syntactic structures can be reduced since they facilitate the acquisition of grammar".

1.1.2 – Negative transfer

However, as far as negative transfer is concerned, Bardovi-Harlig and Sprouse (2017: 1) state that negative transfer occurs "when the influence of the native language leads to errors in the acquisition or use of a target language". In the same way, Odlin (1989: 36) agreed that "negative transfer involves divergences from norms in the target language and it is often relatively easy to identify". Because of that, negative transfer normally leads to the production of errors since the student transfers structures from the L1 to the target language without being aware that these structures may be different in both languages. Moreover, Odlin (1989: 36-7) distinguished four different processes related to negative transfer which are worth commenting: underproduction, overproduction, production errors and misinterpretation.

According to Odlin (1989) and Ellis (1991), Underproduction or Avoidance takes place when learners have difficulties with a certain structure that may not exist in their native language, so, therefore, they do not manage it and they tend to avoid using this structure in order not to make mistakes. In addition, and as a consequence of Underproduction, negative transfer can also occur in the way of Overproduction. That is to say, as learners avoid using a certain structure, they might over-use another structure in order to compensate this lack. As Lennon (2008: 6) states in his study, overproduction would justify the over-use of the past morpheme –*ed* in verbs that do not require this form such as in the verb "choosed*".

1.2 - Lexical transfer and cognates

Bearing in mind how much the L1 influences the acquisition of a second language and the fact that all languages may have some words that look similar, it can be very common to find lexical transfer in our students' language production. In addition, as Odlin (1989) argued, intuition also plays an important role in lexical transfer since a learner can resort to his/her L1 in order to say a word that he does not know how to express in the target language. In a study carried out by Ard and Homburg (1992) in the United States, Spanish and Arabic students were asked to do an English test and, afterwards, their results were compared. The study showed that Spanish speakers were more successful than Arabic students in the lexical part since Spaniards were able to relate Spanish spelling with English. It is true, though, that English and Spanish share more features than English and Arabic; hence, Spanish students did not only have an advantage in relating both languages but it was also easier for them to learn new vocabulary.

However, similarities between languages can also lead to confusion as it is the case of cognates or false-friends. Cognates are words whose form is very similar to another L1 word. Nonetheless, the origin of both words is completely different and so is the meaning. According to the Macmillan Dictionary, a false friend is "a word in a language that looks or sounds similar to a word in another language but means something different".

For native speakers of Catalan and Spanish, cognates are probably one of the most difficult and tricky skills to acquire while learning the English language because the large majority of cognates can be translated into Spanish in a very similar way; however, the translated meaning and the original English meaning have nothing to do. An example is the English adverb *'actually'*, which is usually translated as *'actualmente'* by Spanish native speakers. Automatically, the native speaker of Spanish might think that the real meaning of 'actually' is the correct translation in his native language but it is actually not. This is the reason why a large number of learners (who have a low proficiency in English) tend to misuse this type of words, because they unconsciously resort to translation while applying one cognate in a sentence.

To sum up, "cognates can provide not only semantic but also morphological and syntactic information, and while some of the information may be misleading, some can facilitate acquisition" (Odlin, 1989: 83).

1.3 - Syntax

Syntax is another area of difficulty when tackling the issue of language transfer. In what follows, we are going to focus on some specific topics which are usually transferred from the L1 into the L2/FL.

1.3.1 – Transfer in basic word-order patterns

All languages have different word-order patterns that characterize them and, although some may share some features, there are other languages that are completely different. Learning a new language does not only imply being aware of the differences between the word-order patterns of the L1 and the target language, but also, being able to use them correctly both orally and written. As Cook and Singleton (2014: 58) state, learners of a language "would not do very well in conversation in a second language if they didn't know its basic word order, its common inflections (or the lack of them) and

its system of articles". However, the more different two languages are, the more challenging it will be for the learner to use the target language correctly.

Although there are some features that are completely different between English and Spanish, Swan and Smith (1987: 78) show that these two languages also share some similarities such as "singular and plural forms of nouns; definite and indefinite articles; regular and irregular verbs; past, present and future senses; perfect and progressive verb forms, no declension of nouns, adjectives and pronouns". Nevertheless, Catalan and Spanish are characterized because their word-order patterns are more flexible than in English, in the sense that some structures accept two possibilities depending on the words that want to be emphasized. For instance, if we want to focus on the person who did an action we can either say *Ayer jugaron muy bien los niños* or *Los niños jugaron muy bien ayer*. In addition, Swan and Smith (1987) also state that in Spanish and Catalan frequency adverbs can be placed in different positions whereas in English they can only be placed in mid-position, as for instance: *A menudo, ella ha ayudado* and She has often helped.

One of the most typical errors of beginners' learners of English concerns the position of adjectives and nouns, since in Spanish the adjective is normally placed after the noun whereas in English adjectives are normally placed before nouns. Notice the following sentences: *Viven en la casa roja*, They live in the red house.

1.3.2 – Negation

Negation is one of the most used structures in any language; however, it is very easy to find language transfer in this kind of sentences since the structure of the sentence varies depending on the language. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), all learners go through the same stages while acquiring English negation, which are similar to the negation stages of acquisition in the first language.

The first stage is called the pre-verbal negation stage as learners tend to place the adverb 'no' or 'not' before the verb, for instance, 'no buy'. They also highlight that most Spanish learners prefer to use the adverb 'no' because negation in their mother tongue is formed with the adverb 'no', which is invariable and it is always placed before a noun or a verb (Mackenzie and Martínez, 2012). Consequently, Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that Spanish learners of English may stay longer at this stage because they are likely to transfer the Spanish negation structure very easily. In addition, in Spanish and Catalan double negation is accepted as it can be seen in the sentence *No ví a nadie* whereas in English, double negation is completely incorrect. Nevertheless, some structures such as

"I didn't call nobody" are very common among Spanish learners of English. As for the second stage, Lightbown and Spada (2013) explain that learners usually mix 'no' and 'not' with 'don't' without marking number. That is to say, they use 'don't' for both first and third person singular. Regarding the third stage, learners still use 'don't' without marking number nor tense but they start placing the negative element after auxiliary verbs such as 'is' or 'are' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 49). Finally, in the last stage, learners already mark person, tense and number while using the negative element 'don't'. However, in some cases, learners may mark tense in both auxiliary and main verb as in the example 'I didn't went there*' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 49). A summary is provided in Table 1 below with examples taken from Lightbown and Spada:

STAGE	EXAMPLE
1st stage – Pre-verbal negation	'No buy.'
2nd stage – 'no' and 'not' are alternated with 'don't'	'I don't can sing.'
3rd stage – the negative 'don't' is used without marking number nor tense.	'She don't like rice.'
4th stage – 'do' is marked for tense, person and number.	'It doesn't work.' 'I didn't go there.'

Table 1. Summary of the stages of acquisition of negation (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 48-9)

1.3.3 – Interrogatives

Interrogatives are an important part of speech since questions are present in all speech acts. However, is there any transfer from Spanish to English while asking questions? According to Swan and Smith (1987) Spanish question formation differs from English since in Spanish there is not any word that determines if a clause is a statement or a question; in other words, "auxiliaries play no part" while asking questions in Spanish since the rising intonation is what marks the question. As a result, beginner learners of English may have problems when using the auxiliaries do/does/did as they are completely new for them.

Lightbown and Spada (2013) refer to the study carried out in 1988 by Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley, in which they intended to explain the different stages of acquisition of questions in a second language, which is very similar to the acquisition of

questions in the first language. However, they realized that while acquiring questions in a second language, the structures of the L1 have an important influence on the production of questions in the L2. According to Pienemann et al.'s (1988) study, the acquisition of interrogative sentences consists of six stages. In the first stage, Lightbown and Spada (2013: 50) show that students formulate questions just by using a single word or sentence fragments such as: 'dog?'. However, in the second stage students start using declarative sentences with no inversion in other to ask questions as it is portrayed in the following example: 'It's a monster in the right corner?' Afterwards, students start fronting both the auxiliary 'do' and the 'wh-words' in stage three but without inversion, which leads to the production of sentences such as: 'Where the children are playing?'. Inversion starts to appear in stage number four, as students are aware not only of the inversion with wh-words + copula verbs but also of yes/no questions with other auxiliaries, as in 'Where is the sun?'. Finally, in stages five and six students are able to apply the inversion with wh-words both in auxiliaries and main verbs. However, it is not until the sixth stage that students are able to formulate complex questions including question tags such as 'It's better, isn't it?'; negative questions as in 'Why can't you go?' and embedded questions as for example 'Can you tell me what the date is today?'. A summary of the six stages is depicted in Table 2.

STAGE	EXAMPLES
1st stage – Single words or short sentences.	Dog?
2nd stage – Declarative sentences with NO inversion.	It's a monster in the right corner?
3rd stage – Fronting of 'do' and 'Wh-words' but NO inversion.	Where the children are playing?
4th stage – Inversion of Wh-words + copula verbs	Where is the sun?
5th stage – Inversion in all types of verbs	Where can I buy this?
6th stage – Question tags / Negative questions / Embedded questions	It's better, isn't it? / Why can't you go? / Can't you tell me what the date is today?

Table 2. Summary of stages of acquisition of question formation (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 49-51)

1.3.4 – Articles

According to Mackenzie and Martínez's (2012: 131) definition, articles are "grammatical words that precede the noun within a noun phrase […] In both English and Spanish, many – but not all- noun phrases have an article as their first word." That is to say that, normally, articles are used to introduce a noun phrase, but not all languages have articles or, if they do, they may be used in different ways. According to Cook and Singleton (2014: 66), "articles are used in many languages to convey a range of different meanings, though are completely absent from other languages. The learning of articles in a second language seems a particularly fraught enterprise".

In English there are different types of articles: the definite article 'the', the indefinite article 'a/an' and the zero article. Regarding plural nouns, both zero article or 'the' are accepted. However, as far as Spanish is concerned, articles may be used in different ways since the definite article is normally used with mass nouns and with plural countable nouns to express general meaning as in *la comida* which would be translated as "the food". Furthermore, in Spanish, the gender and the number of the noun determines the type of article that precedes.

In addition, Spanish and Catalan speakers also use the definite article before possessive pronouns as in the sentence *Éste es el tuyo y éste es el mío* whereas in English the definite article is never used in this way (Swan and Smith 1987). Regarding the indefinite article, it is worth mentioning that Spanish and Catalan speakers may use this type of article interchangeably with the number '*one*'. Notice the example *Solíamos vivir en un piso, ahora vivimos en una casa*. However, in English, it is incorrect to say "We used to live in one flat; now we live in one house*" (Swan and Smith 1987: 84), so the use of the indefinite article is fairly different in both languages and this fact may cause difficulties for the learners to acquire the target language.

The most common errors that Cook and Singleton (2014) portray in his study is the omission of articles, which although not being a major mistake, it may lead to a misunderstanding of the message that wants to be expressed. In contrast, some learners tend to use articles when articles are not required, producing sentences such as "knowledge from the books and films and take the new life into our world" (Cook and Singleton 2014: 68). In these cases, the meaning of the sentence is also affected.

1.4 – Phonetics and phonology

When speaking a foreign language, phonetics and phonology determine what the origin of the speaker is since the native accent is very easy to notice while listening to a learner of a foreign language. As Lennon (2008: 2) states in his study, "the usual direction of the influence will be from the mother tongue to the foreign language", and this will produce the typical foreign pronunciation. However, Bardovi-Harlig and Sprouse (2017) highlight that a good comprehension and the ability to communicate efficiently in a foreign language is more important than trying to eliminate the foreign accent. Moreover, as Gass and Selinker, (2008: 181) showed in their study, "the social values of sounds in the native language affect transfer". Bearing all these definitions in mind, we can state that the native language is, in a greater or lesser extent, always present while talking in a second or foreign language.

Since almost all students who participated in the study use Spanish/Catalan as their L1, we are going to analyze to what extent Spanish and Catalan have an influence on English. Gass and Selinker (2008) argue that not only sounds are transferred from one language to another, but also the L1 syllable structure. In order to exemplify this theory, they make reference to the pronunciation of the English sequence *snob* by Spanish speakers, since the sequence '*sn*' in word-initial position does not exist in Spanish and, because of that, Spanish learners of English tend to "insert an epenthetic (addition of an additional sound) vowel, producing *esnob*." (Gass and Selinker 2008: 181), since in their L1 the sequence '*es*' does exist.

In the same line, Bardovi-Harlig and Sprouse (2017) state that negative transfer has a huge effect on phonetics and phonology as some target language sounds may be completely different to some native language sounds and this can cause difficulties for the learner of the target language. For instance, Spanish and Catalan have different vowel systems and different stress patterns from English, causing that Spanish learners of English may have more difficulties to pronounce some English words. Dealing with stress patterns, Mott (2011: 189) explains that:

> "Although both Spanish and English are dynamic stress languages, the stress in Spanish is more predictable than in English, in which much greater variability of position is found. Most Spanish words have penultimate stress, many Spanish words ending in consonant have final stress, while antepenultimate stress in the least common possibility".

As Swan and Smith (1987) revealed in their study, the most common pronunciation errors of Spanish and Catalan speakers include vowels problems such as

the pronunciation of the English vowels /ɜ:/and /ə/ since Spanish does not have these vowels and, whence, these vowels are always pronounced as strong vowels. However, since Catalan speakers use the neutral vowel /ə/ in unstressed syllables, they have less problems to pronounce this vowel in English words. Furthermore, Swan and Smith (1987) also point out the fact that Spanish and Catalan speakers do not usually aspirate initial voiceless plosives (/p/, /t/, /k/) causing that sometimes, they may sound similar to /b/, /d/ and /g/ for an English native.

Another common error by Spanish and Catalan speakers refers to bilabials sounds. Since these languages just have the sound /b/ for both spellings (–b and –v), Spanish speakers tend to mispronounce the English bilabial sounds because they just pronounce /b/ both for 'bus' and for 'vowel'. Finally, spelling has normally an important influence on pronunciation, especially when students do not know how to pronounce a certain word. In these cases, they resort to pronounce the word letter by letter as in the word *asked*, mispronounced as /ɑskɛt/.

CHAPTER 2
ERROR ANALYSIS

2.- Error analysis. Definition and taxonomy

Error analysis is one of the most studied branches in the field of Applied Linguistics since it first appeared in order to prove that, unlike it was thought to be until the late sixties, errors were not only made because of the influence of the learner's native language. Researchers wanted to show that apart from language transfer, there were more universal learning strategies involved such as the ability to make predictions about all these structures received from the target language (Erdoğan, 2005). In addition, Ellis' (1991: 9) opinion about making errors is also interesting since he states that:

> Errors are an important source of information about SLA, because they demonstrate conclusively that learners do not simply memorize target language rules and then reproduce them in their own utterances. They indicate that learners construct their own rules on the basis of input data, and that in some instances at least these rules differ from those of the target language.

As Erdoğan (2005) states, many studies have shown that learning a second language works similarly to the acquisition of the first language. That is to say that, it is completely natural and essential that children make mistakes while learning their first language as thanks to these mistakes, they get feedback and they learn how to produce language correctly. The same happens with the acquisition of a second or a foreign language; the learner needs to make mistakes in order to notice what is correct and what is not. In other words, learners need to make mistakes, they need to know what their weaknesses and their strengths are while producing language in order to improve their language (Lennon 2008). Nevertheless, in order to make a progress in language learning learners need to make mistakes and get feedback. But errors are not only useful for students because as Heydari and Bagheri (2012) explains in his study, teachers can also benefit from students' errors in order to put more emphasis on those aspects in which students show gaps in.

Erdoğan (2005) argues that not all the errors should be corrected so as not to discourage the students. The teacher's job is, first, listen to the students and notice the error and, therefore, try to find out if it is a global or a local error. It is important to consider that all these errors that hinder communication and can lead to a misunderstanding of the meaning (global errors) should be corrected immediately in order to avoid the student to fossilize the error. Nevertheless, minor errors (local errors) such as the use of articles and plurals are less serious since the meaning of the sentence is not affected. Bearing this in mind, Erdoğan (2005: 268) states that "priority in error correction should be given to global errors in order to develop the students' communication skills".

2.1- Different types of errors

In order to analyze errors, Erdoğan (2005) relied on Brown's (2000) distinction between global and local errors. He stated that whereas local errors do not hinder the comprehension of the message since they consist on minor errors that do not prevent the listener from understanding the message, global errors do hinder communication as they may lead to a misunderstanding of the sentence. Notice the following examples from Erdoğan (2005: 264) article in which the difference between global and local errors is easily noticed:

- *'I like bus but my mother said so not that we must be late for school'.* In this sentence, the meaning is difficult to be understood whereas in the sentence

- *'If I hear from her, I would let you know'* the error is not so serious as it does not hinder the understanding of the sentence. However, even though the verb 'hear' is not the most appropriate to use in this context, the listener can have an idea of what is intended to be said.

2.2 - Transfer and Developmental errors

An important factor related to the field of error analysis is recognizing the origin of errors. Some errors may come from the influence of the L1, as it has already been explained in the field of language transfer. As Heydari and Bagheri (2012) shows in his study, in the field of Error Analysis, the origin of errors has been called in many different ways by different linguists. However, I am going to base my study on the terminology that Richards (1974) and, later on, Brown (1980) used. They called 'interlingual errors' to these errors that are produced because of negative influence from the native language, hence, L1 transfer errors (Heydari and Bagheri 2012). For instance, interlingual transfer easily occurs when two words of two different languages look similar in form but they have completely different meanings (See Section 1.2).

Apart from interlingual transfer and L1 transfer errors, there are some errors that are made just because the learner has not totally acquired the target language yet, therefore, he/she is generalizing the rules of that language (Brown, 1980). These errors are produced because of intralingual transfer and, as Richards (1974) states, they can also be called developmental errors (Heydari and Bagheri 2012). Lennon (2008: 3) also

provides a different definition of this term by stating that developmental errors are errors "that learners tend to make regardless of their first language background".

2.3 – Written and Oral Errors

There is a significant difference between written and oral errors since oral errors occur when students are requested to talk orally and, hence, in a fluent way. Because of that, it is advisable not to interrupt the student every time he/she makes an error as this can frustrate and demotivate the learner (Erdoğan, 2005). Moreover, it is worth considering that while doing oral activities, students barely have time to prepare what they want to say, so they have to improvise and be spontaneous, and therefore, they are more prone to make mistakes. This could probably be avoided if students had more time to think what to say. Taking this into account, teachers should only correct oral errors when they hinder meaning or when the teacher wants a certain grammar point to be practiced and this structured is misused.

However, as far as written errors are concerned, Heydari and Bagheri (2012) argues that written data is very useful for the teachers as it can help them to notice students' difficulties while using the language. However, while writing errors can be easily avoided as, normally, in written tasks students do not only have more time to think what to write and how to write it but they are usually provided with some extra paper in case they want to write a draft before writing the final version. The fact of having more time to think does make a difference in the quality of language production since students can think of different structures and different ways to express what they want to say before choosing the most accurate way.

In order to correct written errors, Erdoğan (2001) suggests to not directly provide the correct form to student's errors but to mark where the error is by using a code such as 'sp' for spelling or 'gr' for grammar. By not providing the correct option directly, the learner is expected to identify what the mistake is and, therefore, correct it. However, although this method is effective in the sense that students are intended to think twice about what to write, not many teachers put it into practice since some think that it is a waste of time as students will not correct them.

PART II

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN AND ORAL ERRORS IN THE ENGLISH-AS-A-FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

3. The Study

3.1 – Objectives and Research Questions

Once the theoretical framework has been introduced in Part I, in the following sections we are going to focus on the main objective of this study. This research study aims to analyze the oral and written errors that students of 1st of ESO (1ESO, henceforth) make and try to find out the nature of these errors. Therefore, we have formulated the following research questions:

1. What type of oral and written errors do students of 1ESO make?
2. Are the errors made developmental or transfer errors?

Bearing in mind that the participants of the study are students of 1ESO, the number of errors is expected to be rather high since the level of proficiency of students at this age is normally low and they produce language with the hope of receiving feedback in order to improve. However, we, as teachers, have to consider what errors are unacceptable at this level and what errors cannot be punished as students might not have studied the grammar they are misusing yet. We have to be aware that we do not want to demotivate our young students, so we cannot correct each and every error that they make at this level.

3.2 – Method

3.2.1 – Setting

The secondary school in which the study was carried out was IES Vicent Sos Baynat, located in a medium-class area in Castellón called Rafalafena. Nowadays, this high school offers courses of ESO and Batxillerat in the fields of Sciences and Technology, Social Sciences and Arts. In addition, since this high school is enrolled in the Pluriligualism Program since the academic year 2011-2012, there is a native English language assistant whose job is to reinforce the use of English not only in the English subject but also in other subjects such as Technology. Considering this, our students are exposed to English not only in their English lessons but also in other subjects, which means that apart from the vocabulary included in the First Foreign Language curriculum, they also have the chance to learn new vocabulary from other fields in English.

As far as the English language lessons are concerned, it is worth taking into account that in all levels and in all groups, the means of communication used by the

teacher is English. Nevertheless, students normally use their mother tongue to ask questions or to interact with their classmates but, whenever possible, they are requested to talk in English. In order to foster the students' use of the English language not only with the teacher but also with their classmates, my tutor and I decided to implement the Chungo-Point method (Rubio, 2006) in the 1ESO classrooms during my first period of the internship. This method consists of a game in which students are intended to speak in English not only to ask questions and correct the exercises, but also to interact with their friends. In case a student turns to their mother tongue and the teacher hears him talking in Spanish, this student is given a Chungo-Point, "which is a little teacher-made laminated paper rectangular card" (Rubio, 2006: 2). In order for the student to get rid of the Chungo Point, he has to pay attention in order to listen to one of his/her classmates that is not using English in the classroom. Then, he can give the Chungo-Point to him. By playing this game, we encouraged our students to use English in the classroom and, hence, it was easier for me to notice their most common oral errors.

3.2.2 – Participants

The study was carried out in the four groups of 1ESO. However, it is worth considering that each group is divided into two and my tutor had just half of the class. In this way, the average number of students per class is 12and each group has three hours of English per week.

In the first group (1ESO A) there were 12 students, 8 girls and 4 boys. According to the teacher, this is the 1ESO group with the highest level of English. Moreover, taking into account the results of the survey I gave to them at the beginning of my internship, I noticed that the five students who go to English extra classes had a higher English level and, therefore, were more participative in class. Regarding group B, which was also formed by 12 students (7 girls and 5 boys), students were very participative and it was easy to collect data from them. However, only 6 students out of 12 were willing to participate. The third group (1ESO C) was composed of 13 students (9 girls and 4 boys). This was a good group since 7 students were very participative and the difference in proficiency was easily noticeable among the different students in this class. Finally, as for the last group (1ESO D) composed of 12 students (4 girls and 8 boys), it is worth considering that this was not an easy group since just four students showed interest in the subject. However, the English level of these three students was quite good as they normally attended extra English classes.

In Table 3, a summary of the results from the background questionnaire that was given to the students (See Appendix 1) is provided:

	1ESO A	1 ESO B	1 ESO C	1 ESO D
Total number of students	**12**	**12**	**13**	**12**
Boys	4	5	4	8
Girls	8	7	9	4
Spanish as L1	8	7	9	8
Catalan as L1	4	3	2	4
Other L1 language	1 (Romanian)	1 (Romanian) 1 (Moldavian)	1 (Arabic) 1 (Romanian)	-
Extra classes	5	5	5	5

Table 3. Students' background questionnaire.

3.2.3 – Data collection produce

Data collection took place at two times: the largest amount of data collection was conducted in the first period of my Master's Internship from the 3rd to the 23th February, 2017; secondly, during the second period from the 3rd April to the 17th May, I also had the chance to collect more data.

Firstly, a questionnaire of six questions asking for personal details about the students' language learning history was given to the students of all 1ESO groups. The aim of this questionnaire was to know more about the language that students used in their everyday life, the number of years of exposure to English, if they spoke any other language and if they used English outside the classroom, either in extra classes or watching movies and listening to music (See Appendix 1).

Oral mistakes were gathered by writing down all types of errors they made either while participating in class, correcting their homework, asking for doubts or reading. Afterwards, these oral errors were written down and classified into two categories: grammar errors and lexical errors. Next to each error, the name of the student who made the error was also written down as I needed to know who had made the error in order to carry out an individual interview with the student. In those interviews, I wanted the students to reflect upon the errors they had made since my aim was to find out whether students were aware that they had said something wrong or if they just said it the way

they did because they translated the structure from their L1. As far as written errors are concerned, the teacher asked the students to give me the composition they had written in the first semester in order for me to analyze it. In addition, during the second period of my internship, I asked the students to write another composition using the past tense and using, therefore, both regular and irregular verbs, as it was the grammar point that they had been working on for the past two weeks. Once the compositions were corrected, the different errors were highlighted in different colors so as to classify them into grammar errors, lexical errors, spelling errors and word order errors.

3.3– Data analysis

Despite the fact that written data were collected in the four groups of students, our analysis will only focus on those students who produced both written and oral data for comparability issues. Therefore, some written data remains unanalyzed for the purposes of the present study.

3.4. Results and discussion related to Research Questions 1

The aim of Research Question 1 is to analyze the type of oral and written errors that students of 1ESO make. In order to obtain a clear idea of what the most common written and oral errors are, this section has been divided into two. Firstly, the total of written errors make by students of 1ESO is shown in Figure 1.

WRITTEN ERRORS

Spelling errors
26%

Vocabulary errors
20%

Grammar errors
54%

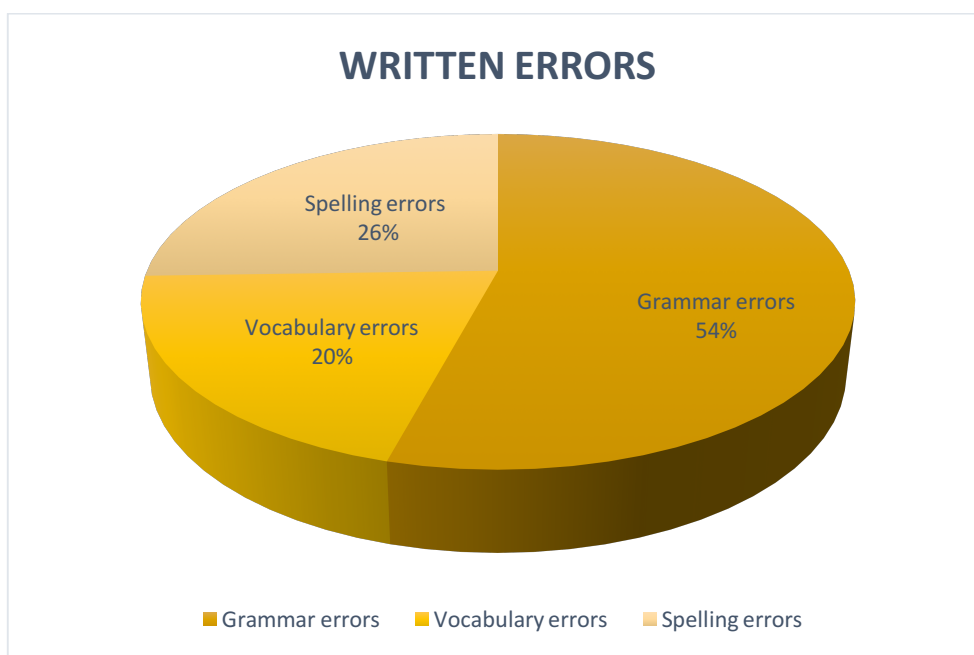■ Grammar errors ■ Vocabulary errors ■ Spelling errors

Figure 1. Written errors

Notice that the large majority of errors (54%) are grammatical errors, followed by spelling errors (26%) and vocabulary errors (20%). Details of the most common written errors made by students are explained below in Figure 2:
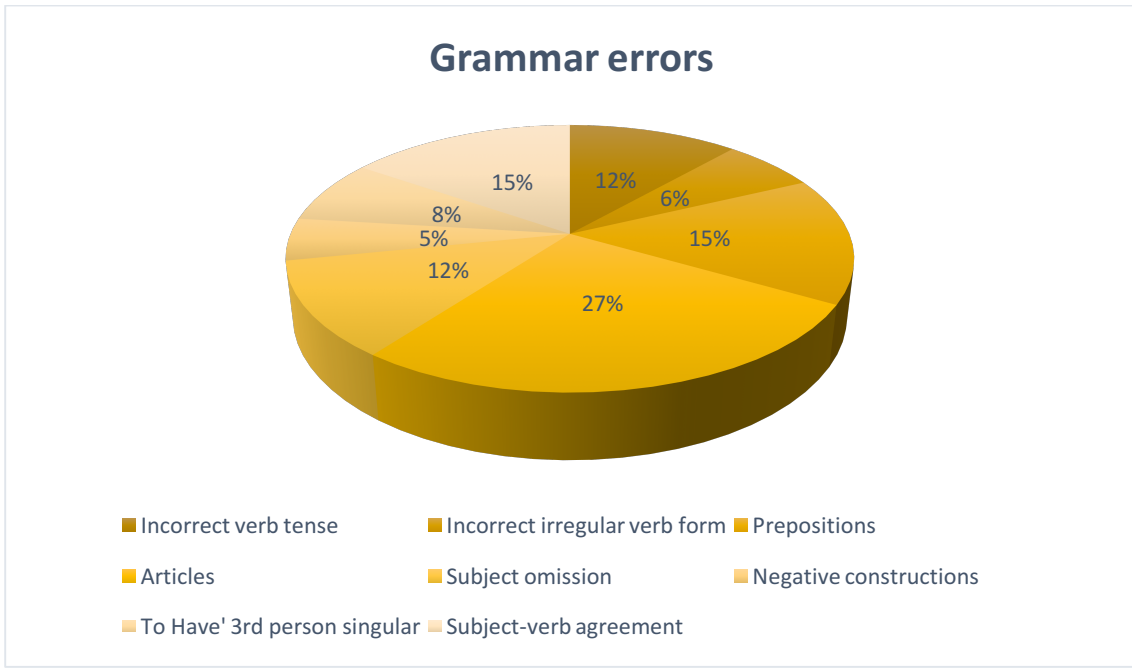

Figure 2. Types of grammar errors

Results have shown that students of this level have problems with verb tenses since they tend to use the present tense while talking about the past (14%) as it is portrayed in the following example:

(1) At 8am I go to Valencia Airport (while talking about what the student did on Easter).

Similarly, since students were introduced the irregular verbs while I was doing my internship, some errors included these verbs, as students might speculate on the correct form of the verbs:

(2) I tecked a shower.

(3) I went home and I taked a shower.

As far as prepositions were concerned, students either used an incorrect preposition or they omitted it (see Examples 4 and 5 below):

(4) We eat salad and meat to lunch.

(5) We go a disco.

As for articles, we have corroborated in our written data what Cook and Singleton (2014) stated that Spanish learners tend to use articles when they are not required as exemplified in the following example:

(6) How are the things?

In addition, some students tended to omit the article 'the' before singular nouns:

(7) I was tired of being all afternoon running.

Turning to subject omission, in both Spanish and Catalan the subject can be omitted whereas in English the subject can never be deleted at the beginning of a sentence. However, 9% of the errors included this type of grammatical error since students still transferred this structure from their L1.

(8) The Tower of London is the Real Palace of the Queen. Is near the Thames River.

(9) Is one of the three museums located in a street called Exhibition Road.

There was also omission of auxiliary verbs in compound verb forms such as the present continuous:

(10) We going to Valencia

(11) I eating in the restaurant.

Regarding negative constructions, we would like to make reference to what Lightbown and Spada (2013) explained about the fact that some Spanish learners tended to mix the negative particle 'not' with 'don't' without marking number since in the data collected, many examples of this type were observed. In addition, there were also some sentences that showed that at an early stage, learners used 'don't' without marking number nor tense. Notice the following examples:

(12) I not like do homework

(13) She don't go to school today

We also found an incorrect use of the verb TO HAVE in third person singular:

24

(14)   Toby haves Art once a week

(15)   Jack haves drama classes three times a week.

Finally, subject-verb agreement was also the cause of some students' mistakes. Since the addition of the 3rd person –s is something that neither the Spanish nor the Catalan language has, it is difficult for students to develop the habit of adding this morpheme at the end of the verb, resulting into sentences such as:

(16)   Victor drink a lot of milk.

(17)   Veronica eat some Indian food.

Once grammar errors have been analyzed, we move to results for vocabulary errors (See Figure 3):
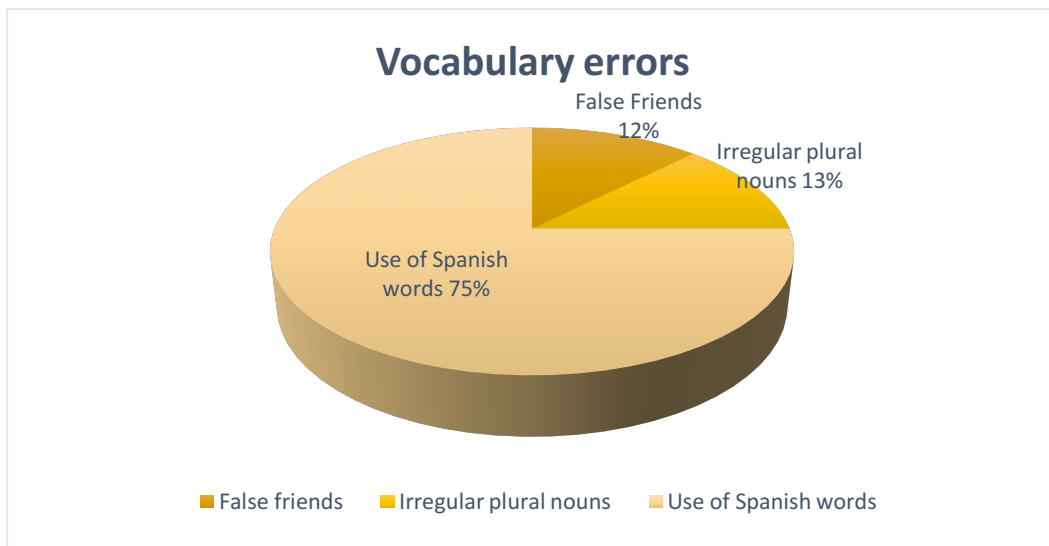

Figure 3. Vocabulary errors

Results show that false cognates amounted to just 12% of the vocabulary errors. However, some students misused some words that looked similar to any word of their L1 as in the following example:

(18)   Actually (Nowadays) there are around 300.000 objects

The misusing of irregular plural nouns were also common in students of this level.

(19)   The population is about 47.000.000 of persons (people)

As shown in Figure 3, most of the vocabulary errors (75%) may occur because, as Odlin (1989) stated in his study, beginner students tend to rely on their intuition and their resort to their L1 in order to say a word that they do not know how to express in their target language. This makes the students use some Spanish words in order to express themselves as it is portrayed in the examples below:

(20)   I went to the hípica

(21)   But my verdader love is my brother

Turning our attention to spelling errors, we may claim, as attested by Figure 4 below, that the vast majority of this type of mistakes relate to the influence that the English pronunciation has while writing the word in English as in:

(22)   It is one of the most famous monuments all over the *wall* (world)

(23)   Harrods was very *spensif* (expensive)

Spelling errors

Spanish influence
11%

Pronunciation
influence
89%

■ Spanish influence ■ Pronunciation influence

Figure 4. Spelling errors

However, it has been shown that Spanish also has an influence when spelling English words, as some students transferred the spelling of some L1 words into the target language.

(24)   My favorite *grups*… (groups)

(25)   I'm from Castellón in the *est* of Spain (East)

Moving to the results for oral errors, Figure 5 illustrates that one third of oral errors made by 1ESO students are related with grammar (75%), whereas vocabulary errors only represent 25% of the total amount of mistakes. An analysis of these errors follows so as to ascertain what type of both grammar and vocabulary mistakes our participants made.

ORAL ERRORS

Vocabulary errors 25%

Grammar errors 75%

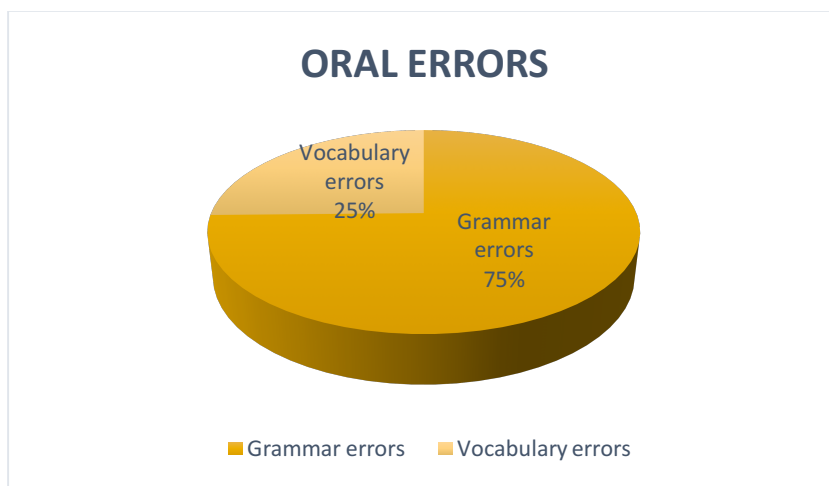■ Grammar errors ■ Vocabulary errors

Figure 5. Oral errors

As far as grammatical oral errors are concerned, 42% were related to problems in third person subject-verb agreement in affirmative, negative sentences and questions.

(26)   Troy *have* a book

(27)   He *haves* a cat

Grammar errors

16%

36%

6%

42%

■ Omission auxiliary verbs ■ Subject-verb agreement
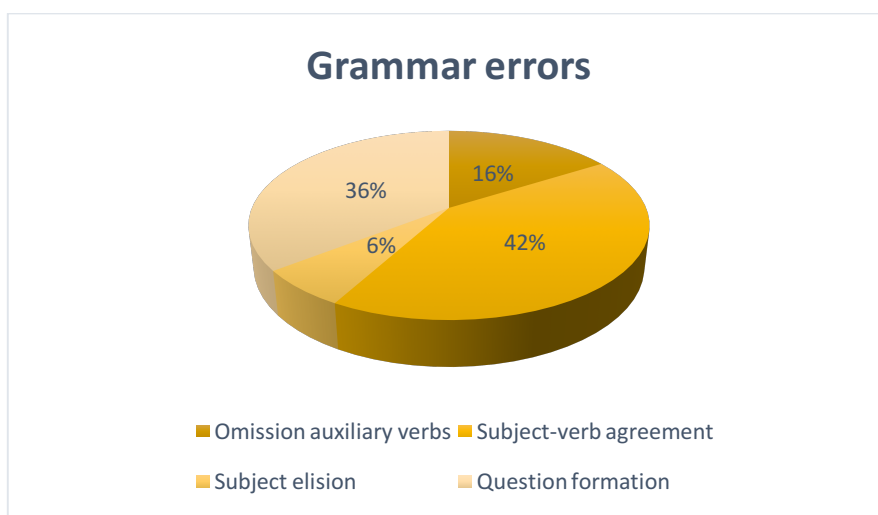■ Subject elision ■ Question formation

Figure 6. Grammar errors

Question formation was also a common error while speaking because as Swan and Smith (1987) put forward, question formation in English differs from Spanish in the sense

that in Spanish questions are characterized by a rising intonation instead of a different word order as in English. Because of that, learners are prone to form questions in the same word order as affirmative sentences, as the following examples illustrate:

(28)   I can say 'one orange juice?'

(29)   There is a cat on the window?

Omission of the auxiliary verb while using compound verb forms was also a rather common error in oral production:

(30)   I making a cake.

(31)   I always cooking dinner

Although in only 6% of the total of errors, subject elision was also present in oral speech as it occurred in written errors. However, results reveal that subject elision is less frequent in oral speech than in written production.

(32)   Was a war and many people died.

(33)   Is missing the class

Some mistakes were due to incorrect use of prepositions:

(34)   The pen is *in* the floor.

(35)   I'm sitting *in* a table

Our participants also made errors in the use of present tense while talking about something that happened in the past. As was also found in written production, students at this level tended to mix the present with the past while speaking, uttering sentences such as:

(36)   She gives me this as a present (while talking about the present that her friend gave her before the English class).

(37)   In Maths I see a tree that did like this (she was trying to explain that while she was in Maths, she saw a tiny tree moving because of the wind).

Within oral errors, vocabulary mistakes included false friends, plural and use of Spanish words (see Figure 7):
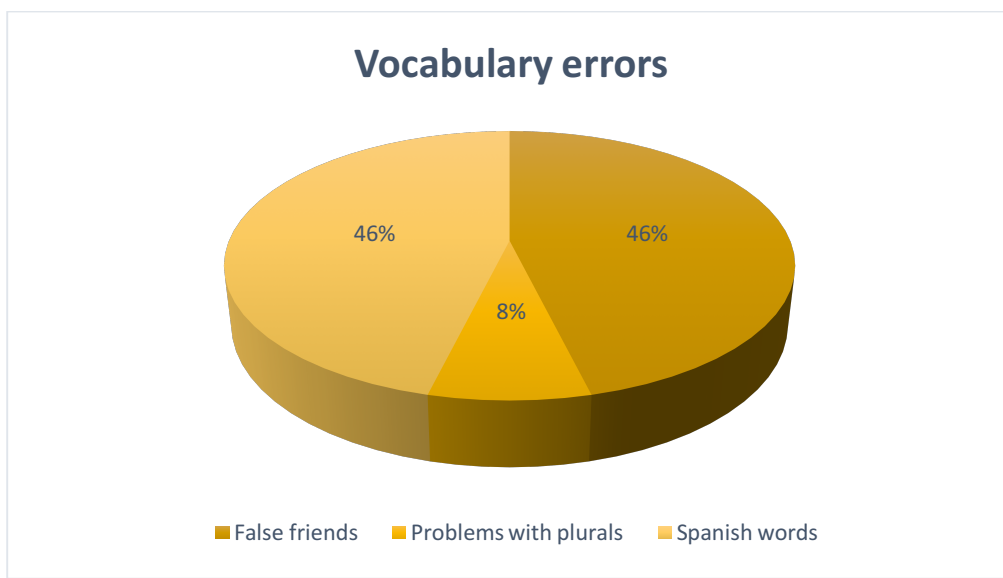
Figure 7. Vocabulary errors

First of all, it is noticeable the high use of false cognates, which represent 46% of the total amount of oral vocabulary errors:

(38)   Plant – Some students understood this Word as *planta* (floor) instead of a tree.

(39)   Carpet – Some students understood this Word as *carpeta* (folder).

(40)   There are some *coffees* in my area – The student wanted to say 'cafés' or coffee shops.

As in written production, transfer of Spanish words is also common in oral speech. Nevertheless, it is interesting to focus on one specific example in which the Spanish plural word *deberes* has been transferred to English also in plural:

(41)   Homeworks instead of homework.

The use of Spanish in words that students do not know how to say in English was also common in oral production as shown in the examples below:

(42)   She says she has 40 of *fiebre*

(43)   This is *igual* a positive?

(44)   *Deportive* cars

3.5 – Results and discussion related to Research Question 2

In Research Question 2, we aim to discover the nature of errors (i.e., transfer errors or developmental errors). In order to analyze this second research question, first we are going to focus on written errors and, afterwards, on oral errors.

Figure 8. Transfer or developmental written errors

Figure 8 shows that 74% of the errors may be regarded as developmental errors because, at the level of 1ESO, students are still acquiring new structures and they are, therefore, starting to use them. This is the reason why many of the structures used were incorrect either mainly because students had not acquired the correct structure yet as exemplified in the following examples:

> (45)   Tomorrow we go to Milan – Since students have just been introduced the use of the Present Continuous to talk about future arrangements, some of them show problems with this structure.

> (46)   I reading in the restaurant – Omission of the auxiliary verb in compound verb tenses.

Consequently, we believe that 26% of errors were transfer errors since students tended to translate a Spanish structure into English, which also proves that students were testing hypotheses about new structures that they had recently learned and that they might have had problems with. Some examples of transfer errors included sentences like:

> (47)   I'm fan of Ariana Grande – *Soy fan de Ariana grande.*

(48)   I stayed to sleep at her house – *Me quedé a dormir a su casa.*

(49)   At the 11am, I read the book of Valencian – *A las 11 leo el libro de valenciano.*

Regarding oral errors, results show that 63% of errors were developmental whereas just 37% were transfer (see Figure 9). As with written errors, students at this stage are beginners and they are introduced lots of new structures that they try to use also while interacting in class. However, since these structures have not been totally acquired yet, they are normally misused. Developmental oral errors included structures such as:

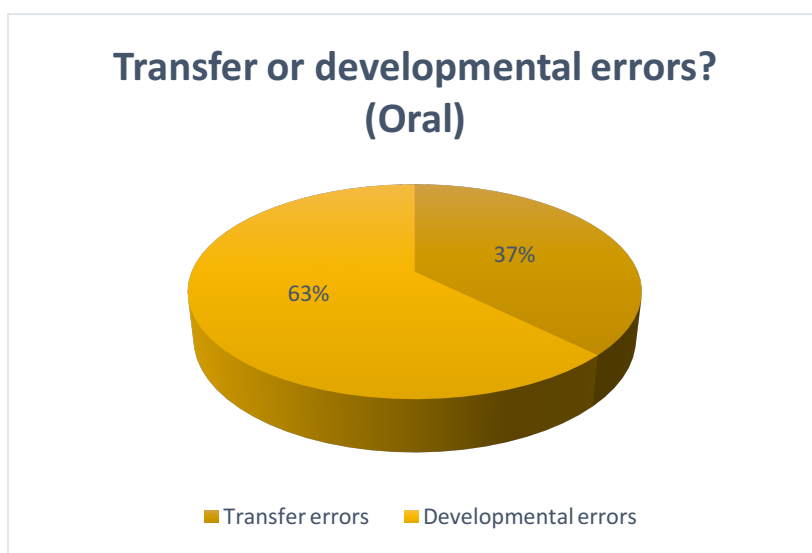(50)   Troy *have* a book

(51)   I always cooking

Figure 9. Transfer or developmental oral errors

Furthermore, we may claim that transfer errors were present in oral speech since students used grammatical structures that they literally translated from their L1 as in the sentence:

(52)   I'm sitting in a table.

Likewise, some vocabulary was also transferred from Catalan and Spanish as it is the case of false cognates, as shown in the following instances:

(53)   Carpet was misused as *carpeta* (folder).

(54)   Titanic was a *transatlantic* ship.

Summing up the results, it is interesting to highlight that some of the theoretical points that have been explained in the first part of this study are confirmed in the present results. For instance, Cook and Singleton (2014) agreed that the most common type of errors regarding articles concern either their omission or their over-using as it has been portrayed in the examples taken from our data. Likewise, our results also corroborated what Lightbown and Spada (2013) agreed about the acquisition of negative structures since Spanish and Catalan learners tend to mix 'not' with 'don't' without marking number due to the Spanish transfer of the negative adverb *no*. This was shown in many utterances that students of 1ESO said as it has been previously exemplified.

The results also portrayed what Odlin (1989) stated about how frequent is among beginners to rely on their intuition and, therefore, to resort to their L1 in order to express a word that they do not know how to say in the target language. As it is depicted in Figure 7, the large majority of vocabulary errors are related with Spanish transfer.

The theory of question formation by Swan and Smith (1987) is also confirmed with our results since the large majority of errors concerning this structure show that students of this level tend to form questions in the same word order as affirmative sentences. That is to say that according to Swan and Smith (1987), the students of 1ESO who took part in the study might be between the second and the third stage of the acquisition of question formation.

Taking all these points into consideration, we may claim that at the level of 1ESO there is more negative transfer than positive transfer in the oral and written production of the target language since the large majority of errors are caused because of the influence of the L1 and, as students have not totally acquired the new grammatical structures they have been taught yet, they tend to make more errors. Notice that the large majority of errors are related with false cognates, words transferred from Spanish and incorrect word order in interrogative and negative sentences that have been transferred from Spanish.

4.- CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study aimed to find out what the most common errors made by L1 Spanish/Catalan 1ESO students in the English-as-a-foreign-language classroom are. The data came from some compositions students wrote in the first semester and a composition using the past tense that students were asked to write once they had been introduced the

past simple tense. Oral data were collected by gathering students' oral production during the English lessons. Although we only had the chance to conduct this study on 12 students of each group, the study shows a number of findings that can be interesting for further research in the field of Error Analysis and Language Transfer.

To begin with, it is worth highlighting that students of this level make more grammatical errors than vocabulary and spelling errors. Surprisingly, the most common written grammar errors concern the use of articles and prepositions whereas the most common oral errors are related with the formation of structures such as negative and interrogative sentences. This is probably because, while speaking, students barely have time to think, and that may lead to the incorrect formation of some target language structures which are completely different in the native language of the students. However, while writing, students have more time to think how to write a certain structure and these types of errors are minimal. In terms of vocabulary errors, both in oral and written data, Spanish transfer is present in words that students do not know how to say in the target language and they automatically use the Spanish word. However, while speaking, the use of false cognates is higher than in writing. Bearing all these facts in mind, we may conclude that when students have more time to think what to say or what to write, they tend to make more minor mistakes than when they hardly have time to think the structures that they have to use.

Secondly, results of the present study have shown that, at the level of 1ESO, the large majority of errors are developmental errors since students are being taught new structures that they do not manage yet. Consequently, they speculate about the use of some verb tenses, auxiliaries etc., without being completely aware whether what they are using and the way they are using these structures is correct or not.

The present study is subject to a number of limitations. First, the small sample of participants does not allow for generalization of findings. Second, the low level of the students may explain why most errors belong to the category of developmental ones. Perhaps high-proficient students may have performed differently and thus different results may have been obtained. Also, the fact that the students' L1 (either Catalan or Spanish) is typologically close to English may explain some of our findings.

All in all, in this small-scale investigation we have tried to analyze type and nature of errors in an EFL setting. Yet, in order to get a wider idea of what the most common types of errors are and what the source of these errors is at this level of secondary school

education, further research should be carried out taking the above-mentioned limitations in mind, which would provide more data with more generizable results.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire about the students' language learning history

Nom i Cognoms: **Curs:**   **Grup:**

1.- On vas néixer?

2.- Quina és la teva llengua materna? En cas d'haver-ne dues, nombra les dues en ordre d'ús.

3.- A quina edat vas començar a estudiar anglès?

4.- Utilitzes l'anglès a casa?
        Sí. Miro pel·lícules en anglès
        Sí. Escolto la ràdio i cançons en anglès
        Sí. Parlo anglès amb els meus pares
        No.

5.- Vas a alguna acadèmia extra escolar d'anglès?

6.- Parles algun altre idioma a part de l'anglès? Quin? Quan vas començar-lo a estudiar?

Appendix 2: Sample essays

Saturday

In the morning, I got up soon [early] to get dressed with the typical costume of Castellón, because I had to go to a "pregonet" of Lledó with the "El Forcat" dance group.

There were many horses carriages, dance groups, the giants and the children's festival queen.

I started in the Calle Sant Roque and finished in the Plaza Mayor.

In the afternoon, I went to a village of Valencia with the colla that touch [play] the "dolçaina".

We went to a parade of Moros and Cristianos to play with "El Ballet de Llum d'Orient".

The parade finished at 20:30 and I arrive [get] at home very late.

In [At] the night, I had dinner and I started to [watch] [see] a film on TV.

Hi Alexa,

How are the things? We are ok at the end of the [the] year excursion. We are at [in] "Portaventura", we are having a very good time, we stay [stayed] in the bus for one hour and half. And when we arrived, we went to have lunch in [at] a [one] restaurant called "Botabara". Next, we go [went] to see all the park and (show) all the amusments. It's amazing, we are going to stay [stay] here [heer] a little bit [bit] more of time and then, we go [are] back to Castellon. And that's all.

Write soon.

XOXOXO

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Last Saturday

On Saturday morning, I woked ~ up at eight o'clock. I studied
a little beat *bit*, I had breackfast and then I put my
horse riding clothes. At 9:30 I went to the hípica *horseriding / equestrian*. At
one o'clock I arrived at home I tecked *took* a shower, I got
dressed and I studied a little beat *bit* more.

At 14:30, I went to my grandparents' house and I ate
there. At 16:00 I went to my home, I studied and then
I went to meet *met* Yasmine, Amanda, Duna and Núria

In the evening we were around the centre. At nine
o'clock I went home to take my bag because that
night I stayed to sleep *slept* at Yasmine's home.

Ⓐ