



## The Impact of Error Analysis and Feedback in English Second Language Learning

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### Abstract

This study examines written errors in a corpus of 30 compositions produced by 15 students of English as a second language (L2), whose first language (L1) is Spanish. Their ages range from 10 to 11. This paper identifies grammar errors as the most frequent due to L1's interference in L2 learning. Positive, focused, indirect written feedback is proven to be the most effective, and the L1 seems to help the students to understand the teacher's metalinguistic explanation to correct errors and avoid mistakes. These results provide insight into language learning given that they offer information regarding the teaching practice.

**Keywords:** Error analysis; Positive; Focused; Indirect written corrective feedback; L2 English; L1 Spanish.

### 1. Introduction

Maria Montessori defended that mistakes have the purpose of learning (Montessori, 1967). Teachers of English as a second language (L2, hereinafter) deal with similar errors and mistakes. While errors show that learners have not reached the L2, mistakes are the result of a developing L2 performance (Corder, 1974). Some errors are usually repeated in the students' production of the L2. Therefore, some action needs to be taken in the teaching and learning tasks.

This paper aims to identify and prevent the most frequent errors found in writing. It also aims to identify the most suitable type of feedback, namely, the one that helps students learn from their errors and avoid mistakes. This research is relevant to second language teaching (SLT, hereinafter) since it contributes to a better understanding and improvement in the teaching of this subject. More specifically, the present study has tested 15 participants (aged 10-11) coursing the 6th Grade of Primary Education in an English-Spanish bilingual school in Madrid (Spain).

Regarding language development, comprehension evolves ahead of production (Berk, 2012). This study will prove that L2 English teachers usually find the same errors every time students' writings are corrected. Attention to avoiding fossilization has also been taken into account.<sup>1</sup> Feedback is considered to be an effective teaching tool in helping students so that mistakes can be avoided. As already mentioned, this paper also aims to identify the most suitable type of feedback for L2 English students of Primary Education, and therefore, positive, focused, indirect written feedback (with a metalinguistic explanation) will be implemented in the study. The language used when giving feedback to students (that is to say, their first language (L1) or their L2) will also be discussed.

Literature review on Error Analysis in the field of L2 English learning has reported that the interference of our L1 is highly present among beginner students. This interference results in what we call interlingual errors. Other types of errors are found later, and these are called intralingual errors (Brown, 2007; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Oller and Richards, 1973).

The present work is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses earlier formal works on Error Analysis in SLT, and the role played by feedback in L2 English students' output. Section 3 explores empirical works on Error Analysis and the effects that L2 English teachers' feedback have on the students' performance. Section 4 formulates the research questions (RQs, hereinafter) that will guide the data analysis. Section 5 addresses the methodology followed in the empirical study. Sections 6 and 7 present the data examined and the discussion of findings, respectively. Section 8 draws conclusions and suggests lines for future research.

<sup>1</sup> Fossilization refers to the process in which incorrect language becomes a habit and cannot be easily corrected (Selinker (1972). *Interlanguage. International review of applied linguistics in language teaching*, 10: 209-41.

## 2. Formal Works on Error Analysis and Feedback

Applied Linguistics helps us to look at a wide range of theories that have accounted for the nature of errors. Contrastive Analysis emerged in the 1950s and shed light on the similarities and the differences between the L1 and the L2. According to this theoretical approach, errors were always the result of the interference from the L1 into the L2.

Error Analysis was born in the following decade as a reaction to Contrastive Analysis. It described learners' interlanguage for the first time, that is to say, the learners' version of the L2. It focuses on the linguistic aspects of the learners' errors and not so much on their L1. This change of paradigm was possible thanks to contributions to the field such as Mackey (1965), who proved that different learners with shared L1 make different mistakes. Recent studies on Error Analysis lend support to the Contrastive Analysis Theory since they claim that while interlingual errors (or transfer from L1 into L2) appear more at beginner levels, intralingual errors start to appear as learners progress in learning the L2 (Brown, 2007; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Oller and Richards, 1973).

The Interlanguage Theory, as suggested by Selinker (1972), would go further by drawing attention to the possibility that the learner's language can be regarded as a distinct language or system with its own particular characteristics and rules. Indeed, SLT methodology has moved from the concept of error as evidence for ineffective teaching to the concept of error as a tool to understand language learning effectively.

Behaviourism believed in habit formation through correct language drilling. Errors were wrong habits that should always be eradicated (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Behaviorism supported linguistic structuralism and resulted in traditional methods in SLT.

Reactions to Behaviorism appeared with generativist methods that emphasize meaningful learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). These methods allowed the fossilization of L2 students' errors and mistakes.

When the communicative competence in SLT was regarded as the students' main goal when learning a language, a functional, pragmatic approach to SLT arose, namely, the so-called Communicative Language Teaching method (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). This method understands errors as a natural outcome when learning a language. Furthermore, it suggests that some action needs to be taken so that the students' communicative competence can be reflected in their output and errors are not fossilized or interfere with communication.

The need to recognize a more direct role of the L1 in L2 learning was proposed for the first time. Following Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978) the Constructivist Approach constitutes a relevant source of knowledge that a learner could draw upon in forming and testing new hypotheses about L2 learning since learners' L1 knowledge is part of their 'previous knowledge'. Therefore, the use of the students' L1 in the teacher's feedback facilitates the understanding of L2 learning, which allows, in turn, error correction and mistake avoidance meaningfully.

Along with the error source in different SLT methods, errors are required to be classified. According to Corder (1973), errors can be classified in terms of the difference between the learners' utterance and the reconstructed version. In this way, errors fall into four categories, namely, (a) omission of some required element; (b) addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element; (c) selection of an incorrect element; and, (d) misordering of the elements.

Corder (1973), further classified errors into overt and covert. While overt errors are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level, covert errors are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication.

In both structural and communicative approaches to language teaching, feedback is viewed as a means of fostering learners' motivation and ensuring linguistic accuracy (Ellis, 2009). This rationale has been implemented in the present study (see section 5). Some teachers claim that correcting students' written work is tiring and not much appreciated by students (Mohamed, 2019); thus, a different approach has to be taken into consideration for the so-called written Corrective Feedback.

Corrective Feedback refers to any teacher's reaction which transforms or demands the learner's improvement of output Chaudron (1977). According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), feedback allows the learner to be aware of his or her incorrect use of the L2 output.

Nowadays, positive feedback is highly implemented since it treats errors as tools for learning. Now a humanistic approach to education is followed, based on the principle that the human being is emotional and social, and needs to be engaged in learning. This is a way to engage the students to provide them with positive feedback and use errors as tools for learning (James, 2013).

In the case of written Corrective Feedback, different strategies have been proposed. Teachers may recast errors (namely, repeat errors for the learner in the correct form), repeat errors for the learner to correct them, request for clarification, correct errors explicitly, bring out the learner's knowledge to correct his or her errors, or use body language to point out errors so that the learner can correct them (Ellis, 2009).

Apart from these strategies, there are two main types of feedback, namely, direct or indirect feedback. Direct feedback provides the correct language form, whereas indirect feedback indicates the presence of an error without supplying the correct form or uses an error-coding system to signal the general category of an error for the learner to correct it. Some researchers argue that indirect feedback is more effective and benefits students' long-term writing performance when compared to direct feedback in L2 learning (Ferris, 2002; Frantzen, 1995; Lalande, 1982). In the case of metalinguistic feedback (namely, the one that provides metalinguistic information about the nature of the error), teaching is not only focused on the grammatical properties that underlie the language, but also on the use of the L2. According to Ebadi (2014), focused, metalinguistic Corrective Feedback leads to accurate L2 output when compared to the traditional Corrective Feedback.

A difference should also be addressed between focused and unfocused feedback (Alimohammadi and Nejadansari, 2014). Focused feedback addresses only on one or two error types, whereas unfocused feedback

focuses on all the L2 learners' errors. Several formal works on feedback suggest that unfocused feedback may turn into negative feedback, causing a feeling of distrust in the language learner (Ferris and Roberts, 2001).

As a whole, feedback is 'a key element of the scaffolding provided by the teacher to build learner's confidence and the literacy resources to participate in target communities' (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). According to Brookhart (2017), feedback includes two factors, namely, cognitive and motivational. The cognitive factor gives students the information they need so that they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next. Once students feel that they understand what to do and why, most students develop the motivational factor, which refers to the feeling of control over their own learning.

There are also theoreticians who believe that feedback may reduce the difference between acquiring and learning a language (Ellis, 2009). We acquire our L1 in a natural and non-formal setting; however, we learn an L2 through formal education. Corrective Feedback facilitates learning by activating internal processes such as attention and rehearsal that, in turn, make L2 learning possible.

### 3. Empirical Works on Error Analysis and Feedback

In view of the findings reported in earlier empirical works on Error Analysis, it is necessary that teachers analyse students' errors frequently (Hasyim, 2002). Corder (1974), proposed five steps to follow when analysing errors: (a) select a corpus<sup>2</sup>; (b) identify errors; (c) analyse those errors; (d) classify them; and (e) evaluate them.

Given that interlingual errors are the result of the L1's interference, they are likely to happen at beginner levels. The study conducted by Alonso (1997) examined the written errors of a group of twenty-eight first-year high school L2 English students (aged 14-15) in the northwest of Spain. Their findings show that (a) the L1 structures represent the main factor of interference in the L2; (b) phonetic, orthographic, syntactic or semantic similarity to the items in the L1 are delayed in their learning process in the case of L1 Spanish students; (c) grammar and vocabulary interference errors are not a significant cause of error; (d) deviant forms occur most frequently in the verbal and the pronominal systems along with linguistic structures.

The study conducted by Dotti and O'Donnell (2014) analyses the singularly most frequent error in terms of the ungrammatical overtiness or absence of the English article in noun phrases. Their work aims to tune the teaching for foreign language learners and argues for the importance of remedial teaching once errors are analysed.

Providing students with mini-grammar lessons is an effective way for them to understand, correct and avoid the most frequent written grammatical errors in the L2 (Ferris, 2002). This is seen in the study conducted by Limoudehi *et al.* (2018) that investigated Iranian L2 English learners who received mini-grammar lessons. Results showed improvement in the experimental group (the one that received such a remedial teaching) after being provided with Corrective Feedback in the form of mini-lessons and self-study materials. However, these results argue against those studies that state that Corrective Feedback has little or no effect on learners' writing (Robb *et al.*, 1986; Tang and Liu, 2018).

As evidenced by the studies reported earlier, there is not much agreement on the benefits of providing Corrective Feedback to L2 learners (Bitchener and Knoch, 2009a). The debate commenced when Truscott (1996) argued that 'grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned'.

Ferris (1999) responded to Truscott (1996) findings three years later. She believed that 'there is mounting research evidence that effective error correction (which is selective, prioritized, and clear) can and does help at least some student writers' (Ferris, 1999).

There was a decision to limit the focus of the feedback based on the positive findings of SLT studies where intensive Corrective Feedback successfully targets a single linguistic category (Bitchener and Knoch, 2009b; Ellis *et al.*, 2006; Muranoi, 2000) or focuses on a few linguistic categories (Bitchener *et al.*, 2005). In the case of Farjadnasab and Khodashenas (2017) study, the relative effectiveness of two different types of feedback (direct and indirect) was assessed over a two-month period. The implementation of each type of feedback in the treatment groups resulted in improving the students' writing at different levels.

This study is in line with Bitchener (2008) since it revealed that the students' accuracy when receiving written Corrective Feedback in immediate post-tests is higher when compared to those ones in control groups where this level of performance is retained longer. He also claimed that written Corrective Feedback should be emphasized more in the teaching and learning process.

Although previous empirical studies conclude that Corrective Feedback is effective on L2 learning, giving feedback and the analysis of errors by language teachers are two areas that have also been criticized by some experts (Byram, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 1993). Some criticisms of Error Analysis include (a) the danger of giving too much attention to learners' errors; (b) teachers tend to study what learners are doing wrong, rather than what makes them successful; (c) it is sometimes very difficult to identify the unitary source of an error; (d) production errors (such as the ones we can find in the writing skill) are only a subset of the overall performance of the learner.

According to feedback criticism (Guenette, 2007; Hyland and Hyland, 2006; Mohamed, 2019), it has been claimed that (a) even positive feedback can be seen as negative from the part of the students; (b) it takes too much time for the teacher to first analyse his/her students' errors and then find the best way to give feedback to the learners. Sometimes, this effort is not appreciated by students and may not result in improvement; (c) it takes too long for improvement to be seen based on giving feedback. Also, there should be other sources of input to create

<sup>2</sup> 'A corpus is a collection of texts when considered as an object of language or literary study' Kilgarriff and Grefenstette (2003). Introduction to the Special Issue on the Web as Corpus. *Computational linguistics*, 29(3): 333-47.

lessons rather than the incorrect realizations of the students. This is the case since some areas of language would not be covered this way.

The type of language used by the teacher when giving feedback has also been another controversial issue in the literature of SLT (Almoayidi, 2018). It is the English teacher's job to help learners develop their proficiency in the L2. Thus, a balanced approach is needed and, therefore, an ideal setting would involve the L1 while recognizing the importance of maximizing L2 use in the classroom.

In favor of the L1 use, Schweers (1999) carried out a study with L1 Spanish speakers who were learning English as an L2. Based on his classroom's recordings and some questionnaires for the students, he discovered that students find it easier to cope with the L2 teacher if he/she can speak their L1 because this indicates that the teacher can help the students effectively.

Alternatively, a significant number of linguists (Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Nation, 2003; Scott and De la Fuente, 2008; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002) consider that using the L1 in the classroom might hinder L2 learning and that it is essential to immerse learners in activities using the L2 only.

The present work will focus on Error Analysis and positive, focused, indirect written feedback by considering the use of the L1 while providing feedback to students.

## 4. Research Questions

The RQs that have guided the data analysis of this study are formulated as follows.

RQ 1. What are the most frequent written errors in Primary Education students of the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade?

Based on RQ 1, we predict that the most frequent written errors to be found in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Primary Education students are errors in the verbal and in the pronominal systems along with linguistic structures (Alonso, 1997). Also, the incorrect use of the English article in noun phrases is also predicted in the L2 English participants' output (Dotti and O'Donnell, 2014).

RQ 2. What are the sources of these errors? To what extent does the L1 interfere in the production of these errors? Are there any intralingual errors?

Based on RQ 2, we predict that errors are the result of the students' L1 interference in the production of the L2 because interlingual errors are highly present among beginner students. On the contrary, intralingual errors will appear later (Brown, 2007; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Oller and Richards, 1973). Thus, interlingual errors should be found to a larger extent in the students' writings when compared to intralingual errors.

RQ 3. What is the most effective type of written Corrective Feedback when focused and indirect feedback is compared to unfocused and direct feedback?

Based on RQ 3, we predict that focused, indirect Corrective Feedback is believed to be the most effective type of feedback (Ferris, 2002). Indeed, it has been found that it helps students understand errors so that they can correct them, and, in turn, fossilization of mistakes is avoided.

RQ 4. Does the L1 help the teacher in the metalinguistic explanation of the students' errors?

Based on RQ 4, we predict that the L1 helps the teacher in the metalinguistic explanation of the students' errors because, following the Constructivist Approach (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978), learners' L1 knowledge is part of their 'previous knowledge'. This constitutes a source of knowledge for the learner to draw upon in forming and testing new hypotheses about the L2. Therefore, the use of the students' L1 in the teacher's feedback facilitates the understanding of L2 learning, which allows, in turn, error correction and mistake avoidance meaningfully (Schweers, 1999).

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Participants

15 L2 English Primary Education students (7 girls and 8 boys) have participated in the present study. Spanish is their L1. Their ages range from 10 to 11 years old.

### 5.2. Tasks and Procedure

An online assessment test (the Online Cambridge Assessment Test) was taken by the whole 6<sup>th</sup> Grade class in order to select a group with a homogeneous L2 language level to participate in the study. Results on the test showed that the students' level generally corresponded to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR, hereinafter, Council of Europe, 2001).<sup>3</sup> Parents were asked for permission to examine some of their children's writing activities that they normally do in class. Students were asked to write stories (35-50 words) based on three pictures.

The tasks were divided into (a) a pre-task that was the first writing students were asked to do; (b) the teacher's application of focused, indirect written feedback, which consisted of marking the students' writing, giving them a metalinguistic explanation of their errors and asking them to improve their writing after this session; and (c) a post-task that was the last writing students were asked to do.

Participants had already been exposed to writing similar tasks before conducting the study. However, they had not been provided with the type feedback used in this work. They were used to receiving direct feedback, which provides the correct language form. On the contrary, as already mentioned, indirect feedback indicates the presence

<sup>3</sup> The CEFR is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 to C2.

of an error without supplying the correct form. In the present study, an error-coding system that signaled the general category of errors was used for the learners to correct them. Thus, the teacher's role at this point was secondary (she marked the students' writing) and the learners were responsible for improving their writings at the task stage using such error-coding system and the metalinguistic explanation provided by their teacher.

Since this study also aims to discuss the language used when giving feedback to L2 English students (L1 or L2), during the task the participants were divided into two groups. Seven participants constitute the group called 'Feedback L1' and eight participants constitute the group called 'Feedback L2'. Feedback L1 group received written Corrective Feedback and a metalinguistic explanation of their errors in their L1, whereas Feedback L2 received this type of feedback in the L2.

### 5.3. Data Codification

Data were collected at three different stages: (a) after writing 1 (pre-task); (b) after the students corrected their writings thanks to the indirect and metalinguistic feedback they received (task); and (c) after writing 2 (post-task).

Corder (1974) five steps have been implemented in this study (see section 3). The corpus collected corresponds to the students' writings discussed earlier and their most frequent errors have been identified, analysed and classified.

Generally speaking, the participants of this study present interlingual errors that can be classified into three categories: (a) lexical errors; (b) grammar errors; and (c) spelling errors.

Lexical errors are in line with Corder (1973) classification and they include (a) omission of some required element; (b) addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element; (c) selection of an incorrect element; and, (d) misordering of the elements. In the present study, lexical errors were considered in terms of (a) wrong word (as per Corder's selection of an incorrect element), (b) extra word (as per Corder's addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element); and (c) missing word (as per Corder's omission of some required element).

Grammar errors were classified into (a) noun morphology; (b) verbal tense; (c) verbal agreement; (d) verb morphology; and (e) constituent order. The latter corresponds to Corder's misordering of the elements.

Spelling errors have also been considered. They are significant in L1 Spanish speakers' L2 English output due to the fact that, while Spanish follows transparent spelling rules, English has fewer spelling rules and the way spelling is presented differs from the way it is pronounced. In fact, Primary Education students are firstly exposed to comprehension before production in their L2. Besides, following the Spanish Primary Education curriculum, the oral aspects of the language are presented before the written ones. Although students learn spelling rules, they present problems in this field because of a delayed exposure to the L2 written language.

## 6. Results

As illustrated in Table 1, grammar errors were highly present in the L2 English learners' output, followed by lexical errors. Spelling errors were the least type of errors presented at this point.

Table-1. Results in the pre-task

Group	Lexical error	Grammar error	Spelling error	Total
Feedback L2	19 (30.6%)	28 (45.2%)	15 (24.2%)	62 (100%)
Feedback L1	14 (29.2%)	21 (43.8%)	13 (27%)	48 (100%)

Grammar errors were frequently reflected in the L1 English learners' output, followed by lexical and spelling errors. However, this feedback group showed fewer errors when compared to the Feedback L2 group.

As illustrated in Table 2, lexical errors were highly produced, followed by the production of grammar errors in the task. Spelling errors were once more the least type of errors.

Table-2. Results in the task

Group	Lexical error	Grammar error	Spelling error	Total
Feedback L2	11 (38%)	10 (34.5%)	8 (27.5%)	29 (100%)
Feedback L1	16 (80%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	20 (100%)

While Feedback L1 group revealed a higher production of lexical errors, Feedback L2 group produced more grammar and spelling errors in their output.

As illustrated in Table 3, lexical errors were, again, highly produced, followed by grammar and spelling errors, in the post-task.

Table-3. Results in the post-task

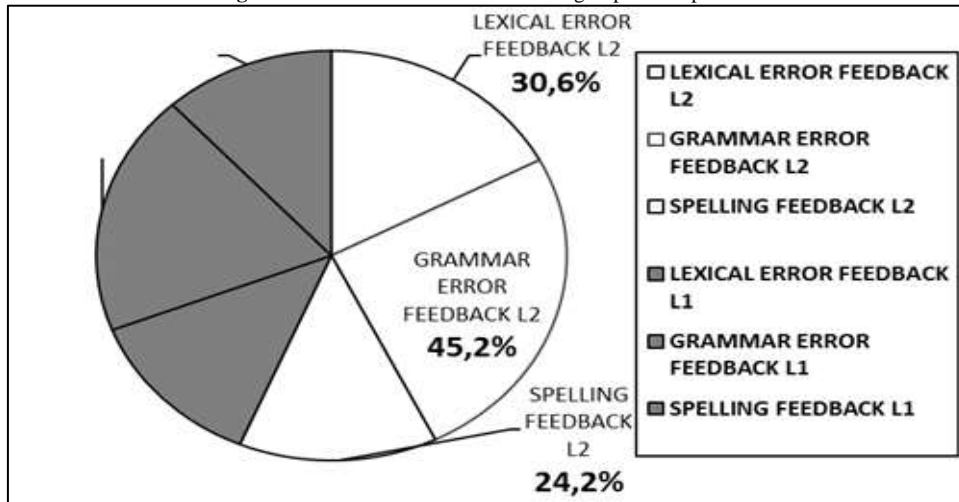
Group	Lexical error	Grammar error	Spelling error	Total
Feedback L2	39 (65%)	16 (26.6%)	5 (8.4%)	60 (100%)
Feedback L1	17 (30.4%)	22 (39.2%)	17 (30.4%)	56 (100%)

More specifically, while Feedback L1 group showed more grammar and spelling errors, Feedback L2 group presented more lexical errors.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 compare the two feedback groups, namely, Feedback L1 and Feedback L2 in terms of the types of errors produced along the three tasks.

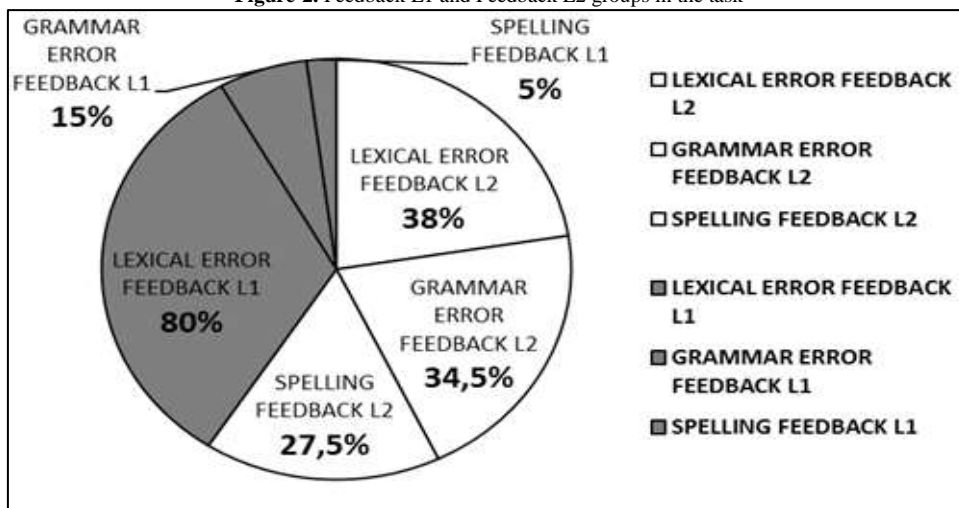
As displayed in figure 1, Feedback L2 group revealed a higher rate of errors in the pre-task, regardless of the type. Grammar errors were the most frequent ones in the two target groups.

Figure-1. Feedback L1 and Feedback L2 groups in the pre-task



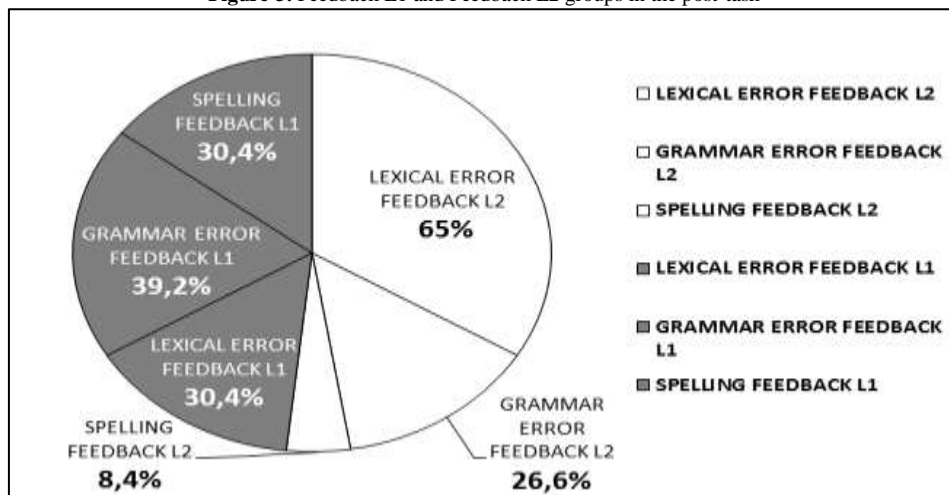
As illustrated in figure 2, Feedback L2 group produced, again, more errors in the task, being lexical errors the most frequent ones in both groups.

Figure-2. Feedback L1 and Feedback L2 groups in the task



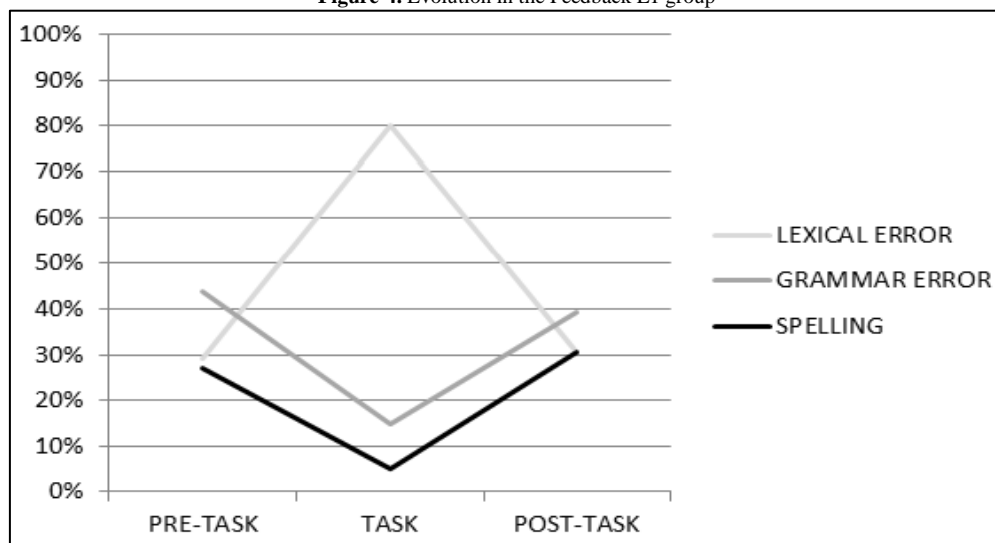
As displayed in figure 3, the number of errors made by the two groups is more equal in the post-task. In particular, Feedback L2 group showed a few more errors in their output, being lexical errors the most frequent ones. As for the Feedback L1 group, grammar errors were highly present.

Figure-3. Feedback L1 and Feedback L2 groups in the post-task



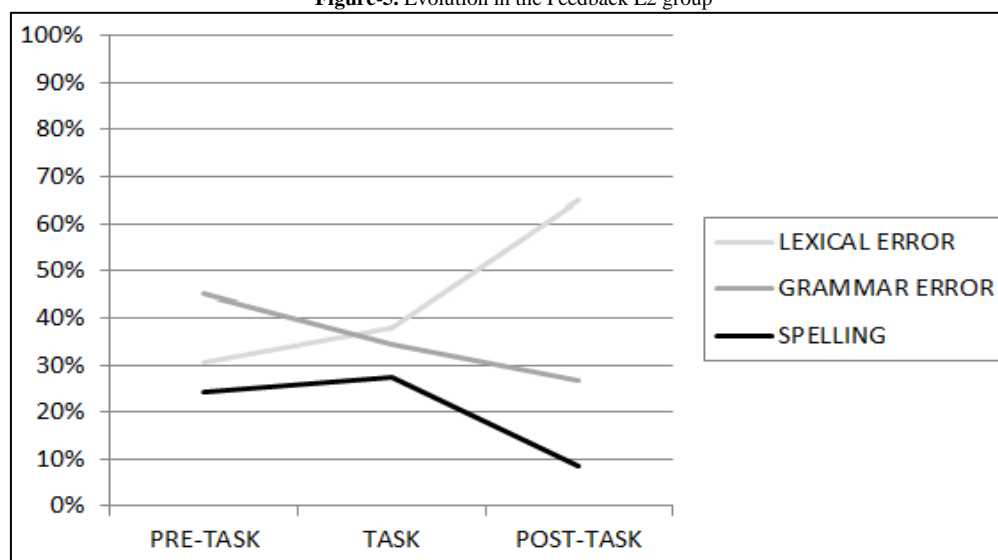
Regarding the evolution of the two feedback groups, and as depicted in figure 4, Feedback L1 group showed fewer errors when compared to Feedback L2 group in the three tasks. Regarding the types of errors, lexical errors increased sharply in the task. Nevertheless, errors were reduced to initial results in the post-task. Similar findings are seen in the grammar errors, as opposed to spelling errors that increased in the post-task.

Figure-4. Evolution in the Feedback L1 group



As displayed in figure 5, Feedback L2 group made more errors as a whole in the three tasks. While lexical errors highly increased in the post-task, grammar and spelling errors were reduced through the tasks that the students accomplished for the study.

Figure-5. Evolution in the Feedback L2 group



## 7. Discussion

Based on the findings analysed in section 6, most of the errors in the participants' output are interlingual given that they are caused by L1 interference (Lott, 1983). Students tend to apply the rules of their L1 when they do not know the rules of the L2. As shown in (1), the preposition (namely, 'in') does not respond to the difference in meaning to prepositions in the L2. The student generalises the use of prepositions in both languages and does not differentiate between 'in' (=dentro de) and 'on' (=sobre, encima de) in the L2. This results in a lexical error due to the selection of an incorrect element or wrong word.

(1) They found a handbag in the floor

A lexical error due to the addition of a non-required element (i.e. extra word) is found in (2). The student transfers the structure 'llamar a alguien' from the L1 into the L2.

(2) Elsa called to the person

A lexical error due to the omission of a required element (i.e. a missing word) is found in (3). Because of verb inflection, Spanish does not require the presence of a subject, whereas English always needs it.

(3) The girl was so excited because was \* looking at the handbag.

In this study, intralingual errors do not occur as often as interlingual errors. However, there are some examples that respond to the students' overextension of rules learned in the L2. As depicted in (4), a grammar error has been

produced due to the generalization of the formation of the regular past ('losted', ungrammatical form) in the L2 for irregular verbs ('lost', grammatical form).

(4) They finally found the person that losted the handbag

Spelling mistakes sometimes show an interlingual source of error (e.g. 'movile'). This is the case because of the similarity with the word 'móvil' in Spanish. Furthermore, an intralingual source of error could explain the rationale behind the spelling mistakes produced (e.g. 'hoo' instead of 'who' shows the student's knowledge of phonological rules in the L2 which he wrongly transfers to writing).

Regarding the effectiveness of feedback and, in particular, focused, indirect and metalinguistic feedback, our findings have revealed that feedback fosters learner's motivation and ensures linguistic accuracy (Ellis, 2009). Students have been aware of the positive effects of feedback in L2 English learning as an opportunity to use errors as tools for learning.

Students' errors have been analyzed and presented to them. Besides, in order to cater for positive feedback, their writings have not only been corrected from a linguistic point of view, but also attention to content has been considered.

Indirect feedback, by means of an error-coding system has been applied in this study and proven to be satisfactory based on the findings discussed earlier. This shows that overall errors have been reduced along the tasks of this study.

Although long-term writing performance has not been proven in this study for time restraints, immediate feedback has proven to be effective. These findings are in line with Bitchener (2008) work in proving that students' accuracy when receiving written Corrective Feedback in immediate post-tests is high. Indeed, the present work has reflected that lexical, grammar and spelling errors were highly reduced in the task immediately after writing 1 was marked and students received a metalinguistic explanation of their errors.

This study has also shown that feedback effectiveness is relative since when students focused on correcting their errors, some of them produced other error types. These results suggest that despite the fact that accuracy is effective in immediate post-tests, there is space for making further errors. These findings are not in line with the study conducted by Limoudehi *et al.* (2018) who claimed that they found improvement in the group that received remedial teaching.

Regarding the two languages used for providing feedback to the target groups, results show that both groups obtained similar results in the post-task. Feedback L2 group made slightly more errors overall. Therefore, this study proves that the L1 has some benefits when used for clarification or even when providing feedback. However, as these results do not differ much between the two feedback groups, we follow theoreticians who claim that it is essential to immerse learners in activities using the L2 only (Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Nation, 2003; Scott and De la Fuente, 2008; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002), and later, use the language that is considered to be more effective for each learner.

## 8. Conclusions

This study has proven that the most frequent written errors that are found in 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Primary Education students are mostly grammar errors. These results go hand in hand with Alonso (1997) study, which pointed to frequent errors in the verbal system. However, the data are not in line with Dotti and O'Donnell (2014) study, which highlighted the incorrect use of the English article in noun phrases as a recurrent error.

These grammar errors are argued to be the result of the students' L1 interference in the production of the L2 (Brown, 2007; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Oller and Richards, 1973). Furthermore, some intralingual errors have been reflected in the students' writings. This shows that L2 rules are internalized by the students.

Focused, indirect Corrective Feedback has also shown success in L2 English learning. Students learned an error-coding system in order to understand the analysis of errors presented by the teacher and eagerly improved their first written productions. Therefore, positive, focused, indirect written feedback has helped students understand errors so that they could correct them and prevent error fossilization.

Regarding the language to use when the teacher provides feedback, the present study has revealed that the L1 would help the teacher in the metalinguistic explanation of the students' errors. However, as results suggest, there is not a clear correspondence between using the students' L1 when giving feedback and obtaining better results. Further work would be required in this respect.

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