

**WRITING ERROR CHARACTERIZATION AS A STRATEGY TO IDENTIFY ELLs
WRITING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FROM THE TEACHING PRACTICUM IN
SECONDARY EDUCATION COURSE OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
PROGRAM**

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PEREIRA

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**TRABAJO DE GRADO PARA OPTAR POR EL TÍTULO DE LICENCIADA
EN BILINGÜISMO CON ÉNFASIS EN INGLÉS**

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1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my very great appreciation to my professors and the people who have been supportive of my career throughout this process. This investigation would not have been possible without the patience and dedication of my colleague, my guides and my family. I would like to offer my special thanks to Professor Luis Miguel Coronado and Professor Daniel Murcia, my research advisors, for their professionalism, guidance, and encouragement for this research project. I am also deeply grateful to my friend and collaborator Luisa Castañeda for the infinite tolerance and thoughtful attitude. This experience made us grow as human beings and transformed our perspective about life both professionally and emotionally.

Sincerely,

Diana Lorena Ramírez Olarte

The almost two years that this project required have taught me several lessons, both positive and not so positive, and the presence of key people in it cannot be overlooked. I want to thank my mother, for everything she represents for me and her complete support throughout my academic path. I also want to thank Diana Ramírez, I could not have had a better workmate and friend in this demanding process, I learnt the meaning of teamwork and patience by her side; and I want to highlight and express my deep gratitude for the vital role professors Nora Marulanda Angel, Luis Miguel Coronado and Daniel Murcia Quintero had in different periods of this research project, it would have been impossible without them for their experience and commitment.

Luisa Castañeda García

2 ABSTRACT

Academic writing is one of the most relevant and complex abilities that individuals of the 21st century are required to develop. As education evolves and becomes more demanding, professionals need to be able to communicate and express themselves with an accurate tone and a proficient use of the language. Taking into consideration the above mentioned, researchers selected the improvement of academic writing abilities as the main focus of the study.

The specific purpose of this investigation is to identify, analyze and categorize the most frequently-made type of errors among students from the Teaching Practicum in Secondary Education course in an English teaching training program. This research is carried out in Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira with ten students from the respective course. The instruments that will be designed and implemented during this project are a corpus and a two-point rubric with the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the data collected.

The results revealed percentage similarities in the two categories analyzed, being the syntactical subcategory of Verb tense the one with the highest score; this pattern hinted at inconsistencies considering the participants' expected English language proficiency (C1) and previous academic writing experiences. These error patterns could result from a lack of proper process when composing the papers or could also highlight particular elements that alter the participants' writing skills and subsequently, their academic papers. Nonetheless, the scope of variables and hypothesis permitted in this research study highlighted the breadth and depth in the development of L2 writing skills.

Keywords: second language writing, academic writing, error categorization, syntactical errors, lexical errors, error analysis, written production.

RESUMEN

La escritura académica es una de las más relevantes y complejas habilidades a desarrollar por individuos del siglo XXI. Considerando la educación actual con sus nuevos requisitos y demandas, la exigencia a los profesionales con sus destrezas en comunicación oral y escrita es cada vez más común y requerida; como resultado a esta coyuntura educativa, sociocultural y profesional, los investigadores han elegido el mejoramiento de las habilidades en escritura como principal foco de este estudio.

El propósito específico de este proyecto de investigación es identificar, analizar y categorizar los errores más frecuentemente cometidos entre los estudiantes del curso de escritura académica de un programa de enseñanza del inglés. La investigación se llevó a cabo en la Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira con diez estudiantes del respectivo curso. Los instrumentos que serán diseñados y empleados durante la realización de este proyecto son encuestas y una rúbrica de cinco puntos para analizar e interpretar la información que se recoja en el proceso.

Los resultados revelaron similitudes en los porcentajes de las dos categorías analizadas, siendo la subcategoría sintáctica de Tiempos verbales aquella con los números más recurrentes. Este resultado apuntó a inconsistencias considerando el nivel esperado de competencias en inglés de los participantes (C1) y sus experiencias previas en escritura académica. Estos patrones de error podrían ser el producto de procesos incorrectos en la composición de los escritos o también podrían resaltar elementos particulares que impactan las habilidades escriturales de los participantes y por lo tanto, su producción académica. Sin embargo, el rango de variables e hipótesis posibles en este estudio destacan la profundidad y amplitud referente al desarrollo de habilidades de escritura en una segunda lengua.

Palabras claves: escritura en segunda lengua, escritura académica, categorización de errores, errores sintácticos, errores de vocabulario, análisis de errores, producción escrita.

3 PRESENTATION

The relevance of writing skills has been significantly increasing in the last twenty years as a result of the ever growing incidence of technology in multiple aspects of an individual's everyday life. This is especially accurate for academic purposes, where learners must display above average aptitudes when writing assignments of different genres and topics. However, real life scenarios in tertiary education reveal that learners struggle when composing and redacting their written products; additionally, difficulty levels arise when students have to write in a foreign or second language as English. This problematic does not only hinder the students' academic performance in university, it is also reflected once they start their professional life.

Thus, several initiatives aiming at improving and strengthening the students' writing skills have been conducted around the world (Moyano, 2004; Phuket, 2015), particularly studies that identify and analyze English Language Learners (ELLs) writing skills' process, development and the errors in their written production (Wu and Garza, 2014). As Corder (1973) defined it, an error occurs when a second language (L2) learner deviates from the established rules of that particular language; nonetheless, errors are natural and regular elements in the written production of learners from all levels and ages and an appropriate indicator of their L2 writing skills' development. Then, it is relevant to consider that writing processes include several components (grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, coherence, etc.), which also demand constant regulation and research from teachers and professors equally. Following this pattern, this research study focuses on the identification, characterization and quantification of syntactical and lexical errors in tenth-semester students' written assignments, as means to provide deeper and better understanding of the development of L2 writing skills (especially regarding syntax and lexical aspects) that could promote the

implementation of appropriate class activities, enhancing L2 writing skill processes and academic writing instruction.

The current interest in L2 writing development in higher education requires steadfast research shedding light on its complexity and providing valuable information to the entire academic community. In the long term, this research study aims at providing evidence that promotes insights concerning academic writing instruction and the learning process of writing skills as well.

4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The last 15 years have significantly modified the way society communicates and interacts, among those changes and with the impact of technology, the relevance of writing has notably increased. Nonetheless, due to the complexity of this skill and particular background aspects (access to education, reading habits, sociocultural variations, impact of technology, among others), a vast majority of people undergo difficulties in their writing performance, whether they do it in their native language or in a second or foreign language; this is especially accurate at academic fields and its community, where students are constantly required to do written assignments and professors and researchers are expected to publish their intellectual work. Unfortunately, most undergraduate students face several setbacks throughout their academic term due to these writing deficiencies, not to mention the subsequent and inevitable repercussions experienced in their professional performance.

Literacy skills have long been a vital part of mankind, subjected to a series of upheavals throughout history. As stated by Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2016), by the 19th century the world population literacy would be only of 12%, recently this percentage has dramatically increased to 83% of literate individuals and Latin America has not been excluded of this growth rate. In Colombia, for example, by 1900 around 66% of the population was illiterate; a century later only 8% of Colombians were unable to read and write. According to Clavijo and Torres (1997), since 1994 the Colombian government has been restructuring its education policies concerning English language teaching, as a way to prepare globally competent citizens. Among the features of a globally competent individual, L2 literacy plays a crucial role, particularly in English. In the last decade official programs like the National Bilingual Program (2004-2010), Colombia Bilingüe (2014-2018) and Colombia Very Well (2015-2025) have attempted to promote and improve Colombian learners' English language proficiency. Nevertheless, Colombia Bilingüe program estimated

that by 2018, only 8% of high school graduates would have a B1 proficiency level in English. Moreover, only 35% of Colombian English teachers and educators possess a B1 level and their teaching methodologies are inadequate and hinder students' linguistic development. The limited reach of these initiatives throughout all educational levels can be reflected once learners enroll at university, specifically in their written production.

In spite of these bilingual policies and initiatives and some drawbacks encountered, it is plausible to consider the lack of practice and experience in the native language, in this case Spanish, as the origin of the difficulties faced when learning a foreign language. As revealed by Camargo, Uribe and Zambrano (2013) study, L1 literacy skills, its importance and development is not considered by universities as an aspect to be fostered among students, in fact, there is an expectancy from the students to have above-average L1 writing performance once they reach tertiary education; besides, the support provided by professors before, during and after the writing process is generally overlooked or omitted. As a consequence and due to the above mentioned difficulties in L1 literacy, the several difficulties faced by Colombian English Language Learners (ELLs) in their L2 written production is foreseen and has increased significantly, mainly owned to current professional requirements, the interest to create and design initiatives to strengthen students' writing skills and support them in this development long-term process.

With the points formerly given, it is evident that the interest and need to foster learners' L1 and L2 writing skills development is increasing as the current social, economic and technological changes demand it; establishing writing performance implications to go beyond academic grounds. Nevertheless, as described by Kaweera (2013), writing in L1 and L2 differ substantially, with aspects to bear in mind such as linguistic proficiency and intuition about language, learning practices and classroom expectations, a sense of audience and writer, texts organization preferences, writing processes and text understanding and texts

social value. All of these emphasizing the complexity of learning writing and instruction as well as the necessity of expanding this research field. As can be seen, L2 writing skills development requirements do not only include students' interest and motivation but also the educators and education settings to be respondent and receptive to provide assistance in these processes, which ultimately appears to be the real setback. Additionally, educator that guide and support students' rigorous development in their writing skills should also recognize their strengths and weaknesses throughout this process, as means to design and provide the appropriate methodologies and techniques that reinforce and urge writers' interest in writing experiences.

The identification and characterization of writing errors offers valuable information to complement and improve writing instruction and learners' writing skills and performance. The latest studies conducted Wu and Garza (2014), Phuket (2015), Kaweera (2013), Mutema and Mariko (2012) and Jung (2013) have not only highlighted and evidenced the importance of errors in language learning but also of the many answers they can reveal and setbacks these can impede if properly identified and analyzed. Nevertheless, aspects like contextual differences such as age, native language, L2 language proficiency, and sociocultural implications must be taken into account to conduct this type of inquiry. In this matter, Latin American researchers (Moyano, 2014; Molina-Natera, 2014; Lopez, 2011; Nunez, 2013) have investigated about the origins, development, conceptions, results and impact of L1 and L2 writing studies and initiatives in Spanish speaking countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Uruguay. As identified by Moyano (2004:110) projects like courses and study groups to foster and improve "basic general writing competences" are regular in bachelor programs and some professors include activities with a strong writing focus in their content classes, this as an attempt to provide learners experiences that bring them closer to L1 and L2 writing.

In the particular context of Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, Colombia, studies like the one conducted by Caro and Marin (2016) wide the scope regarding Spanish-English error research, not only including students' perceptions about oral errors but also those alleged by educators themselves. Partially related to sociocultural changes in the last decade, academic writing and its importance on an individual's educational and professional performance has prompted researchers to inquire about the future of this field of study and the reason behind its growing relevance within the teaching community. In the long run academic writing reaches a variety of study fields, such as research, university teaching, consultancies, postgraduate programs and publications, revealing the wide and decisive effect of L1 and L2 writing instruction, research and initiatives in the long term.

Taking into account the ideas presented before, it can be assumed that writing skills are a very relevant issue in this technological era and they have turned into essential characteristics of competent and skilled citizens. Lacking the sufficient abilities in this area can lead an individual to a series of educational, professional and life related disadvantages. This scarcity of appropriate writing courses in schools steer problems when students go to institutions of higher learning. Professionals in charge of education, whether at secondary and tertiary level, must deliver proper knowledge to their apprentices. In addition, people in any job need to know how to write formally to their bosses for the company they work for. Illiteracy and inadequate writing skills are reasons for many misunderstandings in communication and this is an issue to be prevented.

As it has been mentioned before, the importance of literacy and writing skills is crucial not only at academic fields, but also in professional areas. Being competent in society provides the opportunity to fully participate in the world, to pursue rewarding jobs, in this way improving livelihood. On the contrary, limiting literacy skills can lead to significant inconveniences. According to Moyano (2004) the problem of students in universities

regarding reading and writing are widely recognized: poor reading comprehension, inchoate oral and written production, difficulties selecting content to write a text, to confront positions and to argue. As a consequence, professionals have created many centers in which teachers support the learning process of students regarding writing skills. Specifically, at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira a similar research proposed by Caro and Marin (2016) was conducted. In such study the topic of analysis was error correction in an English Language Teaching (ELT) program regarding oral skills.

It is pertinent to say that conducting an investigation about error analysis in the Teaching Practicum in Secondary Education course of the Licenciatura is a complement for the previous study and also a reliable solution to the main difficulties that students in this area. The main goal is to identify the students' syntactical and lexicon difficulties and analyze the types of error making. Besides, findings can be the source that professors and directives of the program might use to reflect about the design of the Teaching Practicum in Secondary Education course and the methodologies implemented.

As a solution to this problem, this study proposes an examination of error characterization in the Teaching Practicum in Secondary Education course as means to improve the writing competences of the students from the English Language Teaching Program. With the analysis of the data and possible findings, this study will be presented aiming at strengthening the writing component in some of the courses of the program. The betterment of the writing skills of English Language teachers permits an improvement in the quality of language education in universities and subsequently at schools. Besides, taking into account that not all the students of this program will select teaching as their final professional goal, improving writing skills might also help them to apply for jobs such as translation and interpretation.

As a brief example of the initiatives designed to improve students' writing skills worldwide, writing centers and the role they play supporting learners' writing development has been remarkable. Writing centers first appeared in the United States in the 70s as means to provide additional assistance to university and college students to improve their performance on writing assignments. The onset of these initiatives in Latin American has happened in less than a decade and in most cases, following the North American model. Molina Natera (2014) provides a complete review on the origin, causes, development and consequent outcomes of writing centers first, in North American schools and universities and several years later, integrated into educational institutions in Latin America, partly due to the same need to improve students' L2 writing skills.

Currently writing centers in Colombia can be found in cities like Bogotá, Cali (Centro de Escritura Javeriano, Universidad de los Andes, Centro de Escritura Universidad del Cauca, to name a few) and Ibagué (Centro de Escritura Universidad de Ibagué). Molina Natera (2014) emphasizes the fast-paced growth of these programs worldwide, highlighting the main goal of a writing center, which is to support individual writing processes, not to fix and evaluate writing skills.

Taking into consideration the points previously mentioned, the main objectives of this research proposal are: to identify the most commonly committed errors in ELLs academic written products and classify these errors according to level of incidence, providing evidence that promotes a further interest in ELLs' L2 writing skills development.

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What types of syntactical and lexical errors characterize the writing productions of tenth-semester English Language Learners from an English language teaching program?

6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

- To characterize the syntactical and lexical errors in the written production of tenth-semester English Language Learners from an English language teaching program.

Specific Objectives

- To analyze the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors in the students' academic written assignments.
- To quantify the most frequent syntactical and lexical errors in the students' academic written assignments.

7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims at explaining and deepening on the concepts that this research project will be based on. Also, there is an emphasis on the relevance of writing as a productive skill, its complexities and the development of writing abilities in a second language for English Language Learners (ELLs). Furthermore, the importance of errors throughout language learning processes (Brown, 1994; Corder, 1967) will be addressed, especially concerning the development of writing skills. Thus, as means to contextualize and illustrate the purpose of this research project, there will be an explanation of aspects like the differences between errors and mistakes, the significance of methods like Error Analysis (EA) (to explore several varieties of writing learning scenarios) and the types of errors students usually make (according to its contextual particularities) (Richards, 1971; Dulay and Burt, 1974; and James, 1998).

7.1. Writing

Writing is one of the most demanding and challenging skills to develop for any language user, essentially due to the several elements that includes (vocabulary, reading habits, mechanics, knowledge of genre, pragmatics, grammar, among others) (Nunan, 1989); moreover, this set of requirements and its level of difficulty increase if the individual's written production is in a second or foreign language. The complexity of writing is also originated from the several elements that intervene in the development and performance of this skill (recognition of visual and phonetic signs, language functions, and sociocultural aspects as the pragmatic connotation of particular expressions, idiomatic, for example). According to Olson (1993), writing is a system that has allowed human beings to represent the world through written language; following the structural approach of written language,

Fareed (2016) affirms that writing is the correct and strategic use of language that aims at expressing ideas granting communication.

Nevertheless, in order to conduct this action one must have first understood, comprehended and interpreted specific linguistic features. With this in mind, Kellogg (2001) describes writing as a cognitive process that requires memory, thinking and verbal capacity to transmit one's ideas; in other words, writing demands to think deeply what to say, how to say it and whom these words are directed at.

As part of any learning process, but especially in a second or foreign language learning process, the time invested and the commitment provided to the practice and development of lexical, grammatical, mechanical and orthographic abilities are determining in the linguistic performance of the speaker. Considering the complexity and amount of practice required, it is natural that language users might deviate their production from the norm. These deviations, known as errors, are a fundamental and revealing part of any learning process for teachers and learners, highlighting and showing the aspects to strengthen as well as those to improve. Given these points, the predictable appearance of errors in the learner's linguistic development, particularly in those of writing skills, is a clarifying tool to enrich and support teaching experiences and language performance.

7.2 Academic Writing

The requirement of above-average writing skills at academic fields has been present since the 19th century. The relevance and increasing interest in the development of an individual's academic writing skills and its performance is the result of the technological and sociocultural changes occurred in the last 15 years. Most of the importance given to academic writing relies on its wide ranging impact (to express oneself, to entertain, to inform, to

persuade, etc.), this aspect implying an extensive and demanding learning process. As proposed by Brown (2001), in writing, there are specific micro-skills that must be met by an individual:

Table 19.1. Microskills for writing

1. Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.
2. Produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.
3. Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.
4. Use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, and rules.
5. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
6. Use cohesive devices in written discourse.
7. Use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.
8. Appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose.
9. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.
10. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings when writing.
11. Correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of the written text.
12. Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.

Figure 1 Microskills for writing. Taken from: Brown, H. D. (2001). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy.

All of these micro-skills highlight the variety of elements involved in written production (grammar, syntax, mechanics, text organization, vocabulary, pragmatics, etc.), vastly determining writing instruction and the strategies implemented by teachers and professors within classrooms; components such as content, form, grammar, style and mechanics must be considered in writing instruction. As it can be seen, even if there are several aspects to include in the development of writing skills, such as reading habits or exposure to the language, writing instruction should promote and strengthen the development

of pupils in this process; with strategies like error-characterization, writing aspects to improve could be identified, allowing educators to better assist learners in this long-term task.

Taking into account that writing is such a complex skill and involves several aspects when developing a written product, it is relevant to mention that academic writing is more difficult to define. Writing in its pure essence involves expressing thoughts and ideas about the world, but it can be delivered in many different ways. Academic writing, on the other hand, has more precise characteristics and is designed to captivate certain type of public. According to Whitaker (2009), when writing an academic paper, there are certain principles that need to be followed; it is necessary to define a clear purpose as well as to identify the audience, develop a formal and proper style, employ credible support for his statements and use research as fundamental source of the paper. Academic writing also has more specific rules which are very easy to infringe. One of the most important aspects of academic writing is the audience and the tone used; and if this is not carefully considered, papers will probably not be academic.

7. 3 Lexical Repertoire

Among the manifold requirements in second/foreign language learning processes, the relevance of lexical repertoire or vocabulary knowledge in the development of L2 writing skills is unquestionable. Ehsanzadeh (2012) and Milton (2013) state that lexical repertoire is multi-faceted, going beyond the solely understanding of a particular word's meaning in specific settings; this can be especially evidenced when in early learning stages, ELLs identify the phonological sound of a word but do not know its written form, being able to interact orally to some extent but facing severe drawbacks when reading or writing. Nation's

(2001) list of lexical repertoire components (shown below) highlight its above mentioned multidimensional nature.

Table 1. Description of "what is involved in knowing a word", from Nation (2001: 27).

Form	spoken	R What does the word sound like?
		P How is the word pronounced?
	written	R What does the word look like?
		P How is the word written and spelled?
	word parts	R What parts are recognisable in this word?
		P What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Meaning	form and meaning	R What meaning does this word form signal?
		P What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	concepts and referents	R What is included in the concept?
		P What items can the concept refer to?
	associations	R What other words does this make us think of?
		P What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	grammatical functions	R In what patterns does the word occur?
		P In what patterns must we use this word?
	collocations	R What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	constraints on use (register, frequency)	R Where, when, and how often would we expect to meet this word?
		P Where, when, and how often can we use this word?

Figure 2 "What is involved in knowing a word". Nation, I.S.P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language.

Nation, I.S.P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. Cambridge, UK: *Cambridge University Press*.

Similarly, Qian (1999) states that lexical repertoire is conformed by two aspects: size of vocabulary or breadth and quality of vocabulary or depth. The former referring to the number of words a learner recognizes and the latter, as it is explicitly denoted, points at a significant knowledge of a word's meaning concerning aspects of spelling, pronunciation, register, among others (Hasan, 2016). Henriksen (1999) also mentions three dimensions of lexical repertoire: precision of knowledge, depth of knowledge and receptive and productive knowledge. Vocabulary depth can be evidenced as the recognition of a word's meaning and how to make use of it depending on particular contexts. These aspects take a major role in ELLs written production, especially that of academic type. Academic production often demands lexical precision and accuracy to present and develop ideas, which is usually

reflected on the various difficulties learners must face when composing L2 academic papers, such as word choice issues concerning written form and content.

Nonetheless, considering the strenuous process of L2 writing skills development, errors in word choice are usually the result of learners' attempt to express their ideas, particularly if their lexical repertoire is limited. Related to this, Haastrup (2000) referred to this phenomena as lexical inferencing, defining it as learners' informed guesses of a word's meaning based on their linguistic general knowledge and context awareness; and even though this topic is commonly found in the research field of reading comprehension, there is an undisputable correlation among reading practices and habits in the development of writing competences.

7.4 Error Definition

Considering its predictability in language learning processes, errors are a relevant aspect in the learner's target language mastery development. Brown (1994) has defined errors as a visible deviation of a native speaker's grammar, revealing the learner's interlanguage; Corder (1967) stated that an error is a deviation resulting from a lack of knowledge. Related to these conceptions of error in language development, Norrish (1983) described error as the repeated deviation committed by the learners due to a lack of knowledge on the specific matter. These authors recognize errors as useful evidence of language learning processes and highlight the role they play, allowing educators to identify language gaps and examine appropriate methods and procedures that strengthen students' language performance.

Errors usually manifest in ELLs' academic written production, this supporting Fared's (2016) statement that writing is the most arduous skill to master when learning a

second language. More often than not, academic writing is time consuming and there are several stages writing academic papers require. However, these are not the only aspects that influence ELLs' academic written production. Errors also originate from the competences L2 students must have (wide vocabulary range, genre acknowledgement, punctuation, linguistic differences between L1 and L2, grammar structures, among others) and their L2 background (exposure to the language or L2 writing experiences and practice). All these elements ultimately impact on the overall comprehension of the text and its content, representing a real challenge for students in their academic performance.

As stated and supported by the studies conducted by Jung (2013) and Maicusi (2000), L2 error making offers valuable information about language learning processes not only to educators regarding their class methods and techniques but also to students, fostering metalinguistic awareness and improving their writing skills.

7.5 Differences between errors and mistakes

Concerning the definition of atypical utterances made by English Language Learners (ELLs), Lennon (1991) explicitly identified errors as "a linguistic form or combination of forms which in the same context and under similar conditions of production would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the native speakers' counterparts" (p. 182), here emphasizing the linguistic development of learners. It is important to indicate the difference between error and mistake in terms of language learning. As previously stated, errors are a result of a lack of knowledge concerning particular linguistic rules, whereas a mistake, as described by Norrish (1983), is a varying feature in the expressions of learners. In the same line of thought, Gefen (1979) clearly defines the difference between error and mistake in that errors reflect inadequate competence, whereas mistakes are identified as performance hiatuses. Moreover,

Maicusi (2000) derives error as the event that occurs due to a lack of linguistic knowledge, on the other hand, mistake results from competence failure.

The recognition of the differences between these two terms and the acknowledgement of the relatively extended and demanding process of L2 writing skills development, along with the complex task that composing academic papers suppose for most students, this project will focus on the syntactic and lexical errors found in academic papers of tenth-semester undergraduates. These errors possibly result from a lack of knowledge or competences of the several aspects included in this activity (coherence, expansion of ideas due to lack of vocabulary and/or wrong word choice/use, interference, etc.), reinforcing the relevance of further research on this topic for both professors and students.

7.6 Error Analysis

Research on errors has been a topic of interest in most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) fields, research concerning error analysis and their implications in language learning scenarios have been present as far as in the 40s and late 50s, for example with Charles Fries and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), later spread by Robert Lado (Mutema & Mariko, 2012). As described by Mutema and Mariko (2012), methodologies like this are implemented in a series of steps that aim at comparing and contrasting two languages' linguistic systems to identify their structural similarities and differences. Error Analysis (EA) can be described as a type of analyzing approach to L2 learners' skills, focusing on the nature and origin of students' errors. (Wu & Garza, 2014; Mutema & Mariko, 2012).

Most of the popularity of EA approaches derive from the detailed information they can reveal to teachers of the specific drawbacks faced by pupils in their language process.

Error Analysis permits teachers to confirm the effectiveness of class methodologies and the topics presented in class, as well as to measure learners' knowledge of L2 structures, the possible challenges faced with those and the development of their L2 production. (Jimenez, 1997). Consequently, and emphasizing Jung's (2013) description of error analysis relevance in the development of the writing skills of the students, the recognition of these error patterns could improve not only the quality of writing instruction but also metalinguistic awareness in the students regarding their written production.

EA approaches have received criticism about the reliability provided of L2 error categories; Mutema & Mariko (2012) discussed on how some authors have considered the precision of L2 error definition. However, Error Analysis provides revealing evidence that inform teachers, researchers and even learners of the linguistic requirements, particular strengths and weaknesses and subsequent methodologies and techniques that could solve issues and improve the learners' linguistic performance. As described by Jung (2013) errors and the information they provide can reveal something concerning the system of language, promoting an understanding of second language acquisition processes.

Some characteristics of the EA approach will serve in this research project, such as the examination of written errors in academic papers and its frequency. However, it is important to consider that EA mainly focuses on investigating L2 acquisition aspects; an element that will not be part of this project. Additionally, the current conception of EA is that of theoretical and research support in second language acquisition fields. Still, its focus on error explanation as evidence to better support L2 teaching, in this case the development of L2 writing skills, is a vital element to this research project.

7.7. Types of Errors

As previously exposed error analysis and subsequent categorization have long been studied and used as means to provide teachers and language educators with evidence of the learner's L2 development, detailed information of their strengths and weaknesses as well as the most suitable classroom methodologies to implement. As characterized by Touchie (1986), there are Performance errors and competence errors. Performance errors are identified as those errors committed due to the learner's weariness or hurriedness and generally do not require intervention from teachers to correct it; conversely, competence errors not only demand teachers' attention but also reveal inadequate or insufficient language learning experiences. Likewise, and as exposed by Brown (1980), there are intralingual errors, those that derive from the learners' belief that L1 structures are similar to L2's; and interlingual errors, L1 direct interference in L2; usually, students make literal translation from L1 to L2 in writing and speaking, a commonly seen technique in the composition of their academic written assignments. Maicusi (2000) states that interference occurs when the learner assumes that the language forms of the mother tongue are similar to those of the target language.

The influence of the learners' L1 and context in the types of errors performed when writing in L2 commonly derive in syntactical and semantic errors; for instance, the study conducted by Wu & Garza (2014), to Mandarin-Chinese speaking EFL students, revealed that the most frequent type of error committed was subject-verb agreement; similarly, Phuket's (2015) findings, in a study with 40 Thai undergraduates, shown that word choice was the greatest issue to work on. Still, each study and their participants' context, characteristics, mother tongue and the methodologies implemented for the research have a direct impact on the results, emphasizing the relevance of further research on this topic, as means to widen the scope of writing instruction and its features.

Moreover, Corder (1971) made a significant differentiation of errors as overt errors and covert errors. Overt errors, as those errors resulted from sentence level grammatical problems; covert errors, on the other hand, might be grammatically correct but in communicative contexts are unsuitable or not understood. Related to this, Jung (2013) divides errors as marked errors and unmarked errors; he defines marked errors as “form-based”, related to grammatical features, “the first step in L2”, explicit errors; unmarked errors are identified as “meaning-based”, know how to use appropriate words in specific contexts, Jung associates them with “comprehension errors”. In this set of error categorization James (1998), cited by Heydari and Bagheri (2012), subdivides students’ errors in omission, overinclusion, misselection (wrong word use and choice) and misordering.

Given these points, error categorization has generally provided significant evidence of students’ learning development, especially in writing, without excluding their individual needs. As a long-term process, language learning demands continual support and supervision; thus, the acknowledgement of the motives and sources of L2 writing errors as well as the learners’ contextual features, will better prepare educators to assist students’ in valuable L2 learning. Among the types of errors students usually make when writing academic assignments, there are syntactic and lexical errors. The former referring to the correct use in sentence structure and the later, to those specific words/sentences that lack contextual accuracy and hinder communication in L2.

7.8 Syntactical Errors

Syntax is a very essential component of writing. In such a complex skill, there are many particular features that need to be studied in detail in order to master the skill and have accurate written products. Tallerman (2011) refers to syntax as the organization of words and

sentences in a language as well as the set of rules and principles of that language. This means that words cannot be written without a purpose. Regardless of the language, they need to be organized in such a manner that allows the writer to convey the correct meaning or intention. Having this in mind, syntactical errors can be defined as the violation of such system and the alteration of the arrangement that permits the construction of sentences in that language. This inaccuracy in the usage of words make sentences become incorrect. Syntax errors can be classified or divided into certain sub categories. According to a surface strategy taxonomy of errors proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) errors can be classified into three categories: Omission, Addition and Wrong Order. Additionally, Syaifurrahman and Miftah (2016) go in depth in the concept of Subject-Verb agreement. Rozovskaya, Roth and Srikumar (2014) also describe the error known as Verb Tense.

7.8.1 Omission

In a global sense, omission denotes something that has not been included where it is needed. In Dulay et al. words (1982), “omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance” (p.154). This means words or phrases are missing in a sentence that alter the meaning of what is being said.

7.8.2 Addition

In contrast to the previous concept, addition means the act of including unnecessary information. As stated by Dulay et al. (1982), addition refers to extra words or phrases that also alter the meaning of a sentence. In other words, the sentence includes elements that should not exist in a well-formed utterance.

7.8.3 Wrong Order

According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), wrong order consists of placing words or a group of words incorrectly in a sentence. In Dulay et al. words (1982), “these errors occur systematically for both L2 and L1 learners in constructions that have already been acquire specifically simple (direct) and embedded (indirect) questions” (p.162).

7.8.4 Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement refers to the correspondence of the subject with the correct form of the verb. According to Thornton and MacDonald (2003), a subject-verb agreement error happens when the noun and the verb of a sentence do not match in number.

7.8.5 Verb Tense

As stated by Depraetere and Salkie (2015) “tenses are time expressions which are part of grammar. They encode time location relative to other time locations and are also linked to verbs” (p.355). A verb tense error consists of a transition of verb tense in a sentence without suggesting a transition in time.

7.9 Lexical Errors

As highlighted by Agustin Llach (2005), the importance of vocabulary in communication, be it oral or written, has been broadly recognized by researchers. The speaker's possibilities for successful interactions with others derives amply from his lexical range, and it turns into an even more determining aspect when writing. Taking this into account, Lennon (1991) defined lexical error as the incorrect contextual use of a lexical item compared to that of a native speaker in similar circumstances. To illustrate the weight of vocabulary in social interactions and its impact for ELLs, Agustin Llach (2005) states this is the reason why learners carry dictionaries and not grammars when travelling to a foreign country. Likewise, Hughes and Lascarato (1982) describe lexical errors as communication distorters that negatively affect message intelligibility and comprehension. This could prove positive in written assignments, where both structural and functional dimensions of language must be included.

The aforementioned is especially accurate when referring to L2 academic written production, as lexical errors do not only result from natural language learning development but also from external factors such as individual reading habits and exposure to the target language that are reflected on vocabulary range and written production. Lexical errors, as stated by Agustin Llach (2005), are mostly problematic as they hinder and distort communication and the unfolding of the writer's ideas, especially academic topics. Shalaby, Yahya and El-Komi (2009) mention how teachers and professors usually encounter these issues in their students' assignments and struggle to grasp the learner's idea, this referring to the impact lexical errors have on a text's overall comprehension. The relevance of research in the process and development of L2 writing skills, particularly concerning errors in ELLs' written production, relies on the possibilities for educators to not only acknowledge the aspects to be reinforced in the lessons and what activities to implement, but also to broaden

the scope of interpretation concerning the development of writing skills in L2. Among the types of lexical errors ELLs commonly make when composing their written products, and that this research study will explore, there are Interference, Confusion of words in form and in content.

7.9.1 Interference

Interference occurs when learners make use of their mother tongue structures to produce in the second language (Ellis, 1997). It can also be identified as the impact of L1 knowledge on the L2. Ellis (1997) defines interference as well as the influence L1 plays on the learner's acquisition of L2. In writing, as evidenced by several research studies, interference is especially found in grammar and vocabulary (Alamin and Ahmed, 2012; Limengka and Kuntjara, 2012; Wu and Garza, 2014).

7.9.2 Confusion of Words

Laufer-Dvorkin (1991) described confusion of words as ELLs' lack of awareness of the form and content of specific words, which hinders and breaks communication; this phenomenon occurs both in isolation and in context, and there are key differences between the two categories: Content and Form.

- **(Content)** content errors refer to the inappropriate word choice students make mostly due to a lack of knowledge of the item semantic connotation. Zimmermann (1986) defined this type of error as word misuse that learners commit when attempting to approximate to a specific word.

- **(Form)** Zimmerman (1986) also referred to them as form-orientated errors, these errors usually result from the student's intent to identify the written form of a particular word through graphic and phonemic cues. This error usually manifests due to the learner's unfamiliarity with the specific written item. Sometimes, these word approximations are also influenced by the learners' L1.

8 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last decade, and with the impact of technology, writing skills have turned into one of the most relevant requirements in everyday life, especially at academic fields. However, in terms of educational level, most high school seniors do not achieve an average writing proficiency by the time they start tertiary education. This deficit, indeed, causes long-term repercussions in the academic and professional performance. This is especially true in L2 learning processes, where several linguistic aspects such as syntactic structures or conventions require to be modified. Partially related to sociocultural changes in the last decade, academic writing, especially in English, and its importance on an individual's educational and professional performance has prompted research and initiatives to inquire about the future of this field of study and the reason behind its growing relevance within the teaching community. This field of study is relatively new in Latin America and several authors like Molina Natera (2014) and Nunez (2013) have explored the academic writing initiatives in a second language conducted in this continent; assuring its relevance and long term implications for academic communities.

However, in the Colombian context and despite of the many governmental and private policies and programs led to foster bilingualism in educational institutions, it is clear that the majority of English Language Learners' (ELLs) difficulty in their L2 written production relies of their limited literacy skills in their first language as well as their partial experiences in writing. As observed by Lopez (2011), it is common for ELLs to make use of their L1 knowledge to communicate and produce in the foreign language, extrapolating similar linguistic patterns from one language to another. This as means to fasten and simplify the language learning process. (Lopez, 2011).

This difficulty faced by students in their L2 written production has recently promoted, as previously stated, the interest of scholars and academics around the world seeking for the most appropriate methods and techniques in writing instruction. The most common as identified by Moyano (2004) are first, courses and study groups offered in bachelor programs, where the main goal is to provide “basic general writing competences” that allows learners to comprehend and produce texts in any setting. Second, content classes where writing comprehension and production competences are an intrinsic element and requirement of their syllabus. Another type of writing instruction initiative is the writing center that through tutoring sessions assists and supports students in the creating process of their written assignments. Even if they first appeared in the US and England at the beginning of the 21st century, the analysis of nine writing centers in Latin American universities conducted by Nunez (2013), confirmed the popularity and necessity of these settings within academic scenarios. In addition to these, error characterization has proved to be a highly effective tool to improve ELLs writing performance, providing evidence of their weaknesses and strengths, broadening the practice span used by educators in writing teaching. As emphasized by Phuket (2015) error analysis endows instructors with an understanding of the origin of specific writing weaknesses as well as evidence of writing development, successfully supporting ELLs in this task. With this in mind, error characterization not only permits the recognition of common error patterns most ELLs commit in their writing performance but also valuable information that allows language teachers and professors to inquire about appropriate class methodologies that enrich and complement writing instruction.

Types and Attributes of English Writing Errors in the EFL Context—A Study of Error Analysis.

Acknowledging the importance of strategies that promote and improve students' L2 writing competences, particularly of error analysis and characterization, the research conducted by Wu and Garza (2014) aims at identifying the nature and possible sources of specific writing error patterns such as lexical, semantic or grammatical, found in the writing samples of elementary students; stressing the importance of error characterization and its varieties, due to overgeneralization or limited exposure to the target language, and how the learners' language proficiency level determines the factors involved in writing error patterns. This research aimed at answering the following questions: 1. what types of grammatical errors are frequently found in the compositions written by Mandarin-Chinese English as Foreign Language (EFL) students? And 2. What factors cause these errors in EFL students' writing samples? For a period of twelve weeks the five participants, who were 6th grade EFL students from an elementary school in Taiwan, with an age range from 11-12 years old were asked to do a written assignment (essay) with a topic given by the teacher each week. These writing samples were done online and then sent to a native pre-service teacher in the U.S., who took part in a teacher preparation program. Based on these essays and following a series of steps in this error analysis task such as: Identify, classify and quantify errors along with an analysis of errors' source. The labels used for the error categorization were: grammatical, syntactic, lexical, semantic and mechanics. Each error type was quantified and finally, the errors' source were labeled as: Intralingual (overgeneralization errors) Interlingual (L1 interference errors) Intelligible error (would not belong to either category). Wu and Garza explicitly describe how intralingual or interlingual aspects can interfere in the students' written production. The findings obtained evidence that most errors were originated from

interlingual issues rather than intralingual, as well as their strategies when producing in L2, which particularly included linguistic feature commonly used online.

This study emphasizes and details the impact of L1 in the learners' L2 written production, including the influence of technology exposure on younger generations of students. In addition, how particular aspects like the learners' age and mother tongue affect and determine their writing production and the recognition of writing weaknesses. The relevance of this study relies on its focus on writing taxonomy, subsequently providing more evidence as to the most required and accurate techniques teachers can use to enhance and strengthen the learners' writing competences.

Common Errors in Second Language (L2) Speakers' Written Texts. A Case of First Year First Semester (L1:S1) Arts students at Midlands State University: An Error Analysis Approach.

Similarly highlighting the significance of the pupils' context and language proficiency level when implementing writing instruction practices, the study led by Mutema and Mariko (2012) focused on the knowledge gaps concerning L2 rules that interfere in L2 production. The study focused mainly at identifying the most common types of errors among tertiary education learners. The participants of this inquiry were first semester Art faculty students from Midlands State University, 100 papers were randomly selected out of 645. A mixed methodology practices such as observations, questionnaires (to students and their texts) and interviews (to ten lecturers from the Communication Skills Department) were used. The most common errors were categorized as follows: overgeneralization (over-appliance of L2 rules), omission, misinformation (vocabulary consistence) and misordering. The results obtained demonstrated that in this case, the most common error sources were L1 interference and lack

of knowledge about L2 rules, resulted from limited exposure to the language. However, some learners' main source of error was due to gaps in specific L2 knowledge rather than L1 interference, which reflects how the identification of these facts can alter the students' writing skills development.

This research study offers insights concerning how learners' specific contextual facts can modify language teachers and professors' methodologies and how acknowledging these "developmental stages" can also contribute to the improvement of the students' competences. From an "utopist" perspective, Mutema and Mariko propose that teachers' interest in learners' background can alter drastically classroom linguistic goals, mainly those in writing instruction initiatives, implicitly fostering the students' self-expression through writing.

Understanding EFL Students' Errors in Writing

Widening the scope of studies focused in the commonly found difficulty in the development of the writing skills faced by ELLs, the study led by Phuket (2015), aims at identifying the major types of writing error committed by Thai students' essays as well as their sources, recognizing the linguistic level where the majority of errors are produced. The participants of the study were a Thai speaking community, reinforcing the role and impact of L1 and its structure in L2 language learning processes. 40 Thai undergraduates, from second and third year, from Utara University, whose age ranged from 18 to 22 and who were enrolled in a writing class were asked to choose one of three topics given and write a narrative essay. It is important to highlight that topics were selected by two educators according to learners' proficiency level. The papers were collected and analyzed and errors were categorized by two experts independently, a Thai professor and an English native speaker. The results revealed 22 types of errors in the participants' written production. The

most frequent being word choice, verb tense, preposition, and comma misuse. Additionally, interlingual issues (L1 interference) was the most recurrent source of error, concurring with the findings obtained in Wu and Garza's (2014) study.

This enquiry contributes with relevant evidence that assures the complexity of ELLs writing errors according to their native language, in this case, literal translation from Thai language and its structure. There is an emphasis on regular error checking language from teachers and instructors, highlighting the influence that constant practice might imply for students and their writing performance.

Spanish-English Writing Structure Interferences in Second Language Learners.

Supporting how L1 might affect English as Second Language (ESL) or EFL processes, the study conducted by Lopez (2011) offers information concerning the influence of Spanish (as L1) in ELLs written structures. The study general question is what is the impact L1 written structure has on L2 written structure? And aims at describing L1 influence in the structure of the L2 written products. With the use of qualitative methods, 24 first year undergraduate students from UNICA University were assigned some papers throughout the semester. The participants (including some teachers) were interviewed before writing the assignments, to check the similarity of their responses and the learners' production. Lopez focused on the students' use of L1 when writing in English, their dictionary use, and L1 and L2 structure knowledge. The results revealed that students acknowledged Spanish as crucial for English learning (for understanding of new concepts and expressions) but coincided as well that could interfere with their L2 production. On the other hand, teachers did not consider L1 use was important within L2 learning classrooms, believing it could interfere with pupils' development in the target language. Lopez also found that in L2 written

production processes, students write in Spanish first and then they translate into English. The direct impact of L1 on L2 written production resulted in word order issues, missing the verb “be”, implicit subject, and the incorrect use of the article “the”; coinciding with the studies conducted by Phuket (2015) and Wu and Garza (2014).

This research is particularly helpful in Spanish speaking contexts, it does not only offer explicit information concerning the influence of the language on EFL classes but also of the perceptions students and teachers possess about the implications of the L1 use in L2 learning processes and written production, as well as the methods and strategies used by learners when producing. Contributing to the techniques planned for language lessons, especially those for writing teaching.

Spanish Interference in EFL Writing Skills: A Case of Ecuadorian Senior High Schools.

Continuing with contextualized EFL scenarios, the research led by Solano et al (2014) in Ecuadorian public and private schools located in Loja, permits a better understanding of the initiatives that foster L2 writing production practices before learners reach tertiary education level and the challenges in academic writing, especially in L2, most of them must tackle. 351 high school students and 42 teachers from these educational institutions, the students were asked to write a narrative paragraph; mixed method practices such as questionnaires (to both teachers and students) and text analysis were used to collect data and determine interference patterns. The narrative texts done by the participants were analyzed based on semantic, morphological and syntactical aspects. The findings exposed that English grammar and vocabulary were the linguistic areas with higher levels of L1 interference, those being verb and preposition misuse, personal and object pronouns omission, article overuse and inappropriate word order.

This study provides information that conceives ELLs at different educational levels, and the strategies and methods used to help them improve their L2 writing performance, as well as the perceptions language teachers might have concerning students' development in English written production; once again, emphasizing the necessity for teachers to get to know their students' background and help them in the development of demanding writing competences.

To sum up and concerning the contribution of these studies widening the scope of writing error characterization research, they provide valuable information regarding the development of ELLs academic writing skills, including their contextual circumstances (language proficiency and educational level, age, mother tongue, general background, among others), and the considerations language teachers, professors and other academic writing instructors should do based on these particular features , adding to the learners' linguistic process, aiming for academic and professional long-term effects, that support them for life.

9 METHODOLOGY

The following segment describes and explains the type of research and study, the reasons to conduct it, as well as the context, setting, participants and the role of the researchers in development involved in the study.

9.1. TYPE OF STUDY

A descriptive-case type of study was applied to this research as the main objectives of this investigation are to determine or identify the basis of a phenomenon by describing and analyzing collected data. According to Williams (2007), descriptive research approach is a basic research method that examines the situation, as it exists in its current state.

Descriptive research involves identification of attributes of a particular phenomenon based on an observational basis, or the exploration of correlation between two or more phenomena. Based on the author's claim, this research has a descriptive view as it involves analyzing, describing and interpreting samples of written productions with the purpose of identifying certain patterns and characteristics that will lead to answers to specific questions.

Additionally, as reported by Knupfer and McLellan (2001), the intent of some descriptive research is to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators. Regarding the investigation, one of the most important consequences is to contribute to the English Language Teaching program this study was implemented in, to provide useful information concerning the difficulties faced by students, syntactical and lexicon related, when presenting their written assignments.

9.1.1 COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery & Sheikh (2011) define collective case study as the type of study in which researchers analyze more than one case as means to compare and understand the connection between cases to have a broader perspective of a phenomenon. This study will select and analyze academic papers of tenth-semester undergraduates from the Teaching practicum in secondary education and based on particularities concerning syntax and lexical errors found, they will categorize and quantify these to identify its frequency in the participants' written production.

Collective or multiple case studies permit the comparison of carefully chosen cases, or samples in this study, to conduct an interpretation of the selected phenomenon. As affirmed by Harling (2012), when analyzing several cases it is necessary to provide a detailed description of each case and then, a general understanding of the comparison between them. Also, it is important to draw an interpretation of the conclusions and insights revealed on the analysis. This type of study permits that results are used as hypothesis but cannot be replicated or be taken as generalization.

This research aims at identifying and categorizing the most frequent syntax and lexical error typologies; still, the results obtained would vary if conducted with other group of participants and will not provide fixed patterns of the error categories analyzed.

9.2. TYPE OF RESEARCH

According to the nature and purpose of this study (and its descriptive streak), a

mixed methods approach was conducted, as described by Dornyei (2007) this category, that has been increasing for the past 15 years, is also known as multitrait-multimethod research, methodological triangulation, mixed model studies, among others; and fundamentally combines quantitative and qualitative methods to strengthen and foster research development.

As previously mentioned, the use of mixed methods in research widens the prospects concerning findings and contributions to the field of interest. Thus, this study followed the lines of descriptive research that according to Fox (2007) definition, aims at shedding light on issues that, with the use of data collection, permits a broader description of the problem than those of other kind done previously. Likewise, Koh and Owen (2000) highlight that the value of this type of research relies on the possibility to solve problems and enhance practices through observation, analysis and description itself. In this project the use of a Corpus permitted the researchers not only to classify and quantify the most commonly made types of syntactic and lexical errors in the participants' writing, but also to conduct an interpretation of these types of errors in the development of the participants' L2 writing skills.

9.3 CONTEXT

This research study took place at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, Colombia. With more than 17.000 students, the university includes 9 faculties and over 40 undergraduate programs, as well as masters and Ph.D. programmes.

This study was conducted in one of the courses from the Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con Énfasis en Inglés program at the aforementioned university. The program is conformed by humanistic, constructivist and reflective-critical pedagogical components; its main aim is to provide students with the linguistic, sociocultural and pragmatic knowledge that permits them to be competent not only in language teaching fields, but also in research matters. The program's professoriate is conformed by around 15 educators, whose professional profile grants the interdisciplinary nature of language teaching and learning.

9.4 SETTING

The Teaching Practicum in Secondary Education course was selected as the setting for this study to be conducted; it belongs to the tenth semester of the curriculum of the English language teaching program, in which a content-based approach is implemented, predominantly a content-driven emphasis. The course's main objective is to foster the pedagogical and linguistic competences of the practitioners, expanding their knowledge and awareness of English Language Teaching principles. To meet the course's demands, practitioners are required to present a set of three different written products (reports and journals) based on their teaching experiences. Concerning the students' L2 writing performance, they were expected to possess above-average L2 writing underpinnings resulting from courses taken in the first five semesters of the program, including a strong writing component in their syllabus.

9.5 RESEARCHERS' ROLE

In this study, the researchers played the role of analysts and interpreters of the information or data collected. As the investigation employed a mixed method approach,

the role of the researchers varied according to each procedure. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) state that qualitative researchers construct interpretive narrative from their data and try to capture the complexity of the phenomenon under study, particularly for the descriptive nature of the study. In this study, the researchers included both practices since an interpretation of academic papers was conducted to determine what categories of error making emerged from the data collected; subsequently, the characterization of the most commonly made syntactic and lexical errors in tenth semester students' written production. The researchers will implement a software, *Atlas.ti*, for the quantification of the data collected, specifically the recurrence and enumeration of syntactic and lexical errors and their subcategories.

10 SAMPLING

This research implementation took place in a particular setting where its population shared common traits (the students possessed above-average English language proficiency and have had several L2 writing experiences throughout their academic process), a non-probability sampling technique was used, particularly with judgmental sampling methods. This project was conducted with a total of 24 students, whose age ranged from 19 to 30 years old, both females and males. They were also expected to possess a C1 level in English language proficiency.

Concerning its definition, Guo and Hussey (2004) describe non-probability sampling as the researchers' subjective selection of the participants for the study, according to a set of characteristics established by the research objectives and questions. The researchers chose the participants not only for their English language proficiency but also for the several L2 writing experiences they had had by the time they began tenth semester (previous courses with a strong focus on academic writing competences), granting valuable information regarding error characterization. Concerning the methods, judgmental sampling refers to the researchers' selection of some participants based on the features and qualities they possess. The participants' written production, a reflective paper and a peer-coaching report required for the course, provided the researchers with particular evidence of students' overall academic writing abilities, particularly of syntactic and lexical aspects in their writing. Maxwell (1997) also defined this method as the type of sampling where specific features or units (individuals, groups of people or institutions) fit the established research objectives and their particular traits, contributing to answer the research questions.

11 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Taking into consideration the mix-method approach employed in this investigation, the Corpus will be used as a data collection instrument. Due to the type and the nature of the study, the researchers considered a method that enables them to contemplate a better understanding about participants' process as well as more concrete aspects (syntax and vocabulary) of the writing skill.

Corpus linguistic is a method used to analyze language through large compilations of texts which can be either written or spoken language, but contemplating qualitative and quantitative approaches to be implemented (Nesselhauf, 2004). The corpus of this research is constituted by 42 samples, 21 of which are reflective essays about learners' experiences in the practicum, and 21 peer-coaching reports that aimed at raising awareness of the participants' regarding their teaching during the course. The reflective essays were part of the first term of the course and required students to describe particular situations encountered during their practicum in secondary public schools.

On the other hand, the peer-coaching report focused on their observations of a classmate teaching practices and was assigned by the end of the course. It is relevant to highlight that the due date for each of these papers (reflective assigned early in the course and peer-coaching late in the semester) also provided information to determine whether or not students writing errors increased or decreased with regular writing practice throughout the semester. Another crucial characteristic is the time given to students for the composition of their academic papers; students had around a week to prepare the topic, the content and to

conduct the revision of their papers for the due date, this highlighting how the papers contain genuine information of the students' overall error range in their L2 writing competences.

The two folders constituting the corpus consisted on Reflective papers (or **Folder 1**) and Peer-coaching reports (**Folder 2**); the former with 26 academic papers and the latter with 23 documents. It is important to clarify that the original number of papers per folder decreased as the researchers confirmed that some participants' academic production was not in both folders. Thus, the corpus to be used in this study concluded with 21 papers per folder, with a total of 42 documents. The reflective papers had to include a maximum of 4-5 paragraphs and were written individually. The peer-coaching reports must include four (4) paragraphs (introductory paragraph, two body paragraphs and a conclusion) and had to be done in pairs. All papers were saved and analyzed in digital versions.

12 DATA ANALYSIS

For the interpretation of the corpus, the researchers read and made an analysis of each paper from both folders. Then, they conducted the identification of the possible errors according to the established categories (syntactic or lexical and their subcategories) and they recorded these numbers on *ATLAS.ti*, a computer program commonly used for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. After conducting the error quantification, the researchers looked for patterns and trends in the evidence collected.

The software mentioned before works with specific symbols and words employed to categorize and organize the results. As shown in **Chart 1**, the first column, identified as “Quantity” which means the number of errors found in the document analyzed. The second column appears as “Document” and this indicates the text examined. These papers were organized naming them “F1 D1” which means folder one and document one. With this specification, a distinction of folders was made to keep control of the amount of texts studied. The third column term is “Quotation Content” and this includes the specific phrase or sentence identified by the researchers as the error. The fourth column title is “Codes” and this contains the name of the category (syntax or vocabulary) as well as the name of the subcategories (addition, omission, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, wrong order, confusion of words (content), confusion of words (form) and interference). The fifth column name is “Location” and this indicates the specific place the error was found.

Quantity	Document	Quotation Content	Codes	Location
1	F1 D1	Classroom Management crucial to succeed in the teaching and learning the language.	Vocabulary Interference	Paragraph: 1 Line: 5
2	F1 D1	This paper intends aiming at to reflect	Syntax Addition	Paragraph: 1 Line: 1
3	F1 D1	This paper intends aiming at to reflect on	Syntax Verb Tense	Paragraph: 4 Line: 1
4	F1 D1	One of the major aspects concerning teaching and learning the language	Vocabulary Interference	Paragraph: 1 Line: 1,2
5	F1 D1	it is one of the cores to success in the learning goals	Syntax Verb Tense	Paragraph: 1 Line: 2,3

Chart 1 Codes used in ATLAS.ti, research software used for the corpus analysis

13 FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the corpus of 42 academic papers, 432 errors were found; 292 being of syntactic typology and 140 in the category of vocabulary. The total number of errors include the previously mentioned subcategories for syntax: addition, omission, subject-verb agreement, verb tense and wrong order; and for vocabulary: interference and confusion of words in content and form.

The results obtained revealed that grammatical errors were the most numerous, specifically those under the category of verb tense. Related to errors of lexical nature, the most commonly made were confusion of words in content. The subcategories of wrong order (syntax) and confusion of words in form (vocabulary) rated the lowest scores of incidence.

An important aspect to mention, as previously stated, is that the participants had a specific topic to write about in each paper they composed (a reflective paper and a peer-coaching report), which provided reliable evidence of their overall individual academic writing competences concerning the categories and subcategories chosen for this study. Similarly, the process of analysis and categorization of errors presented the researchers with much complexity, as interpretation of what is “correct” varies according to the participants’ L2 overall proficiency and their subjective perspective, particularly regarding word choice. Findings on the specific subcategories of syntactical (Addition, Omission, Subject-verb agreement, Verb tense and Wrong order) and vocabulary (Interference, Confusion of words (content) and Confusion of words (form) errors will be shown below.

Item	Type of error	Number of errors	Percentage (%)	Mean
1	Verb Tense	113	26.15	2.6
2	Confusion of words (content)	68	15.74	1.6
3	Omission	63	14.58	1.5
4	Addition	55	12.73	1.3
5	Interference	47	10.88	1.1
6	Subject-verb agreement	42	9.72	1
7	Confusion of words (form)	25	5.79	0.5
8	Wrong Order	19	4.41	0.4
	Total	432	100	

Chart 2 Results of the syntax and lexical errors, and the subcategories, found in the corpus analysis.

Chart 2 displays the percentages of all the errors identified, the results show that the most common errors committed by the tenth semester students were: verb tense (26.15%), followed by confusion of words (content) (15.74%), omission (14.58%), and addition (12.73%). The next noticeable error was interference (10.88%), next subject-verb agreement (9.72%), and the errors that amounted the less scores were confusion of words (form) (5.79%) and wrong order (4.41%). This also indicates that the category with the highest percentage of recurrence was syntax with a total of 67.59 %, whereas Lexical obtained a lower score of 32.41%.

13.1 Lexical errors:

13.1.1 Confusion of words (content):

According to the data analyzed, the lexical subcategory with the highest scores of incidence was Confusion of words (missattribution) (content), with 15.74%. One common drawback most ELLs face at the time of composing academic papers is the accuracy and appropriateness of the words chosen for the text's style and context. As explained by Carriopastor and Mestre-Mestre (2013), the writer committing this error, usually chooses a general word that might not affect comprehension of the text, but is not appropriate for the context. Likewise, word inappropriateness might be the result of a lack of knowledge of more specific terms.

In the following samples, items categorized as errors of Confusion of words (content) are in bold and underlined:

*“I started to get close to the students to act more like them, **collocation** was used and the teacher tried to make students feel comfortable, however at a moment of the lesson students started to do whatever they wanted”*

Sample located in F1, D8, Paragraph: 2 Line: 2 and 3

The word “collocation” in English refers to “*the combination of words formed when two or more words are often used together in a way that sounds correct*” or “*the regular use of some words and phrases with others, especially in a way that is difficult to guess*”. Both acceptions highlight the fact that most people using this word are native English speakers and also, the difficulty level it presents as usually, a *collocation* cannot be translated literally to other languages. In this sentence, considering the topic developed in the same, the writer was referring to “seating arrangement”, a common term in teaching fields when talking about the most appropriate ways to organize a classroom, as means to facilitate the development of the lesson or also, to avoid students’ disruptive behavior. The writer might have forgotten the technical term for this particular action in the classroom and tried to make an approximation with a similar level of “expertise”. Taking this into consideration, the writer associated the meaning of *collocation* in Spanish with that in English; in Spanish, “*colocar*” means “ to organize”, ”to place”, “to classify”, among others These word definitions could hint at the writer’s intention to talk about placing or changing an object’s position in a classroom to enhance learning environments. As previously stated, the writer could have used this word’s meaning in Spanish to express an idea in English, without considering its unrelated semantic meaning.

“Different types of acknowledge are going to be develop during this paper like: rapport, disruptive behavior, classroom organization, this acknowledge is essential for me as a practitioner because I need to be aware of the different methods I can use to make the class more dynamic and interactive.”

Sample located in F1, D8, Paragraph: 1 Line: 4, 5 and 6

In this passage, there is a similar case of confusion regarding sameness in the written form of a word and its actual meaning. The verb “acknowledge” is defined as “to accept, admit, or recognize something, or the truth or existence of something”, the writer includes this word as a noun to introduce the main topics to be developed in his teaching experience paper. Likewise, this verb could have been confused with a similar word, “knowledge”, this noun refers to the “understanding of or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, either known by one person or by people generally”. Taking into account the writer’s intention in this sentence, it is possible to identify he was referring to the “topics” or “matters” he was going to focus on his paper, these words are commonly used in this context (academic written assignments, in a topic sentence, for example) as they clearly introduce specific information. This also confirms that regardless of their definitions, neither the verb “acknowledge” nor the noun “knowledge” match the idea the writer was attempting to express, particularly the noun “knowledge”, as its connotation is too general for the writer’s intention. It is relevant to notice the writer used the verb “acknowledge” twice in this sentence, confirming the confusion of words concerning not only the content of the word but also the context in which it is used.

13.1.2 Interference

Interference was the second most common vocabulary error found in the analysis of the participants' academic papers, reaching 10.88%. This type of error was mostly evidenced in the use of words in the participants' L1 that were adapted to L2 contexts, or in a high influence of the mother tongue when writing in English. Additionally, some participants made variations of commonly known expressions in Spanish into English to develop their ideas. Wrong collocations were identified in a lower percentage.

In the following examples, words in bold and underlined were categorized as errors of Interference:

*“I was aware of my mistake by being so friendly, **I broke the line of friend and teacher**”*

Sample located in F1, D8, Paragraph: 2, Line: 6

In this passage, the writer seemed to have adapted an idiomatic expression of common use for both English and Spanish speakers when referring to disrespectful behavior or the infringement of accepted standards related to social interaction. The sentence *“I broke the line of friend and teacher”* could be literally translated to Spanish as “Rompí la línea entre un amigo y un profesor”, referring to the aforementioned scenario; however, this situation is normally described as “cruzar/pasar la línea” in Spanish and as “to cross the line” in English. The writer could have used an alternative expression to present his idea as well, one expression that is not so well-known; this situation can also be described as “going off limits” and “step over the line” in English, or “pasar el límite de/ pasar los límites de” in Spanish. This type of informal language is usually not comprehensible for speakers without

high language proficiency levels and could be apt for misunderstandings. The writer makes a point when referring to and depicting particular teaching experiences, but an influence of L1 when composing his ideas could lead to confusion when a reader is not familiar with this type of colloquial vocabulary. The expression he used to portray the breach of being seen as a friend instead of a teacher for the students, shares more similarity with his mother tongue, Spanish, than with English. Expressions such as “se dañó/rompió la confianza” or “se cortó la comunicación”, usually including the verbs “cut/break/damage/”, are a regular in Spanish to refer to situations as the one in the passage, implying a damage of any kind among social interactions.

“We can generate more respect and honesty to make advices and comments”

Sample located in F2, D20, Paragraph: 4, Line: 8

The expression used by the writer in this passage, “*to make advices and comments*”, presents a strong L1 influence and is commonly used among Spanish speakers, “*hacer sugerencias y comentarios*”. In this sentence, the main idea points at promoting respect and honesty within the classroom to provide comments and “*make suggestions*”, described as “*an idea, plan, or action that is suggested or the act of suggesting it/ communication of an idea without stating it directly*”, which could be a more explicit and clear statement for this context and would be easily understood by English readers. Nonetheless, when stating “*make advices*”, the writer might be also referring to “*give advice*”, defined as “*an opinion that someone offers you about what you should do or how you should act in a particular situation*”, being closely related to the meaning of both expressions, “*give advice*” and “*make suggestions*”. Regarding this, influence of the writer’s L1 is evidenced when referring to this

intention or actions in plural, “*make advices*”; in English, this expression is presented in singular, “*give advice*”, but has a plural translation to Spanish. Examples to this can be seen in phrases such as: “*Simple ways to give advice: Maneras simples para dar un consejo/dar consejos*”; “*Life Advice for people: Consejos de vida para las personas*”; “*The Art of giving and receiving advice: El arte de dar y recibir consejos*”, to name a few. Likewise, other verbs such as *provide* and *offer* are also used when referring to “advice” in English; this could have been ambiguous for the writer or the similarity in both expressions’, “*give advice/make suggestions*”, meaning could have resulted too alike to each other, causing confusion regarding its appropriate sequence.

13.1.3 Confusion of words (form):

The category of Confusion of words (form) presented a 5.79% of frequency in the corpus analysis. As stated by Zimmerman (1986), a lack of familiarity with L2 written forms might cause ELLs difficulties in their writing competences. Besides, on some occasions, the writer relies on the word’s written form in L1 to make an approximation to the written form in L2.

“The ss were also speaking to the teacher with bad words as well as **threating** their teammates without friendship”

Sample located in F1, D8, Paragraph: 2, Lines: 4, 5

The writer confuses two words that might look alike in written form and meaning in English for a Spanish speaker: “*threat*” y “*treat*”. The definition of both words is closely related to actions or attitudes displayed in social interactions, which for an ELL might prove

to be challenging when differentiating its written form. The noun “threat”, with a negative meaning, which could also fit the writer’s general idea in the passage, refers to “*a suggestion that something unpleasant or violent will happen, especially if a particular action or order is not followed*”; whereas the verb “treat” is defined as “*to behave towards someone or deal with something in a particular way*”. In this case, and considering the writer’s initial idea, the sentence “*threatening their teammates without friendship*” is denoting the mistreatment displayed by some students towards the practitioner and other students, or is referring to disruptive behavior, a common situation most teachers have to deal with. Bearing in mind that both words share similarities in their written form and definition, the writer might have confused these two aspects and made a guess on its written form or definition or is not well-aware of the difference between the noun “*threat*” and the verb “*threaten*”, if he also intended to refer to this action.

*“Respectfully ask them to pay attention and show an authority position without seem
scarring”*

Sample located in F2, D11, Paragraph: 2 Line: 5 and 6

In the same way to the above-mentioned case, there is also an evident lack of clarity concerning the accurate written form of a word in this passage due to similar meaning and pronunciation. The writer confused the present participle tense of the verb scare, “*scaring*”, with the adjective “*scary*”. This is most likely the result of the phonological resemblance both words share, which seems to be a common issue for ELLs, especially in early learning stages, and usually seen with verbs such as “*lying/laying*”, “*you’re/your*”, “*being/been*”, among

others. The writer's confusion with the word's correct written form could also be derived to the verb base form "scare", as both "scary" and "scaring" have different endings but sound similar when pronounced. The verb "scare" refers to "to (make a person or animal) feel frightened", being the form used by the writer, "scaring", its present participle; on the other hand, the adjective "scary" is defined as "Frightening; causing fear" or "Uncannily striking or surprising", which could explain the possible difficulties faced by an ELL when distinguishing these words' written and phonological differences. Likewise, and considering the meaning of "scary" and the passage's main idea, the word "intimidating" could have explained better the writer's intention. Nonetheless, this does not mean the writer's word choice was incorrect, as its meaning also matches the context presented in the sentence and could clearly describe the writer's practicum experience as well.

13.2 Syntactical Errors

13.2.1 Verb Tense

Errors in verb tense can be evidenced when the correct tense is not applied in the sentence. It can be assumed that these types of errors occur due to a lack of knowledge of the different rules for tenses applications. In the case of verb tense, this subcategory presented the highest scores of frequency among students with a percentage of 26.15%. The majority of inaccuracies took place using the passive voice and the past simple tense.

*"I have tried this technique but it **did not have worked** enough, since only few learners **pay** attention but most of the class **continue** talking"*

Sample located in F1, D1, Paragraph: 3, Line: 3 and 4

In this sentence several verb tense errors can be observed. In the first phrase in bold, the participant showed that he did not recognize some grammatical rules. In order to write the negative form of the present perfect tense, the student used the auxiliary “**did**” which corresponds to the past simple tense. Additionally, the following verbs “**pay**” and “**continue**” were written in the present simple tense when the context required the verbs to be conjugated in the past tense form to maintain consistency.

*“Have you **think** on what you may face at the moment of guiding a first class at a high school?”*

Sample located in F1, D8, Paragraph: 1, Line: 1

In this case, the student had an error using the present perfect tense. The verb in bold had to be written in the past participle form in order to respect the rule of this tense. Due to the fact that this word was written in its basic verb form, it is possible to conclude that the student may presents doubts or a lack of clarity regarding this topic.

13.2.2 Omission

Regarding syntax, this subcategory took the second place of frequency with a 14.58%. According to Muhsin (2016) errors of omission occur when there is a lack of one or more items essential to form a correct sentence. In this study, a recurring phenomenon regarding the lack of pronouns was evidenced.

“Regarding the teaching practicum experience in a seventh grade at a high-school of Pereira, Institucion Educativa Tecnico Superior, ___ is important to say that this was a significant and fruitful experience”.

Sample located in F2, D8, Paragraph: 1, Line: 1 and 2

In this passage, it was observed that the participant did not include the pronoun “it” to complete the whole sentence. It is possible that this inaccuracy has something to do with the pronunciation of the words “it is” in the form of “it’s” or the writer did not know the right use of the pronouns and verbs.

“Those aspects were important to analyze because __ allowed me to recognize mistakes that can be done when planning a class”.

Sample located in F2, D3, Paragraph: 1, Line: 3 and 4

Similarly, in this sentence as in many others the pronoun was omitted. In this case, in order to the sentence to be grammatically correct the word “they” had to be written before the verb “allowed”. Once more, there is the possibility that the participant does not know the right use of the pronouns.

13.2.3 Addition

The subcategory addition presented a 12.73% of frequency occupying the third place of the most common errors regarding syntax. In Muhsin words (2016) “errors of addition are characterized by the presence of one or more items that must not appear in well-formed sentences:” (p.85).

“About the teaching of English in secondary school regarding to the issues we have noticed during this period of time”

Sample located in F1, D3, Paragraph: 1 Line: 2 and 3

In this sentence, the item that had to be excluded was the preposition “**to**”. It can be assumed that the writer was confused with the use of the word regarding. Perhaps, the participant mixed the expression *in regard to* and add the preposition *to* to the word regarding.

“Those aspects provide the information to give the feedback”

Sample located in F2, D3, Paragraph: 1 Line: 5

In this case, the error was evidenced in the addition of the article “**the**”. In English language, The word *feedback* is classified as an uncountable noun, which means that it does not have a plural form. A writer cannot express the idea of *one feedback* or *two feedbacks*. Therefore, the addition of this article results in an error. This misapplication could have happened due to the influence of the mother tongue in the construction of the sentence.

13.2.4. Subject-verb agreement

The frequency of this subcategory was low with 9.72%. Errors of subject-verb agreement occur when subjects and verbs do not agree with one another in number or third person rule.

“Which help in terms of teaching general aspects”

Sample located in F2, D8, Paragraph: 1, Line: 5

In this passage, the pronoun “**which**” is used as the subject of the sentence and it refers to an object or idea. In that case, the grammatical rule states that the noun “**it**” is classified as third person and it requires the “**s**” at the end of the verb to be correctly conjugated. It is possible that the student who wrote this segment was unaware of the rule.

“In general terms, the peer coaching project have more advantages than disadvantages”.

Sample located in F2, D3, Paragraph: 4, Line: 8

In the sentence, the writer disregarded the third person rule once more. The verb “*have*” in this occasion should have been written as “*has*” indicating third person. The participant possibly ignored the rule of the third person or made a mistake with the word project and omitted the “s” to make it plural.

13.2.5 Wrong order

The least frequent error in the whole corpus was the subcategory of wrong order with a 4.41%. These types of errors occur when a word or a phrase is misplaced in a sentence altering the correct sequence of the clause and also the coherence of what is trying to be communicated.

“In this paper, will be reported a short reflection about the peer coaching experience”

Sample located in F2, D16, Paragraph: 1, Line: 1

In this sample, there is a noticeable error in the way the sentence is constructed. The student failed at identifying the correct order of some words in the sentence. The normal structure of a simple sentence is formed by the subject, then the verb and finally the complement. In this case, the entire phrase “*a short reflection about the peer coaching experience*” is the subject of the sentence and the words “*will be reported*” are the verb. In

English grammar, the subject needs to be placed before the verb to be coherent. Therefore, the correct order of this phrase should be: *“a short reflection about the peer coaching experience will be reported”*.

“We never would have realized”

Sample located in F2, D21, Paragraph: 4, Line: 5

In this sample, it can be noticed that the participant did not identify the right position of the word **“never”** which is classified as an adverb of frequency. In English grammar, the rule states that the most common place for these adverbs is after the auxiliary or the modal verb and before the main verb. In this case, the main verb is **“realized”** being **“would”** and **“have”** modal and auxiliary verbs. As a result, the correct order of the sentence respecting the rule would be *“we would have never realized”*.

14 DISCUSSION

The writing error patterns obtained in the results exposed that the percentage differences among the two categories and subcategories were not significant, revealing an average of shared strengths and aspects to improve in the participants' English writing skills; an expected trend considering a common academic background. Nonetheless, as presented in the table of Brown's (2001) Microskills for writing, there are several elements involved at the time of writing in L2, particularly production of academic nature. Throughout the analysis of the corpus used for this research, there were particular examples, found in the different subcategories included, that demand to be mentioned as they reveal the individual and autonomous nature, to some extent, of the development of L2 academic writing skills.

To begin with, it was evidenced that a relevant number of participants faced difficulties when using the correct verb tense on their papers, contradicting this with their expected English language proficiency level that as previously stated was a C1. However, this unpredicted score pattern might match with Touchie's (1986) description of Performance errors, which occur due to tiredness or swiftness of the writer, rather than by insufficient or a lack of knowledge of L2 grammatical rules. Similarly, Jung (2013) refers to this type of errors as marked or "form-based" errors, which are explicit and also include omission and insertion (or addition), both syntactical subcategories also analyzed in the corpus; still, marked errors are described as of common occurrence in early learning stages, highlighting the variation between the participants' language proficiency level and the scores gathered. Concerning this, it is relevant to mention that the writing process the participants had at the time of composing both the reflective paper and the peer-coaching report was not recorded, being this a possible aspect that determined the quality of their written production.

Additionally, word choice issues were also noteworthy during the corpus analysis. A significant number of papers revealed problems when identifying and selecting appropriate and precise words to present and develop ideas, particularly those closely related in meaning to the writers' L1. As highlighted by Quian (1999) and Henriksen (1999), a writer's vocabulary breadth and depth fully define the quality of his written production, the complexity of these two elements was evidenced as some participants included more words when referring to one specific term or selected words that did not match the pedagogical context of the paper, on a few occasions altering ideas thoroughly. Related to this, there was a complete quality dissimilarity among a few papers. In some of them, the researchers did not identify errors of any kind, whereas in other documents, the level of errors found was very high. This tendency prompts questions concerning what other particular elements are involved in an ELL writing skills development, besides sole instruction.

The error tendencies found in this research could point at common issues Spanish speakers encounter when developing their English academic writing competences or could also highlight disparity in this learning process. Still, it has to be mentioned that the interpretation spectrum of these results might vary amply among readers, as this study was not either exploratory or explanatory. The scope of this research did not permit the researchers to also cover the possible sources or causes of these L2 writing error typologies. Consequently, this type of error characterization studies usually present a wide hypothesis array that prompts further investigation.

15 LIMITATIONS

As primary limitation, the researchers' English proficiency must be considered as this is not their first language. Thus, the analysis of the participants' academic papers might be subjected to their academic experience and exposure to L2. Likewise, interpretation differences concerning writing errors and the study's results might appear among readers with English as L1 and those who have it as L2, promoting further research on L1 and L2 writing errors.

This study also underwent some modifications related to its setting. Initially, the Academic Writing course of the same English Language Teaching program had been selected for this research. However, it was the Teaching Practicum in Secondary education course the one designated. Both courses require students to have a B2 or higher English level and include a strong academic writing component on their curriculum.

The corpus analyzed in this research was constituted by 42 academic papers from one course, which does not ensure a complete diagnosis of the academic writing competences of the students from this Program. Consequently, the results obtained in this study should not be generalized to the academic population due to its sample size. However, it might elucidate common issues students face when composing academic papers, as well as evidencing aspects to reinforce in academic writing instruction.

16 PEDAGOGICAL AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The main aim of this study was to categorize the most common syntactical and vocabulary errors found in the academic papers of tenth-semester university students. Considering the current relevance of writing competences in study and professional fields, this research might provide useful evidence for different scenarios, particularly those related to language teaching and academic writing initiatives.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results obtained in this study inform and highlight syntactical and vocabulary issues with a high level of frequency among B2-C1 English learners; in spite of the sample size analyzed, these findings might inform of common errors (from the categories above mentioned) most Spanish speakers face when developing L2 writing skills. Similarly, and considering the long term process of developing writing competences in a second/foreign language and personal circumstances also involved in it, this study's results might serve as a tool to strengthen, adapt or modify writing instruction in the academic program this research took place and settings alike. Other fields that might find this evidence meaningful are those related to academic writing initiatives (i.e L2 writing centers or academic writing short courses), where an acknowledgement of common issues when composing academic paperwork might provide them with evidence to enhance their assistance services.

In the specific setting where this study took place, the results obtained might point at development trends of writing competences among undergraduates, which could be further explored in the specific case of Spanish speakers. Considering this aspect, during the corpus analysis there were some dissimilarities in the quality of the papers (according to the

categories analyzed), some of those differences being greatly significant, presenting questions about, besides writing instruction, what individual aspects are included in the development of L2 writing skills development.

Along the same lines, this project prompts further research on error analysis using different variables. There are more aspects that were not measured in the participants' essays, such as coherence, cohesion, punctuation, among others.

The findings gathered here, which solely aimed at the categorization and qualification of syntactical and vocabulary errors, could promote deeper research on the causes behind these errors, the ones with higher scores of frequency, or those research fields focused on specific matters of syntactical or vocabulary nature.

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18 APPENDIX

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1zuwnZKsdnARhHxEpxuuKzzt-XA3SHClc>

