

Lexical Errors in EFL Students' Written Production¹

(Errores léxicos en la producción escrita de estudiantes de ILE)

*Damaris Cordero Badilla*²
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

*Vianey Martín Núñez*³
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

ABSTRACT

This research describes and analyzes common vocabulary errors found in the written production of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Based on the lexical errors identified, the analysis of the data was carried out by adapting James' lexical error taxonomy and included the written production of 56 students from the Universidad Nacional (Costa Rica). It can be concluded that the participants had more lexical errors in semantics and less at the level of discourse. Recommendations on teaching methodologies to correct lexical errors related issues are included.

RESUMEN

El estudio describe y analiza errores habituales en el vocabulario incluido en la producción escrita de estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE). Identificados los errores léxicos, el análisis de datos se realizó adaptando la taxonomía de error léxico (James) y se incluyó la producción escrita de 56 estudiantes

1 Recibido: 19 de marzo de 2019; aceptado: 29 de octubre de 2020.

2 Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje. Correo electrónico: damaris.cordero.badilla@una.cr

3 Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje. Correo Electrónico: vianey.nunez.arguedas@una.cr

de la Universidad Nacional (Costa Rica). Se concluye que los participantes muestran más errores léxicos en semántica y menos a nivel de discurso. Se proponen algunas recomendaciones sobre metodologías de enseñanza para subsanar el fenómeno.

Keywords: EFL, lexical errors, vocabulary learning, lexical instruction

Palabras clave: inglés como idioma extranjero, errores léxicos, aprendizaje de vocabulario, instrucción léxica

Introduction

Acquiring effective written communication skills is by itself a tough task; developing accurate writing skills in a foreign language is, however, an even harder process that Spanish-speaking students at the Universidad Nacional (Costa Rica) have to deal with, especially considering that the group analyzed does not belong to the English major but to other programs such as Biology, Math, International Affairs, Economics, Music or Geography.

Initially while developing writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students are required to learn adequate vocabulary, internalize basic language structures and understand language discourse acts. Later, language instructors evaluate whether the intended target contents corresponding to a given level have been mastered by the students, and monitor, assess and address the diverse types of errors they produce.

Undoubtedly, lexical errors affect students' written and oral production at all levels. Nevertheless, it seems easier to identify beginners' errors occurring in lexical and syntactical forms. In lexis, issues have been typically identified in the usage of both content (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) and function words (words with grammatical meaning: prepositions, articles, pronouns, and conjunctions.) In syntax, it has been documented that Spanish-speaking students generally deal with word order and word choice.

On these matters, Verspoor et al.⁴ have referred to this point arguing that learners' lexicons change because their second language knowledge increases, they integrate new words, and their linguistic competences become more invariable as they become stronger. Therefore, according to Lewis, an important element for both language acquisition and language learning is the development of learners' proficiency with lexis, and their ability to comprehend and produce lexically and syntactically accurate phrases and language itself.⁵ Lexical approaches in second and foreign language teaching, like those of Richards and Rodgers, indicate a great interest in vocabulary in English language teaching.⁶

Thus, periodically documenting and analyzing students' lexical errors in writing will offer information for English instructors to understand the nature of the inaccuracies present in learners' writing, and lead to effective strategies to help EFL students in the achievement of relevant and effective English lexis, grammar, and discourse.

For this reason, this study examines and describes common lexical errors made on written tasks by 56 Spanish-speaking university students taking pre-intermediate EFL courses at Universidad Nacional (UNA). The tasks were assigned during 2016 and 2017, and then classified and analyzed as a basis for teaching methods that could improve the quality of lexical instruction for future EFL students.

4 Marjolijn Verspoor, Monika S. Schmid and Xiaoyan Xu, "A Dynamic Usage Based Perspective on L2 Writing," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 21, 3 (2012): 239-263. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2012.03.007>.

5 Michael Lewis, *The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and the Way Forward* (London: Language Teaching Publications 1993): 95.

6 Jack C. Richards, and Theodore Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: A Description and Analysis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press (2001) 14.

Objectives

General objective

To analyze the lexical errors that pre-intermediate EFL Spanish-speaking students make when writing short texts aiming at the improvement of language instruction in English courses.

Specific objectives

Additionally, the specific objectives covered in this study are:

- to identify the lexical errors pre-intermediate that EFL students make in writing tasks
- to investigate possible reasons for lexical errors in the written tasks of EFL students
- to propose a classification of Spanish-speaking EFL students' lexical errors
- to provide instructors with recommendations about teaching methods for the reinforcement and improvement of lexical instruction for EFL students

Research Questions

- What types of lexical errors are common in EFL-UNA students' written production?
- What taxonomy of lexical errors could be used to analyze these EFL students' lexical errors?
- What are the pedagogical implications of these lexical errors?
- What teaching methods could be recommended for instructors to curb the appearance of those lexical errors?

Justification

According to the UNA-EFL curricula, since the very first day of class, EFL students are encouraged to develop the four macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. While learners continue learning—at a theoretical and practical level—the functions of grammar structures required to communicate at an A2.1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), they also have to increase vocabulary to express themselves effectively in the target language.

Teachers should increase these learners' abilities to use vocabulary and word combinations correctly, produce accurate phrases and to notice patterns of language. However, by being aware of the common lexical errors that learners make in written production, language instructors will be able to anticipate the problems students have, and therefore improve the quality of learning in EFL courses.

Literature Review

EFL language teachers are continuously analyzing their learners' errors as a way to improve their teaching approaches, methods and practices, and often find that language produced by foreign language students does indeed contain errors of various types; however, in written English, according to Hemchua and Schmitt, "lexical errors are the most frequent."⁷ The purpose of the present study is to validate this argument with the groups of EFL students studied here.

7 Saengchan Hemchua and Norbert Schmitt, "An Analysis of Lexical Errors in the English Compositions of Thai Learners," *Prospect* 21 (2006): 3-25 (3).

Lexical Errors and Language Acquisition

In the process of learning a language, lexical errors are related to a wrong choice of content words that express meaning in a spoken or written text; at times that causes misunderstandings in the final outcomes or messages that students wish to convey. For that reason, in the past language teachers consistently tried to prevent errors, but now due to recent research in second language acquisition, attitudes towards such mistakes vary. As a matter of example, Shormani (who has investigated the second language learners' errors exhaustively) indicates that "errors in themselves are of great importance to scholars inasmuch as they are to teachers and learners, because they see them an evidence of a creative process in language learning."⁸

However, there are also other points of view regarding lexical errors and the language acquisition process. For example, Myles noted that lexical errors are indicators of a change in this process because they are linguistic forms within the mental representations of the learners, and that the lack of a particular word class or linguistic item can be the result of mastery but also of avoidance in the use of content words.⁹ Agustín pointed out that lexical errors represent a lack of lexical knowledge in the communication strategies used and in the order of word class acquisition developed by the learners.¹⁰

Experts such as Corder point out that lexical errors are a sign of language acquisition and development rather than a lack of it and that they can be very valuable in getting a deeper, clearer, and more accurate picture of the processes of lexical acquisition.¹¹ Similarly,

8 Mohammed Q. Shormani, "Lexical Choice Difficulties: A Psycholinguistic Study towards a Solution," *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics* 4 (2014): 43-53 (44). <<https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JLLL/article/view/12085/12425>>.

9 Florence Myles, "From Data to Theory: The Over-Representation of Linguistic Knowledge in SLA," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 102, 2 (2004): 139-168. DOI: 10.1111/j.0079-1636.2004.00133.x.

10 María Pilar Agustín Llach, "Lexical Errors in Writing at the End of Primary and Secondary Education: Description and Pedagogical Implications," *Porta Linguarum* 23 (2015): 109-124. <<https://digibug.ugr.es/handle/10481/53758>>.

11 Stephen Pit Corder, "The Significance of Learner's Errors," *IRAL-International Review of Ap-*

Selinker stated that errors are important for the language teacher because "...they indicate the learner's progress and provide insights into how language is learned.¹² Barolo,¹³ grounded in Chomsky's Cognitive Theory, believes that error analysis of the students' production is not a negative transfer of the target language, but rather part of a creativity process.

Though there are different perceptions regarding the occurrence of lexical errors, one aspect on which researchers and ESL/EFL teachers agree is that lexical knowledge is indispensable for the acquisition of a second or foreign language, and as Agustín Llach also indicates, "language learning starts up with vocabulary, words are the first linguistic items acquired by the learner (in first and second language acquisition) ... and no language acquisition at all can take place without the acquisition of lexis."¹⁴

Lexical Errors and Teachers' Feedback

Skillful writing competencies are important in business, education and personal life, and writing effectively in English is becoming more and more essential. As stated above, writing is a difficult process for many EFL students, due to the time and effort required to learn and internalize vocabulary and language structures; hence the importance of identifying, analyzing, and correcting the errors found in language learners' responses to writing assignments, as a way to anticipate, understand, and reduce communication problems.

plied Linguistics in Language Teaching 5, 1-4 (1967): 161-170. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/iral.1967.5.1-4.161>.

12 Larry Selinker, "Interlanguage," *IRAL* 10, 1-4 (1972): 114-132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209>. Marta Barolo. *La adquisición del español como lengua extranjera* (Madrid: Arco Libros, 1999) 37.

13 Marta Barolo. *La adquisición del español como lengua extranjera* (Madrid: Arco Libros, 1999) 37.

14 María Pilar Agustín Llach, "The Relationship of Lexical Errors and Their Types to the Quality of ESL Composition: An Empirical Study," *Porta Linguarum* 3 (2005): 45-47. <<http://hdl.handle.net/10481/29120>>.

On this matter, Yi-chun Pan mentions three problems around which teachers' error feedback on student writing has centered: the level at which errors must be corrected, either correcting them all, or only making strategic corrections for certain types of errors. Yi-chun Pan also elaborates on the most effective ways of doing so, be it by pointing out errors explicitly, through indirect corrections, face-to-face conferences, traditional written comments, or a combination.¹⁵

In addition, Corder shows that error correction must be done according to the nature and significance of each error and that priority must be given to errors that may affect communication and cause misunderstandings.¹⁶ What then should be important for teachers is to understand that the correct identification of errors helps establish their causes and develop an awareness of language production processes. This also enables them to decide on the type of feedback that the learners require, that is, feedback that even the students believe will really benefit them.

Error Analysis

It is a widespread notion that in any aspect of life, learning takes place when errors are made. In Applied Linguistics for instance, error analysis helps to understand errors as a source of information and this approach is used to improve second or foreign language teaching practices, and develop strategies to improve second or foreign language learning.

Erdogan mentions that research about error analysis shows 1) how learners' errors are related not only to their native language but also to their learning strategies, and in turn, to the cognitive processes that learners use to "recognize the input they receive from

15 Yi-chun Pan, Yi-ching Pan. "The Use of L1 in the Foreign Language Classroom," *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal* 12, 2 (2010): 87-96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.85>.

16 Pit Corder, "Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis," J. C. Richards, ed., *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition* (London, Longman, 1974) 158-171. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800002822>.

a target language;” and 2) how others suggest that “error analysis can be divided into two branches: theoretical, and applied.”¹⁷ Thus, theoretical analysis is related to the process and strategies of language learning and language acquisition; applied analysis aims to interpret the strategies that learners use when learning a foreign language. Findings help teachers organize courses and design, and adopt or adapt appropriate materials and teaching strategies for their courses.

Ciesielkiewicz and Márquez¹⁸ stated that teachers can benefit from the findings of error analysis because they tell how learners have advanced, what else they need to know, and how to enhance their own teaching strategies. However, they also claimed that error analysis also benefits students since “they (errors) are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. Making errors then is a strategy employed both by children acquiring their mother tongue and by those learning a second language. Thus, understanding the nature of lexical errors in context could benefit language teaching and evaluation practices and methodologies implemented by the academic staff, and can also help in redirecting the learning strategies the students need to develop.

Categories and Taxonomies for Lexical Error Analysis in Academic Writing

For this research, different categories of error classification as well as several taxonomies that can be used for the analysis of lexical errors in academic writing have been identified. Examples of these

17 Vacide Erdoğan, “Contribution of Error Analysis to Foreign Language Teaching,” *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education* 1, 2 (2005): 261-270 (261). <<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mersinefd/issue/17391/181766?publisher=mersin-university>>.

18 Monika Ciesielkiewicz and Elena Márquez, “Error Analysis and Its Relevance to Teaching ESL Composition,” *International Journal of Linguistics* 7, 5 (2015): 119-138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v7i5.8076>.

include those of Duskova,¹⁹ Zughoul,²⁰ Sheshsha,²¹ and Hemchua and Schmitt.²² These authors have studied the relationship between lexical errors and the learners' proficiency level, they have examined students' writings, and they have also classified their lexical errors into different typologies or categories which range from confusion in the use of words or terms and inappropriate collocations to intra-lingual and inter-lingual collocation errors.

For the purposes of this work, Carl James' lexical error taxonomy (1976)²³ and Corder's error analysis classification have been used.²⁴ The first author incorporates the sorting of lexical errors into main categories, generally identified as formal and semantic features, which as a matter of reference is an approach based on the classic eight types of knowledge framework suggested by Richards.²⁵ It implies that errors may also be classified according to the level of language (phonological errors, morphological errors, syntactic errors, semantic errors, and so on). The second option includes the identification of errors, the description of errors, and the explanation of errors. This research will consider and combine both approaches in order to analyze written data, as described below.

James' Lexical Error Taxonomy

As seen above, James' lexical error taxonomy is related to Richards and Rodgers' classification of eight types of knowledge, which is

19 Libuše Dušková, "On Sources of Errors in Foreign Language Learning," *IRAL* 7, 1 (1969): 11-36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1969.7.1.11>.

20 Muhammad Raji Zughoul. "Lexical Choice: Towards Writing Problematic Word Lists," *IRAL* 29 1 (1991): 244-60. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1991.29.1.45>.

21 Jamal A. Sheshsha. "Lexical Error Analysis in Learning English as a Foreign Language." *Social Science Research Series* 24 (1993): 5-30.

22 Hemchua and Schmitt, 3-25.

23 Carl James, *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis* (London: New York: Longman, 1998). Jack C. Richards, "The Role of Vocabulary Teaching," *TESOL Quarterly* 10 (1976): 77-89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3585941>.

24 Pit Corder, *Error Analysis and Interlanguage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 36.

25 Richards (1976): 77-89.

a framework that implies that errors may also be classified according to the level of language. For this reason, the researchers have chosen four main categories (morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic).

In addition, Carl James first categorizes lexical errors into formal and semantic types. Formal errors are then sub-divided into mis-selection, misformation, and distortion, which in turn include omission, overinclusion, and blending. Briefly explained, formal misselections are errors presented in the selection of words, misformation is associated to the creation of non-existing words in the target language which have been identified to come from the learner's first language, and distortion is related to word spelling due to words that share phonemes or graphemes.

Corder's Error Analysis Classification

Al-Khresheh²⁶ also mentions how for Corder (1967), there are two main objectives in error analysis: a theoretical one which helps explain how a foreign language student learns while studying the target language; and the applied one which enables the instructor to use the former information. Therefore, considering the first perspective, Al-Khresheh determined four main categories to classify these foreign language learners' errors: omission, selection, addition, or misordering of some elements. These categories will be added to those described in James's taxonomy as a complement for the methodological approach used in this study.

Pedagogical Implications of the Analysis of Lexical Errors

Researchers have agreed on the importance of lexical error analysis in foreign language contexts, and in its pedagogical implications

26 Mohammad Hamad Al-Khresheh, "A Review Study of Error Analysis Theory," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research* 2 (2016): 49-59 (50). <<http://www.life-scienceglobal.com/pms/index.php/ijhssr/article/view/3722>>.

for those students. Corder,²⁷ highlights that it makes it possible to define areas where teaching needs reinforcement, and for James,²⁸ it helps to determine the consequences of unsuccessful language use. Mahmoodzadeh²⁹ suggests that it provides feasible criteria to identify, categorize and explain the errors produced by foreign language learners. It also offers opportunities to explain why one particular aspect of the target grammar has not been adequately acquired. For Alkhresheh, it helps EFL teachers identify students' weaknesses, and revise their teaching methods and learning materials.³⁰

Writing and Lexical Error Analysis

Based on the analysis of lexical errors, some authors have recommended teaching methodologies to prevent similar or other lexical errors in the students' writing. Tran,³¹ for instance, reflects on the importance of teachers focusing on giving feedback on specific structures that the students have just learned. He adds that students require their own type of feedback while learning to write, so teachers must know how students prefer to be corrected in order to fulfill their needs, and comply with their learning styles, learning goals, preferences and language proficiency. Ferris and Roberts³² state that second language writing teachers should be careful of stylistic

27 Pit Corder, "Idiosyncratic dialects and error analysis," J. C. Richards, ed., *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition* (London: Longman, 1974) 158-171.

28 James.

29 Masoud Mahmoodzadeh, "A Cross-Linguistic Study of Prepositions in Persian and English: The Effect of Transfer," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 2, 4 (2012): 734-740. DOI: doi:10.4304/tpls.2.4.734-740.

30 Mohammad Hamad Khalef Alkresheh, *The Misuse of Word Order in the Writing of Jordanian EFL Learners*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (2013). Available at: <<http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/4451/>>.

31 Thu H. Tran, "Approaches to Treating Student Written Errors" (2013): Paper presented at the MIDTESOL Conference (Lawrence, KS, Oct 11-12, 2013): 9-10. <<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED545655>>.

32 Dana Ferris and Barrie Roberts, "Error Feedback in L2 Writing Classes: How Explicit Does It Need to Be," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 10, 3 (2001): 161-184 (184). DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743\(01\)00039-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(01)00039-X).

differences because if there are incorrect linguistic constructions, but the language is accurate and the meaning is clear, there is no need for correction.

On the other hand, Bitchener³³ suggests giving indirect feedback to more proficient language learners and direct feedback for less proficient ones. He also indicates that the most important learning strategy that teachers can give students is to train them to notice lexical chunks during their contact with the language, raise their awareness on language lexical structures and its types, and develop activities that help the learners notice lexical chunks in written texts.

Methodological Criteria

The following sections briefly introduce some of the main elements in this research to provide a more contextualized view of the participants, the language program, the type of data analyzed, and the procedural grounds defined and implemented.

Participants

The participants included 56 EFL-UNA students who took part in the courses where the study samples were compiled: 42 students belong to the major in Systems Engineering and another 14 are majoring in other professional areas. They included 45 males and 11 females on ages ranging from 17 to 22 years old. These students attend a total of 119 language instruction-hours per semester that include the four basic language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). All students have had previous basic exposure to English in their high school programs; and have already completed the first EFL course in the university and were, therefore, familiar with paragraph writing.

33 John Bitchener, "Written corrective feedback for L2 development: Current knowledge and future research," *TESOL Quarterly* 46, 4 (2012): 855-860. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.62>.

Context

In the Integrated English II course (*Inglés Integrado para otras Carreras II*), the students continue strengthening the four basic language skills in the target language. It is a university level theoretical/practical course oriented toward students whose major is not English. It aims to prepare the learners in the mastery of English for general purposes at an A2.1 level (CEFR). The learners complete a variety of comprehension and production in-class exercises, take three midterm exams, create a digital portfolio, and present three complementary assignments. Finally they are required to take a standardized test, in which their writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills are measured.

In this English program a variety of language functions are presented to the students, new vocabulary is introduced and the use of self-correction metacognitive strategies are stimulated, with the objective of guiding them towards the required level. However, for the purposes of this research, the focus is students' writing skills, and consideration is given to the fact that for this CEFR level the students should be able to:

- Write short, simple notes and messages about everyday matters and needs
- Write very simple personal letters, postcards, messages, notes, etc.
- Give short basic descriptions of events and activities
- Describe plans and arrangements
- Explain likes and dislikes about something
- Describe present and past activities and personal experiences³⁴

³⁴ Council of Europe. "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment: Common Reference Levels." (2017): 236.

The Data Collected and Samples

The data collected for this study includes the final written responses to some of the assigned work according to the syllabus. Throughout the course the investigators gathered information and took notes on the errors that students made when writing sentences and working on short writing tasks. For these purposes, students were first introduced to the task with a contextualized passage. The students read and analyzed the text, the teacher answered their questions, and finally the students were required to write a similar text individually.

For the writing skill, the students were assigned three different in-class tasks. They were developed according to the content and topic covered during the lessons, and one of these written assignments was selected by the researchers, with the consent of the 56 students, to compile, classify, compare/contrast, and extract multiple examples of the students' lexical errors.

For the specific data sample examined here, the written production selected corresponded to the task "Holiday Friend." That task required students to write a letter where they introduced themselves, gave some personal information, invited someone to visit them, and exchanged addresses. The letter writing took place in a regular session. No maximum or minimum number of words or paragraphs was indicated, and the only requirement was to write without the help of any dictionary or electronic device (cell phones or translators). The allotted time for this assignment was 45 minutes for the students to complete the letter in class.

Data Analysis

Once the written examples were chosen, the error analysis work began. It implied extensive reading in order to decide which lexical categories to include as referents, and most importantly to propose

an error analysis approach that would be accurate and simple to implement in this context. Consequently, the researchers agreed to group the written lexical errors to be analyzed in four main categories: the morphological or word level, the syntactical or sentence level, the discursive or text level and the semantic or meaning level. Additionally, each category included three sub-categories, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Categorization of lexical errors in pre-intermediate students' written production

1. Morphology	2. Syntax	3. Discourse	4. Semantics
a) Deletion b) Substitution c) Insertion	a) Word choice b) Omission c) Misordering	a) Verbosity b) Repetition c) Sentence length	a) Borrowing b) Coinage c) Calque

For a clear understanding of the sub-categories, a brief conceptualization of each is provided. In tables 2 to 5, lexical errors in morphology, syntax, discourse and semantic levels are defined, and illustrated with samples extracted from the students' responses to the task described above.

Table 2. Lexical errors in morphology in A1 students' written production

Deletion	Substitution	Insertion
The omission of one or more letters in a word	The spelling of a word in L2 that is adapted to a more familiar sound	The inclusion of a letter in the spelling of a word
Examples: (the championship) startguess wichshe enjoy(the driver) knowdiferents... ...preferd... ...hapinies...	Examples: ... competition conclusion spectmy family is find lifes communicatic ...	Examples: ... estudent can goes lief e... ... hapinies can swimming differents changes to invited enjoi ...

Based on the analysis of the texts provided, some of the most common errors students made in writing at word formation level are the omission of final “-s” in the third person singular, past tense endings and double consonants; the substitution of voiced for voiceless sounds and the use of some graphemes to suit a more conventional spelling; and the insertion of sounds at the beginning of some words and final “-s” sounds while pluralizing adjectives (this will also be analyzed at the syntax level).

Table 3. Lexical errors in syntax in A1 students' written production

Word Choice	Omission	Misordering
Selecting a word in the L2 that has a different usage in L1	Omitting a required item for an utterance	Misplacing an item within a sentence
Examples: ...the trip duringthere are much places... ...is a customer (to) receive new year...	Examples: (It) is important (It) is a incredible year I like (to) dance ...wait (for) your answer to invite (you) this year.. I'll wait (for) your visit (I) hope you are good..	Examples: I want to you come ...to invite to that you visit... ...a experience incredible ... I very like this day ...play songs nice ..

It can be observed that at syntax level the main word choice problems are related to 1) the usage of words that actually have a similarity in their written form to that of the Spanish word; 2) the omission of subjects, auxiliary verbs in questions formation, infinitive construction forms and prepositions in compound verbs; and 3) the misordering of words mostly due to Spanish noun adjective construction, which also affects adjective formation as seen at the morphology level.

Table 4. Lexical errors in discourse in A1 students' written production

Verbosity	Repetition	Sentence length
The use of one or more words to express a thought	Saying things twice in a paragraph	Number of words in a sentence
<p>Examples: I would tell more but I invite you to come to Costa Rica to visit my town because in San Jose...</p> <p>In the event I like to talk with you, to ask you about your recent life your projects and achievements.</p> <p>I could pass Math subject</p> <p>It is color green everywhere</p>	<p>Examples: In conclusion, in Costa Rica there are many places very entertaining in the country.</p>	<p>Examples: I would like to remind you when was boys and played all day long in the festival of the city.</p> <p>In Costa Rica there are much places for entertaining, for example go camping in the mountains or go a river.</p> <p>I'm John your university friend I'm writing because I'm going to do a trip with a lot of friend to Manzanillo Costa Rica and I like to aks you if you want to go because there has been a long time since I meet you.</p>

As portrayed in table 4, the students make lexical errors at the text level such as redundancy, verbosity or the excess of words (especially verbs and personal pronouns) to express their ideas. There is repetition of previously presented statements especially to reinforce a thought, along with the presence run-on of sentences.

Table 5. Lexical errors at semantics in A1 students' written production

Borrowing	Coinage	Calque
The adopting of some aspects of L1 into FL2	The deliberated or accidental formation of totally new words	Use of direct equivalents or literal translations in L2 of L1 words/expressions
Examples: Exist different places The last year was... the importants things... ...but before, talk me about... Costa Rica have beaches in... (No aux) you remember ? I want your answer... But say mea lot of time without talk ...	Examples: ...in my family is a customer receive new year together... ...visit interest places in... ...go to the bibliotec at UNA... ...My fathers will wait for you...	Examples: ...take the bus from the coca-cola Mega party in my town... ...I will help you in the works of your house... ...We play " friend secret "...

Regarding the results from Table 5, it can be noticed that, in the students' effort to communicate and convey meaning when writing, they adopt grammatical structures from Spanish, create new Spanish-based words in their outputs, and assume literal meanings of specific words. Based on the taxonomy chosen for this particular case, it is clear that students use coinage and calques to solve linguistic gaps. This suggests that at the semantic level most of the errors reflect both the Spanish language and its cultural and idiosyncratic interference.

Findings

The aims of the analysis carried out here is to propose a contextualized error analysis approach to provide guidance for other language instructors who want to become familiar with the topic and ways to guide their students in the writing process. Thus, the objectives of this study are to classify, clarify, explore written lexical errors and error sources, and therefore, foresee and recommend teaching methods that could improve the quality of second and foreign language instruction.

For this lexical error analysis, the data were organized according to a combination of James' lexical error taxonomy and Corder's error analysis classification, as indicated above, including morphology, syntax, discourse, and semantics. In *morphology*, common errors include the omission of the final "-s" in the third person singular verbs (96%), the formation of past tense endings (92%), the use of double consonants (45%), and the spelling and the insertion of sounds at the beginning of some words (35%). As shown above, this analysis suggests that most morphological errors in writing are related to problems in the oral production. In *syntax*, word choice is a problem related to the usage of words with approximate spelling forms in Spanish (35%), omission of subjects (86%), faulty infinite construction forms (82%), the use and formation of compound verbs (67%), and the misordering of words within a sentence, especially in the adjective + noun sequence (78%), and in the use of adverbs (56%). These issues can be identified as traces of the interference of the mother tongue, both in lexicon and in grammar. In *discourse*, the students' errors are more related to the excessive use of words to express simple ideas, feelings, or thoughts (94%), the repetition of phrases or sentences aiming to emphasize particularly relevant aspects in the text (46%), and the lack of basic mechanics to organize sentences (46%). Such errors can be directly associated to cultural and idiosyncratic traits as those documented by Corder in J. C.

Richards (1974). At the *semantic* level, the students relied more on borrowing specific L1 structures (86%), creating vocabulary (24%), and using contextualized words in literal translations (16%). As a general conclusion, the results showed that the participants made more lexical errors with syntax (94%) than with morphology (83%), discourse (56%) and semantic (25%) categories.

Recommendations

Among the teaching methodologies that could help to correct the appearance of those lexical errors, following Ferris,³⁵ proper monitoring and feedback should take place constantly during the students' writing tasks, because it can help learners to have better control over targeted structures, provide the corrected version of the erroneous language forms, and errors are pointed out. Therefore, it is recommended to diagnose students' learning styles and the way they prefer to receive feedback. Ferris also mentioned how teaching approaches provide second language educators with a wide range of activities and teaching methods on second language writing, but that each teacher may feel more comfortable with a specific way of giving written feedback to their students, "due to their beliefs about how languages are learned and taught." and that the students have their own preference as to how they can be assisted in learning to write. This is why she recommends for the teachers to:

35 Dana R. Ferris, "The Case of Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes: A Response to Trustcott (1996)," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 8, 1 (1999): 1-11. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743\(99\)80110-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(99)80110-6); "The Grammar Correction Debate in L2 Writing: Where Are We, and Where Do We Go from Here? (And What Do We Do in the Meantime ...?)." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 13, 1 (2004): 49-62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2004.04.005>; and *Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing*, 2nd ed. (Ana Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

- Determine whether a certain paragraph, sentence, phrase, or word needs to be corrected or improved
- Be cautious of stylistic differences and erroneous linguistic constructions
- Know how students prefer to be corrected in order to cater to their needs
- Tell their students why they prefer a particular way of providing error correction that is effective for their learners
- Try varying the methods of giving written error feedback based on individual students' preferences and language proficiency, if they teachers want to diversify the way to teach to better serve learners' varied learning styles
- Be aware of common error types and options available for treating student written errors.
- Employ the approach that may work best for their students and specific context.
- Make multiple decisions while grading student writing.

In addition, due to the number of students in the integrated English courses, it could also be valuable to take Bitchener's³⁶ recommendations into account when training students to detect their lexical chunks by themselves and cooperatively with the help of more advanced students.

From the findings of this study, the researchers perceived that, since most cases are related to syntactical errors which in origin have been presumably identified as issues related to L1 interference, teachers must be aware of this feature and pay special attention to sentence formation activities, the review of very specific grammatical structures and the implementation of more accurate self-correcting and peer-correcting tasks. So many other errors are also related to the way the language is being spoken that teachers themselves may take note of how they use of the language when they teach. This also provides a background to foresee

36 Bitchener, 855-860.

certain errors and prepare material for both written and oral production reinforcement activities. It also points out the importance of working on the language competences together.

Regarding discourse and semantics, considering the role of personal beliefs, culture and idiosyncratic characteristics of the student population, attention should be given to how Costa Rican Spanish might hinder learners' written production, especially because the students devote time to finding words that fit local communicative strategies (extra-politeness, use of diminutives, redundancy, repetition, and the like). Teachers and students have to be aware of this limitation and address it in class so to help bridge the language gap.

Finally, although these errors are presented and might seem problematic for most language instructors, and even frustrating for some of the students, the presence of errors definitely demonstrates the presence of very valuable learning strategies and hence, of language development.