

The Use of English Grammar and the Confidence Level of the Student when Writing in Spanish

James Christian Courtad
Bradley University

Carrie Anna Courtad
Illinois State University

Occasionally, when students struggle in college-level second-language composition classes, the lack of first language grammar concepts is prohibitive of being successful in learning the second language. In turn, this can cause frustration for the student in the writing process. As instructors, we are taught to maximize the quantity of instruction in the target language to provide the greatest amount of input for students in a concentrated setting. This can be problematic for some students who do not understand basic rules of grammar. This pilot study was designed to understand and address the struggles of university students, whose first language is typically English, seeking to improve their writing skills in Spanish composition classes. The intention of this study is to determine if reviewing and teaching English language grammar concepts in English, as a pedagogical strategy, will help students produce Spanish writing that has fewer grammatical errors, and if this instruction also improves students perceptions of self-efficacy in their second language writing.

Literature Review

As university students learn how to write better, using a variety of styles and essay formats in a second language (L2), they occasionally fill in their knowledge gaps by applying grammatical concepts from their native language (L1). If students' grammatical knowledge is weak in their L1, this weakness can also present problems when writing in their L2 (Bhela, 1999; Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Language teachers are pulled into the debate regarding the type of pedagogical strategies to be used when teaching a second language. For decades, the practices of only using L2, or including instruction in L1 while learning L2, have been hotly debated. Traditionally, the belief that only L2 should be used in the classroom, in order to maximize exposure to the target language, has been the prominent approach (Krashen, 1981). This can be

frustrating for the students because when assignments are returned for feedback in the L2, simple grammatical mistakes are highlighted. The students' lack of understanding of these mistakes can have a negative effect on the self-efficacy of writing in the target language. Understanding the grammatical structures of their L1 could help students understand the grammatical structures of their L2.

In addition to the debate over L1 or L2 in the classroom, studies have highlighted the experience of interference or transfer of the L1 when acquiring L2. Dulay, Burt, & Krashen (1982), note that interference results in old habits of L1 that should be “unlearned” before learning new habits of L2. Bhela (1999) also cites Dulay et. al. and their definition of interference as “the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language” (Bhela, p. 22). However, she also cites Ellis (1984), who distinguishes ‘interference’ from ‘transfer’, which is “the influence that the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2” (p. 23). Transfer, then, refers to how L1 shapes the syntax of L2 when learners go to complete a task. Interference is more the reliance of L1 when creating in L2.

While many scholars favor the L2 approach to language acquisition over any influence of L1, that is not to say that there is not a place for L1 in becoming L2 proficient. Not all L1 influence is perceived as hindering L2 acquisition, particularly when there are similar syntactic structures between L1 and L2. Derakhshan & Karimi (2015) found that when L1 and L2 shared many syntactic structures, there were fewer problems with L2 acquisition; however, when L1 and L2 were very different structurally, it was not easy for learners to acquire the L2. Stern (1992) acknowledges that there are “language universals” recognizable when we study L2, that L1 can be a reference system for L2, and that there is even an “interlanguage” that develops from a combination of L1 and L2 strategies and structures. Bhela (1999) also points to a specific set of rules that learners create which include L1 knowledge when they believe it will help them with L2.

As for the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, the strongest support for using L1 is regarding student comprehension of tasks to be completed. Cook (2001) favors L1 for comprehension of tasks, especially when it pertains to the efficient use of time, important to the instructor. Stern (1992) distinguished between “crosslingual” and “intralingual” strategies when students learn a second language. The former invokes using L1 as a reference system between L1 and L2 structures, while intralingual strategies rely on the separation of L1 and L2 while learning.

Whereas Stern favors a mainly intralingual approach, he believes that crosslingual strategies can play a role in L2 acquisition. Almoayidi (2018) conducted a literature review to investigate the question of whether L1 facilitates or hinders L2 acquisition with regard to L1 students learning L2 English. He concluded that for best results L2 should be the language of instruction for learning English. However, he does concede that L1 should be used “according to the needs of the learner as well as the classroom situation” (p. 376), therefore acquiescing on a strict L2 only stance. Finally, Ketaguri, Zangaladze & Albay (2016) believe that “A total ban on the use of L1 will hinder learners’ comprehension of the target language” (p. 24-25), and that completely disallowing L1 will in the end discourage students from wanting to pursue language acquisition.

To that end, motivation is a very important aspect for achievement in L2. Nation (2003) advocates maximum use of L2 in the classroom, as it can motivate students eager to acquire the target language. Nevertheless, he believes that L1 use can contribute to meaning-focused tasks, which ask learners to both understand what the instructor is asking them to do and complete the task. Recognizing certain limitations to the learners’ grasp of L2, Nation notes, “Whenever a teacher feels that a meaning based L2 task might be beyond the capabilities of the learners, a small amount of L1 discussion can help overcome some of the obstacles” (p. 3). Nation believes that L1 can be just as effective a tool as the use of pictures or objects to convey meaning, very common in the explanation of L2 meaning. Another motivational tool is the idea of scaffolding. Brooks & Donato (1994) and Antón & DiCamilla (1999) offer studies that involve the use of L1 to help students overcome issues with meaning and task orientation, using a combination of L1 and L2 to help them achieve a task, or at least allowing them to help each other cognitively to understand a task in L2. Using Vygotskian approaches to speech production, Brooks & Donato (1994) discuss “metatalk” as a strategy which allows students to work together to create meaning prior to completing a task. L1 helps students gain control of a situation, and together they can devise strategies to complete the task in L2. “...the use of L1 during L2 interactions...is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another” (p. 268). Likewise, Antón & DiCamilla (1999) found that, through L1 scaffolding of collaborative L2 dialogue between speech partners, L2 acquisition can be facilitated. This indeed helps motivate students to pursue proficiency in the L2.

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 3). The literature indicates that self-efficacy is fed by four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological states. As mastery experience has the strongest effect on self-efficacy, it has the potential to impact second language learning the most (Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019). Repeated success on a task will lead to higher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). The negative effect of written errors highlighted by instructor feedback on L2 assignments can have an adverse effect on the students’ perception of their ability to write in L2. However, motivational techniques, including instruction with L1, can increase student perceptions of self-efficacy.

Part of the problem with confidence in writing in a second language stems from a lack of motivation to do so. Studies have shown that when students are required to complete a task using a second language, the motivational influence lessens, even though it varies from student to student (Khojasteh, Shokrpour, and Afrasiabi 2016). When motivation is low to write in L2, students spend less time writing. Students who had higher self-efficacy when writing in L2 showed greater effort in completing the tasks along with finding ways to overcome obstacles to success (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). Raoofi, Hoon Tan, & Heng Chan (2012) indicated that, when reviewing first language grammar concepts, students also improved their self-efficacy in second language learning.

Students often learn writing skills by the three-step process of prewriting, writing and rewriting. As students become more proficient at writing in their first language, much of what they have learned is applied to writing in a second language (Edelsky, 1982). At the beginning of second-language learning, students develop patterns of experimentation or hypotheses that may come from their native language (Edelsky, 1982; Mayberry, 1998). The style of writing (expository or narrative) with which students experiment has been found to have an effect on number and variation of mistakes made by second-language learners (Asención-Delaney & Collentine, 2011), particularly with noun-adjective and verb-adjective clusters. The use of the native language to remediate problems when writing in a second language was favored by first-year students (López Urdaneta, 2011). This may affect student self-efficacy as they progress with the tasks and repeat certain grammatical structures.

This pilot study examined the use of L1 by the instructor to support mastery of specific Spanish grammar points in student essay samples, as well as promoting Spanish grammar knowledge, and an increase in students' perceived efficacy of their ability to write in Spanish. Two questions are the focus for this study:

- 1) If students are instructed on grammar points in their language of academic proficiency (English L1), will it improve their writings in the L2 (Spanish)?
- 2) Is the self-efficacy of students writing in the L2 positively affected when instruction occurs in the language of academic proficiency?

Methods

Participants

Participants were students enrolled in a private midwestern university-level Spanish composition course. For students to be enrolled in this 300-level university course, they had to have completed at least the fourth semester-level Spanish class or have successfully completed the placement test equivalent. The course is the first Spanish writing course and the first advanced-level course in the major. The academic proficiency language for all students was English. Twelve students participated in this study, representing the entirety of the class. There were 10 female participants and 2 male participants, and all participants had been enrolled at the university for no more than two years.

Procedures

The instructor for the advanced level Spanish class was also one of the study's authors. The instructor had a second faculty member obtain informed consent while he was out of the room to avoid the perception of coercion. All measures were part of the course curriculum and the instructor had no knowledge of those who agreed to participate. Consent forms were coded by the second author, as were all the measures. All measures were scored before the instructor had the knowledge of who had granted consent. The procedures followed a repeated measure design with all measures being administered in a pre and post design. The course met three days a week for 50 minutes.

On the first day of class, students completed the 15-item survey, written in English, asking them to rate their self-efficacy for writing in Spanish. Students completed the same measure during the final week of class, which served as the post self-efficacy survey. At the

second class meeting, students took the Pre-Spanish grammar knowledge assessment, a short quiz covering accent mark placement, verb conjugation and preposition usage. During the final week of the semester, the same quiz was taken as a Post-Spanish grammar knowledge assessment (see Appendix A). During the fifth class meeting, students were required to complete a 200-word composition in Spanish. Students were allowed to use a dictionary for the assignment and write the composition during the instructional class period of 50 minutes. During the final week of class, students were again required to complete a 200-word composition in Spanish written during the normal class period, with use of a Spanish dictionary. After each of these composition assignments were completed, the instructor graded all assignments.

During the semester course, the instructor routinely reviewed basic English language grammar, in English, during the course meeting times. For example, the instructor reviewed the differences between simple and continuous past tenses in both L1 and L2, as well as the use of the subjunctive versus the indicative moods as used in L1 and L2. On a day when the class reviewed a particular grammar topic, the instructor would first spend on average 8-10 minutes reviewing the concept as it pertains to English grammar, and have the students complete a short comprehension quiz in English, which the class performed together as a group. Following that brief review in L1 English, students would switch to the L2 Spanish to cover the concept as it pertained to Spanish grammar constructs, using textbook exercises, and follow up with a short written assignment. These short quizzes in English were not measures but part of the pedagogical strategy.

Measures

Student self-efficacy for writing in Spanish. A 15-statement self-efficacy survey, adapted from Hung-Cheng (2016), was used to rate the participants' confidence in writing abilities in Spanish. It asked students to rate their perceptions of different writing abilities based on an 11-point Likert scale with 11 indicating full ability and 1 indicating no ability. The 15 statements, in English, asked students about their feelings of self-efficacy when writing in Spanish and included declarations about essay structure (paragraphs and sentences), content organization, grammatical accuracy, punctuation and accent mark placement (see Table 1 for statements). Hung-Cheng (2016) reported an adequate internal reliability and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .917 for pretest conditions and .877 for posttest conditions.

Spanish grammar knowledge. A short quiz measuring the knowledge of accent mark placement, verb conjugation and preposition usage was developed by the author/instructor. The above three areas were deemed some of the most problematic based on the instructor's experience of teaching Spanish Composition. In the first section of the quiz, four sentences were written in Spanish but contained no accent marks; students had to appropriately place accent marks. The second section required students to conjugate the correct verb agreement, tense and mood for the context of the sentence. The final section consisted of five incomplete sentences where students had to choose the correct preposition to accurately complete the sentences (see Appendix A). No partial credit was given, and incorrect placement of accent marks was not taken into consideration, only the words which necessitated the diacritical mark.

Composition. The other measure used was a composition assignment: students were asked to describe themselves, or how others might see them, in a 200-word essay, using a variety of vocabulary, no more than three uses of *ser* and *estar*, and with at least two examples each of verbs in the preterit and the imperfect tenses. The compositions were scored holistically with attention paid to the outline requirements. The students could use a Spanish dictionary, and these compositions were written during the fifth class period and in the final week of the course during a 50 minute class period (Appendix B).

Results

The purpose of this pilot study was to measure if a review of L1 (English) grammar structures would help to reduce errors in L2 (Spanish) composition, and to see if student self-efficacy when writing in L2 improved during the course of the semester. In order to answer the questions outlined above, the instructor reviewed the pre/post survey data and pre/post knowledge test. The survey data was reported as 15 statements on a Likert scale from 1-11.

Student self-efficacy for writing in Spanish

For the results of the presurvey on self-efficacy, students felt most confident about their ability to end a paragraph with a proper conclusion (statement 2), with an average ranking of 6.8 (Figure 1). Similarly, students felt capable of structuring paragraphs to support content ideas when they write in Spanish (statement 1), and they noted that they focus more on content when revising their papers than they do on grammar (statement 11), with both questions having an average of 6.4. In the presurvey condition, students indicated having the least amount of self-

efficacy in writing without grammatical errors (statement 14). The average answer was 4.4, and two of the students rated themselves at 1, the lowest on the rating scale. The other low self-efficacy ratings were statements 12 and 13; these statements asked students how well they think they can write an essay without making spelling mistakes (4.8) and how well they think they use correct punctuation and accent marks (5). The average confidence ratings for the rest of the survey items was rated as a 6. The statements generally deal with sentence structure, paragraph construction and organization, and the ability to express meaning in an essay. When averaging all 15 statement on the presurvey, the highest individual rating was an 8 whereas the lowest average rating was 3.4.

When students were asked to rate their confidence at the end of the semester, using the same self-efficacy survey, they rated themselves highest in the area of paragraph structure (statement 7) with an average rating of 9, and on their organizational skills of essays in general (statement 4) with an average rating of 8.9. Students in the post survey answered the lowest in categories pertaining to spelling, punctuation and accent marks, and grammatical accuracy (statements 12, 13 and 14) with scores of 6.7, 6.6 and 6.2, respectively. Individually, the highest average of all the statements was 9.5, with one other student scoring 9; the student with the highest self-efficacy on the initial survey was also the highest the second time the survey was given, with an average increase of 1.5. The lowest average rating on the second-round survey was 5.7 and this student was also the lowest rated score on the initial performance. This student had an average increase of 2.3 between the two surveys. All students scored higher the second time the survey was performed and all but two students scored at least 1 full point higher the second time.

A paired sample t-test was run to see if there was a statistical difference between the pre survey results and the post survey results. All items were statistically significant with the exception of one statement. Statement 11 which focuses on content than correcting grammar mistakes), indicated that there was not significant change from to pre to post (see table 1). For the complete results from the paired samples test, please see Appendix C.

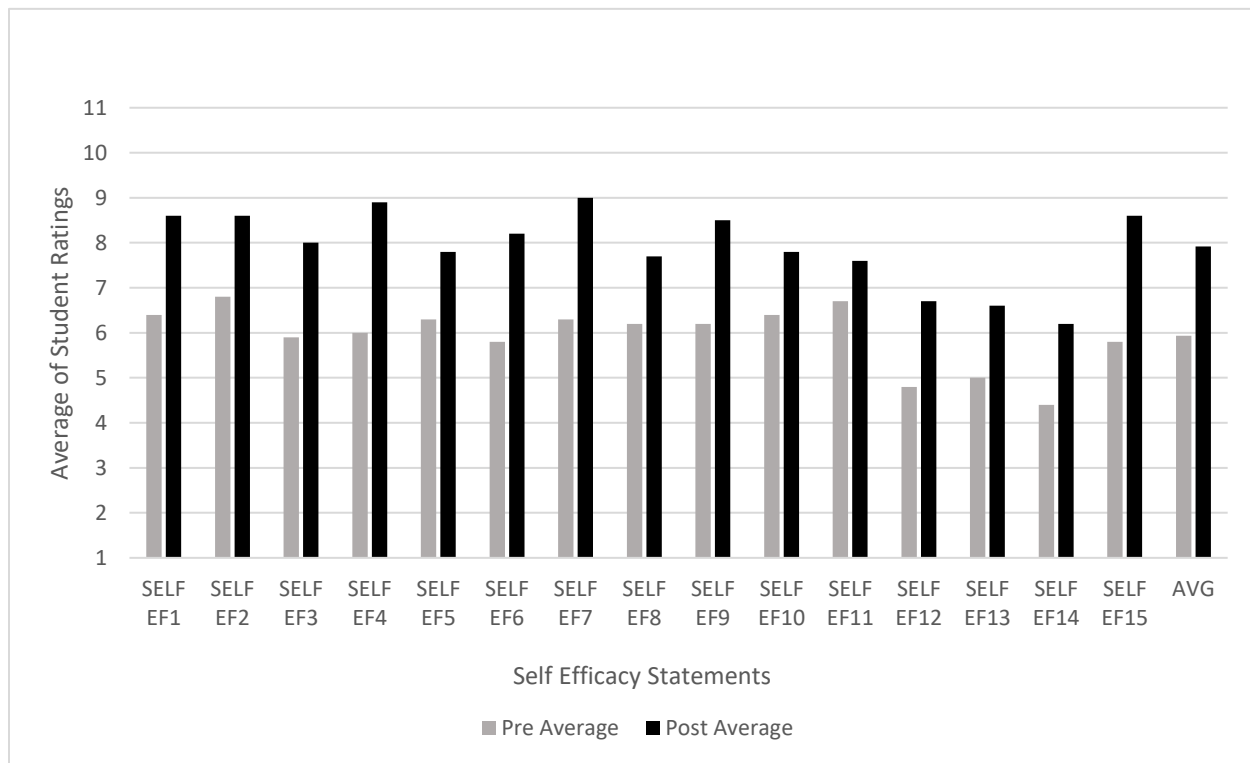


Figure 1: Pre post self-efficacy statement item average

| Self-Efficacy Statements | | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Statement 1 | I can structure paragraphs to support ideas in the topic sentences when I write in Spanish. | .001 |
| Statement 2 | I can end paragraphs with proper conclusions when I write in Spanish. | .010 |
| Statement 3 | I can get ideas across in a clear manner without jumping from one idea to another when I write in Spanish. | .001 |
| Statement 4 | I can write a coherent and well-organized paper with a good introduction, body, and conclusion in Spanish. | .000 |
| Statement 5 | I can rewrite long and complicated sentences into clear and shorter sentences in Spanish. | .003 |
| Statement 6 | I am confident about writing an attractive composition with adequate variation in my word choice when I write in Spanish. | .000 |
| Statement 7 | I can write a strong paragraph with a good topic sentence or main idea when I write in Spanish. | .000 |
| Statement 8 | I have methods to solve my writing block when I get stuck in writing in Spanish. | .000 |

| | | |
|--------------|---|------|
| Statement 9 | I am confident about accurately paraphrasing and quoting original sources and not plagiarizing them when I write in Spanish. | .000 |
| Statement 10 | I know how to correctly arrange words and phrases well when I write in Spanish. | .014 |
| Statement 11 | I focus more on the content than on correcting errors when refining my composition in Spanish. | .094 |
| Statement 12 | I can write a composition without spelling errors in Spanish. | .006 |
| Statement 13 | I can use the right punctuation and accent marks, and put them in the right places in my text when I write in Spanish. | .014 |
| Statement 14 | I can write a composition without grammatical errors in Spanish. | .003 |
| Statement 15 | Even if I have possible punctuating, spelling, or grammatical errors, I am sure I can figure out solutions when I write in Spanish. | .000 |

Table 1. Significance of paired sample t-tests with self-efficacy statements

Spanish Grammar Knowledge

The average Pretest score for accents was 2.7 / 5, while the Posttest score for accents was 3.6, reflecting an average 0.9-point improvement on that section of the quiz. The average Pretest score for verb conjugation was 3.8 / 8 while the Posttest score for verb conjugation was 5 / 8, showing an average improvement of 1.2 points on that section of the quiz. The average Pretest score for prepositions was 3.6 / 5 while the Posttest score for this category was 4.1 / 5, showing an average improvement of one-half of a point on that section of the quiz. The total average score on the Pretest was 9.8 / 18, and on the Posttest it was 12.7 / 18, which is an average 2.8-point improvement from the Pretest to the Posttest (see figure 2). A paired t-test using for pre and post was run to review the significance in change for the assessment as whole, and for the three individual parts (accents, verbs, and prepositions). The results of this t-test can be found in table 2. There was not a significant change from the pre to post in the area of prepositions, and accents was just at the significant level ($p=.05$) indicating that that the growth from pre to post was not nearly the same as when reviewing the score in its entirety where significance was confirmed ($p=.000$).

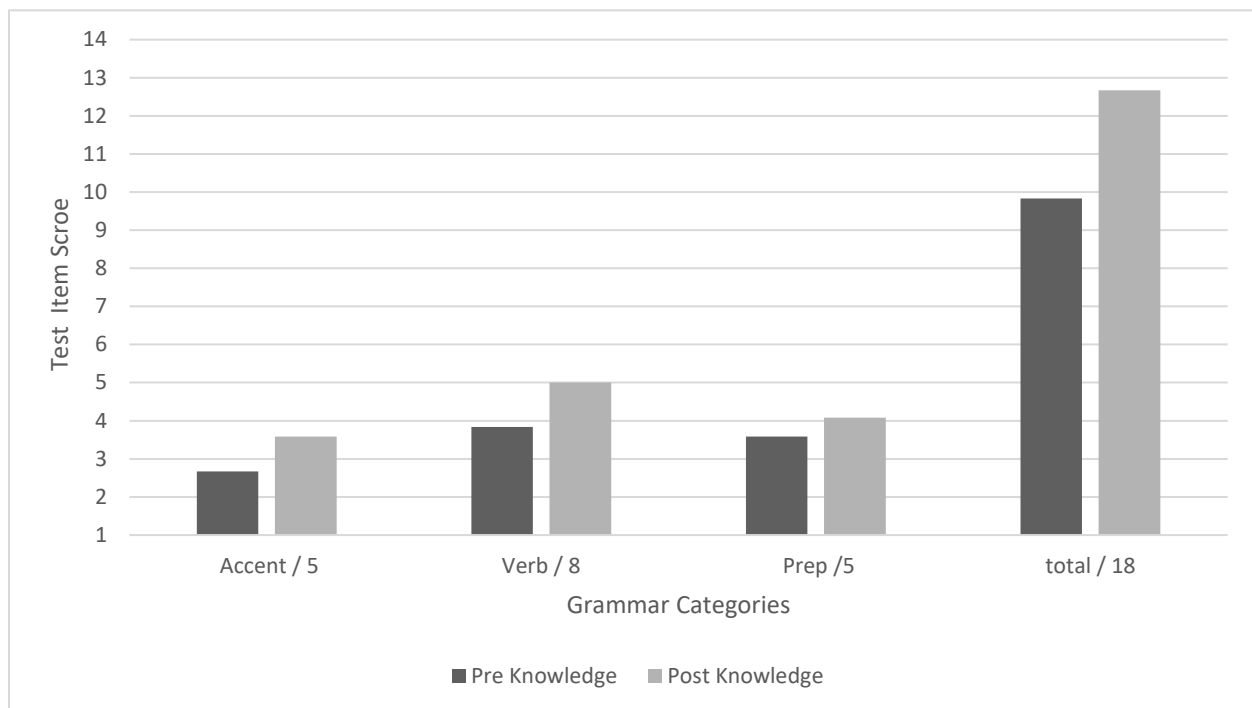


Figure 2. Average scores for pre and post for Spanish grammar knowledge.

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------|---------|----------------|-----------------|-------|----|-----------------|
| Post Accent - Pre Accent | .91667 | 1.44338 | .41667 | 2.200 | 11 | .050 |
| Post Verb- Pre Verb | 1.16667 | 1.33712 | .38599 | 3.023 | 11 | .012 |
| Post Prep - Pre Prep | .50000 | .79772 | .23028 | 2.171 | 11 | .053 |
| Post total - Pre total | 2.83333 | 1.46680 | .42343 | 6.691 | 11 | .000 |

Table 2. Paired t-test for Pre to Post Grammar Knowledge assessment.

Composition

When marking errors for pre and post compositions, the same mistake was not counted more than once, as the comprehension of an overall grammar concept was of greater importance than the number of times the same mistake was repeated. Of the three concepts that appeared on

the Pre and Posttest grammar quiz, students made improvements with regard to accents when they had to write out an actual essay. The number of mistakes for prepositions increased only very slightly from the initial composition to the essay written at the end of the semester: 15 mistakes total made early on, and 16 mistakes total, out of 12 students, at the end of the semester. For calculation of verb errors in the sample essays, the instructor looked at subject-verb agreement, preterit / imperfect usage, verb tense, indicative / subjunctive mood, and the use of the infinitive. Another category analyzed was verb forms, which consisted of correct conjugation (for example, stem-changing verbs) as well as correct participle and gerund usage. There was no change in pre and posttest error number regarding preterit / imperfect and subjunctive / indicative mood usage. However, all the other categories had increased errors in the retake of the essay at the end of the semester. The greatest difference was in subject-verb agreement, with a total of 20 errors in the first draft compared to 30 errors in the end-of-semester draft. The next highest error rate came with the use of the infinitive verbs; only three errors in the initial essay compared to twelve in the final version (Figure 3).

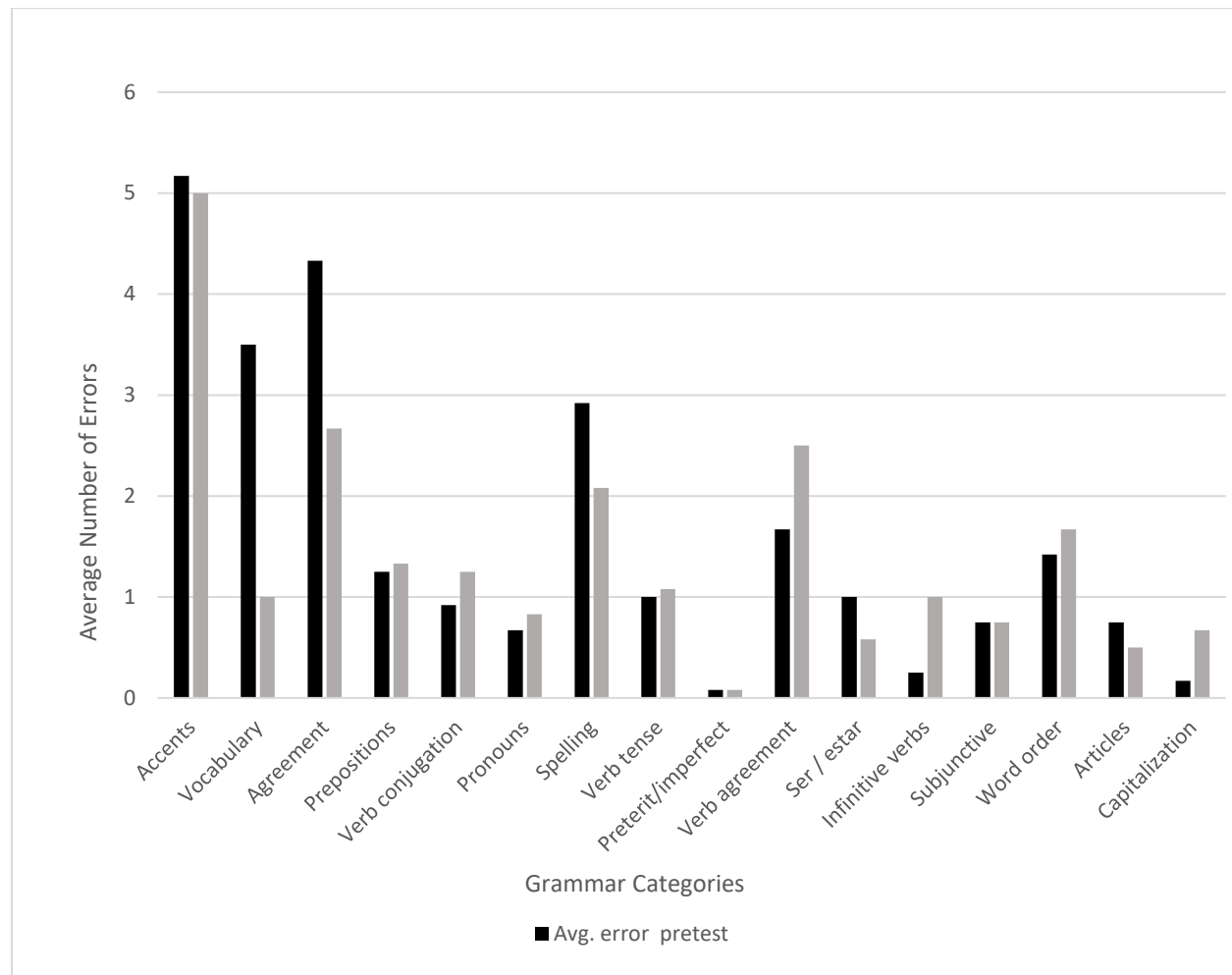


Figure 3. Composition error analysis pre and post test

While these were the grammar concepts that appeared on the Pre and Posttest, the instructor also looked at other categories of errors made in the essay samples. These were noun / adjective agreement, correct vocabulary usage, pronouns, *ser* and *estar* usage, syntax, spelling, capitalization and the use of definite / indefinite articles. Student writing improved between the two sample essays in the categories of accents, vocabulary, agreement, spelling, and *ser/estar* usage. As mentioned above, students on average committed the same number of errors between drafts using subjunctive vs indicative moods and preterit / imperfect verbs; curiously, these were the only two categories that showed no change from one draft to the other. There were more errors committed on the second draft than the first with regard to prepositions, verb conjugation, pronoun usage, verb tenses, infinitive usage, syntax / word order, articles and capitalization. The

areas of greatest improvement between initial essay draft and the draft written during the last week of the semester were with correct vocabulary usage (an average of 2.5 errors less / student), noun-adjective agreement (an average of 1.66 errors less / student), and spelling (an average of .84 errors less / student). The areas of least improvement between drafts were: subject-verb agreement (an average of .83 errors more / student), infinitive verb usage (an average of .75 errors more / student) and verb conjugation (an average of .33 errors more / student).

Discussion

This pilot study was implemented in order to explore how to support improvements in L2 writing in Spanish composition courses. Some research has indicated that including more instruction in L1 could increase performance in L2 (Cook, 2001; Khetaguri, Zangaladze, & Albay, 2016; Nation, 2003; Stern, 1992). This initial project was structured to investigate the potential improvement of grammar, writing, and self-efficacy in L2 by including instruction in L1.

Self-Efficacy for Writing in Spanish

Several studies have shown that an increase in confidence when writing has lead to greater motivation in learners as well as stronger writing skills (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Raoofi, Hoon Tan, & Heng Chan, 2012). According to the Post survey on self-efficacy, all students increased in overall self-efficacy for writing in Spanish. All the statements with the exception of one, indicated a belief that students felt more capable at the end of the semester of writing in L2 (Spanish). The only statement where there was not a significant difference in growth between the pre and the post statement was “I focus more on the content than on correcting errors when refining my composition in Spanish” (statement 11). This is most likely due to the fact that students were more often to engage in editing instead of the more complex process of revising content (Shen & Troia, 2018). Grammar mistakes can be easier to fix since error recognition is a surface-level skill, while content changes are more in depth and requires a greater mastery of language.

Statement 14, “I can write a composition without grammatical errors in Spanish,” was the lowest rated skill on both the Pre and Post self-efficacy survey. This corroborates the idea that students still have reservations about grammatical accuracy throughout the semester; this echoes their feeling that a focus on content is of lesser importance than correct grammar usage even

though the essays were weighted at 60% for content and 40% for grammar, with equal commentary provided by the instructor for both factors. Still, the results of the survey indicate that most students felt some improvement in their confidence to write a composition in Spanish without grammatical errors.

Spanish Grammar and Writing

With regard to the specific grammatical structures measured in the Spanish grammar knowledge assessments, the results of the Posttest seem to confirm that the review of verb conjugations in English – including past tenses and subjunctive / indicative moods – did indeed help the majority of students with verb conjugations in Spanish. The majority of students scored higher on the Posttest section on verbs than on the Pretest, reflecting a greater amount of learning on this grammar point on a concept-specific assessment. Interestingly, the same improvement did not show up when students were asked to use these concepts in a timed essay.

It appears that that English instruction had some mixed results in terms of the grammar knowledge assessments. Overall, there was a significant difference before breaking down the grammar by specific grammar points. It is difficult to know how much, if any, influence English language instruction had on the effect of the overall Pre to Post test; however, what may help pinpoint the L1 effect on the L2 is where the lack of growth happened. With prepositions, there was no significant difference between Pre and Posttest. Students seemed to rely on direct English translation to Spanish even when in Spanish the preposition created a different meaning or usage. For example, the English “to get married to” is expressed as “casarse con” in Spanish. The Spanish preposition “con” is not the equivalent of the English “to”, and students would rely on their L1 when choosing the appropriate option. On the whole, students scored better on the Spanish grammar posttest, showing that review of these grammar points in English may have contributed to students’ grasp of the concepts in Spanish.

When students completed the in-class essay, any gains they may have shown in the Spanish grammar knowledge assessment, were not apparent. In fact, students seemed to have regressed when it came to application of those structures in a formal essay. An increase in errors was shown in conjugated verb usage and also in structures that required the use of the infinitive verb form. This could be due to the transfer of L1 structures when writing in L2, as shown in Bhela (1999) and Derakhshan & Karimi (2015). Stern (1992) also notes the negative transfer or interference in cases where L1 and L2 are different syntactically. Examples would be the

difference in adjective and pronoun placement between English and Spanish. Students seem to perform better on single point grammar questions, but they do not transfer this knowledge when they have to do a more complex tasks, such as a formal essay. The one grammar point that did improve in the formal composition, if only slightly, was accent marks, but as English has very few words with written diacritical marks, it cannot be determined if L1 review in English was effective with regard to accents in Spanish.

The results show that, even if students feel more confidence as rated by self-efficacy, this confidence does not always result in an increase in more accurate performance. While students overwhelmingly rated their efficacy as higher, the results of the post Spanish grammar knowledge and the Spanish compositions did reflect this perceived growth in ability. In fact, the composition measurement showed continued challenges when it came to verb conjugation, subject/verb agreement, and when to leave the verb in the infinitive.

Limitations

As with any classroom quasi-experiments, there are limitations to interpretation of results. For future projects a mechanism should be utilized to measure how much English was spoken during the portion of the class when the instructor reviewed English grammar. Typically, Spanish is the only language used in instruction; therefore, any English that was used was above and beyond the traditional instruction methods for the course. Future research would benefit from an exact time measurement of the amount of instruction performed in English. In addition, research would benefit from the use of a control group in the study design so as to better highlight the effects of English language instruction on compositions written in the target language.

Another limitation is the lack of measurement and self-efficacy for writing in the L1. Future projects should measure students' abilities with writing in L1, similar to the study performed by Bhela (1999). In addition to the English measure, the Spanish grammar assessment should be revised. The individual sections did not have the same amount point totals, leading to a lack of continuity. Another factor to consider in future studies is taking into account any heritage speakers in the class. Students who speak L2 in the home but have no formal instruction in that language often have greater lexical variety and can write with fewer errors; however, they aren't necessarily able to explain the reasons for correct grammatical usage. Also, heritage speakers

have greater difficulty with diacritical marks and spelling than do students who have studied L2 in a formal setting.

Conclusions

This pilot study reviewed grammatical structures in L1 English (the primary native language of Spanish composition students) in an attempt to improve the accuracy of writing in L2 Spanish while increasing the self-efficacy of learners. The results varied depending on the type of task performed by the student. For a quiz instrument, a review of the L1 English-language verb structures may have helped students to lower the number of errors in isolate, focused L2 verb conjugation, although the results are not definitive. However, when given a prompt and asked to write an in-class essay, the number of grammar mistakes increased from when the assessment was initially completed (at the beginning of the semester) to when the task was completed again during the last week of class. This shows that for single point, specific examples of grammar usage in an individual sentence, students are able to improve their scores over the course of a semester. Yet in the more complex exercise of composing an essay, students have not shown to improve on or master grammatical accuracy. After the course of the semester, student self-efficacy when writing in L2 increased across the board, most notably with regard to essay structure and organization. Students went from feeling confident in writing individual paragraphs in Spanish, to expressing greater self-efficacy when compiling a complete essay. From this preliminary study, then, the results corroborate studies that show increased self-efficacy with overall essay structures, but not with regard to confidence with syntactic structures in L2.

If we look at the original research questions for this pilot study, it appears that a review of L1 grammar does affect the perceptions that students have of their self-efficacy in L2 composition,. However, L1 instruction does not appear to have helped with improved grammar structures when it comes to completing an entire essay. Students did improve on single-point grammar exercises, but there is no evidence to suggest that this was due to L1 grammar review.

References

- Almoayidi, K.A. (2018). The effectiveness of using L1 in second language classrooms: A controversial issue. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 8(4), 375-379.
- Antón, M. & Dicamilla, F. (1999). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(2), 233-247.
- Asención-Delaney, Y., & Collentine, J. (2011). A multidimensional analysis of a written L2 Spanish corpus. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 299-322.
- Bandura, A., (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bhela, B. (1999). Native language interference in learning a second language: Exploratory case studies of native language interference with target language usage. *International Education Journal*, 1(1), 22-31.
- Brooks, F. & Donato, R. (1994). Vygotskian approaches to understanding foreign language learner discourse during communicative tasks. *Hispania*, 77(2), 262-274.
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 57(3), 402-423.
- Derakhshan, A., & Karimi, E. (2015). The interference of first language and second language acquisition. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(10), 2112-2117.
- Dulay, H., Burt, M., Krashen, S. (1982). *Language Two*, New York: Oxford UP.
- Edelsky, C. (1982). Writing in a bilingual program: The relation of L1 and L2 texts. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(2), 211-228.
- Ellis, R. (1984). *Classroom second language development: A study of classroom interaction and language acquisition*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Hsieh, P., & Schallert, D. (2008). Implications from self-efficacy and attribution theories for an understanding of undergraduates' motivation in a foreign language course. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33, 513-532.
- Hung-Cheng, T. (2016). Effects of collaborative online learning on EFL learners' writing performance and self-efficacy. *English Language Teaching*, 9(5), 119-133.

- Khetaguri, T. Zangaladze, M. Albay, M. (2016). The benefits of using L1 in foreign language learning process. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 2(3), 24-26.
- Khojasteh, L., Shokrpour, N., & Afrasiabi, M. (2016). The relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance of Iranian EFL students. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 5(4), 29-37.
- Krashen, S.D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- López Urdaneta, J. (2011). Spanish-English writing structure interferences in second language learners. *Gist: Education and Learning Research Journal*, 5, 158-179.
- Nation, P. (2003). The role of first language in foreign language learning. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 32(3), 1-8.
- Ramírez-Mayberry, M. (1998). Acquisition of Spanish definite articles by English-speaking learners of Spanish. *Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education*, 3(3), 51-67.
- Raoofi, S., Hoon Tan, B., & Heng Chan, S. (2012). Self-efficacy in second/foreign language learning contexts. *English Language Teaching*, 5(11), 60-73.
- Shen, M., & Troia, G. A. (2018). Teaching children with language-learning disabilities to plan and revise compare–contrast texts. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 41(1), 44–61.
- Stern, H.H. (1992). *Issues and options in language teaching*. P. Allen & B. Harley (Eds.). Oxford U.P. 279-299.
- Zhang, X., & Ardasheva, Y. (2019). Sources of college EFL learners' self-efficacy in the English public speaking domain. *English for Specific Purposes*, 53, 47–59.