



**Error Analysis in Written Productions of EFL Elementary Students at a Bilingual Private  
School in Cali**

Master's Report

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Master's in Teaching as a Foreign Language

School of Education Sciences

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## Dedication and Acknowledgements

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

First and foremost to God who never forgot about my dreams, who was my provider, my guide, and gave me strength, wisdom, and peace of mind whenever I felt like I was unable to go on.

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## **Abstract**

Studies on error analysis are very important in the field of linguistics, and most importantly in the TEFL context. Second language learners' errors are significant proof of the development of their language. Indeed, an error can be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language, in other words, errors are a device learners use in order to learn (Selinker, 1992 in Rustipa, 2011). This study aims to investigate the frequency and the type of errors made by elementary students in their writing process. The participants are 7-12-year-old students at a private bilingual school in Cali, Colombia. The written productions were collected and the errors were identified, analyzed, and classified. Error analysis is a useful technique to identify and better understand the learner's errors in the foreign/second language. It is considered beneficial to both the learner and the teacher as it gives relevant information and valuable feedback. By identifying and understanding the learner's errors, teachers can know the learner's zone of actual development, and this indicates which aspects or areas need to be addressed, reinforced, or reoriented. The results of this study showed that spelling, wrong verb tense, capitalization, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, among others, are the most frequent errors elementary students make.

*Keywords:* Error analysis, Writing process, ESL writing.

## 1. Introduction

For decades linguists have studied patterns in second language acquisition and have developed several theories, hypotheses, and methodologies about how learners cope with this complex process. When students are learning a foreign language, they face lots of obstacles. Dealing with different phonology, syntax, and grammar, are some of the biggest challenges learners go through on this challenging yet rewarding path. Hence, learning a foreign language is quite a job, especially for young learners who are not only learning a foreign language but also learning content, grasping instruction, and building knowledge through that language.

In elementary school, students at the private institution where I conducted this research, are expected to use the English language in order to communicate ideas and needs and read and write different kinds of texts (descriptions, journals, narratives, stories, etc.). Before students come to first grade, they have been exposed to English language input for about three years, mainly through songs, rhymes, narrative texts, and several hours of instruction in the target language. Approximately at the age of 6, students begin their literacy process which continues in first grade where students are challenged to use the knowledge they have gained: phonological awareness, vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar patterns, etc, in order to produce written texts. Writing is a complex process that is composed of different steps. At this institution, students at a very young age begin to get familiarized with the steps of the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, revising (including peer correction), editing, and publishing. Rozimela (2004), contends that a good mastery of English writing skills is deemed pivotal and helpful due to the nature of the written form in mastering English language learning goals. By following these steps, students enhance their writing skills and discover the benefits of constructive feedback. Correa, et al., (2001 cited in

Velásquez A. et al., 2011) affirm that effective literacy teaching must be addressed with a conception of language as significance, and the conception of the learning process as a construction of meaning by the learner. This is why by providing activities that foster writing skills, students not only advance in the construction of their interlanguage but also develop high-order thinking skills.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

### **2.1 Justification**

As a first-grade teacher I feel I have a very important role in my institution. Helping young learners set the basis for all the knowledge they will construct, providing strategies to facilitate learning, scaffolding, and guiding them in their learning process. Hence, I have always been amazed and very interested in how students bloom in regard to their literacy process. Learning to read and write in a foreign language is not an easy task. Errors are expected to happen all the time, frustration shows up, and students feel somehow discouraged. However, young learners are very persistent, and they have an intrinsic motivation that is like fuel to the teacher. Students have to learn to see errors as a part of their process, not as something negative. Yet, we have to help them develop their communicative competence. This is why I decided to conduct this research, and use the Error Analysis method as an attempt to analyze and describe the learners' errors in written productions from first grade to fifth grade.

When a person is learning a foreign language, errors are expected to happen both in comprehension and production. Many researchers have agreed that errors are due to inadequate knowledge of a particular syntactic feature. Jabeen et al., (2015), contend that error analysis is a very important area of applied linguistics as well as of second and foreign language learning. It is also a systematic method to analyze learners' errors. Errors are not always bad, rather they are crucial parts and aspects of the process of learning a language.

Error Analysis aims at the identification and description of the errors and is a very important tool for teachers and researchers as it gives them insights into what needs to be done in

order to help students fill their gaps. Also, it helps teachers rethink and readdress their practices in order to help students advance and succeed. In elementary, EFL students are just developing their writing skills both in L1 and L2, so they are expected to make a lot of spelling, grammar, and syntax errors, to name a few. In order to help students advance in their literacy process and foster their language skills, errors should be analyzed, identifying the possible sources of these errors. Not all errors should be corrected, some of them are parts of the process; however, if there are errors that are very frequent, they need to be addressed as they can be fossilized.

I have been working in the institution for about 22 years, and I have always felt amazed about the writing process. However, it is somehow frustrating when you see that not all students develop their writing competences in the same way, you feel like something needs to be done in order to help students advance and reach the expected goals. This is why I decided to conduct this research, to have a closer look of the students' written productions at different moments and levels. By analyzing, classifying and describing the errors I can have a wider vision of what students are capable to do in elementary school at this institution, and it can also help us teachers evaluate and improve our teaching practices.

## **2.2 Research Question**

What are the most common errors elementary EFL students have in their writing process at a private bilingual school in Cali, Colombia?

### **3. Objectives**

#### **3.1 General Objective**

- To analyze different types of errors in written productions made by elementary students in a bilingual private school in Cali.

#### **3.2 Specific Objectives**

- To identify the errors produced by elementary EFL students at a bilingual school.
- To categorize the errors produced in their written productions at different stages.
- To describe the most common errors made by these foreign language learners.



## **4. Literature Review**

Studies on error analysis are very important in the field of linguistics, and most importantly in the TEFL context. Second language learners' errors are significant proof of the development of their language. Indeed, an error can be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language, in other words, errors are a device learners use in order to learn (Selinker, 1992 in Rustipa, 2011). Errors are part of the students' interlanguage, that compendium of well-formed and ill-formed utterances foreign language learners produce in the process of learning a language. However, when these errors are not addressed, they can be fossilized and can cause the learners to stop developing their skills appropriately.

Khansir (2012), states that the basic task of error analysis is to describe how learning occurs by examining the learner's output and this includes his/her correct and incorrect utterances. The main focus of this research project is on written production. At the institution where I conducted my research, writing is a very important component. Hence, providing activities to foster writing skills is pivotal since students not only advance in the construction of their interlanguage but also develop high-order thinking skills. However, the writing process is not an easy task for both teachers and students. Thus, error analysis is a useful method that allows researchers and teachers to go beyond the surface stage of the error and look at its nature, its possible reason to be and its relationship to the learner's mother language.

### **4.1 Error Analysis**

Error analysis is a method to document errors studied under Applied Linguistics. It is a technique that studies the kind and quantity of errors. It was established in 1960 by Stephen Pit

Corder as an alternative to the Contrastive Analysis theory (CA) developed by Robert Lado in 1957 (Rustipa, 2011). CA is a theory that was aimed at the study of two languages in regards to their similarities and differences. It was considered that with this approach, linguists and foreign language teachers could predict patterns that might be difficult for the learner. However, due to its shortcomings, CA was criticized, and in the 60's Error Analysis (EA) theory began to emerge (Khansir, 2012). In 1967, Corder, a British applied linguist, emphasized the importance of focusing on errors from a different perspective. He stressed the importance of the learners' errors and their contribution to learning and to second language acquisition. The theory of error analysis came out with a new connotation of the error. Traditionally, errors were considered a negative part of the foreign language learning process, and they had to be erased at all costs. However, EA theory conceives errors as a learning device that is a natural part of the learning process. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), define an error as: "the flawed side of the learner's speech or writing". Consequently, errors provide a rich source of information about the learner's process. "While native speakers make unsystematic 'performance' errors (like slips of the tongue) from time to time, second language learners make more errors, and often ones that no native speaker ever makes. An error analysis should focus on errors that are systematic violations of patterns in the input to which the learners have been exposed. Such errors tell us something about the learner's interlanguage, or underlying knowledge of the rules of the language being learned (Corder, 1981, cited in Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, 2021, para. 3).

The role of the error has changed over the past years, and now it is considered a very important component of second language acquisition. As Khansir (2012), states: "Error Analysis is one of the major topics in the field of second language acquisition research. Errors are an integral part of language learning. The learner of English as a second language is unaware of the existence

of the particular system or rule in the English language”. All learners make mistakes, thus, the systematic study of these errors should be considered in order to discover clues and patterns that can help teachers improve their practices and as a result, help students in their process.

Corder made a distinction between the error and mistake (Corder, 1974 cited in Jabeen et al., 2015). Errors are the result of incomplete learning and linguistic development of the learners and errors cannot be self-corrected. Mistakes are the results of poor performance of language due to many factors like fatigue and carelessness on the part of learners etc. Learners have the knowledge of the correct linguistic form and they can self-correct themselves on the basis of their linguistic knowledge. This is the basic difference between errors and mistakes. Learners produce ill-formed utterances at the very earliest stages of their acquisition and later on, by getting the instructions and feedback from adults, they correct themselves. L2 learners also go through the same process while learning a new language. In the school setting, they receive that feedback from teachers and more knowledgeable peers. That’s why there is not much difference between the processes of learning the second or the foreign language and the first language acquisition (Corder, as cited in Jabeen et al., 2015).

#### ***4.1.1 Error Analysis Taxonomies***

Heydari and Bagheri (2012), approach different error analysis taxonomies used in several research works and publications in this field. Richards (1971) for instance, can be considered a pioneer and one of the most significant researchers on EA. His work included participants from different backgrounds: Asian, European, and African. Based on his study, he stated three different sources of errors: Interference, intralingual, and developmental errors. According to Richards

(1971), developmental errors could be subclassified into overgeneralization errors, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules, and false hypotheses.

In 1974 Richards (1974 cited in Heidary and Bagheri, 2012), proposed a new broader classification consisting of only two groups: interlingual errors (caused by L1 interference) and intralingual and developmental errors (errors that occur during the learning process or that are caused by difficulties in learning the new language). Also, Dulay and Burt (1974 cited in Heidary and Bagheri, 2012), came up with a new classification consisting of developmental errors, interference errors, and unique errors (errors that are neither developmental nor interference). On the other hand, Stenson (1974 cited in Heidary and Bagheri, 2012), took into account a new category, which was called induced errors, those that were caused by incorrect instruction. In countries where English is taught as a foreign language, and where teachers are usually foreign language learners, these kinds of errors are common. Even though bilingual teachers do their best in their teaching practices, they also make mistakes and errors both in pronunciation and the use of morpho-syntactic structures, which can be reproduced by the learners.

Later on, Brown (1980 cited in Heidary and Bagheri, 2012) classified errors into four categories: interference transfer, intralingual transfer, the context of learning, and communication strategies. This last category had to do with the conscious usage of the language to convey meaning when the structures are not yet fully developed. This could be considered a strategic competence the learner uses in order to communicate. Communication strategies include avoidance, use of prefabricated patterns, cognitive and personal style, appeal to authority, and language switch.

James (1988 cited in Heidary and Bagheri, 2012), reported another classification consisting of interlingual errors, intralingual errors, communication strategy-based errors, and induced errors (from EFL teachers, teaching materials, exercises, etc.).

For this research Richards (1974) classification of interlingual errors and intralingual and developmental errors was utilized.

#### ***4.1.2 Steps in Error Analysis***

In this research, EA was used as the main research method, and the same steps followed by other researchers in the EA field such as Londoño (2008) and Hariri (2012). These steps were proposed by Corder (1974). The steps are as follows:

1. Collection of samples of learner language (different written pieces of the learners at three different stages).
2. Identification of errors (the way of identifying errors, e.g. by underlying errors and using the symbols of correcting code).
3. Classification of errors (the errors can be categorized into groups which are stated according to their origin and presence: interlingual, intralingual or developmental errors).
4. Explanation of errors (calculating and explaining the errors in a suitable way).
5. Error evaluation (this step involves the interpretation of tables, graphs, and conclusions).

#### ***4.1.3 Causes of Errors***

According to Dulay et al., (1982), “errors take place when the learner changes the surface structure in a particularly systematic manner” (p. 150), thus, the error, no matter what form and type it is, interferes with the target language production. Indeed, producing errors requires creativity, risk-taking, and making hypotheses, among other thinking skills.

A broad list of causes of errors has been made by different researchers. Touchie (1986), states that interlingual errors are caused mainly by mother tongue interference, however, intralingual or developmental errors originate in the following factors: simplification, overgeneralization, hypercorrection, faulty teaching, fossilization, avoidance, inadequate learning, and false concepts hypothesized. Touchie (1986), explains the different causes of errors as follows: Simplification results from the learner using a structure that is simpler than those found in the L2. Simplification errors can be seen in spelling and grammar. On the other hand, overgeneralization happens when learners apply a learned rule or structure where it does not apply. Hypercorrection is similar to overgeneralization, and it happens when students use a structure that seems to them to be correct. Faulty teaching is caused by misleading teaching examples or teaching materials. Fossilization happens when some errors, both in speaking and writing persist for a long period, and over time they become very difficult to get rid of. Avoidance occurs when the learner avoids using certain structures because it is too difficult. Finally, false concepts hypothesized are seen when learners make false hypotheses about the rules and structures in the target language. This research aims at discovering the possible causes of learners' errors at a bilingual private school and explaining them accordingly.

#### ***4.1.4 Error Classification***

Corder (1974 in Londoño 2008), classifies errors in terms of the difference between the learner's utterance and the reconstructed version and proposes four different categories: omissions, additions, misinformations, and misordering.

According to Londoño (2008), an omission is the absence of a word or a morpheme that should appear in a well-formed utterance (*She cooking or she is cook*). In the first example, the

word *is* is missing, while the latter example lacks the inflectional morpheme *-ing*. An addition is considered the presence of a word or morpheme that should not appear in a well-formed utterance (*He didn't wanted to go*). Notice the unnecessary addition of the morpheme *-ed* to indicate past tense. Misinformation is the wrong application of a rule or structure (*They havved many friends.*). Misinformations can be produced by false hypotheses, in this case, the learner applied a learned structure which consists of the addition of the morpheme *ed* to form the past tense. However, this rule applies to regular verbs, and *to have* is an irregular verb, hence the past tense changes. Finally, misordering is the incorrect placement of words in an utterance (*My color favorite is pink.*).

It is very important for teachers and researchers to identify these different causes and classifications of errors students make when learning a new language. While learners develop their communicative competences, error analysis is a valuable tool to help identify errors and possible causes of those errors both in their oral and written productions.

#### **4.2. Interlanguage**

The term interlanguage was first defined by Selinker in 1972 (cited in Khansir 2012). It was defined as a continuum between the mother tongue and the target language. Interlanguage is characterized by being dynamic and constantly modified by the learner. It is also seen as a language developed by the learner of a foreign language who has not reached the proficiency level yet. Al-khreshah (2015), states that there are five psycholinguistic processes that shape interlanguage which are (a) native language transfer, when there are items and subsystems that appear in interlanguage performance due to the influence of the mother tongue. (b) Overgeneralization of target language rules, when the rules appear from a clear overgeneralization of the rules of the target language. (c) Transfer of training, when fossilisable rules, items, and subsystems come as a

result of particular items in the training process. (d) Strategies of communication, the skills L2 learners use to overcome difficulties that they may encounter when they are unable to express themselves due to limited or partial language resources; and (e) strategies of L2 learning, when fossilisable rules appear as a result of a certain or identifiable approach by the learner to the input that is being presented.

Interlanguage is the actual version of the learner's language. It is not static and it is constantly changing. However, it can be fossilized if students are not corrected on time and continue being unaware of their errors. As Tarone (2006) states, a central characteristic of any interlanguage is that it fossilizes, that is, it ceases to develop at some point short of full identity with the target language. In the foreign language setting, interlanguage is strongly influenced by the learner's mother tongue (L1), and interference or language transfer is usually seen. The learners make hypotheses about the linguistic structure of their L1 and apply them to the target language, even when it is not accurate. Hence, a clear understanding of the learners' interlanguage is deemed pivotal. It is important for teachers to understand this and also to see interlanguage as a series of learning steps. In the writing process, interlanguage plays a very important role. Students are always learning, exploring, taking risks, and proving hypotheses. Hence, their interlanguage is always improving and changing.

#### **4.3 Error Analysis in the Writing Process**

“El lenguaje escrito es una función verbal muy particular. Es el álgebra del lenguaje. Permite al niño acceder al plano abstracto más elevado del lenguaje, reorganizando el sistema psíquico anterior al lenguaje hablado” (Vygotsky, 1984 cited in Rabazo 2008).



With the recent rise of sociocultural theory in second-language acquisition, attempts have been made to understand second language (L2) learners' uses of different resources in writing, based on their cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. Sociocultural theories are based on the social constructivist paradigm which considers that knowledge is constructed socially through interaction and shared by individuals (Bryman, 2001 cited in Wang et al. 2011). In line with L2 writing research within the sociocultural paradigm, Guerrero (2007), asserts that the concepts and ideas drawn from Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory have been explored by researchers as well as teachers in different contexts of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), either with children, adolescents, or adults. Extensive amounts of research studies have documented the applications of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is the space between what a learner can do without guidance and what he can do with the guidance of a teacher or a more capable peer, Peer interaction, Play in SLA, etc. All these tenets are interconnected and belong to the same umbrella term of mediation: the interactions teachers allow in class to foster collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving among others. Writing is a complex, non-linear, mediated process. This mediation can be done by people who surround the learner such as the teacher or peers, but also, the mediation can be done through technology.

Learning to write, like any other kind of human learning, involves making mistakes. It is not only the mere act of putting letters and words together, but it requires high order thinking skills that allow the writer to convey meaning through a text that is expected to have both cohesion and coherence. Writing involves several components: the phonological, the morphologic, the semantic or lexical, and the syntactic. Young learners who begin their writing process in a foreign language have to make use of all this knowledge that sometimes is still under construction, even in their L1. Thus, errors are expected to happen, all the time. Besides, learners do not only make use of

linguistic features of the language. In order to communicate orally or written, they also use their strategic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence. As Halliday (1978 cited in Figueredo 2010) points out:

“The context of situation is a theoretical construct for explaining how a text relates to the social processes within which it is located, and consists of three components: the main social activity taking place, the people involved in it (plus the way they relate to one another) and the roles and functions of the text within this social activity -known technically in systemic functional linguistics as the field, tenor, and mode” (p. 124).

Field is the area of external reality with which the text deals, what is the content matter or topic. Tenor concerns the relationships between those taking part in the linguistic act, the relationship between the writer and the reader. Mode is the means through which the communication takes place, how the text is constructed. Indeed, writing is a social act that requires an implicit or explicit understanding of the field, the tenor, and the mode. This is why learning to write demands a myriad of abilities, competences, and cognitive strategies.

According to Skavlov (2015), even though current sociocultural views of writing are multifaceted, they typically draw on Vygotsky’s idea that higher-order cognitive processes are socially mediated within specific cultural contexts. At the institution where I conducted my research, teachers are expected to follow a constructivist approach to writing. Indeed, writing is a very important component in the curriculum and is seen as a process rather than a product. In fact, it is seen not only as the mere action of putting letters together to convey an idea but as a complex journey that requires engagement from students through the entire process: brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, all these while receiving scaffolding and collaboration from teachers and more knowledgeable peers.

As stated by Rish et al., (2015) cited in Slavkov (2015), writing is a type of social activity. The authors take into consideration four tenets of a conceptualization of a sociocultural theory of writing. The first tenet refers to writing as a social act. It means that writing is affected by social relationships, culture, etc. The second tenet states that authorship is not solitary but distributed, it means, in the process of writing, the learner interacts in different ways with others (peers or teachers) and these interactions influence the content of the written production. The third tenet affirms that writing is a mediated process of invention. During the process, writers use a variety of tools and resources that influence the content of writing. The fourth tenet refers to the notions of dialogism and intertextuality: authors borrowing and lending ideas, linguistic structures, and lexical choices to other writers. All these tenets apply when writing in a second language, in addition, learners are at different stages of learning the language features, pragmatics, and cultural norms of the target language. This is why, since peers are also English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, in many cases, they are not able to identify all their errors and their peers'. Thus, teachers play an important role in identifying errors and giving corrective feedback to their students. Error Analysis becomes an important technique that helps teachers have a better understanding of the learners' real zone of development, and provides insights to improve teaching practices on specific phonological, lexical, or morpho-syntactic items which need to be addressed.

There are several studies that have been made in the field of EA in writing, most of them in Asia and with high school or university students: Richards (1971 cited in Castillejos, 2009) Touchie (1986), Ciesielkiewicz, M. (2015), Karim, A., et al. (2018), among others have conducted research using EA methodology. Londoño (2008), conducted a case study research on EA of a written composition. This study was done in Colombia with a high-beginner student of English at a public university in Medellin. The participant was asked to write a composition entitled "My life

in Colombia”. In his research, Londoño followed the five steps proposed by Corder: Collection of a sample of learner language, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of errors. He used a clinical elicitation method and categorized the errors according to Corder’s classification: omissions, additions, misinformations, and misordering. He concludes in his study that learning a language demands willingness, effort, and commitment from both the learner and the teacher. He states that L1 has a very strong influence on L2 and affects it not only syntactically, but also meaningfully. He considers error analysis as a fundamental and relevant tool in language teaching as it gives the teachers insights to readdress their methodology.

In 2012, Hariri conducted a morpho-syntactic study on error analysis in Iran. The participants of her study were nine Pre-intermediate instructed Persian students of English. In order to collect the data, students had to write an essay entitled “What do you want to be in the future?”. After collecting the data, the errors were analyzed following a linguistic taxonomy of the errors by Keshavarz (2006 cited in Hariri, 2012). In this study, the author concludes that the maximum errors of students are in errors related to the use of prepositions and articles. She also asserts that the maximum frequency belongs to the category of interlingual errors.

Ciesielkiewicz and Marquez (2015), conducted a study that attempted to establish the most common types of errors that Spanish students in the 1st and 2nd year of Bachillerato make in ESL compositions, as well as to identify those that are produced due to the interference from Spanish into English. In this study, the errors were classified according to four categories: spelling, vocabulary, grammar-syntax, and punctuation. According to their research, 44% of the errors were due to transfer from Spanish into English, and the remaining percentage was due to the confusion and overgeneralization of English rules. They concluded that the most difficult and problematic aspects of English for these Spanish students in their written compositions were: the spelling of

words, the use of commas, the use of prepositions, the correct use of words according to their lexical meaning, the articles in English, the number of nouns, the agreement between subject and verb, the use of adverbs, word order and the use of verb tenses.

For many researchers, studies on error analysis have been a significant way to contribute to the field of second language acquisition, L2 writing, and EFL settings in general. Karim, et al., (2018) coincide that identifying the EFL learner's errors in writing has no longer been important but essential. This study aims at analyzing elementary students' written productions and the errors made at three different stages of their learning process during the school year. Literature on error analysis and the latest works done in the field are usually done in Asia and mostly with high school or university students. This is why this research is important for the contributions it can bring to the Colombian EFL context, especially to those teachers working with young learners in bilingual schools.

## **5. Research Methodology**

### **5.1 Context**

This research was conducted in a private bilingual school in Cali, Colombia. The school has more than 57 years of experience in bilingual education and is well known among the bilingual schools in the city. From the lower levels, the school hires both native speakers and bilingual teachers from Colombia or other countries. The school is divided into four sections: Baby Bennett, Preschool, Elementary, and High School. However, this research only focused on the Elementary section. This section is composed of six grades: preparatory, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade. For this work only first to fifth grade were taken into consideration.

Students from first to third grade have a homeroom teacher who is in charge of teaching English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. In fourth and fifth grade, however, there is a specialized English teacher while there is another teacher who teaches Math, Science, and Social Studies. There are three groups in first to third grade named with letters (1A, 1B, 1C). In fourth and fifth grade there are just two groups.

In first grade the three teachers are bilingual from different countries: Honduras, Brazil, and Colombia. In second grade there are three Colombian teachers but one of them lived in Canada most of her life. In third grade, there are three Colombian teachers, one of them lived in the United States for several years. In fourth grade, the teachers are Colombian but have lived in the United States for many years. In fifth grade the teachers are Colombian.

## 5.2 Sample

The participants in this study are 144 students from first to fifth grade. At this institution, there is a quantitative and a qualitative way of grading:

**E** The numerical range is between 46-50. (Excellent performance, the student surpasses the proposed goals).

**S** The numerical range is between 40-45.9 (Very good performance).

**A** The numerical range is between 30-39.9 (Average/satisfactory performance).

**I** The numerical range is between 0-29.9 (Low performance).

**Table 1**

*Evolution Range*

<b>Evolution Range</b>				
<b>Numerical Value</b>	46 – 50	40 – 45.9	30 – 39.9	0 – 29.9
<b>Letter Value</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>I</b>

The students chosen for this research are the students whose performance is between A and S. The reason why those students were chosen is that they represent what most students can do in terms of writing, thus they are a more reliable source.

## 5.3 Data Collection

For this research the data consisted of different pieces of written work students from first to fifth grade produced at certain moments during the 2021-2022 school year. The first moment was in September. In this stage, students' diagnostic evaluations were collected. The written compositions collected at this stage were what teachers had planned as the diagnostic evaluation, and varied according to the level as follows: In first grade, students had to describe a character

from a story they had been reading in class. In second and fifth grade, students had to write a composition about themselves (“All about me” and “My selfie” respectively). In third grade, students had to write a composition about their best friend, and in fourth grade, they wrote a friendly letter.

The second moment was in late November, and for this stage, the final evaluations of the first term were analyzed. The written productions for the second moment were collected in late November. During this stage of the data collection, students had the opportunity to write different kinds of texts. The written pieces that were collected were what teachers had planned as the Evaluation Type IV (summative assessment), which is the writing final evaluation of the first term. Teachers had the autonomy to choose the kind of text to be evaluated according to what they have been working on in class during the term.

In First Grade, for instance, students had been working on descriptions, so, in the final assessment, they wrote a description about themselves using a graphic organizer as a scaffolding. In second grade students wrote their final drafts of a description of a Pop candy. In third grade, students wrote their final drafts about a type of community they belong to. In fourth grade, they wrote their final drafts of a poem they had been writing in previous classes. Finally, in fifth grade, they had a free writing activity. Notice that only in first and fifth-grade students’ writing assessment was the first draft, in the other grades, students wrote their final drafts after revision and feedback from teachers and peers.

The third moment was in March, and the samples used were the final evaluations of the second term. The written productions for this stage corresponded to the final writing assessment for the second period. In first grade, students continued working on the same type of text. Thus, following the same steps as the previous evaluation, they wrote a description of one of the



characters in the story they were reading during the second term. In second grade, they had the same activity that first graders had, however, in second-grade students were supposed to describe an animal. A word bank was given and students were also required to do a brainstorm previous to the written composition. In third grade, students had been working on poetry, hence, the final assessment was the final draft of their poems. In fourth grade, they were working on narrative writing. So, for this assessment, students wrote the final draft of their narrative texts. Finally, in fifth grade, students were reading a chapter book. For the final assessment, they had to write one or two more chapters to give a continuation to the book. This activity was in situ, they also had to do brainstorming prior to the writing activity. Even though the students were aware of this research work, the written compositions were not done under different circumstances. All the written compositions were part of the normal development of the class.

#### **5.4 Steps in Error Analysis**

In this research, EA was used as the main research method, and the same steps followed by other researchers in the EA field such as Londoño (2008) and Hariri (2012). These steps were proposed by Corder (1974). The steps are as follows:

1. Collection of samples of learner language (different written pieces of the learners at three different stages).
2. Identification of errors (the way of identifying errors, e.g. by underlying the errors and using the symbols of correcting code).
3. Classification of errors (the errors can be categorized into groups which are stated according to their origin and presence: interlingual, intralingual or developmental errors).

For this study was used the classification of the errors according to Richards' taxonomy (1971) of the sources of errors: intralingual, interlingual or developmental.

4. Explanation of errors (calculating and explaining the errors in a suitable way). Graphics were made in order to see the different types of errors made by the students and their frequency.
5. Error evaluation. This step includes the interpretation of the data collected (findings and discussion) and the conclusions.

After collecting the students' written productions in three different moments, the identification of the errors was carried out. According to Richards 1971, errors were identified and then classified into two categories: interlingual errors (caused by L1 interference) and intralingual and developmental errors (errors that occur during the learning process or that are caused by difficulties in learning the new language). Besides the number of errors, the number of words written by the students in each grade was counted and was given an error rate: the total number of errors divided by the total number of words written (Truscott and Hsu, 2008). It was considered pertinent to take into consideration the number of words written because of the diversity in the type of texts produced in each grade, hence, the length of those productions varied.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

The corpus of this research was collected at three different moments in order to have a better understanding and follow up of the development of the learners' written process. The analysis of the errors found in the written productions are described as follows.

### **First Moment**

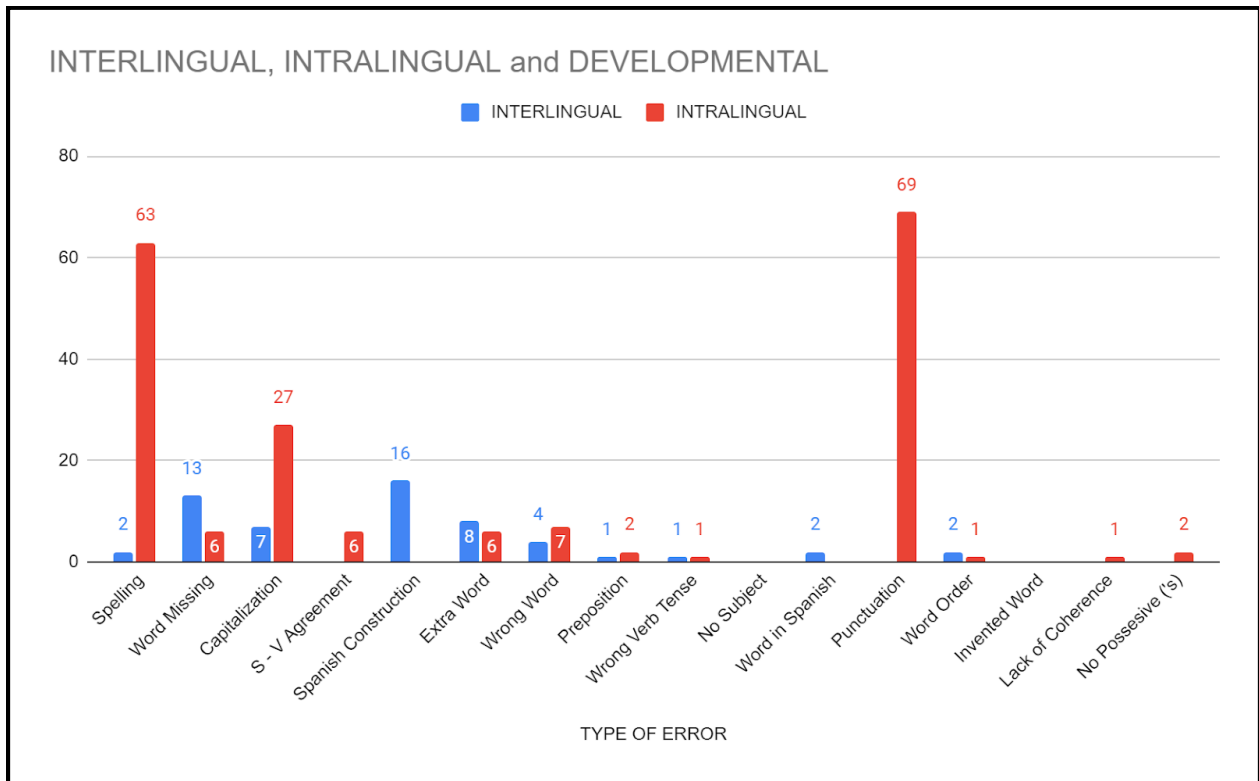
Even though all the written pieces were collected, in first grade it was very difficult to identify the type of error due to the incipient nature of their productions, as it was mostly isolated words and invented spelling, which is expected at this stage of their learning process. Thus, for the first moment, only the data from second to fifth grade was taken into consideration. This is the reason why the graphs only show 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. During this stage, 805 errors were identified and classified as interlingual, intralingual or developmental errors.

In second grade, spelling with 26% and punctuation with 28% were found to be the most common type of error, followed by capitalization 14%, Spanish construction 6%, extra word 6%, wrong word 4%, and subject-verb agreement 2%. (See Figure 1).

The total number of errors in second grade was 247 and the total number of words was 841. The error rate was 0,29.

**Figure 1**

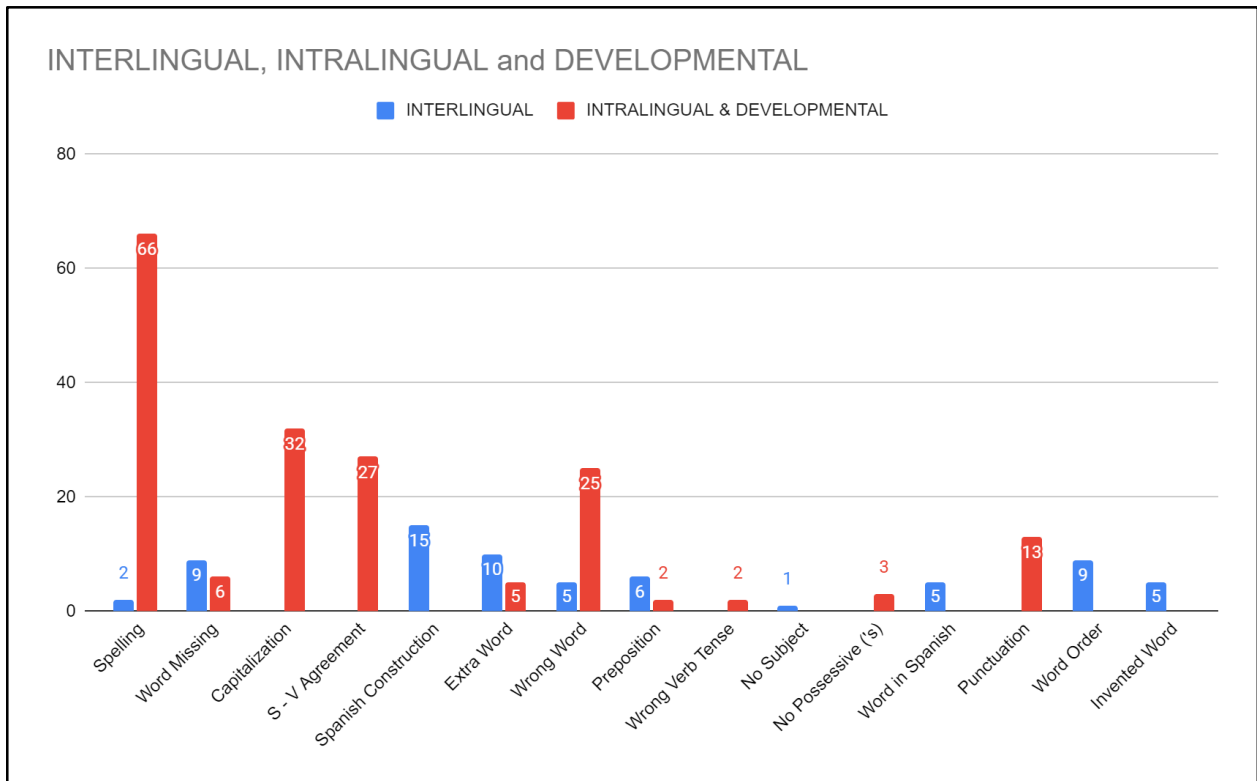
*Second Grade. First Moment*



In third grade, the most frequent errors were Spelling 27%, capitalization 13%, wrong word 12%, and subject-verb agreement 11%, followed by Spanish construction 6%, word missing 6%, extra word 6%, punctuation 5%, word order 4%, and prepositions 3%. Errors related to words in Spanish, invented words, lack of possessive, wrong verb tense, and no subject were found in a minor frequency of occurrences (See Figure 2). The total number of errors in third grade was 248 and the total number of words was 1233. The error rate was 0,20.

**Figure 2**

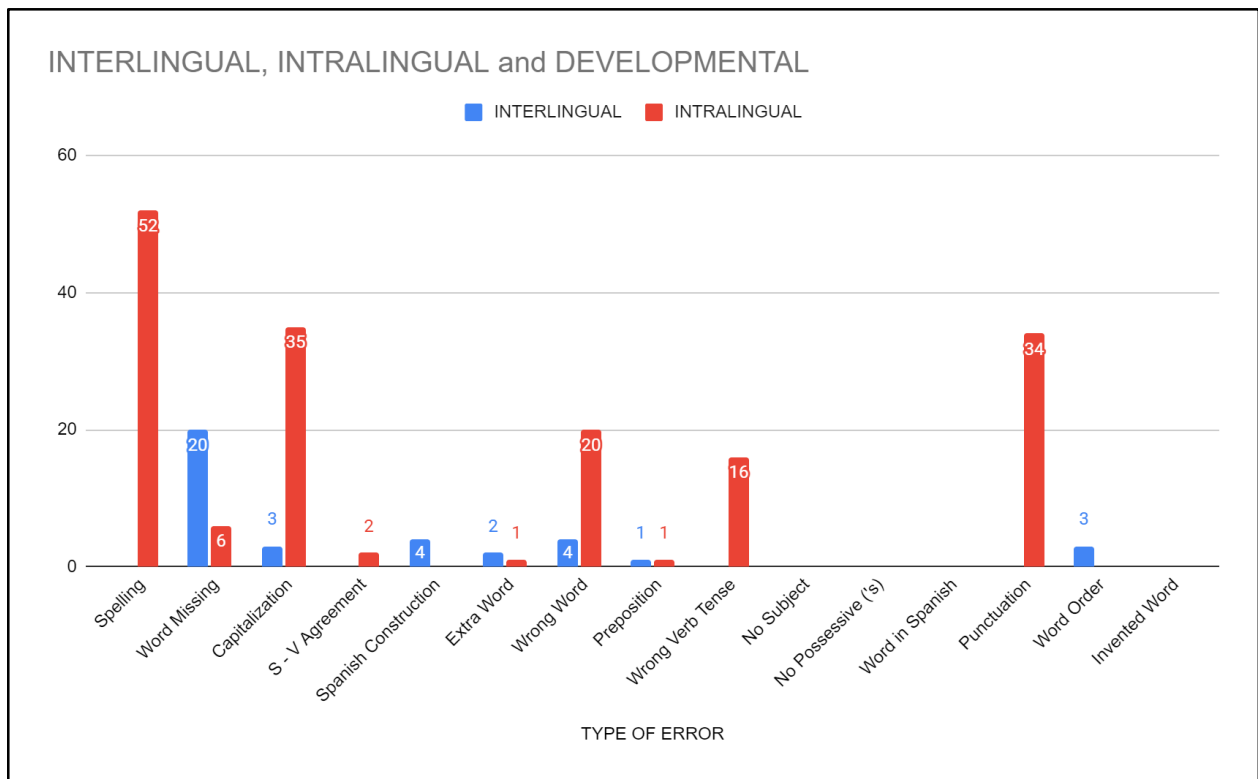
*Third Grade. First Moment.*



As shown in Figure 3, it is clear that the most common type of errors found in fourth grade was again spelling 25%, capitalization had 19%, and punctuation 17%, followed by word missing 13%, wrong word 12%, and wrong verb tense 8%. Other errors such as Spanish construction, word order, extra word, subject-verb agreement, and prepositions had a minor percentage of the occurrence. The total number of errors in fourth grade was 204 and the total number of words was 2475. The error rate was 0,08.

**Figure 3**

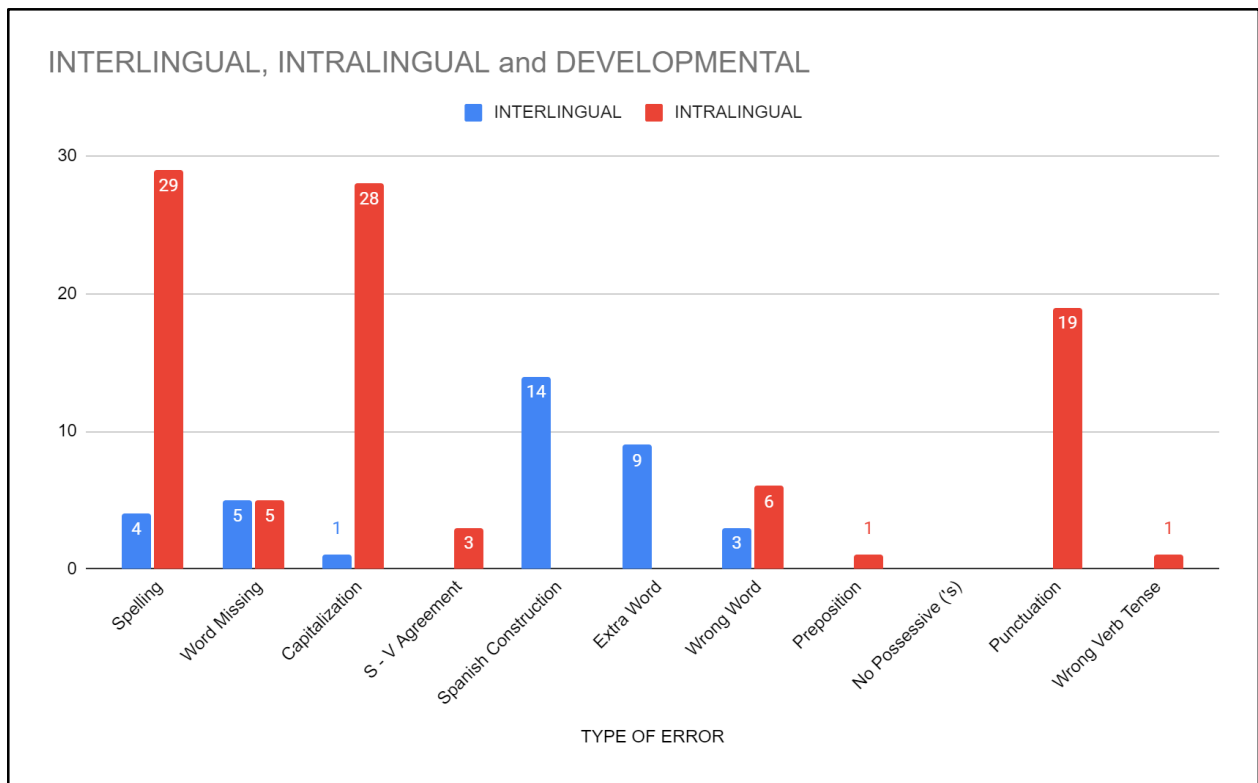
*Fourth Grade. First Moment*



In fifth grade, the frequency of occurrence of spelling was 26%, capitalization at 23%, and punctuation errors at 15% continued to be high. Other errors such as Spanish construction 11%, word missing 8%, extra word 7%, and wrong word 7% also had a significant frequency of occurrence. Subject-verb agreement, wrong verb tense, and prepositions had a low percentage of the occurrence (See Figure 4). The total number of errors in fifth grade was 128 and the total number of words was 1199. The error rate was 0,11.

**Figure 4**

*Fifth Grade. First Moment*



### **Second moment**

The data collected revealed that the most common type of errors found were nine: spelling, wrong word, subject-verb agreement, wrong verb tense, capitalization, Spanish construction, punctuation, word missing, and extra word. During this stage 1020 errors were identified, and classified.

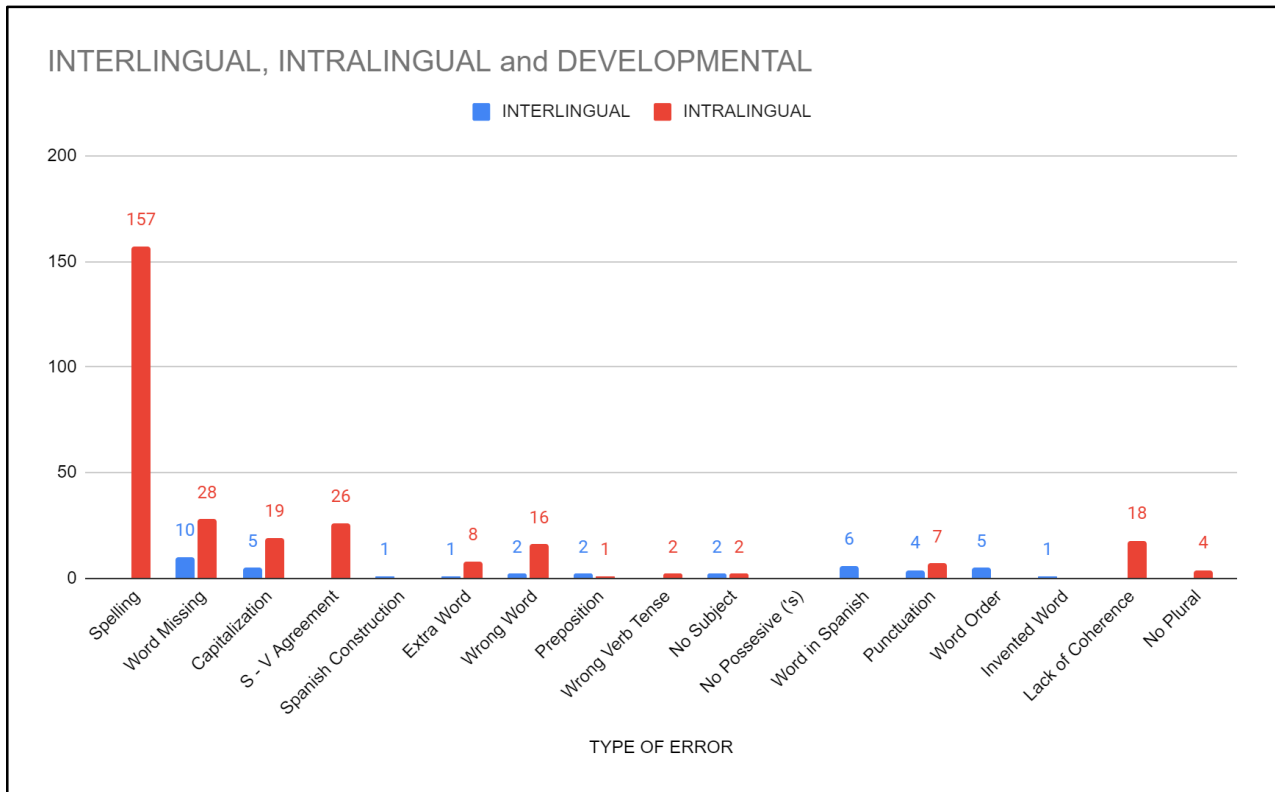
In first grade 327 errors were found. Spelling errors continued to have a high frequency of occurrence (48%). At this stage, this seems to be the most common error among first graders. Other errors such as word missing 12%, subject-verb agreement 8%, capitalization 7%, wrong word 6%, lack of coherence 6%, and punctuation 3%, had a significant frequency. On the other

hand, errors such as extra word, word in Spanish, word order, no subject, no plural, preposition, wrong verb tense, Spanish construction, and invented word were found in a lower percentage. (See Figure 5)

The total number of errors in first grade was 327 and the total number of words was 832. The error rate was 0.39.

**Figure 5**

*First Grade. Second Moment*



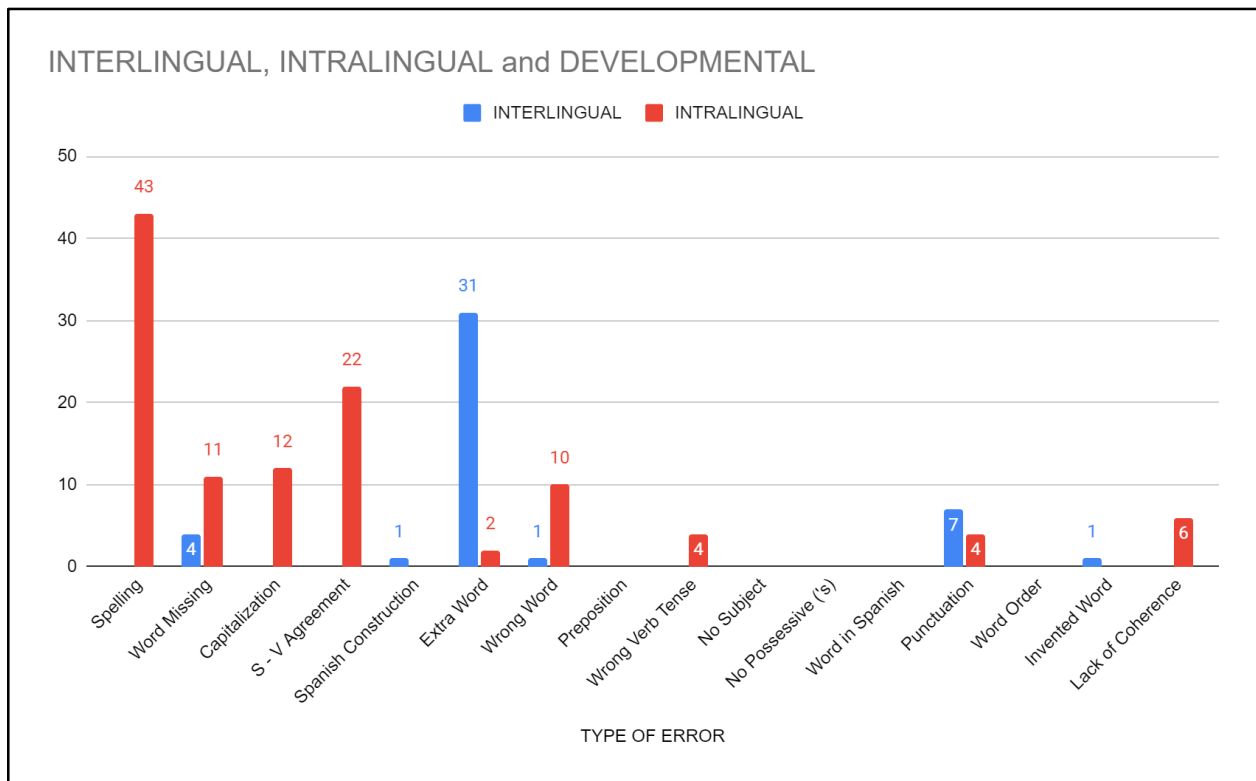
In second grade, 159 errors were found. As Figure 6 shows, spelling errors are the most common (27%), followed by extra word 21%, subject-verb agreement 14%, word missing 9%, capitalization 8%, wrong word 7%, and punctuation 7%. On a lower scale were found errors related



to lack of coherence, wrong verb tense, Spanish construction, and invented word. The total number of errors in second grade was 159 and the total number of words was 923. The error rate was 0,17.

**Figure 6**

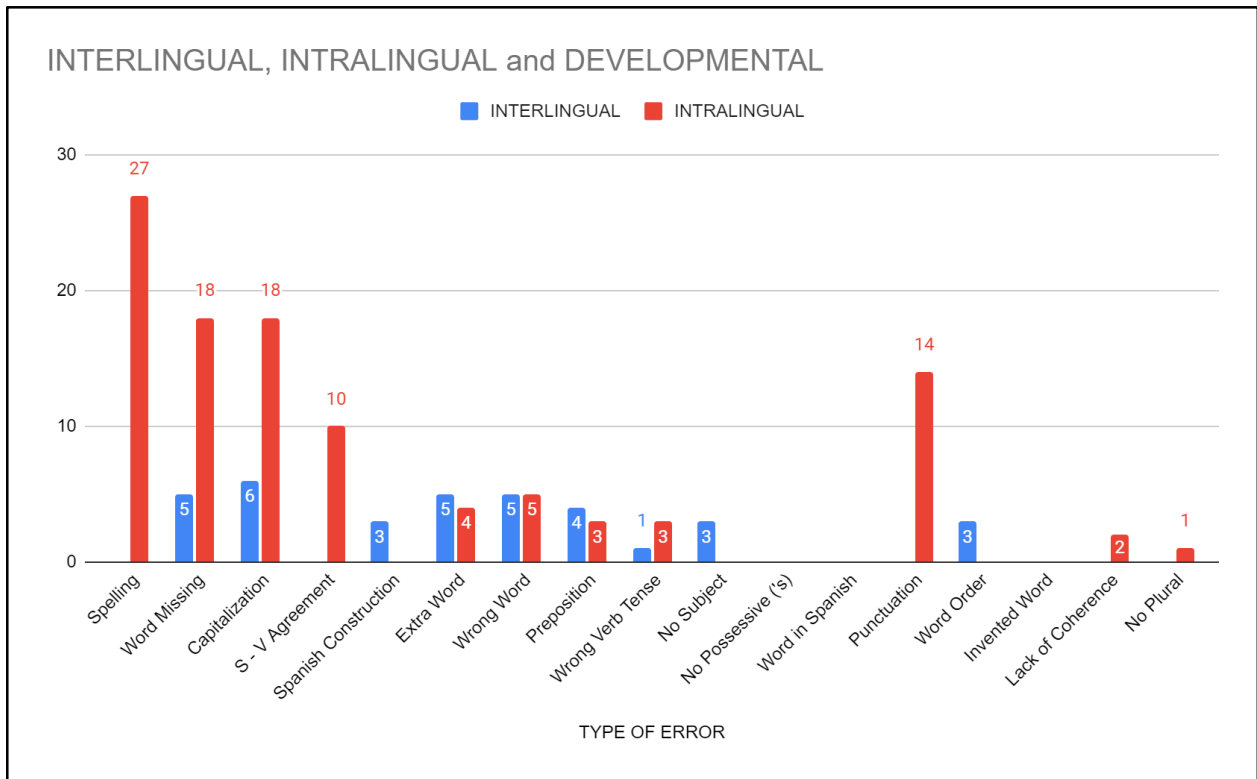
*Second Grade. Second Moment*



In third grade 140 errors were found, again being Spelling the error with the highest percentage of occurrence 19%, followed by capitalization 17%, word missing 16%, punctuation 10%, subject-verb agreement 7%, and wrong word 7%. In a lower percentage were found errors such as extra word, preposition, wrong verb tense, no subject, word order, lack of coherence, and no plural. (See Figure 7). The total number of errors in third grade was 140 and the total number of words was 1864. The error rate was 0,08.

**Figure 7**

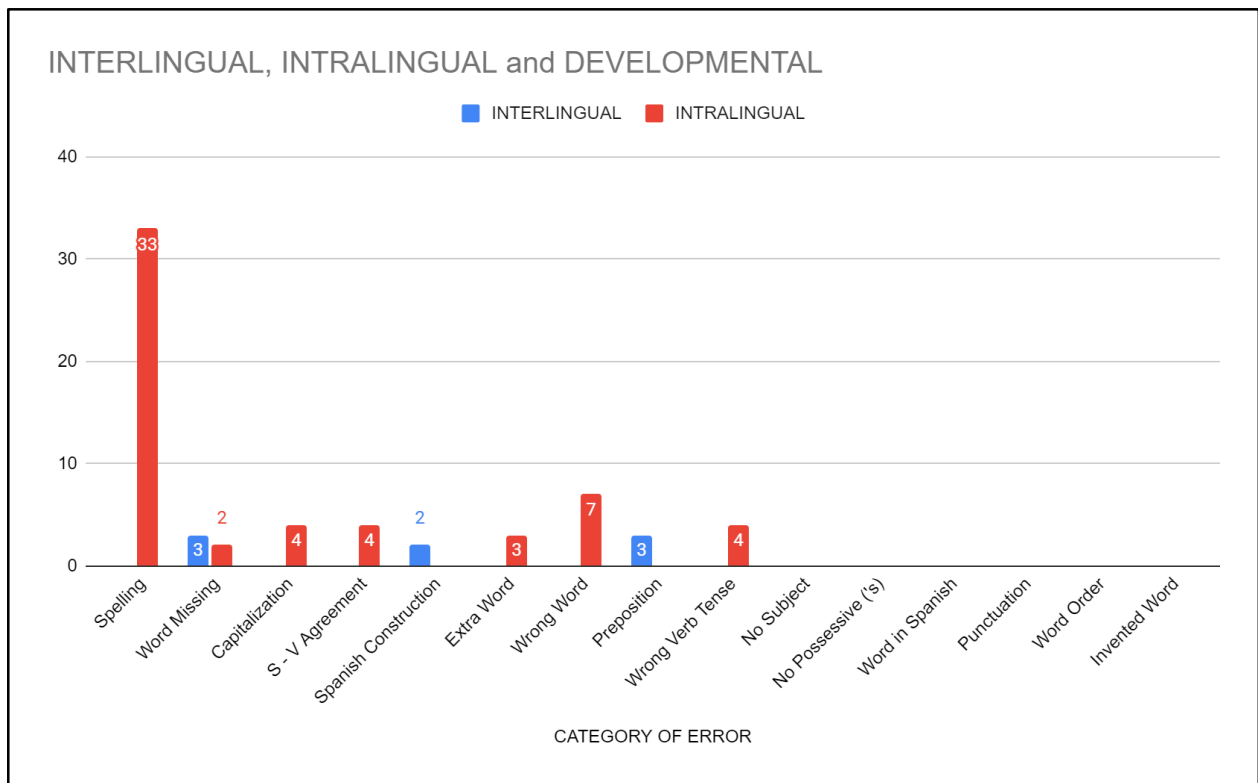
*Third Grade. Second Moment*



In fourth grade 65 errors were found. As shown in Figure 8, spelling mistakes were the most common type of error: 51%. Other types of errors such as wrong word 11%, word missing 8%, capitalization 6%, subject-verb agreement 6%, wrong verb tense 6%, preposition 5%, extra word 5%, and Spanish construction 3%, had the lowest percentage of appearance. The total number of errors in fourth grade was 65 and the total number of words was 1215. The error rate was 0,05.

**Figure 8**

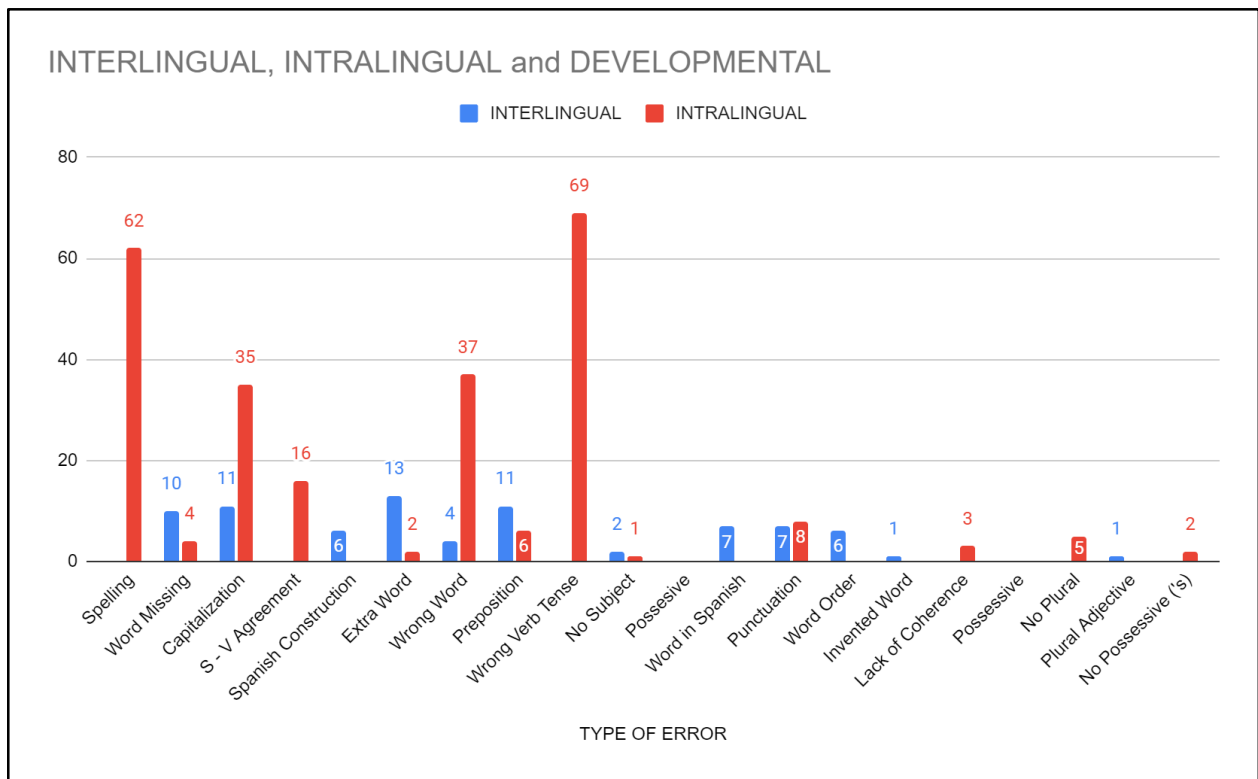
*Fourth Grade. Second Moment*



In fifth grade 329 errors were found. As Figure 9 shows, during this stage there was a variation in the errors' frequency of appearance, being wrong verb tense the most frequent error 21%. Then, we find spelling 19%, capitalization 14%, and wrong word 12%. These errors were followed by errors in the use of prepositions 5%, subject-verb agreement 5%, extra word 5%, punctuation 5%, and word missing 4%. On a lower rate of appearance are word in Spanish, Spanish construction, word order, no plural, no subject, lack of coherence, no possessive, plural adjective, and invented word. The total number of errors in fifth grade was 329 and the total number of words was 2648. The error rate was 0,12.

**Figure 9**

*Fifth Grade. Second Moment.*



### **Third moment**

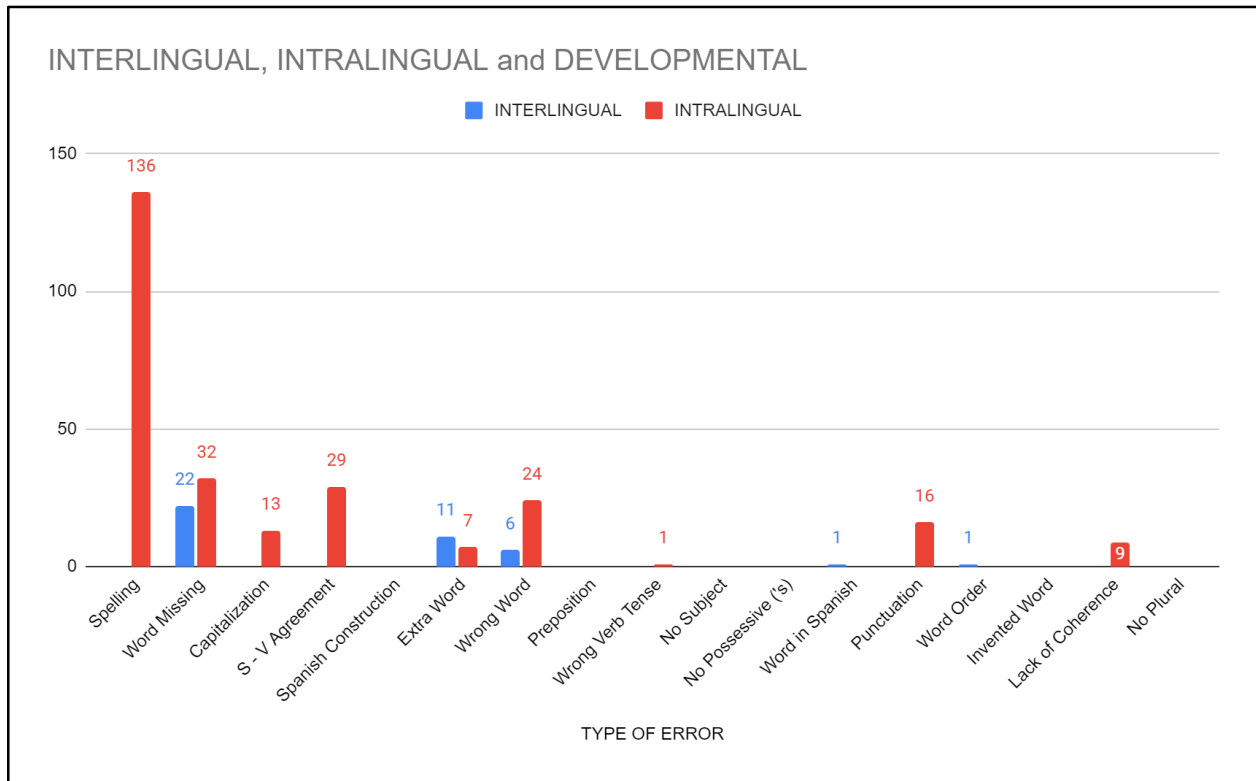
During this stage, 2464 errors were found. Fifth grade was the level at which the majority of errors were found. This might be because their written production was longer than that of the other students in other levels, secondly, because it was the first draft, so, no error correction or feedback from the teacher was given.

In first grade, there was a total of 308 errors, spelling being the most common type of error (44%). Other errors such as word missing 18%, subject-verb agreement 9%, wrong word 10%, extra word 6%, punctuation 5%, capitalization 4%, and lack of coherence 3%, were found with lower frequency. Finally, wrong verb tense and word in Spanish were found only one time

each, see Figure 10. The total number of errors in first grade was 308 and the total number of words was 904. The error rate was 0,34.

**Figure 10**

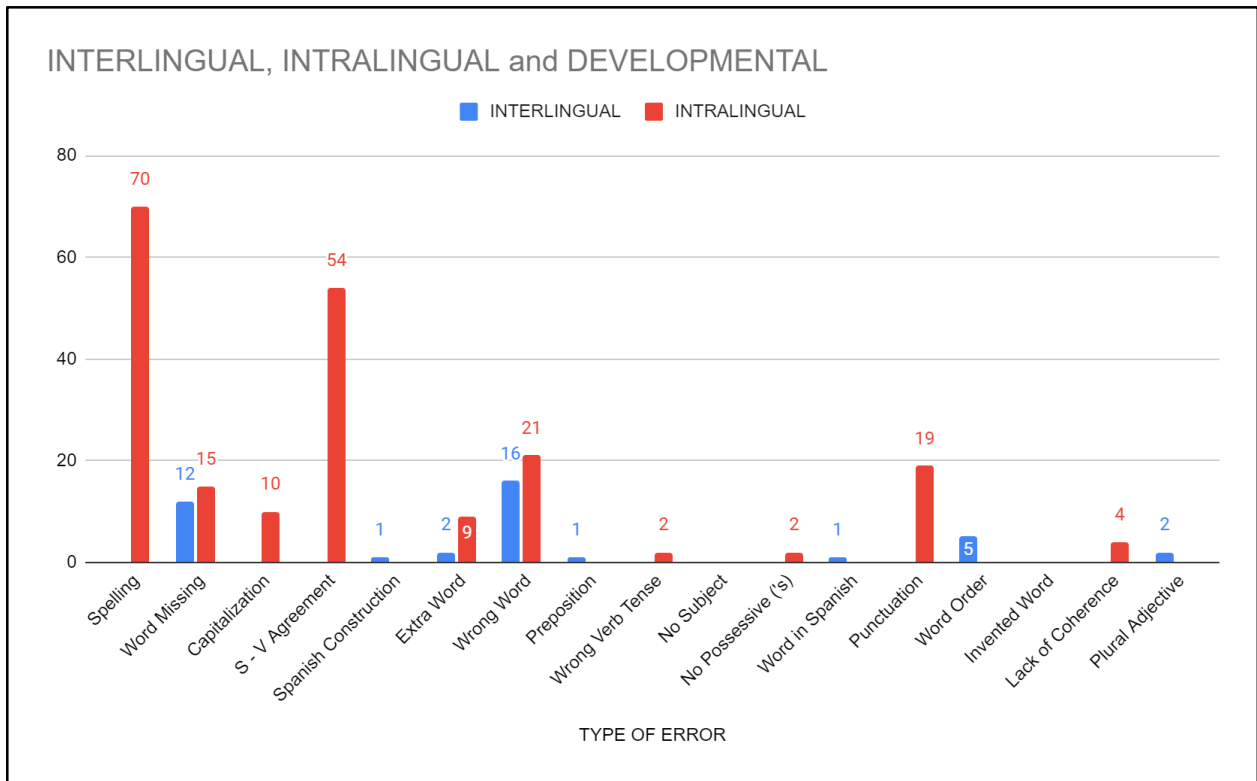
*First Grade. Third Moment*



In second grade 246 errors were found. As Figure 11 shows, spelling errors were the ones with the highest percentage of occurrence 28%, followed by subject-verb agreement 22%, wrong word 15%, word missing 11%, and punctuation 8%. The errors related to extra word, capitalization, word order, lack of coherence, plural adjective, no possessive, wrong verb tense, Spanish construction, preposition, and word in Spanish had a lower percentage of the occurrence. The total number of errors in second grade was 246 and the total number of words was 1317. The error rate was 0,19.

**Figure 11**

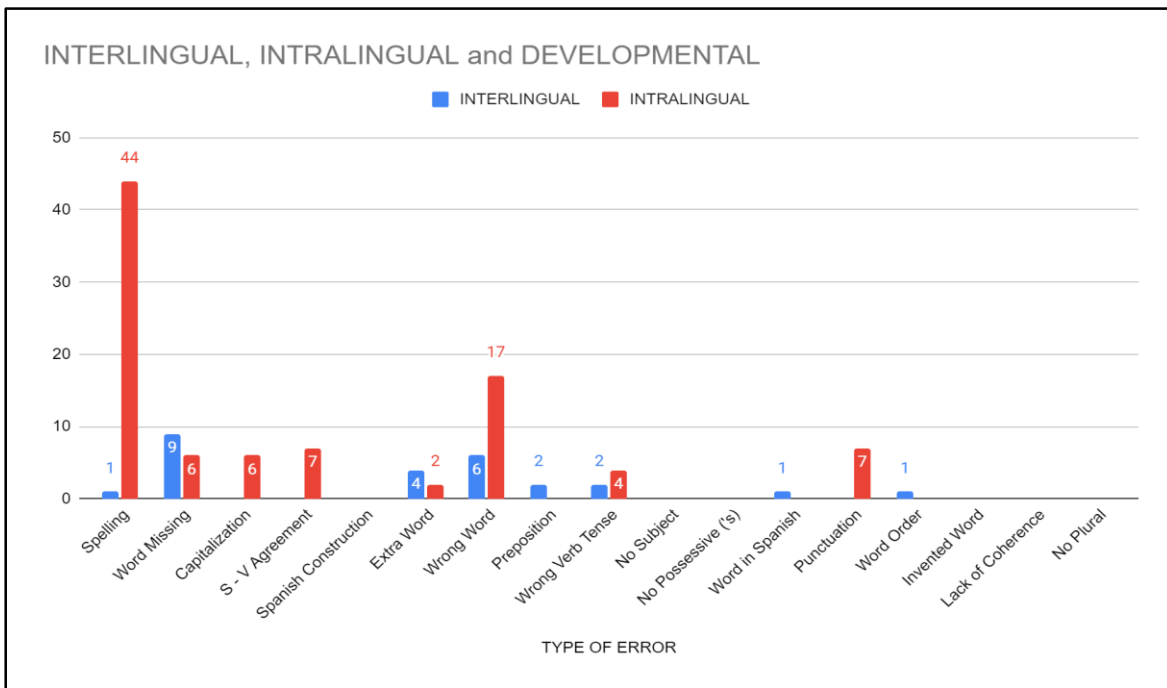
*Second Grade. Third Moment*



In third grade 119 errors were observed. Spelling was the most frequent error 38%, followed by wrong word 19%, and word missing 13%. Other errors such as subject-verb agreement 6%, punctuation 6%, capitalization 5%, extra word 5%, prepositions 2%, word in Spanish 1%, and word order 1%, had a lower percentage of frequency, see Figure 12. The total number of errors in third grade was 119 and the total number of words was 1370. The error rate was 0,09.

**Figure 12**

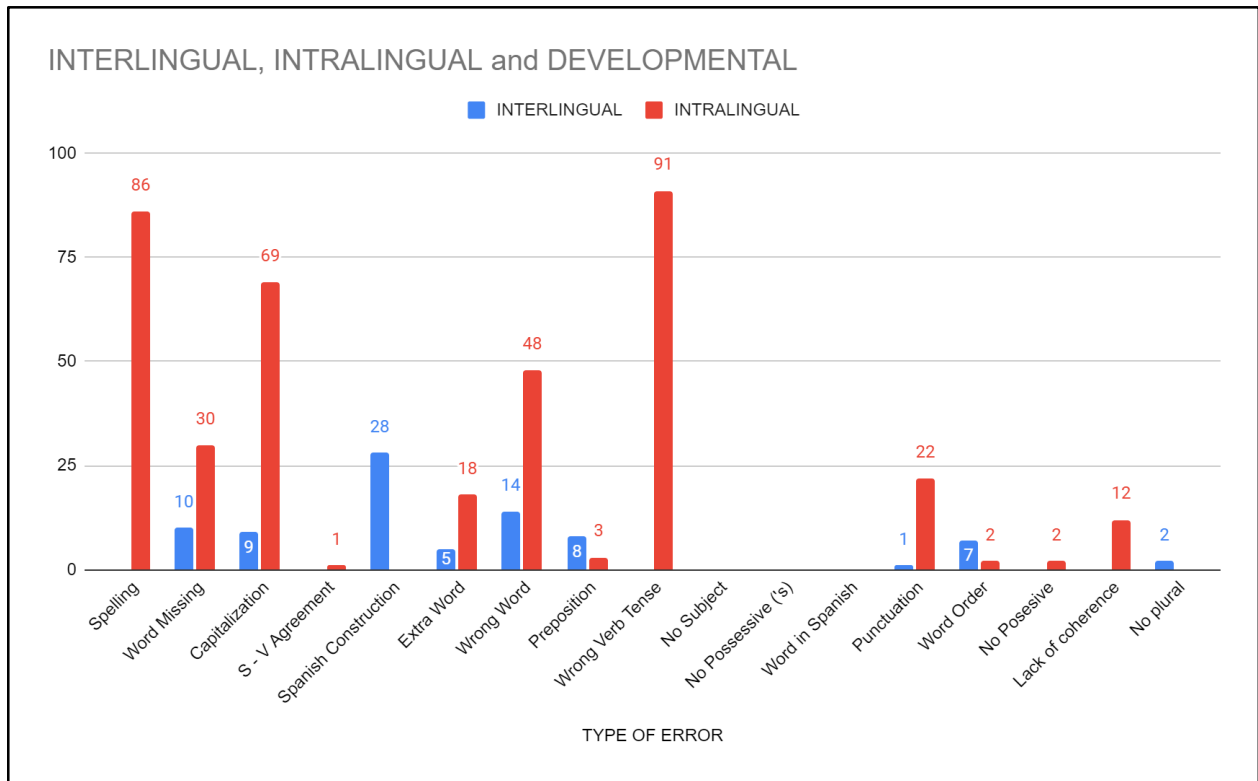
*Third Grade. Third Moment*



In fourth grade 468 errors were found. Wrong verb tense was the type of error with the most frequency of occurrence 19%, followed by spelling 18%, capitalization 17%, wrong word 13%, word missing 9%, Spanish construction 6%, extra word 5%, and punctuation 5%. Other errors such as lack of coherence, preposition, word order, no possessive, no plural, and subject-verb agreement, were found in a lower percentage (See Figure 13). The total number of errors in fourth grade was 468 and the total number of words was 7694. The error rate was 0,06.

**Figure 13**

*Fourth Grade. Third Moment*



In fifth grade 1323 errors were observed. As Figure 14 shows, wrong verb tense was the most frequent error 19%. Spelling errors were found in second place at 18%, followed by capitalization at 17%, wrong word at 13%, word missing at 9%, Spanish construction at 6%, extra word at 5% and punctuation at 5%. Lack of coherence, word order, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and no plural, occurred in a less frequent way. The total number of errors in fifth grade was 1323 and the total number of words was 9327. The error rate was 0,14.



**Figure 14**

*Fifth Grade. Third Moment*

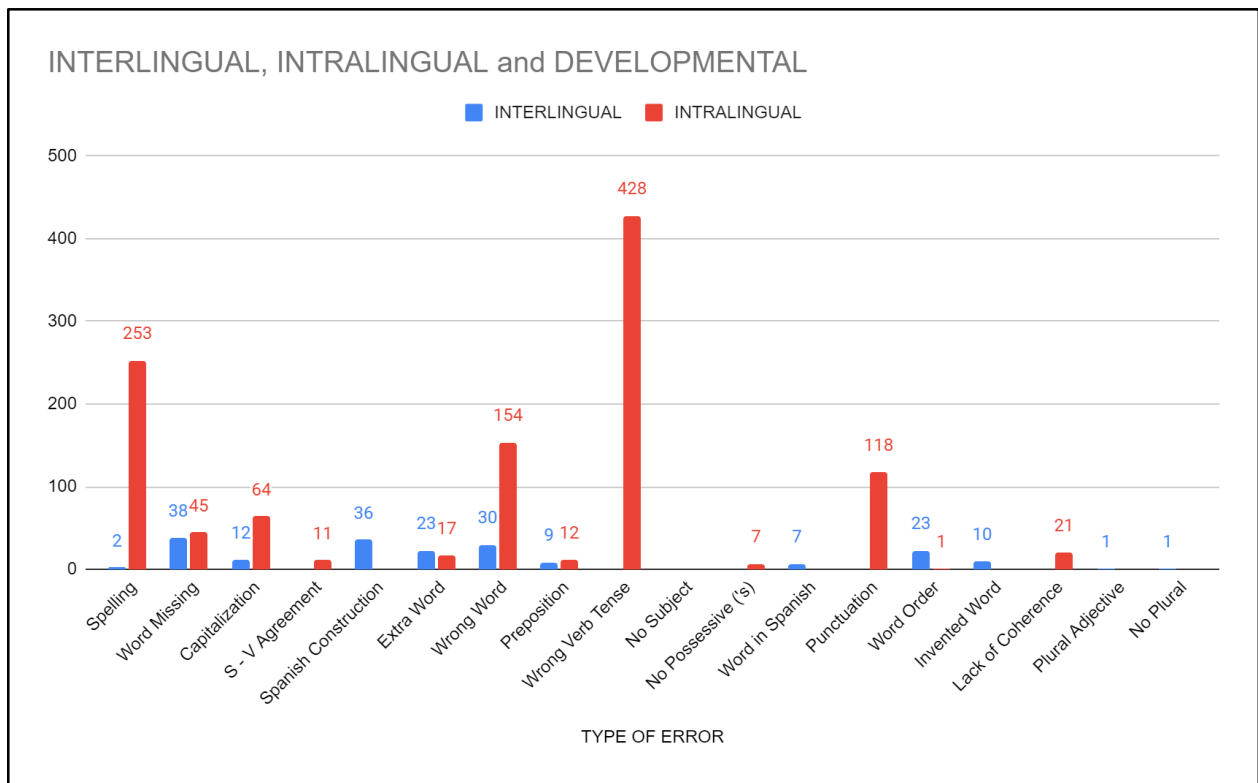


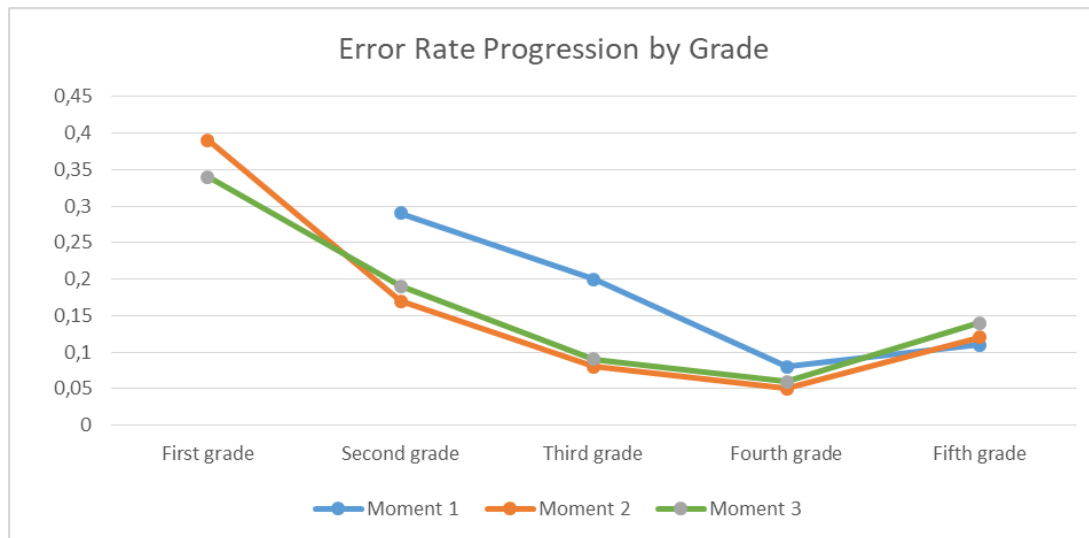
Figure 15 shows the error rate progression by grade. As it can be noticed, first grade has the highest error rate, and this is expected as in first grade students are just beginning their literacy process in L2. Furthermore, they were also assessed on their first drafts, not in the final drafts like students from second to fourth grade did.

One can also appreciate the tendency of the error rate is to decrease until fourth grade, however in fifth grade it goes up again. This suggests that in fifth grade they are being challenged to write more complex texts, but also it has to be taken into consideration that in fifth grade, they had a free writing activity, and the students' writing assessment was the first draft, while in the other grades, students wrote their final productions after their previous drafts had been revised by teachers and peers and previous corrections to improve their writing was made. According to the

results, it is pertinent to consider that the step in the writing process in which the samples are collected is relevant, as it highly influences the error rate.

**Figure 15**

*Error Rate Progression by Grade*



## 6.1 Types of the Errors

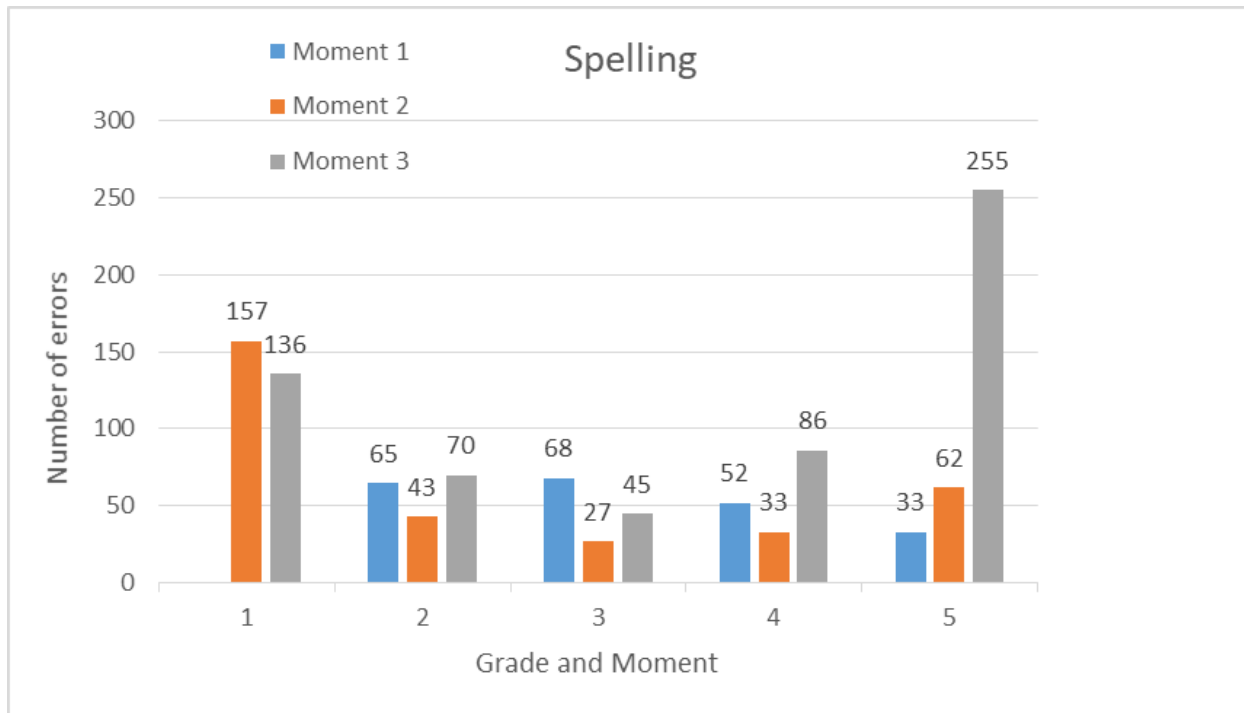
### 6.1.1 Spelling (SP)

The errors in this category are related to invented or phonetic spelling. When children are first learning to spell, they match each sound in a word with their best guess for what letter makes the same sound. They're looking for that one-to-one match in how the word sounds and how it looks. This is a phase of writing that helps children learn to read and spell. However, the number of errors in spelling tells us that something needs to be done. Students make their best guess by trying to write using the letters and sounds that are familiar to them. Yet, they need their ears to be trained to recognize different patterns in sounds and pronunciation in the target language. Phonological awareness is pivotal not only in the early stages of the learning process, but also needs to be reinforced as they continue learning. Provided the students in Colombia are not

surrounded by the target language, it is difficult for them to grasp by themselves these phonological traits which are difficult to distinguish since the Spanish language lacks many of them. Research posits that those phonemic awareness skills already developed in the acquisition of the first language (L1), including knowledge of the phonological system of the L1, will be transferred to the second language (L2) (Anderson, 2004 cited in Le Roux et al., 2017). This is why it is very important that learners have a well-developed phonological system in their mother tongue, so they can understand the phonological system of the L2 and use it accurately. Figure 16 shows the spelling errors made by students from first to fifth grade in the three different moments.

**Figure 16**

*Spelling Errors*



According to the data, fifth-grade students were the ones with the most spelling errors. In fifth grade, students are challenged to write longer and more complete texts. As a consequence, the longer the piece of writing, the more errors tend to be made. In first grade there is also a

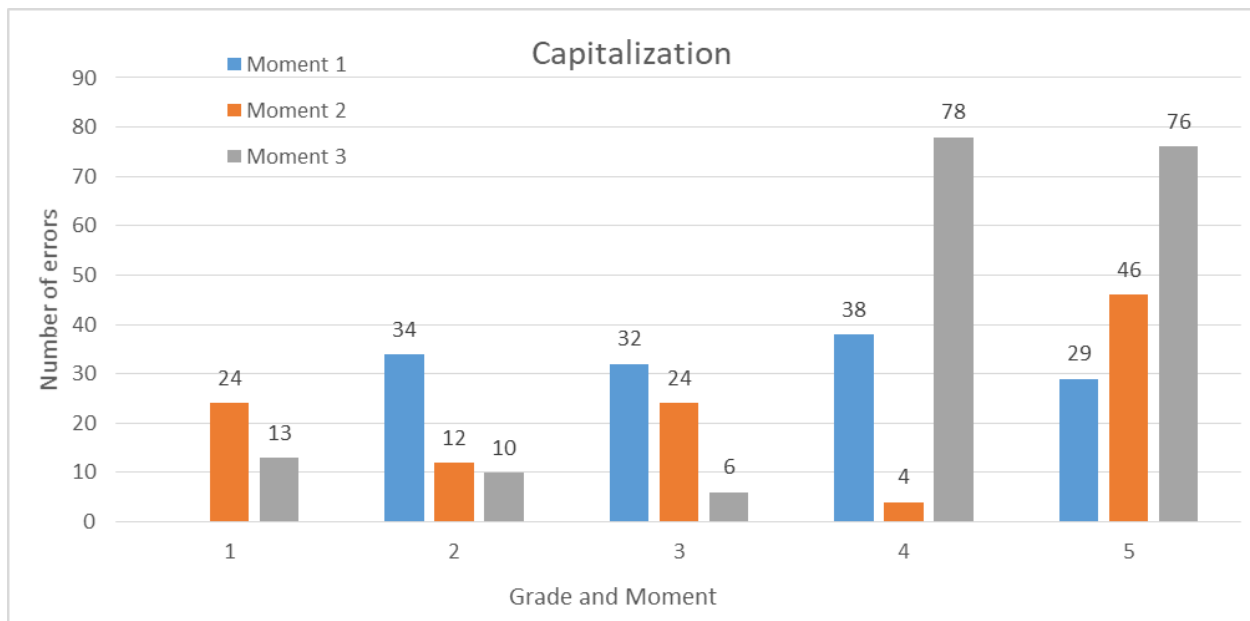
noticeable high number of spelling errors, students at this stage are working on their vocabulary building, and at the same time, they are still grasping spelling patterns.

### **6.1.2 Capitalization (CA)**

Capitalization rules in English and Spanish vary. There are some words that are capitalized in both languages such as the first word in a sentence, proper nouns, and the first word after a period. However, there are some words that are capitalized in English but are not in Spanish such as months of the year, days of the week, the pronoun I, subjects, etc. Errors in the latest group could be considered interlingual errors since the learners cannot relate the capitalization rule with the rule in their L1. However, learners had many capitalization errors in words that should be capitalized in their L1 as well. These errors were considered intralingual or developmental errors. Figure 17 shows a higher number of capitalization errors in the fourth and fifth grades. In these grades, sometimes students did not capitalize proper nouns such as names of games they usually play, names of people, cities or places, the pronoun “I”, and school subjects, among others. Even though these students are supposed to know the rules for capitalization, students sometimes make this type of error due to carelessness, in the same piece of writing sometimes they applied the rules correctly, and sometimes they did not.

**Figure 17**

*Capitalization Errors*

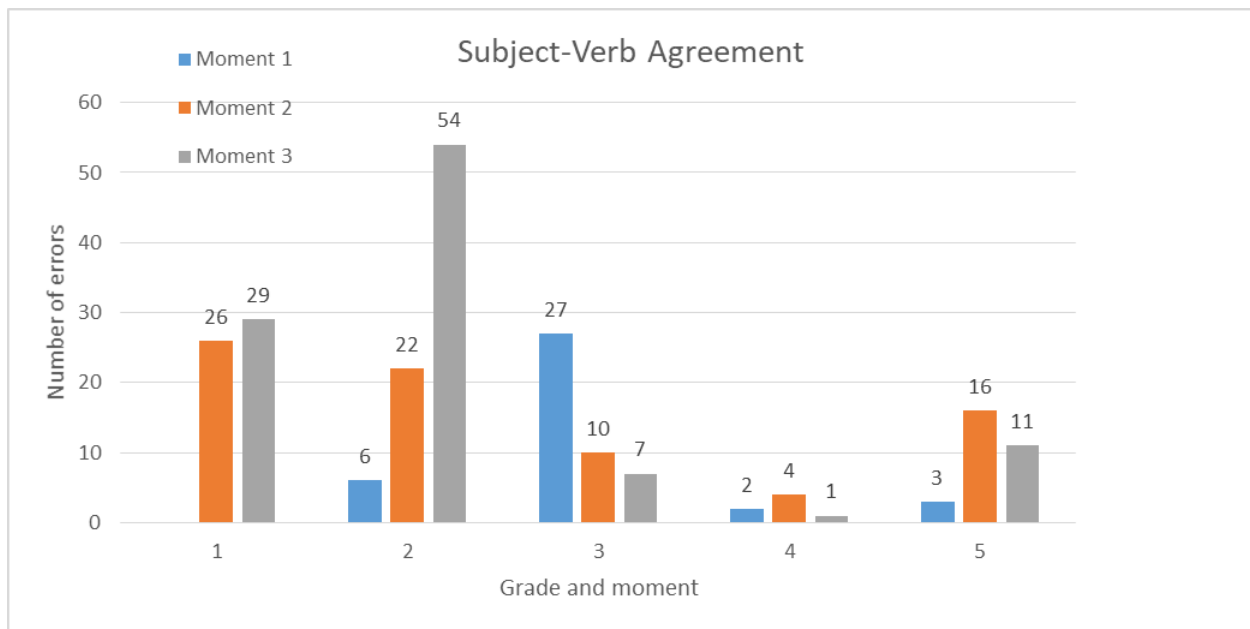


**6.1.3 Subject-verb Agreement (S/V)**

Subject-verb agreement means that a subject and its verb must be both singular or plural: A singular subject takes a singular verb and a plural subject takes a plural verb. The findings reveal that students are having problems finding patterns of subject-verb agreement in their writing using the present tense, see Figure 18. In second and in third grade, students had to write about someone else, which implies the use of third-person singular he or she. This can be a reason why the number of errors lacking subject-verb agreement was more noticeable than when students have to write about themselves using the first person singular. The errors were due to omissions (*He play soccer.*) and additions (*I likes to eat pizza.*).

**Figure 18**

*Subject-verb agreement errors*

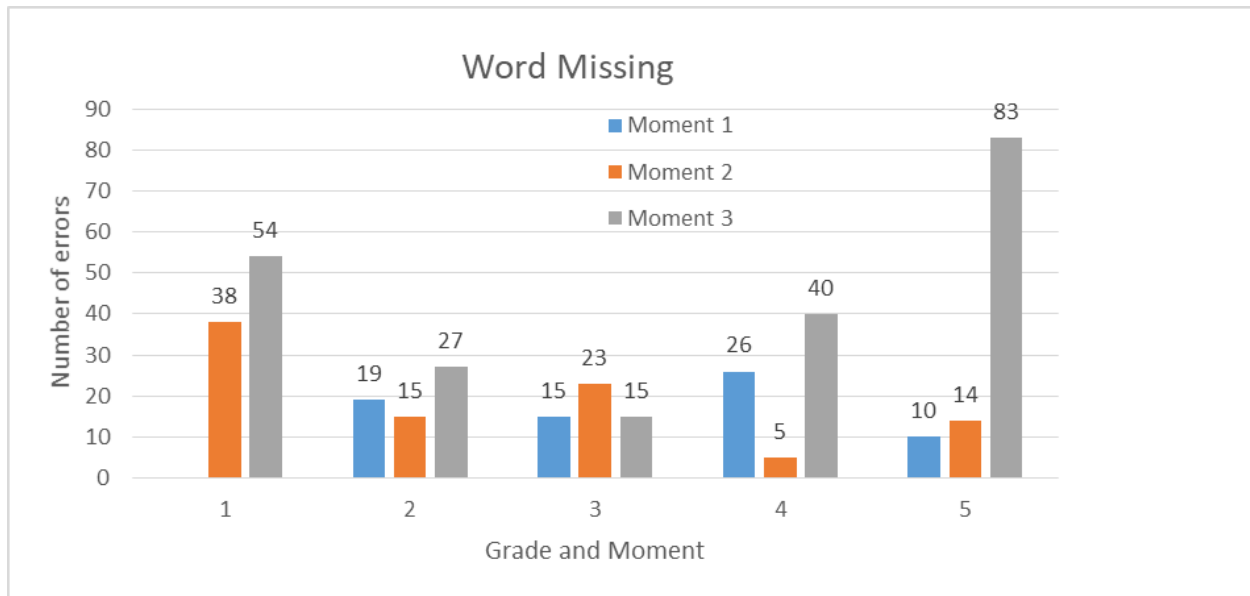


**6.1.4 Word Missing (WM)**

Sometimes students omit words when writing sentences, which leads to leaving out items that are required in a well-formed utterance. This error might be caused by interference from the mother tongue, like in the case of pronouns which in Spanish are not always necessary: “*is easy*” instead of “*it is easy*”. Other cases in which words are missing are when students have to write phrasal verbs, in this case, often the preposition that accompanies the verb is not taken into consideration. In Figure 19 it can be seen that in fifth grade it was relevant the number of errors related to this category.

**Figure 19**

*Word Missing*



**6.1.5 Wrong Word (WW)**

This type of error refers to the fact that a student made use of an incorrect word in his/her writing process, see Figure 20. Many sentences contained inaccurate or inappropriate lexical choices which in some cases deviated from the meaning of the written text. In the lowest levels, it is common to see how the students usually confuse *I* and *my*, and *do* with *make*:

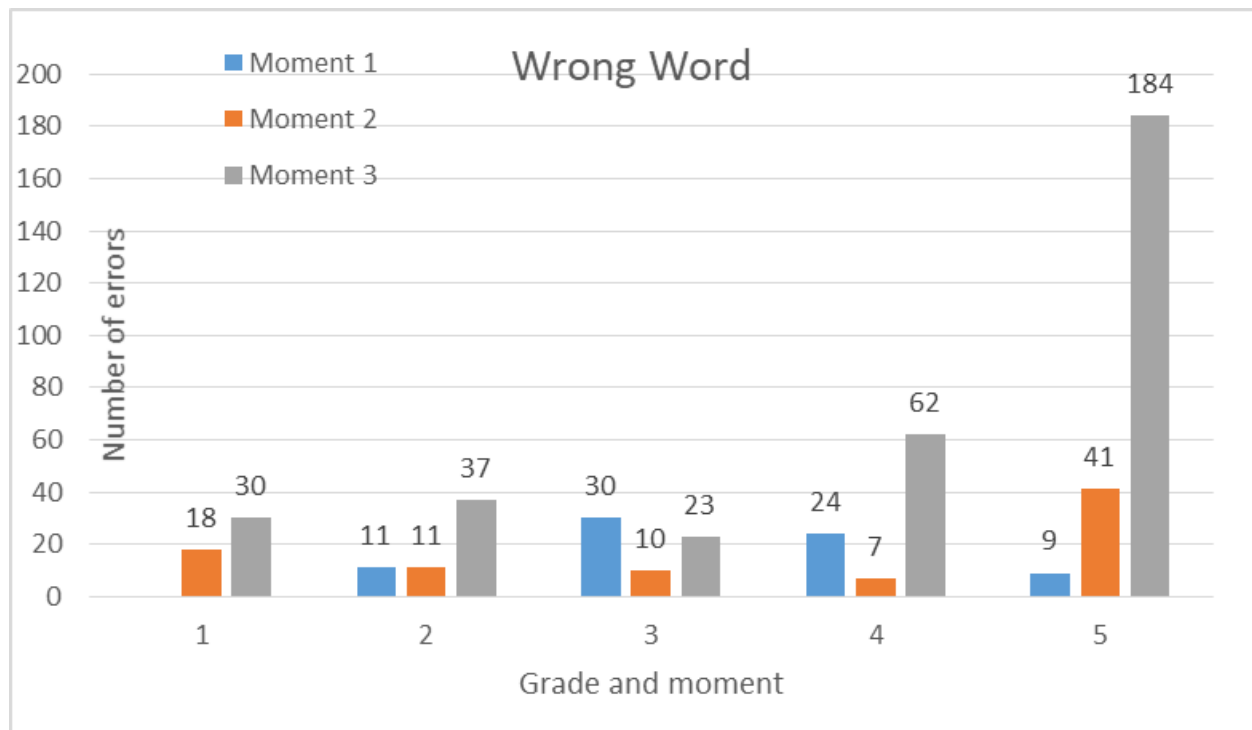
*My likes to read books. (I like to read books.)*

*My hobbies are ride bicycle and make gymnastics.*

However, in fifth grade, it was observed that the poor lexical choices were also made due to a lack of phonemic awareness, or when students confuse two words that are written or pronounced similarly, like the words *when* and *went*, *where* and *were*, *think* and *thing*, *how* and *who*.

**Figure 20**

*Wrong Word*



### 6.1.6 Extra Word (EW)

Sometimes students make use of words that are not supposed to be used in an utterance. Very often, this happens because there is interference from L1. However, sometimes it is an intralingual error as well. Extra word errors are shown in Figure 21.

*Luciana and my we like to play. (Luciana and I like to play).*

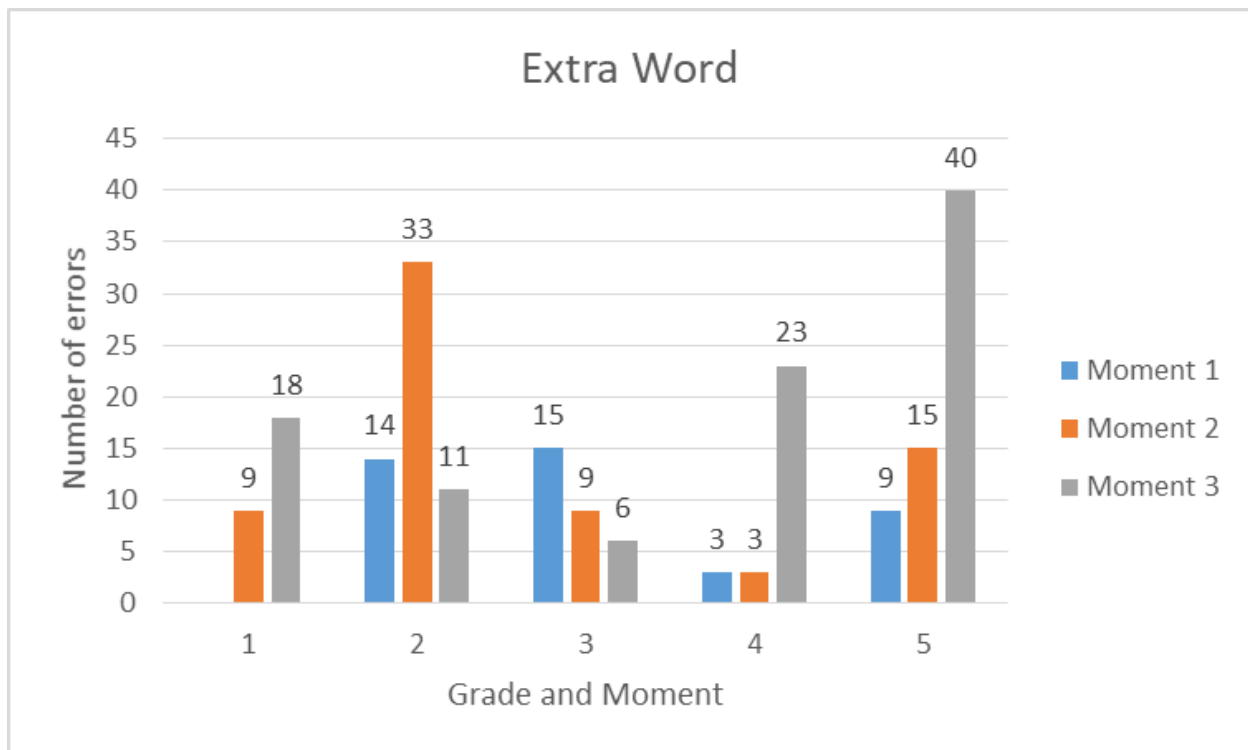
*Sergio he have a pop it. (Sergio has a Pop it.)*

Notice that the pronouns *we* and *he* are not necessary in these sentences.



**Figure 21**

*Extra Word Errors*



### **6.1.7 Spanish Construction (SpC)**

One strategy that language learners use in their writing process in the early stages is a literal translation from the mother tongue. Students try to copy learned structures that they use in Spanish and apply them when using the target language.

*I have eight years old. (Yo tengo ocho años.)*

Surprisingly, this error was found from first to fifth grade. It seems that for the students, the use of the verb to be in this context does not make any sense. In first grade, for instance, when students are given corrective feedback in this specific construction, they look at the teacher totally puzzled and even try to correct the teacher arguing that “have” is the correct form. Some other examples of Spanish construction utterances are the following:

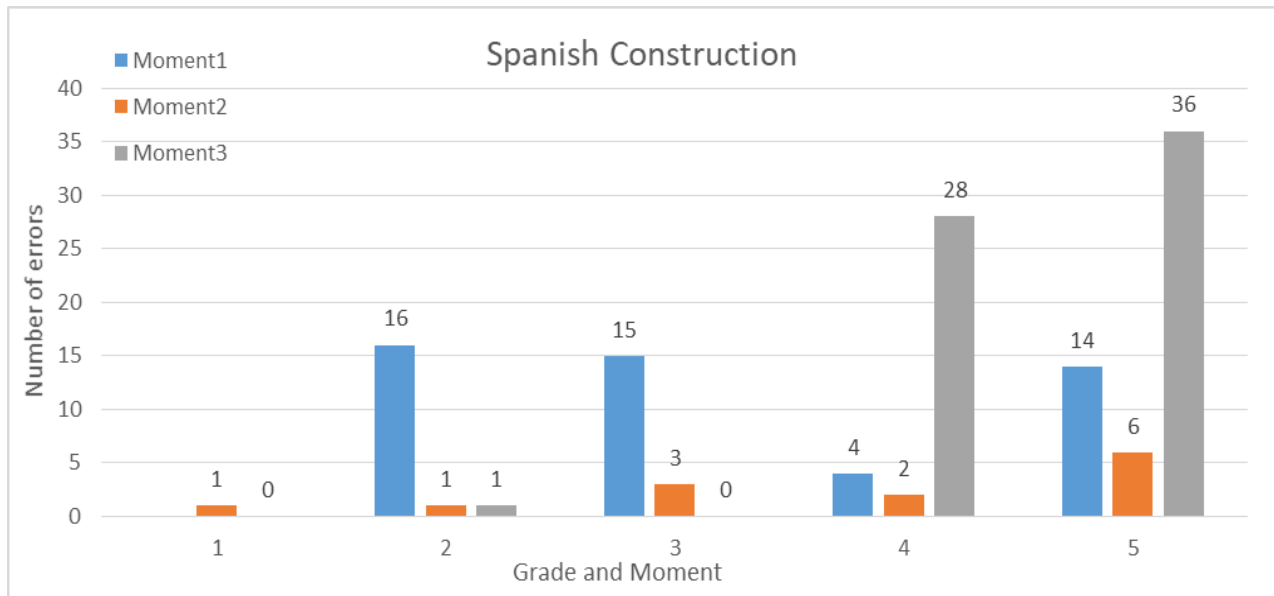
*He have the hair like the mine.*

*I like a lot to play soccer.*

*My school of soccer name is Futbol Paz*

**Figure 22**

*Spanish Construction Errors*



### **6.1.8 Wrong Verb Tense (WVT)**

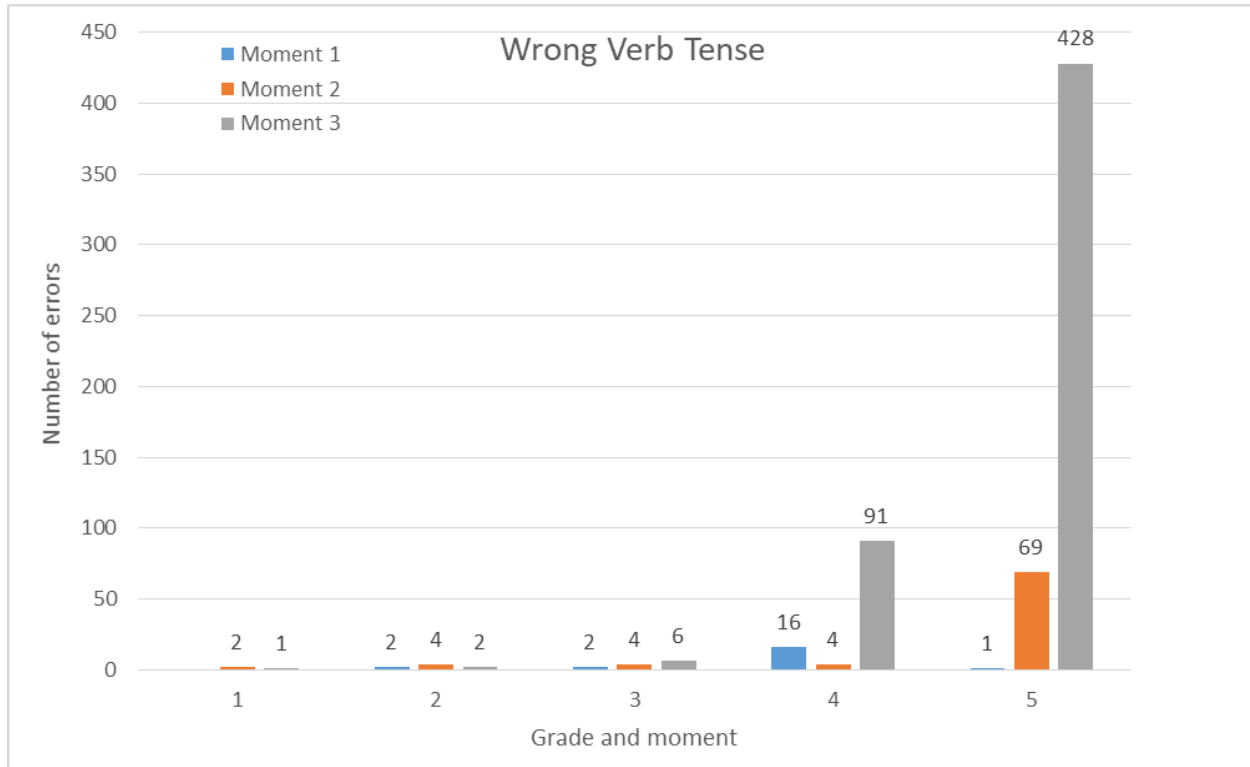
They are one of the most common grammar errors. The verb tense tells the reader when the action is taking place: in the past, the present, or the future. Young learners acquiring a foreign language make a lot of errors choosing the correct verb tense. Figure 23 shows that fifth grade was the level with the most WVT errors. After analyzing the written compositions I noticed that this was due to the fact that fifth graders had to write a composition that required the students to use different tenses, mostly past tense.

*Thanks for be my friend. (Thanks for being my friend.)*

*I go to Cancun with my family. (I went to Cancun with my family.)*

**Figure 23**

*Wrong Verb Tense*

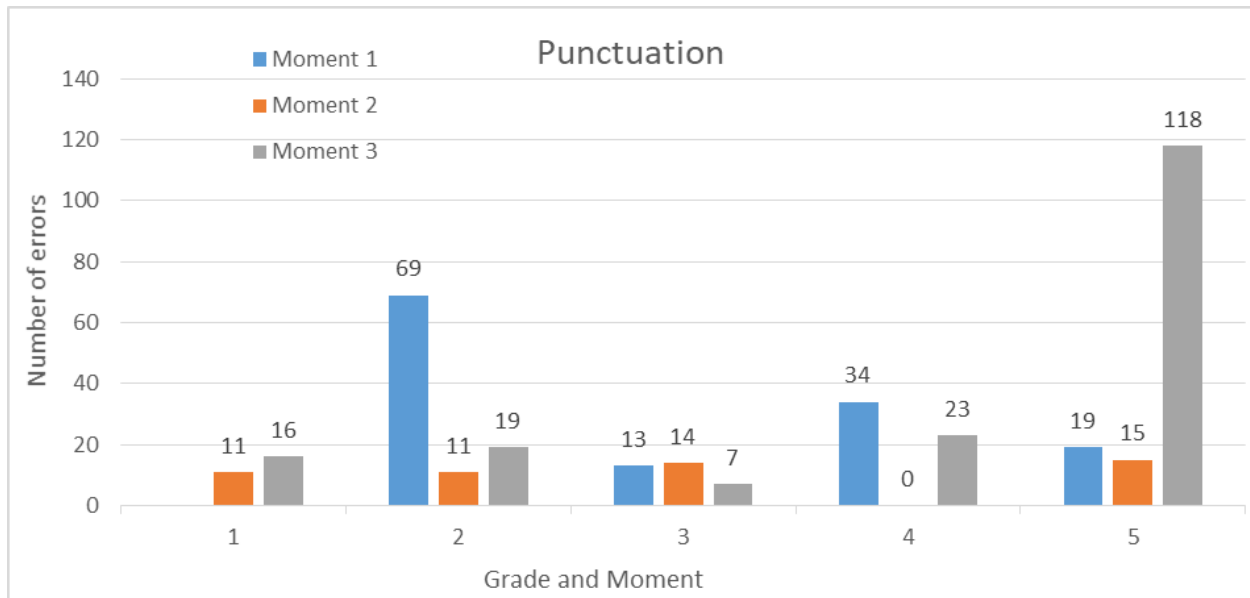


### **6.1.9 Punctuation (P)**

Punctuation errors are not originated from interference with the Spanish language. These types of errors are caused by confusion or lack of knowledge of the punctuation rules in English. Even though students are taught punctuation rules such as a period has to be placed at the end of a sentence, they have no knowledge of how to apply punctuation marks properly in a composition written in English. In second and fifth grade, the lack of use of full stops and commas was noticeable (See Figure 24).

**Figure 24**

*Punctuation Errors*



**6.2 Error Classification**

Within the field of Error Analysis, an error is defined as the creation of incorrect forms by a non-native speaker of the language, while either speaking or writing, due to his/her deficient awareness of the rules of that target language (Khansir, 2012). The presentation of the error analysis will be developed as follows:

- Error classification
- An example of the error
- Error analysis
- Table: Other examples of errors in this category

### **6.2.1 Error Classification: Omission**

As mentioned before, an omission is the act of leaving out items that are required for grammatical correctness. According to Spratt et al., (2005) cited in Londoño 2008, this indicates interference. The authors point out that “an interference or transfer is an influence from the learner’s first language (L1) on the second language” (p. 44).

#### **Example of the error:**

When I grow I want to be CR7.

#### **Error analysis:**

In the underlined part of this sentence, the student omitted the particle “up” in the phrasal verb “grow up”. This is an example of an interlingual error, as in Spanish the verb “crecer” is not a phrasal verb.

Omissions occur on both morphological and syntactic levels. In this example, the omission of the particle “up” is a syntactical omission.

Examples of morphological omissions are often found in wrong verb tense constructions and in subject-verb agreement errors. The inflectional morphemes that indicate third-person singular present, past tense, or gerund are often missed out:

He like to play. (He likes to play.)

She is run. (She is **running**.)

In recess week I stay in a hotel. (I **stayed**)

**Table 2**

*Other Omission Errors*

<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Error analysis</b>
I am 11 <u>years</u> .	The student omitted the word “old” at the end of the sentence. This is another example of an interlingual error. In Spanish you say “Tengo 11 años” there is no extra word added to this construction. Thus, the student is using the L1 structure in the target language.
<u>What you</u> going to study?	In the underlined part the verb “are” was omitted. This is another example of L1 interference. In Spanish the utterance ¿Qué vas a estudiar? lacks the verb to be, thus, the student also omits this verb when writing in English.
His dream <u>is have</u> a dog.	In this case, the student omitted the word “to” that in the English language indicates that the verb is in the infinitive. In Spanish that construction does not exist. Hence, students tend to omit it.

Overgeneralization is often defined as the learners' own way to make rules of the second language because of their incapability to differentiate between L1 and L2 rules. “Overgeneralization is the phenomenon when one overextends one rule to cover instances to which

that rule does not apply” (Saidan, 2011, p. 185 cited in Matiini, 2016). As one I could observe, most omission errors were due to overgeneralizations.

### ***6.2.2 Error Classification: Additions***

An addition is the presence of an item that must not appear in well-formed utterances. This study also showed several errors in addition, both in the morphological and syntactical levels.

#### **Example of the error:**

My favorite food is the sushi. (My favorite food is sushi.)

#### **Error analysis:**

This type of error was very common. Adding the article “the” in several constructions where it is not supposed to be. The sentence in Spanish is “Me gusta el sushi.”, and it demands the use of the definite article “el”. However, this is not the case in English language. This kind of error can be caused by ignorance of rule restrictions. This kind of error is closely related to overgeneralization and it happens when the learners fail to observe the restrictions of certain structures.

**Table 3**

*Other Addition Errors*

<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Error analysis</b>
A person that I admire is <u>to</u> God.	The student added the word “to”. This is another example of an interlingual error. In Spanish you say “admirar a” while in English you admire someone. There is no other preposition needed with the verb admire. In this case, the student is using the L1 structure in the target language.
My favorite food is <u>the</u> pasta.	In the underlined part the article “the” was added unnecessarily. This is another example of L1 interference.
I have a brother <u>that</u> his name is Esteban.	In this case, the student added the word “that” and used it instead of whose. In Spanish it would be “Tengo un hermano que se llama Esteban”, then the use of the word “that” would be correct. This is also an overgeneralization.

**6.2.3 Error classification: Misinformation**

A misinformation is considered to be the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. These errors are common because of the lack of vocabulary which leads learners to make wrong lexical choices. Also, when students look up the meaning of words in the dictionary



or Google translator in many cases, they can grasp the wrong definition of the word if it is not taken into account the context in which the word is used.

I noticed that misinformation at the lexical level occurred a lot. In many cases students used *were* instead of *where*, *to* instead of *two*, *scale* instead of *climb*, *do* instead of *make*, etc.

**Example of the error:**

One thing because I like the pasta is the country where they do it.

**Error analysis:**

In this utterance there are different errors, using the word *thing* instead of *reason*, the word *because* instead of *why*, the unnecessary article *the*, and the word *do* instead of *make*.

**Table 4**

*Other Misinformation Errors*

Sentence	Error analysis
I <u>don now</u> why.	The way the learner perceives the sounds in a word can lead to making errors. In this example the incorrect lexical choice of these two words was due to their similarity in the pronunciation with the words <i>don't</i> and <i>know</i> . The silent “K” and the sometimes difficulty to notice ending sounds.
I <u>thing</u> Quipitos taste bubbling and crunchy.	In the underlined part the verb “think” was changed for the word thing. It seems like ending sounds are difficult to differentiate, hence students make incorrect lexical choices using words that sound similar. As a result, the meaning of the utterance is

---

compromised.

I eat my breakfast then of that I go to brush my theed.

In this case, the student used the construction “then of that”. In Spanish it would be “después de eso”.

This is an overgeneralization.

The word theed instead of teeth also has to do with the sound of the word. The students make hypotheses about the spelling of the words and take risks writing the way it sounds for them.

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#### **6.2.4 Error classification: Misordering**

Misordering happens when words are put in the wrong order. Causes of misordering vary, however, the influence of the Spanish language is remarkable in this type of error.

##### **Example of the error:**

She has things cute. (She has cute things.)

##### **Error analysis:**

The structure in English, for example, requires the adjective to be before the noun, however, in the Spanish language the noun goes first. Novice learners tend to translate in their minds and write according to what the structure sounds in their L1.

**Table 5***Other Misordering Errors*

<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Error analysis</b>
She has <u>hair long</u> .	In the three cases the adjective is placed after the noun which is a typical Spanish construction.
Her class <u>favorite is arts</u> .	This is another example of L1 interference.
Her sison <u>favorite is crismas</u> .	

The results obtained revealed that spelling and grammatical errors were the most numerous, especially those under the category of verb tense. L1 interference was noticeable, however intralingual and developmental errors were the ones with the highest occurrence. Additionally, lexical choice issues were also noteworthy during the corpus analysis. Sometimes words were wrongly used due to the phonetic component, and other times they were used as false cognates. The error tendencies found in this research could point at common issues Spanish speakers face when developing their English writing competences or could also highlight disparity in their learning process. Still, it has to be noted that the interpretation spectrum of these results might vary amply among readers, as this study was not either exploratory or explanatory. Consequently, this type of error characterization study usually presents a wide hypothesis array that suggests further investigation.

## 7. Conclusions

Error analysis is a useful technique to identify and better understand the learner's errors in the foreign/second language. It is considered beneficial to both the learner and the teacher as it gives relevant information and valuable feedback. By identifying and understanding the learner's errors, teachers can know the learner's zone of actual development, which is what the learner has already developed or achieved, and this will indicate which aspects or areas need to be worked on, reinforced, or reoriented.

In the present study, the writing assignments of elementary students were analyzed for the purpose of error analysis. Results of the analysis suggest that students lack phonological awareness that allows them to apply spelling patterns in their written productions. Also, students require grammatical accuracy in their writing as they are not sure of the grammatical rules that can apply in their writing in English, especially those related to subject-verb agreement and verb tense.

According to the results and the high number of spelling mistakes, one can conclude that phonological awareness should be addressed from the early levels with a higher emphasis. Students make their own hypotheses about the spelling of new and known words, however, they need to be more aware and learn the sounds of the target language in order to write more accurately. Rhyming words, minimal pairs, homophones, and homonyms, among others, need to be reinforced in order to improve phonological awareness and thus, help students make better lexical choices.

Error correction and corrective feedback should be evaluated. It is clear that teachers spend a great deal of time correcting students' errors and helping them to improve their writing process. Indeed, during this research, many teachers agreed that correcting writing assignments is very

demanding and overwhelming. It has been noticed that when students are underlined or signaled their errors during the different stages in the writing process, they are able to make corrections, and thus create a more accurate piece of writing. However, when they have to write a new composition on their own, the same errors occur again, which may indicate that the students are not fully developing their linguistic competence. As Truscott 2004 suggests, the time invested in correction should be used in more writing activities. On the other hand, Fathman and Whalley (1990 cited in Truscott, 2004) claim that there is no evidence for students to be better writers in the future because of correction”. Indeed, at this institution, since first grade, many hours are devoted to the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and the teachers use to signal the errors students make. But still, the number of errors increases when students have to write on their own, which suggests that they are just correcting without grasping and interiorizing the spelling and grammatical rules signaled in the different texts they produce.

The current study aimed at investigating the most common errors students in elementary school make in writing. It gives some input about what areas in the writing process students are having more difficulty with. However, further research needs to be done in this field with the aim of helping students succeed in their writing process and reach all their potential. Lave and Wenger (1991 cited in Matusov, 2001) argue that learning is situated in communities of practice. Learning is always a question of membership in the community, about participation in the community practice. A novice is not simply a person who lacks some entities called ‘skills,’ but rather a newcomer who needs to negotiate her or his participation in the community practice. Becoming a successful writer, thus, requires like any other community of practice, the skills needed to produce well-formed utterances and to be able to communicate and convey meaning.

Learning a foreign/second language requires not only willingness but also training and dedication by both learner and teacher. Indeed, error analysis is a fundamental and suitable tool in language teaching, in order to reorganize and change the teacher's point of view and readdress his/her methodology, with the aim of fixing and filling the students' gaps and helping learners improve their communicative competences. When a teacher recognizes the nature of his/her students' errors and their possible sources, s/he can make better decisions, which will positively impact his/her performance and meet the existing pedagogical demands.

## **8. Pedagogical Implications**

The main aim of this research was to categorize the most common syntactical and vocabulary errors found in the academic papers of elementary students at a bilingual private school. The findings gathered in this study, which solely aimed at the identification, categorization, and quantification of 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. Considering the current relevance of writing competences in bilingual settings, this research might provide useful evidence for different scenarios, particularly those related to language teaching and L2 writing.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results collected in this study inform and highlight syntactical and vocabulary issues. These findings may advise of common errors 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 bilingual school this research took place and settings alike.

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' written compositions, such as coherence and cohesion.

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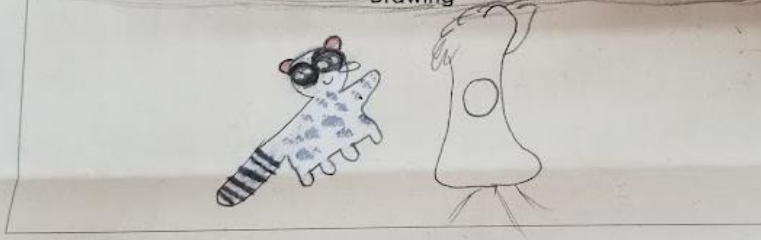
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## 10. Appendixes

### Appendix 1

First Grade. First Moment

Character: <del>Cestery</del> raccoon	
Drawing	
	
What is he/she like?	What happened in the story?
is ilroi yblac is ihpeigen	Starasul da berhi is nat gou sul I lov yu


### Appendix 2

Second grade. First moment

**ALL ABOUT ME!**

MY name is Sara and I have 7 years all i have 2 birds and his names are LUPE and TOVI my birthday is on 27 of September i live with my mom and she is dentist and my aunt is dentist too my favorite food is pizza and my favorite animal is bird.

Grandfather Grandmother



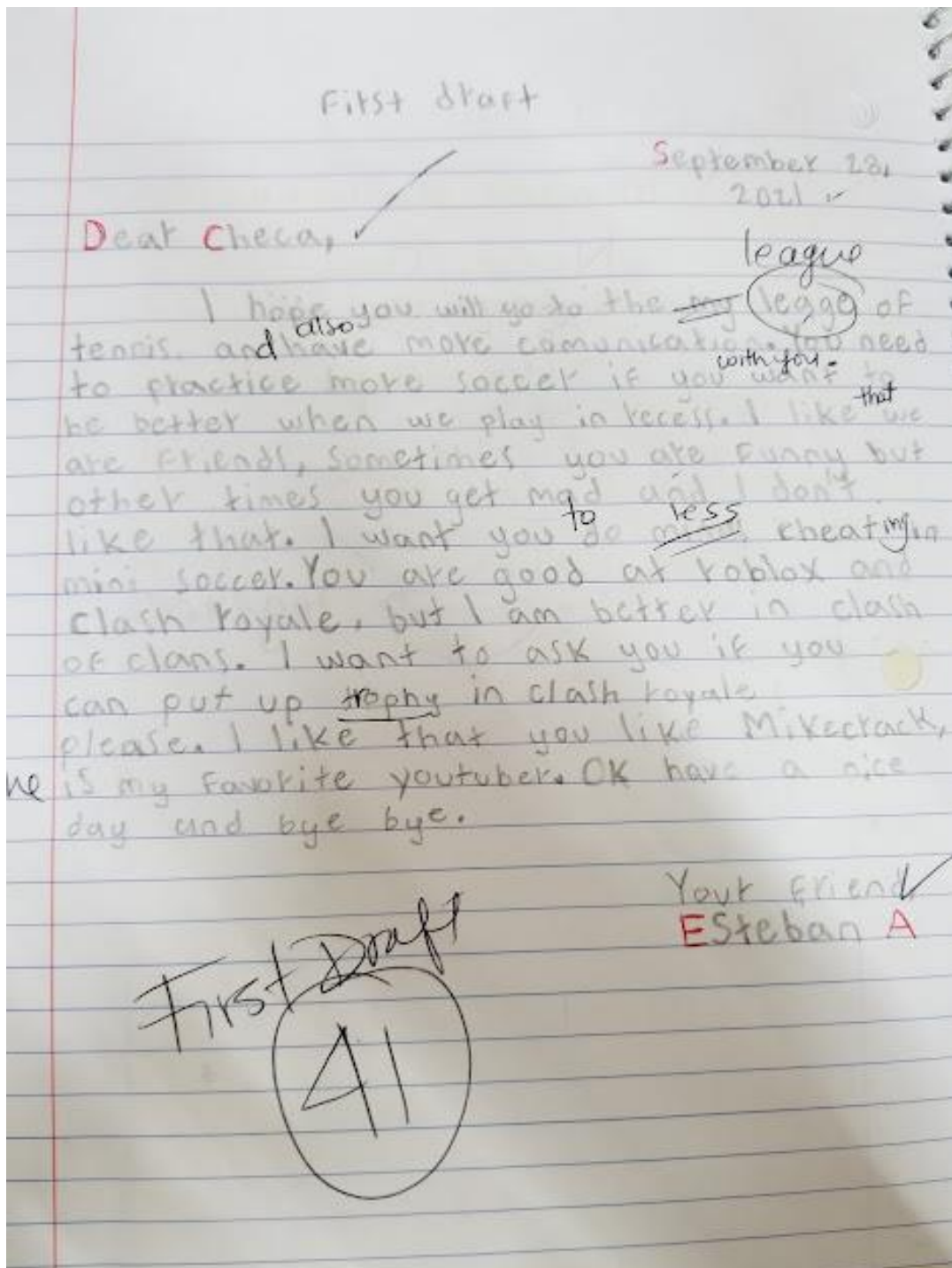
**Appendix 3**

*Third Grade. First Moment*



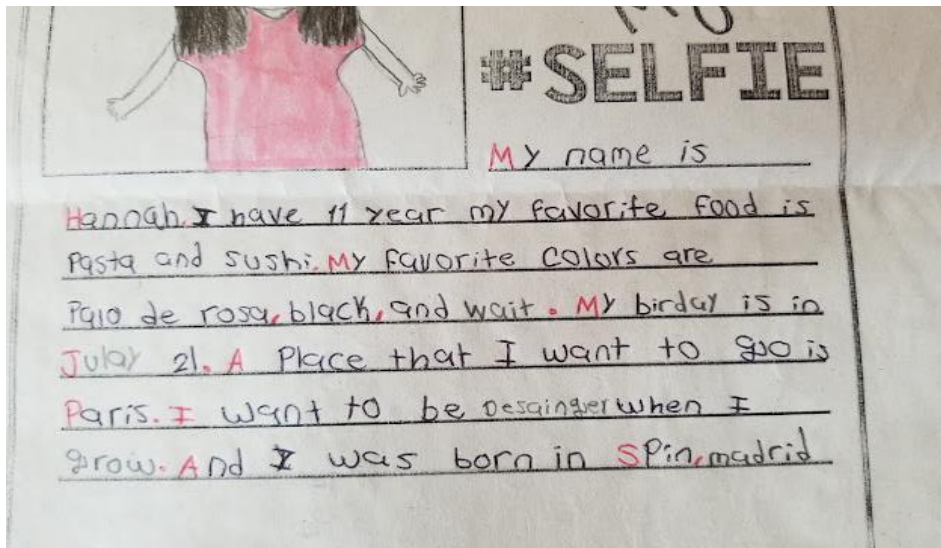
## Appendix 4

### Fourth Grade. First Moment



## Appendix 5

### Fifth Grade. First Moment



## Appendix 6

### First Grade. Second Moment

Name: Luciana Z. Date: Wednesday Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 2021

WRITING EVALUATION

I. Use the web to organize the ideas to write about yourself.

5. Likes

- color black
- color
- play with my friends
- teblox

2. Physical description

- black hair
- brown eyes
- I am a girl
- my hair is short

Name: Luciana Z.

4. Place

- Cali
- home
- school

3. Personality

- happy fast
- playful
- smart

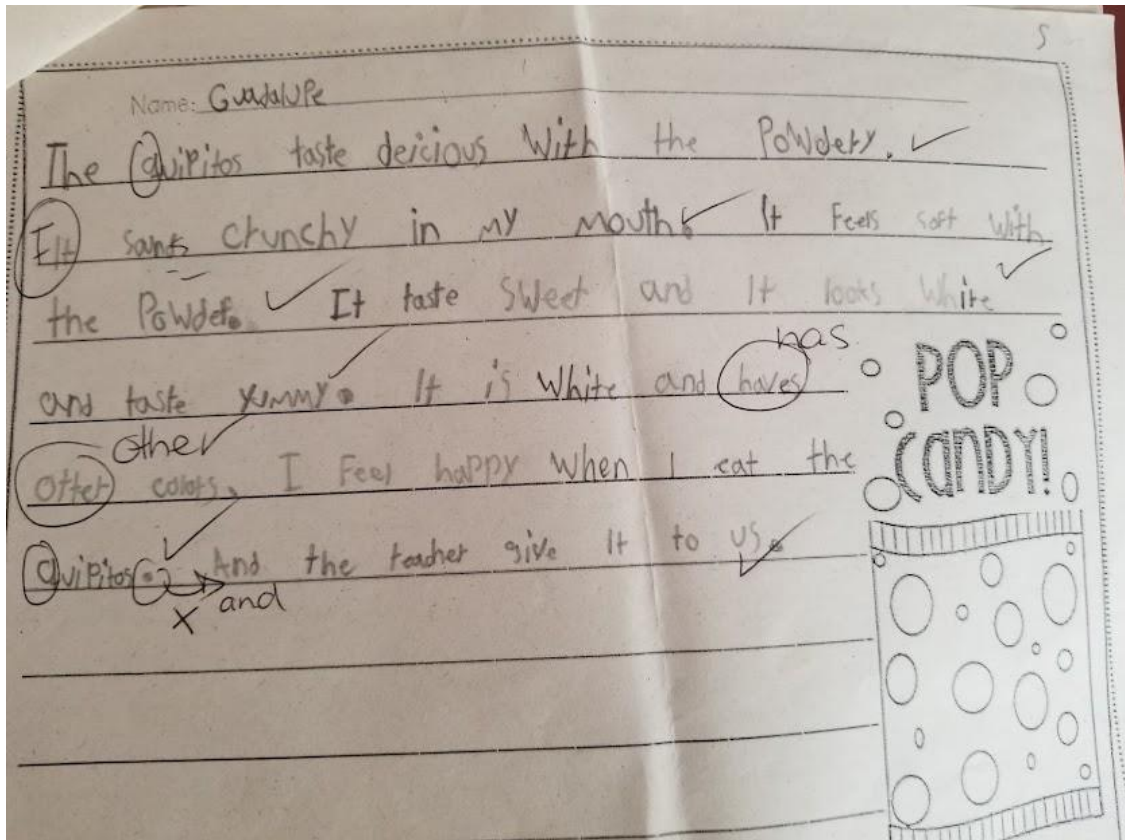
II. Write a complete description about YOU.

I am Luciana Zimmerman Hernandez.

My hair is black, my eyes are brown and I am a girl and my hair is short. My personality is happy, playful, smart and fast. My place is Cali my home and school. My color I like is color black and I like to play with my friends teblox.

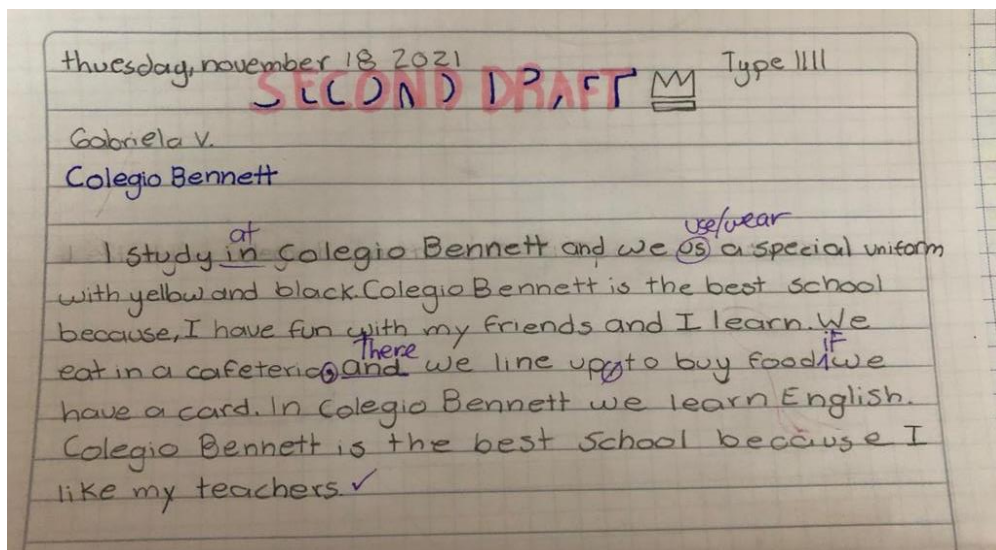
## Appendix 7

Second Grade. Second Moment



## Appendix 8

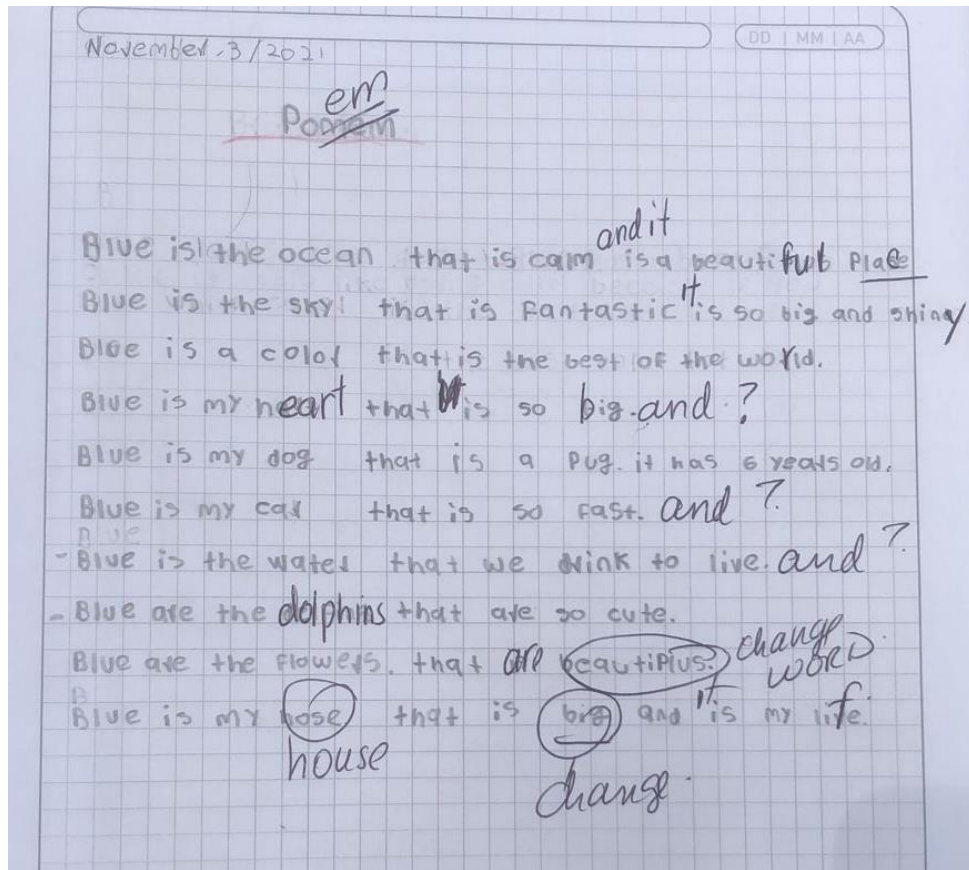
Third Grade. Second Moment





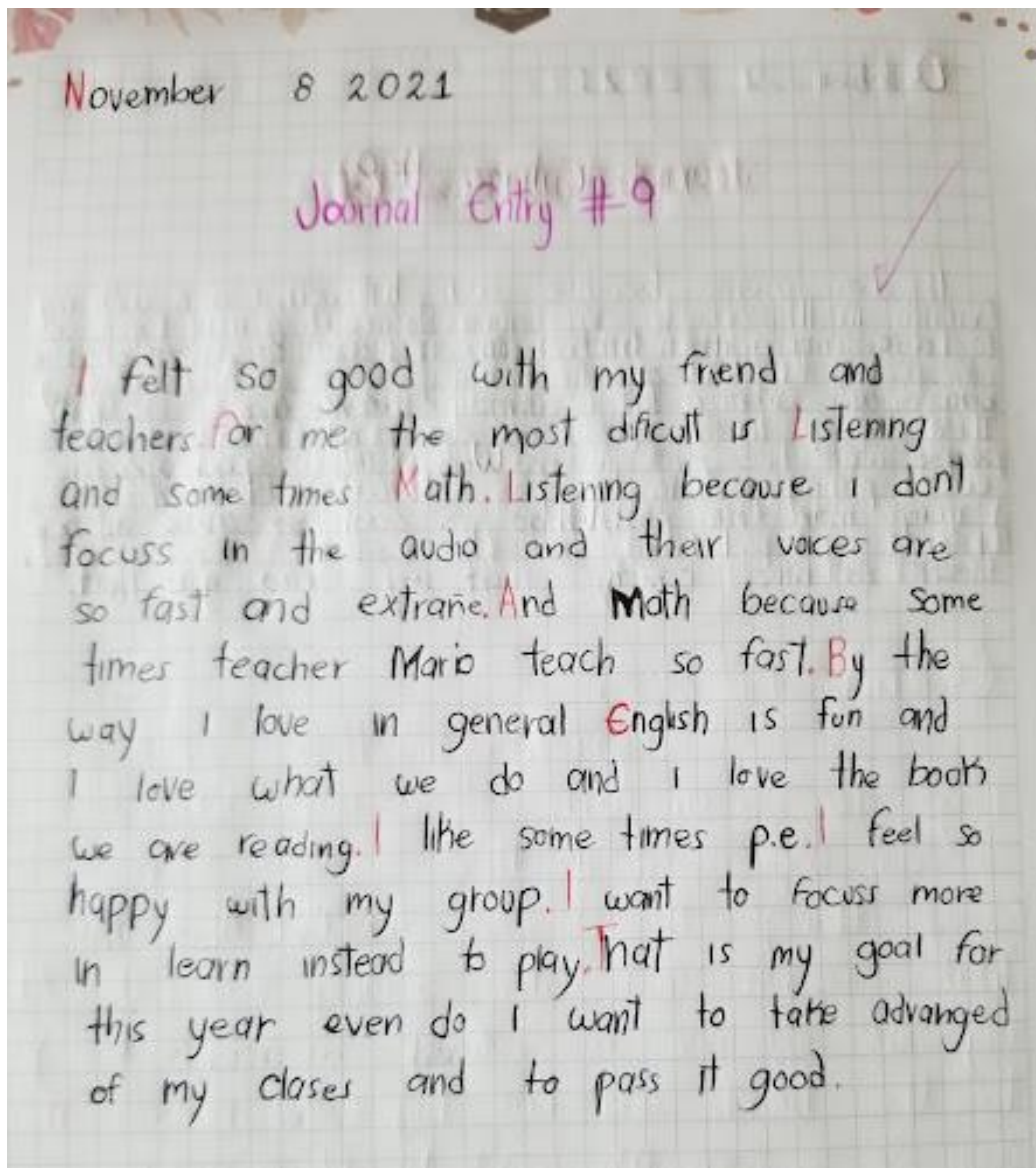
Appendix 9

Fourth Grade. Second Moment



## Appendix 10

Fifth Grade. Second Moment



Appendix 11

First Grade. Third Moment

Name: Mario Andre Date: March 4

Colégio Bennett

WRITING EVALUATION TYPE IV

I. Use the web to organize your ideas about your favorite character in the story "The Little Red Hen"

5. What he/she likes

- To sleep
- eat

2. Physical description

- big
- brown
- blue shirt
- brown eyes

1. Name

dog

3. Personality

- LAZY
- SLEEPY

4. Where he/she lives

- tiny cottage
- country

II. Write a description about your favorite character.

He is the dog he is big he is brown he has a blue shirt he has brown eyes he is lazy he is sleepy he lives in a tiny cottage in the country he likes to sleep he likes to eat

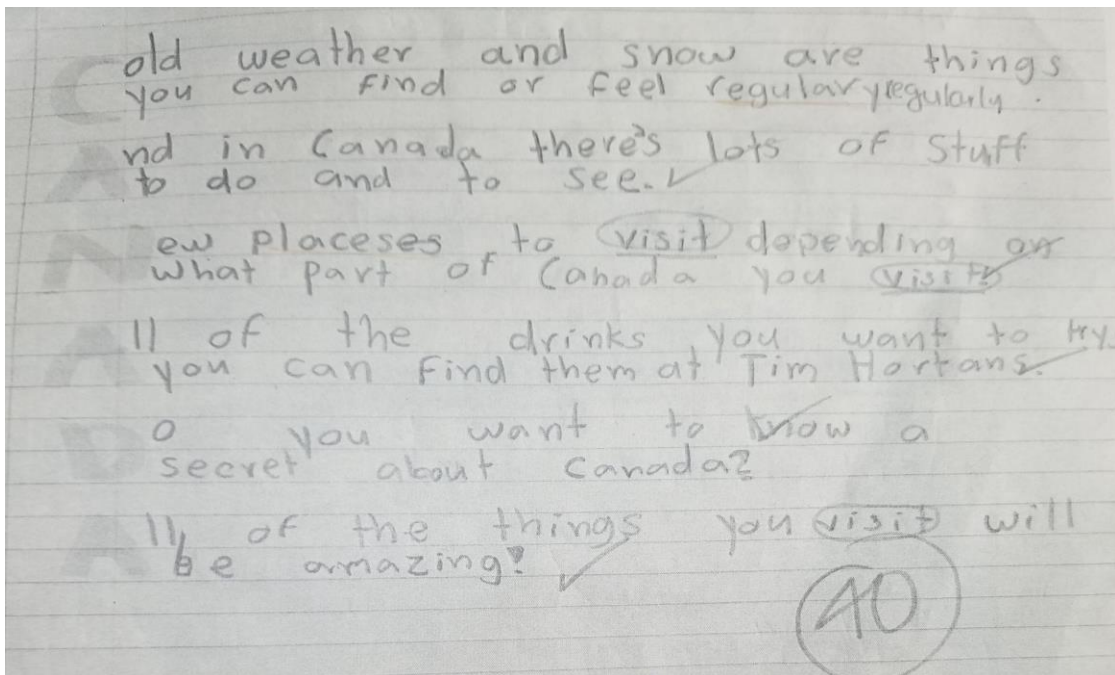
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## Appendix 12

Second Grade. Third Moment

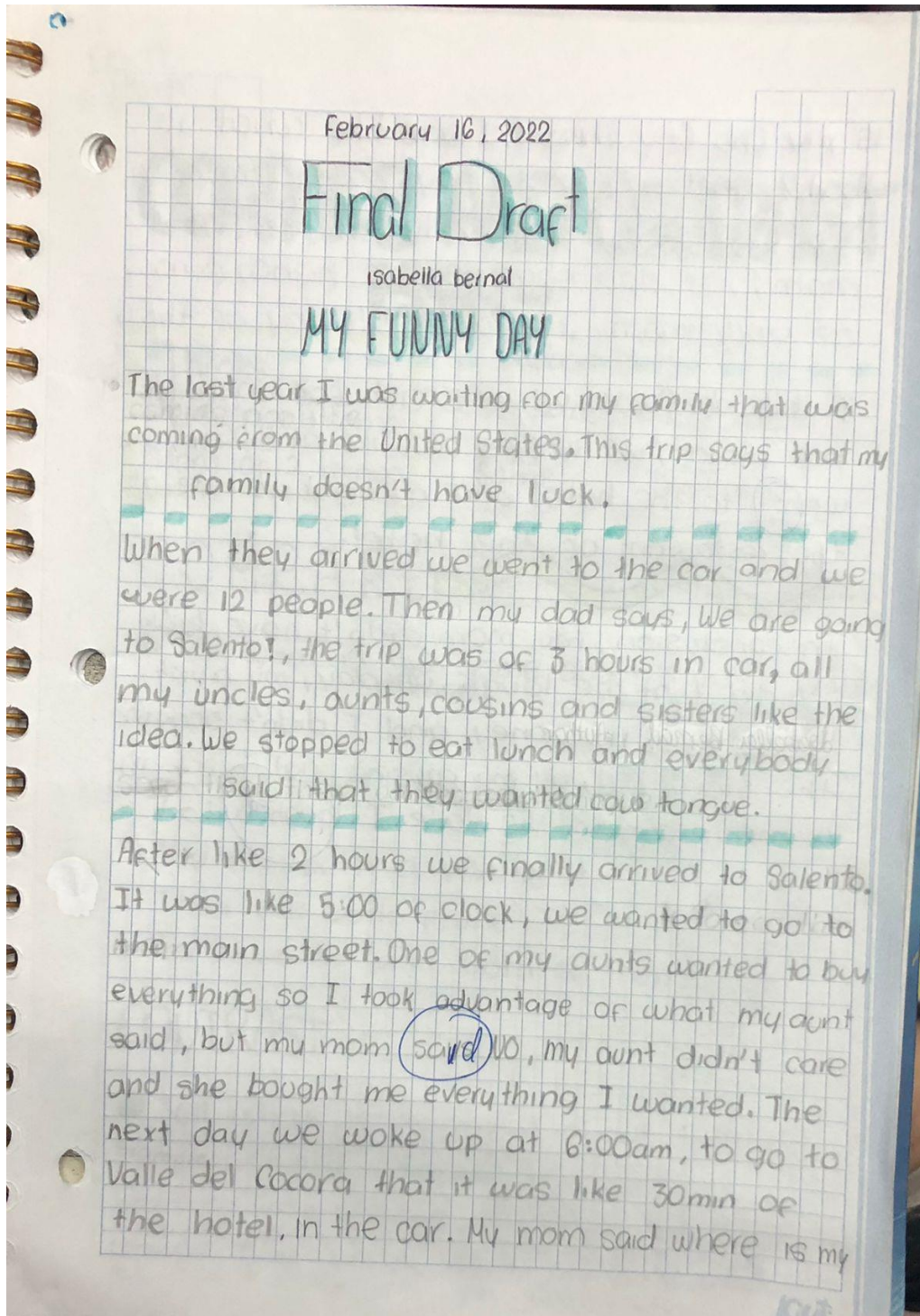
## Appendix 13

Third Grade. Third Moment



## Appendix 14

### Fourth Grade. Third Moment



is my Chu Chu Chuuu?, I was like what is that?, and my mom says again my Chu Chu Chou, all my family laugh of my mom, my dad says is the hand fan of your mom, we laugh all day of that.

At Valle del Cocora we ate fish for lunch. We took photos, we walked and like at 3:00 pm, we went to the hotel and at night we ate at the restaurant of the hotel.

In conclusion, my mom didn't have luck. She did that we laugh all day, my aunt, she <sup>left</sup> <sup>with</sup> no money and I didn't say in the story but, all my cousins got hurt in a mountain in the Valle. I laughed a lot that day.

## Appendix 15

### Fifth Grade. Third Moment

Chapter 40

Two Years later, after the big adventure of James and his friends, a beautiful and pink butterfly knocked on James' door. James opened the door and the butterfly said "Hello, my name is Blue." James replied "Oh, hello how can I help you?" Blue started crying, James, very worried, invited <sup>her</sup> to his home. Blue said to James that she needed help. James very confused asked her: "How can I help you?" Blue said, "I am alone and I don't have a place to stay." <sup>100</sup> Exactly at that moment, James' friends knocked the door. James opened and his friends were very confused. James said <sup>asked</sup> them, "What happened?" The ladybug replied "Who is she?" Blue said "Oh hello, how disrespectful I am, my name is Blue." James said "So Blue what is exactly your problem?" Blue answered "I want to be a fashion designer, but my horrible aunt said I am a good for nothing, so I escaped from home <sup>to</sup> making my dream <sup>come</sup> <sup>true</sup> <sup>real</sup>." James said, "And what about your parents?" "They died," answered Blue. The glow worm said "I think we need to help her." The spider and the ladybug said "Yes!!" So James and his friends went to an audition <sup>??</sup> for Blue. An hour later Blue entered to the waiting room where James and his friends were, Blue with a smile on her face said "They accepted me!!, finally my dream is going to become true." All of them were very happy. But just for that moment because three seconds

Interview

strong words

Maria

later Blue's aunt entered to the room and she said "Enough! You are coming with me!" Blue started crying and said "No!!" But her aunt was very mad so she grabbed her hand and pulled her in a cave. Fortunately James and his friends follow her and rescued Blue. Blue decided to call the police and follow her dream. Two days later, she was opening her first store and she decided to form a group for people that have big dreams just like her, but not alone so she called James and also his friends, all of them accepted and form a group called "The Dreamers". So everyone that has a dream can become it real and have the opportunity to be happy. The End!