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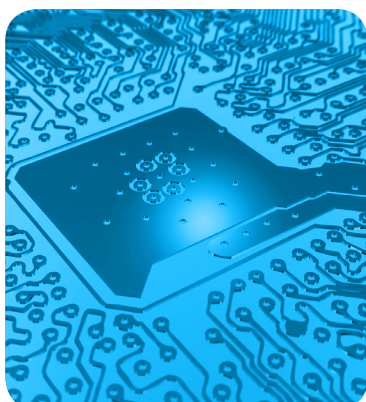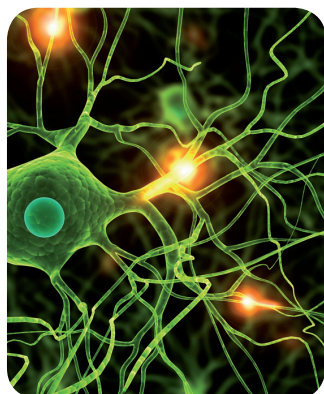
"Self-monitoring Error Chart". Charting errors as an innovative approach to support the development of students' language accuracy in a secondary school EFL classroom
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"Self-monitoring Error Chart". Charting errors as an innovative approach to support the development of students' language accuracy in a secondary school EFL classroom.

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To my beloved family, in Italy.
To Elias and our growing family here.

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decades, the practice of correcting errors in ESL written compositions has sparked controversy among SLA scholars. Some of them advocate for abandoning such practice, claiming that written feedback is infructuous for the students, unless they are cognitively mature to grasp the corrections, as well as that it is time consuming and frustrating for teachers, as certain errors will inevitably persist. Other researchers defend written corrective feedback, especially when it focuses on certain categories of errors, when it is carried out systematically and it actively engages students in the process, boosting reflection and recognition of their main errors. This Master's dissertation illustrates the analysis of data gathered during the implementation of an innovative pedagogical treatment, a "Self-Monitoring Error Chart", with a small sample of third graders of Compulsory Secondary Education (Bilingual Section) in a public secondary school in Madrid. Far from any pretense of exhaustivity, this final project depicts the main findings, reflections and limitations of charting errors which obstacle the progression of written language accuracy, in a particular educational setting. The analysis of data revealed that charting may help to decrease grammatical errors and errors related to sentence structuring, but it does not have any particular effect of lexical competence. In general, the use of charts has been welcomed by the students and its implementation may lead to promising results. Thereby this study leaves the door open to future research on chart design and administration.

Keywords: EFL classroom; written feedback; language accuracy; error charting; error awareness; 3rd year ESO.

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1. INTRODUCTION

*"No one is exempt from the rule that
learning occurs through recognition of error." Alexander Lowen*

It would not be possible to understand the topic chosen for this research without recounting the details of an exchange of views held with my school mentor this year, on the very first day of the internship this year; this is how this project began. When I first met my school mentor and started my internship, at the *IES Conde de Orgaz*, here in Madrid, we had a long conversation regarding the groups of students I was about to start training with, and hence, about her main concerns in relation with their English level.

More specifically, while discussing the main features of the pupils belonging to the 3º ESO Bilingual Section group, she informed me about the fact that some of them had been recently awarded the Cambridge English First Certificate (B2) and that, thanks to a quite satisfactory level of both oral and written fluency held by the majority of the class, lessons could ran smoothly, most of the times. In addition, motivation, participation and even engagement in collaborative and interactive tasks or assignments were not problematic issues with that particular group. With regard to writing, she noticed that the students used to have very interesting and curious opinions about the topics chosen for the syllabus and that they were usually eager to put those ideas down in words. Nonetheless, difficulties arose when the moment of "translating those ideas into readable texts" (Khoii, 2011: 493) came, and grammatical errors started to appear or to be repeated in their compositions. In fact, among the multiple aspects related to the development of second language (hereafter L2) competences, one aspect in particular caused my mentor worry and it was grammatical accuracy in writing; an issue that, whether neglected, may consequently "prevent students from moving beyond a certain level of proficiency" (Porcino & Finardi, 2012: 27) and, hence, from reaching a "full linguistic competence" (Ellis, 1994: 492). We can find this concept mirrored in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereafter, CEFR), which states that grammar competence has to be mastered "*progressively* to arrive at a high degree of accuracy, specifically within high levels (C1)" at a point in which "errors are rare and difficult to spot" (Council of Europe, 2011: 114).

In her view, the spread of the communicative language teaching approach, which since Primary School orients the interest of English teachers toward a more meaning-based forms of instruction, selection of activities and tasks, focusing mainly on fluency, may have led to a more tolerant attitude with regard to grammatical errors (Ur, 2010). Consequently, students use to access Secondary School with their L2 receptive skills, especially the listening ones, well-trained and yet presenting basic grammatical gaps, that later turn out to be quite challenging to be filled.

Being the Head of Studies of the Bilingual Section, my school mentor explained to me that she used to find herself dealing with the same types of errors throughout the correcting process of her students' compositions, sometimes returning their writings literally "mutilated by the red pen" (Semke, 1984: 202) and feeling that her corrections might have just received a "cursory glance" (Semke: 1984: 195) by the students.

Therefore, her recurrent question was the following: How could we help these students to pay more attention to the corrections made on their compositions? That conversation with the mentor motivated my investigation. As a Secondary School English teacher-in-training, I considered this issue highly relevant for two reasons. On the one hand, finding out the most frequent written errors that students could make at this stage of learning, would have been

enriching as consider that getting deeper insights knowing more about errors would help me to anticipating possible linguistic problems students could face and, hence, designing more effective corrective strategies, in the future. At the same time, this research could be devoted to find a way to make those particular students cope with their errors and improve their accuracy, while writing in English. How? Were their errors due to the lack of knowledge of the grammar rules that had to structure their sentences? Were they writing without paying attention to the composition process (Hejazi, 2012)? Or was there any other factor that was preventing them from being as accurate in writing as their English teacher expected them to be?

As mentioned above, the reflection originated from my school mentor's beliefs definitely inspired this investigation, although it was not until I started observing her classes with the third graders, that I began planning this research. In fact, during my observations, I realized that students were engaged in the writing process once a week. More specifically, they were prompt to write short texts in their English journals, experiencing different kinds of genres, namely opinion essays, descriptions, stories, etc. which functions and structure they seemed to control without showing any particular problems. In addition, given the fact that the same group had been taught by the same teacher since the first grade of Secondary Education, it was clear that they were used to extensive writing practices and thus, to a certain writing routine. As a matter of fact, after a brief instruction from the teacher, to orientate their work, they would normally start mind-mapping their ideas about the content given and drafting their compositions, raising their hands just to ask the teacher to move the dictionary closer to their reach, or to call the native language assistant's attention, to solve lexical doubts.

However, it was during the corrective feedback sessions I attended, which were always held by the native language assistant, who was the one that had recently started correcting the students' journals, that I spot the possible difficulty that might hold back their progress towards accuracy. A general corrective session was normally provided to the whole class, and hence not addressing each student's own specific errors; moreover, it was shown on a PowerPoint presentation which lacked clarity, at the point that learners were not able to distinguish between the correct and the incorrect sentence projected on the digital whiteboard. Students would just listen to the explanation provided, sometimes taking notes about what was being said, and would not get back to their own journals and compositions, until the next assignment. What if we tried to implement a treatment that would require students to open their journals again, to trace back, assign a grammatical category to and finally correct their errors?

The heart of this dissertation is constituted by the idea of creating a self-monitoring chart, the design process and its implementation. The chart was created with the aim to deal with the major grammatical difficulties encountered in the writings of this particular microcosm of students. More precisely, this investigation aims at analyzing whether this treatment, founded on the concept of redirecting students' attention to their errors, engaging them in an explicit and active re-correction, would help learners to improve their accuracy in writing, and thus to diminish the number of errors in their papers, or, at least to avoid repeating the same type of errors over and over again.

Following this introductory section, the study is divided into three main parts: Section 2 presents a review of research literature, which focuses on the error analysis and treatment in English as a Second Language (ESL) context, giving particular attention to the controversy among the researchers related to the benefits of the form-focused feedback (Truscott,

1996). Section 3 further contextualizes the given piece of research into the requirements of the National Curriculum, the *CAM Bilingual Project* and the standards dictated by the Common European Framework for Languages. Last but not the least, Section 4 provides details about the methodological procedure undertaken in this study, that is, the main steps that had been taken to carry out this project, encompassing the discussion of the results obtained by means of its implementation. Has the target been hit by having chosen Alexander Lowen's inspirational quote at the very beginning of this introduction? The answer to this question, along with the limitations found during this investigation and proposals for future research will be given in the concluding section.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Good writing is not equivalent to good spelling and grammar.
[However,] knowledge of a language's grammar and correct word
usage are necessary conditions for good writing in that language." (Carroll, 1990: 1)

2.1 Writing Skills and Linguistic Accuracy

Among the four language skills, writing is undoubtedly the most cognitively demanding one to students (Khoii, 2001). Why? What tools should a proficient second language writer be equipped with in order to succeed? In order to answer to this question, it may be reasonable to interrogate the CEFR, a well-known and widely accepted document, signed by the Council of Europe in 2001, which levels of language proficiency and descriptors represent the pillars of many official and nonofficial educational programs in Europe. For example, its most important tenets, standards for language teaching and assessment criteria constitute the core of some relevant National educational initiatives in Spain, such as the *Bilingual Project at the Comunidad de Madrid (CAM),* implemented in 2004 in 26 state-funded Primary Schools of Madrid, which rapidly expanded to a total of 122 centers by 2006 and extended to Compulsory Secondary Education in 2010 (Llinares & Dafouz, 2010: 97-100). As a matter of fact, while this investigation was being carried out, the students of the 3º ESO Bilingual Section of *the IES Conde de Orgaz* were preparing for the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) (see section 3.1 "The participants and the context").

The CEFR conceives language users as "social agents" (Hulstijn, Anderson & Schooen, 2010: 12) who are capable to use the foreign language to interact in a great variety of contexts and situations, but also to produce a great variety of written texts, which may serve several functions. In particular, learning to write in English "is more important and consequential for academic study, work and professional communications than it was 30 years ago" (Cummings, in Manchón, 2009: 2017). Thus, the ideal proficient learners "overcome the barriers to communication" (Council of Europe, 2001: 1) by appropriating and integrating the three main competences, which make every fruitful and efficient communication possible: the linguistic, the sociolinguistic and the pragmatic competences (Council of Europe, 2001: 13). That is, language users must be aware of the language and its system, but might also know "how to use the language" (Silva & Matsuda, 2001: 53). This concept turns out to be paramount in the Bilingual Education, laying the groundwork for the syllabus design and the selection of both teaching materials and activities for the classroom. In fact, the principles established by the CEFR are mirrored in the General Advanced English Curriculum for the Third and Fourth Year of Compulsory Secondary Education, which claims the following:

> "by working toward a command of the language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), students will be able to develop their communicative competence and potential, and their ability to function successfully, and actively take part in society." (B.O.C.M, 2012: 190)

Regarding the writing skills, the descriptors on the overall written production scale of the CEFR indicate that, at an advanced (C1) level, learners can:

"write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion" (Council of Europe, 2001: 61).

Besides, proficient users are expected to master their writing skills in the second language by showing their ability of conveying meaning in their written texts, by presenting them with a consistent "layout, paragraphing and punctuation" (Council of Europe, 2001: 118) and with a spelling which is accurate "apart from occasional slips of the pen" (Council of Europe, 2001: 118).

Thereby, ideally, skillful L2 writers will have the capacity of weaving together a series of essential features in their compositions, which, at the same time, will determine the level of accuracy of their pieces of writing. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the word "accuracy" refers to: "the state of being exact or correct; the ability to do something skillfully without making mistakes." However, it is important to stress that some experts, such as Hammerly, warn that the goal of reaching a native-like and error-free competence when writing in an L2 may be too challenging and, sometimes, unattainable for some students. Nevertheless, an exemplar of perfection should exist for learners, in order for them to be able to compare their products/written productions with that model, and to strive to fill the gap that separates their outcomes from the desired ones (Hammerly, 1991). In fact, as Lee (2014) points out, written forms in the target language do not come naturally to the students, "they do not possess the *feel* or intuitive knowledge" of them.

Returning to the discussion at hand, Polio (in Silva & Matsuda, 2010: 92) classifies the main factors that connote a good piece of writing into the following nine categories:

[1.] Overall quality,
[2.] Linguistic accuracy,
[3.] Syntactic complexity,
[4.] Lexical features,
[5.] Content,
[6.] Mechanics,
[7.] Coherence and discourse features,
[8.] Fluency,
[9.] Revision."

These characteristics can be considered the "micro-components" (Cumming, in Manchón, 2009: 217) that make up a good piece of writing in a foreign language. That is to say, they comprehend all of the purely linguistic aspects, text functions and genres that, together with the individual conceptual abilities, intervene to shape the written work. Thereby, when sitting down in front of their compositions, second language writers face multiple "knowledge transforming" problems (Dean, et al., 2008: 37), namely:

"how to generate and organize task-relevant ideas; phrase grammatically correct sentence that flow; use correct punctuation and spelling, and tailor ideas, tone and wording to the desired audience [...]" (Dean, et al., 2008: 37).

Thus, an L2 written composition is made up of a product, the writing itself, which must be submitted to the rules and "demands" of written English (Flower & Hayes, 1981) and of a process that lies beneath its surface. The "dilemma" (Khoii, 2011), for the students who approach a written task, arises when their focus is directed only to spelling rules and

grammar norms, or when all of their efforts are dedicated to planning and organizing their ideas on the content. This first "knowledge-telling approach" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, in Deane, 2008: 35) may lead to a poor design, as students' major concern will be to translate their own thoughts into the L2; whereas the second case, the "knowledge-transforming" strategy, may go along with errors and lack of accuracy (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In any case, opting exclusively to one of those two major approaches would "lead to frustration" (Shaughnessy, in Flower & Hayes, 1981: 373) for the student, whose composition will always stand in a precarious balance between fluency or accuracy (Hammerly, 1991).

This tension between product and process in writing is mirrored in the two principal research approaches interested in analyzing the complex phenomenon of composing in a Second Language. More precisely, the process-oriented approach (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) is mostly engaged in the investigation of cognitive processes that trigger and support writing, such as memory (Deane, et al. 2008), planning, revising, pausing behavior, fluency, typing-speed, etc. (Dahej, 2012). The product-oriented approach, instead, deals with the concept of error, error analysis and corrective feedback (e.g., Corder, 1974; Erdoğan, 2005) and hence, with the most visible aspect of writing, which, at the same time, opens a "window into [learner's] mind" (Raimes, 1991: 55). Even though the process or what Gabrielatos (2002) associates with "writing skills", which guides the writer's hand is definitely paramount and should be trained in all of its components, the product and the "language accuracy" (Gabrielatos, 2002: 7) is what is eventually evaluated. Consequently, adopting a conciliatory view would benefit our students, that is why Gabrielatos (2002: 11) suggests the following approach, for the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class:

> "Language input and practice alone cannot result in the development of writing skills. Special writing lessons are necessary, in which learners are guided to become aware of all the elements of good writing, supported with information & examples, provided with opportunities for practice, and given focused feedback on their performances."

Analyzing each of the components of the multifaceted phenomenon of writing obviously constitutes an issue that goes beyond the scope and the constraints of this study; for this reason and in relation with the specific writing problems encountered in the microcosm of our classroom during the internship, only certain aspects of linguistic accuracy will be approached.

2.2 Errors and their meaning

According to Rivers, every student who approaches writing in a Second Language must learn:

> "1. the graphic system of the foreign language; 2. [...] to spell according to [its conventions]; 3. [...] to control the structure of the language so that what he writes is comprehensible to [the] reader; 4. [...] to select from among possible combinations of words and phrases those which will convey the nuances he has in mind in the register which is most appropriate." (Rivers in Hourani, 2008: 3)

All of these "musts" quoted above imply that, whenever students fail to put them forth in their written compositions, errors will show and will affect orthography (Deorowicz & Ciura, 2005), grammar conventions, in terms of syntax and usage (Kroll, 2003), vocabulary (Llach,

2011) and register. In general, errors will compromise the accuracy and the effectiveness of the communicative purpose that the writer had in mind, while drafting their thoughts on the paper, or typing them on a screen.

Not all the errors, though, induce the same kind of difficulties to the reader, or to the teacher who is trying to evaluate students' work. Looking at errors by adopting the reader's viewpoint is one of the possible perspective to evaluate how relevant an error may be. According to Burt (1975), we can divide errors into two macro-categories. On the one hand, the errors which do not affect the intelligibility of the message, such as inflections, wrong articles or ill-formed quantifiers, would fall into the "local error" (Burt, 1975: 6) category. On the other hand, all those errors which are an obstacle to comprehension are called "global errors" (Burt, 1975: 6). Among these, we find: "wrong word order, [...], missing, wrong or misplaced connectors, [...], overgeneralization of pervasive syntactic rules, [etc.]" (Burt, 1975: 6-7).

Moreover, not all the errors share the same origin. As a matter of fact, as Corder (1967) points out in "The significance of learners' errors", it is of the uttermost importance to make a distinction between those errors, which result from "memory lapses" (Corder, 1967: 166) and other temporary circumstances such as tiredness, physical conditions and emotions, and the other errors, which are systematic and depend on learner's competence in the target language, instead. In the first case, we are dealing with simple mistakes, or "slips of the pen" (Corder, 1967: 166) and it is very probable that, if we read aloud, or just go through our piece of writing again, we will be able to spot them and provide a correction. Nevertheless, the second category of errors, albeit "transitional" (Corder, 1967: 167), reveals the complex mechanisms entailed in the reality of learning a second language and, thus, might be more difficult to eradicate. More specifically, those errors are labeled as "transitional" by the author, as they are seen as depending on the individual's "built-in syllabus" (Corder, 1967: 165) and may vary depending on the stage of learning students find themselves in, and hence, on their "underlying knowledge of the language to date" (Corder, 1967: 167).

This concept is strictly connected to the major tenet of Selinker's (1967) "theory of Interlanguage (IL)" which, as the famous Second Language Acquisition (SLA) scholar argues, is the language that L2 students speak and write at any given stage of learning. It is a language system in itself and differs from both the native language (NL) and the target language (TL) (Tarone, 2006). Consequently, considering the errors that emerge from students' productions as mere transfers from their native language, as contrastive analysis did, is not sufficient to explain the origin of the "transitional errors of competence" (Corder, 1967: 167). In Kroll and Schafer's view, the product-oriented certitude that "students will err in the TL where it differs from their NL" (Kroll & Schafer, 1978: 242) would lead teacher to think of errors as something bad which is their only to be eliminated and, thus, would orientate their correction practices at them. Nonetheless, teachers would find frustrating to discover that, after having implemented their corrective strategy, the same kind of error would show up again (Kroll & Schafer, 1978). With the advent of Error Analysis, the mental processes engaged in L2 learning would focus on error from another viewpoint:

> "Errors are evidences that the learner is testing hypotheses about the target language. They are a sign of growth. [...] They need the help of someone proficient in order to change their hypothesis."(Bosher, 1990: 92)

Hence, errors are inevitable but, above all, they are useful cracks on the surface of the written product; consequently, their identification and analysis not just guide formal instructions and orientate research efforts (Corder, 1967; Burt; 1975; Mulligan, 2000), they also benefit the students by helping them "gaining control over the language" (Bosher, 1990: 89). As a matter of fact, "studying their own writing puts students in a position to see themselves as language users, rather than as victims of a language that uses them" (Bartholomae, 1980: 257). Acknowledging the existence of mental processes which may systematically intervene to shape learners' written productions such as, for example, syntactic and semantic "simplification", a strategy also used by children who are acquiring their first language (Tarone, 2006), or the "overgeneralisation" which indicates that learners tend to use "L2 where an L1 student would not" (Corpuz, 2011: 13), put the student in a central and active position, in learning.

However, it is important to point out that, in some cases, those mental process are also responsible for making many students stop evolving or working to overcome certain difficulties, and thereby, become fossilized, at a certain stage of their Interlanguage (Selinker, 1967, in Tarone, 2006). More specifically, as Richards (2008) claims, fossilized errors (i. e., the third person singular '-s' omission) are normally those which do not "trigger misunderstandings" (Richards, 2008: 19) and although they do not compromise the conveyance of meaning, they still constitute an obstacle on the students' way to proficiency. Thereby, learners need to be particularly aware about them and to be put in a position to "notice" those errors (Schmidt, in Richards, 2008) and to "push" themselves towards a more accurate output (Swain in Richards, 2008).

To conclude, formal instruction should aim at "what a writer does, rather that [at] what he fails to do" (Bartholomae, 1980, 257).

2.3 To correct or not correct, that is the question

In their paper, "Error Analysis and the Teaching of Composition" (1978), Kroll and Schafer depicted teachers dealing with written errors as "revenge thirsty" creatures who wield "pen and red ink to bloody a stunned freshman's paper" (p. 242). This idea, connected to the intimidating effects of the red ink, was picked up again by other scholars (e. g., Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996; Peloghitis, 2010) and it is part of the collective consciousness of the greatest part of the community of L2 teachers and students.

Particularly, error treatment in the ESL class largely depends on the language teaching method embraced by the instructor (Hammerly, 1991) and their beliefs regarding the benefits of error correction. For instance, if the teacher relies on a more traditional method such as Grammar-translation, each written error will be fought intently and, thus, the focal point of those form-focused and product-oriented lessons (Khoii, 2011) will strictly be the target language grammar and the memorization of its rules (e. g., Hammerly, 1991; Mulligan 2000; Corpuz, 2011). By following this method, students may reach a high level of written accuracy at the same time as they develop a "second-language mutism" (Hammerly, 1991: 1) in terms of authentic and effective communication. And, if errors occur or persist, it means that the teaching or correcting techniques have failed (Corder, 1967: 163). Although the oral communicative competence is not the object of this study, it is important to point out that the communicative-oriented teachers are considered to favor fluency in communication (Hammerly, 1991) and thus to show a more indulgent attitude towards language accuracy, viewing errors as inevitable parts of the process (Corder, 1967). As Allen

& Waugh (1986) claim, this "laissez-faire" attitude towards errors which do not difficult communication, together with Krashen's hypothesis that,

> "Errors would take care of themselves as learners' grammar [is] refined through exposure to sufficient [...] authentic and [...] ungraded in grammatical terms [...] comprehensible input" (Allen & Waugh, 1986: 196),

leads to answer negatively to the question, "Should we correct errors?" Albeit this belief mostly concerns speech, many scholars (e. g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Hammerly, 1991; Porcino & Finardi, 2012) argue that it may indirectly affect written accuracy and hence error treatment, as well.

On the other hand, going back to formal grammar instruction and to a strict correction of errors is a frustrating practice, as well (Kroll, 2003); in some cases, the more you drill and correct a structure, the more students misuse it (Truscott, 1996). Furthermore, as Barnett (1992: 17) claims,

> "Considering form and accuracy too soon obstructs the mental activity necessary to communicate and generate ideas. Writing follows a natural order: ideas demand a structure which must finally be polished. When teachers correct everything, students may be faced with too many changes to be absorbed and incorporate."

In relation to this, Truscott's (1996) polemic and much-disputed paper, "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes", sparked controversy among the scholars interested in error correction in writing. Although it recognized the importance of grammar accuracy, it was firmly rooted in the certainty that grammar correction had "significant harmful effects" (Truscott, 1996: 328) on students and thereby, bluntly stated that it should be avoided in writing courses. In his view, which is vigorously twinned with the principles of Interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) and the "built-in syllabus" (e. g., Corder, 1967; Bartholomae, 1980), the major reason why there are no unequivocal evidences about the benefit of correction and some errors are recurring despite being corrected over and over again, stems on the fact that corrections do not respect students' "developmental stages" (Truscott, 1996: 344). Therefore, if teachers correct structures which significance students are not ready to grasp yet, corrections will have no real value for them and what learners will get, is only going to be a "pseudo-learning" and "pseudo-knowledge" (Truscott, 1996: 345), defined by Truscott as "the result[s] of a teaching-learning process that fails to affect the underlying, developing system" (1996: 345). Furthermore, syntactic, lexical, morphological and pragmatic knowledge is acquired in different ways (Swartz, in Truscott, 1996) and hence, using one comprehensive and generalized correction will be reductive.

In her article, Ferris (2004) defends the practice of error correction. In her view, Truscott does not rely his opinion on consistently designed longitudinal and large scale studies, which would provide significant evidence of how students' accuracy developed and maintained through time after the implementation of a certain type of corrective feedback (e. g., Ferris, 2004; Bitchener, 2005; Greensdale & Brasfeder, 2006). She bases her response on recent SLA suggestions on the importance of making students' errors "salient and explicit" (Ferris, 2004: 54). As a matter of fact, students must, want and appreciate receiving feedback and having their errors noticed (Ferris, 2004); in addition, they should be trained to recognize their own mistakes and, thus, teachers should advocate an indirect feedback strategy, which

> "Engages students in cognitive problem-solving as they attempt to self-edit based upon the feedback that they have received. [For example,] supplemental [...] in class or individualized [...] grammar instruction and [...] the maintenance of error charts can heighten students awareness of their weakness and of their improvement." (Ferris, 2004: 60)

Thereby, teachers should convert into "judges" and "scholars" who are capable to understand the source of errors and therefore, into "designers" of tailor-made corrective solutions for their students; at the same time they will be "motivators" who never forget to write positive comments on the bottom of compositions and finally "trainers" who enable their students to recognize their errors and self-edit their texts (Jimena et al., n. d.: 3-4). Obviously, it is a truism that correcting is time-consuming; as Zamel (1985) points out, it takes approximately 20 to 40 minutes to write comments on each student's paper. For this reason, Bitchener (2005) acknowledges Truscott's belief that grammar errors correction "diverts time and energies from the more productive aspects of a writing programme" (Zamel, 1985: 192). In addition, sometimes tiredness may lead to decrease the consistency, quality and systematicity of teacher's comments (Truscott, 1996). In this case, it will be very difficult for the students to deal with their errors (Peloghitis, 2010).

In the light of these assumptions, what should teachers do? The solution proposed by some researchers (e.g., Truscott, 2001; Ferris, 2007; Henze, 2010) is to focus just on certain errors and to avoid overloading students with comprehensive error correction. What kind of errors should teacher correct? Bosher answers to this question by stating that teachers should always correct:

> "[1] errors that interfere with the message;
> [2] errors that stigmatize the learner from the perspective of the native speaker;
> [3] errors that have become fossilized;
> [4] errors that occur at the greatest level of frequency." (1990: 93)

Regarding this, Truscott (2001) softened his position towards correction and opted for a "selective" type of corrective feedback that should aim at the most "correctable" errors (Truscott, 2001: 94). He suggested three categories of errors according to their level of "correctability" (Truscott, 2001: 104):

> 1. Low-correctability errors:
> errors which are not "good target[s] for correction" (p. 96)
> syntactic errors
> inflectional morphology, except comparative and superlative forms punctuation
> (e. g., end punctuation, comma placement)
> 2. moderately correctable errors: of words misuse of derivational affix
> 3. relatively high-correctable errors:
> errors which are "interesting target[s] for correction" (p. 96)
> misspelling
> inaccurate use of "the"
> restricted collocation (e. g., *blond*)
> form of idioms and lexical choices related to the wrong register
> simple error in word's meaning
> mistaken association of prepositions

That is to say, the closer the error category is to the principles of Universal Grammar, which "rule out most syntactic phenomena" (Truscott, 2001: 103), the most difficult it will be to correct it, unless until learners are cognitively ready to grasp the rule that governs certain structures. Lexis, being arbitrary, should be an easier item to correct (Truscott, 2001).

Other authors (Bosher, 1990; Henze 2010; Peloghitis, 2010; Llach, 2011), instead, have pointed at the "idiosyncratic and non-generalizable" essence of lexis (Llach, 2011: 70) and at the blurred line that separates it from grammar and pragmatics (Llach, 2011) to explain some possible reasons why lexical problems are the most frequent and also, the less studied ones.

2.4 Corrective Feedback Strategies in students' written productions

In order for corrections to be efficacious and long-term, teachers should carefully choose the corrective strategy that suits best their students and, once chosen, they should be consistent and systematic (Zamel, 1985; Ferris, 2004) at applying it. The literature on this topic shows that there are two main types of form-focused feedback: direct and indirect corrective feedback (Baleghizadeh & Dadashi, 2010).

Direct corrective feedback implies making the error visible, for example, by crossing or circling it, and providing the correct form. In some cases, the student will be asked to copy the errors in the notebook or in a chart, and to rewrite the composition (Bosher, 1990), although most of the times learners will just take a mental note of them (Baleghizadeh & Dadashi, 2010), thereby playing quite a passive role in the corrective process. On the contrary, the teacher will be both the "proofreader and the editor" (Baleghizadeh & Dadashi, 2010: 133), and also a motivator, whenever they decide to add encouraging commentaries at the end of the text.

Nevertheless, writing feedback should be more than red "marks on the page" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006: 84) and hence, it should actively engage students in the corrective process. That is why some authors (e.g., Kroll, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) claim that indirect methods of corrections, such as "coding errors" (Kroll, 2003) make "second language learners co-researchers, discovering how grammar functions in academic texts and eventually [help them] transferring these discoveries into their own writings" (Frodesen & Holten, in Kroll, 2003: 153). Errors will be only signaled by the teacher by means of circling, underlining or coding, and students will be required to locate and correct their errors "line-per-line" (Baleghizadeh & Dadashi, 2010). This strategy's benefits are enhanced by further grammar clarification or meaning negotiation (Ferris, 2003) that should take place during writing conferencing (Peloghitis, 2010) that teachers may hold both with the whole class and with individual students. However, Hyland & Hyland (2006) warn about the possible difficulties that low-achievers may face with this type of feedback and acknowledge that some students prefer direct corrective feedback. Taking into account "individual and contextual variables" (Ferris, 2003: 122) is therefore paramount. In addition, Ferris (2003) points out that some students do not feel comfortable to attend one-to-one conferencing with the teacher while teachers may have problems to fit such conferencing in their busy schedules. Research shows a tendency of correcting treatable errors, which follow regular patterns (e. g., verbs, subject-verb agreement, articles, etc.) indirectly and of responding to untreatable and idiosyncratic errors directly, as they are considered to be more difficult for students (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Nonetheless, there are other strategies that can be implemented in the writing class and that aim both at improving language accuracy and supporting the development of

learners' independence and sense of responsibility: peer response and self-evaluation, by means of checklists and rubrics, are two well-known possibilities (e. g., Barnett, 1992; Hayland & Hayland, 2006; Ferris, 2003). In particular, peer feedback, as well as teacher-student conferencing, are believed to be firmly rooted on the principle of scaffolding through interaction and assistance (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Samana, 2013). Having students supporting and correcting each other writing has been regarded as a very useful alternative, as it helps:

"1) to share with our students criteria for good writing;
2) to promote greater improvement of writing by giving learners an instructional
and diagnostic tool [...]"
3) to foster more positive attitudes toward writing" (Rothschild & Klingenberg, 1990: 54).
Although, teachers may face certain problems, such as:
"1) lack of expertise
2) faulty corrections
3) fear of hurting each other's feelings" (Rothschild & Klingenberg, 1990: 54)

To conclude, further research on the topic still needs to be done. It is difficult to agree on what type of corrective strategies is the best one to improve students' linguistic accuracy in writing. Thereby, adopting embracing an eclectic, consistent and systematic approach could afford researchers a possible solution, as it allows to vary corrective strategies, depending on our students' needs. (Corpuz, 2011).

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the characteristics of the specific setting in which this research has been carried out and the main features of the microcosm of students who inspired this investigation and also made it possible, with their dedication and fruitful collaboration. This chapter, together with the analytical section, constitutes the heart of this project.

After presenting the research questions that shaped its design, this section will provide the description of the innovative treatment instrument implemented in one EFL secondary school classroom, hoping that it would help those particular students improving their written accuracy in the target language, in terms of grammar, lexis, orthography and organization of the sentence.

To conclude, we will elucidate the way our treatment was put into practice and data were gathered, in order to be analyzed.

3.1 The context and the participants

This investigation took place at the school where I had my internship during the Master. The *IES Conde de Orgaz* is a Public Secondary School, built in 1968 and located in the northeast of Madrid, in the *Hortaleza* District, next to Esperanza subway station and definitely well-connected with the rest of the vicinity.

Despite its name, this center does not have anything to do with the widely-known, quite close and wealthier *Conde de Orgaz* neighborhood, in *Arturo Soria*; this school is placed, indeed, in a modest and unkempt area and its population is young and heterogeneous. The Head of Studies confirmed this data by detailing that, this year, among the 700 students enrolled in the *IES Conde de Orgaz*, 13% are immigrant pupils who mainly come from South America and East Europe, or belong to a gipsy ethnic group.

In general, the great majority of the students' families have socio-cultural and economic problems, due to the toughness of the recent financial crisis. Yet, crisis also affected the amount of resources that the Government assigned to Education, at the point that, as the School Counselor affirmed, in this center the figure of the Compensatory Education Teacher no longer exists. All of these factors imply the existence of several cases of behavioral problems, absenteeism and, at worst, dropouts.

Nevertheless, what has been mentioned above does not apply to the whole community of students of the school, which is included in the CAM Bilingual Project, since 2012. More specifically, it means that some students have the possibility to access the most popular Bilingual Section where they learn in a quite different environment, formed by less crowded and technologically better equipped classrooms. Moreover they benefit by the daily presence of a native language assistant in their EFL classroom.

The tutor, who accompanied me throughout the whole experience, was the Head of Studies of the Bilingual Section, so by virtue of that, she had a reduced schedule with just three groups of Secondary students. Of those three classes, two belonged to the 4º grade of the non-Bilingual Section and one was the 3º of the Bilingual Section. This latter, which has been chosen to carry out this study. This last group was composed by 19 Spanish students, 11 boys and 8 girls, plus one girl coming from Morocco; two students of this class enrolled later, one of them coming from the New Zealand's Educational system. Those two students have not been included in the sampling.

As previously mentioned in Introduction, the choice fell on the 3rdº graders group due to four main reasons. One of them, could definitely be attributed to the favorable

attitude of these students, who had been described to me as hardworking and committed. Moreover, as one could observe during their EFL classes, their eagerness to participate in classroom activities, their motivation to learn, openness to new proposals and kindness made them the perfect candidates for this study. Due to time constraints, we needed to be sure that students would engage in the tasks assigned, taking them seriously since the beginning.

However, students' positive attitude towards L2 classes was neither the first, nor the most relevant reason for this work. In fact, at the very basis of it, it was a private conversation with my mentor, which took place at the very beginning of the internship, during which she shared with me her concerns about the students' grammatical accuracy in writing. More precisely, she noticed that they used to make the same errors throughout their writings, no matter what genre they were dealing with, and hence, she was afraid that they were not paying enough attention to the corrective feedback she provided them with. Keeping in mind this problem, the next step taken was to figure out two quite basic issues. Firstly, whether the students had a writing routine and secondly, discovering what type of corrective feedback they were receiving.

Having had the opportunity to observe this group during the internship helped answering to the first issue pointed out above as it became clear that this group had a well-established writing routine. They had been taught by the same English teacher, my mentor, since the first year of Secondary Education and held what they called a "Literary Journal" since then. The journal consisted of a simple notebook in which the students were regularly prompted to write in, at least, a page of it, every week or two, by experiencing different genres, such as descriptions, personal recounts, stories and opinion essays related to the specific topic of the didactic unit dealt with in their EFL classes. Writing sessions would take place on Monday or Tuesday, in class. Writing at home was also practiced at the beginnings; however, the teacher realized that some of the students would not remember to bring the journal back at school to be corrected and decided not to allow them taking their notebooks home, in order not to interfere with her EFL classroom routine and hence having all of them ready for the feedback session, at the same time. Normally the teacher would provide the title for the writing, in the case of descriptions and personal recounts, or either a starting sentence for the stories and a question or a statement as input for the opinion essays; after that, she would allow the students to work individually for 30-45 minutes to mind-map, draft and edit their writing.

How were their writings corrected? Journals were collected after each writing and entrusted to the native language assistant, who would focus on grammatical accuracy by correcting them by means of a direct form-focused corrective feedback strategy (Bitchener, 2005: 193-194), adopting a combination of error explicit corrections, possible suggestions and comments, which were never related to the content or the structure of the writing, but basically serve as positive encouragements, at the end of the writing.

Later on, during the same week in which writings had been submitted, a whole-class feedback session would follow. During these sessions, the native language assistant would project on the interactive whiteboard a PowerPoint in which she would have summarized the main errors encountered in the students' journals. Visual presentations used by the language assistant and the way they were designed posed some questions regarding their real benefit for the development of accuracy in students' writing and stimulated this investigation. In our view, the slides were oversimplified and lacked any systematicity in the way of presenting their content, at the point that, most of the time, the students would raise

their hands up asking for further clarification and were not even able to distinguish between the ill-formed sentence and the grammatically accurate one presented in the examples chosen. Furthermore, this feedback strategy implied that students would just passively listen to the explanation provided by the native language assistant and that, while some of them would spontaneously take note of the explications given, other would just not pay attention and get easily distracted.

Tantarangsee (2014) identifies four main factors which influence error making in writing in an L2: (1) "poor grammatical knowledge", (2) "the unawareness of the writing process", (3) the "lack of participation in error correction", and (4) "the inability to learn from writing errors" (Tantarangsee, 2014: 2752). The latter obstacle to written accuracy is considered to be quite relevant in particular, as Llach states (2011: xii) that "learners can learn from their errors by spotting problematic L2 areas where they need more practice".

After an accurate observation of the educational setting and the participants, we would exclude from our list of possible obstacles to written accuracy both problems of poor grammatical knowledge and difficulties regarding the awareness of the writing process; in fact, all the learners of the 3rd grade of this Bilingual Section have been awarded with the Cambridge First Certificate and, as their English teacher reassured, had been actively engaged into a well-established writing routine, since the first year of Secondary School. Nonetheless, apparently the most visible issue that was preventing them to reach a higher level of written accuracy might be closely related to the passiveness of their roles while attending the feedback session. Students were not explicitly told to take notes of the errors during the comprehensive feedback session. Besides they were allowed a short time to go back to their compositions in order to spot quickly where the correction had been made. However, as Hernández (2011: 264) highlights "once the students get their compositions back, the most challenging task for the instructor is to have [them] analyze this feedback and to make it a positive and useful learning experience."

Thus, we realized that some improvements might have been done to the way of getting back to students after their writing practice and such advancement, in our view, should affect the type of error treatment (Tantarangsee, 2014) used within this particular learning community.

3.2 Research questions

In light of the peculiarities of our particular educational context and participants, but especially, considering learners as "attentive monitors of their own progress" (Jimena et al., 2005: 5), the following questions have been formulated and have shaped our research design:

1. What could help the 3º ESO Bilingual Section students to avoid making the same errors throughout their writings and thereby improve their linguistic accuracy in the L2?
2. Would an active involvement in the corrective process make these learners improve their linguistic accuracy in the L2, i.e. decrease the total number of errors in their compositions, or at least of certain specific categories of errors?

The very first question has been answered by designing the experimental instrument, namely the "Self-monitoring Error Chart" which will be presented in section 3.3. More specifically, by means of the chart, we wanted to study whether an active involvement,

namely the engagement of students into a self-monitoring practice would raise their awareness of their most common written errors and hence would help to decrease the total number of errors in their compositions, or at least of certain specific categories of errors.

In order to answer to the above questions, firstly, the most common errors in the students' written productions needed to be identified and, secondly, a method to the error treatment strategy, alternative to the one the participants of this study were used to, should have been proposed to learners.

Besides, before implementing any treatment in our educational settings, students' beliefs and reflections on writing in English should be analyzed. With this aim in mind, the following questions have been stated:

- What was the students' main concern about the writing process?
- How aware were the students about their grammatical errors before and after the treatment?

3.3 Research design

In view of the research questions posed by this specific educational setting, the first step was taken in January when the students' journals together with the native language assistant's PowerPoint presentations for corrective sessions were collected in order to select and classify the most common problems found in the language assistant's presentations.

In parallel, two questionnaires were designed. The first one, an open-ended questionnaire with 11 questions (see Appendix II), was delineated to analyze the EFL teacher's beliefs and assumptions, principally regarding the writing routine she established in the classroom, that is, whether she regularly scaffolded the students' compositions with any pre-writing activity or what use of the journals she made. Yet, a special focus was made on the type of corrective strategy she favored. The second questionnaire anonymous and aiming at the totality of the 20 students of the classroom, as we still had not decided who would be part of both the Experimental and the Control Group, was administered to the students. It contained seven questions (see Appendix III). The first three open-ended questions were essentially aiming at involving the students in the research, by asking their personal opinions about writing in a foreign language. As Krosnick and Presser argue, "early questions should be easy and pleasant to answer, and should build rapport between the respondent and the researcher" (Krosnick & Presser, 2010: 264). A fourth question intended to stimulate students reflections on the most important stages in the writing process, namely:

a) collecting information on the topic;

b) making a mind-map;

c) organizing thoughts coherently;

d) finding the appropriate words;

e) sticking to the number of words permitted;

f) using an appropriate register for the genre;

g) applying grammar rules;

h) organizing paragraphs properly;

i) drafting;

j) editing.

By means of a rating scale, students had to put those steps in order of difficulty, from the one they considered to be the easiest to the most complicated one.

After that, two Likert type scale questions were proposed to check what strategies did students use to overcome the problems they usually found in following the writing steps exemplified in the previous questions, and to examine to what extent they were conscious of the errors in their journals. When the project was at the very beginning, the 9 categories of errors included in the questionnaire had been related to lexical and grammatical errors, errors of spelling and errors associated to the sentence structure and the organization of paragraphs (Schampfer Azar, 2000). Later, during different stages of data gathering, the nine categories of written errors were further broken down into a more detailed list of analyzable items, as it will be explained afterward.

The student questionnaire concluded with a multiple-choice attitudinal question, concerned with the learners' beliefs upon their own improvement in writing.

While reviewing research literature on possible varieties and outcomes of the most common corrective strategies applied by ESL teachers in writing, Hartwick and Perez's (2014) article "Charting writing errors to improve editing skills" turned out to be of a particular importance for the present study as it motivated the choice and the design of a possible alternative treatment we might implement. The following rationales sketched by the authors may serve our purpose since a self-monitoring chart:

> "1. Builds student awareness of how often they make the same mistakes;
> 2. Makes students accountable for their errors;
> 3. Helps us assess if students are improving because we have tangible evidence of self-correction over time;
> 4. Drives instruction [...]
> 5. Helps us [...] gather collective and individual information about what our students need" (Hartwick & Pérez, 2014: 1).

The authors' arguments in favor of using charting with ESL students laid the groundwork for designing a "Self-Monitoring Error Chart" and adapting it for our learners. Besides, as Bosher (1990: 93-95) argues:

> "[...] there should be ways of keeping track of what students are doing [...] Error charts which classify and chart students' errors from one paper to the next are one way of doing this. [...] Students should keep track of their errors and monitor their own progress."

Therefore, a first model of the chart that addressed the nine error categories included in the questionnaire was delineated. Nevertheless, as detailed at the beginning of this subsection, the writing problems encountered so far needed to be further itemized into more categories, so that the chart would target the specific high-frequency problems (Bosher, 1990) encountered in both the students' journals, and in the native language assistant's presentations. Consequently, another chart was developed for students to record their own errors "within the context of their own writing" (Bosher, 1990: 96).

In order not to overcrowd the table on the main page of the Chart, the seventeen major types of errors found at a sentence level were listed at the bottom of the same page. The same list of errors, with each error type followed by an example was provided on the back of the chart (see Appendix IV). This is the taxonomy of errors that has been eventually compiled:

a. grammatical errors

subject-verb agreement

verb tense
verb form
singular/plural noun ending
wrong article
wrong preposition
phrasal verb
apostrophe/possessive error
missing word
extra word
b.   lexical errors
incorrect word use
wrong word form
wrong collocation
c.   orthographic/spelling errors
incorrect spelling
d.   errors related to the register
formal/informal choices (contractions; incorrect word use)
e.   errors related to the organization of the sentence
wrong punctuation
wrong word order

While the two charts proposed by Perez and Hartwick (2014)were designed for students who were used to color-coding, highlighting or, in the case of advanced learners, receiving an indirect and coded feedback (Ellis, 2008), it was opted not make use of any code in the "Self-Monitoring Error chart" created for our students. Instead, the Chart contained a four-column table with the following headings:

a.   "problem", accompanied by a visual "alert" sign;
b.   "correction", with a "tick", an easily recognizable symbol of correctness;
c.   the "type of error", which the participants had to select from the ones provided in the list;
d.   the "number of errors" of each specific error type encountered.

More specifically, in the "problem" column, the participants had to copy the ill-formed sentence or misspelled and inaccurate word used in their composition; whereas in the "correction" column, they were expected to reformulate the sentence or rewrite the word correctly, following the suggestions and corrections provided in red in their journals. At the bottom of the chart, the students were required to sum the total of their errors for that particular composition, which title, together with the date of writing, they had to copy at the top of the table. In our view, the layout chosen to edit for the chart would help students to clearly visualize and number the errors that had been made in each composition.

Among all the variables that had to be taken into consideration, before starting implementing the treatment, one in particular would influence the way of carrying out our pedagogical innovation. Time constraints and the necessity not to alter the schedule of my mentor's programming and thus, her already well-established routine related to students' writing in class, made us agree on a type of treatment that would not require extra time from the students. Consequently, the chart had to be given out and completed in class. Since

it had been thought as an alternative corrective strategy to the one already in use, we decided to ask the students to concentrate on their own particular errors and to make them copy both the ill-formed and the corrected version of their sentences in the chart columns, instead of attending to the more generic whole-class feedback session, held by the native language assistant. As previously explained, in our view, during those comprehensive corrective sessions students played a passive "listener" role and just a few of them were actually taking notes or checking out their journals.

After several meetings with both my academic tutor and my school mentor, further arrangements were made: firstly, if we wanted to check whether the students would benefit or not of charting their own errors, we needed to split the classroom into an experimental and a control group. Only then, my mentor could think about who would be the perfect candidates for both groups. At the beginning, the sampling criteria that we would follow would depend on the level of achievement of the students, 6 of them would be low achievers, 6 medium and 6 high achievers, for a total of 18 students (out of 20), more precisely 9 for the Experimental Group and 9 for the Control group. However, in view of the impossibility to get, for each student, the written mark isolated from the globality of the evaluation, this sampling criterion has been discarded. After collecting the whole data, due to time constraints and for convenience, at the end, we decided to select just 6 students for the Experimental Group and 6 students for the Control group.

In the meanwhile, the analysis of the first questionnaires (the teacher's and the students' pre-treatment questionnaire) revealed some interesting differences between the answers from the girls and the boys, especially in those questions which aimed to reveal personal reflection and thus, "affective factors involved in the composition prose" (Yazdani & Samar, 2010: 359). For this reason, the previous sampling criteria were simplified and a gender-based division was adopted; a total of 6 boys and 6 girls were selected and assigned respectively to the two groups. Nevertheless, although certainly interesting, the question of whether gender, as a "stable trait" (Yazdani & Samar, 2010: 54), may determine the frequency of certain categories of errors in foreign language composition goes beyond the scope of this study. Besides, as Boroomand & Rostami (2013) point out, up to date there has been an extensive research done on the correlation between gender issues and L2 learning and speech errors (Lakoff, 1975), whereas just few studies (e.g., Berryman-Fink & Wilcox, 1983) focus on the relationship between gender and written errors.

My school mentor wanted the treatment to guarantee students' anonymity, so that each student would receive an acronym, namely Student1, Student2, etc.

In order to get an idea of the overall progress that student would make overtime, we decided to have them chart their errors from several compositions; more precisely, belonging to the first, second and third term. The compositions had been chosen by the teacher among the totality of the compositions, which approximately shared the same length. Moreover, the writings selected included three diverse literary genres:

1. two opinion essays ("Expectations for the next year", first term, and "Money makes the world go round", mid term);
2. one story ("Halloween Story");
3. a description ("My hero", mid term);
4. a formal letter ("Letter of complaint", third term).

It was planned that our research would conclude at the end of May with the administration of a post-treatment questionnaire to all the students. This questionnaire would be identical to the pre-treatment one, and would allow us to find out whether students' awareness over their errors had changed overtime.

Finally, an attitudinal questionnaire aimed to elicit the students' opinions about using the "Self-Monitoring Error Chart" was administered only to the experimental group. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the extent to which the students agreed or disagreed with the statements proposed (Dörney, 2010: 27), to understand their feelings both towards the "self-efficacy" (Pajares, 2003: 143) when completing their charts, and towards the experiment they had taken part in. Therefore, the students were asked if they:

- a. enjoyed being a member of the experimental group
- b. had preferred to attend to the native language assistant feedback sessions led by the native language assistant
- c. had troubles in filling up the chart
- d. understood easily the examples provided on the back
- e. understood their main errors and tried not to repeat them
- f. felt that they were improving

The attitudinal questionnaire was designed bearing in mind that what learners have to say is particularly relevant, as Pajares states:

> "Judgments of personal efficacy affect what students do by influencing the choices they make, the effort they expend [...] may serve students well when writing [...] because it engenders greater interest in and attention to writing, stronger effort, and greater perseverance and resiliency in the face of adversity" (Pajares, 2003: 140).

The last two questions of the attitudinal survey were open questions designed to afford the participants the possibility to expand and personalize their answers. At the same time, such questions were included to consider any possible suggestion that the students wished to make, hoping that those contributions would help to improve any future model of the "Self-monitoring Error Chart" in order to enhance its effectiveness for possible future treatments.

3.4 Data collection and data treatment procedures

The teacher's questionnaire (see Appendix II) was handed out at the very beginning of the investigation. The most relevant information gathered from the 11 open-ended questions has been summarized and is reported in section 4.1.

The students' questionnaires were handed out to the whole class before and after the treatment. In the case of the experimental group, apart from the post-treatment questionnaire, the students also had to fill in the attitudinal survey. The questionnaires were administered, completed and collected on the very same day.

Meanwhile, the process of charts gathering worked differently. First of all, the experiment was explained in detail to the whole class. The name of the students who were going to form part of the experimental group was announced. Whereas, the rest of the class was not informed about the names of the students of the control group.

Due to the fact that the teacher's schedule had to be respected, she was in charge of distributing the charts to the participants of the study and collecting them at the end of each session.

During four months (February to March), the five charts have been handed out to students during the comprehensive feedback sessions with the language assistant, which tended to last 15-20 minutes approximately. The students in the experimental group would concentrate on working on the chart and their own errors, instead of attending to the generic explanation provided by the native language assistant. At the same time, for every composition that the experimental group was self-monitoring, I completed a separate chart, for each of the 6 students in the control group, in order to have comparable data, and to check whether the overall rate of errors would diminish, increase or would present no substantial difference for the participants of the experiment.

After gathering all the information and charts from the experimental group, a separate Excel document was created for each student, which contained two types of errors from the students' compositions: the ones they had actually reported in their charts, and the errors they have failed to report. Since each composition had been previously photocopied and scanned, I could check whether the students had overlooked errors, had miscategorized them, or had not paid attention to the examples provided on the back of their charts. These annotations are discussed in section 4.3, as in my view, they constitute valuable data.

Color-coded line graphs have been created, in Word, for each student, to control their overall progress throughout the treatment period. More specifically, for simplicity, and in order to have clearer and legible graphs, it was decided to: 1) group the 17 error types listed on the back of the chart (See Appendix IV) into 5 macro-categories (grammatical errors, lexical errors, sentence structure related errors, spelling errors, errors related to the register); 2) assign a color to each of the macro-category; and 3) eliminate the error categories in which the participants did not present any difficulty. Consequently, only the relevant information was included in the graphs.

Section 4.3 presents each student's evolution graph together with a table illustrating the number of errors made in each composition item by item. To complete the individual analysis, the ranking of the top-five errors is provided, followed by examples selected from the student's journal. The overall progress of the experimental group is presented and discussed in section 4.4. Their outcomes were compared with the results obtained from the overall progress line graph of the control group. The results for both groups are discussed in section 4.5.

As mentioned above, the preliminary analysis of the students' answers in the pre-treatment questionnaires revealed interesting differences between the girls and the boys, so a division of the results per gender has been adopted to show the results of both the pre- and the post-treatment questionnaires (see Appendix IX). More precisely, the answers in both surveys provided to the three open-ended questions were codified with key words and phrases, resulting in a list of the main similarities and differences found in the learners' reflections upon writing in an L2. In particular, students' beliefs upon their main difficulties when approaching a new writing task and of error awareness were compared to those of their teacher. The results are discussed in section 4.2.
The comparison between the most relevant outcomes of both the pre-treatment and the post-treatment questionnaire are discussed in section 4.6.

To complete our data analysis, the responses obtained from the attitudinal questionnaire administered to the students in the experimental group were also examined.

The answers given to the two open-ended questions have been summarized and grouped into key-phrases, instead.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, data gathered from both pre- and post-treatment questionnaires handed out to the students at the end of June and at the end of May, respectively, is presented and discussed, together with the most relevant findings inferred from the implementation of the "Self-monitoring Error Charts" and compared with the overall progression of the control group. Before getting into this information, teacher beliefs are reported.

4.1 Teacher's Beliefs

As already explained in the Introduction and in the Methodology section of this project, this investigation was motivated by a private conversation, last November, with my mentor, Head of Study of the Bilingual Section at the public school *IES Conde de Orgaz*, in Madrid, my internship center. The teacher was particularly concerned about language accuracy in third graders' writing assignments. Those students, in particular, seemed not to pay great attention to the corrections made to their journals and apparently were making the same errors over and over again. Before implementing the chosen treatment, last January, I decided to ask her to answer some questions; for this reason, a questionnaire of 11 open-ended questions has been designed (see Appendix II).

Her answers are reported following the same order of the survey questions and discussed below. Regrettably, probably due to the amount of questions and to her strict schedule, she could only answer to them very quickly, and in my view, that is why they do not reflect the essence of the private conversation we had months before. Nevertheless, some of them still provide valuable insights.

1. The main factors that difficult students' writing, is that students do not pay attention to the examples provided. Besides, teachers are not used to give students freedom or allow them to be creative. I have asked for further explanation to this answers and she said that she meant that if students were allowed to expand their creativity, by means of unconventional activities at school, they would surprise us.

2. The major initiative the teacher has taken in her EFL classes taken in order to train students' writing skills is what she calls the "Literary Journal". Here I have to add that she has been teaching the same group since the first grade of Compulsory Secondary Education and hence, the same journals are still kept and used by the students; they are part of that class writing routine.

3. Their writing routine generally consisted of writing in the journals about a topic related to the didactic unit and then attending the comprehensive and whole-class feedback session, which normally took place a few days after. Writing in their "Literary Journals" converted into an exclusively in-class practice during the midterm due to the fact that some students started to forget to bring their journals back on Mondays.

4. The genre the teacher favored the most throughout the course has been the "opinion essay" as it develops techniques to express opinions and get the students closer to a more polished writing style.

5. The topics for each writing task were either selected from the textbook or from certain TV or radio news they had heard during the weekend and wished to use as a

starting point for the new writing task. In her view, the topics chosen were interesting to the students.

6. The only pre-activity she used to propose before the writing task was a reading from the textbook which presented both the structure (e. g., in the case of formal letters, email, essays, recounts, etc.) and the vocabulary needed for their own writing task. As I could observe during my internship, the students were allowed to use both the textbook and the dictionary while working on their writings.

7. The types of errors that she corrected more frequently were the following: grammar, errors related to sentence structure and spelling.

8. Regarding the preferred corrective feedback strategy, no marking code was used. She advocated for the direct corrective feedback. More specifically, each student received the journal back with all of the correction juxtaposed. Nevertheless, after each writing the whole class had a session of corrective conferencing, where the most frequent errors were presented on the interactive whiteboard and explained by the native language assistant.

9. In her opinion, students were well aware of the types of errors they made in their journals.

10. As a post-writing activity, sometimes the best writings were selected and read aloud.

11. In her opinion, after the corrections, she could not see any major improvement in the rate of grammatical errors. Besides, spelling and punctuation seemed to be overlooked by students. On the contrary, students looked quite confident at starting their writing task, in terms of brainstorming their ideas, planning and structuring their writings.

To conclude, from the information gathered we can infer that, according to their teacher, students' major difficulties, in terms of language accuracy are the following:

    a.   grammar, although she does not specify what aspects of grammar she is concerned with;
    b.   sentence structure, in terms of punctuation and word order;
    c.   application of spelling rules.

Furthermore, in her view, students are well aware about their major editing troubles. In the next subsection, we are going to check whether her belief corresponds to those of her students.

4.2 Students' Beliefs: the pre-treatment questionnaire (January)

It is particularly interesting to look at students' answers from the first questionnaire handed out at the end of January (see Appendix III). The students were asked to reflect upon the differences between speaking and writing in ESL (question 1). Table 1 displays boys' and girls' answers summarized into key phrases:

Table 1. Question 1: In your opinion, what are the main differences between speaking and writing in English?

Boys	Girls
− pronunciation is easier than spelling (x2) − spelling is the main problem in writing − in writing you cannot use gestures to let people understand you − writing implies thinking more, so it is more complicated (x2) − speaking is better as it implies thinking less − writing make the student feel more comfortable because it is a "private" thing − writing takes time (x2) − writing can be entertaining − speaking is more useful when you travel − speaking is faster and formal − speaking is fluent (x7)	− writing is more elegant, polite and formal − having more time to think make writing easier (x3) − pronouncing is more difficult than using the correct spelling − spelling is what you have to pay attention to (x3) − writing implies giving more details in order to be understood, while speaking implies the use of gestures and face expressions

Main similarities	Main differences
− The idea that writing implies the use of a formal register. − Spelling is the main concern when writing. − The impossibility of using gestures and face expressions in writing makes it more difficult.	− Writing implies having time to think; but while the boys consider this aspect to be negative, for the girls it is the opposite. − Pronunciation is easier for the boys and more difficult for the girls.

Spelling seems to be their major concern, and although boys and girls consider it in a different way, all of them are conscious that writing is a process which implies careful thinking and drafting. It is also interesting to see that writing is matched to formality in their imaginary, maybe because they are not used to instant messaging in L2 or they have never experienced speaking in the L2 in formal contexts.

Table 2, instead, focuses on their responses to the question "Do you like writing in English? Explain your answer":

Table 2. Question 2: Do you like writing in English?

Boys	Girls
− not much (x2) − no, I make mistakes − no, I am not good at it − yes, it is a nice language (x2) with lots of words, variations and styles − yes, it is a good way to put theory into practice (x3) − yes, especially writing stories (x2) − yes, especially if the topic is interesting − yes, it is a way to discover yourself	− yes, especially writing stories (x3) − yes, especially writing essays − yes, it is a way to keep secrets as parents do not know English − yes, it is a way to express oneself (x3) − not much, my vocabulary is not enough − not much, feelings and thoughts come easily in the L1

Main similarities	Main differences
− Stories are mentioned by both boys and girls as the favorite genre.	− While writing is a way to express oneself for the girls, for the boys is a way to practice what has been learned

The final open-ended question of the survey aimed at discovering students' considerations on the differences between writing at school and writing at home. Table 3 presents their answers paraphrased into key phrases.

Table 3. Question 3: What is the difference between writing in classroom and writing at home?

Boys	Girls
− there are no differences − writing at home is relaxing, so it is more productive (x3) − writing at home is a voluntary thing − at home, one can freely choose the topic − at home, you can search for information on the internet, in a dictionary. In class your sources are limited (x4) − in class, the teacher helps (x2) − writing in class is stressful, you get distracted	− at home, you feel comfortable so writings are more creative and accurate (x3) − at home, you can search for information and produce better writings − freedom and extra-time lead to better writings − writing at school requires a formal register − in class, you can get distracted − in class, you feel observed by the teacher

Main similarities	Main differences
− Writing at home is considered more relaxing and comfortable − The possibilities of searching for information, at home − The distractions at school	− the presence of the teacher at school is felt like something stressing by the girls but as something helpful for the boys

By means of this question, we also wished to find out the main reasons that cause difficulties to the students when writing at school. We find particularly interesting the idea that writing is acknowledged to be a process that requires time to reflect and to search for information

that can support our ideas. Thereby, according to the students, it should be carried out in a more relaxed atmosphere and not under pressure, in a noisy room and with the feeling of being observed (by the teacher, in this case).

To estimate whether students' beliefs about their specific difficulties in writing coincide with those of the teacher, we focused on questions 4 and 6 of the survey. More precisely, question 4 asked students to assign a number from 1 to 11 to the items of a list, being 1 "the easiest" and 11 "the most difficult" thing to do when writing and, consequently, to order the steps of the writing process in the increasing order of difficulty. After calculating the total average assigned by the students to each of the items of the list, we discovered differences between boys and girls which are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Question 4: Look at the following terms and assign them a number from 1 to 11, being 1 "the easiest" and 11 the "most difficult" thing to do when you approach a new writing task.

	Boys (11)	Girls (9)	Total average
a.revising	50	56	5,30
b.find the appropriate words	65	62	6,35
c.stick to the number of words permitted	60	62	6,10
d.organize your thoughts coherently	60	61	6,05
e.use an appropriate register for the genre	70	74	7,2
f.editing	84	49	6,65
g.drafting	58	32	4,50
h.apply grammar rules	80	60	7
i.organize paragraphs properly	65	63	6,40
j.making a mind-map	51	51	5,10
k.collect information on the topic	76	34	5,50

Moreover, after determining the total average of the grades assigned to each item from both the boys and the girls, we obtained a list of writing process steps in their order of difficulty (from the easiest to the most difficult), as follows:

1º drafting
2º making a mind-map
3º revising
4º collecting information on the topic
5º organizing one's own thoughts
6º sticking to the number of words permitted
7º finding the appropriate words
8º organizing paragraphs properly
9º editing
10º applying grammar rules
11º using an appropriate register for the genre

This data suggests that teacher hit the target, especially with respect to students' concern with the organization of the paragraphs and the application of grammar rules. The teacher stated in her questionnaire that students did not show any particular difficulty when approaching a new writing task; as a matter of fact, during the internship, I had the possibility to see how quickly and confidently the students would start jotting down their ideas about the topic, looking in their textbooks for collecting information or making mind-maps or notes of concepts and words that they would use. In my view, this was due to the fact that they were involved in a well-established writing routine. This particular fact, is confirmed by the data listed above.

In addition, it can be infer from the resulting list that the students felt as having troubles with register, especially with those pieces of writing that required a certain degree of formality (e. g., "Letter of Complaint," which has been analyzed in Chart 5, was one of such compositions) in terms of using appropriate vocabulary and expressions, or avoiding contractions and keeping punctuation. Formality may be perceived as something unfamiliar to a teenager's everyday oral and written communication, one just has to think about the instant messaging, with its abbreviations and misspellings (Vosloo, 2009) and thus, it is an aspect which requires further attention. Interestingly enough, when asked for their opinion about the main difference between speaking and writing, the same students coincide in describing the latter as "formal", "elegant" and "polite."

Moreover, as the responses given to the open questions indicate, while for the majority of the boys writing implies dedicating more time to think, making the practice of writing difficult and tedious, for the majority of the girls, having more time to think means approaching an easier task. Nonetheless, both groups agree on the fact that writing is more complicated than speaking because of the complexities of spelling and of the impossibility of using gestures and facial expressions while conveying the message.

As previously pointed out, the teacher was aware of the fact that the main problems of students were spelling, sentence organization, in terms of word order and sentence length, inappropriate use of punctuation, and grammar. However, since she did not specify which aspects of grammar were the most complicated ones for her students, the errors encountered in students' journals, so far, were used to design question 6: "How often do you find the following corrections on your journal?" Table 5 displays the answers given by both the girls and the boys, while Graph 1 shows the total obtained between boys' and girls' answers. The most relevant information found in their answers has been summarized in Table 6. Note that the errors that the teacher claimed to be the most frequent and overlooked by the students have been written in bold. Nonetheless, in the rest of the table, only the items that have received a score of equal to or more than 4 from the students have been included.

Table 5. Question 6: How often do you find the following corrections on your journals?

Boys	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Girls	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly
a. Subject-verb agreement	1	7	0	1	a. Subject-verb agreement	1	2	6	0
b. Phrasal verbs	1	3	5	0	b. Phrasal verbs	0	2	5	2
c. Prepositions	2	3	3	1	c. Prepositions	1	2	4	2
d. Word choice	1	5	2	1	d. Word choice	1	4	3	1
e. Spelling	0	5	3	1	e. Spelling	1	5	2	1

f. Punctuation	3	4	1	1	f. Punctuation	2	1	3	3
g. Sentence length	2	1	2	4	g. Sentence length	1	3	2	3
h. Verb tense	1	5	2	1	h. Verb tense	2	3	4	0
i. Gender & pronouns	3	5	1	0	i. Gender & pronouns	4	3	1	1

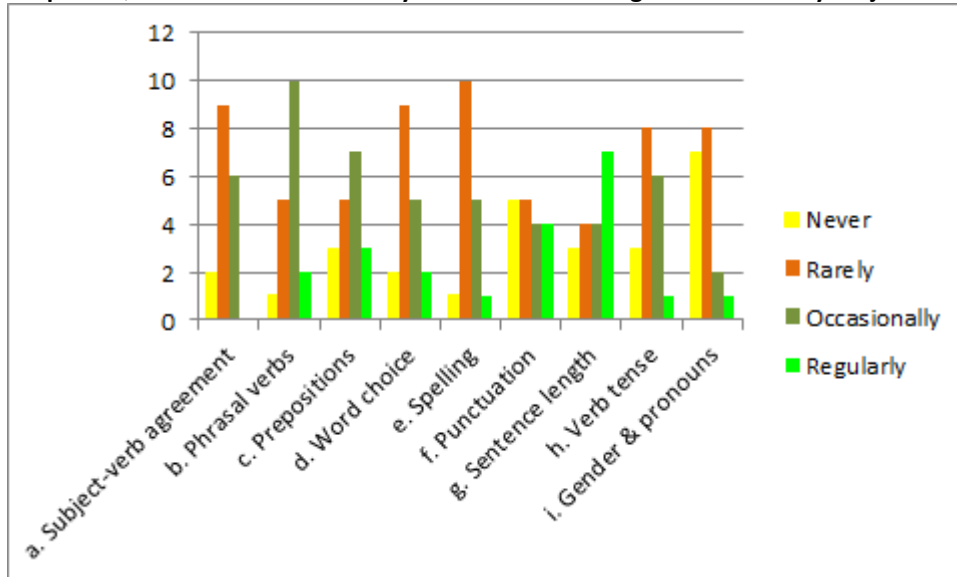**Graph 1. Question 6: How often do you find the following corrections on your journals?**


Table 6. Summary of the most relevant findings

9. boys	9. girls
7/9 *rarely* found subject-verb agreement errors 5/9 *rarely* found word choice errors 5/9 *rarely* found spelling errors 5/9 *rarely* found verb tense errors 5/9 *rarely* found pronouns errors 4/9 *rarely* found punctuation errors 4/9 *occasionally* found phrasal verbs errors 4/9 *regularly* found sentence length problems 1/9 *regularly* found spelling errors	4/9 *never* found gender pronouns errors 5/9 *rarely* found spelling errors 5/9 *rarely* found word choice errors 6/9 *occasionally* found subject-verb agreement errors 5/9 *occasionally* found phrasal verbs errors 5/9 *occasionally* found preposition errors 3/9 *regularly* found sentence length problems 3/9 *regularly* found punctuation errors 1/9 *regularly* found spelling errors

The data reported above suggests that students' beliefs about their most frequent specific errors do not exactly match the macro-categories of errors that the teacher highlighted in her questionnaire. In fact, while the teacher states that the major problems that her students face are related to sentence construction and organization (e. g., punctuation, word order, paragraph length, etc.), the majority of the students claim to find just rarely misspelled words and misuse of the punctuation, in the case of the boys on their

writings. Nevertheless, 4 boys out of 9 indicate that they regularly find errors related to the sentence length; whereas, just 3 girls out of 9 seem to regularly find sentence structure related problems in their journals.

From these preliminary results, it may be inferred that, although the students may be aware about their main difficulties when approaching a new writing task, they may not be able to identify which exactly their problems in relation to language accuracy are and hence, it may be truth that, as their teacher claims, they tend to overlook the correction made on their journals. Regarding this, as the answers to question 5 demonstrate, just 4 students out of 18 declare to regularly go back to their journals when language doubts arise. As the graph below illustrates, the rest of the students indicated that, when they write, they use the following strategies to overcome difficulties:

Graph 2. Question 5. What do you usually do to overcome such difficulties, when working at home?
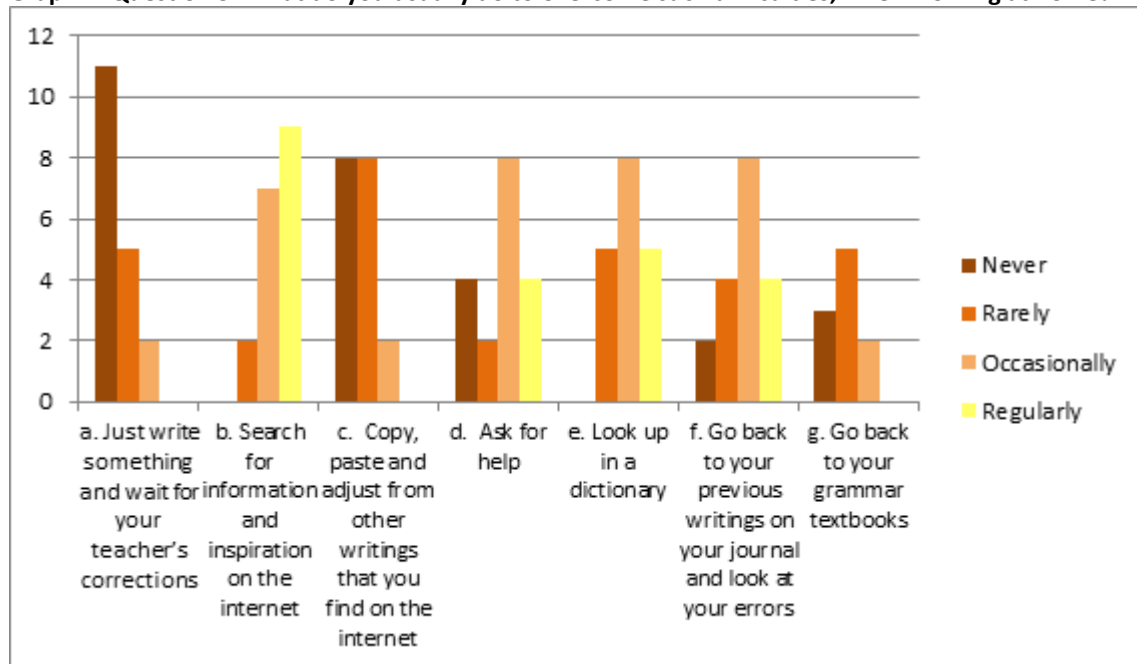
In light of this, the following question can be rightfully asked, would the students be more accurate when writing if they paid more attention to their errors, and thus to the corrections provided in their journals? This issue is going to be discussed in the next subsections. Before concluding the analysis of this first questionnaire it is important to consider students' beliefs about the improvement of their writing skills. The answers that they gave to the last question are reported in Table 7, which shows that the boys have been a little more positive than the girls regarding their progression. Had these results been the same after 4 months? In section 4.6 they will be compared to those obtained from the students' post-treatment questionnaires.

Table 7. Which of the following is true? Cross the most appropriate option

| I am making...	Boys	Girls
a. good progress at writing	33,3%	22,2%
b. some progress at writing	66,7%	55,5%
c. little progress at writing	0%	0%
d. no progress at writing	0%	22,2%

4.3 Chart implementation in the Experimental Group. Type of errors and overall progress

In this subsection, we are going to present and discuss the results gathered from the analysis of the five charts that each student had filled in with his or her own errors, during the four months of the experiment.

4.3.1 Student 1

The following line graph shows the evolution of Student 1 with respect to the total of errors made in each of the 5 macro-categories.

Graph 3.
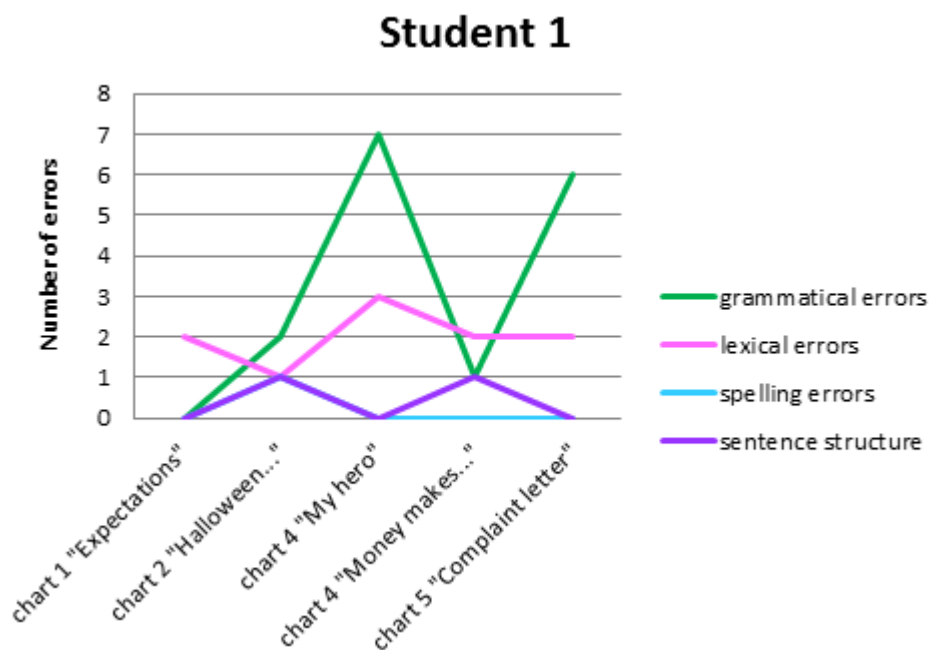
As it can be inferred from the line graph, Student 1 did not make any register-related error in his 5 writings.

In addition, the errors connected to sentence structure have been minimal, with just one "wrong word order" error in chart 2, and one missing comma in chart 4.
Grammatical errors have raised to the highest point in chart 3, fell dramatically in chart 4 and then increased again in chart 5.

Besides, although Student 1 misspelled 1 word ("*companie"), as reported in chart 4, his progression in the lexical error category has been fluctuating. Lexical error increased in composition 3, but then decreased and remained stable in charts 4 and 5.

The graph shows that using the "Self-Monitoring Error Chart" did not make any substantial difference to this student's progression. For instance, the itemization of the Grammatical Error category shows that, although the "verb tense" and the "missing word" error type decreased between chart 3 and chart 5, the number of errors related to the wrong use of the preposition increased, instead.

In table 8 below, the items of each macro category have been further broken down and detailed:

Table 8. Student 1: Error Compilation

	verb tense	verb form	singular-plural	wrong preposition	extra word	missing word	word form	incorrect word use	spelling	word order	punctuation
Chart1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Chart2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	0
Chart3	1	1	1	1	0	3	1	2	0	0	0
Chart4	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
Chart5	1	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	2	1	3	3	5	3	7	1	1	1

In addition, by the analysis of Student 1's high-frequency errors, table 9 has been designed to show the student's top five types of errors. Each category is accompanied by some examples which have been copied from this student's compositions.

Table 9. Student 1.: Errors top-five

Ranking	Error Type	Examples from the journal
1	Incorrect word use	"I've got injured" [I am injured] *Expectations* "2 years before" [2 years earlier] *Halloween Story* "We could not enter until 10" [go/come in] *Letter of complaint*
2	Missing word	"He has become player" [a player] *My hero* "I am sure you know him, Iker Casillas!" [is Iker Casillas] *My hero* "I booked a dinner the 18th of May" [on the 18th] *Letter of complaint*
3	Wrong preposition	"a player of the Spanish team" [in]*My hero* "we arrived to the restaurant" [at] ; "I trusted you for this" [with] Letter of complaint
	Extra word	"I booked for a dinner" [I booked a dinner] Letter of complaint
	Word form	"...for human beings to advance and evolute" [evolve] "...better or worst" [worse] *Money makes the world go round* "he's got...two Europe cups" [European] *My hero*
4	Verb tense	"He is famous since he was 17" [has been famous] *My hero* "the day when everything should have been perfect [should be perfect] *Letter of complaint*
	Verb form	

		My hero born" [was born] *My hero* "before entering your money decides…"[before you enter] *Money makes the world go round*
5	Singular-Plural ending Word order Punctuation	"two Champions League" [Leagues] *My hero* "There he has met a nice and kind woman" [He has met a nice and kind woman there] *Halloween Story* "different, better or worse_who knows" [worse, who knows] *Money makes the world go round*

Note: Code used:

Red: student's error

Green and in square brackets: teacher's correction

Italics: the title of the composition

After analyzing this data, it may be interesting to check the extent to which this student was accurate while filling his charts in with the errors and the corrections marked on his compositions. His charts revealed, indeed, that he failed to report the 21% of the errors and corrections made by the teacher, being his omissions: 3 incorrect word choices, 3 missing words, 1 missing comma.

On the other hand, the same student was quite careful in copying his errors, providing always the full sentence and not just the single error, using two different colors for both the problem and the correction.

Moreover, although he miscategorized "word form" for "spelling", something which may be easily understood, he was accurate enough to specify whether the "incorrect word" used was a verb or a noun.

4.3.2 Student 2

As the graph below demonstrates, Student 2 increased his rate of grammatical errors in the last writing, after a significant decrease between compositions 2 and 4.

It is interesting to see how lexical errors and sentence structure related errors dropped in the "Letter of Complaint", while spelling errors remained quite stable.

No errors related to the register were encountered in his compositions.

Graph 4.
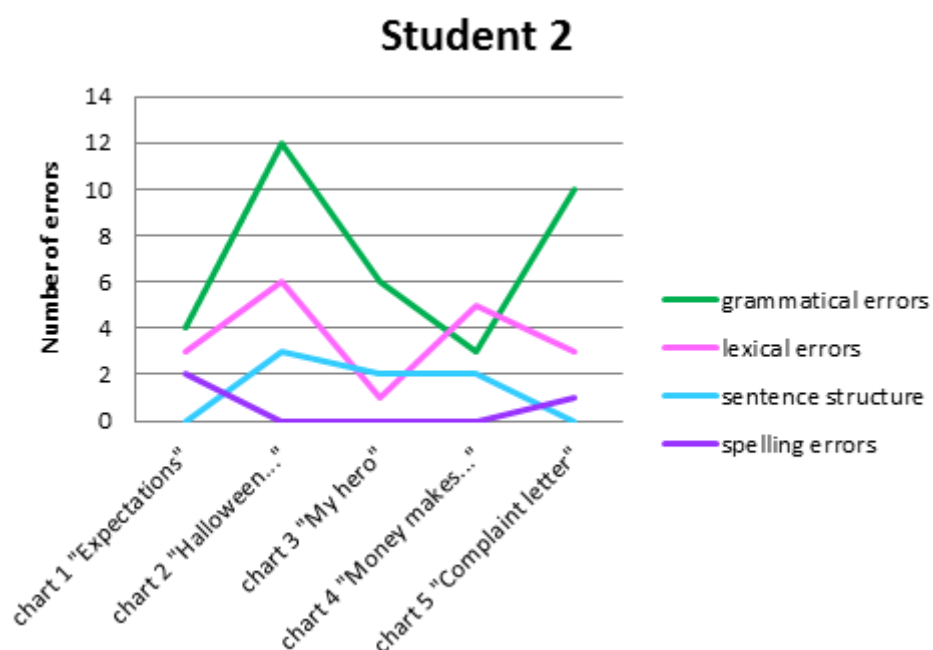
The table 10 shows a more detailed compilation of the errors made by Student 2 in each item belonging to the 4 macro-categories of errors detected in his compositions.

Table 10. Student 2: Error Compilation

	subject verb agreement	verb tense	verb form	extra word	missing word	apostrophe possessive	wrong prep.	incorrect word use	spelling	punctuation	word order
chart 1	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	3	2	0	0
chart 2	0	6	2	0	2	2	0	6	0	3	0
chart 3	0	0	0	1	3	0	2	1	0	1	1
chart 4	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	0	2	0
chart 5	4	0	2	1	2	0	1	3	1	0	0
total	5	7	5	3	9	2	4	18	3	6	1

More specifically, this student presented difficulties in 11 different error categories, the 50% of them belong to grammar, while the 28% are connected to problems with the vocabulary. In table 11, a list of his top-five of errors is analyzed and some examples from his compositions are reported, for a better understanding of his problems.

Table 11. Student 2: Error top-five

Ranking	Error type	Examples from the journals
1	Incorrect word use	"handing a machete" [holding a machete] *Halloween Story* "I would like the new teacher to be easy" [nice] *Expectations*
2	missing word	"with key" [with a key] *Halloween* "because the game" [because of the game] *My hero* "bring us" [bring it to us] *Letter of Complaint*
3	verb tense	"they go down" [went]; "they fall"[fell] "he tries" [tried]; "he can't"[couldn't] *Halloween Story*
4	punctuation	"He is my hero because of the game Minecraft he and his team…" [. He and his team] *My hero*
5	Subject verb agreement verb form	"Money make" [makes]; *Money makes...* "you born rich" [you are born rich] *Money makes...*

Note: Code used:
Red: student's error
Green and in square brackets: teacher's correction
Italics: the title of the composition

In our view, the case of Student 2 is quite interesting. From a cross-check analysis of both his charts and his compositions, we could calculate that the 25% of the corrections made to his writings went unnoticed. Of this 25%, most of them were verb tenses errors and wrong word choices. However, as we could infer from the graph of his evolution, his rate of lexical and sentence structure-related errors decreased in the last writing. We do not know whether the implementation of the chart was responsible for this reduction or not, as due to time constraints we could not go on with our treatment to further verify it. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that this decrease started at the same time that the student began filling his charts more carefully. As a matter of fact, while in chart 2 he failed to report 8 errors out of 21, he just skipped one correction in both charts 4 and 5. In addition, it seems that he started to pay more attention to the examples provided on the back of his chart, as some of the miscategorization he made were minor and, actually, made sense (e. g., "wrong subject" for "subject-verb agreement"). Moreover, we can notice that instead of just copying the misused or ill-formed word, Student2 started copying part of the sentence it was embedded in.

4.3.3 Student 3

As it can be inferred from the line graph below, while charting his errors, Student 3 improved in spelling from chart 1 to chart 4. Unfortunately, spelling error rate raised up again in the last composition. The same increase applied to grammatical and lexical errors, suggesting that this student may have found the last writing particularly complex. In addition, sentence structure errors have been minimal but stable between compositions 3 and 4 and dropped to 0 in the last writing. No errors related to the register have been found.

Graph 5.

Student 3
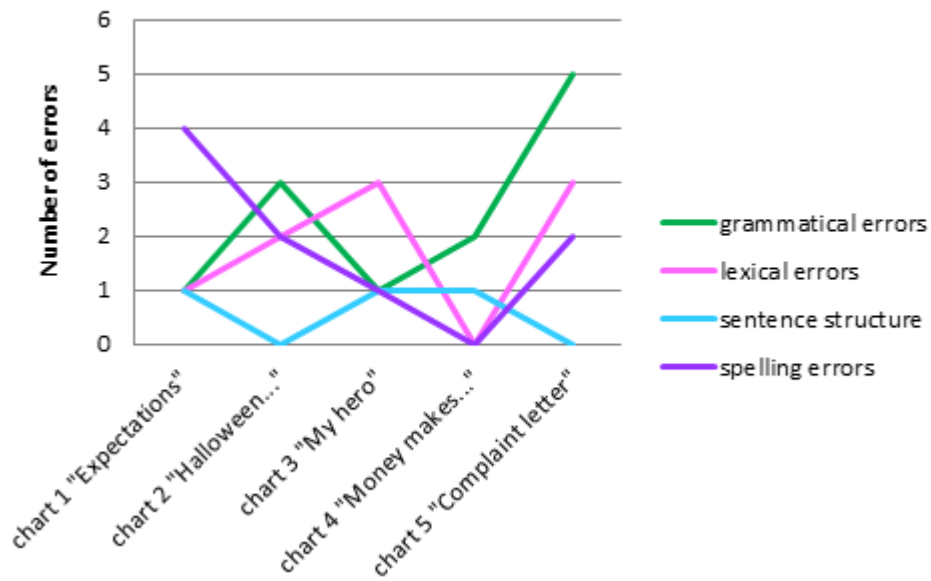
In general, apart from the errors related to spelling, this graph does not suggest any particular improvement, in terms of accuracy, for this particular student. Although, to complete the analysis we are going to show the totality of his errors in table 12 below:

Table 12. Student 3: Error Compilation

	subject verb agreement	verb tense	verb form	extra word	missing word	wrong preposition	incorrect word use	spelling	word order
chart 1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1
chart 2	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	0
chart 3	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	1
chart 4	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
chart 5	0	0	1	3	0	1	3	2	0
total	1	1	3	3	1	5	9	9	3

With respect to Students 1 and 2 analyzed above, Student 3's errors cover only 9 different categories. In light of this data, in this specific case, we present a "top-three" of high frequency errors, as shown in the table below.

Table 13. Student 3: Error top-three

Ranking	Error type	Examples from the journal
1	Incorrect word use Spelling	"the voice of the clown was louder and louder" [became] *Halloween Story* "very exicted of starting" [excited] *Expectations* "lauther" [louder] *Halloween Story*
2	Wrong preposition	"he run away of the basement" [from]; "he hide on the kitchen" [in] *Halloween Story*
3	Verb form Extra word Word order	"he born in Oviedo" [was born] *My hero* "I went to eat to the Barry's Restaurant" [to Barry's Restaurant] *Letter of Complaint* "We can't continue with our style of life" [our lifestyle] *Money makes...*

Note: Code used:
Red: student's error
Green and in square brackets: teacher's correction
Italics: the title of the composition

In the case of Student 3, just one "incorrect word use" error has gone unnoticed while charting errors from the "Halloween Story". In the rest of his charts, he reported all of the corrections made by the teacher, as a cross-check analysis of both his journals and his chart revealed. Nevertheless, as we can see in table 13, in chart 1 he miscategorized the misspelling of "*excited" and labeled it as a "pronoun" error, copying four times the same misspelled word both in the problem column and in the correction one. This may be due to the fact that it was still at the beginning of the experiment, and that he might have not paid enough attention to the examples on the back of the chart.

4.3.4 Student 4

At first glance, the evolution graph below reveals that Student 4 progressed in linguistic accuracy, in all of the errors types, with especial reference to the macro-categories of Grammatical Error and Spelling. Both groups of errors have decreased significantly between charts 2 and 5; but unfortunately, we do not know whether she continued progressing, as the experiment reached its ending in May. However, it seems that composition 4, namely the opinion essay "Money makes the world go round", has been particularly complex to this student, as shown by the peak of grammatical, lexical and sentence structure errors she made in it.
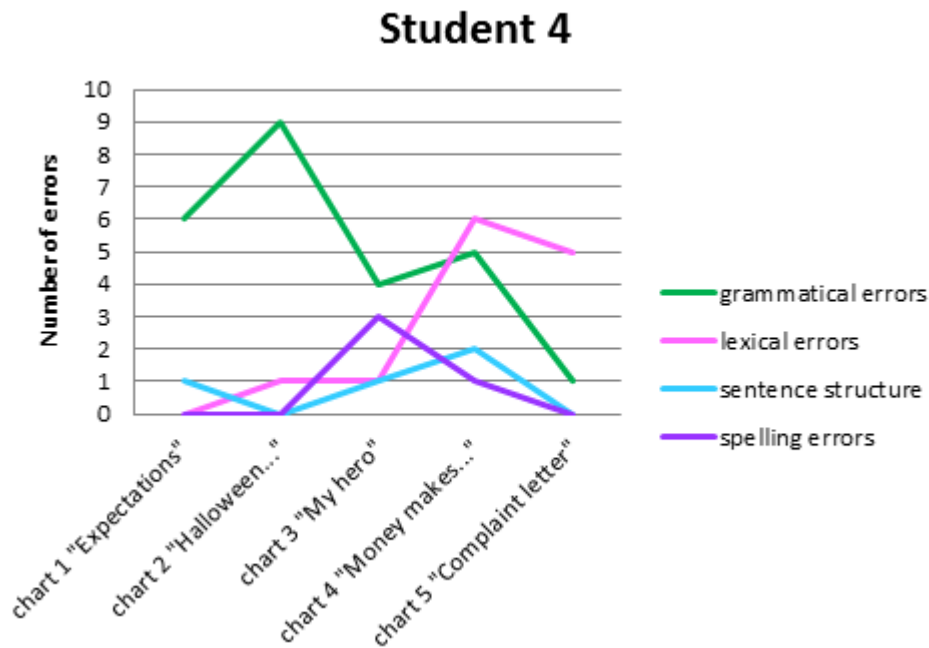
Graph 6.

Table 14 depicts the totality of errors that Student 4 made in each of the items included in the macro-categories. With respect to Students 1-3 analyzed so far, it is evident that by the end of the experiment the rate of errors had decreased in her compositions; although the correction she received on her journals covered a wider range of error types (12).

Table 14. Student 4: Errors Compilation

	verb tense	verb form	singular plural	apostrophe possessive	extra word	missing word	wrong prep	word order	spelling	incorrect word use	word form	wrong collocation
Chart1	0	2	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Chart2	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	1	0
Chart3	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	1	0	0
Chart4	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	5	1	0
Chart5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	1
Total	5	2	1	1	6	6	3	4	4	10	3	1

Of those errors, the following have been the most frequent:

Table 15. Student 4: Errors top-five

Ranking	Error Type	Examples from the journal
1	Incorrect word use	"catching eyes" [striking eyes] *My hero* "listen to people talking about" [hear] *Money makes...*
2	missing word extra word	"talking about economy" [the economy] *Money makes...* "is to have great marks"[it is] *Expectations* "to tell to my friends" *Expectations* "The money makes" *Money makes...*
3	verb tense	"They started running to what seem the exit" [seemed] *Halloween Story*
4	Word order spelling	"The volleyball team of the high school" [The high school volleyball team] *Expectations* "Heroe" [hero]; "definetly" [definitely] *My hero*
5	prepositions word form	"inviting my family to a cruise"[on] *Money makes…* "death body" [dead body] *Halloween story*

Note: Code used:

Red: student's error

Green and in square brackets: teacher's correction

Italics: the title of the composition

Of all the 46 corrections made on her compositions, just the 17% went unnoticed by Student 4. More specifically, the student failed to report "word form errors" and "extra words", although she filled her chart 5 very accurately. In addition, no significant mis-categorizations can be found, suggesting that this student may have taken the charting task quite seriously and paid attention to the examples of errors provided on the back of the chart, which have guided her while reflecting on her own errors.

4.4.5 Student 5

By the study of the evolution chart of Student 5 below, two main points stand out immediately. That is to say, this graph displays both an upward and a downward trend. More specifically, while on the one hand, sentence structure related, lexical and spelling errors rates have risen at the end of the treatment, grammatical errors have significantly decreased. However, both the increments and the decrease of Student 5 errors rate may not be directly related to the use of the chart as all of the four macro-categories lines fluctuate throughout the whole experiment. In general, writing a Halloween story seems to have been the most challenging composition to Student 5, followed by the essay "Money makes the world go round" and the "Complaint letter".
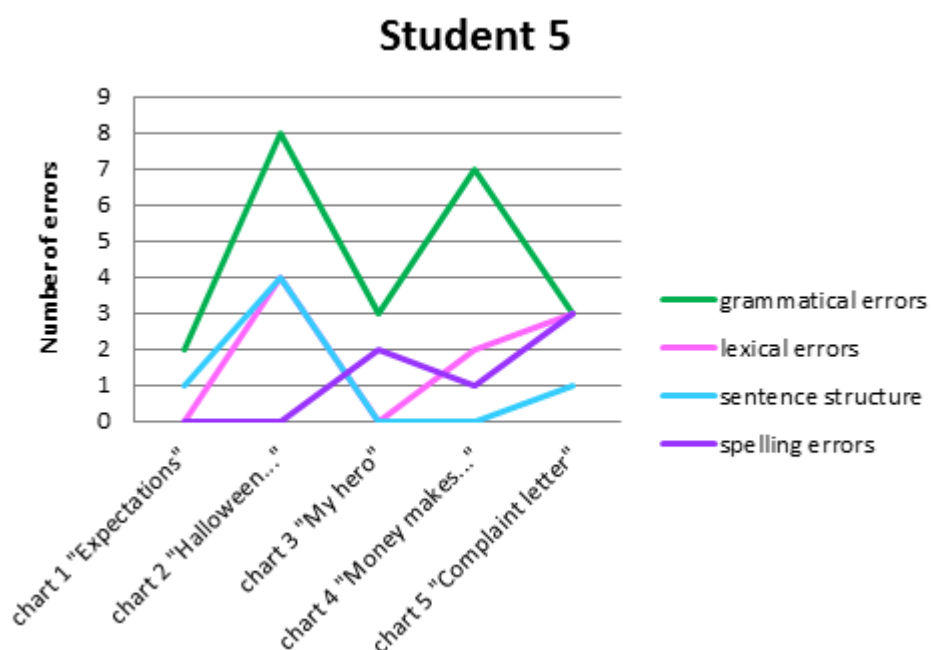
Graph 7.

Student 5

Table 16 displays the total of errors that Student 5 made in each category:

Table 16. Student 5: Error Compilation

	subject verb agreement	verb tense	verb form	wrong prep.	extra word	missing word	word form	incorrect word use	spelling	word order	punctuation
chart 1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
chart 2	0	3	0	4	0	1	1	3	0	0	4
chart 3	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
chart 4	1	0	1	0	1	4	1	1	1	0	0
chart 5	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	3	1	0
total	1	4	3	5	2	8	2	7	6	2	4

In Table 17, the 5 most frequent errors in which Student 5 showed problems throughout the treatment period have been classified and accompanied by examples extrapolated from her journal.

Table 17. Student 5: Errors top-five

Ranking	Error type	Examples from the journal
1	Missing Word	"...always love songs he is" [and he is] *My hero* "to make them happy" [in order to…] *Money makes...*
2	Incorrect word use	"put me another" [give me] *Complaint letter* "without so much money" [as much money] *Money makes...*
3	Spelling	"foreward" [forward] *Complaint letter* "handson" [handsome] *My hero*
4	Wrong Preposition	"on a restaurant" [in]; "at the third day" [on] *Halloween Story*
5	Verb tense Punctuation	"He looked" [had looked] "He help her to stand up" [helped] *Halloween Story* "just at the exit of the graveyard he…" [graveyard, he] Halloween story

Note: Code used:

Red: student's error

Green and in square brackets: teacher's correction

Italics: the title of the composition

Student 5 failed to record 22% of the correction made on her journal. Yet, interestingly enough, most of the errors that went unnoticed belong to the "missing word" category and to the missing use of the punctuation. On the other hand, in general, the analysis of the 5 charts revealed that Student 5 used to group the errors considered to belong to the same type in the same box of the chart, although with a few and minimal errors of miscategorization (e. g., wrong article instead of "extra word", which was the article itself). In our view, this accurate grouping of the errors may mean that the student was actively reflecting on them; an attitude that we wished to promote by implementing our innovative treatment.
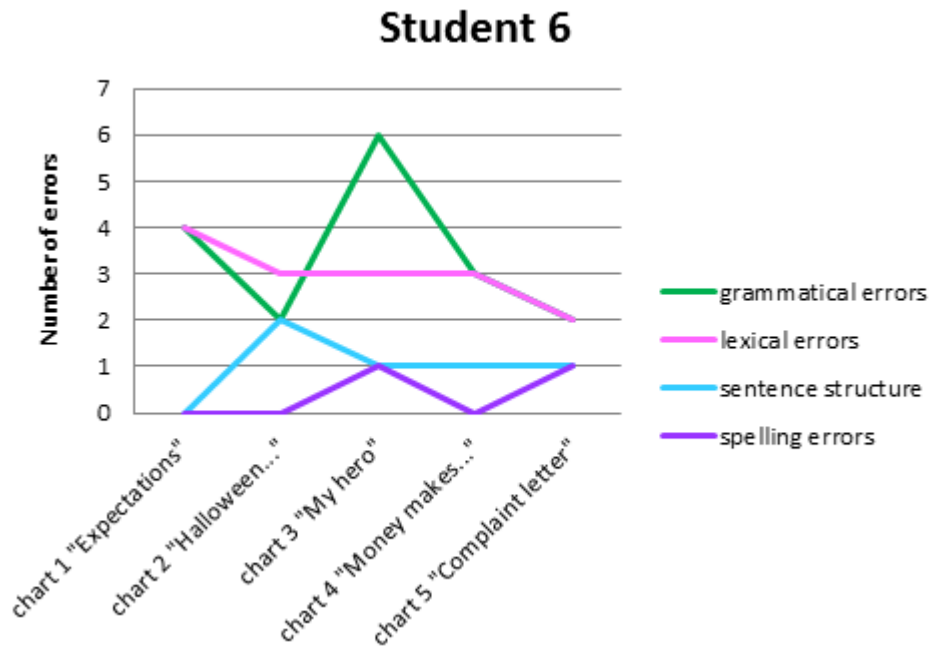
Graph. 8

Student 6

In the line graph obtained with the outcomes of the five charts filled in by Student 6 both lexical and grammatical errors rate went down in composition 5. More precisely, grammatical errors reached the highest point in the vertical axes, in correspondence to the composition "My hero", a description which seems to have been particularly challenging to this student.

Sentence structure errors decreased between writings 2 and 3, to remain stable until the end of the treatment.

Spelling errors were minor and display a fluctuating trend, instead.

Table 18. Student 6: Errors compilation

	subject-verb agreement	verb tense	wrong prep.	extra word	missing word	wrong article	word order	punctuation	wrong collocation	incorrect word use	word form	spelling
chart 1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
chart 2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	3	0	0
chart 3	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	1
chart 4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0
chart 5	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1
total	6	2	1	1	5	2	4	1	2	11	2	2

The analysis of Table 18 shows that the errors made by Student 6 encompass a wide range of categories, namely 12; especially if compared to Student 1 who only presented 9 different types of errors. Table 19 shows a top-five of this student's errors.

Table 19. Student 6: Errors top-five

Ranking	Error type	Examples from the journal
1	Incorrect word use	"but yet enough age to have experienced" [old enough] *My hero* "I cannot afford almost anything" [I can hardly afford anything] *Money makes...*
2	subject-verb agreement	"people with a lot of money are" [people...is] *Money makes* "my future plans is"[are] *Expectations*
3	missing word	"In his novels always includes" [he always includes] *My hero*
4	word order	"pick up her" [pick her up] *Halloween Story*
5	verb tense	"they haven't made a booking"[hadn't made] *Complaint letter*
	wrong article	"All of the sudden"[all of a sudden] *Halloween Story*
	wrong collocation	"He seems funny" [looks funny] *My hero*
	word form	"a teenager girl" [teenage girl] *My hero*
	spelling	"happyness" [happiness] *My hero*

Note: Code used:
Red: student's error
Green and in square brackets: teacher's correction
Italics: the title of the composition

Student 6 has failed to report just the 10% of the corrections made on her compositions, which means that she did not notice a wrong word choice ("to *go by a shortcut"), an extra word ("old enough to have experienced *and lived so many things"), a subject verb agreement ("people *is") and one collocation ("money *makes an important role"). She made just minor misscategorizations when labeling her errors, and tried to group all of the errors of the same type together in the same boxes. Again, it is considered a sign of the student's active participation in charting and of her deep reflection upon her written accuracy in the L2.

4.4 The Experimental Group: a general overview

The chart below displays the evolution of the experimental group as a whole.

Graph 9.
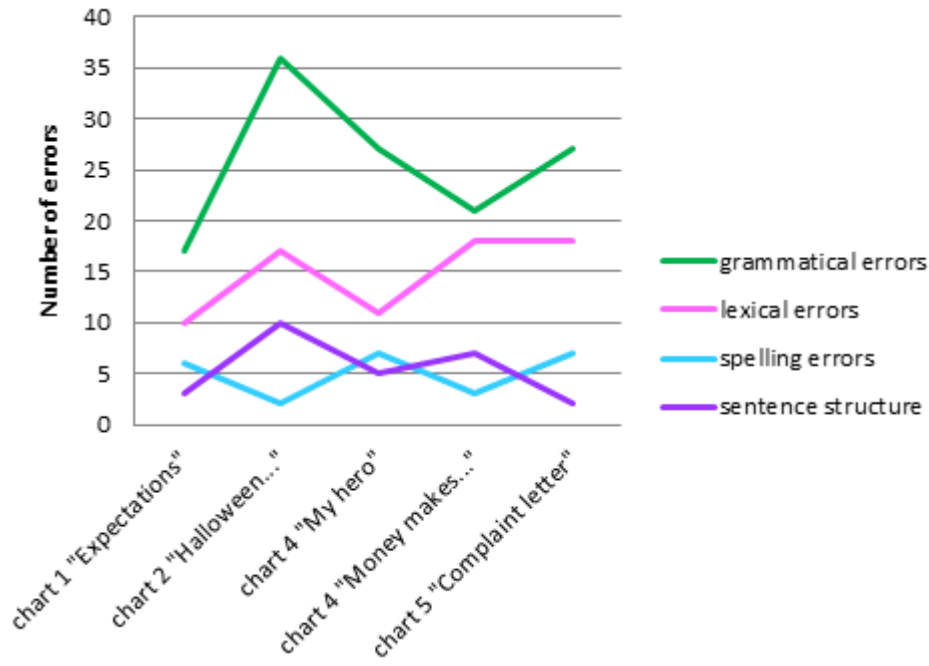
It can be seen that, in general, the trend has been fluctuating during the whole experiment; especially with regards to the spelling and the sentence structure related errors, although it is interesting to notice how the latter has diminished in the last composition. More specifically, because, as discussed in section 4.1, sentence structure related errors were one of the main concerns of the teacher, together with misspelling. In table 20, which reports the top-five errors made by the experimental group, is it possible to see that neither punctuation, nor word order are enumerated among the most frequent ones; whereas spelling occupies the third position in the ranking.

Lexical errors, instead, after a decrease between writings 2 and 3 have raised up again in the essay "Money makes the world go round" and kept stable in the last composition.

Grammatical errors, on the other hand, have dropped significantly after completing chart 2 and until chart 4, only to increase again in the last composition. Regarding this, in our view, it is important to point out that the "Complaint Letter" have been quite challenging for our students. My mentor confirmed to me that she had the whole class rewriting it again. Unfortunately, I have been informed when it was already too late to administer chart 6 to the experimental group. Due to time constraints and to the necessity of sticking to my school mentor's needs, we just had time to hand out 5 charts and to have our students reporting errors related to the second version of the Complaint letter. Nevertheless, it should have been interesting to cross-check the errors made in the two versions of the letter and to see whether the chart had made any substantial difference to the edited version of this last composition.

Table 20 illustrates the most frequent errors of the experimental group compiled during the treatment.

Table 20. Experimental Group: Top-five

Ranking	Type of errors	total
1	Incorrect word use	62
2	Missing word	34
3	Spelling	22
4	Verb tense	21
5	Wrong preposition	14

4.5 Control Group results: comparison and discussion

In order to check whether charting errors have made any substantial difference to the experimental group, we needed to compare its overall results with those of the control group, who did not use the chart and continued attending the language assistant's feedback session.

The evolution graph with the outcomes of the control group obtained in each of the macro-categories of errors identified reveals that it includes errors of register. That is to say, in the journals of the control group students (see Appendix 7), we found a total of 16 errors of register (e.g., "*wanna; gonna*; *stuff; *you know…, life is, etc.). This fact does not depend on the use of the chart, as no errors related to the register have been found in the experimental group's writings. Nevertheless, it is still a significant difference between the two groups, especially if we consider that this trend decreased consistently and disappeared by the end of the term.

In comparison with the results of the Experimental group in the sentence structure related errors, the trend indicates that this type of errors has decreased in both groups in the last term, which can be tentatively interpreted that the chart did not benefit the students in the experimental group in this aspect. As a matter of fact, while the Control Group started to diminish their sentence structure related errors already from composition 2 continued a gradual decrease until the end of the term; the Experimental group's rate of sentence structure related errors decreased but experienced a fluctuation throughout the whole treatment.

Lexical errors reached the highest peak with composition 3, as the Control Group evolution chart illustrates and then started to fall until chart 5. On the other hand, after the implementation of chart 2 lexical error rate decreased for the students of the Experimental Group, although it went up in composition 3 and kept stable until the end.

Regarding spelling errors, a comparison between the results of the Experimental group in tables 12 and 13 and those of the Control group in Table 21 reveals that the Control group totalized more misspelled words (47) than the Experimental Group (22). Nevertheless, while the spelling error rate for the Control Group kept stable between compositions 3 and 5, the spelling error rate of the Experimental Group was moving upward and downward throughout the treatment. This data may suggest that the students belonging to this last group might have felt more confident to "take the risk" and thus to use different words without being sure of their exact spelling, or that this fluctuation might depend on other individual variables, or are just due to casualty.

Comparing the evolution in the rate of grammatical errors made by the two groups, we can easily see that it started to significantly go downward from writing 2 and just went

upward in composition 5, which the teacher considered to be the most challenging to the whole class. Grammatical errors diminished in that specific composition for the Control Group but, on the other hand, consistently fluctuated throughout the 5 writings. Would the Experimental group continued to decrease its rate of grammatical errors? In light of this data, should we consider the "Self-Monitoring Error Chart" as a useful aid to the students' improvement in grammatical accuracy? We wonder what would have happened if we could check the students' future compositions.

Graph 10.
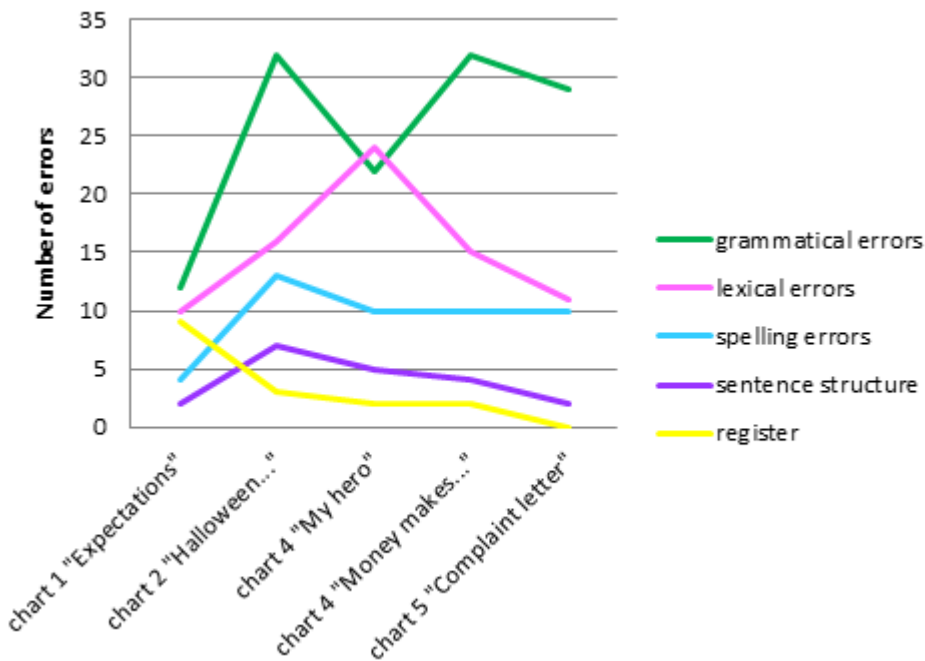
To conclude the comparison between the two groups, table 21 compiles the top-five errors encountered after the analysis of the Control Group journals (see Appendix VII). The data illustrates how the main problem in both groups is related to the poor or improper use of the vocabulary (e.g., "*inside and *outside the track [on and away from the track]; *last day [yesterday]; "it is *closed with a key [locked]; he just get inside *home [house]; my *classroom people [classmates]; etc.)

On the other hand, the main difference between the two groups can be found in the 4th position of the ranking; the Control Group presented more problems with "extra words" ("show *the people"; "to be a free, critical and *a good person"; I am going to attend *to flamenco lessons"; etc.), whereas the Experimental Group made more "verb tense" errors, especially failing to use the past tense while narrating a story.

To conclude, we can highlight that the Experimental Group totalized less errors (153), with respect to the Control Group (190).

Table 21. Control Group: Errors Top-five

Ranking	Error Type	Total
1	Incorrect word use	69
2	Spelling	47
3	Missing word	27
4	Extra word	26
5	wrong prepositions	21

4.6 Students' Beliefs: post-treatment questionnaire (May). Comparison and discussion

After four months of an in-class intensive practice of the writing skills, we handed out the same questionnaire to all the students and cross checked their answers to see whether their reflections upon writing in English and the main problems that it poses to them. In this section, we are going to present the most relevant findings obtained by the comparison of the results of the pre- and the post-treatment questionnaires.

In particular, table 22 illustrates the difference between the answers provided to question 4 in which the students had to assign to each step of the writing process a number from 1 to 11, being 1 the "easiest" and 11 "the most difficult" thing to do when approaching a new composition. The ranking has been obtained by calculating the average "level of difficulty" assigned by the totality of the students to each item of the list.

Table 22. Question 4: Writing Process main steps

| Ranking	Writing steps (January)	Ranking	Writing steps (May)
1	use an appropriate register for the genre	1	stick to the number of words permitted
2	apply grammar rules	2	find the appropriate words
3	edit	3	use an appropriate register for the genre
4	find the appropriate words	4	edit
5	organize paragraphs properly	5	apply grammar rules
6	stick to the numbers of words permitted	6	organize one's own thoughts
7	organize one's own thoughts	7	organize paragraphs properly
8	collect information on the topic	8	collect information on the topic
9	revise	9	revise
10	make a mind-map	10	make a mind-map
11	draft	11	draft

Is it interesting to notice that the last 4 positions in the ranking list are still held by the same items, namely "collect information on the topic"; "revise"; "make a mind-map"; "draft".

On the other hand, two positions in table 22? made us wonder whether our chart could have influenced the answers of the students or not: 1) the application of grammar rules falls from the second to the fifth position in May and 2) finding the appropriate words to express themselves moves from the fourth to the second position. As a matter of fact, as tables 20 and 21 demonstrate, "incorrect word use" has been the most frequent error for both the Experimental and the Control Group.

In our view, the practice of writing, focusing on some specific genres (mainly, formal letters and opinion essays) and insisting on the importance of counting words made during the last four months of the course to prepare the students for the Cambridge CAE, may have influenced students' answers, as well. More specifically, this may be the reason why "stick to the number of words permitted", "find the appropriate words" and "use an appropriate register for the genre" held the first three positions in the post-treatment questionnaire.

Sentence structure related errors and spelling were two of the teacher's concerns, as we pointed out in the section 4.1. In January, 11 students out of 18 referred to be "regularly" corrected on errors related to the organization of the sentence (punctuation and sentence length). Whereas, in May, as the graph below illustrates, situation had changed:

Graph 11.
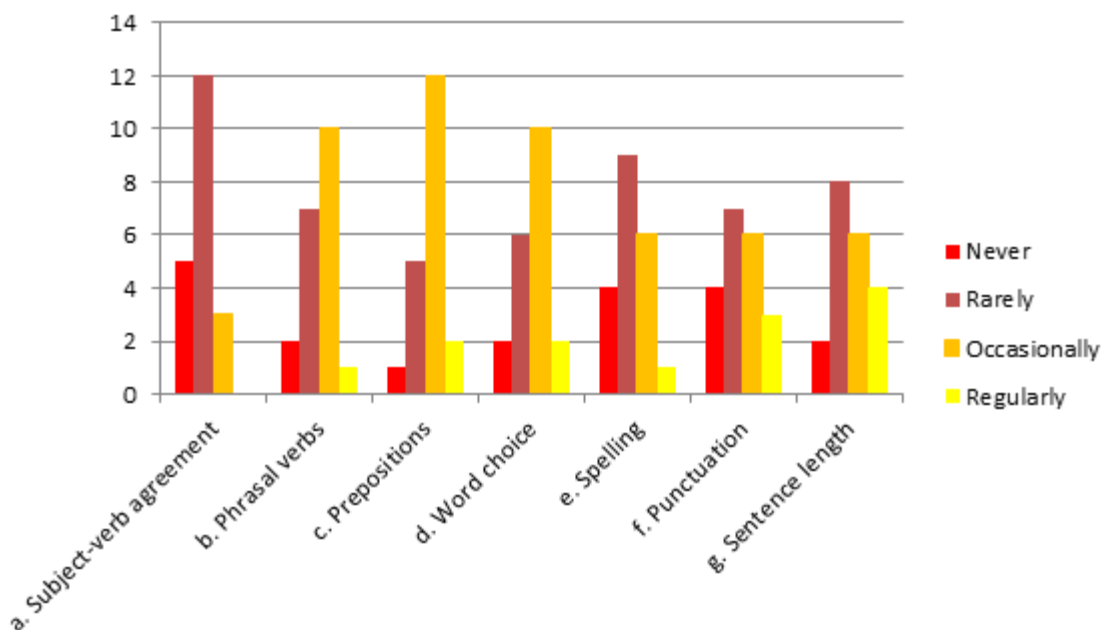
15 out of 20 students referred to just "rarely" receive corrections on this type of errors (punctuation and sentence length). Interestingly enough, as the graphs in the sections 4.4 and 4.5 illustrate, sentence structure related errors have been the ones which trend demonstrates to have decreased in the last compositions in both groups. Furthermore, while in January 10 students out of 18 referred to "rarely" have problems with word choice, in May 10 students out of 20 believed that they "occasionally" failed to choose appropriate words to convey their messages. And in fact, the most common error that both the Control group and the Experimental Group presented belongs to the lexical macro-category of errors. On the other hand, phrasal verbs and prepositions are considered to be corrected with a certain frequency by the students. This data is quite interesting; especially if we consider that the misuse of prepositions holds the 5th position in the top-five ranking of high-frequency errors of both the Experimental and the Control Group.

Did the strategy used to overcome the difficulties that writing poses change over the term? The graph 12, obtained with the data from the question 5 of the post-treatment survey reveals that in general, just 8 students out of 20 usually go back to their journals, and hence check the corrections that they have received. This may be due to the fact that the teacher started to ask the student not to take their journals home, during the last two months of the course. Nevertheless, a comparison between these answers and the ones obtained at the end of January on the same question displays the following dissimilarities: 1) while in January none of the students would go back to their grammar textbook, in May 8 students out of 20 declared to consult "regularly" their grammar books; 2) the number of students who affirm to "regularly" interrogate a dictionary doubled after 4 months.

Graph 12.
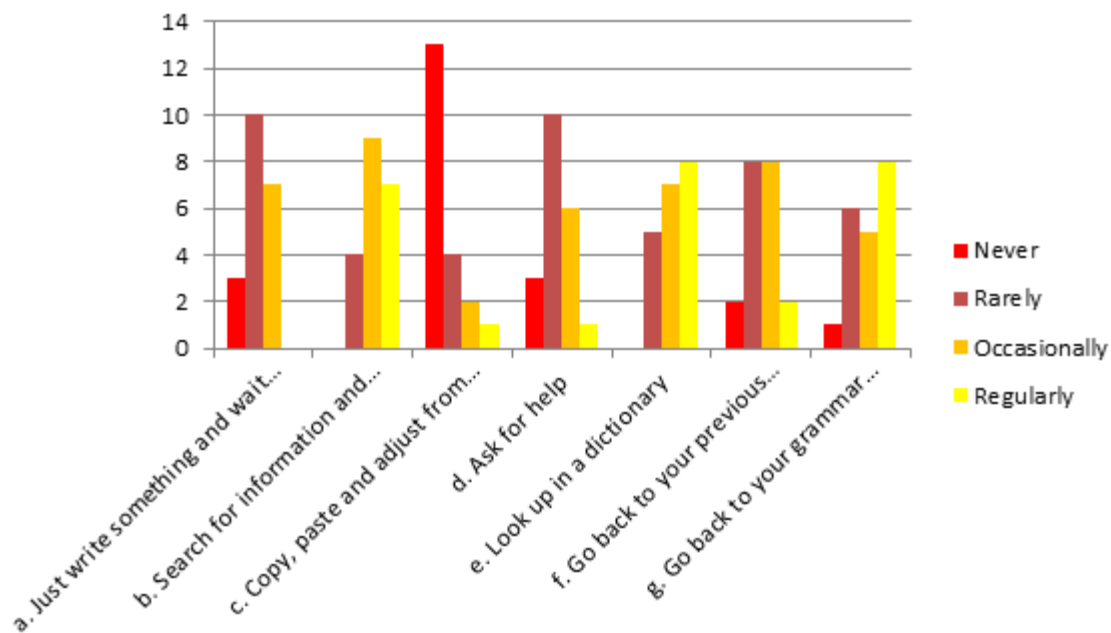
Did the students feel that they were improving their writing skills at the end of the term and after having been both directly and indirectly engaged in the experiment and in 4 months of intensive writing practice? A comparison between table 7 and table 23 reveals that the boys did not change their opinions with respect to their improvement. However, the number of the girls who declared to having progressed satisfactorily doubled.

Table 23. Question 7. Which of the following is true?

I am making	Boys	Girls
a. good progress at writing	36%	44%
b. some progress at writing	63%	44%
c. little progress at writing	0%	11%
d. no progress at writing	0%	0%

From a cross-check analysis of the answers given by the students to the first three open-ended questions of the questionnaire, we found no relevant changes. Table 24 shows that, for example, with regards to question 3, the students pointed out the same differences between writing at home or writing at school as in their pre-treatment questionnaire in January.

Table 24. What is the main difference between writing in classroom and writing at home? (May)

Boys	Girls

Home:
   − more time
   − freedom for choosing the topic (x3)
   − no delimitation of words
   − better performances
   − no differences at all
 	
Class:
   − more help from the teacher and the native language assistant
   − less time
   − more pressure
   − fixed topics
   − distraction and noise
   − relax (in terms of feeling relaxed and not paying attention to the task)
	Home:
	   − more time
	   − more concentration
	   − more relax (in terms of feeling relaxed and thus, inspired and focused)
	   − more inspiration
	   − no worries for the mistakes
	   − more personal topics can be chosen
	   − possibility of searching for information on the internet and on a dictionary
	
	Class:
	   − rush, noise, distraction (x2)
	   − pressure
	   − feeling observed by the teacher (x2)

However, there are some new reflections that attracted our attention in question 1 "what are the main differences between speaking and writing in English?"(Table 25) and 2 "Do you like writing in English?" (Table 26). Those new considerations, which made the difference between the pre-treatment and post-treatment questionnaires, have been highlighted in yellow. Indeed, their answers seem to suggest that some students, by the end of the term, have become more aware of what the process of writing implies, especially regarding the necessary reflection on grammar rules and the avoidance of mistakes.

Table 25. What are the main differences between speaking and writing in English? (May)

Boys	Girls
− pronunciation is easier than spelling (x4) − writing allows you more time to think (x2) − <mark>when speaking you can conceal your mistakes easily,</mark> as it is more fluent than writing <mark>(x3)</mark> − in speaking, you can hesitate − speaking is less structured − <mark>in writing, your mistakes get noticed</mark> − writing implies revision and thinking twice − writing requires a more polite vocabulary	− speaking allows you to express yourself freely (x3) − writing is formal, elegant, sophisticated, polite − spelling needs revision − speaking is improvising. It is faster, fluent, informal − <mark>speaking does not give you the chance of going through and correcting your mistakes (x2)</mark> − <mark>writing is easier as it allows more time to think about grammar rules and the organization of your ideas</mark> − writing is difficult because you have to think more

Table 26. Do you like writing in English? Explain your answer.

Boys	Girls
Yes: writing trains imagination - <mark>practice makes you improving</mark> - writing is challenging - practice writing helps for the future (x2) - <mark>writing shows you your errors</mark> - <mark>writing improves your grammar knowledge</mark> - writing makes you feel clever Not much: - depends on the topic - depends on whether you have to "invent" something (stories?) No: - it is annoying	Yes: - writing helps to learn more vocabulary - boosts imagination, especially when writing stories or essays - writing in English makes your writings look more fluent -<mark>writing in English improves your writing skills in your first language, as well.</mark> - writing in English facilitates communication with other people - writing in English is a private fact, especially when you write at home and your family does not speak English.

In general, all the data presented suggest that students' awareness was developing towards the right direction; hopefully our chart has given a little contribution to these results. Regarding this, it may be relevant to point out that, although only 6 students (Experimental Group) have undergone the treatment and filled in the chart 5 times, both the EFL teacher and the native language assistant commented that the rest of the class was well aware of being part of an investigation project and felt engaged in it. This aspect may have influenced their beliefs and the effort put into their writing tasks during the last four months, as they did not know what 6 students had been chosen to be the Control Group.
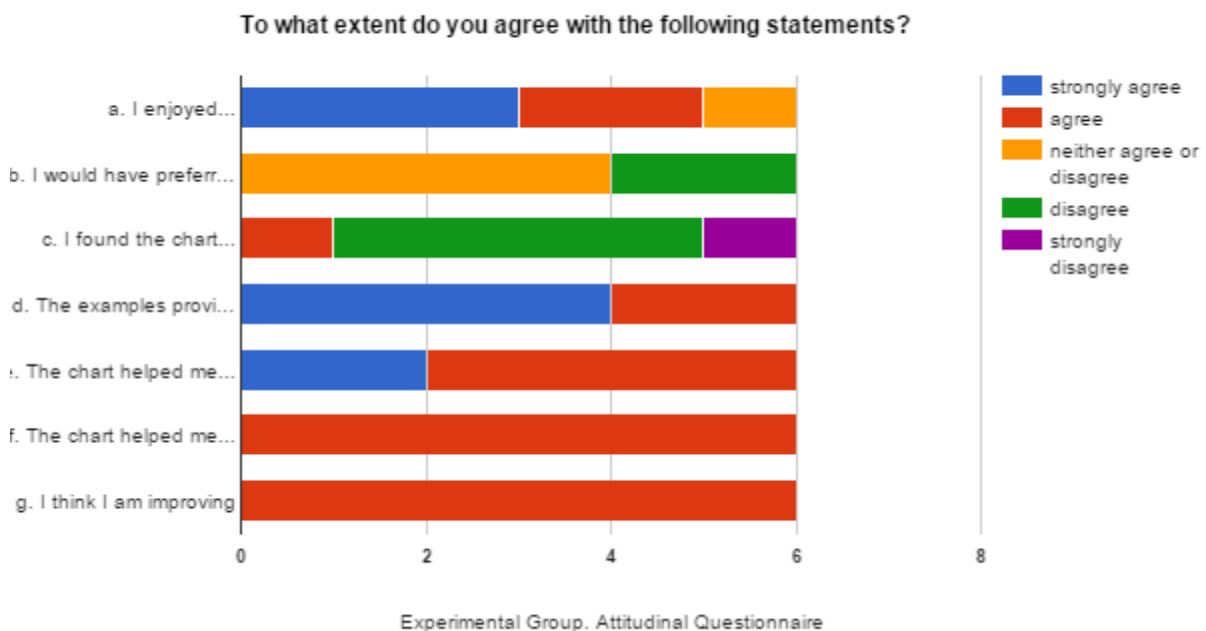
4.7 Post-treatment attitudinal questionnaire results

To complete our research, in this last section we decided to let the members of the Experimental group speak by asking them to anonymously answer a brief attitudinal questionnaire (see Appendix X). It contained the following statements:

a. I enjoyed being a member of the experimental group;

b. I would have preferred to attend to the feedback sessions with the native language assistant, as usual;

c. I found the chart difficult to complete;

d. The examples provided in the back of the chart were easy to understand;

e. The chart helped me to understand what my main grammatical problems are;

f. The chart helped me to avoid repeating the same errors;

g. I think I am improving my writing skills.

After analyzing students' responses we were glad to see how positive the comments provided had been. For example, as the graph 12 demonstrates, half of the students participated enthusiastically to the experiment; the rest enjoyed the experience and just one of them felt neutral about it.

Graph 12.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Experimental Group. Attitudinal Questionnaire

Nonetheless, the most relevant information comes from the answers provided by the students to the open-ended questions of the survey (see Table 27). In their opinion, charting is a helpful and motivating way to approach corrections, to decrease the number of errors they make, to go back to them and feel more conscious about them, and thus to "think more while writing".

Among the few critiques made to the chart, we find: 1) the need for more space and 2) a clearer set of examples. In one case, the student commented the necessity to be allowed with more time to complete it. Unfortunately, time constraints did not affect only the design and implementation of this research, but also students schedule, which is very strict and fast paced.

Table 27.

Name, at least, two positive aspects of having used the self-monitoring error chart	Name, at least, two negative aspects of having used the self-monitoring chart
being more conscious about my writing mistakes	I don't find any (x2)
being more careful, trying to avoid the same mistakes	I don't know
being more confident, I do not make so many	more space is needed
opportunity to correct my own mistakes	maybe it should be resumed in just one page
decreasing the number of mistakes	sometimes you get confused with the errors categories
learning from my mistakes	is discouraging to see that you have made so many mistakes
improving	it takes time to be completed and revised

5. CONCLUSIONS

After the analysis of the data gathered during the last four months (January to May), conclusions address three main points.

Firstly, as it has been pointed out throughout the sections 3 and 4, this research presents some limitations, which can be listed as follows: 1) this study does not pretend to be representative, it is a small scale study which addressed a very reduced and specific population of students in a context-specific educational setting; 2) albeit it was designed to be a longitudinal study, it only covered part of the mid-term and the whole third term; 3) the students used to write one composition each week, but due to time constraints and to the fact that we were not allowed to interfere with the teacher's schedule and programming, we could only have the students charting 5 of those compositions; 4) students were allowed no more than 15-20 minutes to fill in their charts and we have not been allowed to have them rewrite their compositions after their corrections.

Regarding time constraints and having observed our students writing in classroom, we realized that the time that they were given for such a complex "recursive and generative" (Bosher, 1990) process was normally quite short (about 20 minutes). Students did not have time to redraft and proofread their compositions, let alone to rewrite them. All of these factors left us wondering whether it could have been different, if we had time to implement the "Self-Monitoring Error Chart" with a larger sample of students, during the whole academic year and administering the chart as a regular corrective measure after each composition.

Secondly, by means of our charts, we tried to give a little boost to our students' language accuracy in writing, or at least to give them time to notice and reflect upon their own errors. Thereby, as thoroughly detailed in the analytic section of this project, we discovered that: 1) although both the Experimental and the Control Group showed difficulties in the same categories, the Experimental Group totalized less errors and did not present any problem with errors related to the register; 2) the overall progression of the Experimental Group showed a promising decrease in the rate of grammatical errors between charts 2 and 4. Nevertheless, the number of grammatical errors raised up again after the last composition, albeit according to the teacher it had been a quite challenging one; 3) in general, a comparison between the overall progress of both groups shows no significant difference that might point at the chart as being responsible for it. In fact, although both groups have decreased the rate of sentence structure-related errors, it is evident that lexical errors have gone significatively downward from chart 3 to chart 5 for the Control Group, and upward for the Experimental group. 4) Lexical error rate has not been influenced by the use of the chart and by the end of May these errors were holding the first position in the top-five ranking of both groups; 5) these data may suggest that the chart could be helpful to deal with purely "treatable"(Hyland & Hyland, 2006) errors, such as grammatical errors and those errors that affect the organization of the sentence. At the same time, it can be inferred that "untreatable errors" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), such as lexical errors, do not seem to respond to charting, so that teachers should favor a different corrective measure to improve their students' lexical competences (Llach, 2011).

Thirdly, by looking at the individual evolution of each student of the Experimental group, we could see that some of them failed to notice certain corrections on their journals and, thus, to report them in the chart. On the other hand, especially in the case of Student 2, Student 4 and Student 5 there seemed to be a correlation between the overall improvement and the attention that the student put in going back to their composition and take

accurately note of their difficulties on the charts. Unfortunately, albeit the information gathered in four months is abundant, it is still not consistent enough to make any strong affirmations about any possible correlation between the level of attention that students put in acknowledging and taking note of their errors and the decrease of such errors in their future writings. In our opinion, this fact constitutes an interesting issue for future larger scale and longitudinal investigations. Regarding this matter, we agree with Bosher (1990: 3) when she states that "significant improvement over the short term is not a realistic expectation" (1990: 93). Teachers should design their corrective strategies to promote a long-term development and refinement of their students' writing skills.

On the other hand, when charting addresses only some specific types of errors, is tailor-made to suit learners' needs and is systematically integrated in the writing classes routine, it may constitute a valid ally to the students. In this respect, in our case the students received the innovative treatment enthusiastically; the responses obtained in the attitudinal questionnaire were positive and encouraging. Students enjoyed being part of the project and claimed to reflect more and become more aware about their errors when approaching a new writing task. Among their suggestions, we should highlight the need for more space and time to complete its columns. Unfortunately, time constraints did not depended on us, however we can take into consideration improving our chart design if we implement it in the future.

Since we administered the pre- and post-treatment questionnaires to all students in the class, as we were interested in getting to know their opinions and beliefs regarding the practice and the process of writing in English, the rest of the class also felt actively engaged in the experiment, demonstrating interest toward the chart. Some students referred to the teacher that they would have liked to try the method and the teacher herself appreciated this alternative that actively involved students in their learning process. Although we cannot give any numeric value to these comments, we still find them motivating. They suggest that investigation on this method points towards a good direction and should be continued.

To conclude, as a future Secondary ESL teacher, personally I found the analysis of written errors useful and enriching. More specifically because I did not share the same L1 with my students and hence, it gave me the possibility to gain insight to the most common errors that Spanish speaking ESL students make at this stage of learning.

6. REFERENCES

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Nota de la autora

Debido a limitaciones de tiempo y a la gran cantidad de material que estos archivos representan en su conjunto, en esta versión no se incluyen los documentos originales escaneados relativos a los cuestionarios rellenados por los alumnos que han participado en el estudio (*Appendix III "Pre-treatment Students' Questionnaires"* y *Appendix IX "Post-treatment Students' Questionnaires"*). En particular, la plantilla del *Post-Treatment Students' Questionnaire* (*Appendix IX*) al ser exáctamente la misma que se utilizó para el *Pre-Treatment Questionnaire*, ha sido omitida también. Tampoco se han anexado los escaneados referentes a los *writings* de cada alumno y procedentes directamente de sus cuadernos (*Appendix VI "Experimental Group Journals"* y *Appendix VIII "Control Group Journals"*). Finalmente, se ha optado por excluir los *Self-Monitoring Error Charts* rellenados por los estudiantes del grupo experimental (*Appendix V*) y los que la autora completó personalmente durante la investigación para el grupo de control (*Appendix VII*).
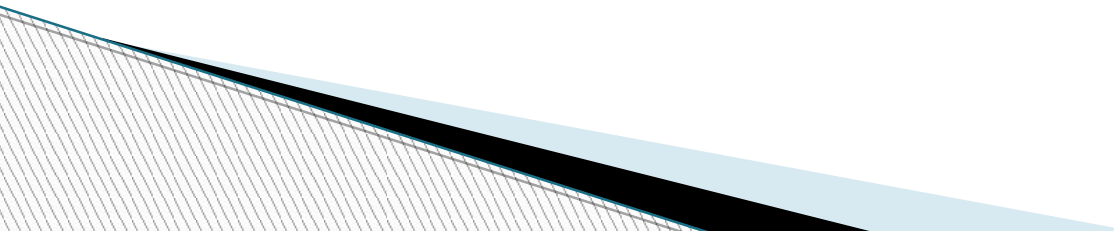
A pesar de no encontrarse los anexos expuestos, el resultado del análisis de todos los datos recogidos durante la investigación se encuentran detallados a lo largo de este proyecto más específicamente, han sido reunidos en el Capítulo 4 *Data Analysis and Discussion.*

Si usted está interesado en consultar el material no anexado, puede ponerse en contacto con la autora a través del siguiente correo electrónico: nicoletta.baf@gmail.com
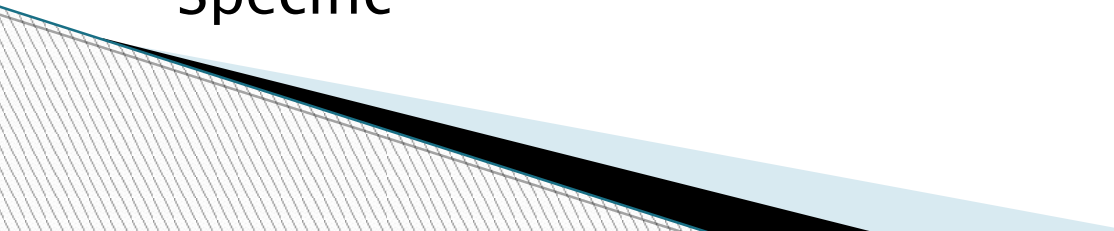
"Money makes the world go round"

Appendix I

example of the Powerpoint used for the corrective feedback sessions.

- Rich people are getting more and more
- Poor people are getting more and more

- More poor/rich   Richer/ poorer

- Becoming richer and richer/ poorer and poorer

When to use "stuff" and "things"

- **People who do their own stuff X**
- **People who do their own thing.**

- **Stuff** – any articles, material,
- common in speaking, not in writing. More informal than "thing".

- An uncountable noun, unspecific
- *"She told us to learn new vocabulary and stuff like that."*

- **Thing** – to refer to ideas, actions and events.
- Specific

"There <u>will be</u> *always* someone else who needs money more than we do"

▸ There <u>will</u> *always* <u>be</u> someone else..
There *always* <u>will be</u> someone else…

He <u>had</u> *also* <u>known</u> that
He *also* <u>had known</u> that.

He *also* <u>saw</u> that.
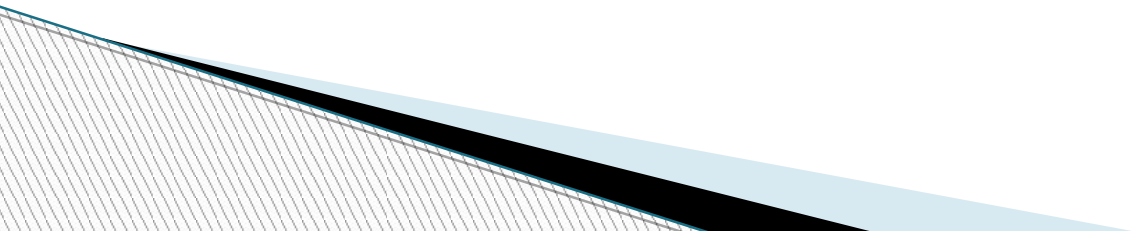
TEACHER'S BELIEFS AND OPINIONS: Writings in III ESO, bilingual section

1. **In your opinion, what are the main factors that difficult writing? Please, explain your answer.**

STUDENTS DO NOT LEARN THROUGH SAMPLES SO THEY DO NOT FEEL CONFIDENT WHEN FACING STRUCTURED WRITING. WRITING IS NOT LEARNT THROUGH CREATIVITY, TEACHERS DO NOT GIVE FREEDOM WHEN WRITING.

2. **Talking about writing skills, what initiatives do you take in order to train them?**

HAVE THEIR PERSONAL JOURNALS, WRITE ABOUT ISSUES THEY ARE INTERESTED IN

3. **Talking about the journals, how do you use them?**

THEY FOLLOW A ROUTINE. ON MONDAYS THEY WRITE THEIR JOURNALS IN THE CLASSROOM AND THURSDAYS WE TALK ABOUT CORRECTIONS. IF THEY WERE LESS STUDENTS, THINGS COULD BE DONE IN A DIFFERENT WAY.

4. **What genres do you favor, and why?**

THEATRE/DRAMA → IT ENHANCES CREATIVITY
OPINION ESSAYS → IT DEVELOPS TECHNIQUES TO EXPRESS OPINIONS

5. How do you select topics?

THERE IS AN ACTIVITY ABOUT NEWS ON MONDAYS. THEY WRITE ABOUT THE NEWS OR THEY WRITE ABOUT THE WRITING ISSUES IN THE TEXTBOOK.

6. Do you "scaffold" their productions in some way (e. g., by any type of pre-writing/pre-assignement activity?

WE TRAIN WITH READING AND VOCABULARY IN THEIR TEXTBOOK

7. What type of errors do you correct?

GRAMMAR, SPELLING, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, WORD ORDER

8. Do you use any marking-code to differentiate the types of errors?

NO

9. Do you think that students aware of error type(s) selected?

YES

10. What do you usually do after correcting their journals?

SOMETIMES I SELECT THE BEST THREE AND THEY READ THEM OUTLOUD. I USUALLY SELECT DIFFERENT STUDENTS

11. Do you see any improvement after applying your corrective strategy?

I noticed that it is easy for them to start writing. They don't think that much how to structure their writings. However, I also noticed that there are some mistakes like spelling or punctuation that are not so important for the.

Thank you for your collaboration

APPENDIX III

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE. Writing in English, your reflections and opinions matter

Sex:

Age:

Grade:

1. In your opinion, what are the main differences between speaking and writing in English?

....
....
....
....

2. Do you like writing in English? Explain your answer.

....
....
....

3. What is the difference between writing in classroom and writing at home?

....
....
....

4. Look at the following terms and assign them a number from 1 to 11, being 1 the "easiest" and 11 the "most difficult" thing to do when you approach a new writing task.

a. Revising	
b. Find the appropriate words	
c. Stick to the number of words permitted	
d. Organize your thoughts coherently	
e. Use an appropriate register for the genre	
f. Editing	
g. Drafting	
h. Apply grammar rules	
i. Organize the paragraphs properly	
j. Making a mind-map	
k. Collect information on the topic	

5. What do you usually do to overcome such difficulties, when working at home?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly
a. Just write something and wait for your teacher's corrections				
b. Search for information and inspiration on the internet				
c. Copy, paste and adjust from other writings that you find on the internet				
d. Ask for help (and to who, if corresponds)				
e. Look up in a dictionary				
f. Go back to your previous writings on your journals and look at your errors				
g. Go back to your grammar textbooks				

6. How often do you find these corrections on your journals?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly
a. Subject-verb agreement				
b. Phrasal verbs				
c. Prepositions				
d. Word choice				
e. Spelling				
f. Punctuation				
g. Sentence length				
h. Verb tense				
i. Gender and pronouns				

7. Which of the following is true? Cross the most appropriate option.

      a. I am making good progress at writing

      b. I am making some progress at writing

      c. I am making little progress at writing

      d. I am making no progress at writing

- **Thank you for your collaboration -**

SELF-MONITORING ERROR CHART

Name: Date: Title of the writing:

Problem ⚠	Correction ☑	Type of error	Nº of errors
			Tot.:

Please select the type of error from the list below:
subject-verb agreement; verb tense; verb form; singular/plural noun ending; word form errors; extra word; missing word; wrong word order; wrong punctuation; apostrophe/possessive error; wrong collocation; incorrect word use; incorrect spelling; wrong article; wrong preposition; phrasal verb; formal/informal choices.

Examples of errors

- subject-verb agreement: "He *cook"
- verb tense: "I go to the cinema and I *saw a movie"
- verb form: "I had *drove"
- singular/plural noun ending: "I have done my *homeworks"
- word form errors: "I am happy to live in a *democracy country"
- extra word: "Our plane flew over *to the mountains"
- missing word: "Our plane flew *[ ] the mountains"
- wrong word order: "As our plane over the mountains *flew" "*You are going?"
- wrong punctuation: "Before leaving *[,] she phoned her mum"
- apostrophe/possessive error: "*Its not that I don't like the story..." "Marys' life..."
- wrong collocation: "She *did mistakes"
- incorrect word use: "He *complements his employee"
- incorrect spelling: "Her *strenght"
- wrong article: "*The cats make great pets"
- wrong preposition: "I left home *at Friday morning to catch a flight *for Ireland"
- phrasal verb: "I look *at my neighbor's dog while they are on holiday"
- formal/informal choices: "She *wanna go..." "*You should sleep eight hours"
  "*But I don't think so".

APPENDIX X

<u>Experimental Group</u>

Post-treatment Questionnaire

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I enjoyed being a member of the experimental group					
b. I would have preferred to attend to the feedback sessions with the native language assistant, as usual.					
c. I found the chart difficult to complete					
d. The examples provided in the back of the chart were easy to understand					
e. The chart helped me to understand what are my main grammatical problems					
f. The chart helped me to avoid repeating the same errors					
g. I think I am improving my writing skills					

2. Name, at least, two positive aspects of having used the self-monitoring chart:

3. Name, at least, two negative aspects of having used the self-monitoring chart: