

**Analysis of errors in oral production of French L3 learners of level A2
at a high school in Ecuador***Análisis de errores en producción oral de estudiantes de francés L3 de nivel A2
en un colegio de Ecuador***Abstract**

The present study explores the possible sources of the most frequent errors in oral production of teenage native Spanish speakers who are learners of French and have also received instruction in English. To attain this objective, online oral interactions in an interview-like setting of 15 students of a private school of Quito and their teacher have been transcribed and analyzed in search of errors. The results show that the most frequent types of erroneous production have to do with form rather than content and do not represent a major impediment to communication. As for their causes, many errors seem to have their origin in the interference of the first or second language, while some others are independent from such languages since both overgeneralization and oversimplification of the target language rules have been recorded.

Keywords

Error analysis; French L3; interlanguage; language interference; oral production; sources of error.

Resumen

El presente estudio explora las posibles fuentes de los errores más frecuentes en la producción oral de adolescentes aprendices de francés, hablantes nativos de español que también han recibido instrucción en el idioma inglés. Para alcanzar este objetivo, se han analizado y transcrito en búsqueda de errores las interacciones orales de 15 estudiantes de un colegio privado de Quito con su profesor en un contexto a modo de entrevista. Los resultados muestran que los tipos de producciones erróneas más frecuentes tienen que ver con la forma más que con el contenido y no representan mayor impedimento para la comunicación. En lo que respecta a sus causas, una gran parte de los errores detectados parece tener su origen en la interferencia de la primera o segunda lengua, mientras que otros son independientes de estos idiomas, pues se ha advertido tanto generalización como simplificación excesivas de las reglas de la lengua meta.

Palabras clave

Análisis de errores; francés L3; interlengua; interferencia lingüística; producción oral; fuentes de errores.

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1. Introduction

Errors are a natural part of the language learning process. Such is the approach of several scholars (Bobăilă & Pelea, 2018; Corder, 1967; Ellis, 1994; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2018; Marquilló Larruy, 2003; Ur, 2012) who have found that errors are a fundamental part of learning, providing important information on the development of the language acquisition process and positively contributing to it.

Learners of French, as well as learners of any other foreign language, make errors in their way to mastering it. The involved learners in this research, teenage native Spanish speakers currently studying French in online modality, are no exception. However, the errors students make often constitute only empirical data for teachers as they are not systematically inventoried and their characteristics, frequency and source are not sufficiently known. Although several studies on error analysis have been conducted with students whose first language (L1) is English (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) as well as with learners of English as a second language (L2) (Cabrera et al., 2014; Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Gayo & Widodo, 2018; Golshan, 2013; Khansir, 2012, Mammeri, 2015; Sari, 2016) or with French L2 learners with an L1 other than Spanish (Demirtas & Gümus, 2009; Garcia, 2005; Rahmatian & Abdoltadjedini, 2007), there is still much to be analyzed when it comes to errors made by Spanish L1 learners of French as a third language (L3) who have already received instruction in English L2. In the present research, students have an A2 level of proficiency in both foreign languages.

As a result, a few questions emerge when trying to deal with the issue:

- What errors do students make in their spoken production?
- What are the characteristics of these errors?
- What are their most frequent errors?
- What is the possible source of them?

This kind of knowledge is essential for teachers to understand their students' learning process better. A thorough analysis of errors is consequently needed so teaching can be reoriented accordingly in its methodology, syllabus design and techniques (Khansir, 2012), providing the learners with better performing linguistic tools

(Bouhechiche, 2009). More concretely, error analysis enables teachers to establish consistent error correction policies in consideration to the students' needs as well as to anticipate certain types of errors before they happen for the first time or back again (Andreou & López García, 2016).

From this perspective, the general objective of this study is to analyze the errors made by French L3 students of A2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level of proficiency in their spoken production during short conversations in synchronous virtual classes in order to determine their possible source.

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The analysis of data, the learners' oral production during online learning, consists then in four stages: identification, classification, description and explanation of errors (Corder, 1967; Fernández, 1997; Andreou & López García, 2016).

The present work is therefore addressed to teachers of other learners in analogous conditions, especially at schools where French is offered as a third language in the city of Quito. These professionals, through the findings of this research, would be able to use quantitative and most importantly, qualitative data to guide their teaching practice that will eventually translate into the improvement of learners' oral production (Ur, 2012).

1.1 Conception of error

The perspective on errors and their place in the process of language learning has evolved through time. In "The significance of learners' errors", S. P. Corder (1967) introduced many significant concepts on the topic and set the path for error analysis. Ever since, scholars (Ellis, 1994; Gass & Varonis, 1985; Selinker, 1972; Ur, 2012) have agreed on the importance of learners' errors and their crucial role in the process of learning a language.

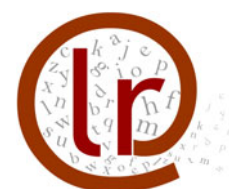
In a traditional conception, an error is considered a sign of weakness (Marquilló Larruy, 2003) or the "evidence of lack of learning" (Van Patten & Williams, 2015: 20). The occurrence of errors indicates failure and fighting against them is necessary to achieve successful learning. For this purpose, behaviorist approaches to learning suggest negative feedback, negative reinforcement and/or punishment as effective ways of eradicating errors (Schultze, 2003).

However, with the passage of time, the conceptions around errors in second language learning have evolved. Corder (1967) introduces the distinction between errors and mistakes. The author maintains the term error for systematic errors, errors of competence in the second language, while mistakes are unsystematic errors, errors of performance that "are not significant to the process of language learning" (Akiyama, 2013: 1). Therefore, Corder (1967) underestimates the need of 'punishment' to what he defined as mistakes, claiming that they are centered solely on the result and do not deserve much attention. On the contrary, errors need to be taken into consideration as a part of the learning process and include doubts and hesitations that are worth analyzing.

On a more contemporary approach, according to Reason (1990) an error is defined as the result of a mental process that does not reach the desired goal – communication in the case of language learning and acquisition. According to Chiahou et al. (2009) the error gives the teacher access to such mental process, the learner's *interlanguage*.

1.2. Errors and interlanguage

The concept of interlanguage was introduced by Selinker (1969, as cited in Song, 2012: 778) as "the systematic knowledge of language which is independent of both the learner's native language and the target language". Given that the process of acquisition of a second language is relatively long, the student goes through different stages of linguistic competence in order to attain proficiency in the target language. These different phases of learning give origin to the dynamic system defined as interlanguage.



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It is worth mentioning that every student has his own interlanguage. It belongs to the student because he has built it himself throughout his learning process of the target language with the means he has at his disposal. It is a true and proper linguistic system with its own particular rules and logic, analogous to his idiolect in his L1.

Consequently, the learner's interlanguage is not definitive. On the contrary, it is unstable and in constant evolution; that is why errors are part of it. To this respect, Demirtas and Gumus (2009) argue that errors are proof of the functioning of the interlanguage. The interlanguage is composed, to a certain extent, of hypotheses about the target language tested by the learner where an error equals an incorrect hypothesis. Therefore, errors demonstrate that such assumptions become signs of regularity, indicators of a normal development of the second language acquisition, and footprints of the learning process in progress, ruling out the notion of errors as indicators of lack of learning or transgression to the norm.

1.3. Error typology

The errors learners make are dictated by various factors that depend on the students' linguistic background, learning experience, but especially the degree of evolution of their interlanguage (Selinker, 1972). The variety of errors comprises then a wide range of possibilities making it difficult to restrict certain errors to a specific category (Alahmadi, 2014), even though scholars provide numerous classifications intended to cover a great deal of error types (Alba Quiñones, 2009).

Although the influence of the L1 was traditionally considered as the main source of errors, Besse and Porquier (1984) show that part of the errors in the L2 could be attributed to the L1 influence or interference (interlingual errors), while others are very similar to those produced by children who are acquiring their L1 (intralingual errors).

This classification led to a change of perspective upon the influence of the L1, which is considered as one of many resources the learner uses for the endeavor of the *reconstruction* of the target language. As a matter of fact, Lado's (1957) Contrastive Hypothesis claims that certain structures that are similar in the L1 and the L2 are transferred from one language to another and are therefore easier to acquire (positive transfer). However, a problem takes place when the structures in both languages differ. This is when negative transfer occurs, in which case, errors appear.

It is important to signal nevertheless, that when it comes to learning a L3, L4, or more, Besse and Porquier (1984) argue that the language to which the learner recurs (L1) could be either the mother tongue or any other acquired language (for example, L2 or L3) that differs from the target language. What is more, Schwartz and Sprouse (2021) claim that the L2, or more accurately the L2-interlanguage, could effectively be a source of transfer to the L3 and exerts a variable degree of influence according to different factors that include the language typology and the degree of evolution of the L2 interlanguage.

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Whether there is an influence of another language on the target language or not, Durão (1999) brings together various different sources for interlingual and intralingual errors. Her classification is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Sources for interlingual and intralingual errors

Interlingual errors	Intralingual errors
analogy	oversimplification
phonetic or spelling similarities – cognates, false friends	over-generalization
nuances in lexicon	induced errors
nuances in grammar	excessive production
use of L1 words	
foreignisms	
literal translation	
syntactic negative transfer	

Adapted from Durão (1999: 69-71)

From a different perspective, according to Demirtas and Gümüs (2009), errors are usually assessed in two dimensions, the pragmatic and the linguistic level. These two levels lead us to distinguish two types of errors: errors of content and errors of form. The latter being more evident and identifiable, they include errors of phonology, morphology, orthography and syntax. In contrast, errors of content include other elements of discourse, for example the length of the speech or the writing, structure, coherence and cohesion of the ideas, among others.

As for Burt and Kiparsky (1972) as well as Johansson (1973, 1978), there is a need to analyze and classify errors according to the communicative effect they produce. Burt and Kiparsky distinguish between global and local errors. Global errors affect seriously and can even hinder the intelligibility of the message, because they “affect overall sentence organization”, while local errors “affect single elements in a sentence” (Ellis, 2009: 6) and cause less difficulty in understanding the intended message. In the latter case, despite the presence of local errors, communication is more or less intelligible. Furthermore, Johansson (1978) proposes a hierarchy between these two types of errors, being global errors the ones that need more attention. The author claims they are more serious because they hinder message comprehension.

1.4. Error treatment

Different approaches could be taken in order to face students’ errors in second language acquisition. From this perspective, error treatment is not limited only to corrective feedback, but also to appropriate instruction with the goal of preventing errors from (re)occurring (Lee, 1970). In either case, the importance of error analysis is vital before any type of intervention takes place (Chiahou et al., 2009). This kind of information allows the

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teacher to make a decision on what (Krashen, 1981), how, when to correct and who does so and to eventually reorient his teaching by providing the students with specific materials and techniques (Hendrickson, 1978) with the aim of preventing errors.

1.5. Error analysis

Several studies on error analysis have been conducted with English L2 learners (Cabrera et al., 2014; Gayo & Widodo, 2018; Golshan, 2013; Mammeri, 2015; Sari, 2016) or with L2 French learners with an L1 other than Spanish (Garcia, 2005; Lyster & Ranta, 1997), but there is still much to be analyzed when it comes to errors made by L1 Spanish learners of French, especially in oral production, although Deswarte et al. (2020) and Lissón and Trujillo-González (2018) carried out studies with participants of this linguistic background.

Regarding English L2 learners, research conducted by Cabrera et al. (2014) explains to what extent the L1 (Spanish) interferes in written production of high school seniors in Loja - Ecuador. Based on their results, the researchers prepared a handout for teachers “which contained some key strategies and suggestions on how to prevent L1 interference”. Gayo and Widodo (2018), Mammeri (2015) and Sari (2016) conducted similar research but went further in their studies by considering not only interference from the L1 of the participants (Indonesian, for the first two and French, for the latter), but also the intralingual factors as a source for errors in written production. They also acknowledged the importance of recognizing the most common errors and the pedagogical implications for the improvement of teaching and learning of English. As for Golshan (2013), he analyzed the effect of corrective feedback on certain errors in written production and came to the conclusion that the effectiveness of feedback depends on the linguistic feature, i.e. the type of error.

Research on error analysis of French L2 learners includes similar approaches to what has been done for English learning. Lyster and Ranta (1997) quantify and classify errors to ultimately explore the different types of corrective feedback used by teachers and their native English speaking students' uptake (responses to feedback), according to the type of error. Garcia (2005) found intralingual and interlingual errors in written production in her study conducted with native Brazilian Portuguese L1 university students learners of French. Both authors agree on the fact that corrective feedback type and remedial instruction base their effectiveness on the error type the learners make.

More recently, Deswarte et al. (2020) published an analysis of fossilizing mistakes of French pronunciation in Spanish speakers. The participants of this research were undergraduate students of Modern Languages. The researchers found errors linked to the pronunciation of certain vowel sounds as well as to the distinction of minimal pairs of vowel and consonant sounds. However, this study does not cover other types of mistakes or errors, such as morphosyntactic or semantic.

An integral analysis of Spanish speakers' oral errors in the early stages of French L3 learning is consequently yet to be done. A study of this nature, which considers different categories and sources for error typology, would enable language instructors to carry out adjustments to their teaching-learning process.

2. Materials and methods

The methodological organization of the present work is descriptive based on the collection – analysis of data. To analyze the information, a quantitative approach was used to obtain numerical and statistical results (Atmowardoyo, 2018) regarding the

amount of errors and their frequency. Besides, in a qualitative perspective, research “involving inductive thinking” was applied “to reveal hypotheses” (Atmowardoyo, 2018) of their possible causes.

2.1. Participants

The participants of this research are 15 teenage students, aged 14 to 17 at a private school in Quito who are learning French as a third language during the first term of the academic year 2020 – 2021. The students belong to two different classes of the same level of instruction with the same teacher and attend two 40-minute video conferencing lessons a week. They have been learning French in person for three years and switched to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From a total of 30 students taking the course, parents of 15 students authorized their participation through a consent act. The learners’ native language is Spanish and most of them have been taking English as a foreign language lessons 2-4 hours a week since elementary school, for at least eight years. The learners are at the A2 level of the CEFR in both English and French.

2.2. Materials

A test was given to the students in the form of a semi-structured interview through a video conference. The interview consisted of five main questions proposed by Brilliant and Himber (2016) and Gallon et al. (2017) for preparation of a speaking part of DELF A2 (*Diplôme d’Études en Langue Française*), which is an official examination to certify French language abilities at level A2 of the CEFR. The topic chosen was “*Mon/ma meilleur(e) ami(e)*” - My best friend. The authors’ questions were combined and reformulated (from imperative to interrogative form) and can be found below:

- *Qui est ton/ta meilleur(e) ami(e) ?*
- *Pourquoi est-ce qu’il/elle est ton/ta meilleur(e) ami(e) ?*
- *Quel est son caractère ? / Tu peux le/la décrire physiquement ?*
- *Quelles activités vous faites ensemble ?*
- *Est-ce que vous vous disputez parfois ?*

Adapted from Brilliant and Himber (2016: 62) and Gallon et al. (2017: 36)

2.3. Procedure

In a real DELF A2 setting, the test-takers are presented with three tasks in the speaking section: guided conversation, exchanging information and role-play. For the information exchange portion, they are provided with a list of topics from which they have to choose one. Then, they prepare their speech for 10 minutes (along

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with the role-play part), and they have about two minutes to talk about it. The candidate may or may not be asked questions depending on their performance (CIEP, 2016). For the purpose of the present study, however, in order to guarantee the reliability of the results, the students were not given either a choice of topic or preparation time. Additionally, the students were not asked to present a speech, but rather to answer the aforementioned questions in full sentences.

The teacher did not provide them with any kind of corrective feedback and did not interrupt their intervention. However, his attitude towards errors on a regular basis is not the same, as he would normally take some kind of action towards error treatment, particularly recasts and explicit correction.

In order to analyze the data, the procedure for error analysis proposed by Corder (1967) was used. The interaction was recorded (audio only) to be later transcribed, then underwent four stages of analysis: identification of errors, classification, description and explanation (Andreou & López García, 2016).

For the identification, the learners' production was compared to what a proficient speaker of the language would have produced to convey the same meaning in a correct way. A coding of colors was used to highlight errors of different categories in the transcription.

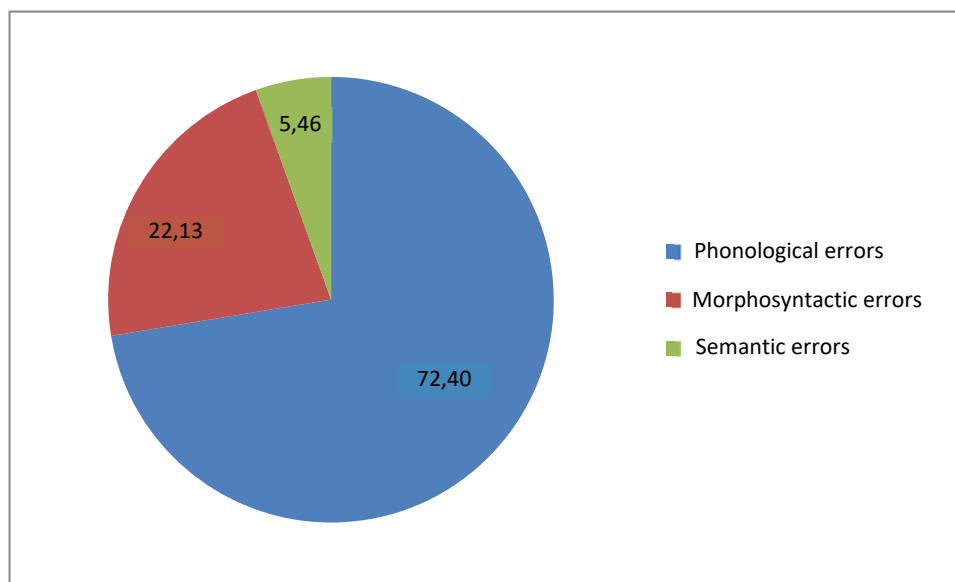
The classification was carried out by describing the errors very briefly following linguistic criteria to divide them into three main groups: phonological errors, morphosyntactic errors and semantic errors. The errors were then quantified to establish the number of tokens and determine their frequency.

Besides, in a qualitative perspective, the stages of description and explanation took place simultaneously. The most frequent errors were described hypothesizing on their possible causes based on the previously cited authors' criteria of error typology, particularly such developed by Burt and Kiparsky (1972), Demirtas and Gümüs (2009) and with a special emphasis on Durão's (1999). Indeed, in all these studies research is focused on the possible causes and effect of errors.

3. Findings and discussion

From the results of the analysis of errors made by the participants in their oral interactions, three main groups of errors were identified: phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic. The total percentages of the errors are presented in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Categories of errors in the participants' production



3.1. Phonological errors

Out of the three main groups, phonological errors have the most prevalence in the participants' spoken production. A total of 265 instances of errors have been recorded and include, but are not limited to: mispronunciation of 15 frequent words and expressions, misapplication of two phonological rules and incorrect production of six phonemes. These errors of form, as they are at the phonological level (Demirtas & Gümüs, 2009), although numerous, would fall in the category of local errors considering the communicative effect they have. As such, given the context, they do not hinder communication and affect only the aforementioned elements (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972).

Table 2 shows the words and expressions that appeared most frequently in the participants' production and the times that such items were pronounced in a way that differs from the standard pronunciation. In many cases, the students' utterances include more than one way of pronouncing the word or expression.

The possible etiology of these errors is however more complex and an explanation cannot be provided for them as a whole. Errors such as *est* /ɛ/ uttered as [est]; *je* /ʒə/, /ʒ/ as [ʒe] or [dʒe]; *nous* /nu/ as [nows]; *cheveux* /ʃəvø/ as [tʃeβewks] or [ʃeβews], *parce que* (*parce qu'*) /paʁskə/, /paʁsk/ as [paʁseke] or [paʁseke]; *video* /video/ as [bi'ðeo]; *yeux* /jø/ as [jewks] or [ʒœks]; *c'est* /sɛ/ as [sɛst]; and *très* /tʁɛ/ as [tʁɛs] suggest they are instances of interlingual errors by analogy (Durão, 1999). In this case, interference from L1 Spanish could have been the reason why the participants opted to pronounce every letter of the words as they would in Spanish with sounds they have in their phonetic repertoire as speakers of the Ecuadorian variety (Haboud & De la Vega, 2003). This phenomenon is especially remarkable in the pronunciation of vowel sounds, as the participants who uttered

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them erroneously had a tendency to reduce French mid- central /ə/ and mid-front /ø/, /ɛ/ to Spanish mid-front vowel /e/ as well as to pronounce digraphs <ou> /u/, <eu> /œ/, /ø/ as diphthongs [ow], [ew].

Samples such as *nous* /nu/ uttered as [nus]; *jeu(x)* /ʒø/ as [zew]; *meilleur(e)(s)* /mejœv/ as [meljœv], [mezœv] or [mezov]; *vidéo* /video/ as [vi'deo]; *yeux* /jø/ as [zə] or [zœks]; *beaucoup* /boku/ as [beakup] [bokup]; *j'ai* /ʒe/ as [zea]; and *fait* /fɛ/ as [fet] likely evidence an incomplete mastery of the rules of pronunciation of French in addition to a possible interference from Spanish. When comparing the spectra of the learners' utterances to the standard pronunciation using the speech analysis software Praat, it has been determined that some phonemes of the word were pronounced closely to the standard pronunciation while others were articulated with the Spanish sounds that correspond to the graphemes.

Table 2: Errors in pronunciation of frequent words and expressions

Word/expression	Nº of tokens	Nº of errors	Percentage of errors	Uttered as...
<i>est</i> /ɛ/	43	10	23,26%	[est] [es]
<i>nous</i> /nu/	30	9	30%	[nows] [nus] [nuz]
<i>je</i> (j') /ʒə/ /ʒ/	28	13	46,43%	[ze] [dze]
<i>parce que</i> (<i>parce qu'</i>) /pɑʁskə/ /pɑʁʁsk/	24	7	29,17%	[parseke] [paske] [pɑʁseke]
<i>c'est</i> /sɛ/	20	1	5%	[sest]
<i>meilleur(e)(s)</i> /mejœv/	15	4	26,67%	[meljœv] [mezœv] [mezov]
<i>sont</i> /sɔ̃/	14	2	14,29%	[son]
<i>très</i> /tʁɛ/	14	1	7,14%	[tʁes]
<i>jeu(x)</i> /ʒø/	13	6	46,15%	[zew] [zwe] [zoe]
<i>vidéo</i> /video/	12	4	33,33%	[vi'deo] [bi'deo]
<i>beaucoup</i> /boku/	10	3	30%	[beakup] [bokup]
<i>cheveux</i> /ʃəvø/	9	8	88,89%	[ʃeβews] [ʃeβo] [ze][tʃeβewks] [ʃeβe] [ʃeβø] [ʃaβø] [ʃeβek]
<i>yeux</i> /jø/	8	4	50%	[jewks] [zə] [zœks]
<i>fait</i> /fɛ/	6	2	33,33%	[fet]
<i>j'ai</i> /ʒe/	4	3	75%	[zea]
TOTAL	250	77		
Percentage	100%	30,80%		

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Another case of interference of the L1 is that the learners' phonetic repertoire would not facilitate the articulation of some French sounds. The word *cheveux* /ʃəvø/ produced in several different ways: [ʃeβo], [ʃe], [ʃeβe], [ʃeβø], [ʃaβø], [ʃeβek] (88,89% of erroneous utterances) as well as [ʒoe] for *jeu(x)* /ʒø/, and [paske] for *parce que* /paʁskə/, /paʁsk/ reveal the unsuccessful learners' attempt at pronouncing the words and suggest that the learners might know the rules of pronunciation, but have not yet mastered the articulation of /ə/ and /ø/, vowel sounds that do not exist in Spanish or English.

Although none of the errors in Table 2 were considered to have an intralingual origin only, without any influence of the L1, there is an error that could be categorized as either interlingual or intralingual (Durão, 1999). That is the case of *est* /ɛ/ pronounced as [es]. Overgeneralization could have occurred (silent final -t) or it might simply be a case where the learner used the equivalent word in Spanish. Below, Table 3 shows the number of errors learners made in the application of two phonological rules of French: pronunciation of final letters and elision of *que*, *je*, *me* and *ne* before vowels.

Table 3: Errors in the application of phonological rules

Rule	Nº of tokens	Nº of errors	Percentage of errors	Examples
Silent final letters				
-t	160	36	22,50%	<i>amusant</i> /amyzã/ > *[a'mysant], <i>et</i> /e/ > *[et]
-s	151	34	22,52%	<i>nous</i> /nu/ > *[nus], <i>elles</i> /ɛl/ > *[els]
-e	101	9	8,91%	<i>écoute</i> /ekut/ > *[ekute], <i>adore</i> /adɔʁ/ > *[adɔʁe]
-er (infinitive verbs)	15	5	33,33%	<i>discuter</i> /diskyte/ > *[diskuteʁ], <i>jouer</i> /jwe/ > *[ʒueʁ]
TOTAL	427	84		
Percentage	100%	19,67%		
Elision of words preceding vowels				
<i>que</i> > <i>qu'</i>	13	7	53,85%	<i>parce qu'elles</i> > * <i>parce que elles</i>
<i>je</i> > <i>j'</i>	7	3	42,86%	<i>j'ai</i> > * <i>je ai</i>
<i>me</i> > <i>m'</i>	1	1	100%	<i>il m'aide</i> > * <i>il me aide</i>
<i>ne</i> > <i>n'</i>	5	1	20%	<i>je n'ai pas</i> > * <i>je ne ai</i>
<i>se</i> > <i>s'</i>	8	1	12,50%	<i>elles s'intéressent</i> > * <i>ellesse intéressent</i>
TOTAL	34	13		
Percentage	100%	38,24%		

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As it can be seen in Table 3, these errors could be more easily described to a certain extent using Durão's (1999) classification. The pronunciation of final letters -e, -s,

-t and -er when they should be silent seem to be due to interference of Spanish L1, which puts them into the interlingual category. The learners had a tendency to pronounce every letter of the word as they would do in Spanish as shown in Figure 2, below. We can visualize the phenomenon in a passage of the transcription of participant 5's interaction:

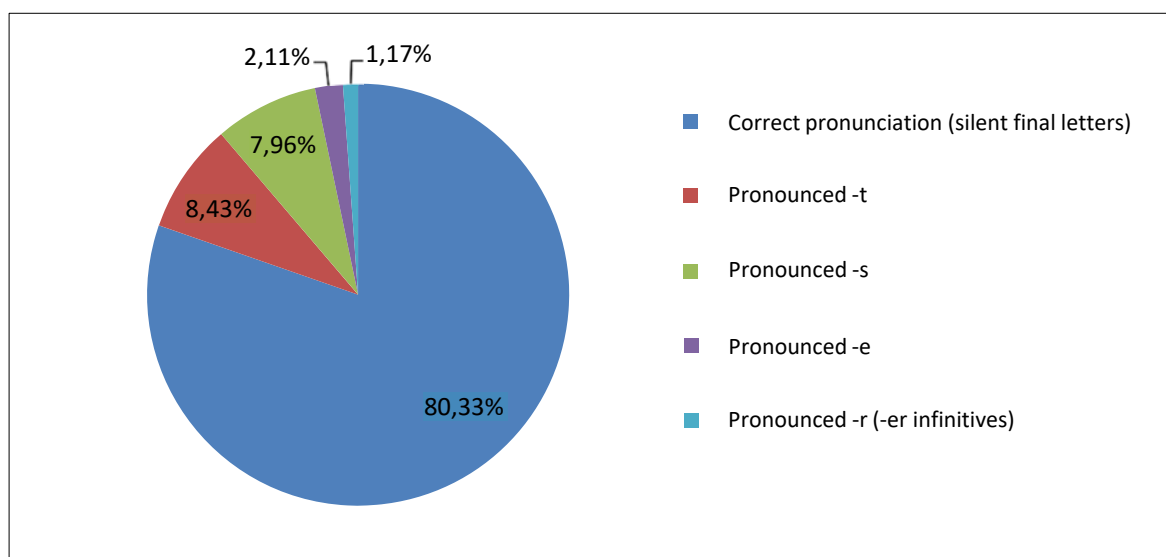
Elle porte ø pantalons grands.

[ˈelepøv'tepanta'lɔnsgvands]

(...) Nous regardons la télé, nous écoutons ø la musique.

[nusvɛgar'donslate'lenuseku'tonslamy'sik]

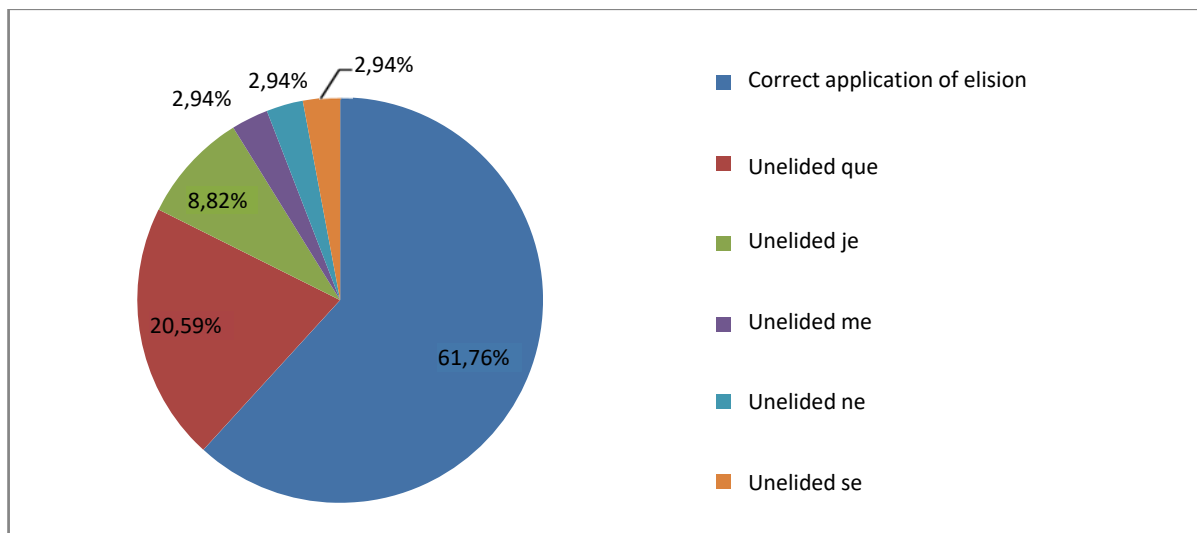
Figure 2: Errors in pronunciation of silent final letters



In spite of the previous assertion, the source for errors in elision may be different. There could likely be an interference of the L1, since this phenomenon is not a standard linguistic feature of Spanish and the words *que* [ke], *me* [me], *se* [se] and *de* [de] exist in the L1. However, the source could also be the oversimplification of the rule, especially in the case of *que* as it might be thought that only two-letter words such as *je*, *me*, *se*, *de*, *ne* are elided before a vowel and not three-letter words like *que*. The evidence from this study suggests that errors in elision of two-letter words occur less often than in the word *que*. As shown in Figure 3, a word *que* that has not been elided represents 20,59% of the utterances involving elision.

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Figure 3: Errors in elisión



Some phonemes posed more difficulty in pronunciation than others for the participants of this study. Such phonemes are presented in Table 4 including the number of errors the participants committed. Interference from the L1 could be one of the reasons for the incorrect utterance of the sounds, since they are characteristic French sounds that do not exist in Spanish or in English. It is worth mentioning that the errors in the phoneme /ʁ/, although recurrent (16 times, 19,28%), were not as significant as the errors in the vowel and semivowel sounds (92,86% for /ã/, 100% for /õ/, 93,33% for /ɛʃ/, 83,33% of errors for /y/ and 100% of errors for /ɥ/).

Table 4: Errors in pronunciation of specific phonemes

Phoneme	Nº of tokens	Nº of errors	Percentage of errors	Uttered as...
/õ/	19	19	100%	[on]
/ɥi/	3	3	100%	[u] [wi]
/ɛʃ/	15	14	93,33%	[in][im][un]
/ã/	28	26	92,86%	[an]
/y/	18	15	83,33%	[u] [ju]
/ʁ/	83	16	19,28%	[r] []
TOTAL	166	93		
Percentage	100%	56,02%		

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The participants of the present study replaced nasal vowels by oral vowels followed by nasal consonants 95,16% of the times, e.g. *indépendante* /ɛdepãdãt/ pronounced as [independant] or *pantalons* /pãtalõ/ as [pantalons]. The results coincide with Deswarte et al.'s (2020) who also found that these vowels and semivowels were articulated in a similar fashion by Spanish speakers, intermediate learners of French (B1 level of the CEFRL). The researchers state that the source for the errors could be an analogy with Spanish. However, overgeneralization might also be behind the errors because the graphemes <a>, <e>, <i>, <o>, <u>, <n> are pronounced /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/, /n/ in certain contexts in French.

Regarding the phonemes /y/, /ɥ/ and /ʁ/, the participants also replaced the phonemes with equivalent sounds found in Spanish in accordance with the spelling of the words: [u], [w] or [r]. This is why words such as *musique* /myzik/, *nuit* /nuɪ/ and *adore* /adɔʁ/ were uttered as [musik], [nwi] and [adore] motivating their classification as interlingual errors.

3.2. Morphosyntactic errors

Morphosyntactic errors are items that have to do directly with the form of the elements of the discourse, this is why they are classified as errors of form according to Demirtas and Gümüs (2009). A total of 81 instances of errors at the morphosyntactic level were recorded. Any of them were considered to represent major hindrance to communication, therefore all of them are included in the category of local errors (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972). The errors were divided into two main groups, those involving nouns and those that have something to do with verbs. Results are presented in Table 5, below:

Table 5: Morphosyntactic errors

Category	Nº of errors	Percentage of morphosyntactic errors	Examples
Errors affecting noun phrases	36	44,44%	
Determiners	27	33,33%	* <i>ma meilleur ami</i>
Word order	5	6,17%	* <i>vidéo jeux</i>
Agreement	3	3,70%	* <i>cheveux brunes</i>
Quantity expressions	1	1,23%	* <i>beaucoup amis</i>
Errors related to verbs	45	55,56%	
Conjugation	29	35,80%	* <i>nous fait</i>
Verb + preposition	7	8,64%	* <i>nous jouons jeux vidéo</i>
Negation	6	7,41%	* <i>non, nous jamais disputés</i>
Verb modifiers	3	3,70%	* <i>je connocé il</i>
Total of morphosyntactic errors	81	100%	

3.2.1. Errors related to nouns

3.2.1.1. Determiners

The erroneous use of determiners or their omission represent 33,33% of morphosyntactic errors and 75% of those related to nouns. Determiners are words that modify nouns and fulfill different functions “to specify the status of the noun” (Hawkins & Towell, 2015). The use of determiners in French is particularly complex for learners as they agree in gender and number with the noun and are sometimes used in contexts where Spanish or English would not use any (Hawkins & Towell, 2015).

3.2.1.2. Possessive adjectives

In response to the first question of the interview *Qui est ton/ta meilleur(e) ami(e)?* (Who is your best friend?) the participants were prompted to initiate their speaking with the use of a possessive adjective and eventually use it again to answer other questions, usually “my” - *mon*, masculine singular; *ma*, feminine singular or *mes*, plural. In their production, a few learners failed to use a possessive adjective that agrees with the noun (7 times), as showed in the following transcriptions (names have been changed intentionally to protect the participants' identities):

**Ma meilleur ami, c'est Andrés.*

**Mon meilleure amie, c'est Mariana.*

*Darío et Leonardo sont mes- sont *mon meilleurs amis...*

The misuse of adjectives may have its source on the L1, owing to the fact that possessive adjectives for the persons of singular are not variable in Spanish: a case of analogy, a feature of interlingual errors (Durão, 1999). In contrast, the errors could be explained as intralingual if we take into consideration that the participants who used a masculine adjective to talk about a female friend might have overgeneralized the rule that prescribes that *ma* becomes *mon* before a noun starting with a vowel: *mon amie* overlooking the adjective *meilleur* that was placed before the noun this word determines. Although this type of errors could be classified as global because the gender of the people could have been mistaken, the errors are only local, as the message is conveyed (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972) because the people's names are explicitly mentioned afterwards.

3.2.1.3. Definite and indefinite articles

In the participants' descriptions of their best friends, some of them talked about the color of their hair and eyes. The noun phrases for these descriptions require the use of definite articles before the noun, in this case, *les* as both *cheveux* and *yeux* are plural nouns. The participants, however, omitted this article six times, as in the Ecuadorian variety Spanish, a construction without article is allowed and preferred:

*Elle a ø cheveux *brunes et ø yeux *brunes.*

*Elle est petite et a ø *verts yeux.*

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In a similar fashion, while the French indefinite article *des* that usually goes before plural nouns of an indeterminate quantity, Spanish or English permit equivalent constructions without an article (Hawkins & Towell, 2015). The implication would be a negative transfer resulting in the omission of the article in French, so we encountered constructions such as:

Elle porte ø pantalons grands.
*Nous jouons à ø jeux *de vidéo*
On regarde ø films.

Consequently, the aforementioned errors in the use of determiners could be interlingual (negative transfer and analogy with L1) or intralingual (overgeneralization of rules) (Durão, 1999).

3.2.1.4. Partitive articles

Both interlingual and intralingual features for the errors in the use of partitive articles were found in this research. The three instances of this type of error revolve around the noun *musique* “music”, an abstract noun that is usually preceded by the partitive article *de la* when functioning as the direct object of the verb. The notion of a partitive article does not exist in Spanish and a similar structure would not need an article, thus generating interference of negative transfer between the two languages.

However, the learners who produced this error used a definite article instead of a partitive: **Nous écoutons ø la musique.*, bringing up the possibility of an intralingual error of oversimplification of the rule (Durão, 1999) when assuming a feminine article - definite in this case- would fit in the structure.

3.2.1.5. Word order

Syntactical features of Spanish and English were used in the production of certain noun phrases. Structures that include **jeux de vidéo*, **vidéo jeux*, **verts yeux*, have been observed in the corpus and reveal a syntactic negative transfer of Spanish or English, consequently produced as interlingual errors. Below, Table 6 shows the erroneous syntactical structures in comparison with their equivalents in Spanish and English.

Table 6: Errors of word order in noun phrases and comparison with Spanish and English structures

Erroneous production	Spanish	English
<i>*jeux de vidéo</i>	<i>juegos de video</i>	
<i>*vidéo jeux</i>	<i>videojuegos</i>	video games
<i>*verts yeux</i>		green eyes

The case of *jeux vidéo* is worth further analysis, however. There is a possibility that the Spanish speaker was not necessarily thinking in their L1 to produce this structure. The word *vidéo* in French has an adjective function here and it is its only function in the Dictionnaire Larousse (n.d.), nevertheless it can also be employed as a noun and the learner

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might have thought that the juxtaposition of two nouns in French is not possible without a preposition – *de* – to link the elements giving place to the expression **jeu de vidéo*, considered an intralingual error.

3.2.1.6. Noun – adjective agreement

Only two instances of adjectives that do not agree with the noun in gender were spotted. The structures *cheveux *brunes* and *yeux *brunes* used by one participant are interpreted as intralingual errors of oversimplification, a lack of application of the rule of agreement of gender. Both *cheveux* and *yeux* are masculine plural nouns and are incorrectly accompanied by the adjective *brunes*, which is feminine plural.

3.2.2. Errors related to verbs

3.2.2.1. Verb conjugation

The use of incorrect verbal forms proved to be recurrent and became an important part of the morphosyntactic errors in the participants' spoken production, representing 35,80% of their erroneous production (see Table 5).

Errors of verb conjugation include not only conjugated verbs that do not agree with the subject, but also irregular verbs conjugated with a wrong root, the use of an infinitive or participle form instead of a conjugated verb, the omission of an element of the phrase (subject pronoun, auxiliary verb, reflexive pronoun), the verb omission altogether or the use of an elided subject and verb as an independent verbal form. The participants made a total of 29 errors out of 140 verbal forms used in their production. The quantitative information regarding these errors is presented in Table 7, below:

Table 7: Errors in verb conjugation

Category	Nº of tokens	Nº of errors	Percentage of errors	Example
Regular verb conjugation with the pronoun <i>on</i>	7	3	42,86%	<i>On *dansons</i>
Irregular verb conjugation	103	14	13,59%	<i>Nous *prenons</i>
Use of <i>c'est</i> instead of <i>est</i>	42	9	21,43%	<i>Il *c'est sympathique</i>
Use of infinitive to express a present action	135	2	1,48%	<i>Nous *jouer</i>
Use of past participle to express a present action	135	1	0,74%	<i>Nous *vu</i>
Subject pronoun omission	112	2	1,79%	<i>...parce que \emptyset sont très drôles</i>
Auxiliary verb omission	4	2	50%	<i>...nous \emptyset jamais disputés</i>
Reflexive pronoun omission	13	3	23,08%	<i>...on \emptyset dispute pas</i>
Verb omission	140	2	1,43%	<i>Julio est petit et \emptysetcheveux noirs</i>
TOTAL	140 ¹	29		
Percentage	100%	20,71%		

¹ Total number of verbal forms used by the participants.



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The conjugation of irregular verbs became the category involving more errors with 14 occurrences. The verbs that caused difficulty for the participants were *être*, *avoir*, *faire* and *prendre* (to be, to have, to do or to make and to take), some of the most frequent verbs of French (Blanche-Beveniste, 2002). The use of *c'est* instead of the verbal form of *être*, *est*, after a third person subject was especially remarkable since it occurred nine times. Apparently, the participants who used this item hypothesized the elided form *c'est*, which already comprises a subject *ce*, as a verb form in and of itself. Regarding verbs *avoir* and *faire*, the participants utilized the third person singular present form for other subject pronouns, as in **Je a* or **Nous fait*. As for the verb *prendre*, participants treated it as a regular verb, in other words, applying the rule to the exception. These difficulties, unique to the language, bring us to the conclusion the errors are examples of intralingual errors of overgeneralization (Durão, 1999).

Errors of other categories regarding verb conjugation were less significant in number, nevertheless, it is worth analyzing two of them:

Errors in the conjugation of regular verbs occurred three times when a first person plural present verbal form was used for the pronoun *on*, even if this is a third person singular subject pronoun. However, as the pronoun "on" could be employed as a synonym of "nous" (we), the learners may have tested the hypothesis of using the pronoun *on* along with the corresponding verbal form for nous as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Errors in the conjugation of regular verbs with the pronoun "on"

Erroneous production	Correct form using <i>on</i>	Correct form using <i>nous</i>	English translation
<i>*on dansons</i>	<i>on danse</i>	<i>nous dansons</i>	We dance
<i>*on écoutons</i>	<i>on écoute</i>	<i>nous écoutons</i>	We listen
<i>*on regardons</i>	<i>on regarde</i>	<i>nous regardons</i>	We watch

This error could be interpreted as either interlingual or intralingual: Interlingual when the students employ a literal translation of the pronoun and intralingual when the learners overgeneralize the use of the same verbal form for two different pronouns with a similar meaning.

The use of non-conjugated forms of two regular verbs by one participant, i.e. infinitives alongside subject pronouns to express an action in simple present, suggests a possible interference of English. In this language, verbs are used in their base form with any subject other than the third person singular in present simple. The participant might have made an analogy between the two languages that resulted in an error. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that the participant could simply not know how to conjugate these verbs given that he is at the A2 level of French.

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3.2.2.2. Verb + preposition

The verb *jouer* (play) is followed by the preposition *à* before a complement. In this study, it has been observed that in constructions of this type, the preposition was usually omitted. Constructions with the verb *jouer* that required the preposition *à* were spotted six times, but only one of them included *à*. The verbs “to play” and “*jugar*”, the equivalents to *jouer*, are transitive and do not require a preposition in English or in the Ecuadorian variety of Spanish (Real Academia Española, 2005) respectively thus interfering with the structure in French. Negative transfer was then the possible source for this interlingual error.

3.2.2.3. The verb *se disputer*

The syntax of this particular verb entailed errors in three different categories: reflexive pronoun omission, auxiliary verb omission and formation of negative statements.

T. *Est-ce que vous vous disputez parfois?*

P1. **Non, nous ø jamais disputés (...).*

To begin with, as one of the questions in the interview was *Est-ce que vous vous disputez parfois ?* (“Do you guys -you and your best friend- argue sometimes?”), the participants were compelled to answer using the verb *se disputer*. The equivalent in Spanish, similar in spelling, *discutir*, is an intransitive verb and therefore does not accept a reflexive pronoun. The difference between the two languages caused negative transfer and led to the omission of the reflexive pronoun in French.

Two participants, who answered negatively to the question, faced another difficulty, the syntax of the negation in French, which usually needs two elements: *ne... pas* or *ne... jamais*. The participants omitted one of the elements in 6 out of 17 negative statements, recalling the syntax of Spanish as they omitted *pas* in *ne... pas* and *ne* in *ne... jamais*.

Finally, participant 1 answered the question using *passé composé*, which further complicated the syntax. In this case, he ended up omitting the auxiliary verb of the structure that could be also influenced by Spanish or English that express this action with a simple tense without the need of an auxiliary verb.

All in all, we can assume these errors are interlingual because of the negative transfer exerted by the L1 Spanish (and/or L2 English) in the syntactic structure of French.

3.3. Semantic errors

Most participants' errors concerning the semantic aspect of the language have to do with a difficulty in distinguishing certain nuances in lexicon that are denoted by different words in French. In this sense, table 9 (below) shows the number of semantic errors that were recorded in the learners' production.

Table 9: *Semantic errors – nuances in lexicon*



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Concepts	Nº of tokens	Nº of errors	Percentage of errors	Example
Être – avoir	80	4	5%	Elle *est ses cheveux ondulés.
En – au – sur – on	4	4	75%	Nous parlons *en WhatsApp®.
Pourquoi – parce que	25	3	12%	*Moi meilleur ami est Jonathan pourquoi ∅ est gentil (...).
Plus – très	13	1	7,69%	Le caractère à Cristina est moi-est plus adorable.
Savoir – connaître	4	1	25%	Mon meilleur ami est Miguel parce que je *sais é desde hace mucho tiempo.
Discuter – se disputer	7	1	14,29%	Non, je n'aime pas discuter .
Comme – comment	1	1	100%	Je ne sais pas *comme ç adit.
Nuit – soir	1	1	100%	Nous faisons des activités scolaires dans la nuite .
Bien - bon	9	1	11,11%	Nous sommes très *bien d'amis.
Large – grande	7	1	14,29%	Alicia est *large .
Il y a – il a	1	1	100%	(...) pourquoi ∅ est gentil, dynamique et parfois triste quand il y a mal au ventre.
C'est – il est	33	1	3,03%	*C'est intelligente, sincère, (...)
TOTAL	185	20		
Percentage	100%	10,81%		

3.3.1. Verbs: être - avoir

Four participants used the verb *être* to express possession instead of *avoir*. *Être* and *avoir* are by far the most used verbs in French and are categorized as stative verbs (Blanche-Beveniste, 2002). Even though the participants may not know they are verbs of the same category, they probably have been greatly exposed to the two verbs and eventually ended up confusing their meaning and usage. A phonological explanation could also be given: conjugated forms of both verbs *ai* and *est* are homophones [ɛ], which could mean that the participants used a verbal form of *avoir* that does not agree with the subject and not a verbal form of *être*. In either case, we could come to the conclusion that this is an instance of intralingual error because of overgeneralization of the use of a verb for two different functions (Durão, 1999).

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The errors in the use of prepositions can be acceptable at level A2 because learning to use prepositions could be particularly difficult, even for advanced learners (Buescher & Strauss, 2015). Moreover, negative transfer often occurs due to the variation between one language and another (Lorincz & Gordon, 2012). That is the case of one learner in this study who experienced negative transfer, thus making an interlingual error in the use of prepositions. He produced the phrase *Nous parlons *en WhatsApp.*, possibly a literal translation from Spanish where the preposition *en* would be acceptable. In French, the correct form would be *sur WhatsApp*, since *sur* is the preposition used for Internet supported platforms. Surprisingly enough, the preposition *en* appeared twice more in a construction of the type **parler en téléphone* (instead of *parler au telephone*), which does not coincide with the preposition used in Spanish. This could indicate that the learners overgeneralized the use of the preposition *en* and extended its meaning to other contexts and functions. However, negative transfer from English could also have happened. The preposition used in these contexts in English is *on* (however followed by the definite article *the*) and since the word *on* [ɔ̃] exists in French as a personal pronoun, the learners could have tried to use it as a preposition, failing to pronounce it correctly to end up sounding closer to *en* [ã].

3.3.3. Adverb *pourquoi* and conjunction *parce que*

It is also worth analyzing the use of *pourquoi* instead of *parce que* to express cause. This is probably a case of negative transfer from the L1. In Spanish, the interrogative *por qué* (why) has phonological and spelling similarities with the conjunction *porque* (because) and the difference is sometimes unnoticed by native speakers. This phenomenon leads to an interlingual error in French: the learners might have made an analogy when hearing the word *pourquoi* in a question and assuming the same word is used for answering it.

3.3.4. Invented words

A final semantic error is worthy of analysis. One of the participants came up with invented words in French in his spoken production. This phenomenon could evidence a certain degree of evolution of his interlanguage. Participant 1 hypothesized the existence of the words **connocé* and **amistés* to mean *je connais* and *amis*. Both could be considered cases of analogies with the Spanish words *conocer* and *amistades*, leading to the possible conclusion that these are interlingual errors. However, there are also features of intralingual errors, for example, overgeneralization of rules. The student probably knows the existence of verbs ending in [-e] and abstract nouns ending in [-te] and applied the rule to these made-up words.

4. Conclusions

Errors, as a natural phenomenon in the process of learning a language, French in this case, can be attributed to a wide range of causes that are sometimes difficult to establish. While some of them could have their source in the learner's first language, Spanish, some others may be independent from it and there are even those that are dictated by other languages in which the learner has received instruction (English), or by a combination of



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these features. The error analysis carried out in this study has tried to contribute to getting acquainted with the learners' interlanguage in their process of "reconstruction" of the target language, thus adding elements to the discussion about how errors are produced and why learners make them.

After the analysis of the students' oral production, using Demirtas and Gümüs (2009) categories of errors, the errors of form were the most frequent and include phonological (73,61%) and morphosyntactic (22,5%) structures that are not in accordance with the norm. In contrast, errors of content were recorded in a smaller proportion (5,46%), and have to do with the semantic aspect of the language.

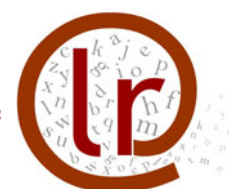
The phonological errors were by far, the most numerous: 265 tokens in total as opposed to 81 tokens of morphosyntactic errors and 20 semantic errors. The learners pronounced certain phonemes, especially vowels, in words and expressions incorrectly. The use of Spanish sounds and a tendency to pronounce all letters in words are remarkable features that give account of the L1 interference in the phonological system of the students' interlanguage.

As for the morphosyntactic aspect of the language, the imprecision in the use and in the agreement of nouns and their modifiers and the utilization of inaccurate verb forms represented the most frequent instances of errors. The participants recurred to their L1 and to a lesser extent, to their L2, resulting in negative transfer, particularly when the target language required elements that do not exist or are not necessary in the other two languages. The learners ended up omitting articles, subject or reflexive pronouns, auxiliary verbs or particles of the negation, among others. However, the errors also revealed a certain degree of difficulty inherent to the French language. It made itself evident in the tendency to overgeneralize some rules that resulted in determiners and conjugations used in opposition to the norm, for instance.

Another point is that although semantic errors were recorded 20 times in total, they proved to be of little significance. The reason lies in both their little number and the fact that the intended meaning of the utterances could be easily deduced by a Spanish speaker in the case of verbs, adverbs and nouns, or given the context in some other cases. Apparently, the difficulty in distinguishing the nuances in lexicon appeared mainly because of analogies with the L1, but also with the L2.

Overall, the interference of Spanish L1 has been very noticeable throughout the corpus: analogy and negative transfer were assumed to be the major causes of interlingual errors (Durão, 1999). In contrast, the L2 English did not exert a major influence on the production of errors: analogy and negative transfer also appeared, but only in punctual instances such as verb conjugations and the adjective-noun order in the phrase.

Even though common features of intralingual errors such as overgeneralization and oversimplification at the morphosyntactic level were recorded, this kind of errors by and of themselves was rather uncommon in the analysis of the participants' production. In fact, a great number of errors with this etiology presented features of both the intralingual and interlingual categories. This supports the approach that errors are eclectic in nature and no definitive assertion could be made when trying to establish their source.



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In any case, the communicative effect of the learners' errors was not regarded as a major hindrance. For the most part, the students' message could get across without much trouble since their errors affected single elements of the discourse. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) classify these as local errors. Their counterpart, global errors, were not spotted in the students' productions, taking into account that their production was rather short and consequently, coherence among sentences could not be analyzed.

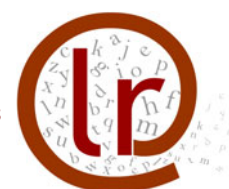
Hence, further research is recommended to unfold more underlying causes of errors in spoken production as some of them might have been missed. A similar study that involves the analysis of a larger corpus, designed to provide more information on the errors presented in this research is suggested in order to ascertain if the results could be generalized.

However, the conclusions drawn from this work and the quantitative and qualitative data, could be used as a starting point for future investigation. Researchers and teachers could explore the actions intended to remediate or prevent the occurrence of the most frequent errors, but also, and more importantly, adjustments to the methodology, didactic procedures, syllabus design, and the provision of input. To sum up, reorienting the teaching-learning process by turning more attention on the areas that pose more difficulties to Spanish speaking learners of French L3 as a way of error treatment would be the ultimate goal towards which this study has made a first step.

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