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Cultural Diversity and Its Implications for Second Language Writing

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COMMON GROUND

Cultural Diversity and Its Implications for Second Language Writing

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Abstract: Today the importance of culture on the process of language learning is widely recognized, namely that learning to communicate in a second language always implies understanding the existing interrelation between culture and language. Many different aspects of language are influenced by cultural factors. Nonetheless, research on the influence of cultural diversity on writing in a second language has been problematic. To address this concern about the differences between L1 and L2 rhetorical paradigms in written discourse, we focus on a comparative study based on content- and language-integrated learning (CLIL) or content-based instruction (CBI) and English as a foreign language (EFL), Spanish groups of upper-secondary students and their competence in written English. To this end, this study aims toward a descriptive analysis based on contrastive rhetoric. In order to address this sociolinguistic component, it has been determined that the most appropriate methodology is content analysis based on a T-unit analysis, relying on Hunt's proposition along with an interlinguistic (L1 interferences) error analysis. Results show that the written texts of both groups reflect Spanish-writing patterns and cultural conventions and that interlinguistic error analysis can help us to predict students' linguistic and pragmatic difficulties in written expression, given that their L1 may cause negative interference.

*Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Second Language Writing, Contrastive Rhetoric,
CLIL/CBI Programs, Intercultural Competence and Written Production*

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Today, the existing interrelation between language and culture is well known. In fact, numerous studies (i.e., Brown 2007; Kramsch 1998; Liddicoat et al. 2003; Savignon and Sysoyev 2005; Schulz 2007; Tang 1999) have shown the inseparability of these two aspects. Both language and culture affect each other mutually; namely, the development of a language affects its associate culture, and cultural patterns are often explicitly coded in language.

The present article seeks to shed some light on the influence of cultural diversity on writing in a second language. This field of knowledge has been studied since the 1960s under the name of contrastive rhetoric, which is the study of how a person's first language and culture may influence his or her writing in a second language. Kaplan (1966), the founder of this field, stated that different languages, and by extension different cultures, operate within different rhetorical paradigms. It is this transference of patterns that complicates writing in a second language.

Research has shown that the contrastive rhetorical component plays a very important role in the language classroom. Recent studies (e.g., Walker 2006; Xing, Wang, and Spencer 2008) have yielded promising results; implementation of the contrastive rhetorical component in language classes has increased students' awareness of the different writing patterns in other cultures, aiding both the teachers and students in understanding native speakers' expectations of the newly acquired language (Casanave 2004).

In fact, as Swales (1990) pointed out, contrastive rhetoric is essentially pedagogical and pragmatic because of its insights into the differences between the languages under study. It has moved beyond a linguistic framework to embrace cognitive, sociocultural, and educational aspects. For Grabe and Kaplan (1996), seven types of knowledge derive from the application of contrastive rhetoric: 1) knowledge of rhetorical patterns, 2) knowledge of composing conventions (pre-writing, data collection, revision), 3) knowledge of morphosyntax at intersentential level, 4) knowledge of coherence mechanisms of the target language,

5) knowledge of writing conventions and text appearance, 6) knowledge of the expectations of the target language, and 7) knowledge of the subject to be discussed in the target culture. These types of knowledge would "empower" students to effectively communicate in a L2 language.

This theory has always been a source of criticism. However, its basic tenet has been put into practice in numerous studies (i.e., Friedlander 1990; Kroll 1990; Leki 1993; Raimes 1983). In fact, a large number of publications have emerged regarding the language of the writers: in Chinese (Hinds 1990), Korean (Hinkel 1997), Japanese (Hinds 1990), or Thai (Indrasuta 1988). Concerning the Spanish language, we highlight the following studies: Lux and Grabe 1991; Montaño-Harmon 1991; Reppen and Grabe 1993; Trujillo 2001. The majority of these studies point out that L2 writing reflects the rhetorical patterns of their L1.

The T-unit analysis developed by Hunt (1970) attempts to address the contrastive rhetorical component (Kaplan 1984). The T-unit, or minimal terminal unit of language, was established by Hunt as the smallest word group that can be considered a grammatical sentence without taking into account the punctuation. This analysis measures the syntactic complexity of writing samples, giving us the capability to recognise the way Spanish learners of English write in their second language and use organizational patterns. Previous studies have shed some light by comparing English with different languages such as Chinese, Persian, or Arabic (Baleghizadeh and Pashaii 2010; Mackie and Bullock 1990; Ostler 1987; Yang and Cahill 2008).

When analyzing the L2 students' written production, the language transfer phenomenon is also crucial. This can be defined as the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and other languages previously learnt (Dulay and Burt 1974; Lado 1957; Kellerman 1979). This influence has been maintained by the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH), which states that deep differences between L1 and L2 can negatively interfere with the acquisition and learning of the second language. Therefore, errors are likely to appear. But when the two languages are similar, a positive transfer can occur between the L1 linguistic elements in L2 performance, resulting in more correct production.

The contrastive analysis hypothesis was predominant in the 1960s, but in the 1980s Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) argued that the first language rarely produces interference in the learners' L2 production. This limitation started to contribute to the weakening of this theory, and it was replaced in the late 1960s by error analysis (EA). Corder (1967) strengthened this alternative to CAH with the belief that errors were a necessary tool for the process of language learning. Corder (1967) claimed that the diagnosis of errors is a key aspect in second-language teaching and learning that reveals how the learner is acquiring the language and employing certain strategies. Our results will show the effect of cultural and first-language transference in the students' written production in many cases. For this reason, EA must be taken into account when teaching EFL or ESL.

The Writing Activity

Language use is a complex activity immersed in a social network of communicative practices. Within this network, individuals construct their knowledge and thoughts when relating to and communicating with other people. Consequently, oral and written communication implies social, cultural, cognitive, and affective processes that are closely interrelated.

Writing as a Cultural and Social Activity

Due to vast changes in the world, such as the rapid development of a global society and the greater need for people from different cultures to interact, the social function of language has lately become a major focus of attention. The fact that language is deeply embedded in culture and that each language is part of a culture has not always been recognized or assumed (Long-Fu 2001).

The social concept of language implies it being considered not only as a body of knowledge to be learned but also as a social practice in which people participate (Kramsch 1996). Under this premise, it could be said that learning to communicate in a second language implies understanding the existing interrelation between culture and language (Byram and Morgan 1994; Kramsch 1998; Liddicoat et al. 2003).

From this perspective, the importance of culture in the process of language learning needs to be emphasized. Thus, within the social framework of language, the approach to teaching and learning a second language has a wider range. The goal of the process of learning is not just based on a code, that is, on vocabulary, or on a series of rules put together to create meanings as a matter of code replacement between two languages (Svalberg 2007). It is actually based on the interpretation of meaning in which the learner decodes the new language and engages with diversity at a social level.

The consideration of writing as a fundamental social activity can also be explained through the contribution of cognitive psychology and the analysis of the mental processes during the writing activity. Research studies on the verbal interactions among students when composing texts and the verbalised thoughts of writers on their creative writing processes show the variety of strategies they follow in their written production. These complex procedures are also influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors (Camps 1997).

In research studies on the written composition processes within the cognitive paradigm, social context is conceived as a set of rhetorical requirements that the writer has to bear in mind to adjust the text. The work of both Vigotsky (1977) and Bakhtín (1982) emphasized this connection between the writer, reader, and social context, shaping the consideration of language as a social and cultural activity along with contributions from written enunciation theory, pragmatics, and functional linguistics.

From this perspective, other important aspects must be considered:

- Written language is the result of a process. Its signs are subject to a process of contextualization and interrelation with other signs. Thus, the nature of written language is social and emerges from communicative exchanges with others (Bueno 1996; Grabe and Kaplan 1996; Hayes 1996; Hedge 1988).
- The nature of written language is also dialogic (Bakhtín 1982). When we write text, we take part in a dialogue with others and anticipate part of the communicative exchange. In this sense, any written text is a response to previous texts and asks for an answer from readers. In this way, it is immersed in a communicative network (Camps 1997; Cassany 1999).
- Writing a text is also a communicative activity. Both the writer and the readers must share a cultural and social system, which determines the comprehension of the text. The knowledge of addressees and their social and cultural background is fundamental for the success of written communication. This shared sociocultural context allows interaction between the text and the readers, making communication possible (Cassany 1999).

Under this sociocultural paradigm, the language forms used in a text to express meaning are subordinated to the context of use, which conditions and makes sense of the written forms and their interpretation. In addition, in the development of the sociocultural perspective (Arroyo et al. 2009; Schultz and Fecho 2000), several sociocultural processes take place: the writer's and readers' social background, the writer's socio-affective world, the process of cultural identity construction of writers and readers, and the process of reconceptualization of the writing activity as an interaction of several complex and diverse cognitive processes. These pragmatic aspects have been considered in the global assessment of the students' written texts of this study.

Writing as a Cognitive Activity

According to the cognitive approach, the writing process implies taking into consideration several cognitive and social aspects: the topic, the addressee or reader, the purpose or objective of the writing text, and the type of text to be written. It aims to identify the mental operations that take place during the process of writing. Hayes and Flower (1980) significantly contributed to this cognitive approach in considering the mental processes that take place when writing as the basic units of analysis. These processes include several stages (Bueno 1996; Cancelas and Howard 2004; Manchón et al. 2005): 1) planning (or pre-writing), 2) formulation, drafting, composing, and developing, and 3) revising and editing, that can occur at any moment during the writing process. These stages are recursive (Hayes 1996; Hedge 1988) in that they do not take place sequentially, one after the other in a linear way, but instead interact with each other with as much looping backwards and forwards between the stages as needed.

For Arroyo et al. (2009), the intersection of the cognitive and social aspects of the writing process leads to the metasociocognitive model, which can be explained by analyzing the metacognitive implications of writing. Metacognition in writing is a mental process that integrates several connections between psychomotor, cognitive, affective, and social factors that determine the development of written composition. As a result, metacognition in writing composition is a process that involves knowledge of: 1) what a text is and what is implied in composing it, 2) why composing a specific text and what for, and 3) how to compose and write the text according to specific goals (self-regulation). The students' metacognitive competence is crucial for the quality of the texts they produce.

Affective Aspects of the Writing Activity

If writing is a social and communicative activity immersed in a cultural environment, the writing activity needs to reflect the values and affective factors that the writer considers as important for himself or herself and the readers. As Camps (1997) has pointed out, the value given to the written language in the community is also important and affects the degree of appreciation of its members. In addition, metacognition in writing composition is not only of a cognitive and mental nature, but also includes self-control of emotions, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and a degree of creative capacity (Arroyo et al. 2009).

When controlling self-emotions, writers apply their cultural competence acquired in interaction with others. Extrinsic motivation for writing favors a balanced and appropriate construction of context, which also determines the affective climate. Intrinsic motivation contributes to the construction of cultural identity, giving the opportunity for writers to communicate aspects related to their culture (Arroyo et al. 2009; McCarthey 2001). Finally, we believe that the practice of written composition also aims to develop the creative capacity of human beings in order to improve their own social group and society in general. For this reason, we included affective aspects in the evaluation of the students' texts in this study.

The Study

As discussed previously, many different aspects of language learning are influenced by cultural factors. Nonetheless, research on the influence of cultural diversity on writing in a second language has always been problematic. To shed light on this issue, we consider a sociolinguistic aspect based on how people's first language and culture influence their writing in a second language. This aspect is often called contrastive rhetorical component (Kaplan 1984).

To address this concern about the differences between L1 and L2 rhetorical paradigms in written discourse, we focused on a comparative study based on content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and EFL/Non-CLIL Spanish groups of upper-secondary education, grade 4 (ages sixteen and seventeen) and their competence in written English. We aim to show a descriptive

analysis based on the contrastive rhetorical component mentioned above. In order to address this sociolinguistic component, we determined that the most appropriate methodology was to study the students' syntactic complexity through a T-unit analysis, relying on Hunt's proposition (1970), along with an error analysis with an interlinguistic nature and including L1 interferences. This sociolinguistic approach ensured gathering all the necessary information to find out similarities and differences between the written proficiency of the two cohorts and, hence, the effects of culture on their written production.

Method

In this comparative study, the following initial hypothesis has been formulated: Text patterns and interlinguistic errors in writing show the language learning process of the student. They are also sometimes a consequence of L1 transference.

Objectives

To test the previous hypothesis, the general objective was to show the importance of cultural and linguistic transference to the process of language learning in that it illustrates the troublesome aspects learners encounter while constructing texts in a second language.

In order to find an answer to the previous objective, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- To examine how Spanish learners of English construct texts by observing their acquisition of English cultural practices developed in their written discourse.
- To study learners' error patterns by classifying the different types of errors and by providing a possible explanation for their occurrence.
- To ascertain whether writing competence is a key factor to predict cultural and linguistic transference in the written productions of the two groups.

Research Design

In order to achieve the intended objectives, a qualitative research study with a descriptive design was conducted, using content analysis based on the contrastive rhetorical component (Kaplan 1984). We used a T-unit analysis, relying on Hunt's proposition (1970) and analysed the shortest units of the students' written composition without leaving any sentence fragments as residue. The same criterion has often been employed in L2 research to assess the syntactic maturity of the students' written production. In addition, we applied an interlinguistic error analysis based on an etiological criterion in order to analyze the cause of errors. We intended to investigate whether the errors made by CLIL and EFL students could be attributed to interference by the L1, as the central error analysis hypothesis argues (Kellerman 1979; Lado 1957).

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of fifty-seven upper-secondary English language learners: Twenty-nine students followed the CLIL approach and twenty-eight students EFL/Non-CLIL. Both groups belonged to the same level of secondary education in a public secondary school in Granada, particularly grade 4, ages sixteen and seventeen. All participants of the study were native Spanish speakers whose L2 was English. This school was chosen by a nonprobabilistic sample of convenience, given that it accepted participating in the study while others did not.

The first group followed the CLIL approach based on content and language-integrated learning, meaning that one-third of the time employed in the teaching of the curricular subjects was through English as a foreign language with dual-focused aims: the learning of content and

the simultaneous learning of a foreign language (Coyle 1999; Coyle, Hood, Marsh 2010; Dalton-Puffer, Nikula, and Smit 2010; Madrid and Hughes 2011; Marsh 2000; Mehisto, Marsh, and Frigols 2008; Pérez Cañado 2011, 2015). Their counterparts belonged to the EFL/Non-CLIL group, which studied English as a foreign language as part of the official curriculum for secondary education.

Instrument

The test used in this study was a written test previously designed by Madrid and Hughes (2011). The dialectic triangulation strategy (Flick 2002) was used as a tool of validation, adding richness and complexity to the study. Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha statistical procedure was applied in order to clarify the reliability of the test and to discard untrustworthy results.

All the students were provided with the same test, consisting of three parts that corresponded to three different types of writing: 1) a short email, 2) a story about an accident the student had, and 3) the students' opinion about the school uniform for a school magazine.

Data Collection Procedure

Data gathering was carried out once permission to have access to the school was granted. After an explanation of the research was given, the primary researcher and the classroom teachers provided the test to the students. The total sample size (N = fifty-seven) was reduced to fifty-five cases because two cases left the text blank. All information was strictly confidential and used for research purposes only.

Data Analyses Procedure

In order to achieve the specific objectives, we implemented the following distinctive analyses. The first analysis was an attempt to give a response to the first specific objective, which aimed to examine how Spanish learners of English acquire English cultural practices when writing texts. The second type of analysis sought to address the second specific objective that focused on the study of the students' errors. The third objective, which was to ascertain whether writing competence was a key factor to predict the cultural and linguistic transferences between the written productions of the two groups, was covered with the previous analyses.

T-unit Analysis

The implementation of the T-unit analysis, based on Hunt's proposition (1970), attempted to address the contrastive rhetorical component (Kaplan 1984). As introduced in the theoretical framework, this is a sociolinguistic dimension related to a sociocultural perspective concerning discourse patterns that considers the important role of L2 in second-language acquisition in terms of organisation of the text. According to Kaplan (1984, 51), "each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself and in each culture there are particular expectations." Moreover, Spanish writers tend to structure the text in a more complex way with the tendency to create longer sentences (Grabe and Kaplan 1996; Trujillo 2001).

The T-unit analysis gave us the capability to explore the level of syntactic complexity and the syntactic maturity indices of the written productions of the students. Through this type of analysis, we were able to recognise the way Spanish learners of English write in their second language and use organization patterns.

In order to do this, first the data collected were managed with the help of a recently developed computational tool, the L2 Syntactic Analyzer (Lu 2010). The system takes a written sample as input and produces different indices of syntactic complexity of the sample based on measures. Following Lu (2010), the present study attempted to address the following measures

commonly used in L2 writing research, allowing us to assess whether the Spanish learners of English had acquired the English cultural practices developed in written discourse.

Table1: Simple Syntactic Measures Used in T-unit Analysis

Syntactic Structures	Code
Sentence	S
Verb Phrase	VP
Clause	C
T-unit	T
Dependent Clause	DC
Complex T-unit	CT
Coordinate Phrase	CP
Complex Nominal	CN
Mean Length of Sentence	MLS
Mean Length of T-unit	MLT
Mean Length of Clause	MLC

Source: Lu (2010)

The following set of syntactic complexity measures that the system covers was recommended by Wolfe-Quintero Shunji, and Hae Young (1998) and Ortega (2003) to study the effect of second-language proficiency on the written texts.

Table 2: Complex Syntactic Measures Used in T-unit Analysis

Syntactic Complexity Indices	Code
Clause per Sentence	C/S
Verb Phrase per T-unit	VP/T
Clause per T-unit	C/T
Dependent Clause per Clause	DC/C
Dependent Clause per T-unit	DC/T
T-unit per Sentence	T/S
Complex T-unit Ratio	CT/T
Coordinate Phrase per T-unit	CP/T
Coordinate Phrase per Clause	CP/C
Complex Nominal per T-unit	CN/T
Complex Nominal per Clause	CN/C

Source: Lu (2010)

Errors Classification

Finally, data were processed with a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo-11, which organized the necessary information employed in the interlinguistic error analysis. The software Nvivo-11 allowed us to create an open and axial coding of the different types of errors based on linguistic categories. The procedure followed to treat the different interlinguistic errors was grounded on second foreign language error analysis studies (SFLEA) (Bueno, Carini, and Linde 1992; Sánchez Iglesias 2004; Vázquez 1991), consisting mainly in classifying the errors found and providing a possible explanation for their occurrence. Interlingual errors take place when learners use transference from the mother tongue, L1 (Spanish), causing deviant problems in the

target language, L2 (English). The classification of the different categories in the error analysis is displayed in the mind map shown in Figure 1.
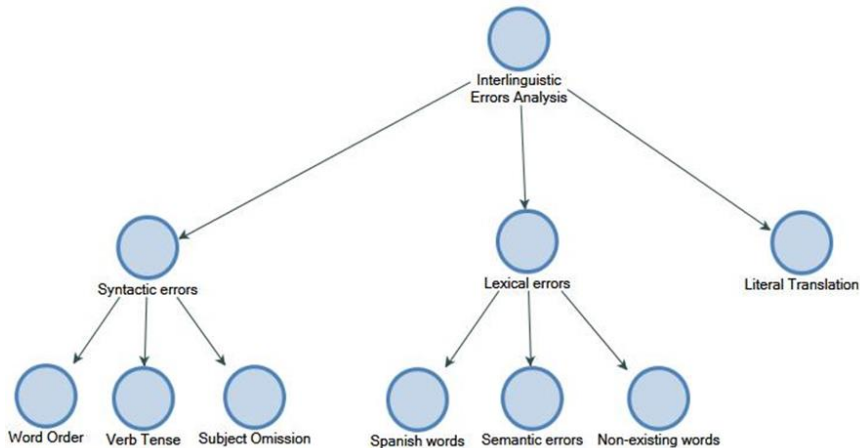

Figure 1: Classification of the Different Categories in EA created in Nvivo-11

Results and Discussion

The results show that the reliability of the test administered in both groups is high: A Cronbach alpha of 0.89 was obtained in the EFL/non-CLIL group and 0.83 in the CLIL group. The written productions were first assessed according to Canale and Swain's discourse competence construct (1980) and by considering the pragmatic, cognitive, and affective aspects, described above, to give a general idea of the students' global writing competence. Our results show that the CLIL group outperformed the EFL/Non-CLIL group since they obtained a mean value equal to 0.61 in a 0-to-1 point scale (SD = 0.15), whereas the EFL group's mean was 0.48 (SD = 0.17). These differences were statistically significant in favor of the CLIL group: p = 0.00, Z = -2.71.

T-unit Analysis

Under Sapir and Whorf's work (in Key and Kempton 1984), we can assume that culture is reflected in the language people employ and that speakers' thoughts shape the way they write. Since we use language in ways that reflect what we do, we could say that we follow cultural practices (Wardhaugh 1986). Each culture has its own way of elaborating and organizing the ideas, according to Kaplan's cultural thought patterns (1984). Kaplan established the basic features of the paragraphs of different countries, known as "rhetoric paradigms." For instance, the English-language paragraph normally follows a straight line of development, while the Spanish- or Romance-language paragraph uses detours to maintain interest. Namely, the way Spanish learners of English elaborate and organize ideas when constructing texts is called a "flowery style," using run-on or fused sentences. Regarding this idea, similar studies (Lux and Grabe 1991; Montaño-Harmon 1991), based on the analysis of written productions from Spanish students, also perceived this way of elaboration. Moreover, two additional features were identified: a frequent use of coordination and conjunctions as the main cohesive devices.

In this respect, the present study attempted to examine the way in which our Spanish learners of English construct their written discourses, observing whether they tend to use their cultural patterns or if they have acquired English cultural practices.

First, through the analysis of the data, it was found that both groups seemed to cluster different ideas into one paragraph, meaning that they tended to jump from one idea to another without clarifying how they related to each other. Here, we could observe the detours that Kaplan

(1984) mentioned in his studies. In the case of the EFL/Non-CLIL group, what appears even more frequently is called "sentence-long paragraphs," or grouping all the ideas in just one long paragraph as in the following example:

> Non-CLIL-4: In my opinion I don't want the school uniforms because I don't like to see all the people in the school with the same clothes is a little pessimistic but I think is not too difficult to choose the clothes that you're going to wear next day.

Thus, we could state that the two groups faced problems of coherence and bridging ideas according to the English-like pattern that follows a straighter line, as described above.

In regard to the use of discourse markers, we should point out the significant lack of cohesive devices, mainly from the part of the EFL/Non-CLIL group, which tended to employ conjunctions such as "and," "or," "but," and "because" as the only subordinating conjunctions. These results confirm the occurrence of one of the patterns mentioned before—the use of conjunctions as the only cohesive devices employed.

This point leads us to support the previous studies in this area and confirm the effect of L1 cultural transfer in both groups. It is important to state that a slightly higher degree of L1 transfer occurred in the EFL/Non-CLIL group due to their lower level of writing competence in the English language. This fact made it more challenging for them to achieve the English-like writing structure since they were influenced by their own cultural conventions.

The results yielded from the T-unit analysis developed through the L2 Syntactic Analyzer (Lu 2010) support the ideas discussed above as can be seen in the following graphics. The first graphic of syntactic maturity indices obtained from the written productions of the two groups indicates the average mean value of each measure being distinguished the two groups in different colours.

Figure 2: Syntactic Measures of the Written Productions of the
Two Distinctive Groups Developed in L2 Syntactic Analyzer

As can be observed, the differences between the two groups are not greatly pronounced. Nevertheless, we should pay attention to the average number of sentences produced by the two groups. In written-language analysis, the use of the category of the sentence has been segmented into smaller units, under Hunt's proposition (1970). In fact, Hunt (1970, 188–89) presents the measure of the T-unit as the "shortest units into which a piece of discourse can be cut without leaving any sentence fragments as residue." This means that 'a traditional sentence with two coordinated main clauses should be segmented into two T-units' (Ibid, 20) in order to avoid challenges with punctuation that are not always consistent.

In the case of the bilingual group, the number of sentences (S) and T-units (T) was higher while their mean length of sentence (MLS) appeared to have a lower rate. These two aspects

show a better adaption to the English-like pattern in which sentences are shorter, following a straighter line.

The second set of syntactic complexity indices, displayed in Figure 3, allows us to observe the use of complex sentences such as subordinate and coordinate clauses (Diessel 2004).
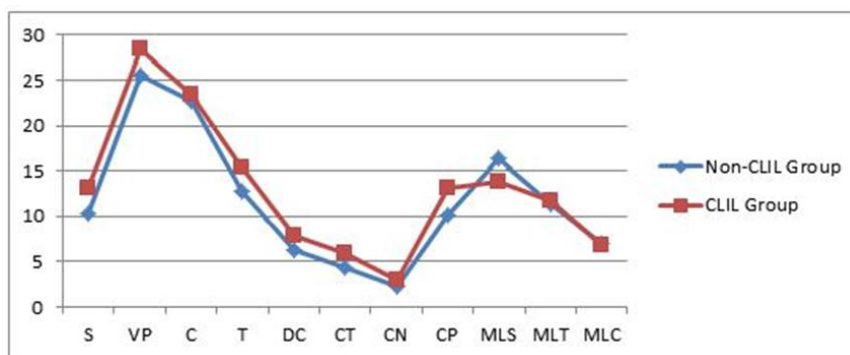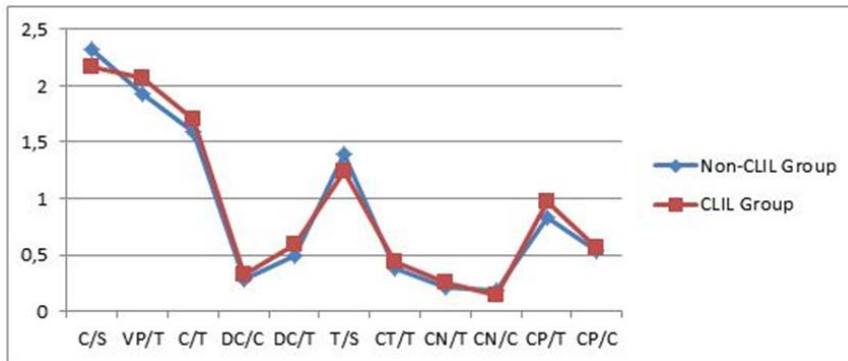

Figure 3: Syntactic Complexity Indices of the Written Productions of the
Two Distinctive Groups Developed in L2 Syntactic Analyzer

After the use of this computational tool, the L2 Syntactic Analyser (Lu 2010), we could state that the frequency of occurrence of coordination phrases per T-unit (CP/T) and per clause (CP/C) is higher than the use of other types of phrases and clauses, as it can be seen in Figure 3. This fact once again supports previous studies that conclude that coordinate phrases are one of the most frequent patterns in written Spanish as in the following example:

> CLIL.17: It's true that if you have a school uniform you have more time to do other things in the morning not to think what you are going to wear, but personally I prefer to choose my own clothes and be different and I hate wearing skirt for the school it's so uncomfortable.

It is a fact that cultural influences from the students' mother tongue (L1) exist. However, it is noteworthy that no significant difference existed between the two groups with regard to the number of coordinate and subordinate clauses used.

Interlinguistic Error Analysis

Error analysis is an innovative perspective that provides new insights into the language-learning process of the students, giving evidence of how the L2 is learned (Corder 1981; Ferris 2002). These new insights also help us to identify and explain the presence of mother tongue habits in the target language due to cultural and linguistic transfer. As mentioned above, this study followed an etiological criterion based on interlinguistic errors. In order to be able to identify the reasons for the errors, we classified the different errors following a linguistic criterion according to the language area affected (Bueno, Carini, and Linde 1992; Madrid 1999; Sánchez Iglesias 2004; Vazquez 1991).

The qualitative data analysis software Nvivo-11 allowed us to classify and examine the different categories of errors caused by cultural and language transference from their mother tongue. The following categories were used:

1. *Syntactic errors* occur when English grammar rules are incorrectly applied, such as the use of an inappropriate verb tense, sentence structure or word order errors, and subject omission due to transference from their mother tongue as some English rules do not exist in their first language.
2. *Lexical errors* involve the use of an incorrect term without being semantically meaningful to the intended context due to confusion with their mother tongue, in addition to the use of Spanish and nonexisting words due to their lack of linguistic proficiency.
3. *Literal translation* occurs when students translate Spanish sentences into English equivalents causing a deviation in the target language.

By applying these categories, a total of 323 interlinguistic errors were identified in the fifty-five written tests under consideration. In the written productions of the CLIL group, 134 errors were found while the Non-CLIL group made 189 errors. The results are summarized based on a linguistic criterion of classification, as follows:
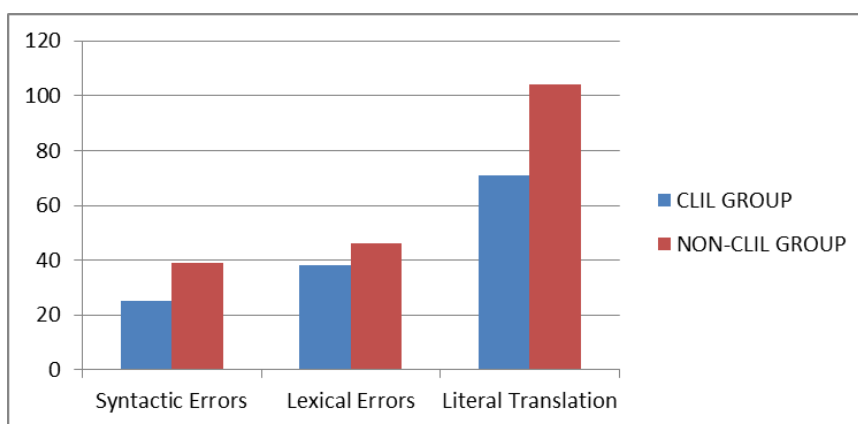
Figure 4: CLIL and Non-CLIL Interlinguistic Errors Were Classified by Language Area

Figure 4 shows the distribution of errors according to the language area. It can be observed that the higher frequency of errors was based on literal translation at the sentence level, followed by lexical and syntactic errors. It is worth mentioning that these linguistic categories have been divided into subcategories that are clarified and developed in the following examples.

The results obtained from the interlinguistic error analysis shed light on those most problematic areas with which Spanish learners of English tend to struggle because of L1 transference. In order to illustrate these problematic areas, the most representative sample of errors from our data is presented.

Literal Translation

Due to its significance in terms of frequency (a total of 175 errors), we attempt to clarify the reasons why students often employ literal translation. Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) claim that languages are born in the mind through the mother tongue. Moreover, according to Costa (1988), the more dissimilar a L2 structure is from the L1, the greater is the need to use literal translation, at least at basic and intermediate levels. Similarly, Koppe and Kremer (2007, 446) state that "students have to build this bridge between L2 and L1," and use translation as a common strategy to get the transformation from one language to another. Therefore, due to the linguistic level of our students, they tended to resort to literal translation in an attempt to fill their linguistic "gap."

CLIL – Student 20
But for me is equal wear or not uniforms = "Para mi es igual llevar o no uniformes"

Non-CLIL – Student 23
The man was talking for telephone = "El hombre estaba hablando por teléfono"

Lexical Errors

The second highest category in terms of frequency of errors is the lexical area of language. This category was divided into three subcategories: Spanish words, nonexistent words, and semantic errors. This strategy shows the transition of their language-learning process between their mother language and the target language. Koppe and Kremer (2007, 446) state that "it is inevitable that learners use L1 as a resource and make certain right or wrong suppositions, based on their experience with the mother tongue."

Non-existing Words

This subcategory is based on the use of Spanish words adapting them to English rules in order to make them sound as English words. However, this strategy leads to the creation of non-existing words, such as in the following examples:

CLIL – Student 14
afortunatly = "afortunadamente"
velocity = "velocidad"

Non-CLIL – Student 19
opinion liberty = "libertad de opinión"
unservible = "inservible"

This subcategory represents the majority of the lexical errors: Twenty-two errors were found in the CLIL group while their counterpart produced twenty-nine errors.

Semantic Errors

This category is based on the use of an incorrect term without being semantically meaningful to the intended context due to the confusion with their mother tongue. Eleven semantic errors were found in the CLIL group while in the EFL/Non-CLIL group the frequency was a bit higher with thirteen errors. These are two significant examples:

CLIL – Student 2
when I ends* that the next month = "cuando termine eso el próximo mes"

Non-CLIL – Student 15
I see the TV everyday = "Veo la tele todos los días"

Spanish Words

The subcategory of "Spanish words" was relatively low in terms of frequency as nine Spanish words were found in the whole set of samples; five words were found in the CLIL group and their counterparts employed four words.

CLIL – Student 25
two boys fighting with a (navaja) and one of them is very grave in the hospital = "dos chicos estaban peleándose con una navaja y uno de ellos está muy grave en el hospital"

Non-CLIL – Student 6
I died for the "vergüenza" = "Me morí de vergüenza"

Syntactic Errors

Syntactic errors occur when L2 structures or tenses do not exist in the students' first language, and as we mentioned earlier, the more dissimilar a L2 structure is from the L1, the greater is the need to use literal translation at basic and intermediate levels. This category is divided into three subcategories: verb tense, subject omission, and word order.

Subject Omission

By looking at the data, it could be observed that some students tended to omit the subject. This fact could be explained by the existence of null-subject languages as Spanish in which the subject can be left unexpressed. On the other hand, languages like English require an explicit subject, which is the reason why the frequency of this subcategory was relatively high. Thirty-one errors in total were found, with thirteen errors belonging to the CLIL group and nineteen errors produced by their counterparts.

CLIL – Student 9
*had really important wounds = "Tenía heridas importantes"

Non-CLIL – Student 22
*was an accident = "Era un accidente"

Word Order

The standard word order in English is *Subject + Verb + Object*. This sequence of words is highly significant in this language, as the meaning of the sentences can vary if the patterns are changed. In contrast, the Spanish language is more flexible in this regard as can be seen in the following examples. This type of error has been found in twenty-three occasions in which fourteen correspond to the EFL/Non-CLIL group and nine belong to the CLIL group.

CLIL – Student 17
I like so much dancing = "Me gusta mucho bailar"

Non-CLIL – Student 3
I don't have time enough to play = "No tengo tiempo suficiente para jugar"

Verb Tense

This subcategory was the lowest in terms of frequency, as nine errors were found in the whole set of samples: Three words were found in the CLIL group, and six words in the EFL/Non-CLIL group. The two following examples illustrate the confusion of the learner with the newly acquired language and the first language.

CLIL – Student 18
we were seeing a helicopter = "Estábamos viendo un helicóptero"

> Non-CLIL – Student 4
> I'm completly disagree with that = "Estoy completamente en desacuerdo con esto"

These results support the hypothesis that errors are not arbitrary, as they show the cognitive process of second-language learning. The CLIL cohort outperformed the EFL/Non-CLIL students, which is the reason why the EFL/Non-CLIL group was more affected by L1 interference than was the CLIL group. Therefore, language transfer plays an important role as specified in the initial hypothesis. It could be argued that error analysis helps us to predict points of difficulty by systematically comparing the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student.

Conclusions

This study addressed a concern that remains problematic—the influence of cultural diversity and transference on second-language writing. This issue has been a focus of attention in past decades. Social development and the increasing need of internationalisation in today's globalised world have surfaced the relevance of culture to the process of language learning, since culture and language are deeply intertwined. This article attempted to contribute to this area of knowledge by highlighting the social function of language and its connection with culture. This study showed that the process of learning should not be based on a static code, but rather on decoding the new language in relation to its culture.

In order to shed light on this issue, this study attempted to deal with a sociolinguistic component, particularly the contrastive rhetorical component. The underlying premise was that text patterns and interlinguistic errors are neither arbitrary nor a result of inconsistency, as they show the language-learning process of the student. To compare the competence in written English of two CLIL and TEFL/Non-CLIL upper-secondary Spanish groups, we employed a content analysis based on a T-unit analysis, relying on Hunt's proposition (1970), along with an error analysis of interlinguistic interferences (L1).

The findings drawn from the T-unit analysis reinforce previous studies (e.g., Kaplan 1984; Lux and Grabe 1991; Montaño-Harmón 1991) that recognize cultural transference from the first language to the second, precisely in regard to paragraph style and organization. Through examining our data, we can conclude that the written texts of both groups tend to reflect Spanish written patterns, such as the elaboration component and the use of coordination as well as conjunctions as cohesive devices. Their writing competence is still influenced by their cultural conventions, leading them to not fully achieve an English-like writing structure.

By the use of error analysis, we could examine and clarify the different categories of errors caused by cultural and language transference from the mother tongue. The reasons of occurrence were varied, showing in all cases the cultural transition between the mother tongue and the newly acquired language that the students were experiencing. This cultural transition must be accomplished at a certain stage of the learning process of a second or foreign language. For this reason, culture is crucial to the process of language learning.

Although prior research in this area has a wide scope, we think that our findings could generate interesting information about the characteristics of CLIL and EFL students' written productions. However, the findings are not generalizable, since the results and conclusions reported in this article were obtained with a reduced sample of fifty-seven students: twenty-nine following a CLIL program and twenty-eight taking EFL. Even though our findings were limited to a particular case study, they could serve as the starting point for future research with a larger and more representative sample in order to make more universal conclusions.

We would like to conclude this article by emphasizing the important role of errors to provide deep insight into the language-learning process. Errors can reveal the ways learners learn a second language and the strategies they employ (Ferris 2002). In addition, it is important to

highlight that teachers should focus their attention not only on the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the students' written production, but also on the cultural factors. This point is especially significant in that L2 competence involves recognizing and learning how to use culturally specific norms for written and spoken discourse (Hinkel 1999). As several studies have emphasised (e.g., Byram 1989; Byram and Morgan 1994; Hinkel 1999; Kramsch 1996, 1998), culture is a determining factor for the acquisition of any language. Based on the findings from both this present study as well as past research, teachers should foster a flexible approach in which an understanding contrastive rhetoric and culture could be applied in language classrooms. Ideally, policy-makers should also be involved in supporting an increasing understanding of culture and the importance of its implementation in the classroom.

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