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**Errors in Expressing the Past in Advanced EFL Learners**

**with Spanish as L1**

Chyby při vyjadřování minulosti u pokročilých španělských mluvčích AJ

**BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**

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## DECLARATION

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a že jsem uvedla všechny použité prameny a literaturu. A také, že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

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## **PERMISSION**

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I have not objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

## **Abstract**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the errors made by advanced EFL learners with Spanish as L1 when expressing the past in the spoken learner corpus. The thesis is divided into two main parts. The theoretical part offers a brief linguistic description of the system, specifically, of the grammatical possibilities when referring to the past. It further provides a theoretical account of learner language, interlanguage, typical features of spoken language, the definitions of errors as well as computer-aided error analysis. In the practical part, the analysis of the data of a sample of native Spanish speakers from the Spanish corpus of LINDSEI is carried out. Subsequently, the evidence of errors in expressing the past is given. The sample of native Spanish speakers is error tagged and the mistakes found in parts referring to the past are identified. For error-tagging the Louvain tagging system is used. Errors chosen are then examined accordingly and compared with the results of previous research of native speakers of Czech.

**Key words:** spoken language, learner language, interlanguage, learner corpora, error analysis, error tagging

## **Abstrakt**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analýza chyb provedených rodilými mluvčími španělštiny jakožto pokročilými studenty anglického jazyka ve vyjadřování minulosti v žákovském korpusu mluvené angličtiny. Bakalářská práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí. Teoretická část poskytuje stručný lingvistický popis systému, konkrétně gramatických možností při odkazování se na minulost. Dále podává popis žákovského jazyka, charakteristických rysů

mluveného jazyka, definice chyb, jakož i počítačem podporované chybové analýzy. V praktické části je provedena analýza dat vzorku rodilých mluvčích španělštiny ze španělského korpusu LINDSEI. Následně jsou podány důkazy chyb ve vyjadřování minulosti. Vzorek rodilých mluvčích španělštiny je označován a chyby v částech odkazujících na minulost jsou nalezeny a identifikovány. Pro označení chyb je použit Lovaňský značkovací systém. Vybrané chyby jsou pak patřičně prozkoumány a porovnány s výsledky předchozího výzkumu rodilých mluvčích češtiny.

**Klíčová slova:** mluvený jazyk, žakovský jazyk, mezijazyk, žakovské korpusy, chybová analýza, značkování chyb

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

EA	Error Analysis
ELT	English Language Teaching
L1	first language (mother tongue)
L1A	first language acquisition
L2A	second language acquisition
LINDSEI	Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

## 1. Introduction

Proficiency as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, pp. 8-9) is the degree of skill with which a learner can use a language, here English. Nonetheless, his or her ability to use the language in one context (for example, writing) cannot guarantee his or her capability of using it in another context (for instance, speaking). This thesis looks at native-like proficiency and uses the speech of native speakers as a point of reference. In Stern's definition (Stern, 1983, pp. 346), the speaker must have the capacity to use the language with maximum attention to communication and minimum attention to correctly used forms. Nevertheless, any proficient speaker should not be satisfied with just a smattering of language in everyday situations and in his or her speech the occurrence of errors is expected to be very rare. The differences in levels which language learners can reach vary enormously and that is why the study of learner language as a target of learner corpus research is becoming more and more important.

Error Analysis tries to analyse the target language and the errors captured are seen as necessary steps towards mastery. Errors, seen as student's attempts, are the results of the students' experimentation with the acquired language, so that he can eventually learn to distinguish between the proper and improper use of language. The analysis of errors might deepen the understanding of language learning. However, it must be taken into account that systematic errors are also signs of incomplete knowledge, and therefore, they must be in the spotlight. If grammatical errors are not corrected, the accuracy suffers. An inappropriate way of pointing out an error during the teaching process could be demotivating for the students, however; as far as the research is concerned, the overlooking of errors may cause further damage and deterioration in the learning process. In such cases the students can keep on using the form incorrectly.

The aim of this thesis is the analysis of the data from a spoken learner corpus considering the specific features of spoken language. In particular, the subcorpus LINDSEI\_SP, compiled by the Autonomous University of Madrid (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) and Universidad de Murcia, is analysed in this thesis. Especially, thanks to the written transcripts of oral interviews produced by advanced learners of English of Spanish origin, the data can be extracted. These transcripts enable the error identification process to be completed.

Chapter two deals with the linguistic description of past tense and various ways of expressing the past. While the third chapter focusses on learner language, interlanguage and their definitions, the fourth chapter deals with the definition of error and the process of error analysis. Furthermore, the fifth chapter concentrates on spoken language and its features, and the sixth chapter describes briefly the data and methodology of tagging errors. The subsequent seventh chapter offers concrete results and examples of different errors committed by students of Spanish origin when describing the past happenings in English. Finally, the last chapter closes the thesis with conclusion and discussion.

Although it is difficult to determine the role of instruction played in the acquisition of morphological features, it is very likely that the collaborative discourse plays a significant part in student's acquisition (Foley, pp. 101). The errors found in this thesis should function as a reference for further research of the specific features of spoken language in order to identify what is typical of English language learners (of Spanish origin) and what is different for English language learners of Czech and Spanish origin.

## 2. Linguistic Description of Past Tense

According to Quirk (1985, pp. 452-475), time can be thought of as a line on which anything before the present moment is in the past. On a grammatical level, the past tense combines two features of meaning. The first is that the event or state must have taken place in the past and there is a gap between its completion and the present moment, and the second is that the speaker or writer has in mind a definite time at which the event or state took place. Past tense for regular verbs is marked with the ending -ed and refers to the past time via some past point of reference. Moreover, the past tense is frequently accompanied by adverbials such as *last week, yesterday, etc.* – either explicitly or implicitly. It is necessary for the past tense to be followed or preceded by an indicator of time or a speaker should be able to count on the listener's assumption that he has a specific time in mind. The element of definite meaning should be recoverable from knowledge of the immediate or local situation, the larger situation of general knowledge, what has been said earlier in the same sentence or text or what comes later on in the same sentence or text. English has two main ways of referring to the past: through the past tense and the perfect aspect.

### 2.1 Expressing the Past

According to Leech (2004, pp. 35-54), English has two main ways of indicating past time: the Past Tense and the Perfect Aspect. The use of the past tense can be distinguished as situational in relation to an immediate situation; anaphoric and cataphoric – anaphoric when the time in the past to which the reference is made is already indicated by a previous use of the past tense and cataphoric in cases when the adverbial (e.g. *last Saturday, once, when, yesterday, a week ago, the other day, at 4 o'clock, in the morning etc.*) follows the past tense or when the

sentence contains some temporal conjunction, such as *while, as soon as* etc.; and as habitual event or state referring to a single definite event in the past. The use of *used to* should also be mentioned in this section. The auxiliary *used to* with infinitive construction helps describe a habitual meaning: *I used to be rich*. And it can be subdivided into a past state (with state verbs): *Cigarettes used to cost fifty pence a packet – now they cost nearly ten times as much.*, and a past habit (with event verbs): *I used to go for a swim every day*.

Leech (2004, pp. 35-54) further defines that the past tense focuses on happenings which take place before the present moment and from which the present moment is excluded. Furthermore, he divides it into four main types:

- a) Unitary past: *He was born, lived and died in Dorset.*
- b) Habitual past: *In those days I enjoyed a game of tennis.*
- c) Hypothetical meaning (dependent clauses): *It's time we had a holiday. If you loved me, you wouldn't do such a thing.*
- d) Present reference (polite): *Did you want me? Yes, I hoped you would give me a hand with the painting.*

## **2.2 Perfective and Progressive Aspects**

There are two aspect constructions in English – the perfective (for a period leading up to the specified time) and progressive (for an event or state of affairs which is in progress or continuing) which also realize the basic contrast between the action viewed as complete (perfective) and the action seen as incomplete (imperfective or progressive). Nevertheless, these two aspects may be combined within one single verb phrase (*I have been reading*). It is also necessary to emphasize that there is a problematic overlap in English between tense and aspect, for example: *It is possible that I left the keys at the office (last night)*. The perfective in

the most common interpretation indicates anterior or preceding time, whereas the present perfective relates a past event or state to a present time. Biber (1999) adds in connection with the present perfect that the past action extends to the present (*I have written to Mr. Steven, but he has ignored my letters.*)

For further reference, Leech (2004, pp. 35-54) segments the Present Perfect referring to the past with present relevance into three subgroups: a time period lasting up to the present, results persisting at the present time and indefinite time.

As per his division there are four principal uses:

- a) State-up-to-present which contains:
  - I. States extending over a period lasting up to present: *I've lived here since I was a child.*
  - II. States extending into the future: *We've kept healthy all our lives, and we mean to stay healthy in the future.*
- b) Indefinite past (with the use of event verbs) in which the Present Perfect can refer to some indefinite happening in the past, while the indefinite meaning is reinforced by an adverb: *ever, never, before* etc.: *Have you ever been to America?* In such indefiniteness the number of events and the time are left unspecified.
  - I. Indefinite events in a period leading up to the present: *All our children have had the measles.*
  - II. At least once in a period leading up to the present: *Have you visited the exhibition?* (The exhibition is still running.)
- c) Habit in a period leading up to the present (with the use of event verbs): *I've always walked to work. Mr Terry has sung in this choir ever since he was a boy.*
- d) Resultative past (transitional event verbs describing the switch from one state to another): *The taxi has arrived.*

Choice between the use of the present perfective and the simple past is often determined by whether the speaker has in mind an implicit and not-yet-finished time zone, for instance: *Have you seen the exhibition?* (meaning: yet) or *Did you see the exhibition?* (meaning: when it took place). There is a clear distinction between the fact if it is still open or if it has already finished. Taking into account the first sentence, a resultative connotation may be implied from it. Such connotations tend to co-occur with time adverbials such as *recently, just, already, yet, since, so far, up to now* etc. Finally, adverbials associated with both the past tense as well as the present perfective should not be forgotten: *today, this month, this year, recently, before, this June, once, already.*

### **2.2.1 The Past Perfective**

The past perfective usually carries the meaning of "past in the past" and can be considered as an anterior version either of the present perfective or of the simple past. (*When we bought it, the house had been empty for several years.*) Its three meanings can also occur: meaning of state, event, or habit. The contrast between the simple past and the present perfective is neutralized, for example in this sentence: *He had died, before his son was born.* While Quirk (1985, pp.192) highlights only three meanings, Leech (2004, pp. 47) adds one more. As a result, there are four meanings: state-up-to-present: (*The house had been empty for ages.*), indefinite past-in-past (*Had they visited Brazil before?*), habit-up-to-then (*Mr Phipps had sung in that choir for fifty years.*) and resultative past-in-past (*The goalkeeper had injured his leg and couldn't play.*). Finally, the perfect aspect of non-finite verbs can refer to both indefinite (*The parcel had already arrived.*) and definite time (*The parcel had arrived on April 15<sup>th</sup>.*).

### 2.2.2 Progressive Aspect

Sometimes also called the durative or continuous (progressive) aspect indicates an action in progress at a given time. When referring to the past the speaker can refer to the competence of somebody or to the performance on a particular occasion or during a particular moment: *He sang well.* vs. *She was singing well.* The simple past helps us see the event as a whole, whereas thanks to the past progressive in periphrastic form one sees the activity rather in progress. The happening in the progressive can have duration which is temporary (limited) and it need not be necessarily complete. State, event, and habit with the progressive are interpreted differently. Even though the progressive aspect occurs with dynamic verbs describing activities or events, it can also be used to describe a static situation (a temporary state that exists for a period of time: *He was sitting in my office smoking one of his cigarettes.*). Additionally, progressive aspect is common in conversation (Quirk, pp. 198): “A count of a large number of verb constructions has indicated that less than 5 per cent of verb phrases are progressive, whereas more than 95 per cent are nonprogressive. The same count shows that progressive forms are more frequent in conversation than in scientific discourse; also that they are marginally more frequent in conversational AmE than in conversational BrE”.

First of all, we distinguish the state progressive which expresses temporariness: *We are living in the country.* Secondly, the event progressive which carries the idea that an event has duration and has not yet finished: *The train is approaching.* And thirdly, the habitual progressive which conveys the idea of repetition over a limited period of time and may indicate a duration or incompleteness of a sequence of events: *He is typing a letter.* In the case of indication of a duration or incompleteness of a sequence of events, the clause must contain an adverbial of time or frequency: *He is always working late at the office.*

Regarding the relation of progressive aspect to tense, it should be mentioned that there is some point of orientation from which the temporary event or state stretches into the future and into the past. This is called temporal frame (*This time last year I was travelling round the world.*). The temporal frame, however, is not a necessary condition of the past progressive. In addition, the relationship between two simple past forms is one of time-sequence: *When we arrived, he made some fresh coffee*, while the relationship between the past progressive and the simple past form is one of time-inclusion: *When we arrived, he was making some fresh coffee.* In conversational context, the progressive may suggest a casual chat: *I was talking to her, and she was telling me that...*

### **2.2.3 Perfective Progressive**

Perfective and progressive aspects can be combined in one verb phrase (*I have been working...*). The progressive in such cases indicates either duration, limitation of duration or possible incompleteness. The meaning of the sentences can be seen as a temporary situation leading up to the present. Whereas the simple perfective has a resultative meaning in some cases: "*Have you cleaned the windows?*", the perfective progressive can be used when the job is not finished: "*Have you been cleaning the windows?*" The happening in the perfective progressive can have (limited) duration or continues up to the present or recent past; it does not need to be complete and may have effects which are still apparent. In addition, the present perfective progressive indicates the temporary habit up to the present or the repetition of the activity may stretch into the future: *He has been scoring many goals.* Apart from the temporary habit up to present time Leech (2004, pp. 48-52) recognizes the temporary situation (state) leading up to the present moment: *They have been living in that flat since their marriage.*, and the temporary situation with present results: *She's been crying again.* (i. e. Look, her eyes are

red.) Past Perfect Progressive manages to combine the temporariness of the progressive with the past-in-the-past meaning. The infrequent occurrence of Past Perfect Progressive has also been detected. (Leech, pp. 52).

### **2.3 Future in the Past**

Future constructions, describing something in the future but seen from a viewpoint in the past, can be divided into five subgroups. The first subgroup contains modal verb constructions which would occur more in literary narrative style: *The time was not far off when he would regret this decision.* The second subgroup contains "be going to" combined with an infinitive in the sense of unfulfilled intention: *You were going to give me your address.* The third subgroup highlights the use of the past progressive when the arrangement was predetermined in the past: *I was meeting him in London the next day.* The fourth subgroup includes the expressions "be to" in combination with the infinitive indicating arrangement in formal use: *He was eventually to end up in the bankruptcy court.* And the last fifth subgroup deals with the use of "be about to" with infinitive, the last subgroup carries the meaning "on the point of" with the sense of unfulfilled intention: *He was about to hit me.* Nevertheless, only the first and fourth subgroups can genuinely express the meaning of future-in-the-past.

### **2.4 Past Time and Modal Verbs in Indirect Speech and Other Constructions**

The Past tense in reported speech determines reports of earlier speech or thought given in the past tense even though the original quote (in the case of speech) was presumably in the present tense (*A girl at work said she worked at Woolworths. / And I thought I was going to go home early.*). In indirect speech modals in the past (*could, might, would, should*) often appear

in the case of permission (*She said we could/might do as we wished.*), in an example of ability (*It was seriously argued that the king could do no wrong.*), in the instance of possibility (*We were afraid that it might rain later. Nobody knew what could be done.*), in the occurrence of prediction (*I felt sure that the plan would succeed.*), in the event of volition (*I wondered if he would help me*), and also in offers (*She asked me if she should open a window.*). The verbs *ought to* and *had better* have no distinction between present and past. They are unchanged in indirect speech, even if they refer to the past. In other constructions, not in indirect speech, the past tense modal forms *could* and *would* act as the past time equivalents of *can* and *will*, however, *might* and *should* do not act as the past time equivalents of *may* and *shall*.

Finally, periphrastic forms (Dušková, pp. 258-259) may also be needed in order to denote past. Regarding the formation of the periphrastic passive, it is formed by the auxiliary verb *be* and past participle of a transitive verb. The periphrastic passive is often substituted with the predicate constructions which consist of an adjective and a verbal element (usually forms of the verb *be*). For example, *it cost five pounds, it was meant as a compliment, the sample was weighed and measured etc.*

#### **2.4.1 Hypothetical Meaning and Tentativeness or Politeness**

The past tense modals appear in the hypothetical sense of the past tense in both main and subordinate clauses: *If they could win this game, they might become league champions.* If the perfective aspect is added, the clause can be interpreted as an opposing fact: *If they could have won that game, they might have become league champions.* While *would* and *should* can also be classified as the mood markers of hypothetical meaning (*If you pressed that button, the engine would stop. If there were an accident, we would/should have to report it.*), the verb

*should* is a marker of putative meaning (*She insisted that we should stay.*). Putative *should* is more common in BrE than in AmE.

Moreover, the verbs *could*, *might* and *would* can carry a meaning of tentativeness or politeness in the past. Quirk (1985, pp. 232-235) distinguishes tentative permission (*Could I see your driving licence?*), tentative volition (*Would you lend me a dollar?*) and tentative possibility (*There could be something wrong with the light switch.*).

## 2.5 Simple Present Referring to Past

The present tense may also be used in reference to the past to produce a more vivid description, such reference denotes the so-called historic present. In some cases it is typical of oral narrative or a style used much more in spoken speech: "*She says, I'm gonna smack you, right, come here', and she gets him and she whacks him in front of everybody, didn't she Robert?*". In popular conversation, the verbs *say* and *go* are very commonly used to report in the historic present, especially by young people (*So I told her about the party – and she goes, ...*). Historic present can be found with verbs of communication such as *learn*, *hear*, *tell*, *write*, and *say* as they refer to the receiving of the message. The last example of historic present covers information belonging to the past (*Like Rubens, Watteau is able to convey an impression of warm,...*). Fundamentally, the simple present appears here to underline the brevity, drama and vividness of the content of the speech.

## 2.6 Verbs Occurring in the Past Tense

There are many verbs that occur most of the time in the past tense (Biber 1999, pp. 452-457): *exclaim*, *eye*, *glance*, *grin*, *nod*, *pause*, *remark*, *reply*, *shrug*, *sigh*, *smile*, and *whisper*

(80% of the time) and *bend, bow, lean, light, park, seat, set off, shake, stare, turn away, wave,* and *wrap* (70% of the time). Many verbs associated with past tense describe human activities, e.g. *bend, bow, eye, glance, grin, lean, nod, park, pause, sit, set off, shake, shrug, sigh, smile, stare, turn away,* and *wave*; or are used for reporting speech acts: *exclaim, remark, reply,* and *whisper*. Other less-common verbs (referring to human actions) that occur in the past tense are: *beckon, blush, chuckle, cough, duck, fold, frown, gasp, gesture, giggle, groan, growl, grunt, heave, limp, mumble, murmur, mutter, scramble, stagger, whistle,* and *wink*.

Past perfect aspect "*had been*" is common in all registers and the verbs: *anticipate, deceive, encounter, inherit, taste, transform* occur in the past perfect more than 25% of the time. Furthermore, the most common verbs with the past perfect are some of the most common verbs overall: *go, come, leave, make, take, do, bring, give, get* (physical movements), *say, tell* (speech acts) and *see, hear,* and *know* (mental perceptions). In conversations the forms *been* and *gone* are the most common.

With the progressive subsequent verbs appear (Biber 1999, pp. 452-457):

- a) Verbs referring to activities and physical events: *bleed, chase, shop, starve* (80% of the time with the progressive), *dance, drip, head (for), march, pound, rain, stream, sweat* (50%). Other verbs: *bring, buy, carry, come, cry, do, drive, eat, give, go, laugh, leave, make, move, pay, play, run, take, walk,* and *work*. However, rarely occurring with the progressive aspect are the following verbs: *arrest, attain, award, dissolve, find, frighten, invent, rule, shut, shrug, smash, suck, suspend, swallow, throw,* and *trap*.
- b) Verbs referring to communication acts (occurring with the progressive) are as follows: *chat, joke, kid, moan* (80%), *scream, talk* (50%), *also ask, say, speak,* and *tell* and exceptionally occurring with the progressive aspect are the following verbs: *accuse, communicate, disclose, exclaim, label, reply,* and *thank*.

- c) Verbs referring to mental/attitudinal states or activities: *look forward, study* (50%), *hope, think, wonder* (more than ten times per million words). Furthermore, with the progressive aspect verbs such as the following seldom occur: *agree, appreciate, associate, attribute, base, believe, conceive, concern, conclude, correlate, delight, desire, know, like, reckon, suspect, and want*.
- d) Verbs referring to perceptual states or activities: *look, watch, feel, stare, and listen* (more than ten times per million words). Nevertheless, the verbs: *detect, hear, perceive, and see* hardly ever occur with the progressive aspect.
- e) Verbs referring to static physical situations: *lurk* (50%), *wait, sit, stand, wear, hold, live, and stay* (more than ten times per million words.) whilst verbs of facilitation/causation or obligation rarely occurring with the progressive aspect include: *convince, entitle, guarantee, incline, induce, inhibit, initiate, inspire, interest, mediate, oblige, promise, prompt, provoke, and render*.
- f) Two verbs in conversation are notable because they occur as past progressives (rather than present progressive) more commonly: *was saying* and *was thinking*. Common progressive aspect verbs typically take a human subject as an agent (actively controlling the action) while the action, state, or situation described by common progressive verbs can be prolonged.
- g) Moreover, the verbs *look, watch, stare, and listen* are stative verbs. Nonetheless, the visual and auditory perception verbs are common with the progressive aspect: *He was staring at me. / I was looking at that one just now.*) whereas *see* and *hear* occur very seldom in the progressive: *I saw him the other day. / I heard about that.* It is possible to stop *looking/watching/staring/listening* but not *seeing/hearing.*)

- h) The verbs *think* and *wonder* involve an active agent controlling the thought process. In contrast, verbs like *appreciate*, *desire*, *know*, *like*, and *want* are more typically interpreted as expressing a state experienced by someone: *I was just thinking*.
- i) Static situations with verbs such as *stay*, *wait*, *sit*, *stand*, and *live* are often of short duration: *We were waiting for the train*.
- j) Many dynamic verbs, for example, *shut*, *smash*, *swallow*, and *throw* rarely occur in the progressive. (He threw me off the bus.)
- k) Some verbs, for instance: *attain*, *dissolve*, *find*, *invent*, and *rule* report the end-point of some process when some result is achieved.

## 2.7 Modal Verbs with Perfect Infinitive

There are more cases of specific past reference (Dušková, pp. 186-203). For instance, when the modal verb *can* is connected with perfect infinitive: *He can't have forgotten*. It does not occur only in declarative: *that remark may have offended her*, but also in interrogative sentences: *Can that remark have offended her?* *Can* in its past form: *could* and *be able to* in the past form: *was able to* express the intrinsic modality: *She could never keep / she was never able to keep a secret*. If the issue is that the speaker needs to refer to reaching something thanks to his ability or capability, he or she should use *be able to*: *He was able to read before he went to school*. Furthermore, *could* with a past infinitive in declarative and interrogative sentences helps the speaker comment on a happening which might have happened in the past: *You could have seen the accident from the window* (past indicative). While *can* with a past infinitive conveys extrinsic modality, *could* with a past infinitive can indicate both extrinsic (*We looked everywhere. – You couldn't have /done/.*) and intrinsic modality (*You've got nothing to reproach yourself with. You couldn't have done more.*).

Might with the perfect infinitive refers to the past happening: *what might have seemed fantastic ten years ago may not be unfeasible today*. There is a difference in probability that the happening did or did not take place. We use *might*: *I might have taken the underground*. (But I also know that I did not). To the contrary, “*He may have taken the underground*.” shows that the speaker does not know if the person did or did not take the underground.

*Must* also manifests the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic modality. *Must* with the perfect infinitive concerns high degree of probability: *It must have been expensive*. If *must* refers to some past happening without the perfective infinitive, it appears in dependent clauses: *I told him what he must do*. Otherwise, the past form *had to* is available to the speakers. In addition, *should* with perfect infinitive highlights something what was advisable to do, however, did not happen: *You should have told me before. I shouldn't have put it off*.

*Will* and *would* can also be used with the perfect infinitive. Whereas *will* appears more frequently in formal contexts (written or spoken): *You will have noticed the discrepancy in the two accounts. Even this brief survey will have shown that...*, the modal verb *would* describes any past action or happening which is probable (as deduced by the speaker): *She would have been about twenty when she married*.

## **2.8 Restrictions in the Use of Tense and Aspect when Referring to the Past**

English certainly has many grammatical means to indicate the time when an action or event occurs, or when a state or process takes place. However, there are also so-called ungrammatical uses such as the ungrammatical use of the simple present or present perfective with adverbials such as *last week, yesterday*: *\*Freda starts/has started school last year*. Quirk (1985, pp. 191) further mentions another unacceptable use of time-position adverbial (e.g. *last night*) combined with the finite verb paraphrase: *\*It is possible that I have left the keys at the*

*office last night.* In the last example, the past tense should be used instead of the perfective. A duration adverbial is in many cases virtually obligatory (Quirk 1985, pp. 192), especially for states leading up to the present: *That house was empty for ages – but now it's been sold* and habits in a period leading up to the present: *The journal has been published every month since 1850.*

In *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* another variant of the indefinite past meaning appears sounding absurdly inappropriate: *\*Has the postman left any letters? Yes, he did six months ago.* From this example it can be inferred that the connotation of recency is connected with the implicit time zone which would be no longer than a day in this particular case. In summary, the past simple is not normally used with definite past references (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, pp. 609): *\*My grandfather has died about four weeks ago. / \*When I was a lad, I have lived on a farm.* The misuse of present tense in following sentence: *\*"Is this the first time you fly on British Airways?"* indicates an immediate event which should normally be used with the present perfect not the present simple or progressive: *"Is this the first time you've flown on British Airways?"*

On the other hand, in the speech so-called performance errors which are induced by one speaker copying the form of another speaker's question may occur (Quirk, 1985, p. 195): A: *Have you ever seen Macbeth on the stage?* B: *\*Yes, I've seen it ages ago, when I was a child.* Some speakers may not acknowledge the restriction between the use of present perfective and past in such cases when they feel that the present perfective implies that the period referred to is not in the past: *\*I have seen her this March.* There is one more common misuse of *for* and *since* when referring to time-up-to-now (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 615): *\*We've had that TV set since fifteen years.* In addition, *since* is not used with the present simple or progressive when referring to time-up-to-now: *\*We live/are living in the village since 1987.*

In the indirect speech construction the past perfective cannot be replaced by the simple past (Quirk, 1985, p. 197) as, for example, the past perfective in following sentence which indicates backshift into the more remote past: *I told her the parcel had not arrived*. Moreover, the past perfect is not used in the main clause in a hypothetical conditional sentence, such as: *\*If I had had more time I had been in touch earlier*.

Besides, state progressive is simply unacceptable with stative verbs as there is no progress made: *\*We are owning a house in the country*. The progressive form is not normally used with punctual verbs: *start, stop, finish* etc. as they refer to actions that are completed at a single point in time: *\*My mobile phone has been starting working again*. It is not used with the reference to single, completed actions or punctual events either: *\*Essex County Council has been approving expenditure of £50,000 on the project this year*.

### **3 Learner Language and Interlanguage**

English-language learners (ELLs) are students who use English as a second language. No matter if first- or second-language learning is considered, there is the same aim: to succeed with perfection. But no one's language is ever error-free.

The concept of learner language leads to the theory of interlanguage. The term interlanguage (used first by Selinker, 1972) refers to the structured system which the learner constructs at any given stage in his development.<sup>1</sup> The language of a language learner is according to Ellis: permeable, dynamic and systematic. The permeability is based on the fact that the learner's knowledge at any stage is open to amendment. Subsequent loss of permeability may result in fossilization and prevent the amendment. The dynamism represents slow revises in the interim systems to accommodate new hypotheses about the target language

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<sup>1</sup> Rod Ellis. *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985 (47).

system. Once a new rule is introduced, it extends gradually over a range of linguistic contexts. The systematization consists of the detection of the rules in predictable ways. The native speaker bases his plans on his knowledge of the L1 system. The early interlanguage theory then constitutes an attempt to explain errors.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4 Defining Errors and Error Analysis**

An error is the use of a linguistic item in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language would regard as faulty or incomplete. There is a distinction between an error, which results from incomplete knowledge, and a mistake caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance.

Error analysis is the study, analysis and classification of the errors made by second language learners which was offered as an alternative to contrastive analysis. Error Analysis has a long tradition (Sridhar, 1981). Its goals were pedagogic, the identified errors provided information which could be used for teaching. The procedure for Error Analysis defined by Corder (1974) as follows: firstly, a corpus of language is selected (including the size of the sample, the medium to be sampled, and the homogeneity of the sample; secondly, the errors in the corpus must be identified; thirdly, the errors have to be classified which involves assigning a grammatical description to each error; fourthly, the errors are explained and finally, in the last step comes the evaluation of each error. The last stage is only necessary if the purpose of the Error Analysis is pedagogic. It is redundant if the Error Analysis is carried out as a part of SLA research.

Error analysis provides two kinds of information about interlanguage. The first is the linguistic type of errors produced by L2 learners, however, linguistic types of errors produced

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<sup>2</sup> (Ellis, pp. 50-51)

by learners do not tell much about the sequence of development. The second concerns the psycholinguistic type of errors committed by L2 learners. During the second stage overgeneralization may happen, further also may occur – ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete applications of rules involving a failure to learn a more complex types of structure because the learner finds he can achieve effective communication without it (by following simpler rules), and hypothesizing of false concept which refers to errors derived from faulty understanding of target language distinctions (*\*He is speaks French.*). The most significant contribution of Error Analysis lies in the success in elevation of the status of errors from undesirability to a guide to the inner workings of the language learner process. The interlanguage theory and the evidence accumulated from Error Analysis is now seen as evidence of the learner's active contribution to SLA.<sup>3</sup>

## **5 Spoken Language and its Features**

The focus of this thesis are L2 learners and their oral production of English. As there are great differences between oral and written language, for example, in comparing cohesion and coherence of a language, the oral and written style must be treated in a different way. Each style has its own characteristics. Therefore, this section will focus strictly on the features of spoken speech. While written language is much more accurate as it requires a great deal of preparation, most spoken language is spontaneous, quick and usually involves immediate thinking on the spot.

The first two main features of spoken language are that it happens in real time, it is unplanned and most typically face-to-face. The following two main features consist of foregrounds choices which reflect the immediate social and interpersonal situations and that

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<sup>3</sup> (Ellis, pp. 52-54)

spoken and written language are not in stark contrast with one another, yet they exist on a continuum. These four features overlap. The everyday informal conversations have several important features of informal spoken grammar used by speakers across different regions, contexts of use, various ages, genders, social classes and occupations. The features of informal spoken grammar can be classified as follows<sup>4</sup>:

- Units beginning with capital letters, consisting of at least one main clause and ending in a full stop are difficult to identify in spoken language.
- Speech is often marked by small units of communication consisting of just single words or phrases which may be separated by pauses, intakes of breath, falls and rises in pitch, and so on.
- The minimal unit of communication is the tone unit. It consists of at least one intonation contour which ends in a rising or falling tone.
- Speaker's turns are not neat and tidy. The speakers interrupt each other, or speak at the same time and therefore any transcript of a real conversation is much less tidy than a layout of a dialogue in a book.
- Listeners do not stay passive but give feedback and responses.
- There are many incomplete or abandoned structures which may not cause a problem of understanding.
- References to people and things in the immediate situation may not be comprehensible to someone reading the transcript.
- Subordinate clauses are present but not always connected to any particular main clause.
- Some structures are difficult to describe as, for example, imperative.

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<sup>4</sup> Carter, Ronald; McCarthy, Michael. *Cambridge grammar of English: A comprehensive guide: Spoken and written English: Grammar and usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- Ellipsis is a very common feature and it occurs when words are not needed because they can be understood from the immediate context or the knowledge which is shared between speakers.
- Some words have an uncertain status regarding grammar (e.g. *wow*). Some may be considered discourse markers. So-called discourse markers are words and phrases which function to link segments of the discourse to one another (*anyway, fine, cos, good, great, like, now, okay, right, well, etc.*)
- Nevertheless, the majority of grammatical items and structures are the same for both written and spoken language.

## **6. Data and Methodology**

Proficiency as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, pp. 8-9) is the degree of skill with which a learner can use a language, here English. Nonetheless, his or her ability to use the language in one context (for example, writing) cannot guarantee his or her capability of using it in another context (for instance, speaking). This thesis looks at native-like proficiency and uses the speech of native speakers as a point of reference. In Stern's definition (Stern, 1983, pp. 346), the speaker must have the capacity to use the language with maximum attention to communication and minimum attention to correctly used forms. Nevertheless, any proficient speaker should not be satisfied with just a smattering of language in everyday situations and in his or her speech the occurrence of errors is expected to be very rare. The differences in levels which language learners can reach vary enormously and that is why the study of learner language as a target of learner corpus linguistics is becoming more and more important.

Error Analysis tries to analyse the target language and the errors captured are seen as necessary steps towards mastery. Errors, seen as student's attempts, are the results of the students' experimentation with the acquired language, so that he can eventually learn to distinguish between the proper and improper use of language. The analysis of errors might deepen the understanding of language learning. However, it must be taken into account that systematic errors are also signs of incomplete knowledge, and therefore, they must be in the spotlight. If grammatical errors are not corrected, the accuracy suffers. An inappropriate way of pointing out an error during the teaching process could be demotivating for the students, however; as far as the research is concerned the overlooking of errors may cause further damage and deterioration in the learning process. In such cases the students can keep on using the form incorrectly.

The aim of this thesis is the analysis of the data from a spoken learner corpus considering the specific features of spoken language. In particular, the subcorpus LINDSEI\_SP, compiled by the Autonomous University of Madrid (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) and Universidad de Murcia, is analysed in this thesis. Especially, thanks to the written transcripts of oral interviews produced by advanced learners of English of Spanish origin, the data can be extracted. These transcripts enable the error identification process to be completed.

Chapter two deals with the linguistic description of past tense and various ways of expressing the past. While the third chapter focusses on learner language, interlanguage and their definitions, the fourth chapter deals with the definition of error and the process of error analysis. Furthermore, the fifth chapter concentrates on spoken language and its features, and the sixth chapter describes briefly the data and methodology of tagging errors. The subsequent seventh chapter offers concrete results and examples of different errors committed by students of Spanish origin when describing the past happenings in English. Finally, the last chapter closes the thesis with conclusion and discussion.

Although it is difficult to determine the role of instruction played in the acquisition of morphological features, it is very likely that the collaborative discourse plays a significant part in student's acquisition (Foley, pp. 101). The errors found in this thesis should function as a reference for further research of the specific features of spoken language in order to identify what is typical of English language learners (of Spanish origin) and what is different for English language learners of Czech and Spanish origin.

## 7. Results

The category of verbs is a complex one. It is subdivided according to the grammatical properties of the English verb. The main purpose of this research part consists in identifying erroneous features with the focus on the use of perfective and progressive aspects (past perfective, progressive, perfective progressive) and the future in the past or simple present referring to the past as well as past tenses in indirect speech and other constructions.

The results of the tagging process shed light on the number and type of errors produced by 25 native speakers of Spanish when referring to the past. In the selected part of 25 speakers, there were 1,254 correctly used past references. The total number of 169 errors accounts for 11.90% of past references in total: 1,423 (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Pivot table listing the frequency of erroneously used past references**

	<b>Total of correctly used past references</b>	<b>Total number of errors</b>	<b>Total of all past references used</b>
<b>Total count</b>	1,254	169	1,423
<b>%</b>	88.10%	11.90%	100%

Table 2 shows the frequency of erroneously used tenses. It is further divided into two parts: erroneously used tense and expected tense. The final numbers highlight the erroneous use of past simple tense. Firstly, there was the present simple erroneously used in 71 cases and then, the present perfect 16 times, while the past simple occurs in eight occurrences and both the past continuous and the past perfect only in two examples. Finally, in one instance the non-finite verb form (gerund) was used instead of the past continuous.

The past simple tense was not applied when it was supposed to in 81 cases (81% of all GVT errors) which demonstrates that for this sample of Spanish native speakers the most

problematic tense is the past simple tense and the strongest tendency appears to be the use of the present simple to refer to the past. The following groups cover the present perfect which was not used (when it was supposed to) with 6 occurrences, and the past continuous with 5 cases. There is only one instance of the use of a modal with perfective infinitive. Errors in other past tenses such as the present perfect continuous, past perfect continuous and future perfect have not been found.

**Table 2. Pivot table listing the frequency of erroneously used tenses (Appendix 2, Table 2-7)**

<b>Erroneously used tense</b>	<b>Expected tense</b>	<b>Number of examples</b>	<b>%</b>
Present Simple	Past Simple	64	64%
Present Simple	Present Perfect	4	4%
Present Simple	Past Continuous	2	2%
Present Simple	Modals with Perfect Infinitive	1	1%
Present Perfect	Past Simple	15	15%
Present Perfect	Past Continuous	1	1%
Past Simple	Present Simple	6	6%
Past Simple	Present Perfect	1	1%
Past Simple	Past Continuous	1	1%
Past continuous	Past Simple	2	2%
Past Perfect	Present Perfect	1	1%
Past Perfect	Present Simple	1	1%
Non-finite verb form: gerund	Past Continuous	1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 7.1 Perfective Aspect

Examples in utterance 1 (for more examples: 1-9, see Appendix 2) can be seen not only as errors in verbal morphology, but also as an incorrect form of the verb used or errors in the use of the perfective aspect. In example 1, there are several incorrect forms used and it is possible that the speaker might not have known the correct form of the past participle or that he/she was unable to use the perfective aspect correctly: (eGVT) I have sit *\$sat\$*. Furthermore, there is some confusion by the speaker as to when to use the past simple and when the present perfect tense: (eGVT) has starting to talk *\$started to talk\$*. In the last error in example 1, the speaker was aiming to use the progressive aspect which would allow him to describe a so-called temporal frame): (eGVT) I have sitting *\$was sitting\$*. Thanks to the last example, it can be concluded that the problematic area of this speaker is not only in morphology, but also in tense.

1. <B> (eGVT) I have sit *\$sat\$* . (eh) by beside her and . I don't know why one {of of}. another woman who was sitting . in the other side (eh) (eGVT) has starting to talk *\$started to talk\$* (eh) with her to te= to her about (em) . {I don't know I don't know} exactly . but (eGVT) I have sitting *\$was sitting\$* in the other side so she was in the middle . the old woman </B>

In example 10 (and also following examples: 1-9, see Appendix 2), it is obviously unclear to the speaker when to use the past simple and the perfective aspect. As a follow-up to this part of the conversation, he/she was attempting to describe an event which took place before the present moment. The present moment should, therefore, be excluded. Moreover, it is clear that he/she has a definite time in mind.

10. <B> and . the old wo= the old woman (eGVT) has said *said* there's a . another old woman (em) . stand . (eh) and <foreign> dice </foreign> do you mind {to to} if (eh) she sit down and (eGVT) I've said *I said* yes of course I don't mind </B>

In example 11, the speaker is attempting to depict a resultative state as the present result can still be seen:

11. I think she's been to the hairdressers and (eGVT) have *has had* her hair done

Perfective aspect describing a state extending over a period lasting up to present can be observed in the example 12:

12. because when I was a child in the school I: always I (eGVT) want *have always wanted* to: speak English like

Finally, in examples 13 and 14 the adverbial *before* appears, the so-called event verb denotes the indefinite past. *Before* could be associated with both the past tense as well as the present perfective. Nevertheless, the present perfective is much more appropriate here. In the sixth example of this section the present perfective is detected in connection with the adverbial *already*.

13. they just talk to you even if they (eGVT) not met *haven't met* you before

14. they (eGVT) already meet *have already met* each other

Choice between the use of the present perfective and the simple past often depends on the time which the speaker has in mind. If it is an implicit and not-yet-finished time zone, then perfective aspect should be used. According to Dušková (pp. 225) the phrase *it's a long time since ...* should be followed by simple past. There is not supposed to be used the perfective aspect:

15. it (eGVT) was *is* a long time since I (eGVT) don't do it *didn't do it*

## 7.2 Simple Past

### 7.2.1 Unitary past

To the next category of errors belong errors concerning the unitary past. The majority of examples 16-19 given (for more examples: 20-60, see Appendix 2) show the erroneous use of the **unitary past**. The happening the speaker describes takes place before the present moment, and he has a definite time in mind. In addition, in the excerpt number 9 the past tense is accompanied by the adverbial *last summer*, in line number 10 by the adverbial *last Sunday* and in example 11 the temporal adjunct: *one of the last summers* is added which means that the utterance is preceded by the indicator of time and the speaker should be able to count on the listener's assumption that he has a specific time in mind.

16. remembering things often when (eGVT) they're *\$they were\$* small

17. <B> okay . last summer {I: I} was in Dubli= in Ireland and when I (eGVT) arrive *\$arrived\$* I (eGVT) see *\$saw\$* that all the country is (eGVT) *\$was\$* green and here in Spain is yellow </B>

18. I think it was last (eh) . Sunday . I guess . and I (eGVT) enjoy *\$enjoyed\$* it . in the original version </B>

19. and then one of the last summers when I (eGVT) finish *\$finished\$* school .. I was with my family there

Additionally, in examples 61 (the verb *ask*), 62 (the verb *tell*), 63 and 64 (the verb *say*) reported speech is used which offers a report of earlier speech or thought given in the past tense (though the original quote in case of this speech was presumably in the present tense).

61. (eGVT) say *\$asked\$* (em:) do \$0\$ you (eGVTA) like *\$if they liked\$* this country and...

62. she told me that (er) there (eGVTA) isn't *\$wasn't\$* any job in summer.

63. <B> he said he (eGVTA) cannot *could not*. you know live on </B>

64. <B> and she (eGVT) has said *said* that he he's (eh) (eGVT) she's *was*  
seventy seven years old </B>

### 7.3 Progressive Aspect

The durative or continuous aspect indicates a happening in progress at a given time as mentioned earlier. The speaker refers to the performance on a particular occasion or during a particular moment. The happening in the progressive can have duration which is temporary or limited (an event or state of affairs which is in progress or continuing) and it need not necessarily be complete. The action may be rather seen as incomplete (imperfective or progressive). Although the progressive aspect can occur with dynamic verbs describing activities or events, it can also be used to describe a static situation (example). Examples 65, 66, and 67 show the progressive aspect is common in conversation. While the verb *talk* often refers to communication acts, the verb *walk* describes activity (physical event). Both occur often with the progressive. Besides, both examples express the relation of progressive aspect to tense. There is some point of orientation from which the temporary event or state stretches into the future and into the past which is called temporal frame.

65. because the whole family (eGVT) talked *was/were talking* together *to each other* . and (eGVT) sitting *was/were sitting* on the same table

66. <B> because they (eGVT) talk *were talking* to among themselves . as well  
but . it was . sad <laughs> </B>

67. when (eGVT) you go to {in in} . (GVT){you go} *were walking* in the streets  
all the people (eGVT) say *said* hello

Lastly, since the verb *hear* refers to perceptual states or activities and the verb *see* to visual perception, they hardly ever occur with the progressive aspect. Therefore, the following use of progressive aspect can be tagged as erroneous:

68. I (eGVT) was hearing *\$heard\$* a funny noise

69. and I (eGVT) was seeing *\$saw\$* it

#### 7.4 Hypothetical Meaning and Tentativeness

When modals appear with the perfect infinitive, they can express, for example, the hypothetical sense of the past tense. The verb *might* in example 70 carries the meaning of tentativeness in the past:

70. <B> (mm) . ah anyway . that she (eGVT) might . should think *\$might have thought\$*. when she was in {the the} car . crazy . I'm not a victim . I'm not a victim </B>

#### 7.5 Simple Present Referring to Past

The present tense in reference to the past is used in instances 71 and 72 to produce a more vivid description. Such reference can also be denoted as historic present. In some cases, it is typical of oral narrative or oral speech:

71. sometimes the teacher (eGVT) didn't *\$doesn't\$* explain anything . it (eGVT) was *\$is\$* you who (eGVT) had *\$has\$* to prepare the class and to explain it to the rest of the class and (eGVT) they'd correct *\$they correct\$* it

72. <B> I mean in the morning you just wake up and . you (eGVT) had \$have\$ very big breakfast ... you (eGVT) didn't eat \$don't eat\$ till two o'clock because in Spain like . you know . wait </B>

## 7.6 Conclusion and Discussion

As indicated in Table 1 and 2 in Chapter 7, the past simple seems to be the most problematic area for the sample of Spanish native speakers selected for this research. It was erroneously used 8 times and not used when it was supposed to in 81 cases. The number of 81 instances indicates the situations when the past simple was to be used, nevertheless, the erroneous utterances contained a variety of different tenses.

The closer analysis of the examples uncovers a number of features which might cause the production of different tenses instead. The possible causes might be following: wrong understanding or incorrect automatization of the rules introduced by teaching, insufficient understanding of past references, or natural L1 transfer. As far as the expected high level of proficiency of the speakers is considered, the errors analysed are striking. The results have demonstrated that despite the expected high proficiency (the corpus of advanced learner language) this sample of Spanish native speakers (and learners of English) seem not to be able to express the past reference particularly accurately. We may, however, speculate whether the Spanish students' proficiency in our corpus was actually of the level required by the LINDSEI criteria (the corpus works with a so-called institutional definition of fluency (see Gráf, 2015) and the participants' proficiency had not been tested prior to the compilation of the corpus).

In comparison, the results are very different from Gráf's (2017) study LINDSEI\_CZ of verb errors in advanced spoken English produced by a selection of Czech native speakers. This research focusses on 250 errors involving morphological aspects of verb usage extracted from

50 different transcripts. Gráf stresses the erroneous use of the present perfect and the failure to supply the present perfect. While the selection of Czech students used another appropriate tense instead of the present perfect in 58 instances (28 speakers), Spanish speakers erroneously used the present perfect only 16 times. Whereas Czech students failed to supply the present perfect in 58 instances (28 speakers), Spanish speakers did not use the present perfect just in 6 cases. According to Gráf's study (2017, pp. 131-149) when Czech students choose the past simple over the present perfect, the inappropriate use makes the messages rather unclear.

Expressing the temporal past reference has always been a very difficult area for the learners of English. This might be true, especially, when it comes to Czech learners whose own mother tongue's tense system is very distinct. However, the inability to supply the correct past reference in the case of Spanish native speakers is rather alarming – taking into account the fact that the tense system is not so different. There are *pretérito indefinido* (*Hablé. I spoke.*), *pretérito imperfecto* (*[Él.] hablaba. He used to speak.*), *pretérito perfecto* (*Ha habido. It has been.*), *pluscuamperfecto* (*Había habido. It had been.*) and *condicional simple* (*Habría. It would be.*) or *compuesto* (*Habría habido. It would have been.*) which normally relate to the past in Spanish. There is much bigger chance for referential ambiguity though when subjunctive forms appear. Regarding a one-to-one parallel between Spanish and English subjunctive, it does not exist. In spite of that, Spanish does offer a parallel way to express oneself in the simple past tense (*Yo viví. I lived. Yo comí. I ate. Yo hablé. I spoke.*), the present perfect or *pretérito perfecto* (*Él ha vivido. He has lived.*) and past perfect tense or *pluscuamperfecto* (*Él había vivido. He had lived.*). Moreover, there is an analogy between the English past reference *used to* and the imperfect in Spanish (*[Él.] hablaba. He used to speak.*) or the periphrasis (*[Él.] Solía venir tarde. He used to come late.*).

Nevertheless, Spanish can use the present simple to talk about events happening around the time of speaking (*El otro día voy al médico y en el camino me encuentro con Charlie. The*

*other day I went to the doctor and I met Charlie on my way.*), when referring to events that have taken place very shortly before the moment of speaking. In such cases the present simple tense may refer to the past happenings in Spanish. In spoken Spanish the present tense can be preferred because the preference is given to the moment of receiving the message rather than sending it. This may sound strange if interfering in English: “*Te traigo flores.*”, but in English “*I have brought you flowers.*”. Other examples show a similar tendency, “*Te adjunto el archivo que me pediste.*” in Spanish but in English “*I have attached the file you asked for.*”, “*Le abonamos en su cuenta 500 euros.*”, however, in English: “*We have transferred 500 euros to your account.*”, “*El paro sube en un 1% en un mes.*” in Spanish and in English: “*The unemployment has risen by 1% in a month.*”.

In conclusion, from the data available for this study it would appear that as regards referring to the past, the most problematic area for Spanish learners of English is the use of the simple past. This should be addressed during the teaching process. The presentation and explication of grammar is an inherent part of the teaching process. However, there ought to be a stronger focus on the importance of discourse. The discourse and the communication skills should be emphasized and put into practise as much as possible in order for the students to realize that a sufficient level of writing is simply not enough as most of them will be using spoken as much as written English on everyday basis. The mistakes must be pointed out in the best and least harmful manner and followed up by the teacher. It is also essential that the students become aware of the differences between their L1 and L2 and the possible L1 transfer.

This study has revealed and identified many errors which Spanish learners tend to make when referring to the past, nonetheless, regarding the method used, during the process of extracting errors it would have been more appropriate to detect not only the erroneous, but also non-erroneous past tense references using the AntConc concordancer. Also, it would have been advisable to find a less time-consuming way of sorting out, coding and analysing the data. The

area which shall be addressed in future research is, therefore, the erroneous as well as the non-erroneous usage of English. This analysis of Spanish speakers may certainly provide an important point of further comparison for future studies and for teachers of English.

## Appendix 1

<b>PfA</b>	Perfective Aspect
<b>SPa</b>	Simple Past
<b>RS</b>	Reported Speech
<b>PrA</b>	Progressive Aspect
<b>Mod</b>	Modals
<b>SPr</b>	Simple Present

## Appendix 2

Table 1

Category	Examples
<b>Perfective Aspect</b>	
<b>eGVT (PfA)</b>	<p>&lt;B&gt; (eGVT) I have sit <i>\$sat\$</i> . (eh) by beside her and . I don't know why one {of of} . another woman who was sitting . in the other side (eh) (eGVT) has starting to talk <i>\$started to talk\$</i> (eh) with her to te= to her about (em) . {I don't know I don't know} exactly . but (eGVT) I have sitting <i>\$was sitting\$</i> in the other side so she was in the middle . the old woman &lt;/B&gt; (1)</p> <p>&lt;B&gt; &lt;overlap /&gt; well . when this the second old woman (eGVT) has (eh) left <i>\$left\$</i> . and I (eGVT) have sit <i>\$sat down\$</i> again in the other . in the same place &lt;/B&gt; (2)</p> <p>&lt;B&gt; and the old woman (eGVT) has started <i>\$started\$</i> to talk about (eh) his life . well her life &lt;/B&gt; (3)</p> <p>&lt;B&gt; it (eGVT) has been <i>\$was\$</i> very impress for me &lt;/B&gt; (1c)</p> <p>&lt;B&gt; I think she (eGVT) has said <i>\$said\$</i> {she she} (eGVT) comes <i>\$came\$</i> from Toledo &lt;/B&gt; (4)</p> <p>&lt;B&gt; because (eGVT) she has said <i>\$told\$</i> a lot of problems &lt;/B&gt; (5)</p> <p>she (eGVT) has make <i>\$made\$</i> {a . a} life (impression) (6)</p> <p>she didn't have sons daughters . and she ha= she (eGVT) has also said <i>\$also said\$</i> (7)</p> <p>she (eGVT) has said also <i>\$also said\$</i> that . he didn't receive any payment (8)</p>

	she's telling him off because she's saying that . he (eGVT) had made \$has made\$. a very . awful picture of her (9)
	<B> and . the old wo= the old woman (eGVT) has said \$said\$ there's a . another old woman (em) . stand . (eh) and <foreign> dice </foreign> do you mind {to to} if (eh) she sit down and (eGVT) I've said \$I said\$ yes of course I don't mind </B> (10)
	I think she's been to the hairdressers and (eGVT) have \$has had\$ her hair done (11)
	because when I was a child in the school I: always I (eGVT) want \$have always wanted\$ to: speak English like (12)
	they just talk to you even if they (eGVT) not met \$haven't met\$ you before (13)
	they (eGVT) already meet \$have already met\$ each other (14)
	it (eGVT) was \$is\$ a long time since I (eGVT) don't do it \$didn't do it\$ (15)

**Table 2**

Category	Examples
<b>Simple Past</b>	
<b>eGVT (Spa)</b>	remembering things often when (eGVT) they're \$they were\$ small (16)
	<B> okay . last summer {I: I} was in Dubli= in Ireland and when I (eGVT) arrive \$arrived\$ I (eGVT) see \$saw\$ that all the country is (eGVT) \$was\$ green and here in Spain is yellow </B> (17)
	I think it was last (eh) . Sunday . I guess . and I (eGVT) enjoy \$enjoyed\$ it . in the original version </B> (18)
	and then one of the last summers when I (eGVT) finish \$finished\$ school .. I was with my family there (19)
	<B> {the the: } the people her= there {I think a= I think} before I: (eGVT) go \$went\$ there that the people (eGVT) are \$were\$ very serious (20)
	they (eGVT) are \$were\$ very {very very} kind (21)
	<B> and all of this impressed me . the weather because (eGVT) it's \$it was\$ not too cold about twenty twenty-four not more {and: and} the

people an= because all of the[i:] the country (eGVT) is \$was\$ green <laughs> (22)
I (eGVT) decide \$decided\$ {to: to} go as a au-pair girl </B> (11d)
<B> (er) no I thi= I was in the South and then I (eGVT) go \$went\$ to Dublin </B> (23)
Well I (eGVT) know \$knew\$ many people from . <overlap /> three years ago </B> (24)
<B> <overlap /> but he (eGVT) seem \$seemed\$<?> Kevin Spacey's character yeah </B> (25)
the one I (eGVT) like \$liked\$ the most was Ireland (26)
I stayed with their all the time and (eGVT) watch \$watched\$ T V . and . went for . walks (27)
<B> when usually we . everyone had lunch at any time when they (eGVT) want \$wanted\$ </B> (28)
but I didn't want to come because I . I (eGVT) meet \$met\$ some friends there and I . felt comfortable (29)
{the the} state (eGVT) give \$gave\$ me a scholarship . so . I went and I didn't (eh) know (eh) anybody (30)
the teachers that we (eGVT) have \$had\$ {and .. and} the people that (eh) {I: I} knew {in . in} Ireland (31)
because I learnt a lot of things I learnt . (eh) a lot of people .. and I (eGVT) visit \$visited\$ a lot of countries ... and (eh) . I (eGVT) visit \$visited\$ (eh) Galway .. and Dublin (32)
{we: we} (eGVT) have \$had\$ a teacher . that (eh) taught us to . taught us the . Irish music (33)
you know that I (eGVT) pass \$passed\$ my interview and next day I started to work (34)
know the resident the clients just came there and I . you know I just (eh) .. (eGVT) try \$tried\$ to help (35)
you know (eGVT) try only just pointed \$you tried only to point\$ thing they really (eGVT) want \$wanted\$ to eat . like {you you} know . then= they really (eGVT) need \$needed\$ (36)

there were like tables and in each table . every staff (eGVT) work \$worked\$ on . with a different kind of client (37)
we had a swimming pool and . we (eGVT) need \$needed\$ to help them (38)
I couldn't stay in one house then I (eGVT) go \$went\$ to the other .. and I (eGVT) say \$said\$ to both girls . well come (39)
<A> another thing I noticed (eGVT) is \$was\$ that (eGVT) there's \$they were\$ so friendly (40)
we were there and Spanish people (eGVT) want \$wanted\$ to go out (41)
I think {they . they} (eGVT) hadn't \$didn't have\$ any problem (42)
<B> <overlap /> yes <laughs> after years of writing . then we (eGVT) meet \$met\$. and then we . <overlap /> never (eGVT) write \$wrote\$ us again </B> (43)
okay . well last summer I went . to Alicante with some children [...] I . (eGVT) live \$lived\$ with them (eh) about twenty-four hours . everyday . and (eGVT) it's \$was\$ really excit= exciting and tiring and stressing I I can't explain . but . I (eGVT) like \$liked\$ it very much (44)
when I arrived to my home <sighs> . I (eGVT) sleep \$slept\$ a lot of time (45)
we had (eh) ten weeks .. because then we (eGVT) have to \$had to\$: to do the: the school experience at school (46)
they (eGVT) call \$called\$ to . to mother . or to father . they began to cry (47)
I was with children (eh) that: <overlap /> they (eGVT) are \$were\$ five and six (48)
it was very difficult for me because they (eGVT) are (eh) tha= (em) don't have \$didn't have\$. teeth (49)
we (eGVT) live \$lived\$ all together the Belgian . the: Denmark people . the German <overlap /> people the Spanish (50)
so we (eGVT) have \$had\$ have a lot of fun . in Ireland . because all day . we (eGVT) have \$had\$ breakfast with .. the German (51)
I didn't like it . no . because we (eGVT) have \$had\$ a lot of subjects (52)

	we were looking for . for another son or daughter . so finally we (eGVT) decide <i>decided</i> to (eh) find an Ukrainian girl (53)
	And (eGVT) ask <i>asked</i> him for a for a picture of herself . so he was sitting there for a long time (54)
	<B> yeah . I only (eGVT) have <i>had</i> a coat . and . it was very very cold </B> (55)
	I (eGVT) start <i>started</i> to swim when I was . three years old (56)
	in the second picture the woman didn't like the . the picture and . he (eGVT) <u>change</u> <i>changed</i> it (57)
	about a experience that it (eGVT) happens <i>happened</i> to me this morning (58)
	<B> as well yes because I (eGVT) it's have studied <i>studied</i> three years of philology .. yes before </B> (59)
	I said okay I'm going to change . so I change <i>changed</i> and I I . began to study biology (60)

**Table 3**

Category	Examples
<b>Simple Past</b>	
<b>eGVT (SP RS)</b>	(eGVT) say <i>asked</i> (em:) do you (eGVTA) like <i>if they liked</i> this country and... (61)
	she told me that (er) there (eGVTA) isn't <i>wasn't</i> any job in summer. (62)
	<B> he said he (eGVTA) cannot <i>could not</i> . you know live on </B> (63)
	<B> and she (eGVT) has said <i>said</i> that he he's (eh) (eGVTA) she's <i>was</i> seventy seven years old </B> (64)

**Table 4**

<b>Category</b> <b>Progressive Aspect</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>eGVT (PrA)</b>	because the whole family (eGVT) talked <i>\$was/were talking\$</i> together <i>\$to each other\$</i> . and (eGVT) sitting <i>\$was/were sitting\$</i> on the same table (65)
	<B> because they (eGVT) talk <i>\$were talking\$</i> to among themselves . as well but . it was . sad <laughs> </B> (66)
	when you go to {in in} . (eGVT){you go} <i>\$were walking\$</i> in the streets all the people (eGVT) say <i>\$said\$</i> hello (67)
	I (eGVT) was hearing <i>\$heard\$</i> a funny noise (68)
	and I (eGVT) was seeing <i>\$saw\$</i> it (69)

**Table 5**

<b>Category</b> <b>Modals with perfect infinitive</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>eGVT (Mod)</b>	<B> (mm) . ah anyway . that she (eGVT) might . should think <i>\$might have thought\$</i> . when she was in {the the} car . crazy . I'm not a victim . I'm not a victim </B> (70)

**Table 6**

<b>Category</b> <b>Simple Present</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>eGVT (SPr)</b>	sometimes the teacher (eGVT) didn't <i>\$doesn't\$</i> explain anything . it (eGVT) was <i>\$is\$</i> you who (eGVT) had <i>\$has\$</i> to prepare the class and to explain it to the rest of the class and (eGVT) they'd correct <i>\$they correct\$</i> it (71)
	<B> I mean in the morning you just wake up and . you (eGVT) had <i>\$have\$</i> very big breakfast ... you (eGVT) didn't eat <i>\$don't eat\$</i> till two o'clock because in Spain like . you know . wait </B> (72)

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