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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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## **Abstract**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to carry out a spoken corpus-based analysis of errors advanced EFL learners with Spanish as L1 make (when) referring to the past. The thesis is divided into two main parts: the theoretical part, and the practical part. The theoretical part offers a brief linguistic description of the system, specifically, of the grammatical possibilities of referring to the past. It also provides a theoretical account of learner language, interlanguage, typical features of spoken language, the definitions of errors, as well as computer-aided error analysis. The practical part presents an analysis of a sample of data drawn from the Spanish subcorpus of LINDSEI. In addition, the practical part continues in providing with the evidence of errors in expressing the past. The sample of native speakers of Spanish is error tagged, and the mistakes found in parts referring to the past are identified. The Louvain tagging system is used for the error-tagging. The thesis analyses the selected errors and compares the results with previous research conducted on native speakers of Czech.

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

## **Abstrakt**

Tato bakalářská práce je založena na žákovském korpusu mluvené angličtiny a jejím cílem je analýza chyb ve vyjadřování minulosti, kterých se dopouštějí pokročilí španělští mluvčí angličtiny. Bakalářská práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí – teoretické a praktické. Teoretická část poskytuje stručný lingvistický popis temporálního systému v angličtině a španělštině s důrazem na prostředky vyjadřování minulosti. Dále popisuje žákovský jazyk, charakteristických rysů mluveného jazyka, definice chyb, jakož i počítačem podporované chybové analýzy. V praktické části je provedena analýza dat u vzorku rodilých mluvčích španělštiny ze španělského subkorpusu LINDSEI. Následně jsou předloženy důkazy chyb ve vyjadřování minulosti. Vzorek rodilých mluvčích španělštiny je označován. Pro označení chyb je použit Lovaňský značkovací systém. Vybrané chyby jsou pak patřičně prozkoumány a porovnány s výsledky předchozího výzkumu provedeného na rodilých mluvčích češtiny.

**Klíčová slova:** mluvený jazyk, žákovský jazyk, mezijazyk, žákovské korpusy, chybová analýza, značkování chyb

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	5
List of Abbreviations.....	9
1. Introduction .....	10
2. Linguistic Description of Past Tense.....	12
3. Expressing the Past.....	13
3.1 Expressing the Past in Spanish.....	13
3.2 Expressing the Past in English.....	15
3.3 Perfective and Progressive Aspects.....	16
3.3.1 The Past Perfective.....	17
3.3.2 Progressive Aspect.....	18
3.3.3 Perfective Progressive.....	19
3.4 Future in the Past.....	20
3.5 Past Time and Modal Verbs in Indirect Speech and Other Constructions.....	21
3.5.1 Hypothetical Meaning and Tentativeness or Politeness.....	22
3.6 Simple Present Referring to Past.....	22
3.7 Verbs Occurring in the Past Tense.....	23
3.8 Modal Verbs with Perfect Infinitive.....	26
3.9 Restrictions in the Use of Tense and Aspect when Referring to the Past.....	27
4. Learner Language and Interlanguage.....	29
5. Defining Errors and Error Analysis.....	30
6. Spoken Language and its Features.....	31
7. Data and Method.....	33
8. Results.....	36

8.1 Erroneous Use of the Perfective Aspect .....	38
8.2 Erroneous Use of the Simple Past .....	40
8.2.1 Unitary past.....	42
8.3 Progressive Aspect.....	42
8.4 Hypothetical Meaning and Tentativeness.....	43
8.5 Simple Present Referring to Past.....	43
8.6 Discussion.....	44
8.7 Conclusion.....	46
Appendix 1.....	48
Appendix 2.....	49
Bibliography.....	55
Resumé.....	58

## **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, 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 a native-like proficiency, and uses the speech of native speakers as a point of reference. In Stern's definition (Stern 1983, 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 the occurrence of errors in his or her speech is expected to be very rare. The differences in the levels of proficiency 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. Although systematic errors can be the signs of incomplete knowledge, and therefore, they must be in the spotlight. If grammatical errors are not corrected, the accuracy suffers. It is true that an inappropriate way of pointing out an error during the teaching process could be demotivating for the students, however, as proven by previous research 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. Errors, seen as student's attempts, are results of the students' experimentation with the acquired language, so that he or she can eventually learn to distinguish between the proper and improper use of language. The analysis of errors may deepen the understanding of language learning.

The aim of this thesis is an analysis of the data drawn from a spoken learner corpus – namely the Spanish subcorpus of LINDSEI, compiled by the Autonomous University of Madrid (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), and the University of Murcia (Universidad de Murcia) – considering the specific features of spoken language. The data needed for the analysis are extracted from written transcripts of interviews produced by advanced learners of English of Spanish origin. These transcripts enable the error identification process to be completed.

Chapter two provides a linguistic description of the system of past tenses in both English and Spanish, focusing on the similarities and differences between the two languages. The third chapter focusses on learner language, interlanguage and their definitions. The fourth chapter deals with the definition of an error, and the process of error analysis. The fifth chapter concentrates on spoken language and its features, and the sixth chapter briefly describes the data used for the analysis 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 events in English. Finally, the last chapter closes the thesis with discussion and conclusion.

Although it is difficult to determine the role instruction plays in the acquisition of morphological features, it is very likely that the collaborative discourse plays a significant part in student's acquisition (Foley 1994, 101). The errors found should function as a reference for further research of specific features of spoken language, as it identifies what is common of English language learners (of Spanish origin), and what is different for English language learners of Czech and Spanish origin when attempting to use the correct past tenses.

## 2. Linguistic Description of Past Tense

According to Quirk et al. (1985, 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 therefore, 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.

While in English, regular verbs take the ending –ed, and irregular verbs have a completely different form, in Spanish, the past tense is expressed by the endings corresponding to each verbal group –é, –aste, –ó, –amos, –ásteis, –aron (for verbs ending in –ar); –í, –iste, –ió, –imos, –isteis, –ieron (for verbs ending in –er and –ir). The irregularities only affect the root of the verb, not the endings; for instance, with the verb *decir* (to say, to tell), which becomes *dijé, dijiste, dijo*, etc. in the past form.

The past tense refers to the past time via some past point of reference, and it is frequently accompanied by adverbials such as *last week* (*la semana pasada*), *yesterday* (*ayer*), etc. – either explicitly or implicitly. In English, it is usually necessary for the past tense to be followed or preceded by an indicator of time if this is not the case the 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 or general knowledge, what has been said earlier in the same sentence or text, or what comes later in the same sentence or text. Spanish then mostly refers to the past through one of the numerous past tenses. There are 8 different forms for past references, 5 in indicative and 3 in subjunctive. English, on the other hand, has two main ways of referring to the past – the past tense and the perfect aspect.

### 3 Expressing the Past

#### 3.1 Expressing the Past in Spanish

**Figure 1:** Terminology in Spanish

Time	RAE	Bello
HABLÉ ( <i>I sang.</i> )	pretérito perfecto simple	pretérito
HABLABA ( <i>I used to sing. / I was singing.</i> )	pretérito imperfecto	co-pretérito
HE HABLADO ( <i>I have sung.</i> )	pretérito perfecto compuesto	ante-presente
HABÍA HABLADO ( <i>I had sung.</i> )	pretérito pluscuamperfecto	ante-copretérito
HUBE HABLADO ( <i>I had sung.</i> )	pretérito anterior	ante-pretérito

In Spanish, there are seven tenses which normally refer to the past: *pretérito indefinido* (*Hablé. I spoke.*), *pretérito imperfecto* (*Yo hablaba. I used to speak.*), *pretérito perfecto* (*Ha habido. It has been.*), *pluscuamperfecto* (*Había habido. It had been.*) and *condicional simple* (*Habría. It would be.*), *compuesto* (*Habría habido. It would have been.*) and *pretérito anterior* (*Hube hablado. I had sung.*). The fact that every Spanish form has its equivalent form in English reduces the chances of ambiguity.

On the contrary, there is much bigger chance for referential ambiguity when subjunctive forms appear. Spanish has four forms of subjunctive which are *presente de subjuntivo* (*Quiero que hables. I want you to speak.*), *pretérito imperfecto de subjuntivo* (*Quería que hablaras. I wanted you to speak.*), *pretérito perfecto de subjuntivo* (*Te lo diré cuando hayas hablado. I will tell you once you have spoken.*), *pretérito pluscuamperfecto de subjuntivo* (*¡Ojalá hubieras hablado! If only you had spoken!*). For its part, English has only two forms – the present subjunctive (*I insist (that) he speak now.*) and the past subjunctive (*I wish I were young.*). The use of these forms is marginal and very limited. It appears very little in written English and

even less in spoken English. No one-to-one parallel between Spanish and English subjunctive exists.

Regarding the time reference in Spanish, we distinguish remote, near and recent past. The *pretérito perfecto* and the *pretérito indefinido* are the equivalent forms to the English present perfect and they are also used in Spanish (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2:** The Expression of Past Time Reference in English and Spanish

<b>Time Reference</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Spanish</b>
Remote Past	Simple Past	pretérito indefinido
Near Past	Simple Past	pretérito perfecto
Recent Past	Present Perfect	pretérito perfecto

The present simple tense may also refer to the past events in Spanish, which could happen either in remote past (*Cristóbal Colón zarpa al mando de tres barcos. Christopher Columbus sets sail in command of three ships.*) or in recent past, 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.*). In the second case, the speaker refers to events that have taken place very shortly before the moment of speaking. In spoken Spanish the present tense can be preferred because the priority is given to the moment of receiving the message rather than sending it. This is called *reactualización* and it is a way of making things seem more relevant and up to date.

### 3.2 Expressing the Past in English

According to Leech et al. (2004, 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 modal verb *used to* with an infinitive construction helps express 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 et al. (2004, 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.*

### 3.3 Perfective and Progressive Aspects

There are two aspect constructions in English – the perfective (for a period leading up to the specified time) and the progressive (for an event or a state of affairs which is in progress, or continuing). The aspect constructions also help to 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*). 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, 452-457) adds that in connection with the present perfect the past action can extend to the present (*I have written to Mr. Steven, but he has ignored my letters.*).

Further, Leech et al. (2004, 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 the 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 occurrence in the past while the indefinite meaning is reinforced by an adverb (*ever, never, before* etc.), for instance, *Have you ever been to America?* In such cases of 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.*

The choice between the use of the present perfective and the simple past is often determined by whether the speaker has an implicit and not-yet-finished time zone in mind, for instance, *Have you seen the exhibition?* (The meaning is *yet*.) or *Did you see the exhibition?* (The meaning is *when it took place*.). The tense clearly indicates whether the exhibition is still open, or whether it has already finished. The first sentence has a resultative connotation. Such connotations 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*). With the latter, it is all the more obvious as these expressions are used with both the present perfect and the simple past.

### 3.3.1 The Past Perfective

Another grammatical tense English employs to express the perfective aspect is the past perfective. This tense usually carries the meaning of "past in the past", and can be considered 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.*) The meaning of state, event, or habit is used.

While Quirk et al. (1985, 192) highlights only three meanings, Leech et al. (2004, 47) adds one more. According to Leech, 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.*). 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>.*). And the contrast between the simple past and the present can be neutralized, for example, *He had died, before his son was born.*

### **3.3.2 Progressive Aspect**

As opposed to the perfective aspect, the progressive aspect indicates an action in progress at a given time. It is sometimes called the durative or continuous aspect. When referring to the past the speaker can refer to somebody's competence, 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, one sees the activity in progress. The happening in the progressive can have a duration which is temporary (limited), and it does not need to be complete. With the progressive, states, events and habits are interpreted differently. Even though the progressive aspect normally 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.*). As Quirk et al. note this aspect is common in conversation (Quirk, 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?*

As regards the progressive aspect, there are three major categories each expressing a different meaning. Firstly, 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 an 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 the 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*). However, the temporal frame is not a necessary condition of the past progressive. Concerning the relationship between two simple past forms, it is one of time-sequence (*When we arrived, he made some fresh coffee*). On the other hand, 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...*).

### **3.3.3 Perfective Progressive**

The 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 understood as a temporary

situation leading up to the present. While the simple perfective has a resultative meaning in some cases, "*Have you cleaned the windows?*", the perfective progressive may 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 continue 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 a temporary habit up to the present, or repetition of an activity, which may stretch into the future (*He has been scoring many goals.*). Apart from the temporary habit up to present time, Leech et al. (2004, 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.*). The past perfect progressive manages to combine the temporariness of the progressive with the past-in-the-past meaning. The infrequent occurrence of the past perfect progressive has also been detected (Leech et al. 2004, 52).

### **3.4 Future in the Past**

Another type of constructions used to express the past time is future constructions. These constructions describe something in the future, but seen from a viewpoint in the past, and 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, this subgroup carries the meaning "on the point of" with the sense of an 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.

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

Unlike the future constructions, the past tense in reported speech determines a report of an earlier speech or a thought given in the past tense even though the original quote (in the case of speech) might have been 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.*), with an 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 the present and the 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 past time equivalents of *can* and *will*, however, *might* and *should* do not act as past time equivalents of *may* and *shall*.

In addition, the periphrastic forms (Dušková et al. 1994, 258-259) may also be needed to denote past. For instance, with the periphrastic passive, which 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.

### 3.5.1 Hypothetical Meaning and Tentativeness or Politeness

Besides indirect speech, 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*). The forms *would* and *should* can also be classified as 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.*), but the verb *should* is also a marker of putative meaning (*She insisted that we should stay.*). Putative *should* alternates with the subjunctive, and is more common in BrE than in AmE.

The verbs *could*, *might* and *would* can carry a meaning of tentativeness or politeness in the past. Quirk et al. (1985, 232-235) distinguish 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.*).

### 3.6 Simple Present Referring to Past

In reference to the past, the simple past can be used as mentioned above. Nevertheless, it is not only the simple past, that can be used to refer to past events. In some cases, the use of the present form is also possible. The present tense serves 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 English ("*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 the 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, the dramatic character and the vividness of the content of the speech.

### 3.7 Verbs Occurring in the Past Tense

Talking about the means English employs to refer to the past, one must also look at the verbs which can occur in the past tense. There are many verbs that occur most of the time in the past tense (Biber et al. 1999, 452-457), e.g. *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 the 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, e.g. *exclaim, remark, reply, and whisper*. Other less-common verbs (referring to human actions) that occur in the past tense are, for instance, *beckon, blush, chuckle, cough, duck, fold, frown, gasp, gesture, giggle, groan, growl, grunt, heave, limp, mumble, murmur, mutter, scramble, stagger, whistle, and wink*.

The past perfect "*had been*" is common in all registers, and the verbs, such as *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, especially, *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, the subsequent verbs appear (Biber et al. 1999, 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). Besides, with the progressive aspect seldom occur the following verbs: *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). The verbs *detect, hear, perceive, and see* can be added to the list, although they 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.). Verbs of facilitation/causation,

or obligation, on the other hand, rarely occur with the progressive aspect: *convince, entitle, guarantee, incline, induce, inhibit, initiate, inspire, interest, mediate, oblige, promise, prompt, provoke, and render.*

- f) Two verbs which are very common in conversation are notable because they mostly occur as past progressives rather than present progressive *was saying* and *was thinking*. Common progressive aspect verbs typically take a human subject as an agent (actively controlling the action), and the action, state, or situation described by the common progressive verbs can be prolonged.
- g) Even though the verbs *look, watch, stare, and listen* are stative verbs, they are common with the progressive aspect: *He was staring at me. / I was looking at that one just now.* In addition, the verbs *see* and *hear* occur very seldom in the progressive: *I saw him the other day. / I heard about that.* Eventually, 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 process of thought. Contrary to that, the verbs *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) Some 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.

### 3.8 Modal Verbs with Perfect Infinitive

In addition to the uses of the modal verbs in referring to the past described above, Dušková et al. (1994, 186-203) describe other cases of specific past reference. For instance, when the modal verb *can* is connected with the perfect infinitive (*He can't have forgotten.*). Modal verbs with perfect infinitive do 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* (*He was able to read before he went to school.*). In all other cases, the correct form is *could*. The latter, in combination 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*). Thus, *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.*).

Both *may* and *might* with the perfect infinitive refer to the past happening (*What might have seemed fantastic ten years ago may not be unfeasible today.*). However, there is a difference in probability that the happening did or did not take place. We use *might* to express that the occurrence did not take place (*I might have taken the underground. “But I also know that I did not.”*). To the contrary, *He may have taken the underground. May* 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. When used with the perfect infinitive, it expresses a high degree of probability (*It must have been expensive*). If it

refers to some past happening without the perfective infinitive, it appears in dependent clauses (*I told him what he must do.*). In all other cases, the past form *had to* is available to the speakers. On the other hand, *should* with perfect infinitive highlights something that was advisable to do, but 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. While *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...*; *would* describes any past action or happening which is probable (as deduced by the speaker), *She would have been about twenty when she married.*

### **3.9 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 the so-called ungrammatical uses, such as the ungrammatical use of the simple present or present perfective with adverbials such as *last week, yesterday etc.* (*\*Freda starts/has started school last year.*). Quirk (1985, 191) further mentions another unacceptable use of a 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 this example, the past tense should be used instead of the perfective. In many cases, a duration adverbial is virtually obligatory (Quirk et al. 1985, 192), especially, with 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 *A Comprehensive grammar of the English language* (Quirk et al. 1985, 193), there is another variant of the indefinite past meaning which sounds rather inappropriate (*\*Has the*

*postman left any letters? Yes, he did six months ago.*). It can be inferred from this example that the connotation of recency is connected with the implicit time zone which, in this particular case, would be no longer than a day. In summary, the present perfect is not normally used with definite past references (Carter & McCarthy 2006, 609): *\*My grandfather has died about four weeks ago. / \*When I was a lad, I have lived on a farm.* The misuse of the present tense in the 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 speech the so-called performance errors, which are induced by one speaker copying the form of another speaker's question, may occur (Quirk et al. 1985, 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 the present perfective, and the past simple with definite time reference (*\*I have seen her this March*). There is one more common misuse: that of *for* and *since* when referring to time-up-to-now. (Carter & McCarthy 2006, 615): *\*We've had that TV set since fifteen years. 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 constructions, the past perfective cannot be replaced by the simple past (Quirk et al. 1985, 197) as, for example, the past perfective in the following sentence which indicates the 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, the state progressive is simply unacceptable with stative verbs as there is no progress made (*\*We are owning a house in the country.*). Also, the progressive form is not normally used with punctual verbs, e.g. *start, stop, finish* etc. as they refer to the 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.*).

#### **4 Learner Language and Interlanguage**

Studying learner language is important as it enables the identification of the most error-prone areas. Thanks to this, English language learners can focus on the most problematic linguistic phenomena, correct their mistakes, and thus increase their overall proficiency. English-language learners henceforth (ELLs) are students who use English as a second language. If both first- and second-language learning are considered, there is the same aim: achieving a native-like proficiency. But no one's language is ever error-free.

The concept of learner language is intertwined with the theory of interlanguage. The term interlanguage was first used by Selinker in 1972 (Ellis 1985, 47), and it refers to the structured system, which the learner constructs at any given stage of his development. According to Ellis (Ellis 1985, 50-51), the language of a language learner is permeable, dynamic and systematic. Its 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 a slow revision in the interim systems to accommodate new hypotheses about the target language system. Once a new rule is introduced, it extends gradually over a range of linguistic contexts. The systematization consists in 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.

## 5 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 errors made by second language learners which was proposed as an alternative to contrastive analysis. Error analysis has a long tradition (Sridhar 1981). Its goals were pedagogic, and the errors identified provided information which could be used for teaching. The procedure for error analysis is described by Corder (1974) as follows: firstly, a corpus of a 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, the evaluation of each error comes in the last step. 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 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 the following situations may arise – overgeneralization or ignorance of rule restrictions, furthermore, incomplete applications of rules which involves 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.*). And that is why 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 (Ellis 1985, 52-54).

## **6 Spoken Language and its Features**

The focus of this thesis is L2 learners and their oral production of English. As there are considerable differences between oral and written language, for example, when 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 English. 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 three main features of spoken language are that it happens in real time, it is unplanned and most typically face-to-face. Another two main features consist of foregrounds choices which reflect the immediate social and interpersonal situations, and that spoken and written language are not in stark contrast with one another, but 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 (Carter & McCarthy 2006):

- 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, the imperative.
- 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. The 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.

## 7 Data and Method

The practical part of this thesis focusses on the analysis of errors in references to the past appearing in the spoken English learner corpus LINDSEI, in particular, in its Spanish part (henceforth LINDSEI\_SP). For the research, 50 interviews of advanced learners of English (of Spanish origin) were available from the subcorpus LINDSEI\_SP for the research. Out of these 50 interviews, 25 were selected for further investigation. In the selection of 25 interviews, there were 82,501 words produced by university students. All the university students who took part in the recordings were majoring in English. As the entrance requirement for Spanish universities is level B1 in compliance with the Common European Framework of Reference, at the moment of recording of the interviews, the students should be at the upper-intermediate level B2. All recordings were obtained in Spain in Madrid. Each interview consisted of three tasks. It started with a monologue about a chosen topic. Each student could choose to talk either about one experience which somehow influenced his or her life, a country they have visited, or a significant movie they had seen recently which somehow had an impact on them.

**Figure 3:** Instrument sample I. (First part of the interview; utterances made by the interviewer are marked with the tag <A>, those by the learner are tagged as <B>)

<p>&lt;A&gt; okay . could you read the instructions carefully and then choose the topic to talk about okay &lt;/A&gt; &lt;B&gt; it's topic two &lt;/B&gt; &lt;A&gt; (uhu) wher= where have you been &lt;/A&gt; &lt;B&gt; in Ireland last last summer &lt;laughs&gt; &lt;/B&gt; &lt;A&gt; (mhm) &lt;/A&gt; &lt;B&gt; okay . last summer I: I was in Dubli= in Ireland and when I arrive I see that all the country is green and here in Spain is yellow &lt;/B&gt;</p>
---

This part was followed by a short dialogue with the interlocutor. In the last part of each interview, each student was given a set of four pictures which they were supposed to describe; however, they were invited to be creative, and invent an interesting story while observing the pictures. This last section *The Picture Story Retelling* offered the students the possibility to narrate and therefore, to use a different range of tenses.

**Figure 4:** Instrument sample II. (Second part of the interview)

<A> (mhm) okay very good (mm) okay . <XX> the picture: (mm) here we have some pictures  
 </A>  
 <B> yes <laughs> </B>  
 <A> try and describe for me each one okay </A>  
 <B> okay ... okay <laughs> here I think in the first one I think that . the: the man try to draw  
 the: the woman </B>

Regarding the method used, the sample of 25 transcriptions was thoroughly read through, errors in the use of past references were located and tagged using the Louvain Error-tagging Manual (Dagneaux et al. 2008). From the list of tags (Gillová 2014, 74-75), the tag eGVT marking Error Grammar Verb Tense was designated, and the symbol \$ was used for the emendation as can be seen below.

**Figure 5:** Instrument sample III. (First part of the interview, error tagged)

<A> okay . could you read the instructions carefully and then choose the topic to talk about  
 okay </A>  
 <B> it's topic two </B>  
 <A> (uhu) {wher= where} have you been </A>  
 <B> in Ireland {last last} summer <laughs> </B>  
 <A> (mhm) </A>  
 <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 (eGVT) is \$was\$ green and here in Spain is yellow </B>

Special attention was paid to concrete errors produced by native speakers of Spanish when attempting to use English past forms. Once the examples were excerpted using a concordance, the mistakes found were classified according to aspect (past perfective, progressive, perfective progressive), the use of future in the past or simple present referring to the past, as well as the appropriate use of past tenses in indirect speech and other constructions. A random selection of 100 examples shows the whole range of errors when referring to the past. Each error demonstrates some specific features occurring in spoken language. The examples of tagged errors from the spoken corpus are used to illustrate the taxonomy of errors committed when referring to the past.

## 8 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 focus on the use of perfective and progressive aspects (past perfective, progressive, and 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 sample of 25 speakers, there were 1,254 correctly used past references. The total number of 169 errors accounts for 11.90% of past references, this adds up to 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.** Pivot table listing the frequency of erroneously used tenses

(Appendix 2, Table 2-7)

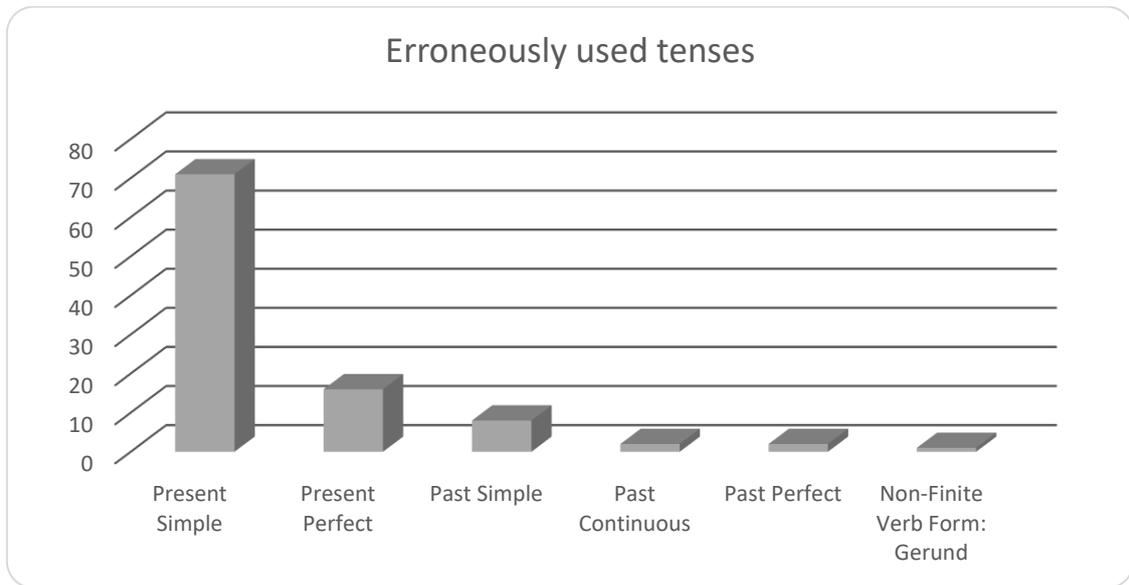
<b>Erroneously Used Tense</b>	<b>Expected Tense</b>	<b>Number of Examples</b>	<b>%</b>
Present Simple	Past Simple	64	64%
Present Simple	Present Perfect	4	4%
Present Simple	Past Continuous	2	2%
Present Simple	Modals with Perfect Infinitive	1	1%
Present Perfect	Past Simple	15	15%
Present Perfect	Past Continuous	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>		100	100%

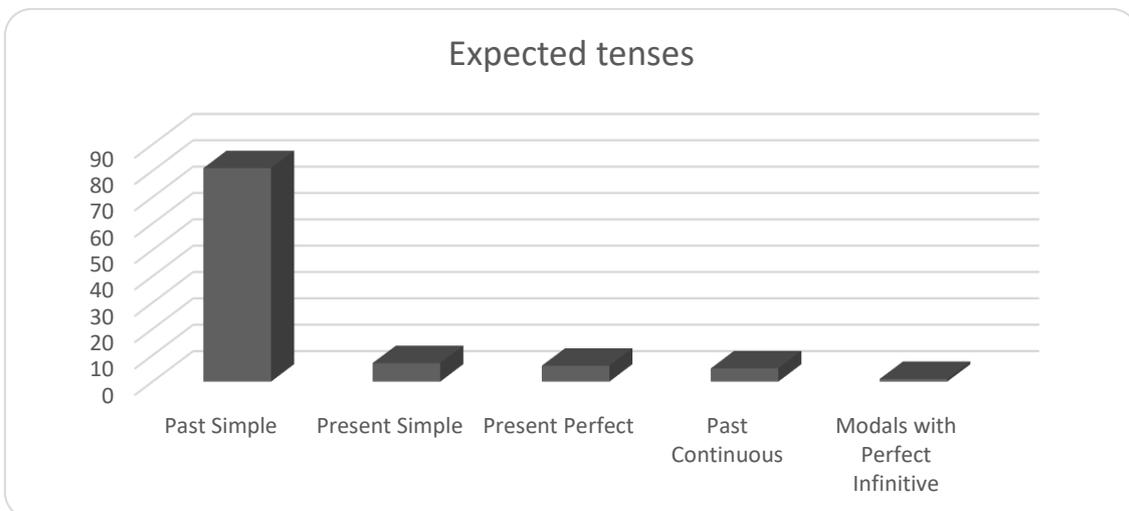
Table 2 shows the frequency of erroneously used tenses. It is further divided into two parts – erroneously used tense (Chart 1) and expected tense (Chart 2). The final numbers highlight the erroneous use of the past simple tense. The present simple was erroneously used in 71 cases, the present perfect 16 times, and the past simple occurs in eight occurrences, and both the past continuous and the past perfect only in two examples. In one instance the non-finite verb form (the gerund) was used instead of the past continuous.

The past simple tense was incorrectly omitted 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) in 6 occurrences, and the past continuous in 5 cases. There is only one instance of 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.

**Chart 1.** The frequency of erroneously used tenses



**Chart 2.** The frequency of expected tenses



### 8.1 Erroneous Use of the 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 on part of 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 then aiming to use the progressive aspect which would allow him to describe the so-called temporal frame): “(eGVT) I have sitting *was sitting*”. With regard to the last example, it can be concluded that the problematic area of this speaker is not only morphology, but also 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 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 use the present perfect to describe an action, whose result is relevant to the present:

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 then be observed in example 12:

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

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

The 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 the perfective aspect should be used. According to Dušková et al. (1994, 225) the phrase *It's a long time since* should be followed by the simple past. Thus, the perfective aspect should not be used in this example:

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

## **8.2 Erroneous Use of the Simple Past**

### **8.2.1 Unitary past**

This category of errors contains errors concerning unitary past. Most of the following examples (for more examples see Appendix 2, examples 16-60) show the erroneous use of unitary past. The happening the speaker describes takes place before the present moment, and he has a definite time in mind. In addition, in excerpt number 17, the past tense is accompanied

by the adverbial *last summer*, in number 10 by the adverbial *last Sunday*, and in example 11, the adjunct of time *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 Dublin in Ireland and when I (eGVT) arrive *sarrived* I (eGVT) see *saw* that all the country (eGVT) is *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

Moreover, 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. [last summer] (eGVT) say *asked* (em:) do *do* you (eGVTA) like *if you 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>

### 8.3 Progressive Aspect

As mentioned earlier, the durative or continuous aspect indicates a happening in progress at a given time. The speaker refers to the performance on a particular occasion or during a particular moment. The happening in the progressive can have a 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 also 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 65). Examples 65, 66, and 67 show that the progressive aspect sometimes seems to be a conversational mistake. While the verb *talk* rarely refers to communication acts, the verb *walk* describes an activity (physical event). Both often occur with the progressive. Besides, both examples express the relation of the 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 and  
(eGVT) sitting *\$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. [last summer...in Ireland] 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 the progressive aspect can be tagged as erroneous:

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

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

#### 8.4 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>

#### 8.5 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 a reference can also be denoted as historic present. In some cases, it is typical of oral narrative or oral communication:

71. [... is completely different . the teacher speaks of course . but the class is more . active . you you speak . you say what you think] sometimes the teacher (eGVT) didn't *doesn't* explain anything . it (eGVT) was *is* you who (eGVT) had *have* 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>

## 8.6 Discussion

As indicated in Tables 1 and 2, and Charts 1 and 2 in Chapter 8, the past simple seems to be the most problematic area for the sample of native speakers of Spanish studied in this research. It was erroneously used 8 times, and not used when it was supposed to in 81 cases. These erroneous utterances contained a variety of different tenses.

Closer analysis of the examples uncovers a number of features which might cause the production of incorrect tenses. The possible causes might be the following – wrong understanding or incorrect automatization of the rules introduced by the teacher, insufficient understanding of past references, or natural L1 transfer. As far as the expected high level of proficiency of the speakers is concerned, the errors found 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 speculate though whether the Spanish students' proficiency in our corpus was actually of the level required by the LINDSEI criteria. The corpus works with the so-called institutional definition of fluency (Gráf 2017), and the participants' proficiency had not been tested prior to the compilation of the corpus.

However, to be able to draw conclusions concerning the speakers' level of proficiency, the results of this study will be compared to those of Gráf's LINDSEI\_CZ *Verb Errors in Advanced Spoken English* (2017) which examined the performance of a selection of Czech native speakers. His 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 Czech students used another appropriate tense instead of the present perfect in 58 instances (28 speakers), the Spanish speakers used the present perfect erroneously only 16 times. And while the Czech students

failed to supply the present perfect in 58 instances (28 speakers), the Spanish speakers did not use the present perfect just in 6 cases. According to Gráf's study (2017, 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 learners of English. This is true, especially, when it comes to Czech learners, whose own mother tongue's tense system is very different. However, the inability to supply the correct past reference in the case of Spanish native speakers is rather alarming, with respect to the fact that the tense system in Spanish is not so different. In both English and Spanish, the past tense is grammaticalized. But despite the similarity of the system, Spanish learners seemed to be either avoiding more complicated past tenses (for example, present perfect), or to have an insufficient knowledge of how and when to use which past tense.

As mentioned before, the strongest tendency of Spanish learners seems to be to use the present simple to refer to the past. Maria Luz Celaya Villanueva (1992, 159-166) notices similar tendencies, and clarifies that Spanish speakers tend to use the simple present if they have not yet learnt the present perfect as they feel the need to differentiate between near past and distant past. Nonetheless, her findings partly confirm the influence of the mother tongue, and partly the fact that Spanish students have insufficient and incomplete knowledge of the English tenses. We must also take into account the fact that at the beginning of university studies in Spain only level B1 is required. Regarding the level B1, the Common European Framework of Reference states that a student reaching B1 level should not have difficulties with the use of the past continuous, the past perfect, the past simple, the present perfect continuous, and the present perfect, which speaks against the findings of her thesis.

## 8.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, from the data available for this study it appears that as regards referring to the past, the most problematic area for Spanish learners of English is the use of the simple past. This phenomenon should be addressed during the teaching process. The presentation and explication of grammar is an inherent part of the teaching process. Yet there is an apparent failure of existing curricula to embed communication skills, and there are no apparent attempts to show the benefits brought by studying English. Therefore, 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 of the possible L1 transfer. That being said, there is one more obstacle which must be considered. According to the research of Daniel Sánchez Caballero published in the Spanish newspaper *El Diario* in 2017, the number of students in each class at all levels of education in Spain is simply too high – it can sometimes reach up to 40 – and that is why the attempts to focus more on communication are very likely to fail.

This study has 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 use the AntConc concordancer to detect not only erroneous, but also non-erroneous past tense references. Also, it would have been advisable to find a less time-consuming way of sorting out, coding and analysing the data. The area which should 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 reference for future studies, and 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 Perfective Aspect	Examples
eGVT (PfA)	<B> (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 </B> (1)
	<B> <overlap /> 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 </B> (2)
	<B> and the old woman (eGVT) has started <i>\$started\$</i> to talk about (eh) his life . well her life </B> (3)
	<B> it (eGVT) has been <i>\$was\$</i> very impress for me </B> (1c)
	<B> I think she (eGVT) has said <i>\$said\$</i> {she she} (eGVT) comes <i>\$came\$</i> from Toledo </B> (4)
	<B> because (eGVT) she has said <i>\$told\$</i> a lot of problems </B> (5)
	she (eGVT) has make <i>\$made\$</i> {a . a} life (impression) (6)
	she didn't have sons daughters . and she ha= she (eGVT) has also said <i>\$also said\$</i> (7)
	she (eGVT) has said also <i>\$also said\$</i> that . he didn't receive any payment (8)
	she's telling him off because she's saying that . he (eGVT) had made <i>\$has made\$</i> . a very . awful picture of her (9)
	<B> and . the old wo= the old woman (eGVT) has said <i>\$said\$</i> 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>\$I said\$</i> yes of course I don't mind </B> (10)
I think she's been to the hairdressers and (eGVT) have <i>\$has had\$</i> her hair done (11)	

	because when I was a child in the school I: always I (eGVT) want \$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 (eGVT) is \$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 <i>\$liked\$</i> the most was Ireland (26)
I stayed with their all the time and (eGVT) watch <i>\$watched\$</i> T V . and . went for . walks (27)
<B> when usually we . everyone had lunch at any time when they (eGVT) want <i>\$wanted\$</i> </B> (28)
but I didn't want to come because I . I (eGVT) meet <i>\$met\$</i> some friends there and I . felt comfortable (29)
{the the} state (eGVT) give <i>\$gave\$</i> me a scholarship . so . I went and I didn't (eh) know (eh) anybody (30)
the teachers that we (eGVT) have <i>\$had\$</i> {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 <i>\$visited\$</i> a lot of countries ... and (eh) . I (eGVT) visit <i>\$visited\$</i> (eh) Galway .. and Dublin (32)
{we: we} (eGVT) have <i>\$had\$</i> a teacher . that (eh) taught us to . taught us the . Irish music (33)
you know that I (eGVT) pass <i>\$passed\$</i> 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 <i>\$tried\$</i> to help (35)
you know (eGVT) try only just pointed <i>\$you tried only to point\$</i> thing they really (eGVT) want <i>\$wanted\$</i> to eat . like {you you} know . then= they really (eGVT) need <i>\$needed\$</i> (36)
there were like tables and in each table . every staff (eGVT) work <i>\$worked\$</i> on . with a different kind of client (37)
we had a swimming pool and . we (eGVT) need <i>\$needed\$</i> to help them (38)
I couldn't stay in one house then I (eGVT) go <i>\$went\$</i> to the other .. and I (eGVT) say <i>\$said\$</i> to both girls . well come (39)
<A> another thing I noticed (eGVT) is <i>\$was\$</i> that (eGVT) there's <i>\$they were\$</i> so friendly (40)
we were there and Spanish people (eGVT) want <i>\$wanted\$</i> to go out (41)
I think {they . they} (eGVT) hadn't <i>\$didn't have\$</i> any problem (42)

<p>&lt;B&gt; &lt;overlap /&gt; yes &lt;laughs&gt; after years of writing . then we (eGVT) meet \$met\$. and then we . &lt;overlap /&gt; never (eGVT) write \$wrote\$ us again &lt;/B&gt; (43)</p>
<p>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)</p>
<p>when I arrived to my home &lt;sighs&gt; . I (eGVT) sleep \$slept\$ a lot of time (45)</p>
<p>we had (eh) ten weeks .. because then we (eGVT) have to \$had to\$: to do the: the school experience at school (46)</p>
<p>they (eGVT) call \$called\$ to . to mother . or to father . they began to cry (47)</p>
<p>I was with children (eh) that: &lt;overlap /&gt; they (eGVT) are \$were\$ five and six (48)</p>
<p>it was very difficult for me because they (eGVT) are (eh) tha= (em) don't have \$didn't have\$. teeth (49)</p>
<p>we (eGVT) live \$lived\$ all together the Belgian . the: Denmark people . the German &lt;overlap /&gt; people the Spanish (50)</p>
<p>so we (eGVT) have \$had\$ have a lot of fun . in Ireland . because all day . we (eGVT) have \$had\$ breakfast with .. the German (51)</p>
<p>I didn't like it . no . because we (eGVT) have \$had\$ a lot of subjects (52)</p>
<p>we were looking for . for another son or daughter . so finally we (eGVT) decide \$decided\$ to (eh) find an Ukrainian girl (53)</p>
<p>And (eGVT) ask \$asked\$ him for a for a picture of herself . so he was sitting there for a long time (54)</p>
<p>&lt;B&gt; yeah . I only (eGVT) have \$had\$ a coat . and . it was very very cold &lt;/B&gt; (55)</p>
<p>I (eGVT) start \$started\$ to swim when I was . three years old (56)</p>
<p>in the second picture the woman didn't like the . the picture and . he (eGVT) <u>change</u> \$changed\$ it (57)</p>
<p>about a experience that it (eGVT) happens \$happened\$ to me this morning (58)</p>

	<B> as well yes because I (eGVT) it's have studied \$studied\$ three years of philology .. yes before </B> (59)
	I said okay I'm going to change . so I change \$eGVT\$ <i>changed</i> \$ and I I . began to study biology (60)

**Table 3**

<b>Category</b> <b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>eGVT (SP RS)</b>	(eGVT) say \$asked\$ (em:) do you (eGVTA) like \$if they liked\$ this country and... (61)
	she told me that (er) there (eGVTA) isn't \$wasn't\$ any job in summer. (62)
	<B> he said he (eGVTA) cannot \$could not\$. you know live on </B> (63)
	<B> and she (eGVT) has said \$said\$ that he he's (eh) (eGVTA) she's \$was\$ 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 \$was/were talking\$ together . and (eGVT) sitting \$sitting\$ on the same table (65)
	<B> because they (eGVT) talk \$were talking\$ to among themselves . as well but . it was . sad <laughs> </B> (66)
	when you go to {in in} . (eGVT){you go} \$were walking\$ in the streets all the people (eGVT) say \$said\$ hello (67)
	I (eGVT) was hearing \$heard\$ a funny noise (68)
	and I (eGVT) was seeing \$saw\$ 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>	[... is completely different . the teacher speaks of course . but the class is more . active . you you speak . you say what you think] sometimes the teacher (eGVT) didn't <i>\$doesn't\$</i> explain anything . it (eGVT) was <i>\$is\$</i> you who (eGVT) had <i>\$have\$</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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## **Resumé**

### **1. Úvod**

V úvodu práce je specifikována definice jazykových znalostí angličtiny dle Společného evropského referenčního rámce. Navíc je zde zdůrazněno, že úroveň angličtiny u vybraného vzorku mluvčích by měla být srovnatelná s úrovní rodilých mluvčích angličtiny. Právě proto, že v úrovních, kterých mluvčí dosahují, existují opravdu znatelné rozdíly, je výzkum jazykových korpusů a analýza žákovských chyb stále důležitější. Chyby jsou výsledkem žákovských pokusů v daném jazyce, díky kterým je žák schopen následně rozlišit správné a nesprávné použití daného jevu. Opakující se chyby by neměly být opomíjeny, jelikož mohou poukázat na neúplnou znalost jazyka. Cílem této bakalářské práce je analýza chyb u rodilých mluvčích španělštiny s pokročilou úrovní anglického jazyka.

### **2. Teoretická část**

Druhá kapitola popisuje v několika podkapitolách temporální systém angličtiny a zaměřuje se konkrétně na způsoby vyjadřování minulosti v souladu s příslušnou odbornou literaturou. První sekce 2.1 se soustřeďuje na způsoby vyjádření minulého času pomocí prostých tvarů a zmiňuje také slovesný vid, kataforickou a anaforickou referenci, využití slovesné opisné vazby „used to“, a na závěr také definici čtyř základních typů dějů v minulosti, které se vyznačují dokončeností. V druhé sekci v části 2.2 následuje popis kategorie vidové, do níž je zahrnuto užití perfektivních a průběhových tvarů. V tomto případě je nezbytné uvést, že v angličtině dochází k překrývání kategorie vidové a temporální. Druhá sekce dále nabízí definici

perfektních tvarů a jejich použití při odkazování na blíže neurčenou minulost, jejíž výsledek však často zasahuje do přítomnosti.

Následující podsekcce 2.2.1 je zaměřena na různá užití plusquamperfekta. Podsekcce 2.2.2 se detailně vrací k užití minulých průběhových tvarů a podsekcce 2.2.3 popisuje průběhové perfektum. Hlavním tématem sekce 2.3 je pak vyjadřování následnosti k dějům minulým. Sekce 2.4 se věnuje tvoření minulých tvarů pomocí modálních sloves v nepřímé řeči a možnosti perifrastického vyjádření pomocí spony. Podkapitola 2.4.1 navazuje popisem vět vyjadřujících nějakou hypotézu a způsobových sloves v minulosti, která často vyjadřují váhavost nebo zdvořilou žádost. Sekce 2.5 doplňuje výčet o popis dějů minulých vyjádřených tvarem přítomného času. Následující sekce 2.6 pojednává o slovesech, která se v minulém čase vyskytují nejčastěji a sekce 2.7 se referuje znovu k modálním slovesům vyjadřujícím jistotní modalitu a odkazují na minulost, např. připojením minulého infinitivu významového slovesa k přítomnému tvaru nebo využitím svých minulých tvarů. Sekce 2.8 uzavírá druhou kapitolu výčtem nespisovných, nesprávných užití a takových vyjádření, která jsou vnímána jako chybná nebo nevhodná; ta dokládá pomocí řady konkrétních příkladů. Ve třetí, čtvrté a páté kapitole následuje definice žakovského jazyka a tzv. mezijazyka, chyb a počítačem podporované chybové analýzy, která přináší nový vhled a informace o stavu žakovského jazyka. Na konci se objevuje také výčet charakteristických rysů mluveného jazyka.

### **3. Praktická část**

Praktická část sestává z analýzy dat vzorku rodilých mluvčích španělštiny ze španělského korpusu LINDSEI. Z 50 rozhovorů ze subkorpusu LINDSEI\_SP byl vybrán vzorek 25 mluvčích obsahující celkem 82 501 slov. Všichni studenti, kteří se nahrávání zúčastnili, byli studenty oboru se zaměřením na anglický jazyk. Nahrávání rozhovorů proběhlo ve Španělsku

na univerzitách Universidad Autónoma de Madrid a Universidad de Murcia. Cílem praktické části je uvést příklady chyb ve vyjadřování minulosti. Proto byl nejdříve vzorek rodilých mluvčích španělštiny označován pomocí chybových tagů. Chyby byly posléze identifikovány a klasifikovány v částech odkazujících na minulost. Pro označení chyb byl použit Lovaňský značkovací systém. Sedmá kapitola práce shrnuje veškeré výsledky bádání. Uvádí, že nejproblematictější oblastí je minulý čas prostý, kde bylo identifikováno nejvíce chyb (64 z celkových 100). Vybrané chyby jsou pak patřičně rozděleny do jednotlivých skupin podle toho, zda se jedná o perfektum (7.1), prostý čas minulý (7.2.1), průběhové tvary (7.3), modální slovesa (7.4) a popis dějů minulých v přítomném čase (7.5).

#### **4. Závěr**

V závěru práce jsou shrnuty výsledky analýzy dat rodilých mluvčích španělštiny, které jsou porovnány s výsledky předchozího výzkumu rodilých mluvčích češtiny. Zatímco minulý čas prostý se zdá být nejproblematictější oblastí pro rodilé mluvčí španělštiny, pro rodilé mluvčí češtiny je to čas předpřítomný. O možných příčinách chybování u rodilých mluvčích španělštiny se lze pouze dohadovat. Nesprávně použití prostých minulých časů je způsobeno mnoha faktory: špatným pochopením, nesprávným zapamatováním, které vede k ustálení v každodenních výpovědích, mezijazykovým transferem atd. Čeští studenti mnohdy chybují právě v používání předpřítomného času, protože ten v českém systému naprosto chybí. Na druhé straně, španělština disponuje podobnými prostředky jako angličtina při odkazování na minulost. Lze se dohadovat, že časté chybování u rodilých mluvčích španělštiny je zapříčiněno částečně mezijazykovým transferem, jelikož v každodenních situacích je možné využít přítomného času prostého, který jasně odkazuje na minulost, ale také vysokým počtem žáků ve skupině, který jim neumožňuje procvičovat mluvený projev.