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The Impact of Interlanguage Process in Foreign Language Learning in Terms

of Transfer, Overgeneralization and Communication Strategies

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(TFG E#07)

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Abstract

The present study investigates the role of the interlanguage among the foreign language learners, the impact that it has when the students perform in the target language and also the importance of understanding the influence of the interlanguage in the process of learning a foreign language. To demonstrate if the interlanguage interferes in the process and to find out if they are positive or negative; the students had to answered some diagnostic questionnaire and also to participate using some specific metacognitive, compensatory and communications strategies. The results of this investigation was that the students are influenced by interlanguage features when predicting new words or structures based on their background native language knowledge, generalizing rules by committing the same mistakes every time that they performe in the target language, and also, the strategies utilized by the students to communicate when they have difficulties, find this process happens very naturally and students may not even realize when they are using Spanish features and applying them to the new English language being acquired. The strategies that were used with the students had a positive effect on the performance of the students and the students could improve performance in the target language. Nevertheless, most of the students complained about the lack of opportunities to use the language or practice.

Content Table

CHAPTER I
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Title: The impact of interlanguage process in foreign language learning in terms of transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies.

This project highlights the importance of all those habits that most people have, in the process of learning a new language. Habits such as using structures of the native language into the second language, or overgeneralization in which learners make their own rules, fossilization in which the learner keeps having the same errors; all of those terms belong to the interlanguage process, according to the studies of the linguist Larry Selinker in 1972. In fact, he suggests that all of those habits are part of the natural process of learning a new language. On the other hand, there are other experts that are against this theory and they get to see all those habits as a result of real errors rather than see them as something normal of the learning a second language process.

The main goal of this research is to demonstrate if these affirmations are correct. To make it possible, students from a high school are going to be observed while some specific strategies are going to be applied to them. Nevertheless, this research also seeks to find out if the aspects of interlanguage, that make up this theory, are to a certain extent positive in the second language learning, and then try to reinforce them with different strategies. In the case that negative aspects are found, this project tries to give a solution if it is possible.

1.2 Rationale

The constant changes in terms of how to use the best strategy to teach and the understanding of different ways the students learn; are probably the main reasons why the teachers must take into account all those habits that usually the learners have when learning. Habits that this research will try to examine in order to demonstrate whether they are positive or negative.

Although, for some experts in the field of the linguistic, these constant mistakes that students have in their intent to speak another language are just seen as common errors; there is this theory (interlanguage by L. Selinker 1972), that suggest that students commit all those mistakes due to a lack of knowledge and that they just use them as a result of the normal process of learning a second language.

Economical and social demands make a lot of people have the necessity of learning a new language and teachers have the delicate responsibility of making this possible without affecting the motivation of the learners. That is why is important to understand all these vast feature ways of learning.

1.3 Purpose of the study

During the process of second language acquisition, the students usually have some trouble with aspects of the language they are performing, in order to continue with their performance, the students develop some other strategies to compensate gaps in the new language that they are learning. Some of the strategies are: using structures from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2), they may alter rules, add rules or even delete them. All of these aspects that are very common to see when teaching a second language; Larry Selinker 1972, named it interlanguage; he says that all of these aspects are presented in between the L1 and L2 and that they are just part of the process of learning a second language. For that reason, this project pretends to help the students be aware of the interlanguage process and take advantage of it, and also, provide some recommendations to the teachers for a better comprehension of this process; in order to reach those goals, some observations along with metacognitive and compensatory strategies, are going to be applied. It is necessary that teachers learn to identify those strategies used by the students to be able to help them to avoid negative effects and reinforce the positive ones.

1.3.1   General objective

To demonstrate the impact of interlanguage in the process of second language acquisition in regards to transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies with tenth graders in Liceo Magallanes.

1.3.2   Specific Objectives

a) To identify the interlanguage effects in students during the process of foreign language learning.

b) To apply metacognitive and compensatory strategies to help students to overcome the possible negative effects and reinforce the possible positive effects of interlanguage during second language learning.

c) To evaluate the impact of the strategies applied in terms of transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies.

1.3.3   Research questions

a) How interlanguage impacts the process of second language learning in terms of transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies?

b) How can a teacher apply some strategies to help the students face the fossilization?

c) Which strategies are helpful to overcome the possible negative aspects of interlanguage?

d) Do the teachers identify and evaluate all the influence of this theory?

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1. Interlanguage

Learning a foreign language is a challenge for anyone that has the intention to communicate in another language. It is a such us effort that some people do to find the key to be able to speak in another language. Sometimes it is a need or sometimes it is because people are just interested in learning a new language. With the globalization more people travel and have contact with different cultures and different languages that are typical in an interconnected world, many people have access to the technology and that also makes the fact of communication an essential aspect to exchange information or to communicate.

In the process of learning a foreign language, the learners are usually influenced by the first language (1L), they usually use rules of the native language when they express in the second language, or, they sometimes, creates new rules and new vocabulary to compensate the lack of structures, vocabulary, right pronunciation and others . These tendency seen in the process, are usually seen as errors that the learners commit. Many researchers have debated in regards of whether the influence of the native language are error or not.

All those mechanism that the learners use, mechanisms such us using structures and other elements of the native language when they are producing in the second language; are called interlanguage according to Selinker, (1972)

According to Han (2014) Interlanguage is that linguistic/cognitive space that exists between the native language and the language that one is learning. Interlanguages are non-native languages which are created and spoken whenever there is language contact. People create interlanguage when attempting to express meanings in a second language. Interlanguages are highly structured, containing new/novel forms. They result from attempted production of a target language and are never perfect when measured in terms of the target language, but deviate in structured ways. Unlike other areas of human behavior, very interestingly, here practice does not make perfect in ultimate success terms1 (Selinker, 2012). Additionally, with interlanguage, or as Ortega succinctly puts it: "What adult learners do in building a new language", there has been a concurrent shift away from over-reliance on the forms of the target language that have been acquired (except maybe in the testing/assessment industry) to focus on knowledge that learners

have actually acquired and constructed as idiosyncratic interlanguage and how interlanguage knowledge is used. (zhaohong han, 2014, p. 223)

As noted earlier, the IL hypothesis began to develop very soon after Chomsky (1965) had proposed a powerful theory about the way children learn to speak their native language: born with an innate knowledge of language (UG) that engages innate acquisition processes, children are (with rare exceptions) completely successful in acquiring the ability to speak their native language. One of the central questions raised by Selinker (1972) suggests that the processes of adult second language acquisition must be different from the child L1 acquisition described by Chomsky. This is because the outcomes of child first language acquisition and adult second language acquisition are dramatically different: very few adults acquire a second language perfectly, an outcome that children seem to effortlessly and universally achieve in acquiring L1. The IL hypothesis postulates that one major reason for this could be that adults, unlike children, do not have access to Universal Grammar , and so they resort to other kinds of cognitive processes to internalize a TL. Selinker (1972) referred to this set of general cognitive processes as a "latent psychological structure (LPS)." But another major reason could also be that adult L2 learners, by definition, already have acquired one language, and that early-learned language system could influence, or interfere with, the formation of subsequent language systems. In other words, both LPS and NL transfer are cognitive processes engaged in adult SLA that are absent in child first language acquisition (…) fossilization. Is the end state of an IL rule system inevitably different from the TL rule system? Selinker (1972) posited that it is – that some constructions in the ILs of adults virtually always fossilize, or stop developing somewhere short of the learners' TL goal. Fossilization may be the most enduring characteristic of interlanguage. And, according to Selinker, fossilization is related to backsliding, which is: "the regular reappearance in second language performance of linguistic phenomena which were thought to be eradicated in the performance of the learner" (1972, p. 211). Selinker (1972) proposes fossilization as a kind of defining characteristic of adult interlanguage: at least some adult interlanguage constructions always fossilize, while this does not seem to occur in child language. As the 1972 paper was being written, this claim was one of the most hotly (zhaohong han, 2014, pp. 10, 13)

The process of learning a foreign language may result very difficult and complex for some people, and it is always necessary for every student to put into practice some special attitudes towards the new language, such as effort, constancy, devotion, willingness, persistency, among

others. People develop those attitudes in a state of complete consciousness and they represent the commitment each person has towards learning the new language and they are effective during the process. But, on the other hand, exists a different set of characteristics presented in this same process of acquiring a new language, which are unconscious and also observable and may be representing a pattern. Those characteristics are part of the interlanguage process, and are explained as follows:

2.1.2. Fossilization

As it is mentioned briefly before, the interlanguage has some characteristics that are common in the process of acquiring a second language. And one of those characteristics is the fossilization which are aspects such us having an accent or not sounding like a native speaker.

The fossilization hypothesis has undergone a series of changes since its first formulation in 1972. After predicting that only 5% of learners of all ages would ultimately succeed, Selinker then narrowed the scope to adults exclusively. He stated that "no adult can hope to ever speak a second language in such a way that s/he is indistinguishable from native speakers of that language" (Selinker 1996, cited in Long 2003: 510). Furthermore, Selinker and Lamendella (1978) postulated that such phenomenon was likely to affect "all levels of linguistic structure and in all discourse domains" regardless of the individual's "positive ability, opportunity or motivation to learn or acculturate into target society" (cited in Long: 488-489). This was later ratified by Selinker (1989), who also viewed fossilization as context-dependent. Hence, learners would experience persisting "fluctuation in interlanguage performance", i.e. 'backsliding' in certain "domains" despite constant interaction with native speakers (Long: 489). Although revisited, fossilization still sparks great controversy among linguists. Selinker's inconsistency and vagueness has allowed the hypothesis to become a "catchall term" (Birdsong 2003, 2006, cited in Han 2013: 136).

The causes of fossilization have been summarized in the following five aspects: "(1) Native language migration, which refers to the transfer of native language features to second language learning in the process of learning second language; (2) The over-generalization of the rules of target language means that the learners use the individual language rules in the target language as the universal rules to create an interlanguage that does not have feature of the native

language nor the target language; (3) Training migration means migration caused by the selection of teaching materials in which some language expression is not enough native or a bit difficult, the teachers' incorrect or inaccurate expressions, improper teaching methods or other factors; (4) Learning strategies refer to methods and strategies learners use in learning a second language or a foreign language. And their excessive analogy or simplification will form an interlanguage mistake in learning process; (5) Communicative strategies refer to a set of skills the learners use when encountering difficulties in the communication process. When learners can't express themselves in the correct target language, they will borrow the synonym, approximate expression consciously or unconsciously to form an intermediary language. Avoidance, retell, borrow, coinage are the commonly used communication strategies. (Selinker, 1972, cited in Yang and Xu, 2019, p. 314)

This same recent study suggests that one of the main reasons students' interlanguage fossilization is because they are completely immersed in their environment of pure mother tongue; and the author mentions that most of the students "usually start formal English learning in junior middle school, as a result, their mother tongue have being basically shaped before English learning (Yang, Xu, 2019, p. 315). The study mentioned before, was conducted in China, but we can see this happening in Costa Rica as well since students may not have the opportunity to practice English, more than they can practice in School, which is one of the principal difficulties for learning the language.

2.1.3. Language transfer

Transfer, is described as a cognitive process of adults second language acquisition and absent from child first language acquisition (Selinker and Lakshmanan, 1992). When fossilisable rules, items and subsystems appear during interlanguage process as a result of first language, then this is called language transfer. The author reconsiders the feasibility of predictions made by language transfer and also the desirability when learning and also explains that there is evidence about some kinds of predictions of new situations. This assumption demonstrates that speakers of

the language similar to the target language are more successful because of the background knowledge and of course, the similarity between words.

According to Hong Han (2014), the term transfer refers to a psycholinguistic process, a linguistic behavior and to a cognitive state of knowledge that emerge very naturally when there is a bilingual and multilingual setting. It is explained, that many characteristics errors presented when a person is learning a new language, are presented as an influence from first language and many studies have been directed to find which aspects may be transferred, how would that happen and why. According to the author, the initial state of first language acquisition is Universal Grammar, which suggests that human language is constrained by different universal principles. Some examples of transfer are avoidance, 'reverse transfer' from a learners' second language to native language, perception of linguistic features (Wang, 2013).

Language transfer is what usually a second language learner experience without realizing. This phenomenon happens when the learners are using a second language and in the process she or he performs using aspects learned in the tong language. These use that the learner give to the language have been discussed by many experts that believe the transfer is something that comes natural along with the language acquisition.

Language transfer as a linguistic concept has always been considered and seen as a phenomenon which occurs in language learning situations. The two definitions below represent the most common views. Behaviorist psychologists, who first defined 'transfer' technically, used it to refer to a process described as the automatic, uncontrolled, and subconscious use of past learner behaviours in the attempt to produce new responses. In this sense, transfer may be of two types: 'negative' and 'positive'. 'Negative transfer' refers to those instances of transfer which result in error because old, habitual behaviour is different from the new behaviour that is being learned. For example, if one has regularly driven a car where the gear shift is on the floor, one will invariably reach for the floor when first attempting to drive a new car whose gear shift is on the steering column. In contrast, 'positive transfer' results in correct performance because the new behaviour is the same as the old. In our gear shift example above, positive transfer would operate if the new car also had its gear shift on the floor – the old and new gear shifting would be the same. Both types of transfer refer to the automatic and subconscious use of old behaviour in new learning situations. (Dulay et al., 1982: 100–1) transfer A term used in applied linguistcs to refer to a process in foreign language learning whereby learners carry over what they already

know about their first language to their performance in their new language. This tendency may be an advantage, if the two languages have features in correspondence, as there will be 'positive transfer' (or 'facilitation'). Rather more noticeable, however, are the cases of 'negative transfer' (or interference), where the patterns of the two languages do not coincide. (Arabski, 2006, pp. 12,13)

2.1.4. Stability

Another observable characteristic found during the interlanguage process, is the stability. It refers to the consistency when using a certain rule or form (Hamad 2015). It means that, when a person uses the same form more than once, there is a kind of stability that makes the person commits the same mistakes.
A different characteristic mentioned by the author is systematicity, interlanguage is not described as a random collection of rules, it actually follows a particular system of rules.

2.1.5. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization is the phenomenon when one overextends one rule to cover instances to which that rule does not apply. This phenomenon may appear in different aspects such as semantic, syntactic, morphological, or behavioral. It is a systematic way that children create and unconsciously use, and here appears the greater opposition to the idea of imitation. It is creative. "The phenomenon of overgeneralization itself is not in doubt, nor is the creative nature of the psychological processes that cause it" (Marcus, 1992) There are many theories on language acquisition. For example, the relational frame theory (Hayes, et al, 2001), which is selectionist. It is based on Skinners behaviorist approach in which he claims that language acquisition is determined by the type and period of linguistic interaction. The psychological events that the child experiences are a crucial and have great influence in his language acquisition; these include feelings, thoughts and behaviors. The Imitation Theory says that children learn language by imitating the speech of the people around them. It consists of memorizing words and sentences and drawing conclusions from them as to what are the grammatical rules of the language. This theory is probably at least partly correct. There are some things (like the meaning of words)

which the child learns by imitation, but there are some things that the theory fails to account for. For instance, children's speech is full of errors. In individual cases this is due to the fact that language is complex and a child's first attempt is often not successful. It is commonly believed that children acquire their mother tongue through imitation of parents, caregivers, or people in their environment. Furthermore, some approaches were neutral in that they considered the environment and biological influences. For example, the Emergentist theories, such as MacWhinney's (2005) competition model, which assert that language acquisition is a cognitive process that emerges from the interaction of biological pressures and the environment explaining that the acquisition process is emergent due to the competition of linguistic forms such as syntactic, lexical, and phonological forms. The above approaches were challenged by another approach which views language acquisition as an innate faculty. (Al-Baldawi, 2011)

2.1.6. Communication strategies

Teaching a foreign language implies that the instructor uses all the strategies she or he can, in order to get the best results from the students. Those strategies must be used according to the subject, and the teacher has to adapt them in order to make the students produce in the language they are learning. Sometimes one strategy doesn't work depending of the group or the topic but there is when the teacher must be prepared to use another one that can works.

The notion of communication strategies, thus, refers to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations in which they do not share the requisite meaning structures. In other words, communication strategies are attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner and the linguistic knowledge of his or her interlocutor in real communication situations. Approximation, mime, and circumlocution may be used to bridge this gap. Message abandonment and avoidance may be used where the gap is perceived as unbridgeable. A broader definition of CSs was proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1984), who emphasized the planning and execution of speech production. These authors affirmed that to solve communication problems, a learner does not only cooperate with his or her interlocutor, but also finds a solution without the help of others. This view led to further research concentrating on learners' internal mental activities, such as CS use for solving lexical problems (Poulisse, 1987). Faerch and Kasper (1984) affirm that there are two types of CSs: Achievement

strategies and reduction strategies. Achievement strategies allow learners to have an alternative plan to achieve reaching an original goal using the resources that are available. Reduction strategies are used by learners to avoid solving a communication problem and allow them to give up on conveying an original message. Achievement strategies consist of compensatory strategies and retrieval strategies. Compensatory strategies include codeswitching, interlingual transfer, interlanguage–based strategies, cooperative strategies, and nonlinguistic strategies. Retrieval strategies are used when learners have difficulties in retrieving specific interlanguage items. Reduction strategies consist of formal reduction strategies (using a reduced system to avoid producing non-fluent or incorrect utterances) and function reduction strategies (giving up on sending a message or avoiding a specific topic).

CSs allow learners to continue in the conversation, which provides them with opportunities to hear more input and produce new utterances. Consequently, the use of CSs can have a significant learning effect for EFL learners. For this reason, CSs should be considered as a subset of learning strategies, which contain both skills for learning a language and applications of them in real communication contexts. (Cervantes, 2012)

CHAPTER III

Design and Method

3.1. Research Method

The action research is the tool that was chosen to conduct this investigation. This investigation is about getting to know how much the interlanguage interferes in the process of acquiring a second language, the role of aspects such us transfer, overgeneralization, communication strategies are going to be investigated in order to know how much they delay in the process. In fact, it was selected due to type of subject that is investigated. Action research is a convenient tool for any investigation in the field of the education. Furthermore, teachers that are interested in improving their teaching and those who want to get better results; usually, use this method for that purpose. That is the reason that this research method is suitable for this project.

3.2. Type of approach

This research is based on a qualitative approach because information is identified and collected in order to apply different metacognitive strategies and finally evaluate the results. This research is explorative, dependent on the collection of verbal, behavioral or observational material obtained; it will be used to understand the underlying reasons, by observing, identifying possible interlanguage features presented on students second language learning process by applying metacognitive and compensatory strategies and finally be able to help students and teachers with the process by finding ways to reinforce positive aspects and avoid negative ones.

3.3. The context

This investigation will take place at Liceo Magallanes, located in Mallaganes, Santiago, and San Ramón in Alajuela province; during the first quarter of 2019. The main economic activities are farming, agriculture, and commerce. The facilities found in Magallanes are EBAIS, transport, basic services, school, and high school. The Liceo Magallanes was founded in 2006 and actually has around 400 students and 42 teachers. The English department has 3 teachers which reinforce listening, speaking, reading and writing but there is also conversational English for students as a technology class. About the facilities of the high school, it has beautiful gardens, ramps for students with special needs, language laboratory, a copy center, a cafeteria, an auditorium, and a gym. There are 13 classrooms which are nice and clean, and all of them are equipped with at least 30 desks and chairs in perfect conditions, acrylic boards and technological

devices such as TVs and video beams. Students come from different places of San Ramón and not only from Magallanes, and they receive classes from 7:00 a.m. to 4:10 p.m. The level chosen is ninth graders, because a certain level of English is required but it is still needed that students belong to a process of continuous learning.   One group of 21 tenth graders is selected for this investigation to take place.

3.4. Data collection procedures and tools of initial research

The methodology intends to collect and analyze the data is the following: researchers visit the institution to work with students, observe and take notes about the possible interlanguage features presented on their speech, and apply different questionnaires and workshops. Also, the instruments of literature research will be needed. The qualitative method approach is used in this investigation in order to best understand the research problem. For this project, is being neccesary to investigate and read in order to get the qualitative data and then combine them with observation and metacognitive and compensatory strategies to measure the usefulness of the techniques.

3.5 Instruments for diagnostic

For this project some instruments are used with the students in order to have a diagnostic of how the interlanguage is immersed in the process of learning a foreign language. This part of the investigation is very important because with this step finished, part of the results of the investigation can be collected and analyzed. The instruments to be applied are the following:

3.5.1 A diagnostic test that consists on 5 multiple choice questions, which pretend to collect information ueful to find out to the impact of student's previous Spanish knowledge when learning English.

3.5.2 Sentence rearrangement practices will be applied to check to what extent students use Spanish word order when creating a sentence.

3.5.3. Multiple choice questions about vocabulary are going to be asked, to see if students relate Spanish words to English words when translating or guessing the meanings.

3.5.4. Students will do paragraph writing practices, which are intended to show if students use Spanisg structures when writing in English.
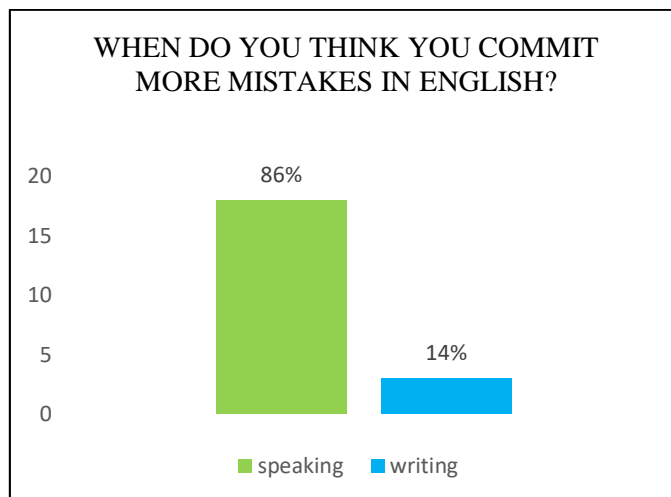
CHAPTER IV

Findings

4.1 Data Analysis
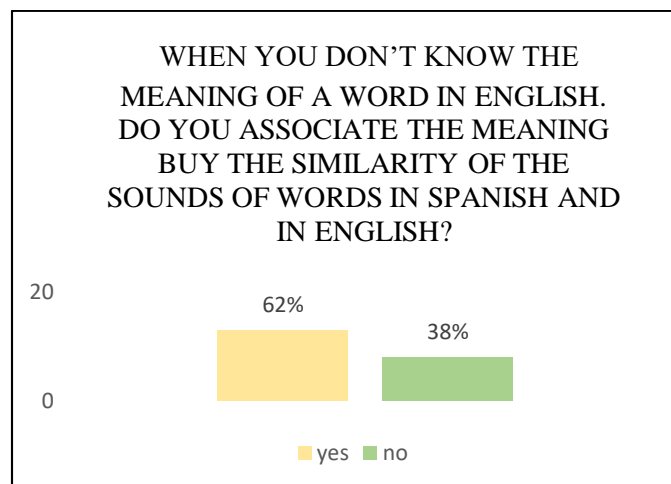
4.1.1 Diagnostic questionnaire

To have an idea of how often the students use the language and to identify some interlanguange features when the students produce in English, the students had to answer five closed questions in which they showed that they do not use the language very often and in the case of the questions to identify some interlanguage features, most of them showed that they use grammatical structures from the Spanish to English and that they also keep committing mistakes that they have had before. With this diagnostic we clearly identify how the students get to use some interlanguage elements without realizing it. On the other hand we can say that the lack of opportunities for them to practice is making them not to improve their English.

HOW OFTEN YOU USE ENGLISH?

0%	76%	24%

■ often ■ only in classes ■ not often
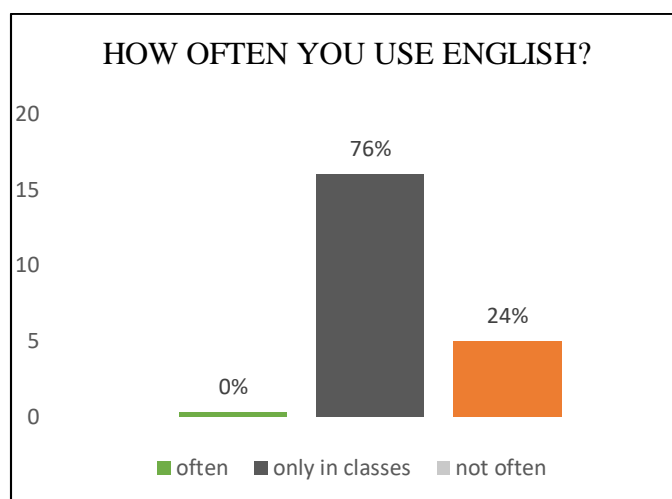
When interviewing the students, 76% of students answered that they use English only in classes and 24% of them just answered that they don't use English often. So taking in to account those percentage given by the answers of the students it is clearly that the students have a lack of opportunities to use the language. No one uses the language very often.

WHEN DO YOU THINK YOU COMMIT
MORE MISTAKES IN ENGLISH?
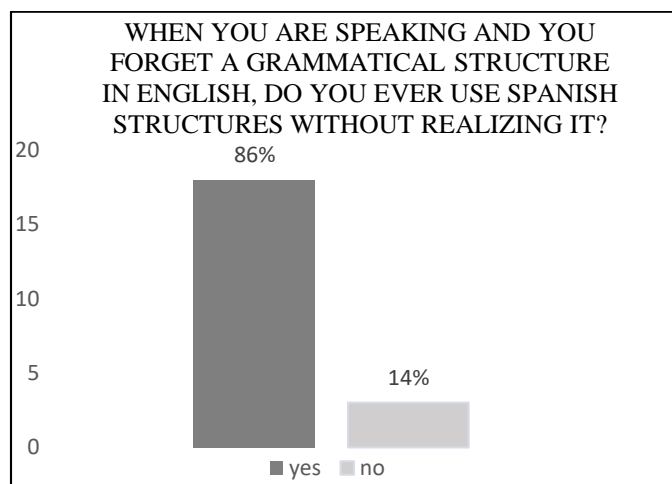
20

15

10

5

0

86%

14%

■ speaking ■ writing

According to the answer of the students 86% of them think they are more exposed to commit mistakes when it comes to speak and only 14% think that they have more mistakes when writing. So, it is clearly that they are more careful when writing than speaking and that apparently they write more in class than they practice speaking.

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW THE
MEANING OF A WORD IN ENGLISH.
DO YOU ASSOCIATE THE MEANING
BUY THE SIMILARITY OF THE
SOUNDS OF WORDS IN SPANISH AND
IN ENGLISH?

20

0

62%
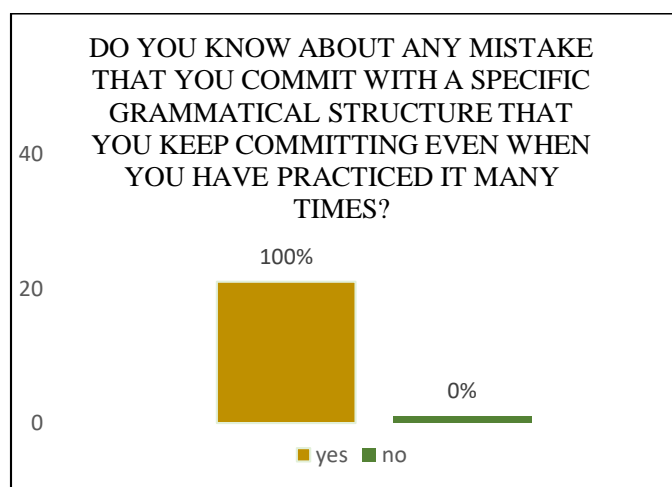
38%

■ yes ■ no

For this question 62% of the students accepted that they sometimes associate the sounds of the word in Spanish with English e.g. embarrassed (by the sound of this word most of them translate this word as pregnancy).   Without knowing the real meaning of the word. On the other hand 38% answered that they don't associate the sounds. So the interpretation of this result is that

when they don't have the resource for them to understand the real meaning of a word they translate the word by the sound that usually is similar to a word in Spanish.

WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING AND YOU FORGET A GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE IN ENGLISH, DO YOU EVER USE SPANISH STRUCTURES WITHOUT REALIZING IT?

- 86% (yes)
- 14% (no)

(y-axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20)

According to what the students expressed about the influence of Spanish grammatical structures, 86% of them have used it when speaking and only 14% have never use that resource. It is noticed that there is a strong influence of interlanguage features.

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANY MISTAKE THAT YOU COMMIT WITH A SPECIFIC GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE THAT YOU KEEP COMMITTING EVEN WHEN YOU HAVE PRACTICED IT MANY TIMES?

- 100% (yes)
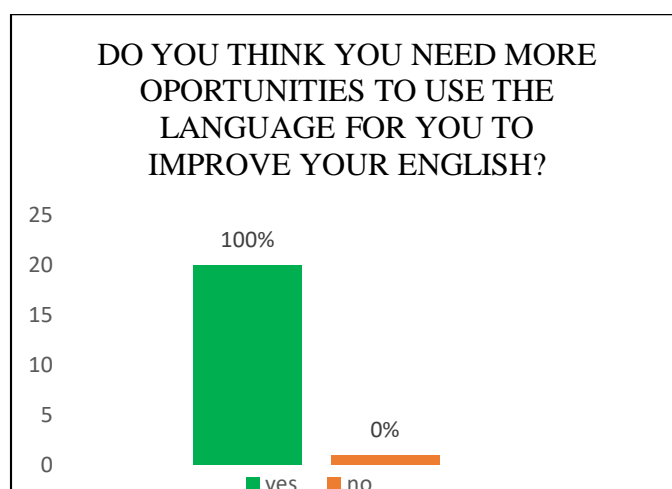- 0% (no)

(y-axis: 0, 20, 40)

The result of this question is that 100% of the students have practiced some grammatical structures but sometimes they have mistaken with the same structures. In this case it is perceived
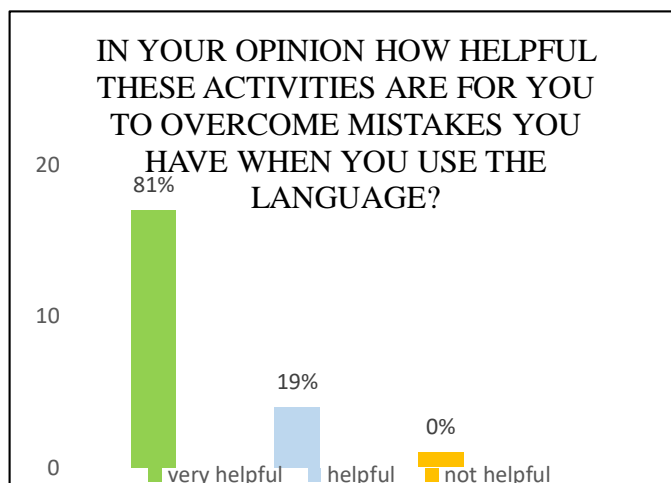
that the fossilization which is one of the interlanguage features is presented when the students are producing.

4.1.2 Questionnaire for the evaluation

In order to get the perspective of the students in regards to the methods and the activities that were applied to overcome the interlanguage influence, and to find out if this activities were effective or not, to identify if the students felt comfortable with them; the students answered a survey in which they had a criteria about the applied strategies and activities.

DO YOU THINK YOU NEED MORE OPORTUNITIES TO USE THE LANGUAGE FOR YOU TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH?

100%

0%

yes   no

Taking in to account the answer of the students for this closed question; it can be interpreted, that definitely, the students need more chances for them to practice and overcome the negative effects of the interlanguage, in fact, 100% of the students agreed in their answers.

IN YOUR OPINION HOW HELPFUL THESE ACTIVITIES ARE FOR YOU TO OVERCOME MISTAKES YOU HAVE WHEN YOU USE THE LANGUAGE?

20

81%

10

19%

0%

0

very helpful   helpful   not helpful

In order to know the effectiveness of the activities that were applied to mitigate the negative effects of the interlanguage, the students were asked about how helpful these activities were in regards to the mistakes that they commit when speaking in English. 81% think that the activities are very helpful when it comes to achieve better performance in the use of the language, 19% answered that these tools are helpful and no one of the surveyed students, thinks that this activities are not helpful at all.

DO YOU THINK THAT PRACTICING MORE WITH THIS KIND OF ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH?
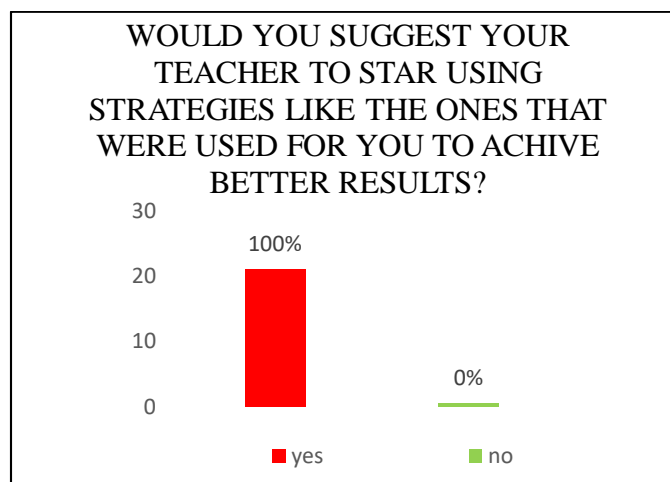
25

100%

20

15

10

5

0%

0

yes   no
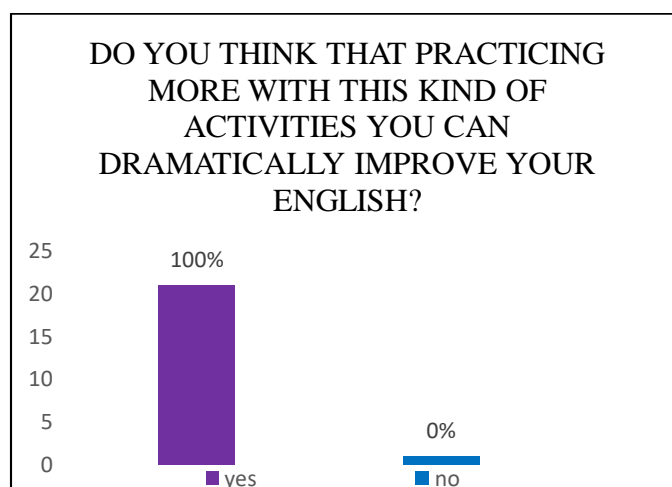
The result of the answer given by the students to this question, is that they think they can dramatically improve in regards to the effects of some interlanguage influence. In fact, 100% of

the students that were asked, answered in favor of the tools that were used in the development of this research.

HAVE YOUR TEACHERS EVER USED THIS TYPE OF STRATEGIES WITH YOU IN THE LAST YEARS?
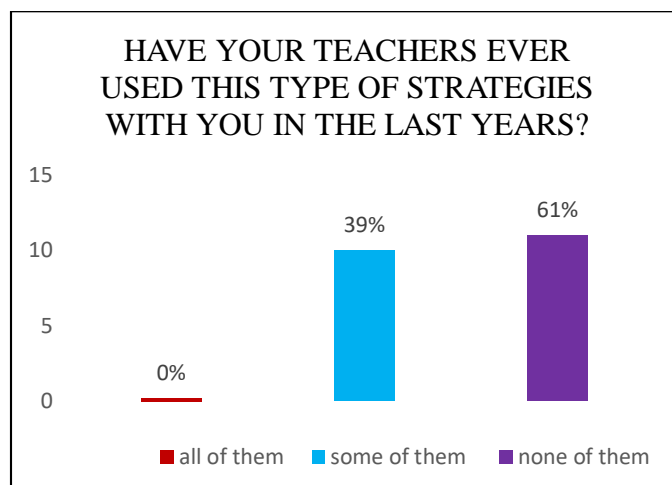
The interpretation of the answer that the students gave to this question, is that in the last years the teacher are using a few strategies or in some cases, they are not using any of this activities to help the students to achieve better results when it comes to perform in English without mistakes the students have had before. 39% of them think that similar activities have been applied with them and 61% affirm that none of this activities they remember had been used with them, on the other hand no one remember to have use all of this activities.

WOULD YOU SUGGEST YOUR
TEACHER TO STAR USING
STRATEGIES LIKE THE ONES THAT
WERE USED FOR YOU TO ACHIVE
BETTER RESULTS?

100%

0%

■ yes   ■ no

The opinion of the students in regards to the implementation of this strategies by their teacher is that they would suggest this type of strategies in their high school. 100% agreed in the implementation of this activities a very useful tool to improve their English.

4.2 Restatement of Questions and Disscussion of Results

After applying different instruments, which were designed to collect important information and identify specific situations; as a result, it was found that interlanguage processes actually affect or interfere on students second language learning. It can be easily noticed when students translate meaning of words and when they produce and write new sentences or paragraphs. The characteristic of interlanguage named transfer, is very common among the students because they use their native language as a base to guess the meaning of words that are similar in English and in Spanish, and transfer is presented as well, when students produce writing material, by using the sentence regular structure of their first language. According to the information collected, it was also detected that, students overgeneralize some rules of English, by applying them to a lot of words or sentences that may be actually not part of that specific rule, and that the different communication strategies are very necessary and have to be applied by teachers and students in order to avoid incorrect use of transfer or overgeneralization when learning a second language.

In order to help the students to face or overcome those processes of interlanguage, which may be obstacles when trying to reach the target language; teachers can apply different strategies. First, it is important that teachers understand that this is a normal process presented when learning a second language, and it is necessary to respect students and ecourage them to learn and improve, instead of blaming them for the mistakes. When a teacher understands the process, students gain self-confidence, which facilitates the analysis of errors and teachers can apply better strategies to correct and reduce them, minimizing the possibilities of fossilization and transfer mistakes. When giving feedback it is important first, to motivate students and encourage them to learn and then correct the errors.

As mentioned before, teacher's role is very significant for students when learning a second language, because they are in charge of students guidance and it is their responsibility to help students learn a second language, however, not all of the teachers are aware of the interlanguage process or they may not give the importance required. After analyzing the results of the data collected, it can be said that teachers could not be aware of the process of interlanguage and that they are not applying the correct strategies to overcome possible interlanguage mistakes.

CHAPTER V

Reflections

5.1Reflections

Learning a foreign language is a challenge, especially for the people who do not have the chance to practice every day due to the environment in which their life take place. Through this investigation, the students showed a lack of opportunity for them to improve their English and also some limitations such as the fact of not having enough time for them to practice with their teachers. In fact they only have five lessons of English a weak and also there is an overpopulation of students assigned for just one teacher. Taking notes of all these limitations and observing the importance that the students give to the English; seems that they should try to take advantages of other resources, such as using the technologies (smartphones) to practice. In this school all of the students carry a smartphone with them, and most of them have access to the internet, but seems that they are not motivated to look for solutions for them to practice. As it has been demonstrated the students need more engagement with the language and for that reason, it will be helpful if the students get to be more motivated to use the language and find the way to practice more at home.

5.2 Plan for further actions

To have better results in regards to the performance of the students in English and to overcome some negative effects of the interlanguage, it will be great if the students could have the chance to practice more and have more conversational lessons. On the other hand, based on the findings of this research, it is clearly that there are some interlanguage elements immerse in the performance of the students, for that reason after analyzing the impact of the interlanguage features in the students; it would be recommended to have more activities or strategies and more chance to practice for the students to overcome those negative effects.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

6.1 Outcomes

The diagnostic questionnaire showed that 76% of the interviewed students have no real opportunities to practice the language, since their English classroom is the only place in which they use English, which is definitely an obstacle to improve their language skills. It means, that outside the High School, most of the students do not listen to English radio stations, or speak the language with English native or non-native speakers, or read blogs or newspapers in English.

Furthermore, taking into account the answers of most of the students (62% of the interviewed students), it can be said that when they do not know the meaning of a word in English, the students usually associate it with a word in Spanish that sounds similar to the one they do not know; which is a clear example of language transfer. There is evidence of this being a common practice among students also because, when they were asked about using Spanish grammatical structures when they forget the English structures, 86 % of the interviewed students answered yes.

Finally, with the initial diagnosis, it was found that all of the interviewed students tend to repeat the same mistaken grammatical structures, even if they have been corrected by the teacher and have practiced the structure before.

The metacognitive and compensatory strategies applied to the students, demonstrated to be effective to help accomplish one of the main goals of the investigation, which attempts to help the students to take advantage of the positive aspects of interlanguage processes and also, to get to know the concept of it, in general terms, to avoid committing mistakes related to interlanguage features, that may hinder the effective and successful second language learning. This is an important accomplishment because students were able to understand the concept of the linguistic system that characterizes the acquisition of English as a second language, which is interlanguage; and implement startegies suitable for them to improve the effectiveness of the learning process.

To complete the investigation, a final diagnostic was applied to the students. The purpose of this diagnostic was to evaluate the student's perspectives towards the information provided, the strategies applied to solve the possible difficulties caused by interlanguage processes, and their motivation to continue improving their English skills by taking into account the given techniques. Based on these answers, it can be concluded that all the interviewed students consider

important and necessary to have more real opportunities to practice English in order to improve their skill, but they agreed that the metacognitive and compensatory strategies facilitated during this investigation, are very useful for them, to avoid being negatively impacted by the interlanguage process. In fact, based on the opinion of the students, their English proficiency can drastically develop by practicing those kind of activities, which were not practice by most of them before but would definatedly recommend their teachers, to implement the strategies during English lessons.

6.2 Implications

During this investigation project, one of the main aspects taken into account, was the fact that interlanguage actually impacts the process of second language learning in terms of transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies. According to the results of the diagnostic questionnaire and also the closing questionnaire, students are influenced by interlanguage features when predicting new words or structures based on their background native language knowledge, generalizing rules by committing the same mistakes over and over, and also, the strategies utilized by the students to communicate when they have difficulties, find this process happens very naturally and students may not even realize when they are taking Spanish features and applying them to the new English language being acquired.

According to the results obtained from the metacognitive strategies applied to the group of students collaborating with this investigation project, it can be said that, first of all, it is very important and necessary to help the students be aware of the interlanguage process they are going through and facilitate the understanding of the interference and role of Spanish language as native language, when learning English. Once the students get to know interlanguage characteristics and the way in which they may somehow affect the new language acquisition process, learners are more conscious about the mistakes the may be committing and learn to be careful and to pay special attention to grammar structures, rules and vocabulary when producing in English.

This investigation project facilitates teachers the comprehension of the mechanisms or strategies students implement by using specific elements of the tongue language when producing during the learning process of a second language.Being familiar with the implications and the way in which students experiment the interlanguage procedures, also allows teachers to help

students overcome obtacles related to the topic and have a more successful second language learning process.

6.3 Strenghts

One of the highlights of this research is the fact that the students were very collaborative and very interested in the topic of the investigation project; students answers and behavior towars the different diagnostics and questionnaires were very appropriate and helpful, and they enjoyed completing the exercises designed to overcome the obstacles of interlanguage, even though, they had some difficulties with some of the activities, they still wanted to complete them.

In addition, the materials prepared to get the information at the beginning of the investigation project and the one applied to try to find solutions and conclutions, were appropriate and completely helpful, since all the information needed was recollected and the suggestions given to the students and teachers were proved to be relevant and helpful.

6.4 Limitations

Due to the nature of the investigation, the most appropriate sample that should be taken into account to get the results, is the students population; nevertheless, it would have been very useful to get to know English teachers opinions and perspectives as well, based on their teaching experience and evaluating the performance of the students when acquiring the second language.

Also, another constraint, could have been presented during the application of the strategies, because of the possible curricular accomodations presented in the classroom, since, for most of the students, the exercises were very easy but, some others had a few difficulties.

CHAPTER VII

Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations

- It is necessary that teachers comprehend the importance of understanding the interlanguage processes, mainly in terms of transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies; to be able to explain to the students all the involved implications in those processes during the second language learning acquisition. Being able to talk to the students about the topic, help learners to have a broad perspective of their own learning process and that way, reach successfulness.

- Provide students with compensatory and metacognitive strategies that supports them and that guide them through positive results when acquiring newvocabulary, grammar rules, pronunciation of words, and any kind of knowledge related to English as a second language.

- To motivate learners to put into practice plans of action that are ideal for them, to help them to avoid to generalize rules of English grammar or structures, to guess vocabulary meanings or keep making th same mistakes, among others; always taking into account individual preferences and needs.

- To investigate about different strategies that teachers can implement in the classroom to take advantage of positive aspects of interlanguage and overcome the negative effects that may cause difficulties to the process.

- On the other hand, it would be important for the high school to try to implement some more conversasional lessons, along with more satrategies in which the students get to see the importance of the language for their future, and also the teachers should find the right methods to motivate the students.

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Annexes.

Annex I. Diagnostic Questionnaire

The following questionnaire pretends to collect information about your personal perspectives about the process of learning English, taking into account your Spanish previous knowledge, and find out in what way it interferes the process. The answers you provide are going to be used as important information for the Seminar I Course, of Universidad Latina de Costa Rica.

1. How often you use English?
   A. Only in classes
   B. Often
   C. Not often

2. When do you think you commit more mistakes in English?
   A. Speaking
   B. Writing

3. When you don't know the meaning of a word in English. Do you associate the meaning buy the similarity of the sounds of words in Spanish and in English?
   A. Yes
   B. No

4. When you are speaking and you forget a grammatical structure in English, do you ever use Spanish structures without realizing it?
   A. Yes
   B. No

5. Do you know about any mistake that you commit with a specific grammatical structure that you keep committing even when you have practiced it many times?
   A. Yes
   B. No

Annex II. Closing Questionnaire.

Please choose the option that you think better answers each of the questions.

Translation
Directions: Translate the following sentences to Spanish.

1) He didn't want to embarrass her with the topic they were talking about.

2) I realized how awesome it is to travel and learn about other cultures around the world.

3) I dreamed becoming a knight someday.

4) I haven't decide whether I go to walk in the forest or stay at home.

5) I love my father.

Vocabulary selection
Directions: Complete the sentence with the right word.

6) He decided not to go any _____. (father/farther).

7) There is a _____ in my jean (hole/whole).

8) Please make sure to _____ a jacket outside (wear/ where).

9) You need _____ for the recipe (flower/ flour).

10) The pain made her cry very _____ (aloud/allowed).

Writing a paragraph
Directions: Answer the following questions, answer should be no less than three lines

MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY
What is your favorite holyday? Why?

If you had the chance to spend a holyday in another country, what country would you visit? Why?

Who would you visit that country with? Why?

What are those important things anyone has to research before visiting a foreign country for the first time? Why?

Sentences rearrangement
Directions: rearrange the following words to create a correct sentence.

1. Ganó el equipo que lo mereció.
   deserved - team – won – that- the – it

   _____

2. Obtienen trabajo las personas que ya tienen muchos años de experiencia laboral.
   already-work-persons-jobs-who-many-get-have-years-of-experience

   _____

3. Pierden peso los que disfrutan de correr.
   like-those-run-weight-who-lose-to

   _____

4. Me duele una muela.
   hurts-tooth-my

   _____

5. El martes 13 de agosto
   the- 13th – tuesday – august

   _____

6. La puerta roja.
   door- the- red

   _____

7. Ella ama las flores amarillas.
   flowers-she-the-loves-yellow-

   _____

8. Fue una fiesta divertida.
   was-party-it-a-funny

   _____

9. Estoy cocinando una cena especial.
   special-I-dinner-am-a-cooking

_____

10. Quiero helado de fresa.
    Strawberry-want-I-ice cream

_____

Vocabulary
Instructions: Select the correct meaning in Spanish of the following words.

1. Advice:
        a. Aviso.
        b. Consejo.
2. Carpet.
        a. Alfombra
        b. Carpeta.
3. Character
        a. Carácter.
        b. Personaje.
4. Commercial.
        a. Comercial.
        b. Anuncio.
5. Deception.
        a. Engaño.
        b. Decepción.
6. Desperado.
        a. Bandido.
        b. Desesperado.
7. Retreat.
        a. Retirar.
        b. Retratar.
8. Letter
        a. Carta.
        b. Letra.
9. Lily.
        a. Lila.
        b. Lirio.
10. Resume.
        a. Reanudar.
        b. Resumir.

Annex III. Assesment Questionnaire.

1. **Memory Game**

Teacher explains the meaning of false cognate words, which refers to a pair of words that seem to be cognates because they have similar sounds or meanings, but they are unrelated. And, the following examples are given: "Carpet" means "alfombra" but is often confused with "carpeta", "embarrassed" means "avergonzado", and it is often confused with "embarazada". Then, students play a memory game with false cognate words.

Resume	Reanudar	Resumir
Summarize	False Cognate Words	Aviso
Advice	Avisar	Ad

Carpet	Alfombra	Carpeta
Folder	Lilac	Lila
Desperado	Bandido	Desperate
Desesperado	⭐	⭐

2. Word order sentences

Student teacher explains basic sentences word order and gives examples. After that, students create their own sentences.

Subject	Verb	Object
I	eat	bread

After that, student teacher explains the adjective placement order, and tells the students that in English, adjectives usually go before the nouns they describe but, in Spanish, adjectives usually come after the noun being described.

Examples are given to the students: I like yellow flowers-Me gustan las floresamarillas.
Finally, students create their own sentences applying the correct rules.

3. Find the mistakes

Students check the e-mail for mistakes (grammar, punctuation, and spelling).

a Read the e-mail. The computer has found ten mistakes. They are either grammar, punctuation, or spelling. Can you correct them?

From: Alessandra [alessandra@andes.com.ar]
To: Daniel [dani2199@yoohoo.com]
Subject: Hi from Argentina

Hi Daniel,

My name's Alessandra. It's an italian name because my grandmother was from Italy, but I'm Argentinian. I live in Mendoza, a big city in the west of the country. I live with my parents and my two brothers. I have 19 years old, and I'm in college. I'm studing computer science. I'm in my first year, and I really like it.

I'm going to tell you about myself. As you can see from the foto, I have long, light brown hair and greens eyes. I wear glasses, but I want to get contact lenses soon.

I think I'm a positive person. I'm pretty outgoing and frendly. My mother says I'm very talkative – I think she mean that I talk too much!

In my free time I love reading and going to the movies. But I dont have much free time becuase I have classes every day, and a lot of work to do even on weekends. I also go to English classes on friday afternoon.

Please write soon and tell me about you and your life.

Best wishes,

Alessandra

4. **Matching. Common Spanish speakers mistakes when learning English.**

   Student teacher explains some common mistakes of Spanish speakers when learning English. After that, students match the explanation of the mistake commited with an example of it.

   a. Forgetting the subject of the sentence.

   b. Adjective placement order.

   c. My, his, her; when talking about body parts.

   d. Showing aggrement or disaggrement.

   e. False cognate words.

   f. Literal translation.

   (   ) My wife is embarrassed, we are having a baby girl. Correct: My wife is pregnant, we are having a baby girl.

   (   ) Incorrect: Anita loves horses, rides her horse every morning. Correct: Anita loves horses, she rides her horse every morning.

   (   ) Incorrect: I am agree. Correct: I agree.

   (   ) Incorrect: I have 15 years old. Correct: Iam 15 years old.

   (   ) Incorrect: I like the house big. Correct: I like the big house.

   (   ) . Incorrect: I brush the hair. Correct: I brush my hair.

5. False cognates.

Students look up the meaning of the following words and create a sentence using each of them.

Contest-Answer- Success-Exit-Factory- Fabric- Reading- Lecture- Bookstore-Library

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____