

Impact of L1 Interference on the Way Advanced EFL Students from Colombian Public  
Universities Use Written Collocations

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### **Dedication**

To God, who allowed me to study this program and who has been my main reason for living and my strength in difficult times. I dedicate each of my achievements and goals to Him because none of this would be possible without His perfect will.

To my parents, Aminta Cordero and Pablo Abreo, for supporting me in every process of my life. For being instruments of peace and wisdom in my life and helping me both financially and emotionally in the culmination of this stage. For being a reflection of God's love.

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### Abstract

**Title:** Impact of L1 Interference on the Way Advanced EFL Students from Colombian Public Universities Use Written Collocations<sup>1\*</sup>

**Author:** Daniela Carolina Abreo Cordero, Fiona Valentina Moreno Martínez, Ruth Daniela Pacheco Díaz<sup>2\*\*</sup>

**Key Words:** First language (L1) interference, collocations, English Language Teaching (ELT) program, writing, English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

#### **Description:**

This study aimed to describe students' perceptions of the impact that their first language (L1) had on their second language (L2) learning process, and to measure students' knowledge and use of English written collocations. The participants were 37 students from 5 public universities in Colombia, who were studying an English Language Teaching (ELT) program; they were expected to have an advanced level. The data collection instruments used were a questionnaire and a test. After collecting the data of the questionnaire, the qualitative information was analyzed through coding and categorizing, and the quantitative part was presented as statistical results. The three main sections obtained were: 1) perceptions towards English-learning contexts; 2) perceptions towards L1 use in the L2 acquisition process; 3) perceptions towards collocations use, instruction and errors. The two sections worked from the test were: L1 influence and use of written collocations. Outcomes showed that students perceive how useful their L1 can be for their L2 learning process, but also how it can affect it. Regarding the test, there was a higher percentage of correct answers (60.5%) in comparison to incorrect ones (39.5%), proving that students have knowledge on collocations, but they need more practice. Also, the type of collocation use could determine the causes of errors since participants had more L1 interference on the multiple-choice activity, but not much in the one where they had to create them from context.

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<sup>1\*</sup>Degree Work

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## Resumen

**Título:** Impacto de la interferencia de la L1 en la forma en que los estudiantes avanzados de EFL de las universidades públicas colombianas utilizan las colocaciones escritas<sup>3\*</sup>

**Autor:** Daniela Carolina Abreo Cordero, Fiona Valentina Moreno Martínez, Ruth Daniela Pacheco Díaz<sup>4\*\*</sup>

**Palabras Clave:** Interferencia de la primera lengua, colocaciones, programa de enseñanza del idioma inglés, escritura, inglés como lengua extranjera.

### Descripción:

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo describir las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el impacto que tiene su primera lengua (L1) en su proceso de aprendizaje de la segunda lengua (L2) por medio de la medición del conocimiento y uso de las colocaciones escritas en inglés. Los participantes fueron 37 estudiantes de 5 universidades públicas de Colombia, del programa Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés (ELT); se esperaba que tuvieran un nivel avanzado. Los instrumentos de recolección de datos utilizados fueron un cuestionario y un test. La información del cuestionario se analizó cualitativamente a través de la codificación y categorización, y cuantitativamente con resultados estadísticos. Los tres apartados principales obtenidos fueron: 1) percepciones hacia los contextos de aprendizaje del inglés; 2) percepciones hacia el uso de la L1 en el proceso de adquisición de la L2; 3) percepciones hacia el uso de colocaciones, instrucción y errores. Las dos secciones del test fueron: Influencia de la L1 y uso de colocaciones escritas. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes perciben lo útil que puede ser su L1 para su proceso de aprendizaje de la L2, y cómo este puede afectarles. En la prueba, hubo un mayor porcentaje de respuestas correctas (60,5%) en comparación con las incorrectas (39,5%), lo que demuestra que los estudiantes tienen conocimientos sobre las colocaciones, pero necesitan más práctica. Además, el tipo de uso de las colocaciones puede determinar las causas de los errores, dado que los participantes tenían más interferencias de L1 en la actividad de elección múltiple, pero menos en las que tenían que crear a partir del contexto.

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## Resumo

**Título:** Impacto da Interferência L1 no Modo como os Estudantes de EFL Avançados de Universidades Públicas Colombianas Utilizam Colocações Escritas<sup>5\*</sup>

**Autor:** Daniela Carolina Abreo Cordero, Fiona Valentina Moreno Martínez, Ruth Daniela Pacheco Díaz<sup>6</sup>

**Palavras-chave:** Interferência na primeira língua, colocações, programa de ensino da língua inglesa, escritura, inglês como língua estrangeira.

### Descrição:

Este estudo visou descrever a percepção dos estudantes sobre o impacto que a sua primeira língua (L1) tem no seu processo de aprendizagem da segunda língua (L2), e medir os conhecimentos dos estudantes e a utilização de colocações escritas em inglês. Os participantes foram 37 estudantes de 5 universidades públicas da Colômbia, que estão a estudar um programa de Ensino da Língua Inglesa (ELT, pela sigla inglesa); espera-se que tenham um nível avançado. Os instrumentos de recolha de dados foram um questionário e um teste. A informação do questionário foi analisada qualitativamente através de codificação e categorização, e quantitativamente com resultados estatísticos. As três secções principais obtidas foram: 1) percepções relativas aos contextos de aprendizagem da língua inglesa; 2) percepções relativas à utilização de L1 no processo de aquisição de L2; 3) percepções relativas à utilização de colocações, instruções e erros. As duas secções trabalhadas a partir do teste foram: L1 influência e utilização de colocações escritas. Os resultados mostraram que os estudantes percebem quão útil o seu L1 pode ser para o seu processo de aprendizagem de L2, mas também como pode afetá-lo. Quanto ao teste, houve uma percentagem mais elevada de respostas corretas (60,5%) em comparação com as incorretas (39,5%), provando que os estudantes têm conhecimentos sobre colocações, mas precisam de mais prática. Além disso, o tipo de utilização da colocação pode determinar as causas dos erros, uma vez que os participantes tiveram mais interferência L1 na atividade de escolha múltipla, mas não muito na atividade em que tiveram de os criar a partir do contexto.

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### Introduction

Since Michael Lewis proposed the Lexical Approach theory, the importance of collocations began to be a topic of discussion among EFL/ESL educators. As a matter of fact, it has been informed that research on collocations was initially conducted by in-service teachers, who suggested that it was important to teach collocations in ESL/EFL classrooms (Hsu, 2007, as cited in Modarresi, 2009). As a result, there have been many researchers who have conducted studies regarding lexical collocational errors. A case in point is a research conducted by Said (2012), who found that even advanced EFL students have problems using collocations since they are not familiar with the academic resources they can use to find information about them. Similarly, Yuniswati (2017) described, identified, and classified the students' lexical errors resulting from their L1 interference in their written compositions. The findings revealed that from 78 written compositions, 586 grammatical and lexical errors were found resulting from L1 interference, and consisted of mistakes in word choice, spelling and literal translation.

This paper stands for earlier studies carried out in courses such as *Foundations of Research, Academic Writing II, Qualitative Methods and Quantitative Methods*, and it aims at presenting recent findings. The main purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of students from an English teaching program towards first language (L1) interference their second language (L2) written collocations use. Also, it focused on determining the impact of learners' L1 has on their use of English written collocations using a mixed method approach. Therefore, students' perspectives were analyzed qualitatively with a questionnaire while the way they used collocations was analyzed quantitatively through a test.

In this latest version of the study, the same instruments and methods were used to analyze the data. As for the participants, students from different public universities of Colombia who are in the Foreign Languages Teaching program were selected to gather a wider range of data and obtain more accurate and authentic results.

This document is divided into four main sections. In the first one, the problem background is presented, which is developed from a general to a specific perspective giving rise to the research hypothesis. Besides, the research justification is introduced as well as the general and the specific objectives. The second section refers to the body of work in which the referential framework is discussed. This section is composed by theoretical framework, literature review and legal framework. First, the theoretical framework presents the most relevant research that has been done in this field of study. Afterwards, the literature review is classified into four important categories: L1 interference in L2, EFL writing, Lexical Approach, and Collocations in writing. Lastly, the legal framework is displayed in this section as a requirement of the Ministry of Education of Colombia, which follows the qualifications suggested in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to provide a general view of the competencies students are expected to have in the B2 and C1 levels regarding writing and collocations. In the same section, the research design, and the description and selection of the sample are disclosed. Besides, the instruments used to collect the information and the resource techniques based on the design of this project are provided. Additionally, the results obtained according to each collection instrument and their respective discussion are presented. Finally, in the third section, the paper

concludes with the conclusions, and in the fourth, recommendations for future research are given.

### **Problem Background**

Many studies on L1 interference in lexical collocation errors made in EFL written compositions have been conducted in recent years in many parts of the world, such as Turkey, Germany, Russia, and China. A case in point is Denizer (2017), who conducted a study in which he discussed whether L1 has a negative effect on learners in reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills, and on which of these skills L1 interferes the most. Data was collected through a questionnaire which consisted of 4-point Likert-scale questions and an open-ended question at the end. The questionnaire was randomly applied to 20 volunteer students in Uludag University and the participants' age ranged from 18 to 40 being 23 the mean age. The findings showed that in English as a Second Language (ESL), grammar was one of the most difficult aspects of language for the participants; in particular, English determiners, articles and tenses were the ones with frequent sources of problems. When it comes to skills, speaking was negatively influenced the most. This study is relevant for the present research as it contained valuable theoretical support regarding mother tongue interference in second language learning and portrayed the effects that learners' L1 has on their skills and performance while learning English as a second language.

Another case in point is Hajebi's (2017) study, which was a quantitative research article in which collocations, language proficiency and its interaction with the first language of the participants were analyzed. For this study, the researcher worked with fifty-seven Persian BA

students from an Iranian University. Aiming to answer the research questions, the author examined the performance of the participants in two tests; first, they took the Michigan test to establish their English level; second, a multiple-choice collocation test was applied by the authors, who proposed to implement it. Results indicated that there was a relationship between the learners' proficiency level in the second language and their usage of collocations. Furthermore, it displayed a greater probability that the collocation was used correctly in L2 when there is L1 positive transfer. The focus on collocation usage related to L1 transfer was of relevance to this mixed research study as it explored the positive and negative influence of L1 in the L2 lexical category.

A final example is the research study conducted by Uçar and Yükseli r (2015), who carried out an experimental research in which the control and experiment groups had 15 participants each. The authors used a collocation test to pre-test students' knowledge as well as corpus-based activities to teach verb-noun collocations to the experimental group while the ones in the control group were taught in a traditional way, and a post-test that could determine students' proficiency after the collocation instruction. For the pre-tests, there were not many differences found between the competence of participants from each group. In the case of the post-test, it could be determined that students from the experimental group had a higher proficiency in collocation use by receiving corpus-based instructions. Although this research does not provide exact information on the problems students have on the use of each type of collocations and the causes of the errors, the test that they used for the pretest was useful to determine the results of the present research.

Therefore, there are two gaps in the field of L1 interference in English written collocations. First, despite the fact that several studies on lexical collocation errors influenced by the L1 have been conducted recently, only one study was found in Colombia in the Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana (UNICA) (López, 2011). However, no research or studies on this topic have been conducted in the Colombian public university context. Thus, more research related to the influence that students' L1 has on their L2 written collocation use is needed, especially in a Colombian educational context, to have more conceptual support in this field.

Second, from the studies mentioned above, EFL advanced level Colombian foreign languages students still have problems with lexical collocations caused by their L1 interference. Since advanced learners aspire to be future teachers and must generally publish academic papers, they are expected not to make collocation errors. In this case, according to EFL teachers and students' perceptions, these types of errors can limit the professional and academic goals that students want to achieve since, on the one hand, it is expected that they, being at advanced levels of English, do not make errors that should be improved in the learning process; and on the other hand, as expressed by Adelian, Nemati & Funami (2015), knowledge about collocations is closely linked to language proficiency and if students aspire to be future English teachers, they are expected to have a good command of this language.

As proven by several researchers (Farghal & Al-Hamly, 2007; Diah, 2002; Almacioğlu, 2018), advanced EFL students still make errors in the use of English written collocations as a result of their L1 interference. Thus, this project aims at answering two different questions: to

what extent does the L1 (Spanish) interfere with the use of written collocations in university students from the Foreign Languages Teaching Program at different public universities in Colombia? and how do students perceive the L1 interference on the L2 and the written collocation errors based on their language learning process?

This study proposes to verify a correlational hypothesis. This type of hypothesis specifies the relations between two or more variables and corresponds to the correlational studies (Hernandez, Fernandez, & Baptista, 2013). The hypotheses that will be proved are the following:

- 1) If there is an observable L1 interference, it can be reasonably expected that this will affect the use of collocations in L2.
- 2) Student's perceptions towards the impact of the L1 interference with the use of written collocations on the L2 are mostly positive.

In the hypothesis presented, there are two variables, a dependent (L2 collocation use), and an independent variable (students' L1 interference). For the purpose of knowing the impact of the independent variable on the dependent one, a questionnaire and a test will be carried out to analyze the data qualitatively and quantitatively.

### **Research Justification**

English teaching in Colombia has been changing and spreading through the years because of the needs that people have due to globalization processes (González, 2010). With the rise of English as the lingua franca of the world, the demand for the teaching of English in Colombia has grown considerably and it has also undergone many changes as it is not used to be as it was 10 or more years ago.

With regard to English in schools, the Colombian government has established a principal goal of preparing students, with the ultimate purpose of having eleventh graders with a B1 English level of communicative competence based on the CEFR (Del Toro et al., 2019). Additionally, one of the main goals of universities is to provide students with English courses due to the demand for this language knowledge. Thus, the English Language Teaching (ELT) university programs have an interest in preparing proficient and competent teachers for the current and upcoming generations who will face a different world, with an English requirement to perform appropriately in their studies and jobs.

This project has a considerable importance as it is expected to make a significant contribution in the field of ELT programs on the preparation of students' written collocations. It is a fact that interlinguistic errors are expected in students' written compositions, as stated by Phuket & Othman (2015), "When encountering a new language, people tend to make, consciously or unconsciously, a connection between what they already know and what they do not know" (p. 1). Thus, this project has two main purposes, thought for contexts where the L1 of students is Spanish.

Firstly, it will be used to inform professors about the high frequency with which lexical errors are made by students and how this can affect their language competence (Llach, 2007, p. 64). Apart from informing professors, the second purpose is to encourage teachers to implement strategies to develop students' knowledge and competence in English written collocations. As the study will examine the perceptions and competencies of EFL students from different universities in Colombia, its results can help professors so that they can design their own strategies.

Finally, it is important to mention that as there are few studies that have been carried out in Colombia, and there is no register of studies conducted in Colombian public universities, this research project provides a significant contribution to the public university context of the country, which consequently, can be taken to do further research on the domain.

## **1. Objectives**

### **1.1 General Objective**

To analyze the impact of students' first language in the use of written collocations of advanced students from foreign language teaching programs in different public universities of Colombia by identifying their perceptions towards this phenomenon.

### **1.2 Specific Objectives**

- To identify student's perceptions of the impact that their L1 has on their L2 learning process, and of their English written collocation knowledge through a questionnaire, analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.
- To measure the use of collocations through a Collocation Test adapted from authors such as Denizer (2017), Hajebi (2017) and Ucar & Yukselir (2015), carried out by students from a general and quantitative perspective.

## **2. Body of Work**

### **2.1 Referential Framework**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been informed by three main approaches: the linguistic, psycholinguistic, and social. These views provide different explanations about what is learned, as well as how and why some learners are more successful than others (Saville and Troike, 2006). Despite the remarkable differences, all three perspectives agree that second language learners rely considerably on their previous knowledge of the first language.

As a matter of fact, learners often transfer linguistic knowledge from their L1 to facilitate the learning of a new language (Hajebi, 2017). However, this transfer sometimes ends up being negative, for it interferes in learners' L2 proficiency in speaking and writing (Forteza and Korneeva, 2017), being the latter the focus of this research.

Even though Jarvis and Pavlenko stated that L1 interference can occur in nine linguistic aspects such as morphology, lexis, syntax, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, phonology, orthographic, semantic, and discourse (as cited in Dissington, 2018, p. 27), different other researchers have concluded that the most common errors found in writing are lexical (Farghal and Al-Hamly, 2007; Farrokh, 2012; Uçar and Yükseli r, 2015). In fact, one of the most challenging parts of L2 writing, regarding lexis, is making combinations of words. This combination of words refers to the term “collocations”, which is defined by Jiang and Yamashita (2010) as “multiword units

that consist primarily of open class items, such as heavy traffic, strong tea, and kill time, that may share certain characteristics with formulas” (p. 649). That is, a meaningful group of words that co-occur frequently in language use.

As collocation errors in writing caused by learners’ mother tongue interference is a problem in the acquisition of a foreign language, there is a need to make further investigation on this topic so as to know the reason why students make these errors, and which are the most common ones. Then, the purpose of this research project is to present the process of the study, the data instruments used, the participants, the qualitative analysis of the data collected, and the results. However, this study is limited since it will not have any pedagogical strategies for teachers to use in their English classes, and it does not go further on the different causes of collocation errors.

## **Literature Review**

### ***L1 Interference in L2***

It has been demonstrated that students use their L1 Linguistic knowledge when they are learning a L2 to facilitate and speed up this process (Lopez, 2011; Phoocharoensil, 2013; Dissington, 2018). As a matter of fact, Brown claims that in the first stages of learning an L2, the L1 is the only previous linguistic source from which the learner can draw since, at this moment of the process, the learner is just starting to be familiar with the L2 (as cited in Darus & Ching, 2009). In this process, learners create their own interlanguage, which is “...a separated linguistic system evidenced when adult L2 learners attempt to express meaning in a language they are in the process of learning” (Selinker, as cited in Tarone, 2012, p. 747). In other words,

interlanguage is present in students' second language acquisition (SLA) process, and it functions as a bridge between learners' L1 and L2.

In the interlanguage process, students transfer linguistic aspects such as grammar structures, lexis, syntax, semantics, spelling, morphology, and pronunciation from their L1 to their L2; this is called language transfer (Lado, as cited in Gass and Selinker, 2001, p. 89). Some authors have agreed that L1 transfer in L2 has a double-sided effect caused by the learners' need to employ their L1 linguistic knowledge in their L2 production (Denizer, 2017; López, 2011; Yuniswati, 2017). This language transfer effect might be positive or negative depending on the usage (Saville-Troike, 2006, p.19). Therefore, when students transfer a structure from their L1 into their L2 learning process successfully, it is called positive transfer; on the contrary, if this transfer brings about some negative effects or errors on learners' L2 output, it is called negative transfer or interference (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 19). Several authors have concluded that negative transfer or interference is a result of the inaccurate connection between the learners' native language and their target one, which can be made consciously or unconsciously (Cabrera et al., 2014; Darus & Ching 2009; Denizer, 2017; Dissington, 2018; Farghal & Al-Hamly, 2007; Forteza & Korneeva, 2017; Lopez 2011; Omar, 2018; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Yuniswati, 2017). Hence, the focus of this research project is on negative transfer or interference found in students' writing production.

### ***EFL Writing***

Since English conveys a large variety of linguistic components, the writing production of this language is a crucial as well as a complex skill, especially for non-native speakers of English

in both professional and educational contexts. Indeed, among the four language skills (writing, speaking, listening, and reading), writing is one of the most challenging for EFL learners to develop and there are some reasons in which it can be demonstrated. One of them is that writing includes the development of thoughts, the apprehension of cognitive knowledge, and of its social performance (József, 2001, p. 1). Another reason is that this skill requires formal instruction since it is not learned naturally (Cabrera et al., 2014, p. 41). In this sense, it is noticeable that writing is not only putting words on paper, but implementing cohesive statements produced in a general or specific context and learned in a formal academic one.

Similarly, there is another important reason why students present more problems in EFL writing than in other skills. According to Cumming (2001), a cause for this sense of complexity might be because effective writing needs structured disciplines such as syntax, morphology, lexis, and a meaningful instruction over those traditional forms and over the relation present between the text genres (as cited in Phuket and Othman, 2015, p. 101). For instance, some challenges that students face when developing foreign language writing, according to Benson and Heidish (1995), are producing grammar structures, expressing their ideas properly, and using accurate writing techniques; these difficulties occur mostly due to L1 interference and cultural differences (as cited in Mohamed and Zouaoui, 2014). Furthermore, Hadifield discusses three problems that students have when they are writing. Firstly, students are not aware of the discourse community they are writing to since their readers are not present while they are doing this activity, which is different from speaking. Secondly, learners find it difficult to understand the complexity of the type of language register required in writing as it must be more formal than

in speaking. Thirdly, students struggle with the organization of ideas intended for making their compositions coherent (as cited in Mohamed and Zouaoui, 2014). Numerous researchers such as Alonso (1997), Amiri (2017), Bahardoust (2012), Hajebi (2017), Yuniswati (2017) Cabrera et al. (2014), Denizer (2017) have studied in detail the problems students have in EFL writing regarding L1 interference, and they have concluded that students often commit errors mostly in lexis production, which is discussed in the following section.

### ***Lexical Approach***

In the vocabulary construction process in a second language within the linguistic field, the lexical aspect plays an important role in SLA for learners use it to improve comprehension and production of their listening, writing, speaking, and reading skills (Abdelaziz, 2013). However, lexis can sometimes cause difficulties in students' EFL writing compositions since the lexical patterns are unmethodical and unconventional (James as cited in Kaweera, 2013); that is, it is not possible for lexis to be generalized into a particular rule (Kaweera, 2013). In this sense, the Lexical Approach (LA), was developed to identify the main lexical errors, their causes, and their usefulness for students to improve their lexical competence. This approach was first introduced by Michael Lewis as a technique to teach a foreign language and aims at developing learners' L2 competence through lexis and combinations of words as well as identifying grammatical patterns of language (Abdul, 2016). Additionally, Lewis (1997) provided a categorization of lexical items, which are words (e.g. house, plants), "polywords" (e.g. to be honest, other way round), "collocations or word partnership" (e.g. I'll let you know, May I go to the bathroom?), "institutionalized utterances and sentences frames and heads" (e.g. The main

problem was... / The purpose of the project is...) and “text frames” (e.g. First... , Second... , Third...) (as cited in Moudraia, 2001, para. 4). Over the years the LA has been a topic of interest in SLA research as an alternative to grammar-based approaches (Moudraia, 2001). It is then necessary to bear in mind that while L2 learners are constructing their interlanguage, lexical errors are made, thus, these lexical errors are considered to be an important tool for teaching writing since they are often used to analyze the learners’ proficiency in English skills although this belief has not been studied in detail (Llanch, 2007, p. 64).

The challenges resulting from the use of lexis in written production have been the target of research. For instance, Liu analyzes four causes of the errors when using collocations in writing (as cited in Farrokh, 2012). First, *lack of collocational concept* in which students only get the isolated meaning of a word, but they are not able to produce any collocation; that is, they do not know how to make combinations of words. Second, *direct translation* is reflected in some EFL learners when they rely on the literal translation of the words for collocation production (e.g., I have 18 years old instead of I am 18 years old). Third, *ignorance of rule restrictions* in which students generate grammatically incorrect collocations since they are not familiar with their limitations; for example, students write *few money* instead of *little money*. Fourth, *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*, many students believe that some words have a limited potential; therefore, they do not realize that there is a wide range of collocational possibilities of those words. For instance, with the verb *to save*, it could be said that most students know the collocation *to save a person*, but few students produce the collocation *to save time* (as cited in Farrokh, 2012, p. 63). In this respect, many researchers have concluded that lexical collocation

errors are part of written compositions of L2 learners as part of their process of acquiring the target language (TL) (Farghal & Al-Hamly, 2007; Almacioğlu 2018; Diah, 2002).

### *Collocations in Writing*

To define collocations, there will be taken into consideration concepts provided by researchers such as Hoey (2005) and McCarten (2007). According to Hoey (2005) collocations are "the relationship that a lexical item has with items that appear with greater than random probability in its textual context" (as cited in Luzon, 2011, p. 78). This definition proves that collocations are usually used to make a connection between lexical items in written context. Furthermore, McCarten (2007) defines collocation as "two or more words which are used together" (as cited in Adelian, Nemati & Funami, 2015, p. 976). Considering these two definitions, collocations can be defined as specific words that relate to other specific words to form a fixed relationship. Benson et al. classified collocations into seven categories (as cited in Hajebi, 2017, p. 144):

1. *verb (donation, creation or activation) + noun (pronoun or prep. phrase)*: apologize for the incident, write about the trip.
2. *noun + noun*: a cream cheese, bus station, action movie, birth certificate.
3. *adjective + noun*: express train, rich vocabulary, little girl.
4. *verb + adverb*: play fast, sleep peacefully, listen patiently, speak wisely.
5. *noun + verb*: water freezes, lions roar, time comes.
6. *adverb + adjective*: highly recommended, perfectly balanced, deeply ashamed.

7. *verb (meaning, eradication or nullification) + noun*: save time, make progress, come prepared.

Since there are many types of collocations, learners usually face some difficulties at the moment of using them in their writing process such as “employing the correct collocation”, “creatively constructing an erroneous collocation based on his interim knowledge of the foreign language”, or “coining a wrong collocation by falling back on his/her knowledge of L1” (Farghal and Al-Hamly, 2007, p. 84). In regard to the causes of these errors, according to Hill (2000), students often tend to generalize any rule, or they are not able to make their own translation in L1 because they do not find an equivalent to the collocation in their native language (as cited in Devici, 2004). Additionally, József (2001) and Farghal, and Al-Hamly (2007) have concluded that some of these problems are caused by L1 interference in the writing process of EFL learners when using collocations. Farghal and Al-Hamly (2007), who conducted a study with the aim of analyzing lexical collocations in written compositions by EFL students to recognize the difficulties that may arise in their production when learning an L2. The participants in this study were 100 students with a high English language proficiency who were studying the subject “Essay writing” at the University of Kuwait. The findings demonstrated that most of the errors were committed in verbal (64%) and adjectival categories (23%). Similarly, a conceptual research on Indonesian EFL learners made by Diah (2002) demonstrated that the three main errors that students make regarding L1 interference are transfer of L1 verbs (verbs + noun collocation); transfer of L1 adjectives that collocate with nouns; and transfer of L1 adverbs in most adverb + adjective combinations. Similarly, Almacioğlu (2018) concluded in his study on

52 Turkish university students that they have more difficulties with adjective-noun collocations as well as they are not aware of the disparity between adverbs and adjectives. In conclusion, the literature tends to demonstrate that EFL learners make collocation errors with verbal and adjectival categories.

### **Legal Framework**

Colombian public education, according to the Article 11 of the Ley General de Educación, is divided into three levels: i) el preescolar; ii) la educación básica y iii) la educación media. The first level includes three- to five-year-old students. In the second level, grades from first to fifth are part of it. Lastly, the third level covers four grades, from sixth to ninth. In addition to these three levels, there is a fourth one that has grades tenth and eleventh; however, some schools may offer grade twelfth. Once students finish high school, they have the possibility of studying at higher education institutions. This level of education is regulated by Ley 30 de 1992, which claims that higher education is an ongoing process that gives a possibility of developing the potential of the human being in a holistic form (MEN, 2014, p.7)

Regarding the acquisition of a foreign language, the Colombian government determined that it was necessary “to develop the capacity of its citizens to be fluent in at least one foreign language” (MEN, 2005, Bases para una nación bilingüe y competitiva, para. 1). Consequently, to accomplish this objective, Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN) implemented the suggested curriculum for English teaching as it mainly focuses on generating educational equality and considering the teaching and the learning of English as a tool that strengthens primary and

secondary students' English learning development (MEN, 2017). Additionally, the MEN enforced the program called *Colombia Bilingüe Program* that aims at implementing English in all Colombian schools aiming at fostering its use (MEN, 2016, p. 14).

Finally, the legal framework based on the Common European Framework of Reference is presented to provide a general view of the competences that students are expected to have in B2 and C1 levels regarding writing and collocations. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (2020), within the linguistic competence, it is found *the vocabulary range* and *the vocabulary control*. The former includes the reception and production of the language. In this vein, there are some indicators of what is expected from the learners from A1 level to C2. Given that, within B2 level, it is demanded that the learner “can produce appropriate collocations of many words/signs in most contexts fairly systematically” (p. 131). Hence, this is important since collocations play a fundamental role in the transition process “from a basic repertoire of words/signs and phrases to a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms” (p. 131). In contrast, the vocabulary control is focused on the learner's capacity to choose the suitable expression from their whole repertoire. Regarding this, it should be mentioned that “as competence increases, such ability is driven increasingly by association in the form of collocations and lexical chunks, with one expression triggering another” (p. 132). Besides that, in terms of writing, it is noted that within the accuracy aspect in the C1 level, the learner constantly maintains a high level of grammatical precision; grammar, collocations, and idioms errors are

rare. Although it might be inferred that the student is allowed to make certain mistakes on the collocations part, they must have minor errors but no significant ones.

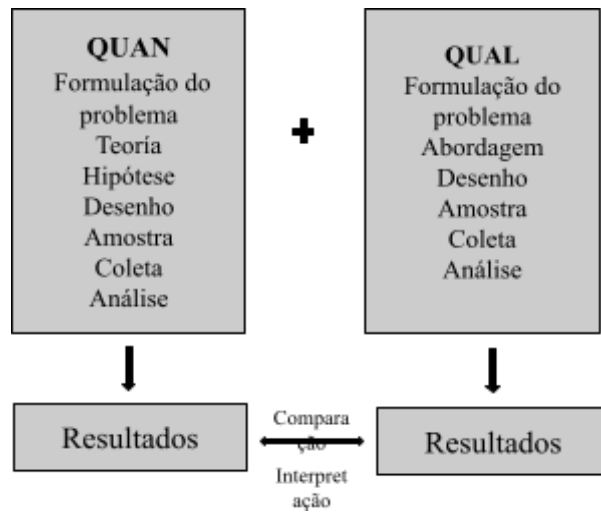
**2.1.1 Methodology**

**Research Design**

Regarding the design of this study, a mixed method approach was selected. Creswell (2015) stated that this type of method embraces both qualitative and quantitative forms, and draws conclusions based on the collected information (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Similarly, Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2013, p. 573) describe the process of conducting a mixed method research in the graphic shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Concomitant Triangulation Design (DITRIAC).*



Note. From *Metodologia de Pesquisa* (5th ed., p. 573), by R. Hernández, C. Fernández, & M. P. Baptista, 2013, Porto Alegre: Penso. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill/Interamericana Editores, S.A. de C.V., México.

As for the types of mixed method design, after a process of development and adaptation, Creswell and Clark (2018) provided three major typologies for core mixed method design that are convergent, exploratory sequential, and explanatory sequential designs. However, this research study focused on the convergent design, which is carried out to collect two independent sets of data, quantitative and qualitative, to analyze them and compare the results obtained (Creswell and Clark, 2018). For this design, Creswell and Clark (2018) provide four main steps to follow. The first step is to gather the qualitative and quantitative data needed for the purpose of the research, although they are collected together, they function independently. The second step is to analyze the two sets of data separately using the corresponding quantitative and qualitative instruments. The third step is to combine both databases through a comparative table or discussion, or by reconstructing the results to make the analysis easier. Lastly, the fourth step involves interpretation of the data to determine to what extent the two independent sets of results coincide or differ from each other based on the research objectives. In this regard, this design highlighted three stages of analysis: the qualitative phase, the quantitative phase, and the integration phase.

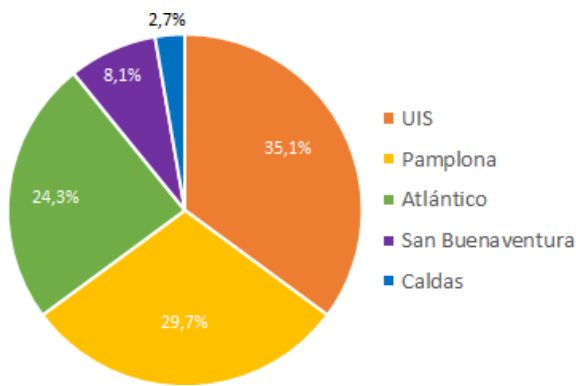
### **Sample Description and Selection**

The population considered in this study were students from public universities in Colombia which had the B.A. in Foreign Languages Teaching Program. Taking this into account,

the resulting sample was 37 students in total from 5 public universities which are: Universidad de Atlántico, Universidad de Buenaventura, Universidad de Caldas, Universidad Industrial de Santander and Universidad de Pamplona (see Figure 2). The students who participated in this study range from 4th to 10th semester, however, most of them are taking the seventh semester onwards. (see Figure 3).

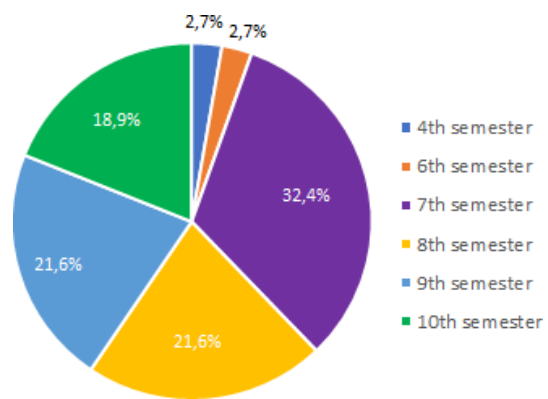
**Figure 2**

*Participating Universities*



**Figure 3**

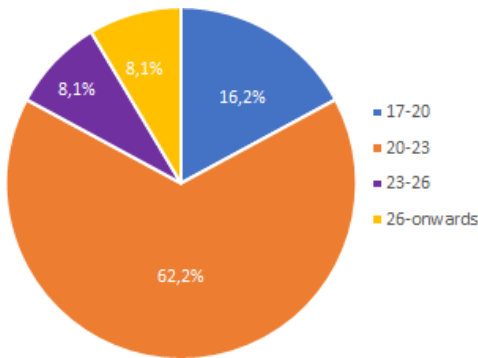
*Semester of the students*



Regarding the age of the subjects, 62% of them affirmed to have an age range between 20 to 23 years old (See Figure 4). Also, in terms of sex, 73% of the participants are female (see Figure 5). Majority of the students (62,2%) indicated that they are currently focused on their studies, while 37% are working as teachers as well (see Figure 6). With respect to their English learning process, most of them have been studying English for 4 years or more, since 29,7% answered they have been studying it for 4 to 6 years and 45,9% have been learning this language for more than 6 years (see Figure 7).

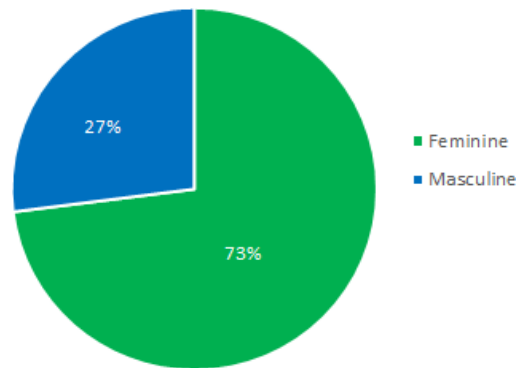
**Figure 4**

*Age of the students*



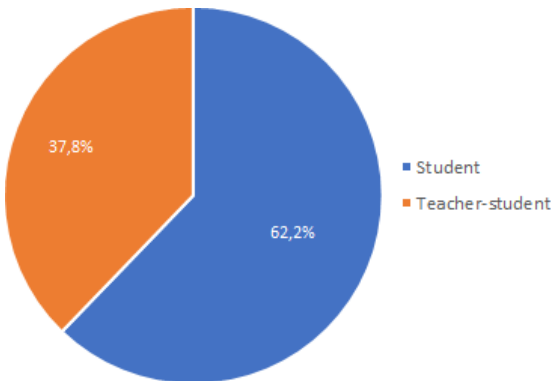
**Figure 5**

*Sex of the students*



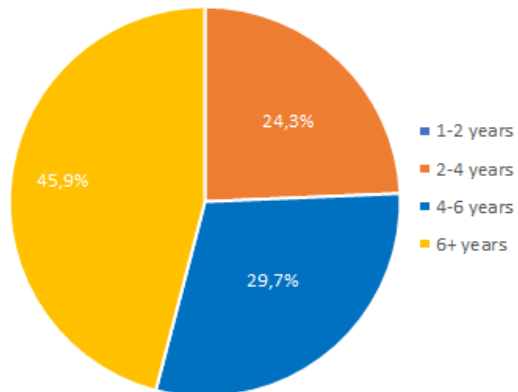
**Figure 6**

*Occupation of the students*



**Figure 7**

*Time spent learning English*

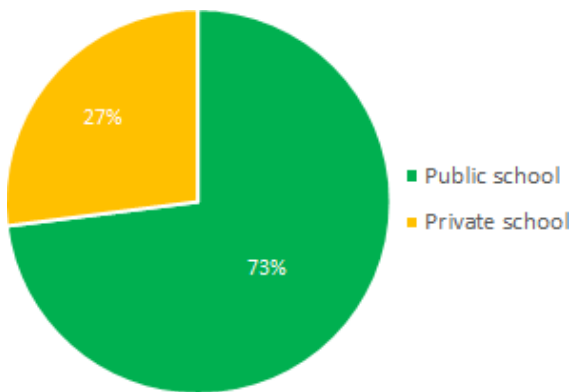


In addition, with the intention to know a little more about their previous studies, they were asked if they had studied in a public or private school, to which most of the participants, specifically 73% of them responded that they had studied in a public one (see Figure 8). Finally,

they were also asked if they had ever lived in an English-speaking country, to which 91,9% of the students responded that they have never lived in an English-speaking context and only 8,1% answered affirmatively (see Figure 9).

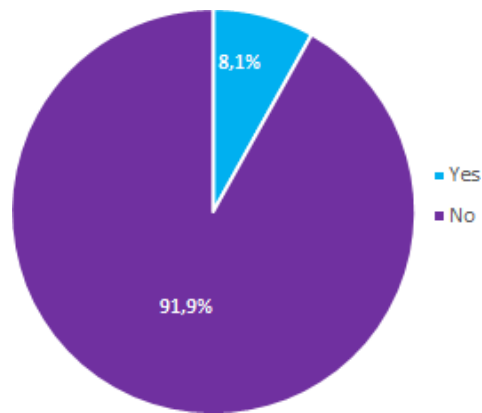
**Figure 8**

*Private or public school*



**Figure 9**

*Living in an English-speaking context*



The type of sampling used for this research is convenience or opportunity sampling. This sort of sampling is one of the most frequently used in L2 research in which the sample is chosen intentionally. In this sense, the participants must meet some characteristics or criteria for the purpose of the study such as *geographical proximity*, *availability at a certain time*, or *easy accessibility* (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In the present study, the first criterion taken into consideration was that the universities chosen were public universities as Universidad Industrial de Santander since it is an aspect of the research context. The second criterion was based on the fact that for these universities it is mandatory to include the Foreign Languages Teaching program as part of the academic programs that the universities offer. Finally, it is important to

mention that the universities chosen had contact with one of the researchers; this made the selection process more practical and accessible.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The instruments used for this research were:

1) A questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions, five of them open and ten closed, related to participants' background and perceptions towards L1 interference, academic writing competence and L2 written collocations use. According to Brown (2001), questionnaires include statements or questions that participants can either respond to by writing or selecting among different options so as to determine their opinions and perspectives of a specific topic. As for questionnaire types, Brown (2001) provides the *self-administered questionnaires* and the *group-administered questionnaires*. For global health issues due to COVID-19, as well as for functionality, the type of questionnaire chosen was the self-administered one as it is, according to Brown (2001), "usually mailed out and filled out by the participants in their own homes or offices and then returned by mail" (p. 4). Therefore, participants were sent an email containing a Google form that included both the open and the closed questions. Within the same email, a consent form was included so that participants knew the purpose of the study, the time they needed to complete it, and the instructions they had to follow (see Appendix A).

2) A test was adapted from different tests already designed by researchers such as Denizer (2017), Hajebi (2017) and Ucar & Yukselir (2015), with the purpose of measuring participants' collocations use. The reason for choosing this instrument was because "tests provide a way to assess subjects' knowledge and capacity to apply this knowledge to new

situations” (Frechtling, 2002, p. 55). The test was then divided into three parts, which were *demographic information, L1 interference, and collocation use*. In the first section students had to provide personal information such as their age, gender, occupation and time learning English in order to relate their level to their use of collocations. The second section included four Likert scale questions in which students had to select the frequency or perceptions they had regarding the influence that their L1 has on their L2 in different situations within their second language acquisition process. The third section included three parts, two of them consisted of multiple-choice questions, and the last one included a gap-fill exercise. In the first two parts students had to select the correct word that best collocated with the word in bold from the sentences stated there, and in the last part, they had to fill in the blanks with the collocations given in a box; in this case, they had to combine the words to form a collocation. Students completed this test in approximately 30 minutes (see Appendix B).

### **Resources and Analysis Techniques**

The analysis techniques developed in this research are based on the convergent design previously described. First, the data was gathered through a questionnaire and a test, and then the analysis process was carried out. In the case of the questionnaire, the questions were open-ended and closed-ended, which resulted in qualitative and quantitative data. On the one hand, the qualitative data was coded and categorized with the purpose of obtaining the main themes from the participants’ answers. Clark and Creswell (2007) briefly explain the meaning and purpose of coding as they state, “Coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that

simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data. Your codes show how you select, separate and sort data to begin an analytic accounting on them” (p. 43). This coding process helped create the following sections, perceptions towards English learning contexts, perception towards L1 use in the L2 acquisition process, and perceptions towards collocations use, instruction and errors. On the contrary, the quantitative data included percentages calculated with Microsoft Excel functions, which were eventually graphed to present the information gathered.

Likewise, the quantitative data gathered through the test, which contained closed-ended questions only, went into the same process of analysis as the quantitative information collected in the questionnaire. Participants’ answers from the test were analyzed with the intention of identifying collocation errors. It was possible to determine the number of correct and incorrect answers based on the percentages, with a focus on knowing in which combinations of words students had more errors with, as well as to know the most common cause of those errors.

Finally, the results obtained from the questionnaire and the test were triangulated by comparing and discussing the outcomes, and then, this information was contrasted and supported with the literature review. This triangulation process allowed us to confirm what was planted in the hypothesis.

### ***2.1.2 Results***

As the first data collection instrument analyzed was the questionnaire, the outcomes presented in this part will be about this first tool. The results from the questionnaire were divided into three main sections: 1) perceptions towards English-learning contexts; 2) perceptions

towards L1 use in the L2 acquisition process; 3) perceptions towards collocations use, instruction and errors.

### **Perceptions towards English learning contexts**

#### ***English-speaking context***

After analyzing the answers submitted by the participants in question 5 (see Appendix A), which is related to the influence that English-speaking contexts have on students' English learning process, it was possible to determine different categories (see Figure 10). The first one is about *receptive skills*; 5 students mentioned that their listening skill has improved by having the opportunity of interaction with other English speakers. One of the subjects mentioned, "Listening to native people speaking the language is a great way to perfect our listening". Additionally, some students also affirm that the English-speaking context has helped them boost their *productive skills*. They asserted that they became more fluent after they started consuming more content in English, either written or spoken. Besides, they consider that their academic performance, regarding writing, went to a higher level.

Nevertheless, the English-speaking context did not only influence the language skills of the participants, their *lexical* and *phonological* knowledge was highly influenced as well. The students affirm that when they are exposed to this type of context, they learn new words, and in this way, their vocabulary is expanded, and they could understand the language much better. In addition, they claimed that their pronunciation improved, and they were able to recognize accents in an easier manner.

Furthermore, students wrote about two more aspects, *motivation* and *sociocultural knowledge*. First, regarding motivation, four participants said that they felt motivated when they were in English-speaking contexts as there were many topics of their interest from which they could learn more and expand their knowledge; likewise, they felt motivated when they noticed how their own academic performance had improved. Second, regarding sociocultural knowledge, two students affirmed that this specific context had given them the opportunity of discovering an opposed culture. A participant claimed, “Has influenced a lot because I have been able to know a culture very different from ours”, which shows their emphasis on the importance of knowing a foreign culture. Moreover, there is one more category subtracted from the students’ answers, which has to do with the *decreasing number of mistakes* that students make when transferring words or grammatical structures from their L1 (Spanish) to their L2 (English).

Although most students said that the English-speaking context has influenced positively many linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects, three subjects mentioned that they had *lacked English-speaking contexts* and that this has affected their academic and nonacademic competence in the language. For instance, one student said, “From my point of view, my English has been affected by the lack of English-speaking context because I can’t use my English frequently and it is not useful to me”.

Thus, based on the outcomes, most students affirmed that the English-speaking context has positively influenced their language skills and linguistic knowledge. What’s more, they have felt motivated to keep learning as they note how their academic performance improves. Some other students enjoy learning not only about the language, but about a different culture as well;

and some students claimed that the lack of English-speaking contexts has negatively affected their academic and nonacademic performance.

### Figure 10

#### *English-speaking Context Influence*



#### *Secondary school context*

Students answered question 7 related to their experience with respect to their English classes at school (see Figure 11). From this question, there were a variety of answers which led to creating various categories. The first category has to do with the teaching method that most teachers implemented. Twenty students claimed that their English teachers used a *grammar-translation method*, as their teachers asked them to complete the grammatical exercises from the book and translate some writing works from English to Spanish. The second category is related to the language skills, *receptive and productive*, that their teachers exercised on the students; nine participants wrote about the different listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities that they performed at school.

Another aspect that some students mentioned was about their teachers' didactic strategies. On the one hand, 4 students assured that their classes were *active and dynamic*, with

fun and engaging activities. On the other hand, 4 other students expressed their thoughts about how their teachers gave poor explanations on the class topics and lacked appealing learning activities. Chiefly, those participants referred to their *teachers' lack of pedagogy and didactics of the language*. A student expressed herself by saying, "They lacked pedagogy, passion and foremost content". Besides, 5 participants talked about how their teachers focused mainly on teaching *vocabulary*, and 3 other participants said that they were taught only *basic concepts* of the language.

With respect to teachers' ability in the language, 3 students agreed on the fact that their teachers were *not qualified* to teach the subject. Besides, 2 more students said that they started to learn and study English *on their own*, if they genuinely thought about increasing their language skills. A student who wrote about this said, "I didn't have any qualified English teacher at School. I started learning this language on my own. (Self-taught)".

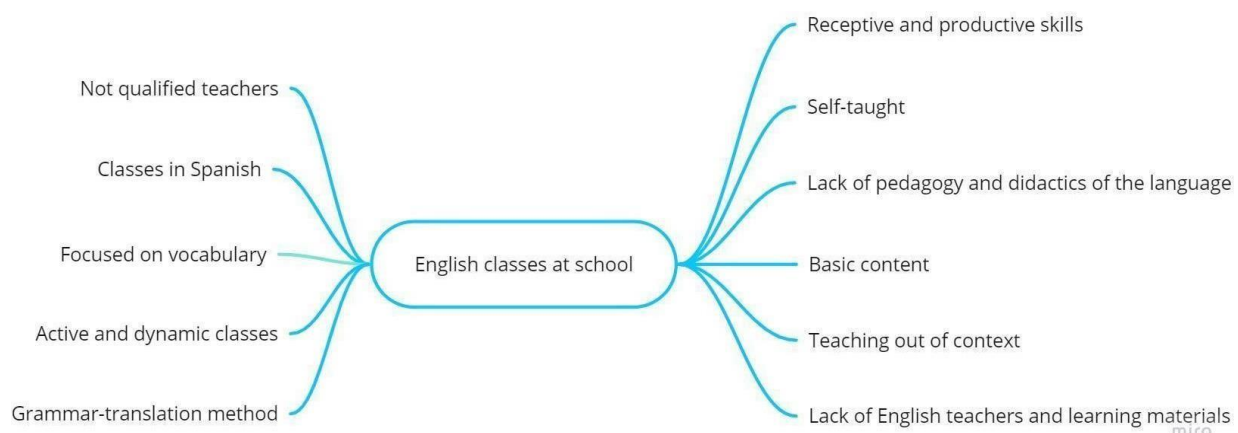
One answer from the questionnaire said the following, "At school, English classes were basic grammar-based lessons taught by a teacher who used to speak in Spanish". This idea was found in the answers of 3 more participants, who emphasized on the fact that their English classes were *taught in Spanish*. Apart from this, 1 student confirmed that the topics of the lessons were *taken out of the context*, which resulted in them memorizing the topics of the class. Lastly, 4 subjects wrote about the *lack of teachers and learning materials* they had at school. One of them said, "I did not take English until last year of high school. Then, I had a really good teacher that taught us the most essential things that we could learn in one scholar year". Another student

also claimed, “half of the time the school lacked English teachers, so there were no classes for many groups”.

Evidently, students’ experiences in terms of their English classes at school were mostly negative as they mentioned that they did not have qualified teachers, their classes were in Spanish, their teachers implemented only one teaching method, and in some cases, the participants did not have English teachers at school. The few positive experiences (receptive and productive skills development, active and dynamic classes) were written by students who studied at private schools.

**Figure 11**

*English Classes at School Experience*



***Academic context: writing strategies***

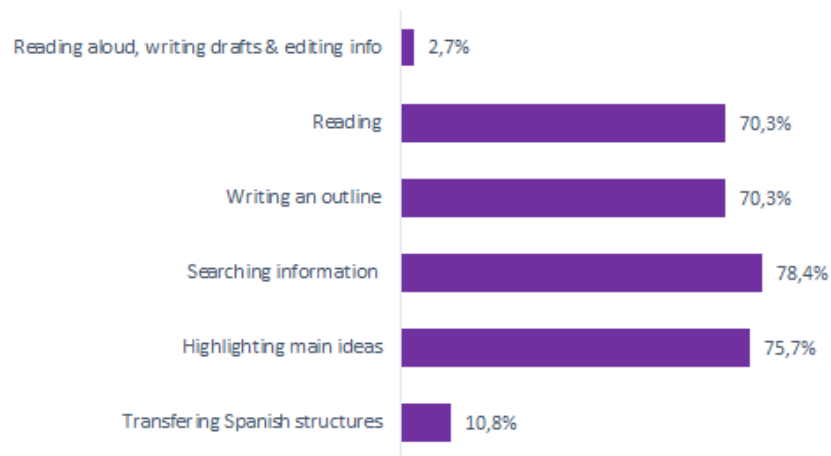
In question 10, students were asked about the writing strategies they use in the academic contexts (see Figure 12). 78,4% of the subjects answered that searching information is the strategy that they prefer to use, and 75,7% students highlight ideas when they write academic texts. Additionally, the same percentage of participants (70,3%) inclined for writing an outline

and reading when they are required to write at university. Not surprisingly, only four students (10,8%) out of the 37 who answered this question, asserted that transferring Spanish structures is their preferred method for writing. Nonetheless, a different answer was submitted by one of the participants, who wrote, “Reading it out loud to see if I missed anything. Using multiple drafts and editing information in or out of them”.

Hence, it is evident that the strategy that students use the least is transferring Spanish structures; this can be a result of the rejection that most of them have towards the grammar-translation method, which shows that in most cases they try to avoid using Spanish.

### Figure 12

#### *Writing Strategies in Academic Contexts*



### Perceptions towards L1 use in the L2 acquisition process

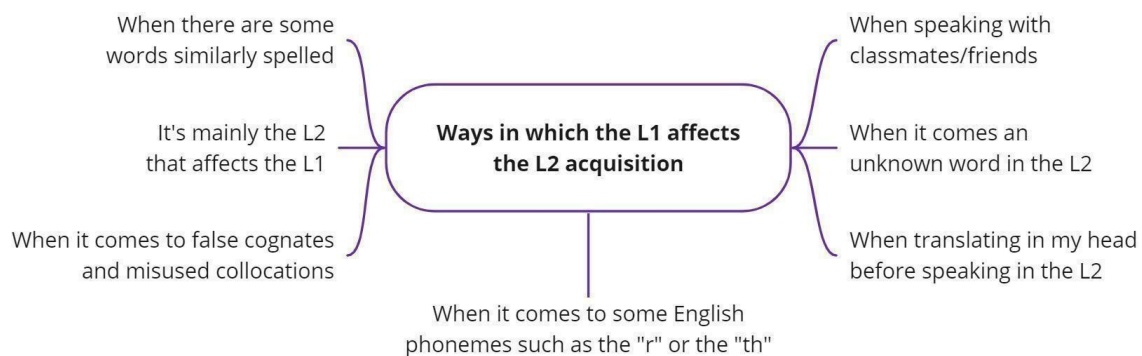
#### *L1 influence in the Second Language Acquisition*

In question number 8 students were asked about their perceptions on the ways they consider the L1 affects the acquisition of their target language (See Figure 13). Due to the fact

that some students had more than one answer, the total number of responses was 42. First of all, out of the 42 responses, 15 indicated that the second language is generally influenced by the L1 when students translate in their head before speaking in their L2. Secondly, 14 responses mentioned that one of the most common ways of interference between one language and the other was when they did not know the word in their L2. Then, 9 responses expressed that this interference is usually evidenced when they speak with friends or classmates. On the other hand, one response pointed out that this negative transfer occurs in some English phonemes that do not exist in Spanish such as the rhotic "r" or the pronunciation of the "th" sound. Additionally, another response mentioned that the L1 affects the L2 when there are some words similarly spelled in the two languages. Another response affirmed that this was also due to false cognates and misused collocations. However, one student stated that it was mainly the L2 that affects the L1 and not the other way around.

**Figure 13**

*L1 influence in the Second Language Acquisition*

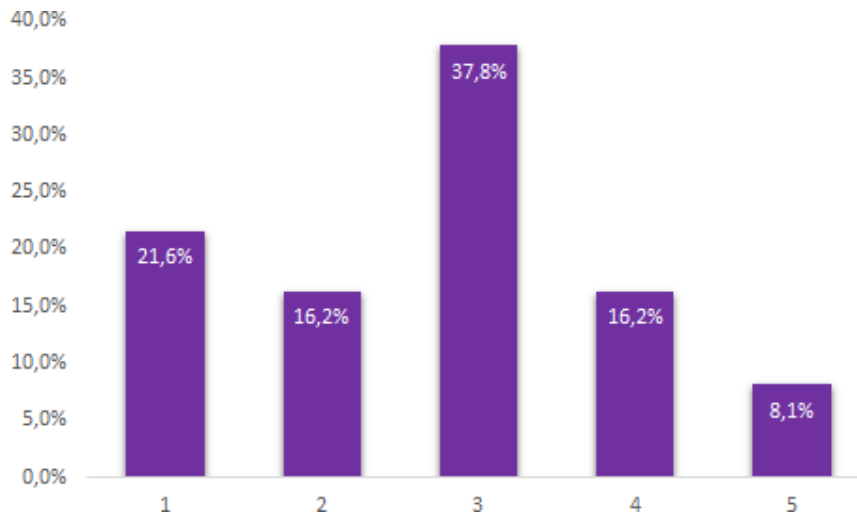


***Students' Perception Towards L1 usefulness in L2 Learning Process***

In question 9, students were asked how useful their L1 was in their L2 learning process so that from a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant not useful at all and 5 meant very useful, 8,1% learners selected 1, 16,2% indicated 2, 4, 37,8% stated 3 and 21,6% answered 5. This means that the higher percentage showed that it was neither not useful at all nor very useful for them to use the first language while learning the second one (see Figure 14).

**Figure 14**

*Students' Perception Towards L1 usefulness in L2 Learning Process*



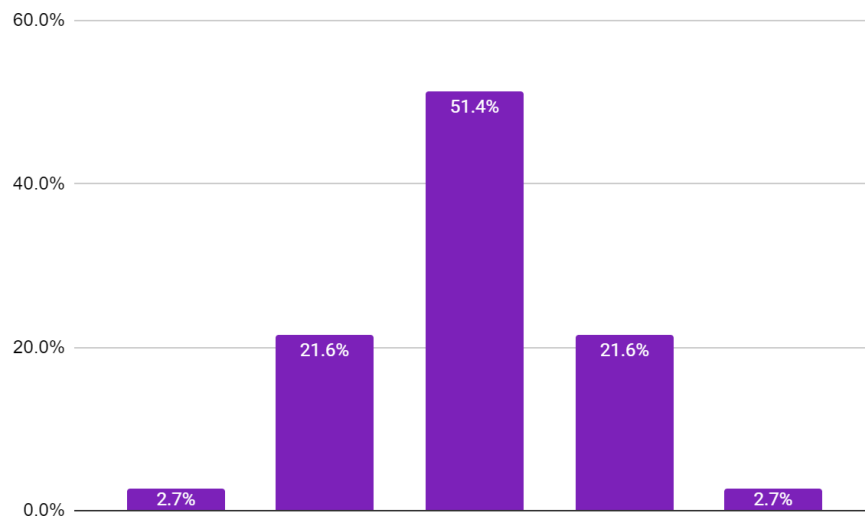
**Perceptions towards collocations use, instruction and errors**

In this section, questions 11 to 15 had the purpose of determining students' perceptions towards their use of collocations, the formal instructions they received at university, and the kind of errors they tend to make when using written collocations as well as the causes of these errors.

Regarding the general knowledge that students have about collocations, from a scale of 1 to 5 (question 11), 1 being nothing and 5 a lot, the results collected were (see Figure 15): 2.7% of the participants selected number 1, 21.6% chose number 2, 51.4% opted for number 3, 21.6% picked number 4, and 2.7% selected number 5. In this sense, from the analysis it can be determined that more than half of participants perceived they have a fair amount of knowledge on collocations, meaning that they do not know neither much nor little about the term.

### Figure 15

*Students' Knowledge on Collocations*



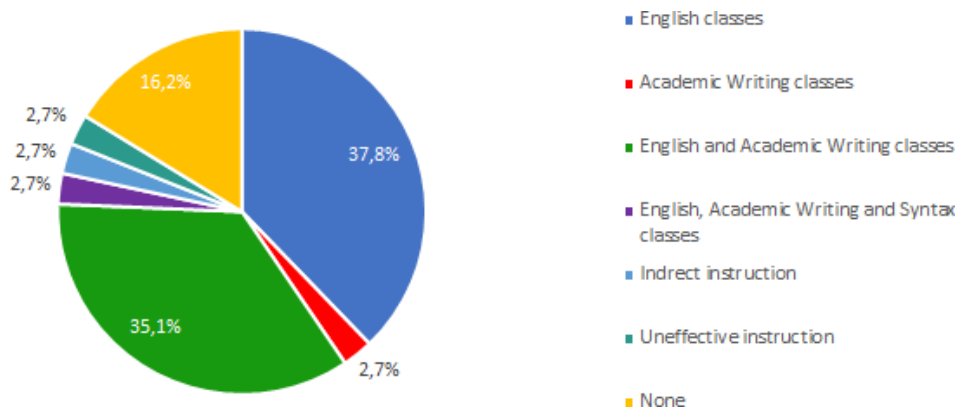
As for the formal instructions students have had during their academic life on collocations (question 12), participants had to choose among English classes, Academic Writing classes, both, or none. In addition, students had the possibility to provide a different answer than the ones already given (see Figure 16). Therefore, it was taken that 37.8% of students received formal instruction in their English classes, 2.7% of them learned the topic in their Academic

Writing classes, 35.1% had instruction in both their English and Academic Writing classes, 2.7% expressed they received instruction on collocation in their English, Academic Writing and Syntax classes. Nonetheless, 16.2% of participants affirmed that they have not had learned about collocations in none of their university classes, and 2.7% of them perceived collocation instruction as ineffective by stating that “the instruction of collocations at uni falls short, especially since we are going to be the next professors of our country, I feel like they stick to what they know, or even the learning strategies that they used when learning (...)”. Finally, 2.7% of them stated that they have had indirect instruction on collocations in English and Academic Writing classes, meaning that they acquired this aspect of the language without using the technical terms or mentioning them specifically.

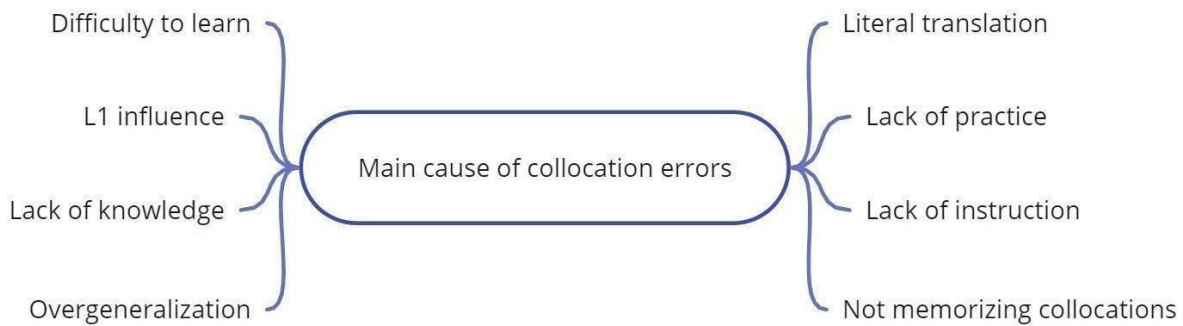
Hence, it is concluded that most participants have had a formal instruction on collocations in their English lessons. However, a considerable percentage still lack instruction on this topic in their university classes.

**Figure 16**

*Students’ Perceptions Towards Collocation Instruction*

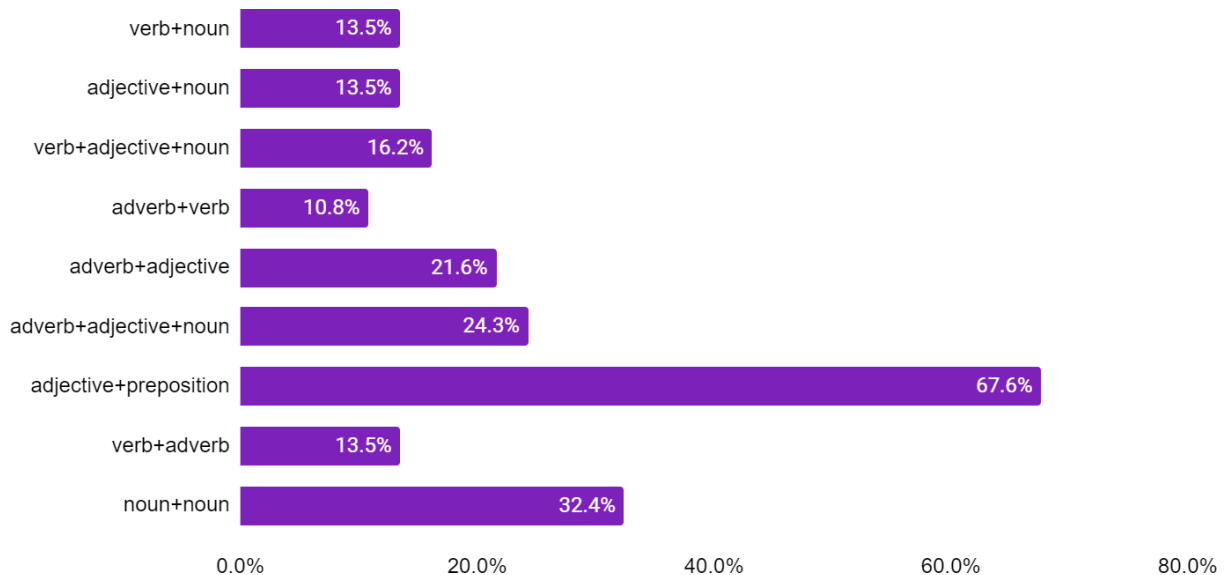


From the data collected, students' perceptions on the main cause of collocational errors in academic settings were varied, and some students gave more than one cause of these errors (see Figure 17). One of the causes was *difficulty to learn collocations*, which was taken from answers such as "as they are common expressions in the language, they are sometimes difficult to learn" and "it can be hard. It is a matter of learning that they go together"; another cause was *literal translation* from English to Spanish, given by students who said, "translating too literal from the L1 to the L2"; another cause was *L1 influence*, which was determined by answers such as "at the moment of writing the person is thinking about his/her L1" and "our L1. I think many people still think in Spanish"; besides, *lack of practice*, decided from in answers such as "I consider the main cause of these errors is the limited frequency in which we use them" and "people do not practice enough"; also, *lack of instruction*, taken from a participant who answered, "not having learned about them before". Among the causes, *lack of knowledge* was perceived by some subjects in answers such as "lack of knowledge of the target language structures" and "the lack of knowledge of some words that can go together"; additionally, *not memorizing collocations*, was another reason given by some participants who answered "not memorizing properly the existing English collocations"; and *overgeneralization*, which was established from answers such as "the main cause of these errors are due to the overgeneralization" and "overgeneralization (application of the same rule where it is not required for)". Therefore, it can be determined that among the most perceived causes of collocational errors are L1 interference, lack of knowledge and practice, and literal translation.

**Figure 17***Students' Perceptions Towards Collocation Errors*

In regard to students' perceptions on which collocation categories are the most difficult for them to use (question 14), based on a list of categories given (see appendix A), answers collected were very diverse (see Figure 18). First, 13% of participants considered that they have more problems using the combination of verb+noun, 13.5% of them selected the adjective+noun category, 16.2% chose the verb+adjective+noun combination, 10.8% picked adverb+verb, 21.6% chose adverb+adjective, 24.3% selected the adverb+adjective+noun group, 67.6 percent chose the adjective+preposition category, 13.5% picked verb+noun, and 32.4% of them selected the noun+noun category. Therefore, it is determined that the categories that students find more difficult to use are adjective+preposition, noun+noun, and adverb+adjective+noun.

Lastly, regarding the reason why students find the collocation categories chosen in the previous question difficult, eleven groups of causes were taken from students' answers (see Figure 19). The first cause was *L1 influence*, which was related to answers such as “because

**Figure 18***Students' Perceptions Towards Collocation Categories Difficulty*

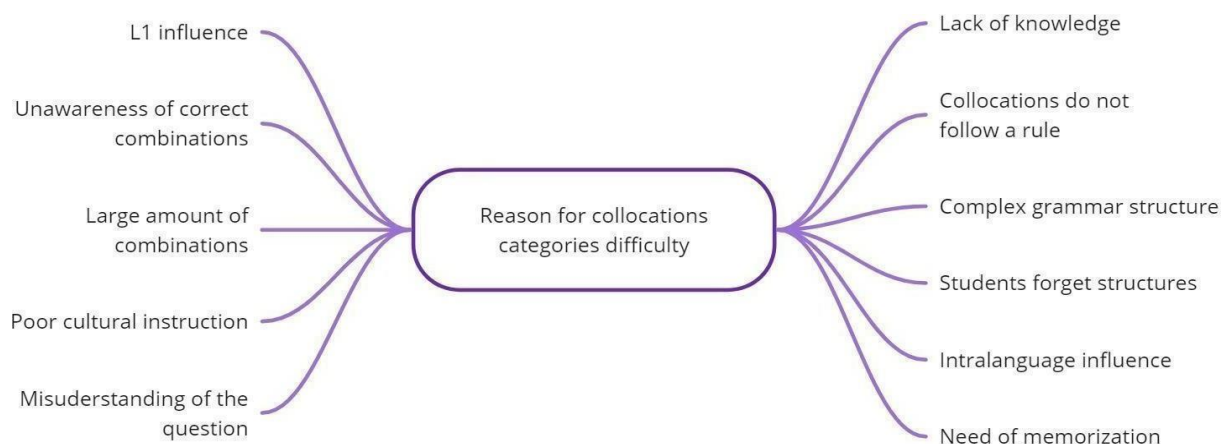
there is an interference of L1 with L2 so in most of the cases this collocation sounds weird and incoherent to us just because we translate”, or “sometimes, I mixed the Spanish structure with L2 structure”. The second one was *unawareness of correct combinations*, which corresponded to answers such as “prepositions can vary depending on the words before it, so it's complex to know which words go with what”, and “I find it difficult to choose the correct prepositions”. The third classification was *large amount of combinations*, perceived by some subjects in answers such as “the multiple prepositions you can use, some of them are similar and is easy to get confused” and “How to place words in a sentence because there are so many collocations”. The

fourth group was the *need of memorization* to learn collocations, which was connected to the fifth group, collocations *do not follow a rule*. This resulted from answers such as “because most of them are to be learned by heart due to the lack of a frame or rule” and “one of the problems with learning collocations is that they don't follow a rule and you have to memorize them”.

The sixth cause was *lack of knowledge*, noted by some students in answers such as “you don't know the uses of these categories which difficult your learning” and “I find them difficult because I rarely use these types of collocations, and I am not very familiar with them”. The seventh reason was given by 2 students who tended to *forget the structure* of the combinations; in their answers they gave their own arguments by writing “because I forget the structure” and “the case of adj+prep, I sometimes forget the preposition I must use”. The eighth group was *complex grammar structure*, determined from answers such as “I consider "Adverb+adj+noun" collocation is very long to build up at the moment of speaking” and “the structure can be a little confusing”. The ninth cause was *poor cultural instruction* represented in the answer “I would say that my difficulties for the noun + noun category is related to poor cultural instruction concerning this commonly used words”. The tenth category was *intralanguage influence*, which was taken from answers such as “basically the use of the correct preposition with fixed expressions or phrasal verbs” and “"noun+noun" collocations are more accurate and typical of the English language”. Finally, the eleventh reason was *misunderstanding the question*, recognized by 2 subjects' answers related to confusion in relation to the question.

**Figure 19**

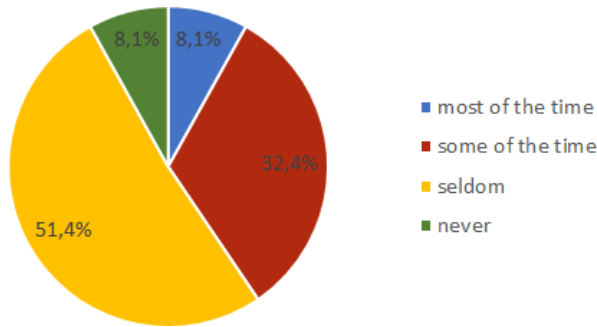
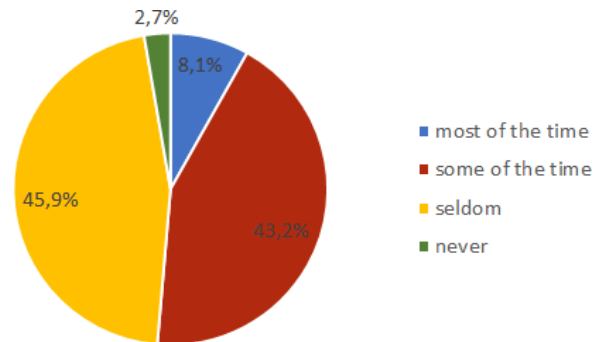
*Students' Perceptions on the Collocation Use Difficulty*



For this second part, the results obtained from the test analysis will be presented. Therefore, the outcomes of each section of the test (L1 influence and use of written collocations) are described with detail to show students' answers. In the second section, (use of written collocations) causes of the participants' choices are presented as well.

### **L1 influence**

For the first part of this section, participants selected from the given linguistic situations, the ones they considered to have experienced interference with their mother tongue. Firstly, in the case of *grammar*, 51.4% of the participants chose *seldom*, 32.4% said *some of the time*, 8.1% selected *most of the time*, and 8.1% claimed that they had *never* experienced interference of their mother tongue with grammar (see Figure 20). Secondly, 45.9% of the subjects claimed that they had *seldom* experienced interference with *vocabulary*; 43.2% affirmed that this type of interference happens to them *some of the time*; 8.1% said that *most of the time* they experience this, and only 2.7% of the students asserted that this have *never* occurred to them (see Figure 21).

**Figure 20***Grammar***Figure 21***Vocabulary*

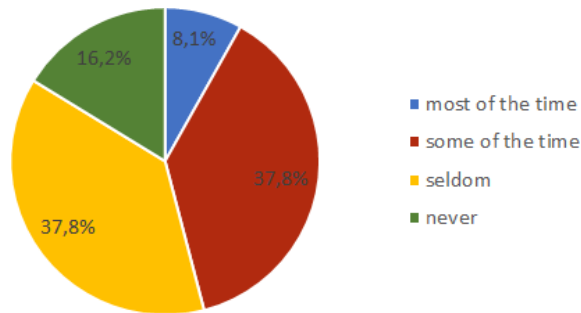
Thirdly, regarding *pronunciation*, 37.8% of the subjects chose *seldom*, 37.8% chose *some of the time*, 16.2% said that they have *never* experienced interference of their mother tongue with pronunciation. Lastly, 8.1% claimed that *most of the time* their L1 interference has to do with pronunciation (see Figure 22).

Lastly, the percentages of the answers about *spelling* did not vary very much from the ones submitted by the students in the other fields. From the participants' answers, it was possible to determine that 51.4% chose *seldom*, 24.3% selected *some of the time*, 16.2% said that they have *never* experienced this sort of interference, and 8.1% claimed that *most of the time* they have been through this situation (see Figure 23).

Taking the results into account, it was possible to determine that *seldom* was the option that most students selected from the different choices given to answer; on the contrary, *most of the time* was chosen the least by the participants.

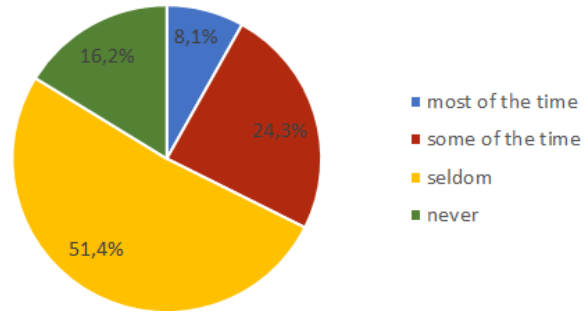
**Figure 22**

*Pronunciation*



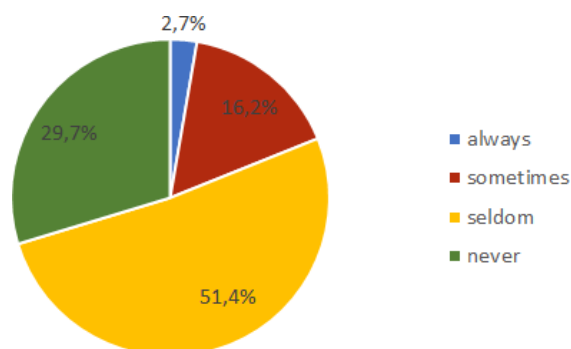
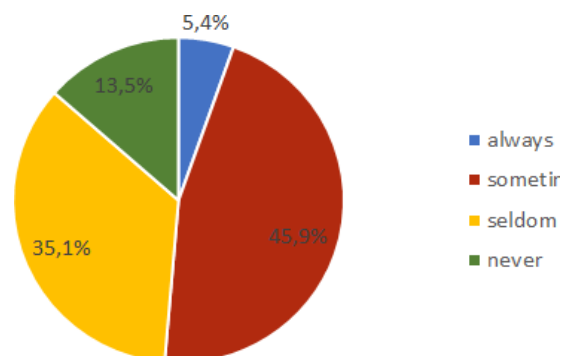
**Figure 23**

*Spelling*



Students were also asked, in the second part, whether their mother tongue makes second-language learning difficult while reading, speaking, listening or writing. First, 51.4% of the participants opted for *seldom* in the case of *reading*. Additionally, 29.7% of the subjects affirmed that second-language learning is *never* difficult for them while reading. Besides, 16.2% of them said that *sometimes* they found this language skill hard due to their mother tongue. What’s more, only 2,7% of the students highlighted that they *always* find reading difficult (see Figure 24).

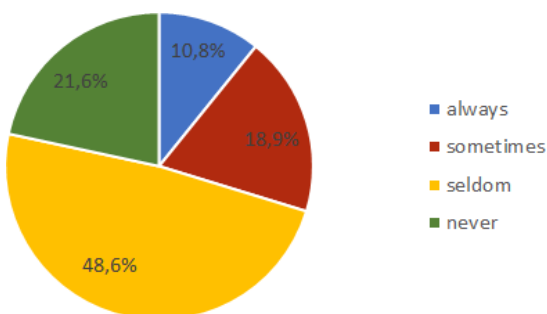
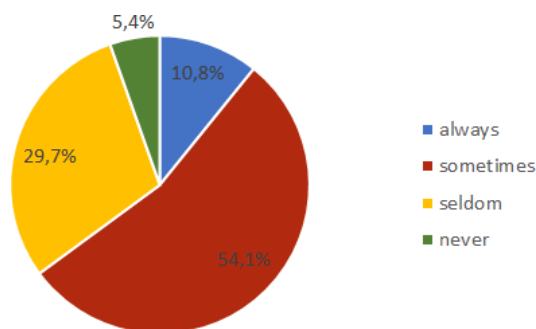
Second, the results obtained from *speaking* revealed that 45.9% of the participants considered that they *sometimes* find this skill difficult in this specific situation; 35.1% selected *seldom*, 13.5% opted for *never*, and 5.4% affirmed that they *always* have difficulties withspeaking due to their mother tongue (see Figure 25).

**Figure 24***Reading***Figure 25***Speaking*

Third, when students answered about their *listening* performance, 48.6% affirmed that their mother tongue *seldom* makes second-language learning difficult in this skill, 21.6% claimed that they *never* find themselves in this situation; 18.9% highlighted that *sometimes* their listening ability is affected by their mother tongue. In addition, 10.8% opted for choosing *always* as the adverb that best represents their answer to this question (see Figure 26).

Lastly, from the options given to answer about *writing* (always, sometimes, seldom, never), 54.1% chose *sometimes*, 29.7% selected *seldom*, 10.8% highlighted *always*, and 5.4% marked *never* (see Figure 27).

Although the adverbs given as options for students to answer the question for each language skill varied from part I, *seldom* remains as the mostly selected choice, except in the case of writing, as *sometimes* obtained a percentage of 54.1%. Concerning the least selected, *always* was the adverb with the least percentage.

**Figure 26***Listening***Figure 27***Writing*

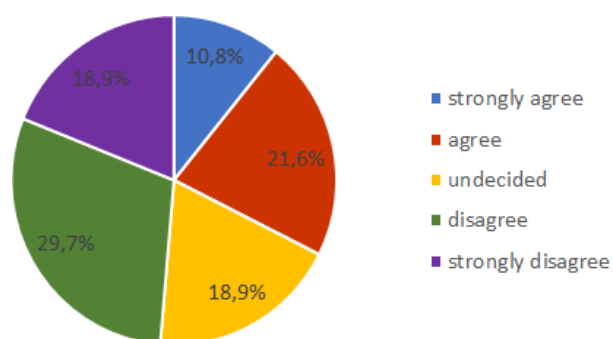
Moreover, in the third part, students were given six different situations in which they could identify whether their errors were conditioned by those circumstances. Firstly, for the situation *I make errors when a teacher insists on using only English in class*, 29.7% of the participants chose to *disagree* to describe their position in this situation. In contrast, 21.6% of them *agreed* on this. Furthermore, 18.9% strongly *disagreed* with respect to this situation, 18.9% were *undecided*, and 10.8% strongly *agreed* on this (see Figure 28).

Secondly, for the next situation presented to them, *I make errors when making a sentence in L2 is preceded by thinking L1*, 37.8% *agreed* on their tendency of making mistakes in this case; 27% *disagreed*, and 16.2% were *undecided*. In addition to this, there were 13.5% of the students who strongly *agreed*, and on the contrary, 5.4% *strongly disagreed* (see Figure 29).

Thirdly, after presenting the third circumstance, *I make errors by looking for the meaning of a new word from a monolingual dictionary (English-English)*, it was possible to obtain from the outcomes that 37.8% of them *disagreed* with this situation, 29.8% *agreed*, and 16.2% *strongly disagreed*. Additionally, 10.8% opted for *undecided* to express how they find

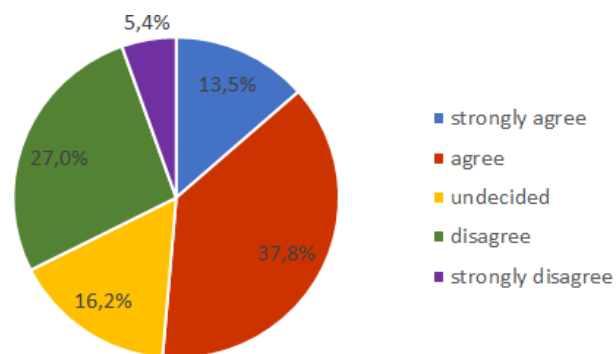
**Figure 28**

*When a teacher insists on using only English in class*



**Figure 29**

*When making a sentence in L2*



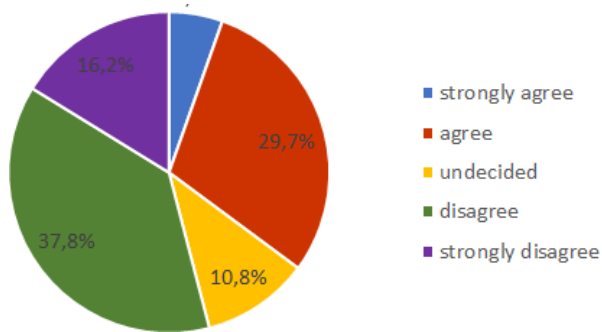
themselves in this situation, and with few responses, 5.4% of the subjects *strongly agreed* (see Figure 30).

Next, participants were given the following affair: *I make errors when I have to speak without any preparation*, 35.1% of the subjects *agreed* on this, 16.2% were *undecided*, and the same percentage went for those who *strongly agree*. Although 24.3% *disagreed*, only 8.1% *strongly disagreed* (see Figure 31).

After students thought of themselves encountering a situation such as *I make errors while translating a passage into my L1*, 48.6% opted for *agreeing*, 24.3% were *undecided*, and 16.2% *disagreed*. Surprisingly, the same percentage of students, 5.4%, went for different choices, *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree* (see Figure 32).

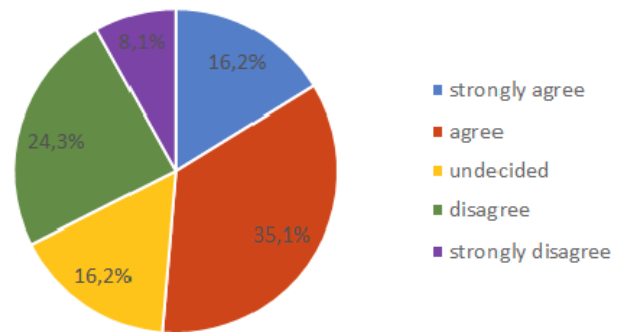
**Figure 30**

*By looking for the meaning of a new word from a monolingual dictionary (English-English)*



**Figure 31**

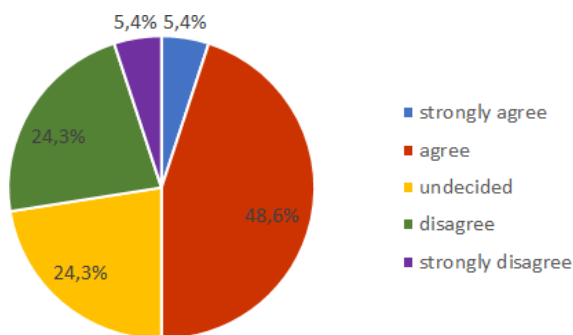
*When I have to speak without any preparation*



Lastly, for the situation, *I make errors while translating a passage into the target language*, most of the students, 56.8%, *agreed*, and 21.6% *disagreed*. Additionally, it was also found that 16.2% were *undecided*, and one more time, the same percentage, 2.7%, was obtained from the options: *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree* (see Figure 33).

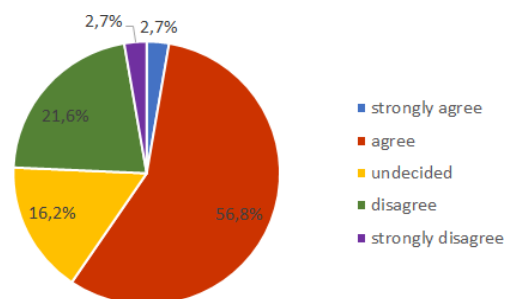
**Figure 32**

*While translating a passage into my L1*

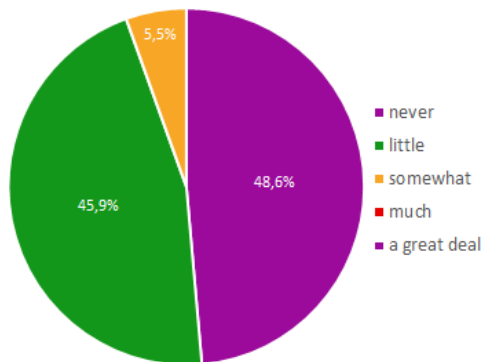
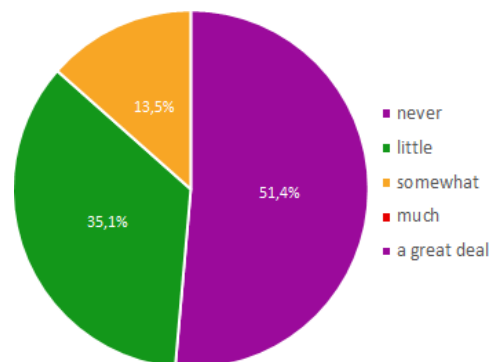


**Figure 33**

*While translating a passage into the target language*



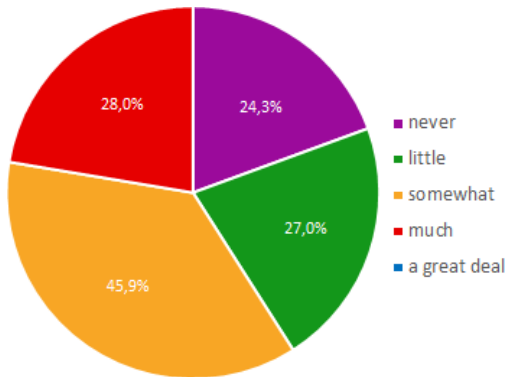
The fourth part of this section was related to the level of difficulty the students had in some aspects of the L2 grammar and lexical rules. Regarding the *English alphabet*, 48.6% of the students responded that they *never* had difficulty with it, 45.9% of them answered that they had *little*, and 5.5% proved to have had *somewhat* (see Figure 34). In relation to the *Capital letters*, it was found that 51.4% of the participants *never* had problems with this aspect, 35.1% of them had *little* difficulty with that and 13.5% considered to have had *somewhat* (see Figure 35).

**Figure 34***English alphabet***Figure 35***Capital letters*

In regard to the *affixes*, 45.9% of the subjects found that they *somewhat* had problems with this group, 27% answered they had *little*, 24.3% stated that they *never* had difficulties; however, 2.8% of them affirmed to have had *much* trouble with it (see Figure 36). With respect to the *articles* (a-an-the), 59.5% of the subjects considered they *never* had problems with this part, 32.4% indicated to have had *little* and 8.1% of the students answered that they *somewhat* had (see Figure 37).

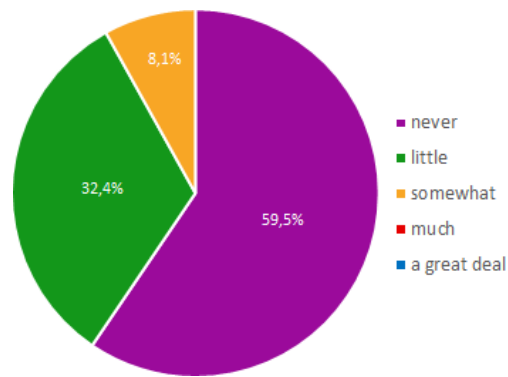
**Figure 36**

*Affixes*



**Figure 37**

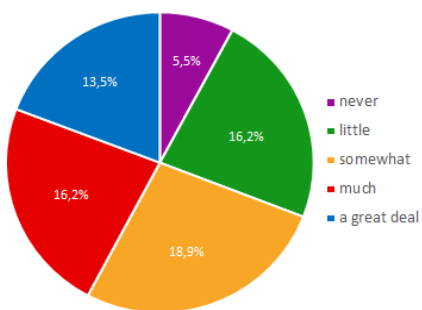
*Articles*



In terms of *prepositions in English*, 45.9% of the respondents affirmed to have had *little* difficulty with these words, 18.9% responded they *somewhat* had trouble with it, 16.2% of them showed to have had *much* problem, 13.5% answered they had *a great deal* and 5.5% revealed they *never* had difficulties with this (see Figure 38). Regarding *fricative sounds*, 29.7% of the students pointed out to *somewhat* have had challenges with these sounds, 27% of them considered they had *little* difficulty with it, 24.3% responded they *never* had any difficulty with this issue; whereas, 16.20% of the participants answered they had *much* trouble in this category, and 2.8% of them responded that they had *a great deal* (see Figure 39).

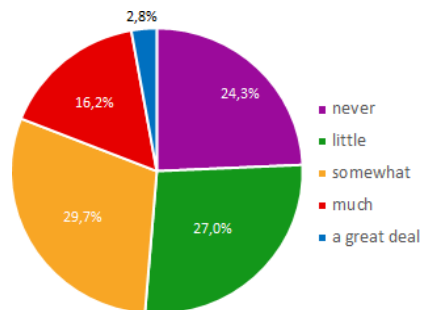
**Figure 38**

*Prepositions in English*



**Figure 39**

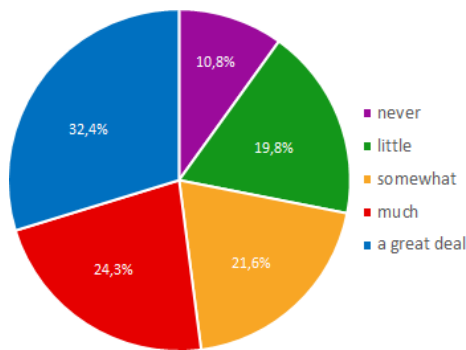
*Fricative sounds*



In relation to the *learning of words such as “dessert” and “desert”*, 32.4% of the students expressed they faced *little* problem with these words, 24.3% revealed to have *never* had any difficulty, 21.6% answered they *somewhat* presented complications when learning these kinds of words; on the contrary, 10.8% indicated to have experienced *much* difficulty with it and other 10.8% affirmed to have had *a great deal* (see Figure 40). In terms of the *English homophones like “meet”, and “meat”*, 35.1% of the subjects expressed they had *little* difficulty with these words, 29.7% answered they *never* had complications with this, 21.6% considered they had *somewhat*, 6.8% indicated to have had *much* trouble with respect to this group of words and other 6.8% showed to have had a *great deal* (see Figure 41).

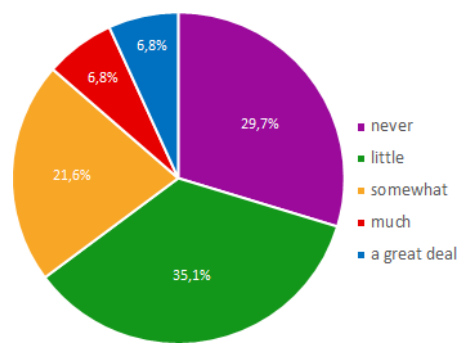
**Figure 40**

*Learning words like “dessert” & “desert”*



**Figure 41**

*English homophones like “meet” & “meat”*



Regarding the *pluralization of the words such as “goose” to “geese”*, 29.7% of the students considered they had *little* problems with these kinds of rules, 27% of them answered they *somewhat* had troubles on this, 21.6% indicated to have had *much* difficulty, 16.2% affirmed to have *never* had problems with it and 5.5% of the participants responded they had a

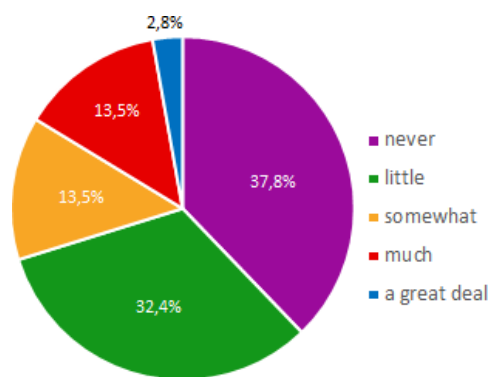
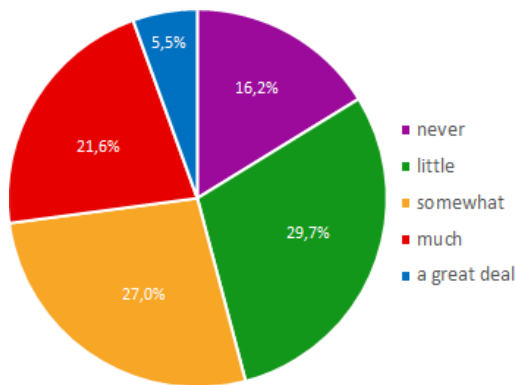
*great deal* (see Figure 42). With respect to *learning the irregular verbs*, 37.8% of the participants considered they *never* experienced problems learning them, 32.4% answered they had *little* difficulty with it, 13.5% responded they *somewhat* had difficulty learning those kinds of verbs and 2.8% stated to have had *a great deal* (see Figure 43).

**Figure 42**

**Figure 43**

*Pluralization of the words “goose” - “geese”*

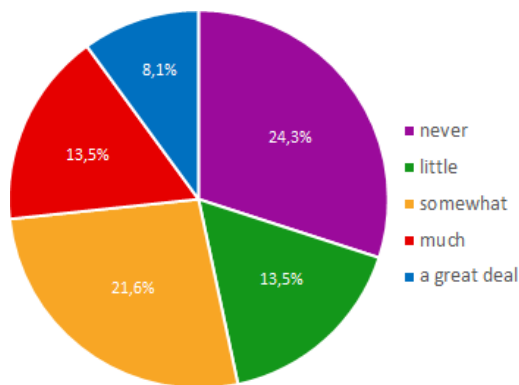
*Learning the irregular verbs*



With respect to the *learning of words which have two grammatical functions such as a verb and a noun*, 32.4% of the respondents considered they had *little* problems in this part, 24.3% indicated they had *never* experienced troubles with it, 21.6% expressed to *somewhat* have had difficulties with these kinds of words; otherwise, 13.5% indicated to have faced *much* problem in this category, and 8,1% showed to have had *a great deal* (see Figure 44). Regarding the *phonetics of words such as “knight” or “comb”*, 32.4% of the students considered they had *little* problems with this category, 29.7% answered they *somewhat* had, 27% affirmed to have *never* had any problem with these words and a small percentage, 10.8%, responded to have experienced *much* difficulty (see Figure 45).

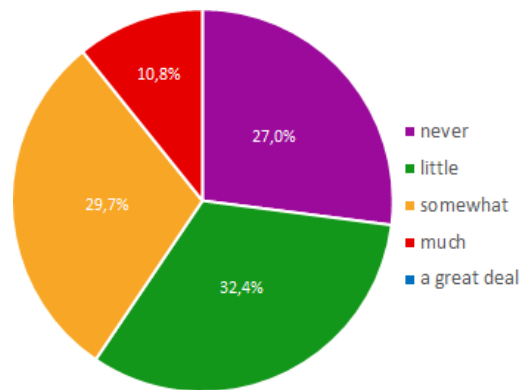
**Figure 44**

*Words with two grammatical functions*



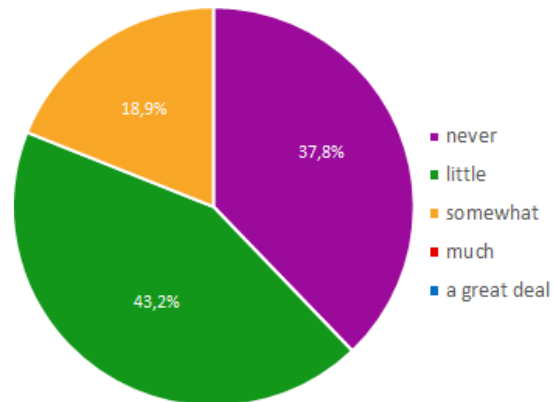
**Figure 45**

*Phonetics of words such as “knight” or “comb”*



In terms of *English tenses*, 43.2% of the subjects stated that they had *little* problems in this part, 37.8% answered they *never* experienced problems and 18.9% showed they *somewhat* had difficulty with tenses (see Figure 46).

From the above mentioned, it could be inferred that, on one hand, the aspect in which students had less difficulty in their L2 learning was with the *articles (a-an-the)* as 59.5% of the participants expressed, they did not have problems with this at all. On the other hand, the aspect in which most of students had difficulty was with the category of *pluralizing the words such as goose to geese* since 21.7% of the students considered they have been through troubles with this in their L2 learning.

**Figure 46***English tenses***Collocations use**

This section of the test was divided into three parts in which the two first ones were about choosing the correct word that best collocated with the word highlighted in the sentence; the last section was about filling in the sentences by creating the collocations taking the words given in a box (see Table 1).

The first part of the test included ten statements in which the students had to choose the correct option. In the first item, 94.6.2% of the participants answered the correct verb, *comes out*, which goes with the noun *album*, while 2.7% of them chose the verb *appears*, and the other 2.7% picked *emerges*. Regarding the second statement, students had to select the word that best collocated with the noun phrase *her father's advice*, which was the preposition *on*; however, only

10.8% of the students chose it correctly. Here, a significant percentage of the participants (83.8%) selected an incorrect word, *under*, and 5.4% picked the preposition *in*.

In the third statement, the best preposition that goes with the noun *fondness* is *for*, which was selected by 64.9% of the students; while the other two options, *towards* and *of*, were chosen by 18.9% and 16.2% of the participants, respectively. As for the fourth item, nearly half of the students (54.1%) responded with the preposition *in*, which is the most adequate word for *point*. However, 35.1% of them chose the option *on*, and 10.8% picked the particle *at*.

In the fifth statement, participants had to choose the best word for the noun *campaign*; here, 45.9% of the subjects chose the word *issue* correctly, whereas 27% of them selected *subject* and the other 27% picked the noun *topic*. For the sixth item, students had to decide the correct verb for the noun *communication*; in this case, 89.2% of them chose the verb *broken down*, while 8.1% selected *collapsed*, and 2.7% opted for the verb *failed*.

With respect to the seventh statement, even though most of the participants chose the wrong options, there was a slight difference in the percentages between the correct answer and the incorrect ones. In this regard, the verb *booming*, which is best collocated with the noun *business*, was chosen by 43.2%, and the incorrect verb *growing*, was selected by 45.9%. Also, the verb *prospering* was picked, but only by 10.8% of the subjects. Regarding the eighth statement, students had to decide the proper preposition for *in connection*; this time, the preposition *with* was selected correctly by 86.5% of the subjects, and the preposition *by* was picked by 13.5% of them.

In the ninth item, the most adequate word that goes with the noun *interim* is *period*, which was answered by 83.8% of the students; however, two incorrect options, *term* and *interval*, were selected by 13.5% and 2.7% of the participants, respectively. In the last statement, 43.2% of the subjects opted for the preposition *to*, which collocates better with the noun *preference*; on the contrary, 51.4% of them chose the particle *to*, and 5.4% decided on the preposition *upon*.

The second part of the test also consisted of ten statements that participants had to complete with the correct collocation. In the first statement, 59.5% of the subjects responded with the correct preposition, *to*, that best collocated with the noun *tribute*; however, 37.8% of them selected the preposition *for*, and 2.7% of them chose the particle *at*. In the second statement, 89.2% of the participants answered correctly with the verb *take* that goes with the noun *action*, while 8.1% of them chose the verb *make*, and 2.7% picked *come*.

As for the third statement, students had to find the correct particle for the noun *dilemma*; here, the verb *caught* was chosen correctly by 75.7% of the participants, and the verb *found* was selected by 24.3% of them. In the fourth statement, even though most subjects (91.9%) selected the verb *get* to go with the noun *food poisoning*, 5.4% of the students answered incorrectly the verb *do*, and 2.7% picked the verb *make*.

For the fifth statement, participants had to choose the correct verb for the adjective *fired*; in this case, 86.5% of them selected the verb *get* correctly, while 8.2% opted for the verb *come*, and 5.4% decided on the verb *go*. In the sixth statement, there was a narrower distance between the correct preposition *to*, that collocates better with the noun *responsibility*, chosen by 45.9% of

the subjects, and the incorrect one, *on*, picked by 43.5% of the students. As for the third option, *in*, only 10.8% of the participants selected it.

In regard to the seventh statement, the best preposition that goes with the verb *think* is *of*, which was answered by 54.1% of the participants; however, two incorrect options, *in* and *on*, were chosen by 18.9% and 27% of the subjects, respectively. The eighth statement consisted of singling out the most adequate verb for the adjective *crazy*; here, 56.8% of the subjects chose the verb *go* correctly, while 43.2% of them answered with the verb *get*.

In the ninth statement, 83.8% of the students opted for the correct verb, *make*, for the noun *fortune*, but 13.5% of them picked the verb *get*, and 2.7% chose the verb *do*. The final statement consisted of deciding on the best verb for the noun *attempt*; in this item, 63.2% of the subjects chose the verb *make* correctly, while 18.9% of them selected *have*, and 18.9% picked the verb *do*.

In this sense, from the first and second part, it is taken that participants are more knowledgeable about the combination of nouns and verbs with other particles such as *noun+verb*, *preposition+noun+preposition*, *noun+noun*, *verb+noun* and *verb+adjective*. However, the type of collocations with which they had more problems were *preposition+noun*, *noun+preposition*, *noun+noun* and *noun+verb*.

Lastly, the third section of the test involved ten items in which participants had to fill in the blanks with the correct set of collocations given in a box. The correct answer for the first statement was *at regular intervals*, which 56.7% of the students chose correctly; however, 10.8% of them answered *within intervals*. As well, responses such as *abstract radius*, *abstract research*,

*research interval, within concern, within crimes, at regular institutes, research institutes* and *within a ban* were chosen by 2.7% of the subjects each. Finally, there were incomplete answers given by 5.4% of the subjects, and 2.7% of them did not write any answer.

The second item had 32.4% of correct answers as subjects selected *abstract thought*; in regards to incorrect answers such as *crisis of though, imposed intersect, imposed thought, lines interval, abstract concern, abstract intersect, err on thought, imposed a ban, perpetrated side of caution* and *regulate thought* were written by 2.7% of the participants each, as well as replies such as *perpetrated crimes, legitimate concern, err on the side of caution* and incomplete answers that were given by 5.4% of the students each, 10.8% of the subjects answered *legitimatethought*, and 8.1% of them did not provide an answer.

The correct answer for the third statement was *crisis of confidence*, which was selected by 21.6% of the participants; nonetheless, the answer that was written by most students was *crisis of institutes*, with a percentage of 24.3 of them. Other incorrect answers were *crisis of concern* (10.8%), *crisis of crimes* (8.1%), *crisis of concern* (13.5%), *crisis of radius* (5.4%), *crimes perpetrated* (2.7%), *crisis of the side of caution* (2.7%), *perpetrated a ban* (2.7%), *crisisof intervals* (2.7%), *perpetrated concern* (2.7%), as well as 10.8% of incomplete responses, and 2.7% with no answer.

As for the fourth statement, the correct answer, *legitimate concern*, was selected by 51.3% of the subjects, while *legitimate thought* and *imposed concern* was chosen by 8.1% of them each, *abstract thought* was picked by 5.4% of the participants, and answers such as *legitimate crime, err on the side of caution, imposed thought, legitimate confidence, perpetrated*

*concern, a ban at regular* were decided on by 2.7% of the students each. In addition, there were 8.1% of incomplete answers, and 2.7% of the students did not write one.

Regarding the fifth statement, 51.3% of the subjects replied *within a radius* correctly; however, 8.1% of the participants wrote incorrect answers such as *with in the side of caution*, 5.4% of them replied, *at regular radius*, 2.7% each chose *imposed radius, imposed the side of caution, lines the side of caution, the side of caution lines, with in interval, at regular institutes, crisis of radius, lines radius*, 8.1% were incomplete answers, and 2.7% did not have one.

The correct answer of the sixth statement was *err on the side of caution*, which was written by 40.5% of the participants. In the case of incorrect answers, 5.4% of the students replied, *abstract thought* and *research intervals* each, 2.7% answered *concern abstract, legitimate institutes, lines intervals, with in institutes, intersect lines, legitimate thought, legitimate with confidence, perpetrated the side of caution, research a ban, research concern* each, 8.1% decided on *research thought*; also, there were 8.1% of incomplete answers, and 5.4% of the participants that did not note down any response.

In connection with the seventh statement, 62.1% of the subjects chose *lines intersect* correctly; nonetheless, there were incorrect replies such as *perpetrated a ban, research intervals, imposed thoughts, imposed confidence, abstract intervals, research radius, lines intervals, lines concern, err on lines, crisis of intervals, at regular intervals* with a percentage of 2.7 of the students each, as well as 5.4% of incomplete answers, and 2.7% of the participants who did not reply.

As for the eighth statement, the correct answer was *imposed a ban*, which was written by 70.2% of the subjects; in relation to the incorrect answers, 2.7% of the participants responded *intersect err on*, *thought at regular*, *legitimate a ban*, *with in crimes*, *perpetrated crimes*, *err on concern* each, and there were 8.1% of incomplete answers and 5.4% of the students that did not state anything.

The correct answer of the ninth answer was *research institutes*, which was selected by 45.9% of the subjects; however, 8.1% of them answered *legitimate institutes*, *research confidence each*, 2.7% replied *crisis of confidence*, *institutes research*, *research radius*, *researchconcern*, *perpetrated institutes*, *lines intersect*, *institutes imposed*, *at regular institutes* each, 13.5% of incomplete answers, and 2.7% of the subjects that did not write one.

Lastly, in the tenth statement, 62.1% of the students wrote *perpetrated crimes* correctly, while 8.1% of them stated *err on crimes*, 2.7% noted down *imposed a ban*, *perpetrated the side of caution*, *research confidence*, *legitimate crimes*, *lines crimes*, *imposed intervals* each, 8.1% of incomplete answers, and 2.7% of the participants that did not write any answer.

In this regard, from the results it is evident that subjects perform better in this kind of exercise using types of collocations such as *verb+noun*, *noun+verb* and *adjective+adverb*. Nevertheless, they still have problems with *adjective+noun*, *verb + noun (pronoun or prep. phrase)*, and *noun+noun* combinations.

**Table 1***Percentages of the students' answers in the tests*

ITEM	ANSWERS	TYPE OF COLLOCATIONS	ANSWER SELECTION	RELATIVE FREQUENCY (RF)	PERCENTAGES
<b>PART 1</b>					
1	<b>Album comes out</b>	Noun + verb	comes out	35/37	94.6 %
			appears	1/37	2.7 %
			emerges	1/37	2.7 %
2	<b>On her father's advice</b>	Preposition + noun	under	31/37	83.8 %
			on	4/37	10.8 %
			in	2/37	5.4 %
			for	24/37	64.9 %
3	<b>Fondness for her</b>	Noun + preposition	towards	7/37	18.9 %
			of	6/37	16.2 %
4	<b>Point in</b>	Noun + preposition	point in	20/37	54.1 %
			on	15/37	35.1 %
			at	4/37	10.8%
5	<b>Campaign issue</b>	Noun + noun	issue	17/5	45.9 %
			subject	10/37	27 %
			topic	10/37	27 %
6	<b>Communication has broken down</b>	Noun + verb	broken down	33/37	89.2 %
			collapsed	3/37	8.1 %
			failed	1/37	2.7 %

7	<b>Business is booming</b>	Noun + verb	growing	17/37	45.9 %
			booming	16/37	43.2 %
			prospering	4/37	10.8 %
8	<b>In connection with</b>	Preposition + noun + prep	with	32/37	86.5 %
			by	5/37	13.5 %
9	<b>Interim period</b>	Noun + noun	period	31/37	83.8 %
			term	5/37	13.5 %
			interval	1/37	2.7 %
10	<b>Preference to her sister</b>	Noun + preposition	over	19/37	51.4 %
			to	16/37	43.2 %
			upon	2/37	5.4 %

**PART 2**

1	<b>Tribute to</b>	Noun + preposition	to	22/37	59.5%
			at	1/37	2.7%
			for	14/37	37.8%
2	<b>Take action</b>	Verb + noun	take	33/37	89.2%
			make	3/37	8.1%
			come	1/37	2.7%
3	<b>Caught in a dilemma</b>	Verb + noun	caught	28/37	75.7%
			found	9/37	24.3%
4	<b>Get food poisoning</b>	Verb + noun	get	34/37	91.9% %
			do	2/37	5.4%
			make	1/37	2.7%
5	<b>Get fired</b>	Verb + adjective	get	32/37	86.5%

			go	2/37	5.4%
			come	3/37	8.1%
<b>6</b>	<b>Responsibility to its members</b>	Noun + preposition	to	17/37	45.9%
			on	16/37	43.2%
			in	4/37	10.8 %
<b>7</b>	<b>Thought of a way</b>	Verb + preposition	of	20/37	54.1 %
			in	7/37	18.9 %
			on	10/37	27%
<b>8</b>	<b>Go crazy</b>	Verb + adjective	go	21/37	56.8%
			get	16/37	43.2%
<b>9</b>	<b>Make a fortune</b>	Verb + noun	make	31/37	83.8%
			get	5/37	13.5%
			do	1/37	2.7%
<b>10</b>	<b>Make an attempt</b>	Verb + noun	make	23/37	62.2%
			have	7/37	18.9%
			do	7/37	18.9%

**PART 3**

			at regular intervals	21/37	56.7%
<b>1</b>	<b>At regular intervals</b>	Adjective + adverb	with in intervals	4/37	10.8%
			abstract radius	1/37	2.7%
			abstract research	1/37	2.7%
			research intervals	2/37	5.4%
			with in concern	1/37	2.7%
			with in crimes	1/37	2.7%

			at regular institutes	1/37	2.7%
			research institutes	1/37	2.7%
			with in a ban	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	2/37	5.4%
			no answer	1/37	2.7%
2	<b>Abstract thought</b>	Adjective + noun	abstract thought	12/37	32.4 %
			crisis of thought	1/37	2.7%
			imposed intersect	1/37	2.7%
			imposed thought	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate thought	4/37	10.8%
			lines intervals	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated crimes	2/37	5.4%
			abstract concern	1/37	2.7%
			abstract intersect	1/37	2.7%
			err on the side of caution	2/37	5.4%
			err on thought	1/37	2.7%
			imposed a ban	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate concern	2/37	5.4%
			perpetrated side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			regulate thought	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	2/37	5.4%
			no answer	3/37	8.1%

3	<b>Crisis of confidence</b>	verb + noun (pronoun or prep. phrase)	crisis of confidence	8/37	21.6%
			crisis of crimes	3/37	8.1%
			crisis of institutes	9/37	24.3%
			crisis of radius	2/37	5.4%
			crimes perpetrated	1/37	2.7%
			crisis of the side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated a ban	1/37	2.7%
			crisis of concern	5/37	13.5%
			crisis of intervals	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated concern	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	4/37	10.8%
			no answer	1/37	2.7%
4	<b>Legitimate concern</b>	Adjective + noun	legitimate concern	19/37	51.3%
			legitimate crime	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate thought	3/37	8.1%
			abstract thought	2/37	5.4%
			err on the side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			imposed concern	3/37	8.1%
			imposed thought	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate confidence	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated concern	1/37	2.7%

			a ban at regular	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	3/37	8.1%
			no answer	1/37	2.7%
<b>5</b>	<b>Within a radius</b>	Preposition + noun	within a radius	19/37	51.3%
			at regular radius	2/37	5.4%
			imposed radius	1/37	2.7%
			imposed the side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			lines the side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			the side of caution lines	1/37	2.7%
			with in interval	1/37	2.7%
			with in the side of caution	3/37	8.1%
			at regular institutes	1/37	2.7%
			crisis of radius	1/37	2.7%
			lines radius	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	3/37	8.1%
			no answer	2/37	5.4%
<b>6</b>	<b>Err on the side of caution</b>	verb + noun (pronoun or prep. phrase)	err on the side of caution	15/37	40.5%
			abstract thought	2/37	5.4%
			concern abstract	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate institutes	1/37	2.7%

			lines intervals	1/37	2.7%
			with in institutes	1/37	2.7%
			intersect lines	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate thought	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate with confidence	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated the side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			research a ban	1/37	2.7%
			research concern	1/37	2.7%
			research intervals	2/37	5.4%
			research thought	3/37	8.1%
			incomplete	3/37	8.1%
			no answer	2/37	5.4%
<b>7</b>	<b>Lines intersect</b>	Noun + verb	lines intersect	23/37	62.1%
			perpetrated a ban	1/37	2.7%
			research intervals	1/37	2.7%
			imposed thoughts	1/37	2.7%
			imposed confidence	1/37	2.7%
			abstract intervals	1/37	2.7%
			research radius	1/37	2.7%
			lines intervals	1/37	2.7%
			lines concern	1/37	2.7%

			err on lines	1/37	2.7%
			crisis of intervals	1/37	2.7%
			at regular intervals	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	2/37	5.4%
			no answer	1/37	2.7%
<b>8</b>	<b>Imposed a ban</b>	Verb + noun	imposed a ban	26/37	70.2 %
			intersect err on	1/37	2.7%
			thought at regular	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate a ban	1/37	2.7%
			with in crimes	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated crimes	1/37	2.7%
			err on concern	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	3/37	8.1%
			no answer	2/37	5.4%
<b>9</b>	<b>Research institutes</b>	Noun + noun	research institutes	17/37	45.9%
			crisis of confidence	1/37	2.7%
			institutes research	1/37	2.7%
			research radius	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate institutes	3/37	8.1%
			research confidence	3/37	8.1%
			research concern	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated	1/37	2.7%
			institutes	1/37	2.7%
			lines intersect	1/37	2.7%

			institutes imposed	1/37	2.7%
			at regular institutes	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	5/37	13.5%
			no answer	1/37	2.7%
10	Perpetrated crimes	Adjective + noun	perpetrated crimes	23/37	62.1%
			imposed a ban	1/37	2.7%
			perpetrated the side of caution	1/37	2.7%
			research confidence	1/37	2.7%
			legitimate crimes	1/37	2.7%
			lines crimes	1/37	2.7%
			imposed intervals	1/37	2.7%
			err on crimes	3/37	8.1%
			abstract radius	1/37	2.7%
			incomplete	3/37	8.1%
			no answer	1/37	2.7%

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**2.1.2.1 Discussion.** With a view to determine the causes of the errors found in students' tests, the ones provided by Liu were taken into consideration (1999, as cited in Farrokh, 2012). These causes, which are also highlighted in the literature review section, are categorized as "lack of collocational concept", "direct translation", "ignorance of rule restrictions", and "lack of knowledge of collocational properties".

The first cause, lack of collocational concept, relates to the errors that are made when learners know the words separately but do not know how to form a collocation or their use. This

cause was obtained in errors where the combination did not make sense or did not fit in the context of the statement. The second cause, direct translation, was established when the error presented literal translation, and when there were combinations with the possibility of being made in participants' first language, Spanish. The third cause, ignorance of rule restriction, was taken from answers that did not follow the appropriate English grammatical rules. The last cause, lack of knowledge of collocational properties, was related to *the limitation of collocational knowledge* as students did not know that certain words can be collocated with more than one particle. In this sense, this cause corresponded to answers that had either could work in a different context than the one from the correct statement or that had one correct particle, but it did not fit in the context of the statement (see Table 2).

Regarding the first part of this section, every statement had two wrong answers, except for item eight. First, incorrect responses from statement one were *appears* and *emerges* and their main cause was related to the *lack of collocational concept*. Second, the prepositions *under* and *in* were the two incorrect replies. As for *under*, the main cause of this error was related to *direct translation*; and for *in*, was linked to *ignorance of rule restriction*.

Third, in statement three, similarly to the previous one, the incorrect responses *towards* and *of* were related to *direct translation* and *ignorance of rule restriction*, respectively. Fourth, the prepositions *on* and *at* were the two inaccurate answers in statement five. In this case, both of them were caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*.

Fifth, mistaken replies from statement five were the nouns *subject* and *topic*, whose main causes for both of them were *ignorance of rule restriction* as well. Sixth, wrong responses from

statement six were *collapsed* and *failed*. In the case of *collapsed*, its main cause referred to *lack of collocational concept*, and for *failed*, the main reason why students made this mistake was due to the *direct translation*.

Seventh, the verbs *growing*, and *prospering* were the incorrect responses from statement seven and they were caused mainly by *direct translation*. Eighth, the only incorrect reply in statement eight was the preposition *by*, whose main reason why subjects selected it was because of their *lack of collocational concept*.

Ninth, the two erroneous answers in statement nine were *term*, which was caused by *direct translation*, and *interval*, which was related to *lack of collocational concept*. Lastly, in statement ten, the two incorrect responses were *over* and *upon*. As for the word *over*, students made this error due to their *lack of collocational concept*, and for *upon*, its main cause referred to *direct translation*.

In regard to part two, every statement had two incorrect answers, except for statement three and eight. First, wrong answers from statement one were *for* and *at*. In the case of *for*, the main cause of this error was linked to *direct translation*; and for *at*, the main cause why participants made this error was because of their *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*. Second, incorrect responses from statement two were *make* and *come*, whose main causes for both were *lack of collocational concept*.

Third, the verb *found* was the only erroneous answer from statement three, and it was caused mainly by *direct translation*. Fourth, the two wrong incorrect replies from statement four were *do* and *make*, which were caused by *lack of collocational concept*.

Fifth, mistaken answers from statement five were *go* and *come*, whose main cause was also *lack of collocational concept*. Sixth, the preposition *in* and *on* were the two incorrect responses from statement six. Here, both errors were caused by *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*.

Seventh, the two wrong answers from statement seven were *in*, which was caused by direct translation, and *on*, whose main cause was *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*. Eighth, the only imprecise answer from statement eight was *go*, whose main reason why subjects selected it was because of their *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*.

Ninth, the verbs *do* and *get* were the two incorrect answers from statement nine. The main cause attributed to the answer *get* was *direct translation*, while *do* was caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*. Lastly, wrong replies from statement ten were *have*, whose main cause was *lack of collocational concept*, and *do*, which was caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*.

Finally, in part number three there were ten statements, and each one had at least six incorrect answers as well as incomplete ones, and some that were not given. In the first statement, there were nine incorrect answers; *within intervals* was caused by *direct translation*, *at regular institutes*, whose main cause was *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*; also, answers such as *abstract radius*, *abstract research*, *research intervals*, *within concern*, *within crimes*, *within a ban* and *research institutes* were caused by *lack of collocational concept*.

In the second statement, replies such as *crisis of thought*, *imposed intersect*, *lines intervals*, *perpetrated crimes*, *abstract concern*, *abstract intersect*, *err on the side of caution*, *err on thought*, *imposed a ban*, *legitimate concern* and *perpetrated side of caution* were caused by

*lack of collocational concept*, while others such as *imposed thought*, *legitimate thought* and *regulate thought* were caused by *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*.

In the third statement, wrong replies such as *crisis of crimes*, *crisis of radius*, *crisis of intervals*, *crisis of the side of caution*, *crimes perpetrated*, *perpetrated a ban* and *perpetrated concern* were caused by *lack of collocational concept*; also, there were answers such as *crisis of concern* and *crisis of institutes*, which main cause was *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*.

In the fourth statement, there were nine different incorrect answers. Some answers such as *legitimate confidence*, *abstract thought* and *err on the side of caution* were caused by *lack of collocational concept*; some others such as *legitimate crime* and *perpetrated concern* were caused by *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*; replies such as *a ban at regular*, *imposed concern* and *imposed thought* were caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*; and the cause for the answer *legitimate thought* was determined as *direct translation*.

In the fifth statement, wrong answers such as *within the side of caution*, *imposed radius*, *imposed the side of caution*, *lines the side of caution*, *the side of caution lines*, *at regular institutes*, *crisis of radius* and *lines radius* were caused by *lack of collocational concept*; and the answers *at regular radius* and *within intervals*, which main cause was *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*.

In the sixth statement, there were 13 erroneous responses. Some answers such as *were concern abstract*, *intersect lines*, *legitimate thought*, *legitimate with confidence* and *legitimate institutes* were caused by *lack of collocational concept*, while some others such as *abstract*

*thought, within institutes, lines intervals, research ban, research concern, research intervals and research thought* were caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*.

In the seventh statement, there were eight answers caused by *lack of collocational concept*, which were *at regular intervals, research intervals, imposed thoughts, imposed confidence, lines concern, crisis of intervals abstract intervals* and *research radius*; two answers caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*, which were *perpetrated a ban* and *err on lines*; and one answer, *lines interval*, caused by *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*.

In the eighth statement, the answers *intersect err on, thought at regular, legitimate a ban, within crimes* and *perpetrated crimes* were caused by *lack of collocational concept*, while *err on confidence* was caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*.

In the ninth statement, there were ten wrong answers in total; seven of them were *research confidence, research concern, perpetrated institutes, lines intersect, institutes imposed, at regular institutes* and *crisis of confidence*, caused by *lack of collocational concept*; also, there were two answers, *research radius* and *legitimate institutes*, that were caused by *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*; lastly, one answer caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*, which was *institutes research*.

Finally, incorrect answers in statement tenth such as *abstract radius, imposed a ban, perpetrated the side of caution, research confidence, legitimate crimes, lines crimes, imposed intervals*, whose main cause was *lack of collocational concept*, and the answer *err on crimes*, which was caused by *ignorance of rule restriction*.

**Table 2***Causes of the students' errors.*

ITEM	STATEMENT	STUDENTS' WRONG ANSWERS	CAUSES
<b>Part 1</b>			
1	His latest <b>album comes out</b> in the spring.	appears emerges	lack of collocational concept lack of collocational concept
2	He studied his books <b>on</b> his father's <b>advice</b> .	under in	direct translation ignorance of rule restriction
3	I've always had a certain <b>fondness for</b> her	towards of	direct translation ignorance of rule restriction
4	Obviously, there wasn't any <b>point in</b> waiting longer.	on at	ignorance of rule restriction ignorance of rule restriction
5	Education has become an important <b>campaign issue</b>	subject topic	direct translation direct translation
6	<b>Communication</b> between the two sides has <b>broken down</b>	collapsed failed	lack of collocational concept direct translation
7	<b>Business</b> is <b>booming</b> for estate agents in the south as the property market hots up.	growing prospering	direct translation direct translation
8	The stereophonic earphones can be used in <b>connection with</b> the new soundsystem	by	lack of collocational concept
9	The value of property almost doubled during the <b>interim period</b>	term interval	direct translation lack of collocational concept

10	She was chosen in <b>preference to</b> her sister.	over upon	lack of knowledge of collocational properties direct translation
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**Part 2**

1	The bridge is a remarkable <b>tribute to</b> the skill of the Victorian railway engineers	at for	lack of knowledge of collocational properties direct translation
2	Men and women who want freedom and growth should <b>take action</b> immediately	make come	lack of collocational concept lack of collocational concept
3	They were <b>caught in</b> a real <b>dilemma</b> .	found	direct translation
4	Disease Control and Prevention report that more than 200.000 Americans <b>get food poisoning</b> every single day.	do make	lack of collocational concept lack of collocational concept
5	If the boss wanted to see him, he was probably going to <b>get fired</b>	go come	lack of collocational concept lack of collocational concept
6	The club has a responsibility <b>for its members</b>	on in	lack of knowledge of collocational properties lack of knowledge of collocational properties
7	I suddenly <b>thought of</b> a way I could help	in on	direct translation ignorance of rule restriction
8	If you start to get too many things in your head, you will <b>go crazy</b>	get	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
9	You have to make a living and if you're smart you can <b>make a fortune</b> in a short time	do get	ignorance of rule restrictions direct translation
10	Politically motivated people in the State Department decided to <b>make an</b>	have do	lack of collocational concept ignorance of rule restrictions

**attempt** to find that letter

**Part 3**

	within intervals	direct translation
	abstract radius	lack of collocational concept
	abstract research	lack of collocational concept
	research intervals	lack of collocational concept
<b>1</b>	Most academic journals are published at <b>regular intervals</b> , perhaps every month or every quarter.	within concern within crimes
	at regular institutes	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
	within a ban	lack of collocational concept
	research institutes	lack of collocational concept
	crisis of thought	lack of collocational concept
	imposed intersect	lack of collocational concept
	imposed thought	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
	legitimate thought	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
	lines intervals	lack of collocational concept
<b>2</b>	While it is probably true they are not capable of <b>abstract thought</b> , most animals appear to experience a range of emotions.	perpetrated crimes abstract concern abstract intersect
	err on the side of caution	lack of collocational concept
	err on thought	lack of collocational concept
	imposed a ban	lack of collocational concept
	legitimate concern	lack of collocational concept

	perpetrated side of caution	lack of collocational concept
	regulate thought	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
	crisis of institutes of crimes	lack of knowledge of collocational properties crisis
	crisis of radius	lack of collocational concept
	crisis of concern	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
3	In the 1970's, the price of oil increased dramatically, causing an international economic <b>crisis of confidence</b>	crisis of intervals crisis of the side of caution lack of collocational concept lack of collocational concept
	crimes perpetrated	lack of collocational concept
	perpetrated a ban	lack of collocational concept
	perpetrated concern	lack of collocational concept
	legitimate crime	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
	legitimate thought	direct translation
	abstract thought	lack of collocational concept
4	Most people accept that fighting against terrorism is a <b>legitimate concern</b> of any government.	err on the side of caution lack of collocational concept imposed concern ignorance of rule restrictions imposed thought ignorance of rule restrictions legitimate confidence lack of collocational concept perpetrated concern lack of knowledge of collocational properties a ban at regular ignorance of rule restrictions
5	Because of the danger of an explosion, everyone who was <b>within a radius</b> of	at regular radius lack of knowledge of collocational properties

500 metres of the bomb was evacuated.	within the side of caution	lack of collocational concept
	imposed radius	lack of collocational concept
	imposed the side of caution	lack of collocational concept
	lines the side of caution	lack of collocational concept
	the side of caution lines	lack of collocational concept
	within intervals	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
	at regular institutes	lack of collocational concept
	crisis of radius	lack of collocational concept
	lines radius	lack of collocational concept
	abstract thought	ignorance of rule restriction
	concern abstract	lack of collocational concept
	within institutes	ignorance of rule restriction
	intersect lines	lack of collocational concept
	legitimate thought	lack of collocational concept
6 Before publishing the results of new research, it is better to <b>err on the side of caution</b> and recheck the results.	legitimate with confidence	lack of collocational concept
	perpetrated the side of caution	ignorance of rule restrictions
	research ban	ignorance of rule restriction
	research concern	ignorance of rule restriction
	research intervals	ignorance of rule restriction

		research thought	ignorance of rule restrictions
		legitimate institutes	lack of collocational concept
		lines intervals	ignorance of rule restriction
		at regular intervals	lack of collocational concept
		perpetrated a ban	ignorance of rule restriction
		research intervals	lack of collocational concept
		imposed thoughts	lack of collocational concept
		imposed confidence	lack of collocational concept
7	On this graph, where the two <b>lines intersect</b> we find the ideal balance.	abstract intervals	lack of collocational concept
		research radius	lack of collocational concept
		lines intervals	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
		lines concern	lack of collocational concept
		err on lines	ignorance of rule restriction
		crisis of intervals	lack of collocational concept
		intersect err on	lack of collocational concept
		thought at regular	lack of collocational concept
8	Following the rise in violence, the government <b>imposed a ban</b> on the private ownership of guns.	legitimate a ban	ignorance of rule restriction
		within crimes	lack of collocational concept
		perpetrated crimes	lack of collocational concept
		err on concern	ignorance of rule restriction
		crisis of confidence	lack of collocational concept
9	Because of the work of <b>research institutes</b> , there is increasing hope that effective treatments for AIDS will soon be available.	institutes research	ignorance of rule restrictions
		research radius	lack of knowledge of collocational properties
		legitimate institutes	lack of knowledge of collocational properties

		research confidence	lack of collocational concept
		research concern	lack of collocational concept
		perpetrated institutes	lack of collocational concept
		lines intersect	lack of collocational concept
		institutes imposed	lack of collocational concept
		regular institutes	lack of collocational concept
		imposed a ban	lack of collocational concept
		perpetrated the side of caution	lack of collocational concept
10	He <b>perpetrated crimes</b> which were so terrible that a massive manhunt was launched by the police to find him	research confidence	lack of collocational concept
		legitimate crimes	lack of collocational concept
		lines crimes	lack of collocational concept
		imposed intervals	lack of collocational concept
		err on crimes	ignorance of rule restriction
		abstract radius	lack of collocational concept

For the purpose of getting specific results from the causes of the participants' incorrect answers, percentages were taken from the total of wrong answers from every part of the last section of the test and the total of the four causes determined in each part.

Regarding the first part, the cause with the highest percentage was *direct translation* with 60.4% of the incorrect responses, while *ignorance of rule restriction* was related to 18.7% of the wrong answers. In the case of *lack of collocational concept* and *lack of collocational properties* were established with 13.1% and 7.6% of the replies, respectively.

In relation to the second part, the cause with the greatest percentage was *lack of knowledge of collocational properties*, with 33.9% of the incorrect answers, while *direct translation* was determined on 32.1% of the answers, *ignorance of rule restriction* was linked to 16.5% of them, and *lack of collocational concept* was present in 17.4% of the responses.

Finally, in the last part, the cause with the highest percentage was *lack of collocational concept*, which was related to 56.3% of the answers; *direct translation* was associated with 4.9% of the replies, *lack of knowledge of collocational properties* was identified in 21.8% of them, and *ignorance of rule restriction* was linked to 16.9% of the incorrect answers.

Hence, with the aim of acknowledging the first research question, *to what extent does the L1 (Spanish) interfere with the use of written collocations in university students from the Foreign Languages Teaching Program at different public universities in Colombia?* It is shown in Table 3 that participants' use of collocations was influenced mostly by *direct translation* and *lack of collocational properties* in the multiple-choice exercises. This, according to Alonso (1997), is a consequence of students' tendency to employ their L1 rules when they do not have sufficient knowledge on a specific topic, in the case of the present research, English written collocations. In addition, learners were aware of the influence that Spanish has on their L2 learning proficiency, especially in their writing skills as most of them (54.1%) affirmed that their mother tongue sometimes makes it difficult for them to write in their target language. Overall, L2 writing was the skill that students perceive to be hindered the most by their L1.

Nonetheless, in the exercise where they had to create the correct combination of words, their biggest difficulty was caused by their *lack of collocational concept*. This is also concluded

in different research studies conducted by researchers such as Shitu (2015), Farghal and Al- Hamly (2007), and Luzón (2011), who affirmed that even though learners' L1 is a distinguishable factor that affects their use of collocations, lack of collocational knowledge and overgeneralization are also common problems that students have to face at the moment of writing collocations. In this sense, advanced English learners still take their L1 linguistic knowledge to use written collocations in their target language; however, as shown in the results, there are other elements that students rely on to perform in their L2. As a matter of fact, Jiang and Yamashita (2010) resolved that because learners have recognized that their L1 forms and structures do not always correspond to their L2 ones, they opt to avoid relying on their mother tongue, even in situations where it is correct, which leads to make errors related to intralingual interference.

**Table 3**

*Percentages of the causes in each part of the test.*

CAUSE	PART 1		PART 2		PART 3	
	RF	%	RF	%	RF	%
<b>Direct translation</b>	87/144	60.4%	35/109	32.1%	7/142	4.9%
<b>Ignorance of rule restriction</b>	27/144	18.7%	18/109	16.5%	24/142	16.9%
<b>Lack of collocational concept</b>	11/144	7.6%	19/109	17.4%	80/142	56.3%
<b>Lack of knowledge of collocational properties</b>	19/144	13.1%	37/109	33.9%	31/142	21.8%

With the intention of addressing the second research question, *how do students perceive the L1 interference on the L2 and the written collocation errors based on their language learning process?* it will be taken into account the results from the questionnaire and the test.

Regarding the perceptions of participants from the questionnaire, it was evident that the L1 affects the acquisition of their L2 in different ways. For example, one of the most common answers from the students was that they tend to translate in their head before speaking in their L2. Additionally, the L1 is also influenced by the L2 when students do not know the word in their target language. Besides, students responded that their L1 affects their L2 when they are speaking with their classmates or friends. Apart from the above answers, other students replied that it is also influenced due to false cognates, misused collocations, some English phonemes, and some similarly spelled words.

From the aforementioned, it is important to highlight that, according to what Cabrera et al (2014) stated in their study, the idea of thinking in the L1 and translating into English is an overall perception of teachers and students which causes significant interference mistakes. This is also affirmed by Bhela (1999) who claimed that “learners translate their mother tongue structures at the moment of writing texts in the target language. Consequently, the interference of the L1 is considered negative as it impedes language acquisition of the L2” (p.44). This author also pointed out that interference errors arise when students are writing in their L2 as they usually invent words or take similar morphological structures from their L1, which occurs mostly with false friends or false cognates (as cited in Cabrera et al, 2014).

For the perceptions of the subjects related to the usefulness of the L1 towards the L2 learning process, most of them were very neutral since they demonstrated that they thought it was neither very useful nor not useful at all. In this sense, it can be inferred that students are aware that their L1 can have a positive as well as a negative influence in their L2 learning process. As a matter of fact, on the one hand, based on a study conducted by Bahardouse and Raouf (2012), the number of correct grammatical collocations could be associated with the L1 positive influence. On the other hand, in other cases such as the study carried out by Pengpanich (2002) and Junpui (2007) stated that some second language writing research demonstrated that the English writing mistakes were caused by the influence of learners' first language (as cited in Khumpee & Yodkamlue, 2017).

About the perceptions of the participants related to the instruction on collocations in their classes, it was possible to see that they received instruction in their English as well as in their Academic Writing classes; however, they emphasized that they were not taught specifically as a topic but spontaneously. It should be mentioned that, according to Rahimi & Momeni (2012), teaching collocations plays an important role in the language learning process since it improves language proficiency and consequently, students' language errors decrease.

It is observable from the questionnaire that the participants recognized and accepted their limitations with reference to the different types of collocations given. Students said that one of the collocation categories that they found the most difficult were *noun + noun*, and that was exactly what the test results demonstrated with a percentage of 54% of wrong answers in the case of this precise collocation.

Additionally, students also mentioned, based on their experience, the possible accounts for finding collocations difficult. In the questionnaire they named some reasons such as lack of knowledge, unawareness of correct combinations, L1 influence, the complexity of collocations and literal translation. Congruently, after analyzing the causes of students' mistakes in the test, it was found: direct translation, lack of knowledge of collocational properties, lack of collocational concept and ignorance of rule restriction. As it is evident, the test supports students' answers from the questionnaire, which demonstrates that what the participants perceive about themselves, on the topic of collocation use and knowledge, is proven by the test results.

### **3. Conclusions**

Considering one of the motivations that led to carry out this research, lack of knowledge on English collocations that students of ELT programs have, the contribution is relevant. Firstly, there are numerous ELT programs in many public universities in Colombia. As for Universidad Industrial de Santander, and for all the state universities in the country, this study will clarify the causes for which students, who will be English teachers in the future, make mistakes on the different types of English collocations. Secondly, once professors recognize the causes of those errors, they will be able to think, search, and apply some teaching and learning strategies for their students to learn and use English collocations. Additionally, as it has been supported and proved, this phenomenon does not occur only on students whose mother tongue is Spanish, but also on learners from all parts of the world.

Thus, this study will provide a foundation for teachers of ELT programs from any country to have a point from which to start at the moment of working on English collocations. With the information given in this study, teachers will be informed about the frequency with which students make lexical errors and how this has affected their competence with the language. This project

shows that although most participants are expected to have an advanced English level, some of them still make mistakes in this aspect. Besides, according to their perceptions they accept sometimes they are uncertain about the combinations of words, which affects their linguistic competence in the language.

Furthermore, the purpose of this work is also to encourage teachers to have instructive lessons on collocations. This is due to the fact that some participants consider that their professors in the university have not explicitly taught collocations as a topic which makes it less relevant. Hence, this has caused ignorance of collocational concepts, which makes students rely on their first language as the only resource, literal translation of the words, or overgeneralized rules, among others. As a result of this research, it is expected that teachers will implement strategies in which students can develop knowledge and improve their competencies in written English collocations.

As a means to meet the research objectives that aimed at describing students' perceptions towards the impact that their L1 has on their L2, it was possible to determine different notions that learners have from their answers in the questionnaire, which correlated to their direct use of English written collocations, gathered from the test. First, it could be established from their perceptions that participants are conscious of how useful their L1 can be for their English learning process, but also how it can affect it. This was also noticeable in their test answers as it was proven that in the multiple option exercises the presence of Spanish interference was prominent. Notwithstanding how affecting learners' L1 was, other causes of collocational errors such as lack of collocational knowledge and lack of knowledge of collocational properties were spotted both from their perceptions as well as in their test results. As a matter of fact, from students' questionnaire answers, it was observable that they were aware of their different collocational errors' causes such as absence of collocational knowledge, overgeneralization of rules, and need

for practice and instruction.

Another notion that could be gathered up was related to the latter mentioned cause -need for practice and instruction- as it was evident that even though some students shared their opinion on how they need more formal instruction, most of them declared that they indeed received formal instruction on collocations in subjects including English, Academic Writing and Syntax. As well, from students' test outcomes, it was decided that there was a higher percentage of correct answers (60.5%) in comparison to incorrect ones (39.5%), proving that students do have knowledge on collocations, but they need more practice and reinforcement to improve their written collocation competence.

A final cooccurrence found in the results analysis was between students' answers in the questionnaire and in the test, regarding the types of collocations they had more trouble with, was non+noun combinations. Besides, in general, from participants' use of collocations, the kind of collocations they had issues with were mainly preposition and noun combinations: preposition+noun, noun+preposition, noun+noun and noun+verb and verb + noun (pronoun or prep. phrase).

In this sense, on the one hand, to support the first research hypothesis *-if there is an observable L1 interference, it can be reasonably expected that this will affect the use of collocations in L2-*, it can be concluded that students' L1 indeed affects their use of written collocations. However, it was found that there are other different factors that cause them to make errors (*lack of knowledge and practice, and overgeneralization*). On the other hand, for the second hypothesis *-students' perceptions towards the impact of the L1 interference with the use of written collocations on the L2 are mostly positive-* the participants showed a neutral position as some of them considered the L1 has a positive influence with the use of written collocations on the L2, and some others thought this influence is negative. Finally, it is important to notice

that the type of collocation use can determine the causes of errors since participants had more L1 interference on the multiple-choice activity, but not much in the one where they had to create them from context.

#### **4. Recommendations**

This work provides a contribution in the field of research in written collocations since there are currently few available studies conducted in Colombia. What's more, there is no research based on the country's public universities, specifically in the ELT programs. That is why it is hoped that this study will contribute to fill the gap existing in this area of study. It would not be unreasonable to expect that our study will provide valuable information for future research.

Based on the findings and conclusions presented the following recommendations are suggested. First, academics and professors should carry out more research in English collocations at universities, specifically ELT programs. Students who are in these programs will be teachers in the future, they will have to verify their language proficiency, and also, they will have to assess this topic in their classes. Thus, investigating this topic will be extremely helpful for professors to know what decisions to make in the classroom.

Second, professors should apply teaching and learning strategies in the ELT programs to improve students' written collocations knowledge; consequently, this knowledge will be helpful for learners to know how to use them. This is one of the critical points as it was evident how the participants recognized the lack of knowledge they had on the topic.

Finally, there is a pronounced need to raise teachers' awareness about the importance of English collocations in the process of teaching and learning the language. This could pave the way for future research within the framework of sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

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**Appendices****Appendix A***Qualitative Instrument: Questionnaire*

- 1.** How long have you been studying English?
  - a. 3 to 5 years
  - b. 5 to 7 years
  - c. 7 or more years
- 2.** Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 3.** In what ways has the English-speaking context influenced your learning of the language??
  - Open answer
- 4.** Did you study in a public or private school?
  - a. Public school
  - b. Private school
- 5.** Briefly describe your English classes at school.
  - Open answer
- 6.** In what ways does your L1 affect the acquisition of your L2?
  - a. When I don't know the word in the L2
  - b. When I am speaking with my classmates or friends
  - c. To translate in my head before speaking in the L2
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7.** From a scale of 1 to 5, how useful is using your L1 in your L2 learning process?
  - a.1
  - b.2

c.3

d.4

e.5

8. Which writing strategies do you use when you write academic texts?

a. Transferring Spanish structures

b. Highlighting main ideas

c. Searching information

d. Writing an outline

e. Reading

f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. From a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you know about collocations?

a.1

b.2

c.3

d.4

e.5

10. Have you ever had instructions on collocations only in your English classes or academic writing classes?

a. English classes

b. b. Academic writing classes

c. c. Both

d. None

11. Do you consider that a professor should implement a specific class of the course just to explain what collocations are or to give you instructions about it?

a. Yes

b. No

12. 12. If you answered yes in the previous question, why do you consider so?

- Open answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**13.** Regarding collocational errors, what do you consider is the main cause of these errors?

Open answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**14.** The following list consists of English collocation categories with their corresponding examples. From your personal experience, which of these categories are the most difficult to use?

- a. Verb + noun: throw a party / accept responsibility
- b. Adjective + noun: square meal / grim determination
- c. Verb + adjective + noun: take vigorous exercise / make steady progress
- d. Adverb + verb: strongly suggest / barely see
- e. Adverb + adjective: utterly amazed / completely useless
- f. Adverb + adjective + noun: totally unacceptable behaviour
- g. Adjective + preposition: guilty of / blamed for / happy about
- h. Verb + adverb: abject poverty / choose badly
- i. Noun + noun \*: pay packet / window frame

**15.** Based on the categories that you chose above, explain what makes them difficult for you to use (cause).

Open answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### *Quantitative Instrument: Collocation Test*

This test was adapted by Daniela Abreo, Valentina Moreno and Ruth Pacheco from questionnaires carried out by different researchers such as Denizer (2017), Hajebi (2017) and Ucar and Yukselir (2015).

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify whether the first language or native language (Spanish) interferes with the learning of a second language (English) as well as with the use of written collocations.

This questionnaire will be divided into three sections. The first section will have demographic questions such as age, sex, educational background, occupation, among others. The second section will cover questions related to the frequency with which the first language interferes with the learning of a second language. Finally, the third one will focus on the use of written collocations. All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data will be kept in a secure location and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the interviews will be destroyed.

### **Section 1: Demographic questions**

#### **Age:**

- 17 to 20 years old
- 20 to 23 years old
- 23 to 26 years old
- 26 onwards

#### **Sex:**

- feminine
- masculine

#### **Occupation:**

- student
- teacher-student

#### **Time learning English (years)**

- 1 to 2
- 2 to 4
- 4 to 6
- 6 or more

**Section 2: L1 influence**

In this section we want to know through the answers given the frequency and perceptions that you have regarding the use and influence that your first language, in this case Spanish, has on the second language, English, in different situations within your second language acquisition process. Choose the answer that you consider represents your case.

**Part 1:** I experience interference of mother tongue in:

	<b>1 -Most of the time</b>	<b>2 -Some of the time</b>	<b>3 -Seldom</b>	<b>4 -Never</b>
1. Grammar				
2. Vocabulary				
3. Pronunciation				
4. Spelling				

**Part 2:** Mother tongue makes second-language learning hard while:

	<b>1. -Always</b>	<b>2. -Sometimes</b>	<b>3. -Seldom</b>	<b>4. -Never</b>
1. Reading				
2. Speaking				

3. Listening				
4. Writing				

**Part 3:** I make errors:

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
When a teacher insists on using only English in class					
When making a sentence in L2 is preceded by thinking in L1					
By looking for the meaning of a new word from a monolingual dictionary (English-English)					
When I have to speak without any preparation					
While translating a passage into my L1					

While translating a passage into target language					
--	--	--	--	--	--

**Part 4:** I have difficulty with:

	<b>A great deal</b>	<b>Much</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Little</b>	<b>Never</b>
English alphabet					
Capital letters					
Affixes					
Articles (a-an-the)					
Prepositions in English					
Fricative sounds (ð, θ)					
Learning words such as “dessert” and “desert”					
Homophones like “meet”, and “meat”					

Pluralizing the words (goose, geese)					
Learning irregular verbs					
Learning words which have 2 grammatical functions (verb-noun)					
Phonetics of words like “knight” or “comb”					
English tenses					

### Section 3: Use of written collocations

In this section, participants should choose the only collocation they consider is correct for the word that is in **bold**. The aim of this section is to find out how participants use the written collocations in English.

**Part 1:** Choose the correct answer that can best collocate with the **bold words**.

1. His latest **album**\_\_\_\_\_in the spring.

- a) emerges
- b) appears
- c) comes out

2. He studied his books\_\_\_\_\_his father's **advice**.

- a) under
- b) on
- c) in

3. I've always had a certain **fondness**\_\_\_\_\_her

- a) towards
- b) for
- c) of

4. Obviously there wasn't any **point**\_\_\_\_\_waiting longer.

- a) in
- b) at
- c) on

5. Education has become an important **campaign**\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) issue
- b) topic
- c) subject

6. **Communication** between the two sides has\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) broken down

- b) seized up
- c) taken up

7. **Business** is \_\_\_\_\_ for estate agents in the south as the property market hots up.

- a) booming
- b) growing
- c) prospering

8. The stereophonic earphones can be used **in connection** \_\_\_\_\_ the new sound system.

- a) to
- b) of
- c) by

9. The value of property almost doubled during the **interim** \_\_\_\_\_

- a) space
- b) period
- c) interval

10. She was chosen in **preference** \_\_\_\_\_ her sister.

- a) to
- b) over
- c) upon

**Part 2:** Choose the correct answer that can best collocate with the **bold word (s)**.

1. The bridge is a remarkable **tribute** \_\_\_\_\_ the skill of the Victorian railway engineers.

- a. for

b. at

c. to

2. Men and women who want freedom and growth should\_\_\_\_\_ **action** immediately.

a. make

b. come

c. take

3. They were\_\_\_\_\_ in a real **dilemma**.

a. seen

b. caught

c. found

4. Disease Control and Prevention report that more than 200.000 Americans\_\_\_\_\_ **food poisoning** every single day.

a. get

b. do

c. make

5. If the boss wanted to see him, he was probably going to\_\_\_\_\_ **fired**.

a. go

b. get

c. come

6. The club has a **responsibility**\_\_\_\_\_ its members.

a. to

b. on

c. in

7. I suddenly **thought**\_\_\_\_\_a way I could help.

- a. on
- b. of
- c. in

8. If you start to get too many things in your head, you will\_\_\_\_\_ **crazy**.

- a. have
- b. get
- c. go

9. You have to make a living and if you're smart you can\_\_\_\_\_ **a fortune** in a short time

- a. make
- b. get
- c. do

**10.** Politically motivated people in the State Department decided to \_\_\_\_\_ **an attempt** to find that letter.

- a. make
- b. have
- c. do

**Part 3:** Start by reading through the sentences below. Then take one word from the box on the left and combine this with one from the box on the right to make a collocation. (Note that more than one pairing may be possible and that some words appear more than once.) Then try to match your combinations with the spaces in the sentences below.

• abstract	• lines	• a ban	• thought
• err on	• crisis of	• crimes	• intervals
• at regular	• research	• intersect	• radius
• imposed	• legitimate	• concern	• confidence
• with in	• perpetrated	• institutes	• the side of caution

1. Most academic journals are published \_\_\_\_\_, perhaps every month or every quarter.
2. While it is probably true, they are not capable of \_\_\_\_\_, most animals appear to experience a range of emotions.
3. In the 1970's, the price of oil increased dramatically, causing an international economic \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Most people accept that fighting against terrorism is a \_\_\_\_\_ of any government.
5. Because of the danger of an explosion, everyone who was \_\_\_\_\_ of 500 metres of the bomb was evacuated.
6. Before publishing the results of new research, it is better to \_\_\_\_\_ and recheck the results.
7. On this graph, where the two \_\_\_\_\_ we find the ideal balance.
8. Following the rise in violence, the government \_\_\_\_\_ on the private ownership of guns.
9. Because of the work of \_\_\_\_\_, there is increasing hope that effective treatments for AIDS will soon be available.
10. He \_\_\_\_\_ which were so terrible that a massive manhunt was launched by the police to find him

