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AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOST COMMON L1 INTERFERENCE GRAMMAR, VOCABULARY AND SYNTAX ERRORS OF LITHUANIAN LEARNERS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH

Annotation. The paper describes a study on the most common English mistakes among Lithuanians in written tasks on the topic of business and finance. The study was conducted with high school students and university students, and the effectiveness of error feedback in reducing the occurrence of errors was also examined by comparing 2 written texts of each participant. Grammatical errors related to the use of articles and punctuation were found to be the most common types of errors, and feedback on errors was found to be an effective tool in increasing learner motivation and understanding, reducing common errors but not reducing the most common types of errors. The research showed that detailed, personalized feedback can help minimize mistakes in writing assignments, especially if it can be accessed during or in between tasks. However, it is uncertain whether this method will have long-lasting benefits or if improvements are dependent on continual feedback reference. Participants were advised to keep their error feedback forms and utilize teachers' feedback as a constant guide for improvement. We plan to utilize data on frequently occurring errors to conduct additional research on tackling and enhancing language errors that have become ingrained, employing various strategies. Based on the findings, directions for future research were identified. In the future we intend to carry out a study, using controlled texts with a pre-determined number of errors in diagnostic testing. This would allow us to more precisely analyse learners' improvements in the use of given structures, through a more extensive research.

Keywords: error analysis; contrastive analysis; L1 interference; university students; writing skills.

Introduction

Many error-analysis-based studies have been carried out in English as second language learner groups, allowing for the identification of commonly-occurring errors to increase learner and teacher awareness, and facilitate addressing the common errors. The aim of this study was to analyse errors resulting from L1 interference among Lithuanian learners of English, and in doing so raise learner awareness of errors, whilst attempting to address these using error feedback.

The research process was carried out based on error analysis focusing on the actual output of learners and contrastive analysis allowing the identification of points of difficulty and interference. The study focused on written English, due to the importance of these skills in an academic and professional setting, and the practical advantages of using written text for analysis, as well as the fact that writing is considered one of the hardest skills to master in a language. The importance of writing in international business careers was a reason for the focus on written English, as the participants were enrolled in business or finance English courses as part of their undergraduate studies.

It was found that article related errors were the most commonly occurring by a significant margin, as well as the error type committed by the largest percentage of participants, followed by word choice errors, punctuation errors, and preposition errors, with other error types mentioned below. In terms of the effectiveness of an error feedback form in reducing errors, it was found that the overall number of errors per student was reduced, though this was not the case with the most commonly occurring error types. There may be several reasons for this, as highlighted in the limitations section, and further research will be carried out in response to this outcome. In terms of learners' perception of the process, feedback was positive, with all participants saying they found the error feedback form useful in improving their motivation and understanding. Given the importance of motivation in language learning, this is a positive outcome.

Theoretical Background

L1 interference in language learning is a well-documented phenomenon, recognised as a substantial influence on the development of language skills. Interference was defined by Janulevicienė and Kavaliauskienė (2000) as the application of linguistic features from one language to another by a bilingual or multilingual speaker. Language transfer may occur from a mature speaker's first language to a second language they are acquiring or from an L2 back to the L1. Interference can be classified as "positive" or "negative", with positive interference aiding learners in acquisition and negative interference hindering acquisition.

L1 Interference has been widely investigated and remains pertinent across many languages, for example, case studies carried out on the writing of English learning Chinese students by Niswa (2022) and speech errors of Chinese learners of English by Krish and May (2020), who both focused on identifying common errors caused by L1 interference, and found articles and preposition errors to be common. Similarly, error analysis-based research on L1 interference was carried out on Italian learners of English and Spanish by Mahnaz (2022), who focused on writing, comparing inter and intra-lingual errors, emphasising the importance of L1 interference errors. Also relevant was the work of Kaspars (2012), investigating false cognates between Lithuanian and English among interpreters, assembling a comprehensive list of commonly occurring negative transfer errors.

Writing skills are among the most challenging aspects of language acquisition and an area of difficulty for students and teachers (Pop & Sim, 2010). This may explain why they are often neglected compared to other skills, despite being an important aspect of careers in many sectors, including the business sector, where error-free emails and reports are expected. As a result, the development of proficiency in writing during a business English or similar course should be prioritized. This has become increasingly important with investment growth in various sectors in Lithuania, particularly the technology sector and international business, where these communicative skills have become invaluable, giving rise to greater demand for interpreters, translators, and workers with strong English skills. This has been affected by such factors

as Lithuania's entry into the European Union. The increasing demand for English language proficiency in a business environment, and other careers, was highlighted by Jucevičienė (2017), who attributed this demand to multiple factors, including globalisation, free migration, etc.

Expected Errors Based on Language Differences

Below, some differences between Lithuanian and English are highlighted to explain and predict L1 interference errors. Though both languages are classified as Indo-European in origin, there are fundamental differences between the two. These include differences in sound systems, pronunciation, rhythm, and stress, though this paper focuses on difficulties in grammar, lexicon and syntax, commonly encountered by learners of English. What follows is a brief description of some of the differences considered relevant, but for a more in-depth analysis of expected errors based on differences between the languages we suggest the work of Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė (2000) on grammar differences and language transfer, where descriptions and examples are provided.

Lithuanian is considered a synthetic language – where forms are made through changes in the structure of words (e.g., verb conjugation and adjective / noun declension). There is no fixed word order. There are three main tenses – past, present and future, and neither progressive nor perfect forms of verbs exist. There are no auxiliary verbs like 'be, do, have, shall, will' or articles like 'a, an, or the'. Phrasal verbs are non-existent in Lithuanian (Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė (2000)).

Other expected errors involve subject – verb agreement, the use of the future tense in the first conditional (a feature of Lithuanian, not present in English, where the present tense is used). The use of the full infinitive with "to" after modal verbs is commonly observed, as the infinitive form follows modals in Lithuanian, whereas English modal verbs are followed by the bare infinitive (without "to").

Lithuanian learners often make errors involving the gerund in English, which is not present in Lithuanian, mistakenly using the infinitive. Countable and uncountable nouns are also an area of confusion for Lithuanian learners of

English, as these differ between the languages. The use of the non-gendered, 3rd person singular pronoun “they” also appears problematic for Lithuanian learners of English, who almost exclusively use “he” when referring to a generic subject. Another common error is confusion about when to use the demonstrative adjectives, pronouns or articles “this / that / these / those”.

One more area predicted to be problematic is in false cognates between Lithuanian and English, an area covered in detail by Kasparė (2012), who identified many “false-friends” analyzing the work of interpreters. This was relevant as many of the students on the business English course had expressed plans to work as interpreters after graduation, so including word-choice errors caused by L1 interference in the analysis could potentially help to reduce errors at an early stage for prospective interpreters. Kasparė (2012) claims that, despite considerable difference between the languages, several apparently similar words appear, and are either partial false friends (with some connection in meaning), or absolute false friends (with no shared meaning). Without a strong knowledge of the Lithuanian vocabulary, attributing word-choice errors to false-cognates from the L1 is not always possible, however.

Camilleri (2004) identified different forms of L1 interference error, including one described as ‘new category’, referring to the presence of a new area of grammar in L2 which does not appear in L1 (an example of this being articles, which are present in English but not Lithuanian), and it appears that many learner errors identified in this research fit within this category. In this study, categories have been developed based on prior studies of Lithuanian researchers, mentioned above, and our observations in the classroom.

The commonly occurring errors of Lithuanian learners of English have been observed across all levels of learning, including throughout university. This is consistent with the findings of several researchers that L1 interference errors occur even in the later stages of language development among advanced learners (Daukšaitė, 2019; Niswa, 2022).

Discussion on Study Concepts

Below is a brief outline of concepts considered important for understanding the study. For readers who wish for a more detailed explanation

of any of the following concepts, or other information in this paper, we suggest an in-depth reading of the references included in this section and the bibliography.

Several forms of analysis were deployed in the study, including *contrastive analysis* and *error analysis*. Contrastive analysis is defined as the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences (Johansson, 2008), whereas Schachter (1974) defines it as a point-by-point analysis of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, or other subsystem of two languages. The purpose is generally pedagogical, allowing for the creation of effective teaching materials. Contrastive analysis allows for identifying points of difficulty and interference, based on an understanding of similarities and differences between the L1 and the target language.

Error Analysis is a research model that, instead of beginning with a comparison of two languages, focuses on the actual output of learners. Error analysis proposes the study and analysis of errors that occur during the learning process, to discover causes. Proponents of error analysis are concerned with investigating strategies employed by learners during learning, as well as mutual interference of items within the target language.

Several stages of error analysis are suggested by Corder (1967): the collection of a sample, the identification of errors, the description of errors, the explanation of errors, and the evaluation of errors. Corder (1967) explains that while native speakers make unsystematic 'performance' errors (like slips of the tongue) from time to time, second language learners make more errors, and often the ones that no native speaker ever makes. An error analysis should focus on errors that are systematic violations of patterns in the input to which the learners have been exposed. Such errors tell us something about the learner's *interlanguage* or underlying knowledge of the rules of the language being learned.

Interlanguage describes the linguistic system that underlies learner language (Selinker, 1972). This system is visible when a learner attempts to use learned language in an unrehearsed communicative situation. Selinker (1972) defines interlanguage as "the linguistic system of the student that mediates between the native language and the target language, the complexity

of which increases in a creative process that goes through successive stages, marked by new structures and vocabulary that the student acquires”.

Error analysis and interlanguage analysis differ in that an error analysis is likely to demonstrate that errors are occurring in a certain area of language (e.g., the learner is repeatedly incorrectly gendering nouns); whereas an interlanguage analysis might demonstrate the system being utilised by a learner (the learner is applying masculine gender to all nouns and modifiers). In this case an interlanguage analysis provides information on the system leading to errors, as well as correct forms.

Of particular importance in the study was the concept of *language transfer*. Language transfer occurs when features from one language are applied to another by a user. This can occur in any situation in which an individual lacks native-level command of a given language. Language transfer is generally categorised as positive or negative, though negative transfer – viewing interference as a source of errors in the target language – is more widely discussed. Positive transfer occurs when features of a learner’s L1 aid acquisition of an L2, for example, through prior knowledge of cognates, or shared structures in both L1 and L2.

Negative transfer occurs when features that differ between the languages are incorrectly transferred from L1 to a target language. According to Lennon (2008), “the greater the differences between two languages, the more negative transfer can be expected”. Due to the structural differences between Lithuanian and English, in terms of syntax, vocabulary and grammar, it is expected that a fairly large number of L1 interference errors are likely to take place. Brogan and Son (2015) found that negative transfer errors occur at all levels of language learning, findings shared with much prior research.

Finally, *fossilisation* refers to the process of erroneous language becoming a habit, occurring regularly, and being difficult to correct in a lasting way. Fossilised errors occur even at advanced levels of learning and prevent the development of native-like fluency in a target language, regardless of a learner’s motivation to continue. Fossilised errors often seem to be impervious to explicit attempts at correction (Han, 2003; 2004).

Research Motivation

As teachers, our primary objective was to improve the level of the students' English language competence. In demonstrating the effectiveness of an error feedback form, we sought to present students with a tool to use individually for the continual improvement of recurring errors, even without the direct supervision of a teacher, to allow for long-term progress, beneficial in a future professional setting.

To contribute to a greater understanding of the Lithuanian-to-English learning experience was also a motive, as this is an area in which a lack of research is present, and with proficiency in English language so highly sought and prioritised in Lithuania, an area of importance. Due to the role of English as a lingua-franca, widely utilised in international business and professional environments, and when dealing with foreign visitors to Lithuania, the development of students' English is a worthwhile objective. Focusing on improving errors in written English can yield benefits for a setting where participants are required to write emails, reports, and other texts, where errors can be problematic.

The analysis of commonly occurring errors of Lithuanian learners of English can facilitate the development of targeted teaching materials, allowing issues to be addressed pre-emptively for efficient learning. Additionally, the findings of such research could be extrapolated to other learner groups whose languages have structural similarities to Lithuanian, for example, similar errors might be expected among learners from Slavic language backgrounds, which also utilise noun-declension.

The error feedback form in a table format could be an effective way for teachers to organise and analyse errors in writing, which can be a difficult and overwhelming task, particularly when many errors are present, or when the intended meaning of a text is hard to ascertain. We aimed to demonstrate the efficacy of this approach.

Finally, with this work an attempt was made to show that research based on an analysis of student errors and the contrast between their L1 and the target language can take place as a complement to an existing curriculum in an academic setting. The analysed texts came from assignments written by

students during their university term, which facilitated the process for all to be involved, saving time for researchers and students, and reducing workload. The texts were organised through the university's MOODLE system, and this facilitated logistical aspects of the study. With this in consideration, we encourage others to take a similar approach and broaden research into this area.

Research Methodology

The following section includes a description of the context of the study and a step-by-step explanation of processes involved, including the activities in which texts were produced, error analysis and recording, and the distribution and analysis of questionnaires. Also described are materials employed.

All participants were Lithuanian students studying an undergraduate degree in English for Specific purposes and communication at Mykolas Romeris University, where a minimum level of B2 in English is required before the course, ensuring that students were at an upper-intermediate level or above. Non-L1 Lithuanian students were excluded from the study to ensure relevance of results.

Method

The decision was made to focus our error analysis on errors involving the most relevant language areas, selected from those identified by researchers into errors of Lithuanian learners of English (Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2000; Daukšaitė, 2019). This was intended to facilitate an efficient comparison between errors occurring in the first and second tasks. This also simplified instructions to students and lessened the cognitive load taken on before the second task.

The errors anticipated were based on the experience of the researchers as lecturers, suggestions and information gathered by consulting Lithuanian teachers of English, and the error analysis of earlier researchers. Prior research had identified expected error types, but not quantified which errors were common nor provided comparisons.

The study took place in stages, involving an investigation into predicted errors based on previous literature, in which error categories were determined, giving an idea of what to be aware of when analysing submissions. The decision was made to note all errors found in the submitted texts, before creating error categories based on them.

Following this, the first writing task was assigned. Learners were given 7 days to complete the task, and then the assignments were marked, with errors transferred to an error feedback form, and consultations given. Upon receiving the first error feedback, learners were assigned the second task, given another week to complete the task. After submitting the second task they were presented with the second error feedback. Upon submission and marking of the second task, the final data analysis stage took place. Below is a description of each stage.

Task assigned (1). At this stage students were assigned the first writing task.

The activity on which the first error analysis was carried out involved writing a short summary based on a business or finance topic, a regular assignment during their university course. Summaries were from 200 to 300 words. The news articles were sourced from the same newspapers and journalists, to ensure similarity in the writing style and complexity of texts.

All texts to be analysed were submitted electronically, feedback and error analysis were carried out remotely, due to logistical complications arising from Covid 19. All texts were taken from British or American newspaper articles on the topic of business or finance, and the students were given a choice of 3 articles to write from in each assignment.

The activity was completed at home, and learners were not prohibited from using dictionaries or thesauruses – though they were instructed not to use reactive grammar correcting software. The detection of recurring L1 interference errors during such tasks had been a primary inspiration for initially undertaking this study.

Correction of written assignments and data analysis (1). After the first written assignments were submitted, they were checked for errors, which were highlighted. Errors were transferred into an error feedback form, where corrections and explanations were written. Grades were given with

comments praising positive aspects of the texts and outlining steps to be taken to improve future submissions. Learners were instructed to pay close attention to the error feedback form before future writing assignments, with the aim of reducing the recurrence of errors. Learners were then given a marked version of their assignment and the first error feedback.

After individual feedback, the first error analysis stage began. **39** sample texts had been attained. Errors were counted and categorised, divided into the primary categories of **vocab** and **grammar**, and then further divided into **18** subcategories (see section *results / discussion* for categories). The most common categories of errors were determined at this point. These categories provided a focus for the rest of the study – as the second task was used to determine whether the common types of errors were reduced through the use of the error feedback form between tasks.

This data was recorded for the entire learner group, and also recorded for each individual student, to allow for a comparison in the second analysis stage.

Task assigned (2). After the correction of the first task and provision of feedback, the second task was assigned. This followed the same format as task 1, a summary of 200 to 300 words of a business or finance article. Students were instructed to refer to error feedback forms from the previous task to attempt to reduce errors.

Correction of written assignments and data analysis (2). Once completed, the second task was gathered and marked, with errors added to an error feedback forms to be compared with prior results. Students were again provided feedback through the second error feedback form, and a comparison was made to determine if any reduction in errors had taken place. To do this, the number of errors from the most common error categories in error feedback form one were compared with the same categories in error feedback form two.

Error feedback form description. The error feedback form was designed to provide learners with feedback in the form of a table involving an explicit description and explanation of their errors, with corrections and the grammatical or lexical reason behind their errors. In this way learners were made aware of the L1 interference affecting their writing, where possible, and given instructions on how to improve. This allowed for observation of whether

an explicit and clearly defined explanation of errors, which learners could refer to between tasks, would reduce errors.

The error feedback form was made up of three columns, the first displaying the original text including errors, the second showing the corrected version of the text, the third explaining the reason behind the error, with corrections.

Questionnaire description. The decision was made to question learners on the effect of the error feedback approach on their motivation. The decision to receive feedback from students was based on the well-established importance of motivation in language teaching, with researchers, such as Seven (2020), stating that "motivation is vital in language learning, and one of the most difficult aspects of teaching is how to motivate a language student." Thus, any tool which improves learner motivation is valuable. The questionnaire was designed to allow learners to reflect on their learning experience, whilst providing qualitative data on the perceived effectiveness of this form of feedback.

Learners were presented with 5 statements about the effectiveness of, and their opinions on, the error database. Learners were asked to indicate whether they agreed, disagreed, or neither agreed nor disagreed with each statement. Space was provided for learners to write comments, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of their experience.

Participants were presented with questionnaires to determine their perceived effectiveness of the use of error feedback forms in reducing errors, after completing both tasks. At this stage participants were questioned about their attitude towards the error feedback approach to consult, and whether they felt that this form of feedback increased their confidence in writing.

Results / Discussion

Several areas of interest were investigated during this research, including identification and analysis of errors, and a comparison of error frequency before and after feedback. The analysis was split into two stages, the first taking place after the completion of the first written assignment, and

the second stage carried out after the second assignment. Below the process and findings of this analysis are outlined.

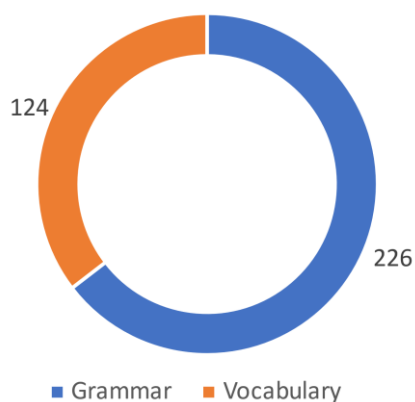
When recording the most commonly-occurring errors, the normal occurrence of each grammatical structure in normal writing should be considered, e.g., the use of the first conditional may be an area of difficulty for most students, but the number of times that a first conditional is used may be low in general writing, when compared to the use of articles or prepositions. For this reason, we have noted not only the most commonly occurring errors, but all errors which occurred repeatedly and seemed of note. Additionally, data has been included on the number and percentage of students who made the most common errors.

After task 1. Firstly, we sought to determine which errors were most commonly occurring, based on several categories.

The total number of errors recorded in the first assignment was **350**, across **39** papers analysed, an average of around **9** errors per paper. As demonstrated in Figure 1 below, a substantial majority of the most commonly occurring errors fell into the category of *grammar errors* (**226**), with the rest classified as *vocabulary errors* (**124**).

Figure 1

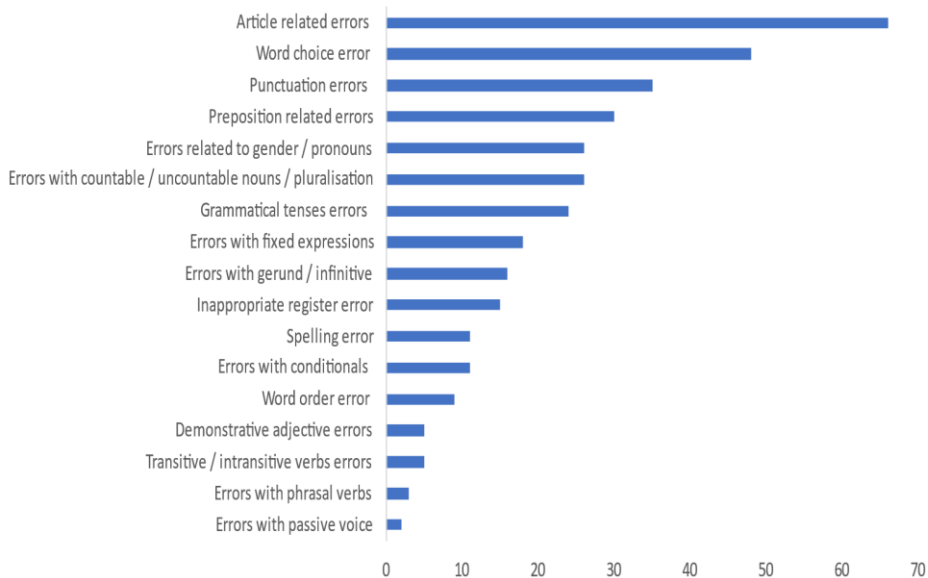
Grammar / Vocabulary Errors



Errors were further divided into the categories below and compared by frequency, as illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2

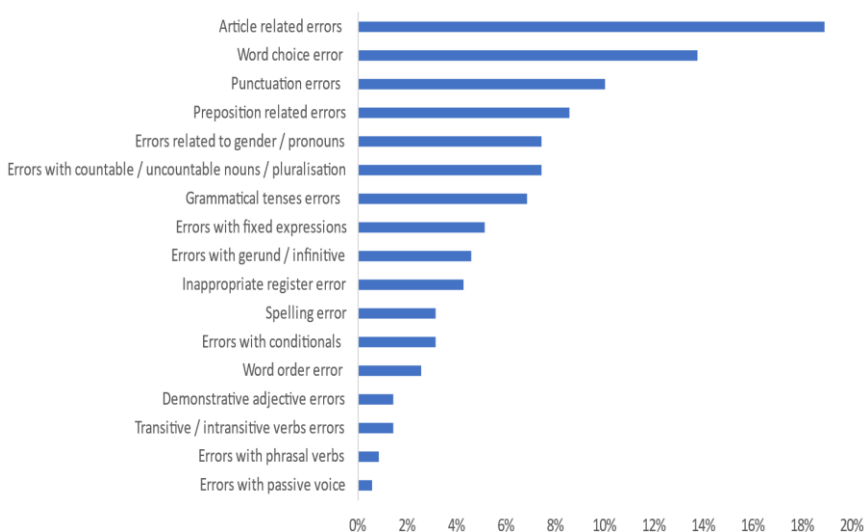
Error Occurrence of Each Category (Task 1)



The above diagram shows the occurrence of each type of error in the first task, with article related errors notably the most common.

Figure 3

Percentage of Total Errors for Each Category (Task1)



As observable in the figures above, the most commonly occurring error type was *article errors (usually the definite article)* (**66**), which accounted for over **19%** of total errors. This error was made by **35/39** participants, roughly **90%** of the total number of participants.

The second most commonly occurring error type was *word choice errors (where the wrong word had been chosen, likely often due to L1 interference)* (**48**). This error type made up **14%** of total errors, and was made by **25/39** participants, **64%** of the total number of participants.

The third most commonly occurring error type was *punctuation errors (almost exclusively involving the use of commas)* (**35**) which made up over **10%** of total errors, and was made by **25/39** participants, making up **64%** of the total number of participants.

The fourth most commonly occurring was *preposition related errors* (**30**) which made up almost **9%** of total errors, and was made by **24/39** participants, constituting around **62%** of the total number of participants.

Following these above, the most commonly occurring error types included *Errors with countable and uncountable nouns / pluralisation* (**26**) and *Errors related to gender / pronouns* (**26**), both of which occurred in around **a third (12/39 participants – 31% and 13/39 participants – 33% respectively)** of papers analysed.

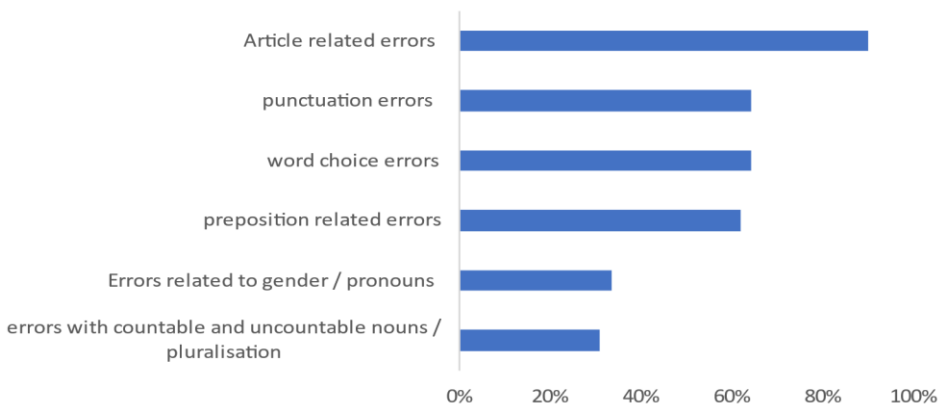
Table 1

Percentage of Participants Who Made Each Error Type

Type of error	Number of participants who made error	Percentage of total participants (39 in total)
Article related errors	35	90%
word choice errors	25	64%
punctuation errors	25	64%
preposition related errors	24	62%
errors with countable and uncountable nouns / pluralisation	12	31%
Errors related to gender / pronouns	13	33%

Figure 4

Percentage of Participants Who Made Each Error (Task 1)



**Note: total percentages add to over 100% as multiple errors can be made by each participant*

Analysis of article-related errors. A more detailed analysis was carried out regarding the most commonly occurring error type, *article-related errors*. **8** of the learners' submitted texts were selected at random, and the number of articles used was counted, and then divided into **2** subcategories: *indefinite articles (a/an)* and *definite articles (the)*. These were then divided into *correct uses of each type of article* and *incorrect uses of each type of article*, in order to provide an idea of the ratio of incorrectly used articles and to determine the extent of this grammar problem among learners.

Table 2

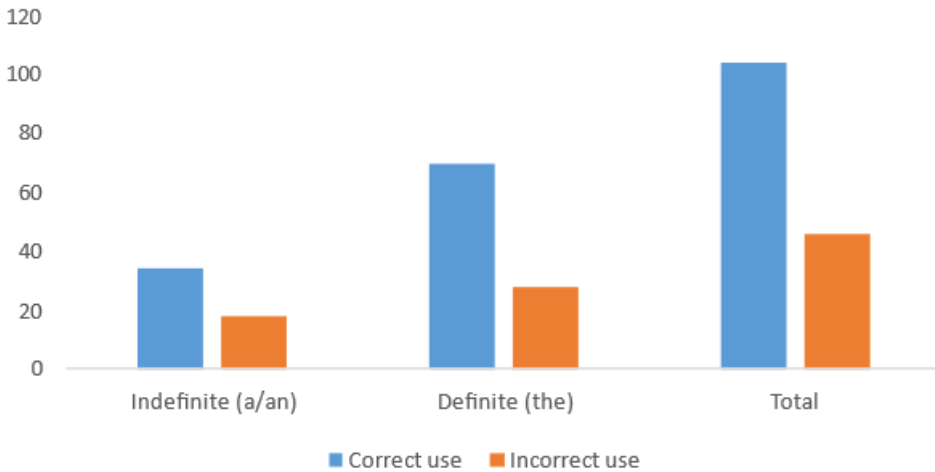
Total Numbers of Errors Calculated After Task 1

Article	Correct use	Incorrect use	Total
Indefinite (a/an)	34	18	52
Definite (the)	70	28	98
Total	104	46	150

Article	Correct use	Incorrect use
Indefinite (a/an)	65%	35%
Definite (the)	71%	29%
Total	69%	31%

Figure 5

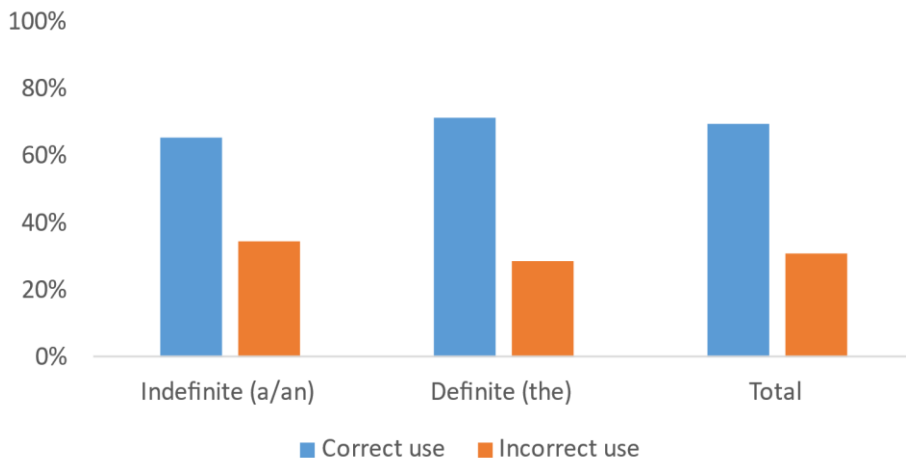
Numbers of Correct and Incorrect Use of Articles



The graphs above (**Figure 5**) and below (**Figure 6**) provide a comparison between the number of correct and incorrect uses of articles, based on the data gained from the previously mentioned random sample. The second graph details the percentage of correct and incorrect uses of articles.

Figure 6

Percentage of Correct / Incorrect Uses of Articles



The above analysis demonstrates that this error is extremely common, with errors accounting for almost a third of all uses of articles. This is unsurprising based on the experience of the researchers, and the fact that the L1 of the learners does not contain articles. This highlights the necessity of an effective way of training learners to use articles more accurately.

Other notable errors. Also of note was the frequency of punctuation errors, specifically with commas. This error occurred in over 60% of the papers analysed, the second highest frequency based on this metric. It was an unexpected area of difficulty for learners, and revision of defining and non-defining relative clauses, among other uses of commas, is advisable. According to Bučienė (2019), this can be a problematic area for Lithuanian students in their own language. Native-Lithuanian teachers of English were consulted regarding this and explained that commas are used with much greater frequency in Lithuanian than in English, and that the incorrect use of commas by learners likely results from a negative transfer. Students were found to tend to overuse or underuse commas. When consulted several students responded, “We were never taught to use commas in English classes”, suggesting that this area requires training.

Other notable error types, found to occur frequently but not included in the full analysis, are listed below, along with the number of occurrences in the first task:

Errors involving the incorrect use of grammatical tenses (usually perfect tenses) (24)

Errors involving the use of conditionals (usually the first conditional) (11)

Errors involving incorrectly used fixed expressions (18)

Errors involving the use of the gerund or infinitive form of the verb (16)

Errors involving the use of incorrect register (usually overly informal language) (15)

Errors involving the use of transitive and intransitive verbs (5)

Errors involving the use of phrasal verbs (3)

Some other error types were recorded but were either infrequent or not relevant to this paper.

After task 2. We also sought to investigate the effectiveness of using an error feedback form focused on explicit grammatical and lexical explanations of errors to provide feedback, in reducing errors between tasks. Although an overall decline in errors was observed, this was not the case in the most commonly occurring error types, which were not reduced by the use of an error feedback form. Though several students were able to effectively utilise the feedback to reduce commonly occurring errors, many others were not, and this will prompt an investigation into other methods of improving upon fossilised errors.

Above is a comparison between errors of different types in each task, with details given below. The total number of errors recorded in the first task was **350**; this was reduced to **320** in the second task, a reduction of almost **9%**. As mentioned, in terms of the most commonly occurring errors, there was no reduction observed, and in some cases there was an increase of commonly occurring errors. For example, *errors involving articles* were not reduced at all and increased from **66** to **67**, and *word choice errors* went from **48** to **62** – an increase of almost **23%**.

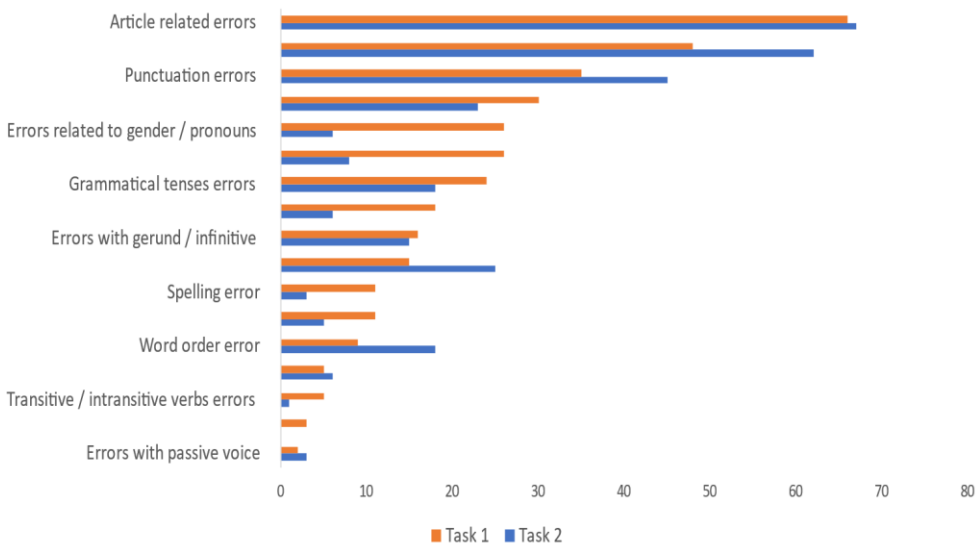
The average number of errors per assignment before the error feedback was around **9** and, after error feedback, this dropped to **8** errors per assignment. The greatest reduction in errors from one learner was from **17** errors (pre-error-feedback) to **5** errors (post-error-feedback), a reduction of **70%**.

Several students had an error reduction rate of **100%**, particularly among the highest-level students, who, after using the error feedback form, were able to eliminate all errors between tasks.

Some students were of a lower-than-expected English level for the class and made a very large number of errors in both tasks, with the highest number of recorded errors at **33** in a **246**-word submission. Some participants made no errors in either task.

Figure 7

Number of Errors Per Type, Per Task



Results of Survey

As mentioned, 39 questionnaires were distributed to determine participants' views on the process.

Table 3

Table of Participant Responses to the 5 statements in the questionnaire

	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5
a1	36	39	38	39	38
a2	3	-	1	-	1
a3	-	-	-	-	-

The statements are explained below, with the meaning of numbered responses provided.

s1: *The error feedback helped to reduce the number of errors I made*

s2: *The error feedback made me feel more confident about the writing task*

s3: *The error feedback was easy to understand*

s4: *The error feedback helped me to understand the reasons behind my errors*

s5: *I would like to use an error feedback form in future assignments*

Responses:

1 – *Agree*

2 – *Neither agree nor disagree*

3 – *Disagree*

As observed above, learners were satisfied with the process, and found the error feedback approach beneficial, with almost every participant stating that they wished to continue using this form of feedback.

Comments included phrases such as, “The error feedback form is a great way to check and understand mistakes”; “I really like this method of correcting mistakes. Conveniently, at any time I can open a Word document and check the explanation of my errors. It helps me avoid them not only in writings but also in conversations”; “The error feedback forms have been really helpful as it not only indicates what is wrong, but also shows how it should be written and clearly explains why this way is better.”

While the improvement of commonly occurring errors was not overwhelmingly successful after the first error feedback, learner perceptions of this approach were positive, and the error feedback form was seen as a useful tool in improving understanding and motivation among learners, giving a focus on areas to improve.

Conclusion

The findings regarding the most commonly occurring error types provided insight into which areas to focus on; namely, article, preposition, and punctuation errors, particularly when giving grammar-focused lessons. Revision and practice of several lower-level grammatical structures could be included alongside more advanced general English or English for specific purposes courses.

We can see that highly detailed, individualised feedback may be a useful tool in reducing errors in written tasks, if feedback can be referred to

between or during tasks, though the effectiveness of this approach in the long term is inconclusive, as it is not yet clear whether these improvements will be lasting, or whether they rely on constant reference to feedback. We encouraged participants to maintain their error feedback forms and continue using feedback provided by teachers, to serve as a continual reminder of areas to focus on. We aim to use the information regarding commonly occurring errors to formulate further research into addressing and improving upon fossilised errors, using a variety of approaches.

Limitations

There were several areas of the study which were limited due to logistical or practical concerns, and which could be improved on.

Firstly, the classification of some errors proved difficult, as it was not always possible to determine reasons behind an error (e.g., do vocabulary / word-choice errors originate from L1 interference or not? A detailed consultation with L1 Lithuanian teachers of English could help to elucidate this matter). In fact, this classification was perhaps the greatest challenge of the research, as some categories could be considered connected, and some errors could fall into several categories (e.g., *article related errors* and *countable / uncountable nouns / pluralisation*); however, we believe that the classification utilised in this paper still has value as a means of identifying areas to be focused on in teaching.

According to Camilleri (2004), "under ideal circumstances the researcher should ask every research participant to explain why mistakes have been made, but they are sometimes unable to explain this, and the researcher does not always have a possibility to discuss the errors soon after they have occurred".

It was not practical to question every student about errors; however, questionnaires were designed to go some way in asking students if the reason behind their errors had been identified and addressed in the error feedback forms. In future a "focus-group" style interview session might help to improve understanding among researchers and participants, as to why errors have occurred.

It was also not always possible to assign an error to one category (e.g., if it is an error using a fixed expression, a mistranslation, or a preposition error). Some errors could fit several categories, making classification complicated.

The English proficiency of learners was not always well-matched, with some learners exhibiting a below-expected skill level. This may have increased the average number of errors recorded. As mentioned earlier, some assignments contained no errors, while others contained as many as 33.

The level of the detailed error-analysis and feedback provision utilised proved time-consuming, which may not be practical for teachers, particularly with larger classes. A faster method of categorising errors and providing feedback could streamline the process.

A larger sample size may produce more conclusive results, and this could be achieved using a larger pool of students, in a collaborative effort between universities with the aid of a greater number of teachers.

Suggestions for continuation of research

In future research, directly consulting students about reasons for their error, or having a native-Lithuanian, well-versed in their L1 grammar at hand to advise, may improve the results and the depth of understanding behind observed results.

In terms of data analysis, an analysis could be made of how often the structures analysed were used correctly, compared to incorrectly, or how many times they were used incorrectly as a percentage of overall use, for each error type. This would allow us to determine which areas were most erroneous in general writing and to formulate a targeted approach to teaching.

In the future we intend to carry out an investigation, using controlled texts with a pre-determined number of errors in diagnostic testing. This would allow us to more precisely analyse learners' improvements in the use of given structures, through longitudinal research.

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**DAŽNIAUSIAI PASITAIKANČIŲ GRAMATINIŲ, ŽODYNO IR
SINTAKSĖS KLAIDŲ, DAROMŲ RAŠY TINĖJE ANGLŲ KALBOJE
IR SĄLYGOJAMŲ GIMTOSIOS LIETUVIŲ KALBOS ĮTAKOS,
ANALIZĖ**

Anotacija. Straipsnyje aprašomas tyrimas, kuriuo buvo analizuotos dažniausiai pasitaikančios anglų kalbos klaidos rašytiniuose lietuvių tekstuose verslo ir finansų tema. Tyrime dalyvavo aukštesniųjų klasių moksleiviai bei universiteto studentai. Taip pat buvo nagrinėjamas grįžtamojo ryšio efektyvumas mažinant klaidų atsiradimą, palyginus du kiekvieno dalyvio rašytinius tekstus. Nustatyti itin dažni klaidų tipai: artikelių vartojimas ir skyrybos ženklai. Grįžtamasis ryšys apie daromas klaidas yra veiksmingas besimokančiųjų motyvacijai ir supratimui, kaip sumažinti bendrą klaidų skaičių, bet nemažina dažniausiai pasitaikančių klaidų rūšių. Tyrimas atskleidė, jog išsami, asmeniškai pritaikyta grįžtamoji informacija gali padėti sumažinti klaidų skaičių, ypač jeigu ją galima gauti atliekant užduotis arba tarp jų. Tačiau neaišku, ar šio metodo nauda bus ilgalaikė, ar patobulinimai priklausys nuo nuolatinės grįžtamojo ryšio nuorodos. Dalyviams buvo patarta saugoti klaidų grįžtamojo ryšio formas ir naudotis mokytojų grįžtamoju ryšiu kaip nuolatinio vadovu tobulėjant. Duomenis apie dažnai pasitaikančias klaidas planuojama panaudoti papildomiems tyrimams, kaip išgyvendinti įsisenėjusias kalbos klaidas ir patobulinti įgūdžius taikant įvairias strategijas. Remiantis išvadomis, buvo nustatytos būsimų tyrimų kryptys. Ateityje ketiname atlikti tyrimą naudodami tekstus su iš anksto nustatyta diagnostinių klaidų skaičiumi. Atliekant ilgalaikį tyrimą tai leistų tiksliau nustatyti, kaip besimokantieji tobulina tam tikrų struktūrų vartojimą.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: klaidų analizė; kontrastinė analizė; L1 trukdžiai; studentai; rašymo įgūdžiai.