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**Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement Errors in  
Written Production: A Comparison between CLIL  
and Non-CLIL Contexts**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Previous studies have proven subject-verb agreement a difficult area for learners of English as L2. Thus, the aim of this study is to shed some light on subject-verb agreement errors and how these can be dealt with bearing in mind the following variables in relation to the participants: i) whether they attend a CLIL program; ii) their proficiency level in English; and iii) their motivation when writing in English. In order to do so, two storytelling tasks and an Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT) have been designed, together with a questionnaire to find out the students' motivation status when writing in English and the reasons for that. The results of the experimental test reveal that: i) the omission of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme -s in written production is recurrent; ii) the error correction process should be adapted to the group's cognitive and linguistic level and needs; and iii) the CLIL program impacts positively on the students' motivation and linguistic proficiency. Lastly, a didactic proposal is presented to review the problematic aspects, especially in the non-CLIL group, and to reinforce the positive aspects in the CLIL group.

**Keywords:** subject-verb agreement, CLIL program, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme, motivation, error correction.

## **RESUMEN**

Estudios anteriores han demostrado que la concordancia sujeto-verbo es un área difícil para estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua. Así, el objetivo de este estudio es arrojar algo de luz sobre los errores de concordancia sujeto-verbo y cómo se pueden tratar teniendo en cuenta estas variables en relación con los participantes: i) si asisten a un programa AICLE; ii) su nivel de inglés; y iii) su motivación al escribir en inglés. Para ello, se han diseñado dos tareas de narración y una tarea de juicio de aceptabilidad, junto con un cuestionario para conocer la motivación de los alumnos al escribir en inglés y las razones para ello. Los resultados de la prueba experimental revelan que: i) la omisión del morfema de 3<sup>a</sup> persona de singular -s en la producción escrita es recurrente; ii) el proceso de corrección de errores debe adaptarse al nivel y a las necesidades cognitivas y lingüísticas del grupo; y iii) el programa AICLE impacta positivamente en la motivación y la competencia lingüística de los alumnos. Finalmente, se presenta una propuesta didáctica para superar las dificultades, especialmente en el grupo no AICLE, y para reforzar los aspectos positivos en el grupo AICLE.

**Palabras clave:** concordancia sujeto-verbo, programa AICLE, morfema de 3<sup>a</sup> persona de singular, motivación, corrección de errores.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation orbits around three interconnected topics: subject-verb agreement in English, the correction of errors in the written production in English as L2, and the benefits of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The agreement between the subject and the verb in English has been demonstrated to pose certain difficulties for students of English as L2, which requires to explore which are the most problematic agreement features and the causes that lead students to commit these mistakes: is it due to differences between their L1 and their L2? – i.e., interlingual factors –, or is it due to difficulties posed by the second language itself? – i.e., intralingual factors (Suryo and Yustisia, 2018).

Once the most problematic areas, as well as their causes, are identified, the next step is to come up with a solution through fruitful error correction strategies for subject-verb agreement mistakes (Hoshino et al., 2010; Morales, 2014; Medina, 2015; Suryo and Yustisia, 2018; Morales and Montrul, 2020). For these strategies to be effective, the impact on the students must be positive resulting in motivation and linguistic improvement (Ferris, 2004; Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018). Therefore, several considerations have to be made by the teachers: i) the proficiency and linguistic needs of the students; ii) who corrects the mistakes; iii) which types of mistakes are going to be corrected; and iv) the attitude of the students towards the different strategies.

More and more European countries are implementing CLIL programs since the term was introduced in the continent in 1994 (Goris et al., 2019). In these programs, the foreign language and the content subjects are taught interconnectedly (Goris et al., 2019; Coyle et al., 2010) and these are based on four central pillars known as the 4 Cs: Culture, Communication, Cognition, and Community (European Centre for Modern Languages, 2004-2007). The foreign language is approached putting the emphasis more on the message than on the form, which results in a more naturalistic methodology centered around the use of authentic materials and qualitative input from native language assistants. The methodology implemented in CLIL programs has been demonstrated to provide benefits not only in motivation but also in linguistic and intercultural competence (Lasagabaster, 2011; Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau, 2015; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019). Consequently, it seems necessary to bring this methodology closer to non-CLIL contexts so that the students who do not attend a CLIL program can reach a similar linguistic competence in relation to subject-verb agreement in written production, and motivation, in this case through error correction. Therefore, the following aims are pursued through this dissertation:

- To explore different subject-verb agreement features and the reasons for L2 English students' problems in order to be able to find a solution;
- To explore different correction strategies for written production to be able to find the most motivating and linguistically effective one;
- To explore the benefits of CLIL to continue reinforcing them in CLIL contexts and to be able to bring them closer to non-CLIL students.

The organization of the dissertation is as follows. Firstly, the theoretical background includes the exploration of the topics under analysis: i) subject-verb agreement, ii) error correction, and iii) the benefits of CLIL. This section is followed by the research questions and hypotheses proposed to reach the aims. The fourth section covers the methodology of the experimental part, that is to say, the profile of the participants and the collection of data. The results of this experiment are presented and discussed in the fifth section, followed by a sixth section describing a didactic proposal to overcome the difficulties that the experimental data reveal. Finally, the seventh and last section consists of the conclusions drawn from the previous information.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **PART I: Subject-verb agreement**

Agreement is defined as a grammatical feature common to most natural languages and the relationship between two or more elements in the clause in case, number, gender, and person (Quirk et al., 1972; Vigliocco et al., 1996; Franck et al., 2003; Johansson, 2018). More specifically, subject-verb agreement is the grammatical link between a singular subject which requires a singular verb and a plural subject which requires a plural verb (Vigliocco et al., 1996). Although this rule is clear and common to all languages, subject-verb agreement errors are frequent in L2 learners' writing due to interlingual factors – i.e., interference from their L1 to the L2 –, or intralingual factors – i.e., difficulties within the L2 (Suryo and Yustisia, 2018).

This section is aimed at illustrating first the interlingual factors that may affect the acquisition of English subject-verb agreement by Spanish speakers. Then, the intralingual factors are presented in the case of English as L2, concluding with previous studies done on this topic with L1 Spanish L2 English participants.

## 2.1 Interlingual factors: morphological differences between Spanish and English

A shared characteristic between English and Spanish when it comes to subject-verb agreement is that in both cases the subject and the verb of a clause must agree in number; singular or plural (Foote, 2010; Hoshino et al., 2010). Nonetheless, these two languages differ in the way agreement is expressed. Consequently, this section is devoted to exploring important differences regarding the verbal morphology of Spanish and English which affect the use of subject-verb agreement.

The first substantial difference between these two languages is that Spanish is classified as a null-subject language according to the Null Subject Parameter, whereas English is a non-null-subject language. This means that Spanish allows the subject to be null because agreement features are already reflected on the verb and this helps to identify the subject in its absence. The verbal morphology in Spanish is intricate since it reflects tense, person, number, aspect, and mood (Vigliocco et al., 1996; Morales, 2014; Foote, 2015). English requires explicit subjects due to its poor morphology (Vigliocco et al., 1996; Sagarra and Rodríguez, 2022), and the agreement between the subject and the verb occurs only with person and number (Franck et al., 2003; Johansson, 2018). For this reason, subjects in Spanish can occupy a pre-verbal or a post-verbal position, whereas English subjects must be pre-verbal (Vigliocco et al., 1996).

In Spanish all the verb forms in all tenses are derived inflectional forms, except for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, while most verbs in English show inflection on restricted occasions – e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form of the present simple –, and only *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* represent more instances of derived inflectional forms either as lexical or auxiliary verbs (Davies, 1996; Suryo and Yustisia, 2018).

According to Morales (2014), the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis claims that the phonological structure of the L1 has an impact on the acquisition of the L2 morphology resulting in its omission. However, this interferes only with the production, and not with the comprehension. Then, Spanish learners of L2 English will make more mistakes due to the different marking of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural forms in the present simple. In Spanish, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form of the present simple does not show overt number morphology (as in 1a.), but there is overt marking in the case of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural with the morpheme *-n* (as in 2a.). Contrarily, the singular form in English is marked with the morpheme *-s* (as in 1b.) and the plural form does not have overt marking for number (as in 2b.) (Legendre et al., 2014; Sagarra and Rodríguez, 2022).

- (1) a. (él) *come-Ø* [Spanish 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, present simple]  
 b. he *eat-s* [English 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, present simple]
- (2) a. (ellos) *come-n* [Spanish 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, present simple]  
 b. they *eat-Ø* [English 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, present simple]

Therefore, if transfer takes place, learners will assume that there is not marking for the English 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form in the present simple as it happens in Spanish, thus, omitting the morpheme *-s* in English.

## 2.2 Intralingual factors: subject-verb agreement in English as L2

Subject-verb agreement is a phenomenon difficult to master in the first language, which entails an even greater difficulty for L2 speakers (Hoshino et al., 2010). The use of the verbal morphology also seems to pose a problem for L2 learners of English, who tend to omit inflection at high rates and for a long period of time after starting to learn the language (Morales, 2014). Nonetheless, she points out that this is not the case with all the verbs. It appears that bound morphemes (as in 3) are acquired later than unbound morphemes (as in 4) which present higher rates of accuracy in early stages of the learning process (Morales, 2014).

(3) The dog barks all the time. [Bound morpheme – 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular *-s*]

(4) My mum is taller than yours. [Unbound morpheme – copula *be*]

Additionally, L2 learners will make more mistakes due to the fact that grammatical and conceptual number sometimes differ (Hoshino et al., 2010). The examples provided to illustrate this mismatching are the following ones:

(5) The author of the novels...

(6) The drawing on the posters...

The grammatical number in both cases is singular because both nouns are singular. However, the conceptual number is different because in (5) one interprets that there is only one author who wrote more than one novel, while in (6) there are several posters with a drawing, so there are also several drawings although the noun is singular (Hoshino et al., 2010).

Morales (2014) compared in her dissertation the Impairment approach to the non-Impairment approach. The former suggests that agreement features, which are functional features, will never be fully integrated in L2 learners' performance. On the contrary, the latter

suggests that the access to L2 functional features will always be available to L2 learners although processing problems may appear at certain stages of the learning process since it is dynamic (Morales, 2014).

## 2.3 Previous studies on subject-verb agreement in L1 Spanish L2 English

This section consists of a brief overview of previous studies on subject-verb agreement with Spanish subjects whose L2 is English. Table 1 illustrates the main points of each study in relation to the topic under analysis in this dissertation, and a more detailed description is provided below.

**Table 1.** Summary of previous studies regarding subject-verb agreement in L1 Spanish L2 English

Author(s)	L1	L2	Task	Topic	Findings
Hoshino et al., 2010	Spanish	English	Oral sentence completion task	Level and accuracy in grammatical and conceptual subject-verb agreement	-Less proficient participants sensitive to grammatical number -More proficient participants to both
Medina, 2015			Written production	Use of the bound morpheme <i>-s</i> and unbound lexical and auxiliary <i>be</i>	-High omission of 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular <i>-s</i> -High percentage of correctness in <i>be</i>
Morales and Montrul, 2020			Picture comprehension task	Comprehension of agreement verbal morphology	-English 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular <i>-s</i> is acquired later than Spanish 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural <i>-n</i> in L2

Hoshino et al. (2010) tested 35 participants whose first language was Spanish and second language English. Their focus was on the relationship between proficiency level and the processing of subject-verb agreement in English with different grammatical and conceptual number of the subjects. The data were obtained recording an oral sentence completion task and the results show that the participants with a higher proficiency level in the L2 mastered both grammatical and conceptual number, while less proficient participants mastered only the grammatical number. This hints that grammatical number is first controlled by L2 learners than conceptual number.

Medina (2015) examined a total of 6167 Spanish participants learning English between the ages of 11 and 18 years old divided into three groups depending on their educational stage. The topic under analysis was the use of bound morphemes for tense and agreement in English, more specifically of *-ed* and *-s*, and of unbound lexical and auxiliary *be*. The task consisted of a written text with different topics for each group. From the analysis of these texts, Medina found that the omission of *-s* was a generalized problem in the three groups, in contrast to the



correct performance in relation to *-ed* and *be*. Then, he could not argue that the problem was with bound morphemes, instead he suggested alternative reasons for this incorrectness, such as the input received and the phonological features of each morpheme.

Morales and Montrul (2020) carried out a study with 32 L1 Spanish L2 English learners and 32 L1 English L2 Spanish learners. Their aim was to compare the participants' acquisition of agreement features in the first and the second languages. For instance, in the case of L2 English, they investigated the acquisition of the morpheme *-s* as a nominal marking for plural and as the verbal marking for 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. The participants were shown three pictures and they heard a sentence recorded by a native speaker of the corresponding language. Then, they had to point at the corresponding picture. The results proved both groups mastered the identification of plurality to a native-like level. Moreover, they found that L2 English participants performed better in the case of the plural marking *-s* in nouns and had difficulties identifying the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular *-s*, in contrast to L2 Spanish participants who seemed to have acquired the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural marking *-n*. They argue that these results were motivated by phonological aspects since the morpheme *-n* in Spanish is more salient than the morpheme *-s* in English. Therefore, the former would be acquired earlier in the second language than the latter. This led them to highlight the importance of input in the acquisition of agreement.

After having a look at previous studies in relation to the subject-verb agreement in L1 Spanish L2 English several conclusions can be extracted. First, regarding the tasks or type of data as instruments of investigation, both competence and performance have been studied in relation to the topic under analysis in this dissertation. According to the results, the unbound agreement morpheme *-s* seems to be problematic in both competence and performance. Within the subject-verb agreement, the areas that have been widely studied are the verb *to be* as a copula and as an auxiliary, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme *-s*, and grammatical versus the conceptual number of the subject. Therefore, most studies conclude that the verb *to be* seems to be less problematic than the morpheme *-s*, which confirms Morales' (2014) theory that bound morphemes are assimilated later than unbound morphemes. Additionally, grammatical number in L2 English results easier than conceptual number in earlier stages of the learning process.

To summarize the main points explored in this section in relation to subject-verb agreement, it is common to all studied natural languages. However, there exist some differences across languages that interfere in the mastering of this phenomenon in the L2 known as interlingual factors. That is, Spanish has a rich verbal morphology that allows the identification

of the subject when it is not overt or it is in a post-verbal position, thus, it is considered to be a null-subject language. While English has a poor verbal morphology, it is a non-null-subject language, and so subjects must always be overt and pre-verbal. Furthermore, the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis establishes that prosodic differences between the L1 and the L2 can cause the omission of the L2 morphology in the early stages of the learning process. On the other hand, two intralingual factors are the later acquisition of bound morphemes in comparison to unbound morphemes, and the difference between the grammatical and the conceptual number of the subject. Then, the Impairment approach states that agreement features will never be fully integrated in L2 learners' language, while the non-Impairment approach claims the opposite. The studies under analysis in this section regarding L1 Spanish L2 English show two main difficulties: the conceptual number of the subject and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme *-s*.

## **PART II: Correction of errors**

The correction of writing errors in the English classroom is generally considered to be helpful for students to be aware of what they are doing wrong, avoid these mistakes and improve their knowledge of the language (Rabehi, 2012; Ferris, 2004). Making explicit the students' mistakes encourages them to develop their competence in the second language and avoid the fossilization of these errors. Then, the correction of mistakes seems to be beneficial, while "its absence may be harmful." (Ferris, 2004, p. 55). Although not all researchers agree on the usefulness of error correction (Truscott, 1996, 1999; Mohebbi, 2021), this dissertation is based on the previously mentioned premise that it does have a positive impact on student learning and motivation.

If the correction of errors in L2 writing is considered necessary, how to implement it so that it results beneficial for the students' learning must be questioned. Ghabanchi (2011) defends the idea that teachers provide indirect feedback to promote the students' problem-solving and cognitive skills. However, the feedback should be adapted to the students' needs regarding their proficiency in the L2 and their development as writers. Ferris (2004) supports the idea that giving feedback on errors in writing consists not only of the teacher stating the mistakes, but it requires that students reflect on their errors and on the importance of linguistic accuracy and editing. Therefore, this author argues that students need practice and cognitive engagement in the process of writing to improve. The lack of students' active participation in the correction of their papers can negatively impact their motivation, improvement, and awareness of their weaknesses (Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018). Apart from all these considerations, Ferris (2004)

mentions a series of questions and aspects on which teachers must reflect so that the treatment of errors in the English classroom can be productive in the long term. For example, teachers must observe whether the students show progress when they are provided with feedback on their writings.

## **2.4 Error correction strategies: who corrects?**

The ways of providing error feedback in writing are numerous considering the different procedures and whomever the evaluation comes from. Some strategies require more effort by teachers, while others engage students more in the process (Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018). Different opinions may arise as regards who should provide the error feedback and which strategy is more productive. Agudo (2014) tested 55 students and teachers and concluded that they did not agree with the greater effectiveness of peer correction in comparison with teacher correction, nor with the idea that the former causes less anxiety than the latter. Focusing on the teacher group, this author found that 78% of the teachers supported students' self-correction. The results obtained by Yüksel et al. (2021) testing 15 EFL teachers are similar. The preferred option for most of the teachers was teacher correction (56%), then self-correction (29%), and, finally, peer correction (15%). Rabehi (2012) discovered that few of the 25 English teachers did not correct the errors due to large class sizes. Others, but still few, preferred collaborative feedback, such as peer correction, and most of them highlighted the importance of themselves giving immediate feedback, especially on evaluation papers.

In this section, three different strategies of error correction in writing are explored and classified according to the person from whom the feedback comes. These are self-correction, peer-correction, and teacher correction.

### **2.4.1 Teacher correction**

Ha and Nguyen (2021) contemplate the three types of evaluation under analysis in this paper and their results demonstrate that self- and peer-correction receive a positive evaluation by both teachers and students. Nonetheless, both groups consider that the teachers are the most appropriate people to provide corrective feedback arguing that: i) students think that providing feedback to their classmates may result somehow aggressive, ii) and teachers doubt the ability of the students to provide adequate feedback due to their proficiency in the language or the lack of knowledge of correction strategies.

Ferris (2004) states that teacher correction helps students and keeps them focused, although it involves the consideration of prior decisions on the part of the teacher and of different aspects

such as the students' needs, level, and context. Harmer (2010) proposes a technique in which the teacher and the students agree on a list of symbols corresponding to the type of error that is committed. For instance, *SP* corresponds to wrong Spelling and *WO* corresponds to wrong Word Order (see figure 1). When the students hand in a piece of writing, the teacher just underlines the mistakes and writes the corresponding symbol. This way, it does not seem like the paper is overcorrected and the feedback is more gentle.

**Figure 1.** List of symbols for correction provided by Harmer (2010)

WF	Wrong from: the <u>best</u> will be its achievements
WW	Wrong word: patient, funny <u>kindly</u> <sup>ww</sup>
T	Wrong tense: in the last few weeks you <u>didn't have</u> much fun
Λ	Something is missing: you arrived in Brighton the 1 <sup>st</sup>
	Λ
SP	Wrong spelling: <u>comfortable</u> <sup>Sp</sup>
WO	Wrong word order: you haven't seen [ yet] London
P	Wrong punctuation: Look out. <sup>P</sup>
V	Wrong verb form: the Titanic <u>sunk</u> very quickly
//	New paragraph needed
∅	Not necessary: John came in and he sat <del>down</del>
∩	You don't need a new sentence
	Join up the ideas
?	I don't understand what you're trying to say
~v~v~	This isn't quite right: it needs clearer expression (usually the teacher provides an alternative)
[ ]	This part needs to be re-arranged or reworded.
!!	You really should know what's wrong here because.
	- We've just done it in class.
	- I've told you so many times.

Another strategy to avoid overcorrection, also provided by Harmer (2010), is to focus on certain types of errors, such as only correcting punctuation or grammar mistakes. Thus, the paper is not full of red ink, which results demotivating for students, and also, this makes them pay more attention to a specific part of the language. Going one step further, Teba (2017) puts forward the possibility that teachers correct only serious mistakes that students keep committing time and time again. However, albeit this strategy seems to be fruitful for the students, it implies hard work from the teacher, who has to be aware of the mistakes that each of the students repeats constantly, and this can be almost impossible especially in larger classes (Teba, 2017).

Rabehi (2012) collected the strategies preferred by the surveyed teachers, some of which are giving the students drills and extra exercises focused on the common mistakes of the class, making comments on the most common errors among the class, or giving the students writing samples so that they can have a model for accuracy purposes.

### **2.4.2 Self-correction**

Harmer (2010) defines self-correction as the process in which students are told that they have made a mistake and they correct it. Then, this type of indirect feedback allows the students to make decisions on their own mistakes, which engages them more in the correction, resulting in a more motivating and productive process (Bitchener et al., 2005). Therefore, self-correction triggers the autonomy and the development of cognitive skills and raises awareness of their own mistakes. This way, the teacher plays an important role in marking the mistakes, but the students are the ones who correct them and, thus, become more independent of the teacher (Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018).

Self-correction can be carried out in various ways, and the difference between these lies in how the teacher points out the errors. One technique can be to use the symbols provided by Harmer (2010) and presented in Figure 1. Then, the students correct the mistakes according to the symbols that they receive in their writings. An alternative to this approach is that the teacher compiles mistakes committed by the students and projects these (Harmer, 2010). With this technique the teacher has to make the decision as to which errors to include. These can be the most serious ones, the most repeated one, focused on grammar, or vocabulary, for example. The next step is that students check their own writings to see if they have committed these mistakes to correct them.

### **2.4.3 Peer correction**

According to Balderas and Cuamatzi (2018), peer correction is the type of revision in which the students give and receive feedback from their classmates. One of the benefits of this process is that it fosters the students' cooperation skills, interaction, and autonomy (Harmer, 2010; Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018). Additionally, students get more involved in the process of correction, and they develop critical reading and thinking skills, as well as decision-making (Moussaoui, 2012). Therefore, they may feel that their opinion is heard and valued, they share learning and knowledge with peers, and the figure of the teacher is not seen as authoritative in this approach (Pishghadam & Kermanshahi, 2011; Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018).

Agudo (2015) investigated to which extent a group of L2 English undergraduate students from Spain preferred this approach for correction and found that 42% of the students supported peer correction only if it was carried out in small groups. Consequently, a system for implementing this can be to group them in small groups, correct their writing, and let them share and discuss the errors and possible solutions (Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018).

## 2.5 Correction of grammar errors in L2 English writing

The topic of correction of grammar mistakes in writing has been widely explored resulting in a highly controversial issue, especially since Truscott (1996). In this and subsequent articles (Truscott 1999, 2001, 2004, 2007), Truscott has defended the futility of giving feedback on L2 writing. One of his arguments against grammar correction is that he observed that his colleagues get frustrated because they correct certain mistakes, and their students keep on repeating these same mistakes. He was asked about how to replace error correction and noted that error correction should not be substituted, just eliminated, so that this time could be devoted to aspects that teachers feel necessary to improve the students' learning. For instance, he highlights the benefits of receiving a considerable amount of English input to be able to produce high-quality writings, which, in his view, is usually ignored in favor of the ineffective error correction and direct grammar instruction (Mohebbi, 2021).

Following a different line, other researchers defend that the error feedback focusing on grammar improves the grammatical accuracy of the students (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 2004; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2005). Despite disagreeing on some points of error correction, Truscott (1996) and Ferris (1999) agree on the fact that the different areas of the language are acquired following different patterns. Thus, different types of correction would be needed depending on whether the error is related to syntax, lexicon, or morphology (Ferris, 1999). Consequently, Ferris (1999) suggests that further research is carried out to find out which types of errors are more manageable in each type of error feedback. She points out that one type of error should be chosen establishing a relation between the type of errors under correction and the type of error correction feedback. She distinguishes between *treatable* and *untreatable* errors. The former are the ones that follow a pattern such as errors regarding verb tense or subject-verb agreement, and the latter include word order mistakes, sentence structure, or issues related to vocabulary. In order to correct what she calls treatable errors – e.g., subject-verb agreement errors –, she highlights the importance of direct instruction – i.e., directly from the teacher, and not among students – or self-editing as long as the students are trained to identify and correct serious mistakes for which they need to be explicitly instructed on the rules governing the patterns under correction. Furthermore, Ghabanchi (2011) agrees on the importance of self-editing adding that the best option would be to carry out this revision in class in the presence of the teacher and other students in case they need some help. The same as Ferris (1999), he defends grammar instruction in the EFL classroom to improve the students' accuracy in writing, be it in class or through individualized materials. For an effective grammar feedback and

instruction, teachers must take into account aspects such as the students' L1, their proficiency in the language, and their previous contact with grammar instruction and editing (Ferris, 1999).

## **2.6 The attitude of students towards error correction in L2 English writing**

Albeit extensive research has been carried out in relation to which types of correction to apply, how to give feedback, and other strategies centered around the teachers' job, the attitude and preferences of the students towards this correction has been much less studied (Lee, 2005). In general terms, ESL students show a positive disposition towards error correction in their writings and consider it a crucial part in the development of their linguistic competence (Ferris, 2004; Bitchener, 2008).

The effect that error correction has on the students' motivation will depend on which type of correction is carried out; that is to say, by whom and how feedback is given, as shown in the previous subsections. It is highly important to choose the correct type of correction since students may get disappointed and demotivated if their pieces of writing are full of red ink or if everything is crossed out (Rabehi, 2012; Harmer, 2010). Harmer (2010) also indicates that teachers must encourage and help students to have a look at the feedback received by the teacher in order to ease the correction of errors. If this is not the case, the teacher runs the risk that his future comments will not be respected by the students who can get demotivated. Then, teachers must make sure that the students have understood the corrections and provide opportunities for them to develop their cognitive skills and to take active participation in their own learning process. This participation can be, as Harmer (2010) proposes, in the form of suggestions or comments about their own mistakes and their peers', which will improve their attitude towards the correction process. One example of what could happen if these aspects are not considered in the L2 English classroom is provided in Teba's (2017) study, whose results show that only around 10% of the participants were satisfied with the correction process carried out by their teachers.

As important as the type of correction is the attitude and knowledge of the teacher for the correction to have a positive impact on students. This is because teachers must be aware of non-linguistic aspects such as the students' requirements and motivation (Maghsoud and Sadeghi, 2015). It has been proved that if they feel that the correction is focused on their needs and they feel valued, their attitude will be much more positive than if they simply receive tons of corrections without the necessary explanations or support (Oladejo, 1993).

Lee (2005) distributed a questionnaire among 320 L1 Chinese L2 English students aged between 12 and 18 to explore their attitude towards several aspects of correction. The results showed that 82.9% of the participants preferred to receive feedback on all the mistakes because they considered this an effective strategy for them to know what aspects they needed to improve. Some students pointed out that if they do not receive feedback on all the mistakes, they will not be able to learn from the mistakes that are not marked because they are not aware of them. On a different aspect, 75.7% of the participants stated that they preferred the teacher to correct the mistakes instead of just marking the errors and the students having to correct them. This shows a reliance on the teachers, and probably laziness, but it could be detrimental for their cognitive and linguistic competence development (Lee, 2005).

To summarize the main points examined in this section, error correction in L2 English writing must emerge from a well-planned and structured decision-making process on the part of the teacher bearing in mind the students' preferences and the linguistic and cognitive needs. Then, teachers must be aware of a series of important aspects:

- i) the debate that exists around whether or not to correct the students' writings;
- ii) who should provide the feedback and which strategies are more effective;
- iii) if they are the ones who provide the feedback, to which extent they should involve their students or themselves in the process of correction;
- iv) if all types of mistakes should be corrected, or if the focus should be put only on some of them and which ones these should be;
- v) if they choose to focus on grammar, they should be aware of the existing debate about correcting or not grammar mistakes in L2 writing;
- vi) the preferences of the students and their attitude towards the different types and ways of correcting their pieces of writing.

### **PART III: The benefits of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

In recent years, globalization has increased the general interest in learning foreign languages, in particular English. This interest is translated in many European countries adopting Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programs. This term was introduced in Europe in 1994 (Goris et al., 2019) and refers to a dual-focus methodology since the foreign language and some of the content subjects, such as biology or history are taught as interconnected aspects (Goris et al., 2019; Coyle et al., 2010). The target language continues to be an independent subject in which students are taught the common areas of the language such



as grammar and vocabulary (Wolff, 2007). However, the emphasis is put on the message and the meaning rather than on the medium and the form (De Graaff et al., 2007). In other words, the input needs to be contextualized so that the experience in CLIL classrooms has a relationship with reality resulting in a more motivating environment (Dalton-Puffer, 2002; Gajo, 2007; Lorenzo, 2007). The content subjects are taught in the target language and require an extra effort from the teachers as they need to adapt the methodology so that both the content and the input are fully understood and comprehensible (Goris et al., 2019).

The European Centre for Modern Languages (2004-2007) of the Council of Europe has designed a matrix that they define as “an awareness-raising and training tool for teachers” aimed at two main objectives: i) guiding professionals in teaching through CLIL and offer them resources to test to which extent they are prepared for that; and ii) providing a framework around the basic elements integrated in CLIL programs, which are Content, Language, Integration, and Learning, related to four parameters: Culture, Communication, Cognition, and Community. Therefore, the matrix is made up of a total of 16 indicators, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. CLIL Matrix webpage



Each indicator includes a brief description and a series of questions for self-assessment against this indicator. For instance, clicking on the indicator that relates Content and Culture, the following information appears: “Culture is deeply embedded in many aspects of communication. In CLIL it is necessary to ensure that there is not a cultural black hole in the learning environment. This is achieved through appropriate target language input (through materials, networking)” (ECML, 2007). Then, they provide an example related to the

corresponding indicator. In this case, they deal with the use of authentic materials, but cautioning against the difficulty of these materials as it could be counterproductive. Finally, five statements appear for teachers to evaluate their students in relation to the given indicator using a Likert scale. Regarding the Content-Culture indicator, one of the questions is the following: “The choice of materials used offers students opportunities for cross-cultural comparison”, and the answers are *very much*, *much*, *somewhat*, *not much*, and *hardly at all*. All in all, this matrix is useful to set a proper background and trigger a prosperous implementation of CLIL programs, especially in the member states of the Council of Europe.

The objectives of CLIL, according to Eurydice (2006) are the following:

- a) To prepare students for a globalized world and a demanding labor market;
- b) to instill students in values of cultural respect and tolerance;
- c) to provide students with the necessary resources and encourage them to achieve a fruitful communication in the target language;
- d) to aid students to broaden their knowledge in given content subjects through the target language;
- e) to contribute to the improvement of students’ learning and studying skills through an innovative methodology.

These general objectives are reflected in the results of various research projects that have managed to highlight the benefits of CLIL programs regarding language learning, cognition, or cultural awareness, especially in cases in which English is the target language. As Lasagabaster (2011) points out, the language learning process implies linguistic –i.e., related to language skills– and non-linguistic –i.e., related to motivational and attitudinal skills– abilities.

## **2.7 Benefits regarding motivation**

Navés (2009) argues that the language learning process is naturalistic in CLIL methodology, which means that the learning takes place imitating how the first language is acquired. This imitation is done, for example, increasing the amount of English input exposure, since they have one extra hour of English class per week, and the quality of this input because they are in touch with authentic materials and native speakers. Goris et al. (2019) summarize some of the benefits of CLIL and try to clarify their causes. They argue that CLIL students have a higher L2 level than those who are learning through the traditional curriculum. In addition, the former are more motivated and perform better in the L2, probably due to their higher proficiency and motivation. They also present more advanced skills linguistically and

academically speaking. However, these results are not seen immediately, but the benefits are noticeable, especially in the long run. Wolff (2007) attributes these improvements to the fact that CLIL students are exposed to a higher extent to the foreign language, as mentioned above, since CLIL programs include extra lessons in EFL together with the extra input they are exposed to during the content subjects.

In regard to the benefits related to cognition, it is worth mentioning that the focus is going to be put especially on motivation, since researchers (such as Lasagabaster, 2011; Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau, 2015; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019) have proved that CLIL programs have a great impact on the students' motivation. Lasagabaster (2011) compared motivation in CLIL and non-CLIL students. He concluded in his study that CLIL students seemed more motivated considering three aspects: "interest and instrumental orientation, attitudes towards learning English in class, and effort" (p. 10). In a later study, Heras & Lasagabaster (2015) contended that students in general feel less motivated because, due to the evolutionary stage in which they find themselves, they tend to reject formal settings, and traditional methodologies do not seem appealing for them either. Moreover, at primary school, they are used to speaking more and writing less, and the studies are student-centered, while in secondary education the case is just the opposite (Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015). Then, CLIL programs appear to be the solution to increase their motivation overcoming these barriers. This is so because CLIL programs are oral and student-centered, and they offer a different and innovative methodology. This difference lies in the more dynamic and authentic character of the classes that includes a wide range of aspects involved in the learning process and environment, such as the teacher, the students, or the classroom. Therefore, it can be said that both the quality and quantity of the input, as well as the authenticity of the materials and the classes play an important role in increasing the CLIL students' motivation in comparison to their non-CLIL peers. As Méndez García (2012) states, comparing these two groups of students, CLIL students present a higher competence in the language, but also a higher pragmatic competence due to a more meaningful and authentic L2 use in CLIL contexts.

According to Dörnyei (2009), learners become more motivated in the initial stages of learning a foreign language due to their engagement with the process itself, which is more profitable when, for example, students realize that they have the ability to learn the language. He studies the motivation of L2 students from the perspective of what he calls *L2 Motivational Self System*, which is composed of three elements: a) the *Ideal L2 Self* refers to the ideal that a language learner would like to achieve in relation to his/her attributes when learning a language;

b) the *Ought-to L2 Self* represents the necessary features that learners think they should have in order to avoid negative results when learning a language; and, c) the *L2 Learning Experience* applies to the real situation of the learning environment, such as “the impact of the teacher or the peer group”. Consequently, CLIL programs seem to influence the students’ motivation bearing in mind three aspects, since they provide opportunities for students to be aware of their language learning attributes to become closer to their ideal self and of the attributes that they need in order to avoid negative results to achieve that. That is, profitable environment that is created in these classes, which makes the learning experience more motivating and productive.

## **2.8 Benefits regarding intercultural competence**

Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau (2015) praise Spain as one of the leaders in Europe regarding the implementation of CLIL. In relation to intercultural competence, this leadership can be due to the linguistic and cultural diversity within the country’s own borders (Coyle, 2010) since there are some Autonomous Communities with a co-official language, such as Catalonia or the Basque Country. However, it is necessary to clarify exactly what intercultural competence refers to. As specified by Sercu (2005), intercultural competence is “the acquisition of intercultural skills, such as independent exploration of cultures or the ability to mediate successfully in intercultural situations” (p. 120). In turn, CLIL has been proved to enhance the students’ awareness of the relationship between different countries, their cultures, languages, and history (Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau, 2015) through the use of authentic materials (Rodríguez & Puval, 2012). Additionally, all this helps students to get rid of stereotypes, prejudices, and racist attitudes, and to develop their empathy towards other cultures (Méndez García, 2012).

Méndez García (2012) states that language learning, and more specifically CLIL programs, constitute a perfect tool for students not only to look into a different language and its culture but also to explore their own mother tongue and culture. This intercultural perspective is one of the central objectives of CLIL programs because the mother tongue is considered the starting point in the development of the appreciation of other cultures (Carrió-Pastor, 2009). Thus, both content and language teachers in CLIL programs mediate between the foreign culture and the students’ own. Therefore, students can have a wider and richer overview of the world, not just their own environment. Méndez García (2012) carried out a study with the aim of finding out the extent to which CLIL programs benefit the development of intercultural awareness taking into account the opinion of both teachers and students through interviews.

She groups the findings into three categories: i) attitudes; ii) critical cultural awareness; and iii) action-taking.

- (i) Méndez García (2012) results are in line with Ramos (2007). That is, CLIL fosters positive attitudes in respect to other languages and cultures. She highlights the words that some teachers used to refer to the students' attitudes towards the foreign culture. Some of them are "interest, curiosity, receptiveness, tolerance, openness, open-mindedness, respect and value, change of attitude, positive attitudes, acceptance and tolerance" (p. 203). Related to this positive attitude towards other cultures, CLIL students have been proved to demonstrate more maturity and critical thinking than non-CLIL students (Arnold, 2011). Consequently, Byram et al. (2009) defend that CLIL students are more prepared for unfamiliar or ambiguous situations, while their non-CLIL peers seem to experience that as a threat.
- (ii) Méndez García (2012) defines critical cultural awareness as the capacity of individual to assess their own and other cultures. This is, hence, related to the development of critical and autonomous thinking. Her results confirm the hypothesis that CLIL students are more prepared for "higher-level thinking skills" (p. 206) as a consequence of the learners' ability to process the input that they receive.
- (iii) Action-taking refers to the participation of the individuals in the society. That is to say, the capacity to put into practice their intercultural competence, which is related to the students' reaction to new situation referred to above. Her results prove that CLIL learners can react more decisively in conflictive situations and even act as "cultural mediators" (Byram et al., 2002).

On account of all that, it has been proved that CLIL is beneficial for the students in many aspects related to their intercultural awareness and competence since this program influences positively their knowledge on the own and other cultures, tolerance, autonomy, and critical thinking. Then, CLIL students are more open to confront unknown situations, more and they demonstrate to be more mature all in all.

## **2.9 Benefits regarding linguistic competence**

Apart from being motivating and developing the students' intercultural competence, one of the main goals of CLIL programs is to improve the students' competence and performance

in the foreign language. That is to say, CLIL is beneficial both for the acquisition of formal aspects of the language such as grammar and vocabulary, as well as for other communicative aspects such as oral and written expression (Gajo, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Goris et al., 2013; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019). In their study, Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau (2015) raised the question of the benefits of CLIL among content and English teachers. On the one hand, English teachers thought that some of its benefits were higher proficiency, the practice and improvement of oral production and comprehension, and an expanded vocabulary. Content teachers expressed the same opinion, adding that students have easier access to resources in English and they are better prepared to travel abroad.

Another of CLIL's benefits is that it provides opportunities for students to be in direct contact with conversation assistants who are part of the program and who are L1 English speakers with whom they can interact and construct their own input from the one received (Lasagabaster, 2011; Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau, 2015). This direct and longer exposure to the foreign language community helps students practice their oral ability extendedly, which does not usually happen in non-CLIL contexts (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Lorenzo et al., 2010; Lasagabaster, 2011). Goris et al. (2019) investigated five studies on spoken fluency in L2 English on CLIL Spanish students. They state that three of these studies put forward that spoken skill is the most benefited area, and this is linked to the higher exposure to authentic communication and materials. Nonetheless, other skills and language areas have been put under analysis in relation to the benefits of CLIL. Heras & Lasagabaster (2015) defend that CLIL is useful to activate students' prior knowledge and also to process actively new contextualized vocabulary. This improvement is also pointed out by Goris et al. (2013), who noticed a refinement in the students' knowledge of idioms and grammar, especially regarding writing skills. Benefits related to this skill are also reported by Ruiz de Zarobe (2011) among L1 Spanish L2 English students in CLIL contexts.

To conclude, globalization has awakened the awareness of the importance of knowing and respecting other languages and cultures, and CLIL seems to fulfill this requisite with its four central elements: Culture, Communication, Cognition, and Community. Its benefits regarding these aspects are numerous, starting with the fact that this program follows a naturalistic approach. That is to say, students learn the language in a natural way, which requires less effort and implies more motivation. This naturalistic approach lies in the use of authentic materials and input received from native speakers of the language. So, the benefits are not only

related to motivation, but also to linguistic competence due to the fact that from this authentic and quality input they are able to construct their own input and their proficiency and communicative skills improve. Finally, this program also allows students to delve into their own culture and another first-hand and respect the diversity. It has been proved that they become more mature, open-minded, and more critical thinkers by opening up to other situations and cultural knowledge offered by the program.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This section includes research questions raised and their corresponding hypotheses considering the topics and the information discussed in the previous sections of this dissertation. The research questions are presented in italics, and the hypotheses are illustrated in the paragraph below.

***Research Question #1.** Will agreement features be problematic for the participants in the different tasks?*

***Hypothesis #1.** It is likely that participants will not produce very elaborate sentences in the storytelling tasks. Due to the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis and because bound morphemes are mastered later than unbound morphemes according to Morales (2014), the participants are expected to omit the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular -s in the production task and judge incorrectly the sentences of the Acceptability Judgment Task in which it is omitted. Therefore, they will make more mistakes in sentences in which the subject is singular with a plural verb – i.e., omitting the morpheme -s – than in sentences in which the subject is plural, both in production and comprehension. However, they are expected to make less mistakes regarding unbound morphemes such as the verbs *to be* or *to do* as an auxiliary verb.*

In the AJT, it is predictable that the sentences that will concentrate the highest number of errors are the following ones: i) those with a DP as a subject, since participants have been studying pronouns since an early stage and they are expected to know which agreement feature corresponds to each pronoun; ii) those with subordination because these are more complex sentences involving at least two verbs and therefore also two subjects; iii) affirmative sentences since the agreement in negative sentences is more salient; and iv) ungrammatical sentences since the participants are expected not to have acquired some agreement features yet, thus considering grammatical ungrammatical sentences – e.g., they will judge as grammatical a sentence which requires the morpheme -s, but it is omitted.

***Research Question #2.** What role, if any, does the correction of grammar errors, more specifically of subject-verb agreement errors, play in the acquisition of L2 English subject-verb agreement?*

**Hypothesis #2.** The correction of grammar errors in L2 English writing is controversial in the sense that some researchers, such as Truscott (1999; 2001; 2004; 2007), favor the elimination of grammar correction, while others support this correction (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 2004; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2005). In support for the second hypothesis, the results will be positive in favor of grammar correction since it seems to be proved by a larger number of studies and scholars. Assuming this, the results would show that in the storytelling task 1, completed before the correction, the rate of incorrectness would be higher than in the storytelling task 2, completed after the correction. This is because the correction of grammar mistakes is expected to have a positive impact on the students' performance, resulting in a decrease of the incorrectness rate regarding subject-verb agreement.

**Research Question #3.** *How will students feel about the teacher and peer correction?*

**Hypothesis #3.** The correction procedure that will be followed in this study has the characteristics that students consider positive when receiving error correction, as well as the best for their learning. The correction will come from the teacher marking the mistakes to avoid overcorrection (Agudo, 2014; Yüksel et al., 2021), then by the students correcting others' mistakes marked by the teacher (Harmer, 2010; Pishghadam & Kermanshahi, 2011; Moussaoui, 2012; Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018). Therefore, since previous experimental studies about the students' feelings towards different types of error correction are taken into account, the participants in this study are expected to feel comfortable and motivated with the error correction process. Albeit some may feel a bit overwhelmed due to the indirect teacher correction and peer correction, which requires more cognitive effort and a higher proficiency level by the students. This is expected to happen specially in the case of the non-CLIL group as opposed to the CLIL group due to the previously studied benefits of the program on the cognitive and linguistic competence of the students.

**Research Question #4.** *What role, if any, does the CLIL program play in the participant's motivation and proficiency? Will the CLIL students outperform the non-CLIL students in the different tasks?*

**Hypothesis #4.** CLIL programs benefit students' motivation, language proficiency and intercultural competence, among others (Gajo, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Goris et al., 2013; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019). Therefore, CLIL participants are expected to show a higher motivation and better predisposition towards writing in English than non-CLIL participants. Additionally, it is expected that they would score higher



in the Oxford Placement Test, thus, the higher the proficiency the better the performance in all the tasks.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Participants**

The data presented in this study were collected from 15 participants, who were classified in two groups: 6<sup>1</sup> CLIL students and 9 non-CLIL students. These participants are between 13 and 14 years old and they are students of the second course of Compulsory Secondary Education from a secondary school in Castile and León (Spain).

In order to take part in the study, the participants had to meet certain criteria. These criteria were, on the one hand, that their L1 was Spanish and L2 English, and on the other hand, to have at least an A2 level of English. To check these criteria, they were asked to complete a Language Background Questionnaire (LBQ) and the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Initially, 20 students completed these first tests, but five were discarded because they did not meet the criteria mentioned above.

For the LBQ, the participants were required to provide information such as their L1, their L2, and the amount of time that they are exposed to the L2 per week. Of the 20 participants, 3 answered that their L1 was a language other than Spanish, namely Romanian and Bulgarian. Therefore, these participants were discarded. Regarding the hours of exposure to the L2 per week, non-CLIL students claimed to receive 3 hours of English per week, corresponding to the English classes at the secondary school. While CLIL students claimed to receive 4 hours, corresponding as well to the English classes. In order to make a comparison of the exposure received by the participants of each group per year, the hours of each group were multiplied by the number of weeks in a school year – i.e., 37 weeks. This resulted in non-CLIL students receiving a total of 111 hours per course and CLIL students receiving a total of 148 hours per course.

The results of the OPT showed that 2 participants had an A1 level of English according to the CEFR, so they were also discarded. The rest of the participants in both groups scored within the range of level A2, which is from 18 to 29 points. Nonetheless, in order to compare the level of the two groups more accurately, the mean score obtained by each group was taken

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<sup>1</sup> The scant number of participants in the CLIL group is due to the fact that this is the total number of students who are part of the program in the second year of compulsory secondary education at the high school where the test was carried out.

into consideration. The mean score of the non-CLIL group was 21.7 points and the mean score of the CLIL group was 24.3 points.

## 4.2 Collection of data

The process of collecting data took four sessions. In this case, a session is defined as a secondary school English class lasting 50 minutes. In order to elicit the data, five experimental tasks were used, as shown in Table 2. The storytelling task 1 appears in both sessions 2 and 3 because session 2 corresponds to the writing of the story and session 3 to the correction of errors on that same story. The time elapsed between sessions was similar in both groups since sessions 2 and 4 took place one week apart, as well as sessions 1 and 3. Therefore, the entire data elicitation process took approximately one and a half weeks for each group.

**Table 2.** *Data elicitation distribution*

TASK	SESSION	DATE	
		NON-CLIL	CLIL
Oxford Placement Test (OPT)	Session 1	Friday 18/3	Thursday 24/3
Storytelling task 1 (writing)	Session 2	Monday 21/3	Monday 28/3
Storytelling task 1 (correction)	Session 3	Friday 25/3	Thursday 31/3
Storytelling task 2	Session 4	Monday 28/3	Monday 4/4
Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT)			
Motivation questionnaire			

i) Firstly, students completed the OPT, which is designed to measure the L2 English proficiency of the participants. It consists of a total of 60 questions that participants have to answer either as multiple choice or fill in the gaps. Since these exercises are based both on comprehension and grammar skills, the difficulty increases as the test progresses.

ii) The second session was devoted to completing the LBQ and the first storytelling task. The storytelling task consists of seven strips representing a story whose main characters are animals, and it includes a short list of non-inflected words that participants were not supposed to know due to their level. Before writing, they were given some instructions. Firstly, they were told to write the story using mainly the present simple, the present continuous and the past continuous. This is due to two main reasons: i) these are the tenses that the participants are the most familiar with and ii) these tenses reflect overtly the subject-verb agreement on the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular with the morpheme *-s* and on the auxiliary verb *to be*, respectively. Additionally, they were required to write at least 5 sentences for each strip to ensure sufficient amount of data. As for the vocabulary, if participants asked for some words during the task,

they were told to try to write the same thing with other words to encourage their independence in writing in English.

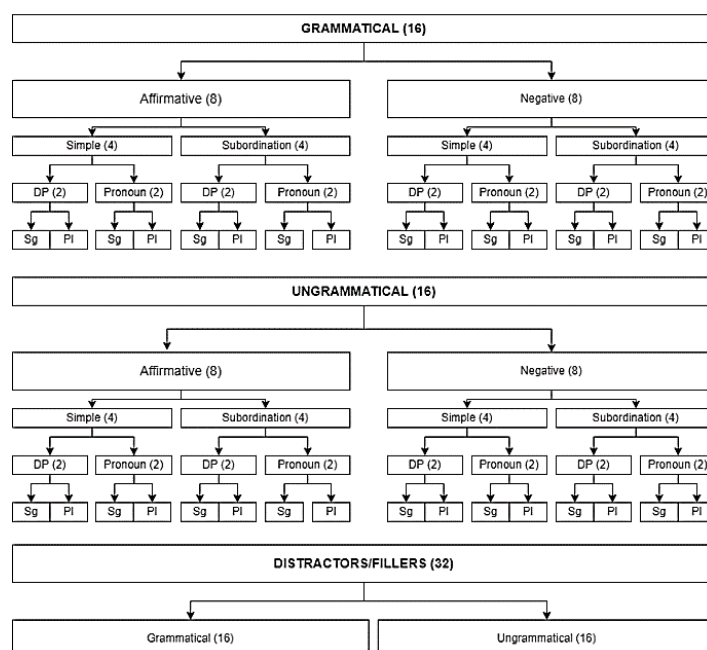
iii) The third session was devoted to the correction of the errors carried out in two stages:

a) The investigator corrected the essays at home using the symbols provided by Harmer (2010) (see Figure 1).

b) Then, in class, the investigator introduced the symbols to the participants. They were handed in the essays randomly, so that they received an essay that was not theirs and carried out peer correction, since the participants had to correct the mistakes that the investigator had previously marked. The most repeated mistakes were written on the blackboard and corrected out aloud to make them clear. However, as the focus of this study, special emphasis was placed on the subject-verb agreement errors.

iv) In the fourth session, the participants completed three tasks: i) a questionnaire dealing with motivation writing in English and the error correction; ii) storytelling task 2; and iii) the AJT. Firstly, the questionnaire is based on questions related to their motivation when writing in English, the reasons why they feel (de)motivated, how they felt towards the correction of errors in this investigation, and, finally, whether they took notes of these corrections. Then, the second storytelling task, in a similar vein as the first one, consists of a story with 7 strips and animals as main characters and the same instructions as for the storytelling task 1 were given. Lastly, the AJT consists of 64 sentences distributed as seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** *Distribution of the sentences in the Acceptability Judgment Task*



The 64 sentences are divided into *Grammatical*, of which 8 are affirmative and 8 are negative, *Ungrammatical*, of which 8 are affirmative and 8 are negative, and *Distractors/fillers*, of which 16 are grammatical and 16 are ungrammatical. In both the grammatical and ungrammatical sentences, the affirmative and the negative ones are divided into 2 simple sentences and 2 with subordination, which are in turn divided into *DP*, if the subject is a Determiner Phrase (DP), and *Pronoun*, if the subject is a pronoun. Each category includes one singular and one plural DP as a subject and one singular and one plural pronoun as a subject. In order to avoid number and person effect that might be shown in the task, the same singular and the same plural pronouns – i.e., *he* and *we* respectively – were used for these sentences.

(7) [AJT\_002] These students do their homework every afternoon. – Grammatical, affirmative, simple, plural DP

(8) [AJT\_032] \*People believe that we isn't the best football players. – Ungrammatical, negative, subordination, plural pronoun.

## 5. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This section deals with the analysis and the discussion of the results obtained from the data collected during the tasks. It is organized following the Research Questions (RQ) in section 3 in order to provide an answer to each of them.

### 5.1 Research question #1

*-Will agreement features be problematic for the participants in each task?*

In order to provide more comprehensible answers to the RQ#1, in this section the results from the storytelling tasks will first be interpreted followed by the results from the AJT.

#### 5.1.1 Storytelling tasks

On the one hand, it was predicted that in the storytelling tasks the participants would find more difficult the use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme *-s*, thus, omitting it (Legendre et al., 2014; Morales, 2014; Medina 2015; Sagarra and Rodríguez, 2022).

**Table 3.** Correctness and incorrectness rates in relation to subject-verb agreement with different verbs

				Storytelling task 1		Storytelling task 2	
				Non-CLIL	CLIL	Non-CLIL	CLIL
Unbound morphemes	<i>To be</i>	Sg	Correct	27.9% [26]	20.8% [15]	5.1% [5]	8.3% [6]
			Incorrect	3.2% [3]	1.4% [1]	3% [3]	0% [0]
		Pl	Correct	17.2% [16]	9.7% [7]	18.4% [18]	16.7% [12]
			Incorrect	2.2% [2]	2.8% [2]	<b>9.2%</b> [9]	0% [0]
	<i>To do</i>	Sg	Correct	0% [0]	1.4% [1]	1% [1]	0% [0]
			Incorrect	1.1% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1.4% [1]
		Pl	Correct	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [1]	1.4% [1]
			Incorrect	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Bound morphemes	Lexical verbs	Sg	Correct	1.1% [1]	4.2% [3]	1% [1]	1.4% [1]
			Incorrect	<b>17.2%</b> [16]	<b>16.7%</b> [12]	<b>13.3%</b> [13]	<b>6.9%</b> [5]
		Pl	Correct	<b>28%</b> [26]	<b>43%</b> [31]	<b>48%</b> [47]	<b>63.9%</b> [46]
			Incorrect	2.1% [2]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
				<b>100%</b> [93]	<b>100%</b> [72]	<b>100%</b> [98]	<b>100%</b> [72]

Table 3 shows the number and percentage of correctness/incorrectness regarding subject-verb agreement in the two storytelling tasks by the two groups classified according to the use of the following two variables in line with Morales (2014): *bound morphemes* and *unbound morphemes* (see section 2.2). On the one hand, in the task there are examples of *to be* both as a lexical and as an auxiliary verb (unbound morpheme) and *to do* functions as an auxiliary verb in all the cases found (unbound morpheme). On the other hand, there are lexical verbs to which a bound morpheme (-s, -es, or -ies) is added with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular subject. The correct instances correspond to the sentences in which a singular subject appears with a singular verb, and a plural subject with a plural verb. It is considered that singular incorrect category refers to these sentences in which a singular subject requires a singular verb, but a plural verb was used instead. For instance, in the case of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, if participants omit the morpheme -s, due to the lack of overt morphology it seems to be a plural verb while the subject requires a singular verb with overt agreement morphology. Then, plural incorrect means that the subject requires a plural verb, but has a singular verb instead. For instance, if the subject is *the animals* and participants write *has a ball*.

In connection with RQ1, the highest rate of incorrectness in both groups and in both tasks is found in the category *lexical verbs* in the singular. In the storytelling task 1, the percentage is 17.2% in the non-CLIL group and 16.7% in the CLIL group, and in the storytelling task 2, it is 13.3% in the non-CLIL group and 6.9% in the CLIL group. That is to say, the most repeated error is the omission of the bound morpheme *-s* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular in lexical verbs (as in 9).

(9) \*The panda **water** the tree.

In the case of the storytelling task 2 and the non-CLIL group, there is a category in which the rate of incorrectness is higher than in the category mentioned above (9.2%). Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that these mistakes correspond only to one participant. All these mistakes are found in sentences in which a plural subject required a plural form of *to be*, but a singular form of *to be* was written instead (as in 10).

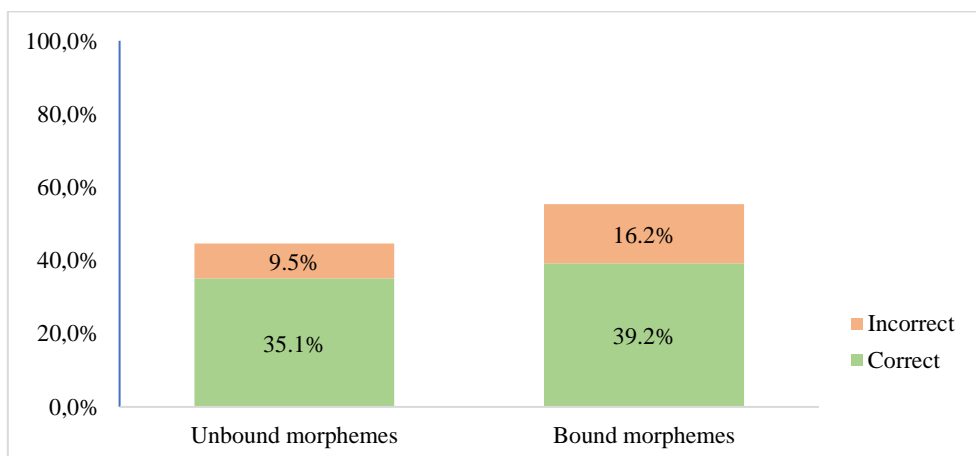
(10) \*The animals **is** happy.

In regard to the rate of correctness of the storytelling task 1, the non-CLIL participants are more proficient in the use of *to be* with a singular subject (as in 11) with a rate of correctness of 27.9% and lexical verbs in the plural (28%). CLIL participants master better the use of lexical verbs in the plural (43%) (as in 12). In the storytelling task 2, both non-CLIL and CLIL participants performed best in the case of lexical verbs in the plural as well (48% and 63.9% respectively).

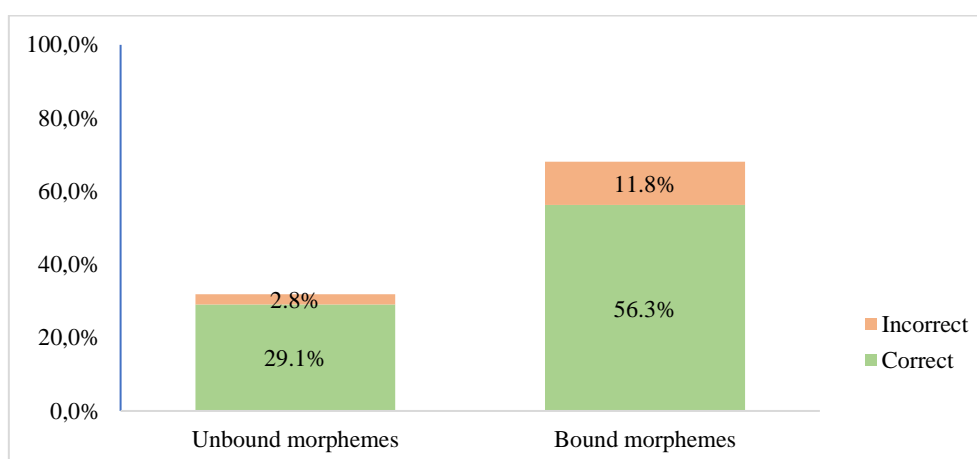
(11) The bird **is** worried.

(12) They **plant** a tree for the bird.

**Figure 4.** Correctness/incorrectness in bound/unbound morphemes in the storytelling tasks: non-CLIL group



**Figure 5.** Correctness/incorrectness in bound/unbound morphemes in the storytelling tasks: CLIL group



Figures 4 and 5 summarize the correctness and incorrectness in unbound (i.e., *to be* and *to do*) and bound (other lexical verbs) morphemes in the two storytelling tasks in the different groups. In both groups, the use of bound morphemes is higher than the use of unbound morphemes, although this difference is more noticeable in the CLIL group (Figure 5). In the non-CLIL group (Figure 4), the rate of incorrectness in bound morphemes almost doubles that of unbound morphemes (16.2% vs 9.5% respectively). In the CLIL group, this difference is still more relevant, being the rate of incorrectness in unbound morphemes 2.8% and 11.8% in bound morphemes.

These results reveal that the participants have not assimilated yet the use of the bound morpheme *-s* in subject-verb agreement since the rate of incorrectness of both groups in both tasks is concentrated in the cases in which they had to add the morpheme to a lexical verb. That is, when a singular subject required a singular verb, it was omitted. Conversely, the participants obtained better results in the use of unbound morphemes such as *to be* as lexical or auxiliary verbs and *to do* as an auxiliary verb. This supports the idea that L2 English learners acquire bound morphemes – e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme *-s* - later than unbound morphemes – e.g. verb *to be* (Morales, 2014; Medina, 2015; Morales and Montrul, 2020), thus, confirming the first part of the hypothesis for RQ#1. Additionally, the fact that the use of bound morphemes in the CLIL group is higher than in the non-CLIL group (68.1% vs 55.4%) but the rate of incorrectness is lower in the former than in the latter (11.8% vs 16.2%) exposes the higher linguistic competence of the CLIL group.

### 5.1.2 Acceptability Judgment Task

On the other hand, the sentences that were hypothesized to pose more problem in the AJT were those with a DP as subject as opposed to pronouns, complex as opposed to simple

sentences, affirmative as opposed to negative sentences, and ungrammatical as opposed to grammatical sentences. Therefore, these types of sentences would concentrate the highest rates of incorrectness.

**Table 4.** *Judgment of the AJT sentences in relation to the type of subject*

		<b>Non-CLIL</b>	<b>CLIL</b>
<b>Singular DP</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	12.8% [37]	20.8% [40]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	<b>12.2%</b> <b>[35]</b>	4.2% [8]
<b>Plural DP</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	16% [46]	20.8% [40]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	9% [26]	4.2% [8]
<b>Singular pronoun</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	15.3% [44]	20.3% [39]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	9.7% [28]	<b>4.7%</b> <b>[9]</b>
<b>Plural pronoun</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	14.2% [41]	20.3% [39]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	10.8% [31]	<b>4.7%</b> <b>[9]</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b> <b>[288]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[192]</b>

Table 4 illustrates the number and the rate of correctness/incorrectness in the judgment of the AJT sentences in relation to the type of subject. The type of subject that concentrates the highest rate of incorrectness in the non-CLIL group is the singular DP (12.2%), and in the CLIL group these are the singular and the plural pronouns (4.7% in both cases). However, the difference in the rate of incorrectness of other categories in both groups does not seem to be significant. Similar results can be seen in the categories with the highest rate of correctness, which in the non-CLIL group is the plural DP (16%) and in the CLIL group the singular and the plural DPs (20.8% in both cases). It is worth noting that within the same category, there are relevant differences between the rates of correctness and incorrectness. For instance, in the singular DP and singular pronoun as subjects in the non-CLIL group, the rate of correctness is higher than the rate of incorrectness – i.e., 16% vs 9% and 15.3% vs 9.7% respectively. In the CLIL group, this difference is even more noticeable in the four categories: 20.8% vs 4.2% in the DPs and 20.3% vs 4.7% in the pronouns.

Thus, these results demonstrate that the hypothesis related to the type of subject is confirmed in the non-CLIL group but rejected in the CLIL group, since it was predicted that DP subjects would concentrate a higher rate of incorrectness than pronouns. Albeit, the difference in the rates is not relevant enough to specify if DP or pronouns are more problematic.



Nonetheless, the results show that the non-CLIL participants have special difficulty with singular DPs because the rates of correctness and incorrectness are very similar (12.8% and 12.2%). On the other hand, the results of the CLIL group show that they have better acquired the subject-verb agreement features since their rates of correctness are higher than the rates of incorrectness in all the categories. This highlights the benefits of the CLIL programs in relation to the linguistic competence (Gajo, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Goris et al., 2013; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019).

**Table 5.** Judgment scores of the simple and subordinate sentences (AJT)

		<b>Non-CLIL</b>	<b>CLIL</b>
<b>Simple</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	28.5% [82]	<b>42.2%</b> <b>[81]</b>
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	<b>21.5%</b> <b>[62]</b>	7.8% [15]
<b>Complex (subordination)</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	<b>29.9%</b> <b>[86]</b>	40.1% [77]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	20.1% [58]	<b>9.9%</b> <b>[19]</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b> <b>[288]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[192]</b>

Table 5 shows the numbers and the correctness and incorrectness rates of the correct and incorrect judgments depending on whether the sentence is simple or complex (i.e., containing subordination).

The rate of incorrectness in the non-CLIL group is slightly higher in the simple sentences than in the complex sentences (21.5% vs 20.1%), while in the CLIL group it is higher in complex sentences than in simple sentences (9.9% vs 7.8%). Whereas the rate of correctness in the non-CLIL group is higher in complex sentences than in simple sentences (29.9% vs 28.5%), and in the CLIL group it is higher in the simple sentences than in complex sentences (42.5% vs 40.2%).

The fact that the incorrect judgments are higher in the simple sentences in the non-CLIL group and higher in complex sentences in the CLIL group partially confirms the hypothesis. Although in none of the groups the difference between correct and incorrect judgments in simple and subordinate sentences seems to be significant. Thus, it cannot be concluded which type of sentence has resulted more problematic for the participants. Albeit, the better performance of the CLIL group as opposed to the non-CLIL group again stands out.

**Table 6.** Judgment scores of ungrammatical complex sentences according to the location of the ungrammaticality

			Non-CLIL	CLIL
<b>Complex (subordination)</b>	<b>Main clause</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	<b>37.5%</b> [27]	<b>43.7%</b> [21]
		<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	12.5% [9]	6.3% [3]
	<b>Subordinate clause</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	23.6% [17]	37.5% [18]
		<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	<b>26.4%</b> [19]	<b>12.5%</b> [6]
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>100%</b> [72]	<b>100%</b> [48]

In the AJT, there are a total of 8 ungrammatical complex sentences, half of which have ungrammaticality in the main sentence and half of which have the ungrammaticality in the subordinate clause. Table 6 shows the number and correctness and incorrectness rates of the judgment of ungrammatical complex sentences in which the mistake is in the main clause and in the subordinate clause. The total in the last line corresponds to the number of ungrammatical complex sentences that were analyzed in this task (8 multiplied by 9 participants in the non-CLIL group, and by 6 participants in the CLIL group). In line with the hypothesis, the sentences with ungrammaticality in the subordinate clause concentrate the highest rate of incorrectness in both groups (26.4% and 12.5%), while the rate of correctness is higher in the sentences with the ungrammaticality in the main clause in both groups (37.5% and 43.7%).

These results indicate that participants, when confronted with a complex sentence, have paid more attention to the agreement of the matrix subject and the matrix verb than to the subordinate subject and the subordinate verb. This has resulted in a higher rate of incorrectness in cases where the agreement between the subordinate subject and the subordinate verb is ungrammatical.

**Table 7.** Judgment of affirmative and negative sentences (AJT)

		Non-CLIL	CLIL
<b>Affirmative</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	90 31.2%	82 42.7%
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	54 18.8%	14 7.3%
<b>Negative</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	78 27.1%	80 41.7%
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	66 22.9%	16 8.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>288</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>192</b> <b>100%</b>

Table 7 illustrates the number and correctness and incorrectness rates in the judgment of affirmative and negative sentences. According to hypothesis #1, affirmative sentences would

be more problematic for the participants because in negative sentences the agreement features are more salient, thus, the former would concentrate the highest rate of incorrectness.

The incorrectness rate is higher in the case of negative sentences in both groups (22.9% in the non-CLIL group and 8.3% in the CLIL group) and the correctness rate is higher in affirmative sentences in both groups (31.2% and 42.7% respectively). However, the correctness and incorrectness rates between categories in the CLIL group do not differ a lot – i.e., 42.7% and 41.7% of correctness in affirmative and negative sentences respectively, and 7.3% and 8.3% of incorrectness respectively. This difference is more noticeable in the non-CLIL group – i.e., 31.2% and 27.1% of correctness in affirmative and negative sentences respectively, and 18.8% and 22.9% of incorrectness respectively.

In regard to this aspect, hypothesis #1 is rejected because the rates of incorrectness are concentrated in the negative sentences as opposed to affirmative sentences which have been judged correctly to a higher extent. Since there is not a big difference in the judgment of affirmative and negative sentences, it can be concluded that participants do not seem to be sensitive to negation. Thus, the results obtained from both the affirmative and negative sentences are similar.

**Table 8.** *Judgment of grammatical and ungrammatical sentences (AJT)*

		<b>Non-CLIL</b>	<b>CLIL</b>
<b>Grammatical</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	33% [95]	42.7% [82]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	17% [49]	7.3% [14]
<b>Ungrammatical</b>	<b>Correct Judgment</b>	25.3% [73]	39.6% [76]
	<b>Incorrect Judgment</b>	24.7% [71]	10.4% [20]
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b> <b>[288]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[192]</b>

In the AJT, there are 16 ungrammatical and 16 grammatical sentences considering subject-verb agreement. Table 8 shows the number and the correctness/incorrectness rates in the judgment of grammatical and ungrammatical sentences. It was hypothesized that ungrammatical sentences would concentrate the highest rate of incorrectness due to the lack of acquisition of some agreement features, for example, the morpheme *-s*. Thus, for instance, participants would consider grammatical a sentence in which the *-s* is omitted.

Ungrammatical sentences concentrate the highest rate of incorrectness, or incorrect judgments, in both groups (24.7% and 10.4% respectively). Therefore, the rates of incorrectness

in the case of grammatical sentences are much lower (17% and 7.3%) than the rates of correctness in this category (33% and 42.7%). In the non-CLIL group, the difference in the rates of correctness and incorrectness of ungrammatical sentences is not very noticeable, but it can be observed that there is a difference in the correct and incorrect judgments of grammatical sentences (33% of correct judgment and 17% of incorrect judgment). The same as in other categories explored in RQ#1, the difference between the correct and incorrect judgments in the CLIL group is more salient (42.7% of correct judgment vs 7.3% of incorrect judgment in the grammatical sentences, and 39.6% of correct judgment vs 10.4% of incorrect judgment in ungrammatical sentences).

These results demonstrate that the non-CLIL participants found easier to judge grammatical sentences, while ungrammatical sentences pose more problem for the participants in both groups, thus confirming the initial hypothesis; the judgment of ungrammatical sentences seems to be more problematic.

## 5.2 Research question #2

*-What role, if any, does the correction of grammar errors, more specifically of subject-verb agreement errors, play in the acquisition of L2 English subject-verb agreement?*

In this section, the results of the two storytelling tasks will be analyzed and compared to provide an answer to this question, followed by the corresponding discussion. The hypothesis of RQ#2 was that there would be an improvement in the second storytelling task in both groups due to the positive impact that grammar correction, and more specifically of subject-verb agreement, is said to have on the enhancement of the linguistic competence (Hyland, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Lee, 2005; Bitchener, 2008; Agudo, 2014).

**Table 9.** Correct and incorrect rates of subject-verb agreement by both groups in both storytelling tasks

	Non-CLIL		Total	CLIL		Total
	Correct	Incorrect		Correct	Incorrect	
<b>Storytelling task 1</b>	74.2% [69]	25.8% [24]	<b>100%</b> <b>[93]</b>	79.2% [57]	20.8% [15]	<b>100%</b> <b>[72]</b>
<b>Storytelling task 2</b>	74.5% [73]	25.5% [25]	<b>100%</b> <b>[98]</b>	91.7% [66]	8.3% [6]	<b>100%</b> <b>[72]</b>

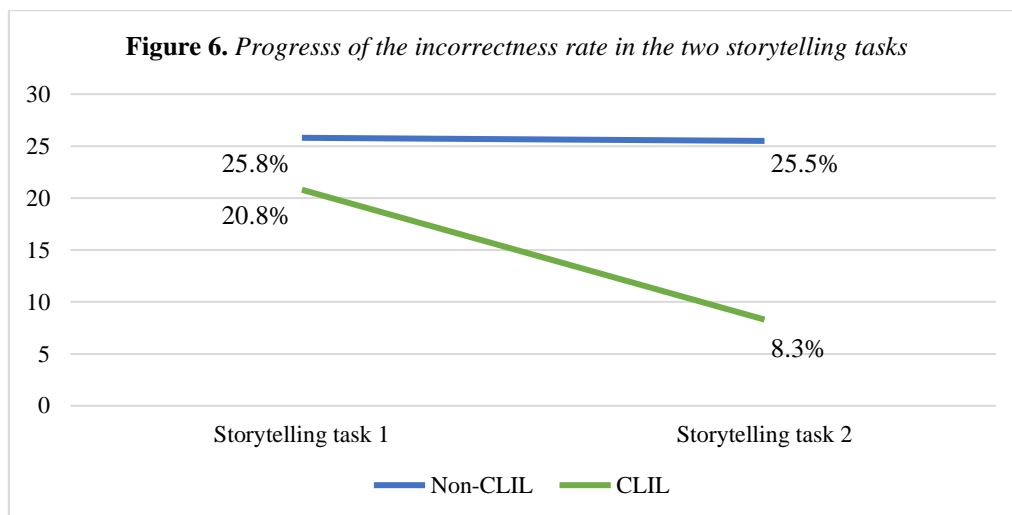


Table 9 summarizes the number and percentage of correct and incorrect instances of subject-verb agreement found in the two storytelling tasks by the two groups, and Figure 6 shows the progress of the rate of incorrectness of the groups from the storytelling task 1 to the storytelling task 2 done after the error correction. Table 9 and Figure 6 illustrate that the rate of incorrectness is similar in both tasks in the non-CLIL group (25.8% and 25.5% respectively). Contrarily, in the CLIL group, the rate of incorrectness decreases from the first task to the second (20.8% and 8.3% respectively).

Therefore, both groups use subject-verb agreement to a similar extent in both tasks, but improvement is noted only in the CLIL group. Thus, the hypothesis related to RQ#2 is partially confirmed since only one of the groups has shown improvement after the error correction.

### 5.3 Research question #3

*- How will students feel about the teacher and peer correction?*

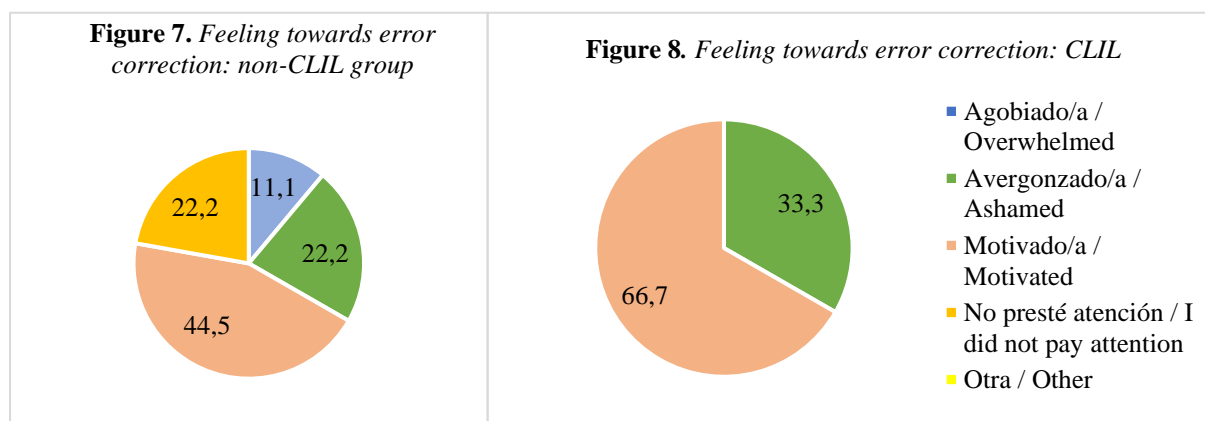
The results of the motivation questionnaire will be useful to clarify this question. The errors in the storytelling task 1 were marked by the investigator following Harmer's list of symbols. Then, the most repeated mistakes were written on the blackboard, putting special emphasis on subject-verb agreement. The participants were shown the list of symbols and they anonymously peer-corrected the essays. Afterwards, the participants completed a questionnaire to find out how they felt during the correction, which is the focus of RQ#3. Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that the participants would feel, in general, motivated and comfortable (Ferris, 2004; Harmer, 2010; Pishghadam & Kermanshahi, 2011; Agudo, 2014; Ha and Nguyen, 2021; Yüksel et al., 2021; Moussaoui, 2012; Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018).

In the questionnaire, the participants were asked how useful they found the correction process in this project. They were given a 4-point Likert scale with the following items: 1. Very useful; 2. Somehow useful; 3. Not very useful; 4. Not useful.

**Table 10.** *Opinion of the participants towards the usefulness of the error correction*

	<b>Non-CLIL</b>	<b>CLIL</b>
<b>MEAN SCORE</b>	1.8	1.5
<b>1. Muy útiles Very useful</b>	22.2% [2]	50% [3]
<b>2. Algo útiles Somehow useful</b>	77.8% [7]	50% [3]
<b>3. Poco útiles Not very useful</b>	0% [0]	0% [0]
<b>4. Nada útiles Not useful</b>	0% [0]	0% [0]
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[9]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[6]</b>

Table 10 shows the mean score in the different groups and the number and percentage of participants that chose each answer. The results reveal that the non-CLIL participants found the error correction slightly less useful than the CLIL participants. The mean score in the former is 1.8 out of 4 (4 = not useful) with 22.2% of the participants considering the correction very useful and 77.8% somehow useful. In the latter, the mean score is 1.5 with half of the participants considering the correction very useful, and the other half somehow useful.



Participants were also asked about how they felt during the error correction process including the options *overwhelmed*, *motivated*, *ashamed*, *I did not pay attention*, and an open answer to add whatever they wanted. Figures 7 and 8 show the results of this question revealing that students, in general, felt motivated (44.5% in the non-CLIL group and 66.7% in the CLIL group). However, there is a percentage of students in each group that felt ashamed (22.2% in the non-CLIL group and 33.3% in the CLIL group). In the non-CLIL group, one student felt overwhelmed (11.1%) and two claimed not to have paid attention (22.2%).

Since most of the participants felt motivated by the error correction technique, hypothesis #3 is confirmed. Nonetheless, students who felt ashamed or overwhelmed (33.3% of the 15 participants) should not be ignored.

#### 5.4 Research question #4

*- What role, if any, does the CLIL program play in the participant's motivation and proficiency? Will the CLIL students outperform the non-CLIL students in the different tasks?*

This section includes, first, the results of the motivation questionnaire and then, of the storytelling tasks and the AJT to give an answer to this question. It was hypothesized that the CLIL participants would show a high motivation and better results in all the tasks compared to their non-CLIL counterparts (Lasagabaster, 2011; Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau, 2015; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019).

##### 5.4.1 Motivation

To find out if the CLIL program provides benefits to the participants of this project, they were asked in a questionnaire whether they felt motivated when writing in English and the reason for that. For the former, they were given a 4-point Likert scale with the following items: 1. Totally agree; 2. Moderately agree; 3. Moderately disagree; 4. Totally disagree.

**Table 11.** *Participants' answers to whether they feel motivated writing in English*

	<b>Non-CLIL</b>	<b>CLIL</b>
<b>MEAN SCORE</b>	2.5	1.2
<b>1. Totalmente de acuerdo Totally agree</b>	11.1% [1]	16.6% [1]
<b>2. Medianamente de acuerdo Moderately agree</b>	33.4% [3]	83.4% [5]
<b>3. Medianamente en desacuerdo Moderately disagree</b>	44.4% [4]	0% [0]
<b>4. Totalmente en desacuerdo Totally disagree</b>	11.1% [1]	0% [0]
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[9]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[6]</b>

Table 11 shows the mean score obtained in each group and a breakdown of the number of participants and percentage by answer. The mean score in the non-CLIL group is higher than in the CLIL group (2.5 vs 1.2 out of 4, being 4 total disagreement). No participant in the CLIL group has shown a disagreement in relation to the statement proposed – i.e., if they feel motivated to write in English –, while in the non-CLIL group there are 5 participants disagreeing, which constitute more than half of the answers (44.4% and 11.1%, then, a total of

55.5%). Therefore, the CLIL participants show a higher motivation towards writing in English than the non-CLIL participants.

**Table 12.** Participants' reason(s) that (de)motivate them to write in English<sup>2</sup>

Impact	Teacher/ student's focus	Reason <sup>3</sup>	Non- CLIL	CLIL
Positive	T	The corrections I receive are useful for learning	11.1% [1]	50% [3]
	T	The teacher is supportive and reassuring	0% [0]	0% [0]
	S	I like English	11.1% [1]	50% [3]
	S	I think writing is very useful for learning English	22.2% [2]	50% [3]
	S	I don't have time to write	11.1% [1]	16.6% [1]
	S	It is a task that requires too much effort	22.2% [2]	33.3% [2]
	S	I lack vocabulary	33.3% [3]	33.3% [2]
	T	The teacher does not motivate me to write/learn	0% [0]	0% [0]
Negative	T	I do not receive appropriate corrections	0% [0]	0% [0]
	S	I think writing is worthless	0% [0]	0% [0]
	S	I do not concentrate when writing	44.4% [4]	0% [0]
	T	I am not interested in the topics I am asked to write about	11.1% [1]	0% [0]
		Other	0% [0]	0% [0]

Table 12 illustrates the reasons that students considered to be the cause for their (de)motivation when writing in English. In the non-CLIL group, the two most chosen reasons for demotivation are student dependent – i.e., *I do not concentrate when writing* (44.4%) and *I lack vocabulary* (33.3%) –, whereas teacher dependent reasons are the least

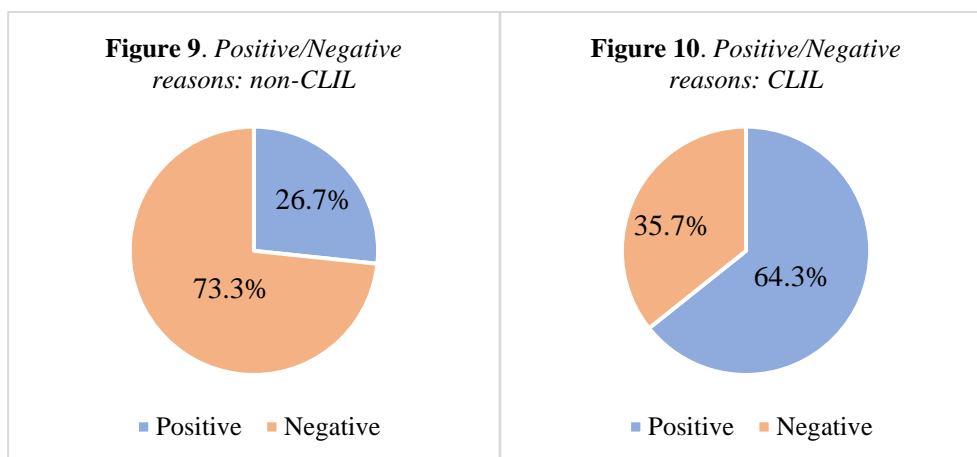
<sup>2</sup> The number of answers exceeds the number of participants in each because they were able to choose more than one reason.

<sup>3</sup> The options in the questionnaire were given to the students in Spanish, but only the translation into English appears in this table for simplification purposes.

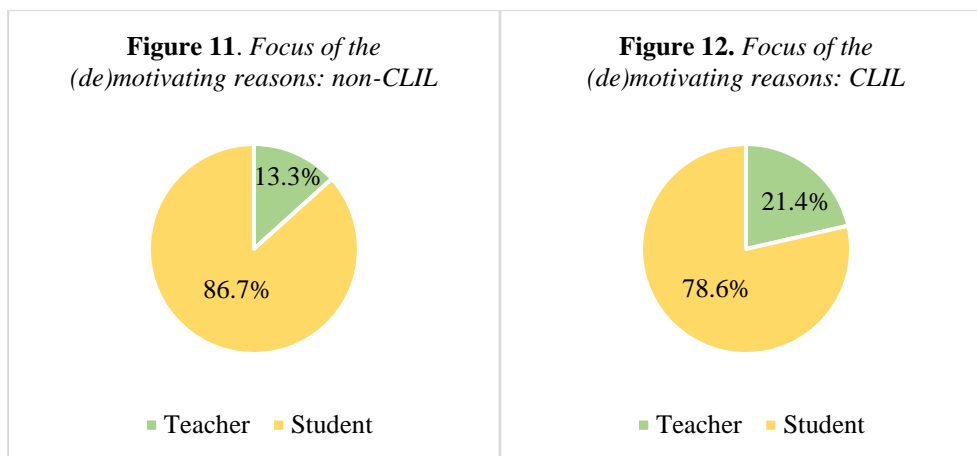


chosen – i.e., *I am not interested in the topics I am asked to write about* (11.1%). Regarding the motivating reasons, the most chosen is student dependent – i.e., *I think writing is very useful for learning English* (22.2%) –, while the least chosen ones are student dependent – i.e., *I like English* (11.1%) – and teacher dependent – i.e., *The corrections I receive are useful for learning* (11.1%). In the CLIL group, the three demotivating reasons chosen are student dependent – i.e., *It is a task that requires too much effort* (33.3%), *I lack vocabulary* (33.3%), *I don't have time to write* (16.6%) –, whereas no teacher dependent reason has been chosen. In the motivating reasons, the three chosen reasons share the same percentage, and these are two student dependent reasons and one teacher dependent – i.e., *I like English* (50%), *I think writing is very useful for learning English* (50%), and *The corrections I receive are useful for learning* (50%).

So, the results in both groups indicate that the students are conscious of their skills and limitations in the L2 English and that their improvement depends to a high extent on their own work and effort.



Figures 9 and 10 show the percentage of positive and negative reasons that were chosen by participants in each group. It is observable that the CLIL participants chose positive reasons to be motivated when writing in English to a higher extent (64.3% positive reasons and 35.7% negative reasons), while the non-CLIL participants have chosen more negative answers (73.3% negative reasons and 26.7% positive reasons). This goes in line with the results of the question whether they feel motivated when writing in English (Table 11).



Figures 11 and 12 display the number and percentage of answers according to whether the reason is teacher or student dependent. Similar results can be observed in both groups. The participants have chosen to a higher extent student dependent reasons (86.7% in the non-CLIL group and 78.6% in the CLIL group). Otherwise, they have chosen few reasons that have to do with the teacher (13.3% in the non-CLIL group and 21.4% in the CLIL group).

The data related to the motivation show that hypothesis #4 is confirmed since the CLIL students demonstrate a higher motivation and more positive reasons for this motivation when writing in English. Additionally, these results indicate that teachers should also value the negative or demotivating reasons provided by the participants when writing in English, such as the lack of vocabulary in order to improve students' writing skills.

#### **5.4.2 Linguistic competence**

CLIL programs are also known to provide benefits for the students' linguistic competence and proficiency in the L2 (Gajo, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Goris et al., 2013; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019). Consequently, it was hypothesized that the CLIL participants would outperform the non-CLIL participants in all the tasks. This subsection includes the presentation and discussion of the general results regarding the correctness and incorrectness of the storytelling tasks and the AJT, as well as a comparison of the mean score obtained by each group in the Oxford Placement Test (OPT).

**Table 13.** Summary of the groups' results in all the tasks

		Non-CLIL	CLIL
<b>Mean score OPT out of 60</b>		21.6	24.3
<b>Storytelling tasks</b>	<b>Correct</b>	74.4% [142]	85.4% [123]
	<b>Incorrect</b>	25.6% [49]	14.6% [21]
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b> <b>[191]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[144]</b>
<b>AJT</b>	<b>Correct judgment</b>	58.3% [168]	82.3% [158]
	<b>Incorrect judgment</b>	41.7% [120]	17.7% [34]
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b> <b>[288]</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>[192]</b>

Table 13 is a summary of the general results in each group in the different tasks. The results of the OPT show that the CLIL participants have a higher proficiency in English with a mean score of 24.3 as opposed to a 21.6 obtained by the non-CLIL participants. In the storytelling tasks, the rate of incorrectness is higher in the non-CLIL group than in the CLIL group (25.6% vs 14.6%), so the rate of correctness is higher in the CLIL group than in the non-CLIL group (85.4% vs 74.4%). In the AJT, the rate of incorrectness is higher in the non-CLIL group than in the CLIL group (41.7% vs 17.7%). Thus, the correctness rate is higher in the CLIL group (82.3% vs 58.3%).

The results in all the tasks demonstrate that the CLIL participants have outperformed the non-CLIL participants, therefore, that hypothesis #4 is confirmed.

**Table 14.** Summary of the hypotheses and their result

<b>RQ#1</b>	<b>Hypothesis #1</b>	(Storytelling tasks) More omission of -s	Confirmed
		(AJT) More incorrectness in DP than pronouns as subjects	Partially confirmed
		(AJT) More incorrectness in complex than simple sentences	Partially confirmed
		(AJT) More incorrectness in affirmative than negative sentences	Rejected
		(AJT) More incorrectness in ungrammatical than grammatical sentences	Confirmed
<b>RQ#2</b>	<b>Hypothesis #2</b>	Better results in the storytelling task 2 after the grammar correction in both groups	Partially confirmed
<b>RQ#3</b>	<b>Hypothesis #3</b>	Students will feel motivated by the error correction process	Partially confirmed
<b>RQ#4</b>	<b>Hypothesis #4</b>	CLIL students feel more motivated to write in English than non-CLIL students	Confirmed
		CLIL students have a better level of English than non-CLIL students, then, better results in the tasks	Confirmed

Table 14 shows a summary of the hypotheses under analysis, the RQ which these are related to, and if they have been confirmed or rejected based on the results obtained. The clearest results have been obtained in the first prediction since the percentage of incorrecion in the singular lexical verbs that required the morpheme *-s* is noticeably higher. Therefore, the storytelling tasks have been useful to determine that bound morphemes are acquired later than unbound morphemes (Morales, 2014; Medina, 2015) and mastered later in production (Morales, 2014). Within each of the four predictions related to the AJT, the fact that the rates of correctness and incorrectness are so close demonstrate that participants are not sensitive enough to grammaticality.

The second hypothesis has been partially confirmed because the prediction has been fulfilled only in the CLIL group. The fact that CLIL students have improved from one production task to the other with a correction process in between, and non-CLIL students have remained the same, suggests two issues: i) that CLIL programs provide cognitive and linguistic benefits for the students, since they have been able to process and correct the mistakes better than the other group; and ii) since the error correction process was the same for the two groups, the correction should be adapted to the students' needs and capacities.

The third hypothesis is partially confirmed because, although in general students claimed to have felt motivated during the error correction process, there is a percentage of students who felt embarrassed or overwhelmed. These students cannot be ignored and the cause for this embarrassment and overwhelm should be found to improve the correction to be effective and comfortable for absolutely all students. Therefore, these results suggest that teachers should adapt the error correction to the needs of the students. For this, it is very important that the teacher is aware of their strengths and limitations to be able to find the most adequate approach in each class and for each student (Ghabanchi, 2011). Although this requires a tedious work by the teacher, it will benefit students learning process and mental health.

Lastly, the confirmation of the predictions in hypothesis #4 reaffirms the much-studied benefits of the CLIL program in relation to the motivation and the linguistic competence of the students (Gajo, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Lasagabaster, 2011; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Goris et al., 2013; Guillamón-Suesta & Renau Renau, 2015; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019 among others).

The two predictions have been confirmed since the CLIL participants have obtained better results in all the tasks and a higher proficiency in the OPT. Although the CLIL group has

outperformed the non-CLIL group, it is worth noting that the results of the question regarding the reasons that (de)motivate them to write in English reveal that both CLIL and non-CLIL participants are generally conscious of their limitations and of the fact that improving their level depends to a great extent on their own skills and effort as well.

## **5.5 Conclusion of the experimental data**

To end with the presentation and discussion of the results of the investigation, some conclusions about the most problematic aspects have to be drawn in order to be able to apply a solution for them in the didactic proposal.

On the one hand, the high rates of omission of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular morpheme *-s* in L2 English in both CLIL and non-CLIL groups reveal that bound morphemes are mastered later in production than unbound morphemes, as suggested by Morales (2014). However, it is not clear whether this omission is due to interlingual – e.g., the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (Morales, 2014) – or intralingual factors – e.g., difficulties with bound morphemes or the Impairment Approach (Morales, 2014). On the other hand, the lack of sensitivity to grammaticality in comprehension suggests that the participants have not yet fully assimilated agreement features in general. The error correction process is crucial to tackle this mistake. Previous studies claim that teachers are preferred to provide feedback (Ferris, 2004; Ha and Nguyen, 2021), but the question is how they should carry this out. It has been proven that indirect teacher correction is more effective for involving the students more in the learning process (Ghabanchi, 2011), and this is the strategy that has been applied in this dissertation, together with anonymous and individual peer correction. The fact that only the CLIL group showed improvement after this correction process highlights the higher proficiency and the ability to process faster the mistakes of the CLIL group; one of the proved benefits of the program. However, special attention should be put to the non-improvement of non-CLIL group from one task to the other. Some participants in this study claimed to have felt overwhelmed or embarrassed, which could be due to their low proficiency, to individuality, or to their lack of knowledge of correction strategies. In the results of all the tasks – i.e., production tasks, AJT, and motivation questionnaire –, the CLIL participants show lower rates of incorrectness and higher motivation towards the error correction process and writing in English. Therefore, the high rates of incorrectness and the lack of motivation of the non-CLIL group is the last problematic aspect revealed by the experimental data that has to be tackled in the didactic proposal described in the following section.

## 6. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

The following didactic proposal is designed around the topic of travelling, and more specifically, it deals with the planification of the itinerary for a one-day trip to a city in an English-speaking country. It is intended for two groups of the 2<sup>nd</sup> course of Secondary Compulsory Education; one non-CLIL group and one CLIL group. The proposal is mainly focused on the use of present simple in written expression, although other skills such as oral or reading comprehension will also be worked on. As indicated in Morales (2014), competence is mastered before performance, thus, the didactic proposal starts with comprehension activities and ends with a final written product (written production). The didactic proposals for the two groups are similar but differ in slight details justified by the needs of each group according to their expected level and skills for being part of the CLIL program or not. Therefore, both proposals are presented simultaneously introducing the differences between the groups in specific activities or sessions. The proposal consists of four sessions following the process approach organized as follows: i) explanation of the project and warm-up activities; ii) planning and drafting of the project; iii) error correction; and iv) final product and closure activity.

This didactic proposal is based on the Real Decreto 217/2022, 29<sup>th</sup> of March, which establishes the organization and minimum teachings of Compulsory Secondary Education. Consequently, the general objectives of this didactic proposal are as follows:

- a) To assume their duties responsibly, exercise respect for others, practice tolerance, cooperation and solidarity among individuals and groups and practice dialogue;
- b) To develop and consolidate habits of discipline, study and individual and team work as a necessary condition for an effective performance of the tasks of learning and as a means of personal development;
- e) To develop basic skills in the use of technological information sources in order to acquire new knowledge with a critical sense;
- g) To develop self-confidence, participation, critical sense, personal initiative and the ability to learn to learn, plan, make decisions and assume responsibilities;
- i) To understand and express themselves in English appropriately, more specifically in relation to the comprehension and production of English subject-verb agreement;
- j) To know and respect the artistic and cultural heritage of an English-speaking country.

<b>Stage:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> stage of Compulsory Secondary Education	
<b>Level/course:</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	
<b>Timing:</b> 4 sessions	
<b>Key competences</b>	<b>Specific competences</b>
a) Competence in linguistic communication.	1
d) Digital competence.	2
e) Personal, social, and learning to learn competence.	3
h) Competence in cultural awareness and expression.	4
	5
	6
<b>Basic knowledge</b>	
<p><b>A) Communication</b></p> <p><i>1.-</i> The error as an instrument of improvement and repair proposal.</p> <p><i>2.-</i> Basic strategies for planning, execution, control and repair of comprehension, production of oral and written texts.</p> <p><i>7.-</i> Commonly used vocabulary of interest to students related to places, leisure, and free time.</p> <p><i>9.-</i> Basic orthographic conventions and communicative meanings and intentions associated with formats, patterns, and graphic elements.</p> <p><i>10.-</i> Basic conversational conventions and strategies for initiating, maintaining, and ending communication, taking and yielding the floor, asking and giving clarifications and explanations, rephrasing, comparing and contrasting, summarizing, collaborating, debating, etc.</p> <p><i>11.-</i> Learning resources and basic information-seeking strategies: dictionaries, digital and computer resources.</p> <p><i>13.-</i> Basic analog and digital tools for oral and written comprehension and production and for learning, communicating, and developing projects with speakers or learners of the foreign language.</p> <p><b>B) Plurilingualism</b></p> <p><i>1.-</i> Strategies and techniques to respond effectively to a basic and concrete communicative need in an understandable way, despite the limitations derived from the level of proficiency in the foreign language.</p> <p><i>2.-</i> Basic strategies for identifying, organizing, retaining, retrieving, and creatively using linguistic units.</p> <p><i>3.-</i> Basic strategies and tools for self-assessment and co-assessment, analog and digital, individual, and cooperative.</p> <p><i>4.-</i> Commonly used vocabulary and expressions to understand statements about communication, language, learning and communication and learning tools (metalanguage).</p> <p><b>C) Interculturality</b></p> <p><i>1.-</i> The foreign language as a means of interpersonal and international communication, as a source of information and as a tool for personal enrichment.</p> <p><i>2.-</i> Interest and initiative in carrying out communicative exchanges through different media with speakers or learners of the foreign language.</p> <p><i>3.-</i> Basic sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects related to the living conditions, culture, customs, and values of the countries where the foreign language is spoken.</p> <p><i>4.-</i> Basic strategies for understanding and appreciating linguistic, cultural, and artistic diversity, taking into account eco-social and democratic values.</p>	
<b>Assessment criteria</b>	
1.1 - 1.2	
2.1 - 2.2	
3.1	
4.1 - 4.2	
5.2 - 5.3	
6.2	

Activities				
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2: both groups</b>	<b>Session 3: non-CLIL</b>	<b>Session 3: CLIL</b>	<b>Session 4: both groups</b>
·Activity 1: non-CLIL ·Activity 1: CLIL ·Activity 2: both groups	·Activity 1 ·Activity 2	·Activity 1 ·Activity 2	·Activity 1 ·Activity 2	·Activity 1 ·Activity 2

## 6.1 Session 1

SESSION 1			
<b>Specific competences</b> 1 2 3 6	<b>Specific assessment criteria</b> <i>1.1.1</i> Interpret and analyze general information from the YouTube video about London's landmarks. <i>1.1.2</i> Interpret and analyze general information given by the language assistant about his/her hometown's landmarks. <i>1.2.1</i> Select, organize, and apply the most appropriate strategies to understand the general ideas of the written texts they find on the Internet about the assigned category. <i>1.1.3</i> Interpret and analyze globally and specifically the information found about the assigned category (restaurant, monument, hotel, other) in different internet pages. <i>2.1.1</i> Orally express doubts or comments in relation to the assistant's presentation. <i>3.1.1</i> Jointly plan the main points of the work in relation to the landmarks of a city of their choice, showing empathy towards the ideas and opinions of their group mates. <i>6.2.1</i> Accept and adapt to the linguistic, cultural, and artistic diversity shown in the video of the London's landmarks. <i>6.2.2</i> Accept and adapt to the linguistic, cultural, and artistic diversity during the assistant's presentation about his/her town of origin.		
<b>Basic knowledge</b> A) 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11 B) 1, 2, 4 C) 1, 2, 3			
Activities	Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria	Basic knowledge
Activity 1: non-CLIL	1 6	1.1 6.2	A) 1, 2, 7 B) 1 C) 1, 3
Activity 1: CLIL	1 2 6	1.1 2.1 6.2	A) 1, 2, 7, 10 B) 1 C) 1, 2, 3
Activity 2: both groups	1 3	1.2 3.1	A) 2, 7, 9, 11 B) 2, 4 C) 1

In the first five minutes of the first session, the groups will be introduced to the information and requirements of the project that will be carried out during the current and subsequent sessions. After providing them with all the information, they will form groups of 4 people to cover the four elements in the project: restaurants, monuments, hotels, and other category of their choice (e.g., beaches, activities to do, etc.).



**Session 1 - Activity 1: non-CLIL group**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Class management</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Introductory	20 minutes	Small groups of 4 people/big group	Computer and overhead projector/digital screen and YouTube video link ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlOhbcNR1f8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlOhbcNR1f8</a> )

For the first activity, non-CLIL students will watch a YouTube video of a travel content creator about a one-day trip to London. In groups, they will be required to take note of the places that are mentioned in the video. They will watch the video twice, the second time pausing the video every time the youtuber mentions a place. Then, they will have to group the places in different categories depending on whether these are restaurants, museums, bridges, hotels, etc. The last few minutes will be for sharing and correcting the information all together.

**Session 1 - Activity 1: CLIL group**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Class management</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Introductory	20 minutes	Small groups of 4 people/big group	Language assistant

For this activity, CLIL students will listen to a six-minute presentation by the language assistant about some interesting places to visit in his/her city of origin. During the presentation, the students will have to take note in groups of the places that he/she mentions and of two questions per group that they would like to ask the assistant about the city. Then, they have to ask the questions and have a little big-group discussion. Then they will have to classify the places in different categories depending on whether these are restaurants, museums, hotels, etc.

**Session 1 - Activity 2: both groups**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Class management</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Introductory	25 minutes	Small groups of 4 people first, then individually	One computer per student and online/printed monolingual English dictionary

After that, they will have to decide which city they want to work on and who will be in charge of which category. To decide the city, they will be able to search on the Internet for cities in English-speaking countries if they need it. In the non-CLIL groups, they cannot choose London, and in the CLIL group they cannot choose the city which the language assistant comes from since these are already worked on in the previous activity.

Once they have the groups, the city, and the roles, it is time for everyone to start looking for information on the Internet about their category. To guide them in the project, they will be advised to look for information in the following Internet manner: for restaurants and hotels,

they can look at reviews on different review sites or look for information about the menu or the hotel facilities on their own website; for monuments, they can look on blogs or on the official website of the city if it has one; for the *other* category, they will be advised to be creative and look for interesting elements. When they are searching on the Internet, they will be required to take some notes of the information they find to ease the subsequent drafting.

## 6.2 Session 2: both groups

<b>SESSION 2: both groups</b>			
<b>Specific competences</b> 3 2	<b>Specific assessment criteria</b>		
	<p>2.2.1 Organize and write a draft from the notes taken during the search for information on the Internet about the assigned category.</p> <p>2.2.2 Organize and write coherently and cohesively the itinerary of a trip through digital tools such as Word.</p> <p>3.1.1 Plan and participate in the group organization of the trip itinerary showing empathy and respect for the different ideas and initiatives of their group mates.</p>		
<b>Basic knowledge</b>			
<p>A) 2, 7, 9, 13</p> <p>B) 2, 4</p> <p>C) 1, 4</p>			
Activities	Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria	Basic knowledge
Activity 1: both groups	2	2.2	<p>A) 2, 7, 9, 13</p> <p>B) 2, 4</p> <p>C) 1</p>
Activity 1: both groups	2 3	2.2 3.1	<p>A) 2, 7, 9, 13</p> <p>B) 2, 4</p> <p>C) 1, 4</p>

The first five minutes will be devoted to reminding the students what they have to do during the session, which in this case is to start writing the draft individually and then gather the information from all members to establish the itinerary of the trip.

<b>Session 2 - Activity 1</b>			
Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Reinforcement	25 minutes	Individually	The notes from the previous activity

For the next activity, they will start writing a draft description of their category based on the information they found in the previous activity. They will be required to use pen and paper, writing about 50 words each member of the group in the non-CLIL group and 80 words in the CLIL group, and they must use the present simple tense. They will be able to use a monolingual English dictionary to search for the words that they do not know, but they will not be able to copy the information as such or use any online translators. They will have to write the description with their own words.

## Session 2 - Activity 2

Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Reinforcement	20 minutes	Small groups of 4 people	One computer per group

Once they have written their descriptions individually, it is time for them to decide on the itinerary. For example, first you go to the hotel to drop off your bags, then you go for lunch to a restaurant, and then you spend the afternoon visiting a monument. When they decide the order, they must join all the parts together writing them in the chosen order and linking the different parts with connectors to provide coherence and cohesion to the writing. This will be done in a Word Processing Software.

### 6.3 Session 3: non-CLIL group

SESSION 3: non-CLIL			
Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria		
1	1.1.1 Interpret the information contained in the flashcards with their own mistakes.		
2	1.1.2 Interpret and analyze as a group the specific information of classmates' drafts.		
3	2.2.1 Organize the different flashcards to be able to form sentences considering subject-verb agreement.		
4	3.1.1 Participate in interactive situations with their group mates to make joint decisions about correction, showing empathy and respecting different opinions.		
5	4.2.1 Apply strategies that facilitate communication by correcting the mistakes of their peers through digital resources.		
	5.3.1 Identify and record as a group the foreign language learning difficulties of other students by making them explicit through digital media.		
<b>Basic knowledge</b> A) 1, 2, 7, 9, 13 B) 2, 3, 4 C) 1			
Activities	Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria	Basic knowledge
Activity 1	1 2	1.1 2.2	A) 2, 7, 9 B) 2, 4 C) 1
Activity 2	1 3 4 5	1.1 3.1 4.2 5.3	A) 1, 2, 7, 9, 13 B) 2, 3 C) 1

The third session for the non-CLIL group will be devoted to correcting the drafts from the previous session. First, the teacher would have corrected the drafts at home marking the subject-verb agreement mistakes, and five other categories of his/her choice using Harmer's (2010) symbols (see figure X) – e.g., *P* for punctuation mistakes, *SP* for spelling mistakes, *WO* for word order mistakes, and  $\emptyset$  when something is missing. Only some types of errors will be tackled to avoid overcorrection and the consequent demotivation (Agudo, 2014). In the first five minutes, the students will be introduced to the error correction process that will be carried out throughout the session.

### Session 3 (non-CLIL group) - Activity 1

Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Introductory	15 minutes	Small groups of 4 people	Flashcards with the subjects/verbs

For this activity, the teacher will bring flashcards with the mistakes that he/she has marked in the drafts. He/she has to take note of the incorrect sentences, write their correct version in a piece of paper, and cut sentences separating the subject and the verb. The activity consists of giving each group a proportionate number of subjects/verbs, and they will have to form the sentence by joining singular subjects with singular verbs and plural subjects with plural verbs. If they join a sentence that they made incorrectly in the draft, they have to correct it.

### Session 3 (non-CLIL group) - Activity 2

Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Correction	30 minutes	Small groups of 4 people	One computer per group

For the first activity, each group will be assigned a type of mistake. Therefore, students need to be introduced to the list of symbols. Then, following the instructions proposed by Agudo (2014), they will correct only<sup>4</sup> the mistakes related to the category assigned to their group in the drafts of the other 4 groups using Track Changes.

#### 6.4 Session 3: CLIL group

<b>SESSION 3: CLIL group</b>			
Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria		
1	<i>1.1.1</i> Interpret the information contained in the flashcards with their own mistakes.		
2	<i>1.1.2</i> Interpret and analyze as a group the specific information of classmates' drafts.		
3	<i>1.2.1</i> Select, organize, and apply the most appropriate strategies and skills to mark errors in the drafts of other classmates.		
4	<i>2.2.1</i> Organize the different flashcards to be able to form sentences considering subject-verb agreement.		
5	<i>3.1.1</i> Participate in interactive situations with their group mates to make joint decisions about correction, showing empathy and respecting different opinions.		
	<i>4.2.1</i> Apply strategies that facilitate communication by marking the mistakes of their peers through digital resources.		
	<i>5.3.1</i> Identify and record as a group the foreign language learning difficulties of other students by making them explicit through digital media.		
<b>Basic knowledge</b>			
A) 1, 2, 7, 9, 13			
B) 2, 3, 4			
C) 1			
Activities	Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria	Basic knowledge
Activity 1	1 2	1.1 2.2	A) 2, 7, 9 B) 2, 4 C) 1

<sup>4</sup> The rest of the mistakes will be tackled in the next session.

Activity 2	1	1.1	A) 1, 2, 7, 9, 13
	3	1.2	B) 2, 3
	4	3.1	C) 1
	5	4.2	
		5.3	

The third session for the CLIL group will be devoted to correcting the drafts from the previous session. First, the teacher would have corrected the drafts at home marking the subject-verb agreement mistakes.

<b>Session 3 (CLIL group) - Activity 1</b>
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Same as in the non-CLIL group (6.3.1 Activity 1).

<b>Session 3 (CLIL group) - Activity 2</b>
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Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Correction	30 minutes	Small groups of 4 people	One computer per group

First, the teacher will introduce the students to a list of 5 symbols for correcting mistakes following Harmer (2010) (see figure 1) – e.g., *SP* for spelling mistakes, *WO* for word order mistakes, and  $\emptyset$  when something is missing. Each group will be assigned a symbol and they will have to mark the assigned mistake in the other 4 drafts of the class.

### 6.5 Session 4: both groups

<b>SESSION 4: both groups</b>			
<b>Specific competences</b>	<b>Specific assessment criteria</b>		
1	<p><i>1.1.1</i> Interpret information specific to corrections or error marks by peers.</p> <p><i>1.1.2</i> Interpret the overall meaning of the itineraries of their peers expressed orally with the support of visual material - Google Street View.</p> <p><i>2.1.1</i> Orally express their group's itinerary with the support of visual material - Google Street View - and using production control and planning strategies.</p> <p><i>2.2.1</i> Organize and write coherent and cohesively an itinerary using technological media.</p> <p>Plan and participate in interactive situations with their group mates, or other groups if there are doubts, showing empathy and respect for different opinions.</p> <p><i>4.1.1</i> Explain concepts and solve doubts to their classmates, if any, in relation to the corrections they have made.</p> <p><i>5.2.1</i> Use and differentiate knowledge and strategies to improve the ability to communicate and learn the foreign language with the support of classmates and digital supports such as Word.</p>		
2			
4			
5			
5			
<b>Basic knowledge</b>			
<p>A) 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13</p> <p>B) 1, 2, 3</p> <p>C) 1, 4</p>			
Activities	Specific competences	Specific assessment criteria	Basic knowledge
Activity 1	1 2 4 5	1.1 2.2 4.1 5.2	A) 2, 7, 9 B) 2, 3 C) 1

Activity 2	1 2	1.1 2.1	A) 2, 5, 7, 8, 13 B) 1 C) 1, 4
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In the fourth and last session, the students will come up with the final version of their travel plan and do a final activity. The first five minutes of the session will be devoted, as in previous sessions, to making the procedure and activities of the session clear.

<b>Session 4 - Activity 1</b>
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Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Reinforcement	20 minutes	Small groups of 4 people	One computer per group

Firstly, the students will revise their documents marked by the teacher and corrected by their classmates in the case of the non-CLIL group, and to correct the mistakes marked by the classmates in the case of the CLIL group. The non-CLIL groups will have to accept or reject the changes made by the other groups using Word Track Changes. In both cases, if they do not understand the correction, they can go to the group that corrected/marked it and ask them to clarify it. The objective of this activity is that they end up with a finished and clean travel plan.

<b>Session 4 - Activity 2</b>
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Type	Timing	Class management	Resources
Closure	25 minutes	Big group	Computer and overhead projector/digital screen.

Once the plans are finished, one student of each group will be required to act as a spokesperson and show the rest of the class the places that they chose for their trip using Google Street View explaining very briefly (around 5 minutes) what these are.

To summarize the changes in the didactic proposal of the non-CLIL and CLIL groups, in the first session, the non-CLIL group will watch a video from YouTube to bring them closer to the culture of another country in the most natural way possible, while the CLIL will take advantage of the presence of the language assistant being able to interact with him/her. The number of words that each member of the group is required to write is also a difference – i.e., 50 words the non-CLIL group and 80 words the CLIL group. Regarding the error correction, Harmer’s list of symbols will be used in both groups, but in the non-CLIL group the teacher will mark the mistakes and in the CLIL group the students will mark their classmates’ mistakes. Then, in the non-CLIL group the students will correct their classmates’ mistakes, and in the CLIL group they will correct their own mistakes.

The implementation of this proposal would result in the following benefits for the students. This proposal would bring the students closer to the culture and artistic heritage of an English-speaking country and develop their intercultural competence. Their linguistic competence would also be enhanced since they would work with the foreign language all the time, insisting on subject-verb agreement. They would also learn correction strategies that would be useful for them to self-correct and that would awaken their awareness of the importance of committing mistakes to improve. Since the error correction process would be adapted to each group, this is expected to have a positive impact on their motivation, eliminating shame or overwhelm. Additionally, the opinion of the participants in this project is taken into consideration since some argued that they do not feel motivated to write in English due to a number of reasons. The ones that are addressed in this proposal are teacher dependent reasons such as the lack of vocabulary and of interest in the topics that they are required to write about. During the introductory activities, the students would be provided with enough vocabulary to be able to write the final product. Although the topic is restricted to travels, they are free to choose the city and the category that interests them the most. Finally, students would develop both self-discipline and the ability to work in a group and make decisions together, because the entire project from the first activity to the final project, with the exception of the presentation, would be carried out in groups.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this dissertation is aimed at exploring: i) subject-verb agreement features; ii) error correction strategies for written production and iii) the benefits of CLIL, as well as at finding problematic areas in these aspects through experimental data and to propose a possible solution for them through a didactic proposal.

First, it has been demonstrated that the participants in both groups tend to omit the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular bound morpheme *-s* in production, while they have less difficulty with unbound morphemes such as the verb *to be* as a copula verb, as found in Morales (2014). In the comprehension task, the participants demonstrated not to be sensitive to grammaticality since the rates of correctness and incorrectness are too similar within each group. Since a larger exposure to qualitative English input seems to be one of the reasons for the linguistic improvement of CLIL students (Wolff, (2007; Goris et al., 2019; Morales and Montrul, 2020; Mohebbi, 2021), special importance is given to the input in the didactic proposal described in this dissertation. Therefore, be it or one the other the reason behind the omission of the morpheme in production and the lack of sensitivity to grammaticality in comprehension, one

solution to this error seems to be to increase the quantity and quality of contextualized input that non-CLIL students receive, as well as to maintain this for CLIL students from language assistants and the teacher (Dalton-Puffer, 2002; Gajo, 2007; Lorenzo, 2007). A different story would be if the Impairment approach described by Morales (2014) was behind the cause of this omission. It suggests that agreement features will never be fully integrated in L2 learners' repertoire, and further longitudinal research would be needed to confirm or reject the approach.

Then, the comparison between the two storytelling tasks, the second being completed after the error correction process, reveals improvement in the results only of the CLIL group. For this reason, and given that some participants report having felt overwhelmed or embarrassed during the correction process, the same correction strategies appear not to be appropriate for both classes and for all students. Therefore, the error correction process should be adapted to the linguistic and cognitive needs of each class, and if possible, of each student. This issue has been taken into consideration in the didactic proposal, as well as the possibility carrying out the peer correction in groups so that students with a lower proficiency or cognitive skills could be helped by more proficient and skilled students, avoiding negative feelings (Balderas and Cuamatzi, 2018). The CLIL participants showed a higher motivation when writing in English and better results in all the tasks, which reaffirms the benefits of CLIL programs (Gajo, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Goris et al., 2013; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Goris et al., 2019), and suggests the necessity to pay attention to the non-CLIL students' shortcomings and needs. Therefore, in the didactic proposal it is suggested that: i) the latter are required a lower number of words to write; ii) they are more exposed to authentic and natural input despite not having a language assistant; iii) the error correction process is less demanding than in the CLIL group; and iv) the tasks are more guided and monitored so that the improvement is achieved gradually, avoiding overwhelm.

Finally, some areas of improvement should be taken into consideration for further research. In search for effectiveness of different error correction strategies, further studies should be longitudinal in order to provide more details on their effect. Furthermore, for the results to be more representative, more participants should be analyzed, and the proficiency groups should be more homogenous.



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