

University College Plymouth St. Mark & St. John
CENTRE for INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

(IEDM29): English Language Learning and Teaching

**Addressing L2 Learners' Writing Problems in a Blended Program, with Specific Reference
to Run-On Sentences**

Dissertation submitted in part of the requirements for the MA in TESOL

Marisol Guadalupe Del Rio

November 2014

Statement of Originality

I certify that all the material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me.

Marisol Gpe. Del Rio

November 2014

Abstract

Research on writing processes in foreign language learning and the impact of providing certain kinds of feedback has been overlooked in the Mexican university system. However, it ought to be taken into consideration since writing is the most common form of communication at the tertiary level.

This dissertation demonstrates how university-level EFL (acronym for English Foreign Language) students can be aided significantly in their writing process through the use of a marking code, particularly in relation to the problem of run-on sentences. This issue will be fully described in chapter 1.

The study explores samples of students' writing which were produced during a particular blended learning course. The same pieces of writing samples include a marking code adapted and implemented by myself in order to have the pupils reflect on their mistakes so that further improvements could be made.

In addition, interviews were conducted with students who had effectively improved their scripts by using the marking code. The interviews are included in order to explore students' feelings in regards to the code, their success in improving their writing and specifically the use of run-on sentences.

The data yielded in this study demonstrate that a marking code can help students in a positive way as long as guidance is input from the teacher. This may motivate students towards an independent learning style which is currently emphasized in the EFL field.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank and acknowledge all of those who supported my journey for this meaningful stage in my life.

First of all, my coordinators who strongly motivated me to take this next step in my professional life and provided all the support to enter the program and achieve to arrive towards the end of it.

Second, my family, my son and daughter, who despite their age, supported and encouraged me to get my assignments written. My sister and friends who aided me when it was a crucial time.

Third, my tutors who gave their unconditional support throughout the entire program and despite an ocean between our continents, there was always a reply in my inbox or in the program's forum.

Last, but not least, all my classmates from the program and both cohorts. I learned much from all your sharing inside the classroom and, in the forum. You were a tremendously positive support on our social network for those busy days.

List of Contents

Chapter One: The Context

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Research Purpose

1.3 Background

1.4 Blended Program Policies

1.5 Course Description

1.6 The Role of Writing in a Blended-Learning Program

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Errors in Writing - Typology

2.2 Correction Methods in Writing

2.3 Run-On Sentences: possible causes

2.3.1 Punctuation

2.3.2 Leaving out Connectors and/or Conjunctions.

2.3.3 Misconception of Complex Sentences

2.3.4 Spanish Interference in Discourse Patterns

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the Research

3.2 Data Gathering

3.2.1. Students' Scripts

3.2.2 Teacher Intervention

3.2.3 Application of Marking Code

3.2.4 Interview with Students

Chapter Four: Finding and Analysis

4.1 Students' Scripts Changes

4.2 Regarding Run-On Sentences

4.3 Students' Interviews

Chapter Five: Discussion and Suggestions

Conclusions

Bibliography

List of Tables

List of Appendices

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework
FCE	First Certificate of English
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
PCI	Programa Certificado de Ingles (Certified Program of English)
PAI	Programa Alternativo de Ingles (Alternative English Program)
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
L1	First or Native Language
L2	Second Language
SCL	Student Centered Learning

Chapter One: The Context

Background information is essential, in order to understand the circumstances and conditions connected to this study as well as its purpose. These points are revealed in this chapter.

1.1 Introduction

Technology has always been in our lives; nevertheless, it has grown even further in importance with the boom of the internet. Nowadays, most activities can be achieved through this incredible tool which is becoming increasingly important in teachers' as well as, students' lives. Currently, there are fully online and blended courses in many universities around the globe and my university is no exception. Sheehy (2013) reported that colleges have increased their offer for fully online degree programs up to 62.4 percent. Hitchcock mentions this increase is caused due to needs for quality and flexible programs which can be adapted to the world's current workforce. Another fact from the National Center for Education Statistics (2011:33) demonstrates that 20% of undergraduates has taken at least one distant education course in 2007-08 compared to the 16 % in 2003-04.

A fully online course consists of working through the Internet using a specific platform and communicating over the network with the teacher. According to Mason (1998: 1), it is the evolution of a learning model which has resulted from "technological innovation, experimentation, and new instructional designs". Alternatively, blended courses are when there is not a complete loss of face-to-face classes and a hybrid coexists with in-person and online activities as Rovai and Jordan expressed (2004: 1). For instance, if it is an 8-hourly per week class; 4 hours are in-person and the remaining 4 are taken online.

My university has a foreign language program which provides six languages for students: German, Italian, French, Chinese, English and Spanish (this last language is usually taught in the summer for exchange students). In order to receive their university diploma, all students must have a specific level of English, a B2 level, according to the CEFR (acronym for Common European Framework), to be precise. The CEFR is widely used as a reference in the EFL field to standardize the level of the language.

At the university, a student has the options of demonstrating his or her command of the language in the following ways:

- Presenting a diploma which certifies a First Certificate of English (FCE) level from the University of Cambridge.
- Demonstrating a score of 550 on the TOEFL examinations.
- Answering successfully the diagnostic exam in the language center.
- Passing the last level of the EFL program successfully.

The university presently has a total of eight levels of EFL language instruction. All levels may be taken in face-to-face or blended classes. The details of the courses are described further in section 1.3 as well as how the teacher and students work in the courses since the activities vary from in-person to the blended program.

I have been working for the university for more than four years and it has been highly satisfying. I have been teaching blended courses for over three years.

Writing is the main mean of communication in the blended course due to the number of hours the students must work independently online. Once students decide to take this type of course, their writing needs attention, just as in any language course; however, as previously mentioned, this skill is quite fundamental for specific activities (which are described further) within the blended class. Most of the students who decide to study in the blended course are already working. Due to the flexibility of attending classes through the university's educational platform and only visiting the campus once or twice per week for the face-to-face classes, this course attracts mostly students with restricted or busy schedules. Most students have taken English before at some point of their life. Most of their previous academic years have been spent in private education which is likely to teach English since students' early years. On the other hand, in public education, English begins to be taught in 7th grade.

Writing in English has become more constant and common during the last 25 years in Mexico. It is more frequent and accessible to find literature, as well as magazine, newspaper, and professional development articles in this language; therefore, a part of the population has become aware of the importance of commanding the language. Also, considering that such a high quantity of literature is being published, and English is the language which would always give access to material of such importance (St. John 1987: 113). In 1997, according to Lesk, the Library of Congress had a 20 terabyte-sized information which half is in English not considering the information which added daily on working days. Hence, the importance of commanding more access depends on the knowledge of the language.

Proper writing in English has become extremely important due to globalization and the internet; current undergraduate students, use English in their employments to communicate with clients, employees or employers from other countries in order to fulfill needs, regardless of the industry of their employment. Furthermore, the university intends to have all students graduate with an upper-intermediate level of the language with appropriate use and production. Consequently, there have been needs which have arisen within the students' writing production, with special attention to run-on sentences.

It is absolutely imperative to carry out an action research on this issue due to the increasing growth in these types of courses at my university and the awareness of the lack of correct writing in the blended courses. This paper may also aid the courses which are exclusively in-person since writing issues occur in any EFL class. Likewise, it is mandatory to find or create activities to

increase awareness in preventing, or in another case, solving concerns related to writing. Hence, this will aid students to become skilled and proficient writers.

So as to become observant what can help students, it will be necessary to identify what the main problems with students' writing are. As well as analyzing why they occur and what can be done to prevent them. The study is based on the following research questions:

1. Regarding run-on sentences, what could be the possible reasons they occur and what can be done to prevent them?
2. Can a marking code effectively aid students to improve their writing?

1.2 Research Purpose

Writing has been one of the macro-skills (in English, there are four macro-skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening) which many students have had difficulties with since it needs to fulfill certain specific requirements, as outlined in the rubrics below. These rubrics were designed by one of the former coordinators, taking into consideration writing guidelines from the CEFR.

- **Content.** The subject of the topic is fully covered taking into consideration all the important points which ought to be mentioned.
- **Grammar.** This point should be used properly assuring that verb tenses, forms and parts of speech as well as word order.
- **Vocabulary.** Accurate use of connectors and words in order to fully express the intention of the writing.
- **Organization.** Appropriate organization of the sentences, paragraphs and especially, ideas should not be undermined so that confusion is avoided.
- **Paragraphing.** In occasions, students neglect the use of and/or misuse paragraphs within a text not considering that topic sentences and main ideas must always be utilized. This would imply planning of behalf of the student in order to organize ideas into a logical sequence.
- **Mechanics.** This will be one of the most frequently mentioned points in this dissertation since there is a strong relationship with run-on sentences. Mechanics are the misuse of capital letters, spelling and punctuation.

The reason that students produce errors, on some occasions, could be due to the fact that they are not aware of what is expected in their pieces of writing; this could occur if the teacher does not

make them aware of the aforementioned rubric. On other occasions, this might happen if students do not know how to write scripts that meet the requirements of the rubric.

There has been concern from teachers, coordinators, academic staff and students about how students can improve their writing. It has been a challenge that has existed for some time in language education. Considering this, several ways have been implemented inside and outside the classroom. Black (2004:1) mentions assessment provides information to teachers that can be used to deliver feedback. The word “assessment” comes from the Latin root “assidere” “which means to sit next to one another”. In the EFL field, as well as other fields, it is an essential step towards students’ learning. Greenstein (2010:2) mentions two types of assessment: traditional and formative. Traditional implies a summative assessment which involves testing in order to supply a score. This tends to standardize students’ achievement. On the other hand, formative provides strategies for students’ progress. This type of assessment can definitely be carried out during an in-person class as well as through the distance.

According to Encinas, Keranen and Salazar (2010: 17) research on writing English in Mexico is quite new; therefore, this must be considered in order to carry out research, analyze it and find ways of improving students’ performance, especially at the university level. Research would enlighten the way to what are the ideal tools that could aid students with their writing in this highly technological environment.

1.3 Background

At the university I work for, the English program consists of a total of eight levels. English is taught in three different types of courses: face to face which is the PCI program (Programa de Certificacion de Ingles that stands for English Certified Program), blended (half the workload, face to face and the other half online) and PAI (Programa Alternativo de Ingles which translated to English means English Alternative Program) which is intended for students who have had very little or no exposure to foreign language classes throughout their academic life).

Each level is a taught block of 60 hours which add up to a total of 480. They can be taken in a bimestrial (seven weeks) or semestral period (fourteen weeks). According to the CEFR, when a student completes the final level in this university; she or he reaches an upper-intermediate level command of the language (B2) which is considered appropriate for the student’s professional development in an English-speaking environment. The following table explains how the levels compared to the CEFR:

PCI / Blended	CEFR
Level 1	Below A1

Level 2	A1
Levels 3, 4 and 5	A2
Levels 6 and 7	B1
Level 8	B2

Table 1: PCI/Blended levels compared to CEFR

The blended program has similar evaluation criteria for its levels as the PCI program. There are slight changes which are mentioned in further.

The blended program is the one considered for this study; on account of the amount of writing the students produce which, as described earlier, is usually higher than in a PCI course. When doing their online activities (posts in forums, online journals, and homework) the course focuses more on writing than the face-to-face sessions in which students are exposed to speaking activities. Obviously, the latter would also depend on the teacher’s style and beliefs. Thus, this type of course is the one that needs more attention in improving students’ writing skills since it is the main form of communication when the group is not physically in a classroom.

1.4 Blended program policies

In order to complete the blended program successfully, students must finish satisfactorily all the levels up to eight so that the university diploma can be granted. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the students do not have to take all levels or any at all, if they have already fulfilled any of the other mentioned requirements (see introduction).

Currently, the blended course is only available for levels four to eight. It is believed that an A2 level (CEFR) should be achieved first in order to be able to handle the blended course work which will be done in an autonomous manner. This is the reason why this type of course is offered only in the upper levels of the program.

It is recommended that not all students study in the blended program. Students must evaluate whether they meet the requirements to adapt to the style of this type of course. Before enrolling to a blended course, it is recommended that the student answers a questionnaire in order to see if they match the profile of a successful blended student. Just to mention a few of the aspects they are asked to consider about themselves:

- Do you have initiative and interest in learning on your own?

- Do you feel comfortable when using technology to learn?
- Are capable of self-evaluating your strengths and weaknesses in the language?
- Can you administrate your time successfully?
- Do you have the discipline to deliver your work on time?
- Do you have the available time to work four hours weekly online?

(Translated from:

http://saturno.sc.iteso.mx/portal/page/portal/Dependencias/Rectoria/Dependencias/Direccion_General_Academica/Dependencias/Centro_de_lenguas/Blended)

It is important to remember that a blended student will be learning half of the time on her own. For this reason, it is extremely important to take all these aspects into account to prevent frustration or withdrawal from the course. In my experience, I have had students who, half through the course, realize the blended form is too challenging or they would rather have a teacher to guide them all the time. Thus, the importance of considering the previously mentioned questions in order for a student to know if she is an appropriate candidate for this type of course.

1.5 Course Description

First of all, the blended course includes other aspects besides those formerly mentioned. Having half the course online implies exposing the students to different activities than the ones offered in face-to-face classes. As previously mentioned, there are two types of course lengths: semestral and bimestral classes. The semestral course meets two hours per week face-to-face and the other two hours are through online activities. The bimestral course has four face-to-face classes weekly and the same number of hours for the online section. This dissertation focuses on a semestral group.

The blended course has online activities which the face-to-face course lacks. These are the following:

- Etivities: this is a compound word for “electronic” and “activity”. Every two weeks (or weekly in the case of bimester courses), students have to go to their online course and read the instructions in order to carry out their etivity successfully. The instructions vary depending on the teacher, but most include slides or a video with a grammar explanation. Afterwards, students must post three times during an agreed-upon period of time (which usually is between three to five days). The first post is the longest; it includes the grammatical points which were previously seen in the instructions (it also grants one of the two attendances that students receive for the etivity). The second post includes questions among students and the third and last involves responding to the questions

raised in the second post (these two latter posts grant their second attendance). Six activities are carried out throughout the course and they are worth twenty per cent of the students' final grade.

Each activity is worth ten points, five for the posts on the forum and the other five for completing the weekly resources. These latter are resources published in an Evernote page and they involve practicing skills such as listening and reading as well as grammar topics which have been seen in class or online. When the student finishes these activities on the webpage, a screenshot is taken and pasted into a file. This is done until three screenshots are taken of the resources. Once everything is pasted, the file is sent to the teacher by a specific date.

- **Reflective Journals:** to conclude each activity, students must write or record a message reflecting on their learning experiences in this blended format. They must make a total of six journal entries, one for each of the activities. The instructions are online as well, and the majority of them contain questions which invite the student to reflect on their learning process in the course. Some of the entries are about contacting someone who has an advanced level of the language and interviewing them on experiences they have had with online learning. Afterwards, they have to write or record their interviewee's. These entries are evaluated with the same criteria as the activity when it is delivered to the platform or sent by email. These journals are worth ten per cent of the course.

It is necessary to explain how the activities in the program work because in Chapters 4 and 5, when the data is analyzed, the data in the appendices seem to not have any coherence. This is due to posts from the students which are from a single thread. In order to understand the full topic, it would be required to enter the university's online platform. These two previous activities are only a part of the assessment for the course; however, the marking code is always applied.

1.6 The Role of Writing in a Blended-Learning Program

Being in a blended course involves a great deal of communication outside the face-to-face classroom and writing is the most important skill in this case. In the classroom, when all the students and teacher are together and face-to-face, such as listening and speaking receive more attention. The face-to-face class may be used to involve students in icebreakers, role plays, activities related to phonetics and phonology, chants, presentations, etc. Obviously, all these mentioned activities involve listening as well as specific activities connected to this skill.

When the group is working online, writing is the macro-skill most frequently used due to the posts in the forum and occasionally, the journal entries. Reading is also highly involved because students must read their classmates' posts in order to write their own posts. It is constantly thought, on behalf of the teacher, how to include the other macro-skills (listening and speaking) and using the resources (linked on Evernote as mentioned in the sub-chapter).

Working online involves not only communication between teacher and students, but among students as well. As previously mentioned, writing is always used for the activities, specifically for the posts in the forum and occasionally to fulfill the reflective journals (considering that journals may be in a written or audio format). In addition, all blended courses include assignments; in the case of levels five and six, four assignments must be completed. Each assignment is generally focused on a macro-skill; however, not all assignments can be targeted on one skill because as acknowledged by most language teachers, it is known that most activities involve at least two skills at a time.

Compared to the PCI course, which at the most includes 3 or 4 scripts, writing is a stronger activity in the blended; therefore, it must be taken advantage to assess students so that they gain a high level of accuracy.

Writing, as previously mentioned is the main method of communication in the blended course and we, as blended teachers, must always consider the support our students need from us so that improvement can be observed. Our support may be controlled or guided depending on the context; however, it should always be there to aid students to a better command of the language.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Teachers' use of a marking code and making reference to run-on sentences will be described in the following chapter. Both topics were the main concern of this research in order to observe the results of using a code to improve students' scripts.

2.1 Errors in Writing - Typology

Errors and mistakes are everywhere in our lives and language learning is no exception. All people who have undergone EFL or ESL (English as a Second Language) that have made mistakes in their learning process. In my experience, I have observed how students take advantage of their mistakes and errors as part of attempting to understand how the language functions. There has been research on what students make the most errors on regarding the macro-skills. Writing contains the highest number as demonstrated in the following graph from Perez (2013:3):

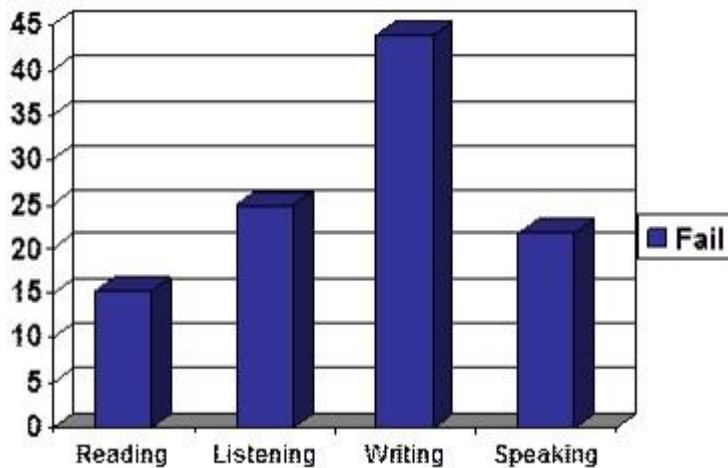


Table 2: Intermediate Certificate Results (Perez, 2013)

There is a difference to mistakes and errors. Mistakes, according to Brown (1994:205), are made unconsciously, e.g. a typo in a message or email and they can be produced by non-native and native speakers in the target language, whereas an error is mostly formed by a non-native speaker in the second or foreign language. For instance, “he was invite to the party”. It can be observed that there is an omission of the past participle in “invite” and this is a type of error common among EFL and/or students.

In order to aid our students in understanding their errors so that they are able to work on them to successfully correct their posts, and improve their writing skills, it is essential to make our students aware of what types of errors they make. According to Jung (2013:123), raising our

students' awareness about their mistakes and errors can help them understand how they can acquire the language in a more convenient way. In other words, if students know why they make their mistakes or errors and how they can correct them, they will be able to become more successful learners. This awareness is crucial for teachers so that students are guided to enhance accuracy and quality. Jung also mentions two types of errors in general with specific aspects for each one.

Form-based errors are related to using exact grammatical principles and punctuation, such as: "How many time do you have?" In this example, using "many" is grammatically incorrect because, as we know, "time" is an uncountable noun; therefore, "much" would be the appropriate word: "How much time do you have?" In contrast, *meaning-based errors* are those that inhibit the comprehension of the context. For instance, a frequent one among Spanish speakers is: "I am actually studying for my history exam" when the speaker in reality means: "I am currently studying for my history exam". This is the consequence of "actually" being a false cognate in Spanish, in this study, both types of errors were considered.

2.2 Correction Methods in Writing

"Writing is a more reflective and self-conscious process than speaking". (Lewis, 2002:175) Contrasted to speaking, writing allows us, in most cases, to think what the convenient ideas, reflections, thoughts, etc. are. We may also consider which parts of speech, tenses, words, etc. are the best to express what is meant. During this process, we tend to brainstorm, take notes, not only in L2 or foreign languages, but also in our mother tongue. In spite of this brainstorming, planning and preparation, language learners will eventually write errors. Fortunately, there are methods that teachers can consider to aid students with their corrections. Lewis (2002:174) claims that anyone who aspires to learn a foreign language, to a proficient level, will inevitably make hundreds of errors. This study will focus on one of these correction methods.

I presume it is necessary to find a way to advise our students in the most convenient manner. For the blended courses, students make several errors in their posts and written journals; therefore, it is mandatory to find the most appropriate form to correct their writing.

Lewis mentions that there are "hard" and "soft" ways of correcting. The "hard" way assumes the following:

- Firstly, the teacher is knowledgeable about the language.
- Secondly, the teacher calls student's attention to what is right and wrong about their language usage. This is to make the student aware an error has been made.
- Thirdly, the student is explained to the student what is correct.
- Finally, the student is asked to correct what is wrong.

The “soft” way considers that the teacher discovers a way of responding to students’ errors and this could be achieved through reformulation and feedback. Bitchener (2005:193) describes these ways as direct or explicit and indirect respectively. The following table can demonstrate the varied forms this may be achieved:

Form	Author	Details
Marking code	Bartram and Walton	Using abbreviations such as “sp” for a spelling error/mistake or “gr” for a grammatical error.
Minimal marking with audio notes	Hyland	It consists of only marking an “X” at the end of the line for each error or mistake found on every line. Student receives an audio with teacher’s feedback.
Students’ questions	Charles	Students write their own questions and doubts on their essays.

Table 3: Correction Methods

Each form will be further described with the marking code described last, since it was the one used for this study.

First of all, Hyland (2006:177), suggest providing students with a minimal marking which includes marking and “X” for every error at the end of every line. This is only to indicate the number of corrections that consider attention. For organizational difficulties, a recording will be added in which the teacher’s reactions towards their scripts will be saved when the text is read aloud. In other words, interaction is included when the teacher reads the student’s writing while adding feedback. Considering the limited time a blended course has, this would be time-consuming and it would imply a great deal of work for the teacher taking into account that the maximum number of students in each blended group may be up to 14. This could be a good option if the group is small or it could be done for merely one feedback session in the course, since Hyland has had success with this technique.

Secondly, regarding Charles (Charles in Lewis, 2002: 178) questioning technique, this would focus on students’ concerns and also enhance student centered learning. She (Charles) states that “if we are concerned about establishing a dialogue related to the text, then the problems

identified by the writer need as much attention as those identified by the editor.” I believe this could also be a successful technique if teachers train students on this procedure.

Finally, the marking code mentioned by Bartram and Walton (Bartram and Walton in Lewis, 2002: 177) motivate teachers to create a code for particular kinds of errors. For instance, a GR indicates a grammatical error. A MW highlights a word missing in that precise space whereas a WO tells there is a word order issue. This correction method is the considered one for this study because it allows the student to know where the error is and what type it is. It will be described in more detail in the following chapter.

Not only should choosing the appropriate method be considered. There are also techniques we can weigh in order to enhance the chosen correction method. Lewis (2002:175) suggests the following points:

- Introduce students to the following writing process: brainstorming (different techniques may be used throughout the course so that students become aware and encounter the most suitable one), drafting, receiving feedback from peers and/or teacher and, finally; editing as many times as necessary.
- Avoid the use of red ink (if the corrections are made on paper). The color contributes to a negative connotation.
- Approval should always be mentioned, to encourage motivation and make students aware of their strengths.

The first point is necessary for a well-developed writing since it involves a process which the skill, opposite to speaking, can easily include and benefits it. The second is quite explicit; if it is necessary to use a different color, there are several “soft” or “pastel” ones that can work. This can be applied electronically, through a computer, or on paper. If it is done electronically, e.g. on a Word document, it could be time consuming to click on the desired color. The last point is extremely important and must never be neglected so that students know how to exploit their strengths and continue working on their weak aspects.

To sum up with Lewis (2002:178), he suggests a lexical approach which consists of non-traditional grammar and vocabulary fabricated in chunks, however; this can be applied in a more efficient way for professional English than EFL or ESL. L2 learners need the basics to begin grasping the language. This approach was not considered for the students’ scripts in this particular study, but it can be useful, for instance, to immerse students in the target language.

In the activities, used for retrieving this study’s data, there was an introduction which was sometimes questions, reflections or a short video as an introduction or brainstorm to lead into the activity. So, Lewis’s first technique was definitely applied. It was considered to encourage students’ independence towards their language learning in a certain amount, but it is important to provide some guidance (which is carried out by establishing the steps through the instructions).

In ESL, there can be other ways to lead a writing activity; however, it is highly important to choose the proper method to correct in order to deliver feedback in a convenient way.

2.3 Run-On Sentences: Possible Causes

Herffernan and Lincoln (1987:279) define a run-on sentence as “a sentence with no punctuation or conjunction between them”. In other words, it is when there are two or more sentence fragments linked without any or improper punctuation connections. It is also known as a fused or stringy sentence.

Run-on sentences have become an issue when it comes to writing in the language classroom and they are significant ill formed structures by students according to Firat Altay (2007:1). A common misconception that I have observed is that a run-on sentence is always long; however, a run-on sentence should be determined of its structure instead of length.

In my experience as an EFL teacher, I have realized that run-on sentences are a frequent problem among my students, especially when students begin to write academic papers at the university level. Observation and experience throughout these years have enlightened quite a few possible main causes on behalf writing run-on sentences (Del Rio, 2013). These points will be described in the following points.

2.3.1 Punctuation

Students use inaccurate punctuation and comma splices. Most of the students in this university have, at some point, taken lessons on punctuation, likely in Spanish and less likely in English. In other points, they do not always know or remember the rules for punctuation.

Lamb (1977:2) mentions that errors are “governed” by rules and the application of commas related to run-on sentences. In occasions, students are aware that writing a very long sentence is not correct so that the overuse of commas appear. In spite of the fact that students seemingly know how to use punctuation, it is not a fact that they will always use it. Even so, I have observed scripts that do indeed include punctuation; however, it is not applied properly. For instance, after providing feedback on a writing section of a midterm exam, a student approached me and claimed that her “run-on sentence” was not such because it had a comma splice dividing it. This can be illustrated by the following example:

The handbag is empty, Sarah's wallet is missing.

The comma is not being properly used. A clause (a full sentence with subject and predicate) has ended and it should have another type of punctuation. It would be better to use a semicolon:

The handbag is empty; Sarah's wallet is missing.

Also, a period may replace the semicolon so that two sentences are formed:

The handbag is empty. Sarah's wallet is missing.

There are other combinations that can be considered and are mentioned ahead.

Another possible cause may be the interference of spoken language. It can be considered normal to say these sentences with that punctuation in mind; however, that does not state it is accurate.

2.3.2 Leaving out Connectors and/or Conjunctions.

Connectors and conjunctions help to make transitions between sentences. Students should learn the basic ones which are: but, or, yet, for, and, nor, and finally so. There are more complex ones; however, knowing how to use these is a start to help avoid run-on sentences.

This can be seen with the same previous example:

The handbag is empty, Sarah's wallet is missing.

It would be better to replace the comma with a coordinating conjunction:

The handbag is empty and Sarah's wallet is missing.

2.3.3 Misconception of Complex Sentences

According to Frajzyngier (1996:17) a complex sentence is “a construction consisting of more than one clause”

In Spanish, it is quite considered accurate to write long sentences with complex language: such as, formal vocabulary to show a certain level of knowledge. This provides the perception of someone who has been highly educated and consequently, it can be someone that gains a level of respect. An example from a student is included ahead:

“Well, practically for being the first week, we started at a good step, I have been enjoying all my classes by now and I do hope we can maintain our progress until the end of the course, I think that the strategy that we are using in class is efficient, for instance gathering theory and practice.”

This example was taken from an entry of a reflective journal. The student used vocabulary such as “maintain”, “efficient” and “gathering”. Also, the sentence could be considered a whole paragraph, but there is an absence of periods. Besides the punctuation issue, the student tries to be formal by using a complex sentence. This can also happen due to L1 (first language) interference, in this case, Spanish. This point is described in the following sub chapter.

2.3.4 Spanish Interference in Discourse Patterns

Spanish being their native language, my students have taken Spanish lessons throughout their academic life. Of course, the native language along with lessons, greatly interfere with the learning of the target language. At a certain point, after attending a school in the United States for more than six years I had to study Spanish, and it was interesting how little emphasis was made on the use of punctuation and the length of the sentences which seemed to be fine from my teacher's point of view (Del Rio,2013). To put it in a different way, not learning the importance of using punctuation may influence run-on sentences.

Montano (1999:417) claims that discourse patterns of texts vary due to the “straightness” of English. She mentioned that the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 1982 compared English with several other languages, among them Spanish. This can be represented in a visual way:

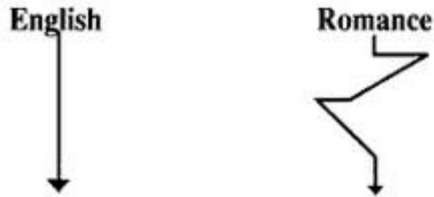


Table 4 : Comparison of English and Spanish

Observing the representation, Romance languages are expressed in an indirect way. In the American culture this is as in English. In her paper, Montano mentions a textbook for translators written by Vazquez-Ayora (1977) in which he states that Spanish has an overall complexity in texts due to sentence length and a general elegant writing style. Spanish, especially among Mexicans, does not lead its texts straight to the point, but instead has a free and flexible style.

Montano led a study contrasting two groups of students:

Means		
Discourse Feature	Mexican Spanish	Anglo-American English
length of the text	184.86 words	155.70 words
number of sentences	5.38	9.90
average length of sentences	41.10 words	17.10 words

Table 5: Length and Number of Sentences (Montano)

This may explain the influence of Spanish on writing production in English. As observed in the table, Spanish contains longer sentences and texts. In the following table, it can also be noted that run-on sentences are written more frequently by Mexicans than Americans. Montano highlighted that the longest sentence in Spanish was a full paragraph of 78 words whilst the shortest one in English was only 3-word statement.

Means		
Discourse Feature	Mexican Spanish	Anglo-American English
fragments	.58	.76
run-on	2.66	1.30
simple	.72	3.20
compound	.18	.56
complex	.90	3.42
compound-complex	.32	.64

Table 6: Types of Sentences (Montano)

This demonstrates that students in English write more compound sentences whereas Mexican students rather use run-ons. Montano explains that more complex sentences were written in English sometimes using subordinate clauses beginning with “because”.

In summary, it can be observed that writing in Spanish involves longer sentences and this could be a strong influence when writing in English.

Finally, to conclude this chapter, it can be observed that different causes for run-on sentences types of errors are involved in writing in English, although it is more the teacher’s role to be aware of them than the student’s so that action can be taken inside classroom instruction. Applying a marking code could significantly aid students’ scripts.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will describe the methods used to carry out the research. The most relevant point to mention is that an action research was applied. Cohen and Manion (1989:223) claim that this type of research is an “on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation”.

3.1 Introduction to the Research

In order to begin the research, it is essential to consider the research questions which were mentioned in the introduction:

- **Regarding run-on sentences, what could be the possible reasons why they occur and what can be done to prevent them?**
- **Can a marking code effectively aid students to improve their writing?**

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, it is mandatory to find out why run-ons occur, and ways to aid students with their writing skills in order to create self-awareness which could lead to SCL (student-centered learning). The independence that students may obtain from SCL can motivate to learn from errors. It is also extremely important in the success of commanding the language. In order for the research to obtain satisfactory results, it was essential to follow certain steps and considerations.

Firstly, it was important to choose a group which is part of the blended program, this due to the ease with which I could apply the marking code and to create, to a certain level, students' autonomy. Using the marking code may boost SCL because it can show students which are their frequent flaws that need more attention. Therefore, students may be more cautious to avoid the same error. An intermediate level, specifically six, is ideal because at this stage the student is already aware of the basics in the language and can already produce a piece of writing with a considerable amount of information.

It is necessary to highlight that this research could also have been carried out with a PCI group since there are also writing activities. However, it could be a substantial amount of workload due to the face-to-face hours which, as aforementioned, are twice the blended courses. Nevertheless, implementing the marking code could have the advantage of motivating SCL.

Secondly, it was necessary to work with a group with which a good amount of writing could be done and I could constantly check their work so that students could receive feedback and so realize that there is improvement to be made.

Thirdly, after the posts in the forum were written; I checked students' scripts using the marking code in order to make students aware of what was necessary to correct and to look into problems with run-on sentences.

Lastly, but not least important, interviews were made with students about the use of the marking code which was meant to guide students to improve their writing. Students were encouraged to give reasons for their opinions and suggestions in case they noticed the code needed improvements.

3.2 Data Gathering

As mentioned in the previous sub chapter, the different kinds of information for the data are the scripts from students before and after using the marking code and the student interviews. The process for retrieving this information is described in the following paragraphs.

Nunan (1992: 1) describes several instruments which can be used to collect data, for instance: journals, interviews (for teachers as well as for students), questionnaires, and surveys. In order to follow the characteristics of an action research, the most appropriate for this study was an interview schedule for students with open questions and analysis of scripts.

Data collection was carried out since almost the beginning of the course. As previously mentioned, the chosen course is in a semestral form which began in mid-August. The first week was not considered for data since it is a general introduction to the course and provides students time to become familiar with the process of working online. Also, students had never experienced a blended course before.

For the first week, the students merely posted about themselves and interacted with the teacher and classmates so that everyone would get to know each other and become acquainted with the online activities.

When the second week arrived, it was time for the first of six activities, so students received the instructions on the forum and began posting. As mentioned in chapter 1, students did the three posts which were afterwards copied and pasted into a Word document by the teacher. The marking code began to be applied in this step.

3.2.1. Students' Scripts

Checking students' scripts was a biweekly activity and, as mentioned in the previous sub chapter, it consisted of going online to the module which was covered according to the program. Accessing the activity's forum and copying and pasting each post from every student their individual Word document were the first steps. After pasting all their posts, I proceeded to read

and apply the marking code. The group had 8 students and 2 responded editing their scripts considering the code.

As formerly mentioned, every week, each pupil receives via email a Word document with all their posts done in the week. Each activity is divided from the others. After their posts, there is a grade depending on the performance of the student along with comments from the teacher.

Mainly, two students were considered for this dissertation on account of their work on correcting their posts when they had received their feedback. It is not mandatory to correct their posts and send them back; it is merely optional in case they wish to increase their grade. From the group of eight students, two of them are constant with correcting their writing and emailing them back to the teacher. Hence, this is the main reason for choosing these students in order to check their progress.

3.2.2 Teacher Intervention

After that, the number of errors was marked at the bottom of all posts along with some personal feedback regarding the student's general performance. In case the student believes the amount of errors is too high and would rather make the necessary corrections, they were given some time (approximately three days) to send the posts back corrected and improved.

The two students who edited their scripts with the teacher's markings can be found in appendices 3 and 4. The students are identified as Student A (appendix # 3) and Student B (appendix # 4). The posts may not seem to have any coherence among them as a result of the interaction among all the students in the group. Thus, to comprehend the interaction, it would be necessary to enter the forums and read each thread created by each pupil for every activity. The appendices only consist of the posts that those students wrote on their behalf in order to receive the corrections with the code exclusively for their writing.

Students A and B sent their corrections (appendices 5 and 6 respectively) within the time required by the teacher (me). Afterwards, they were revised again as they were compared with the first version (appendices 1 and 2). This step included the analysis. The students' names originally written in the scripts were changed to *classmate* in order to protect students' identities.

3.2.3. Application of Marking Code

As mentioned in the previous section, the marking code, based on Bartram and Walton's, was applied during the teacher's intervention stage. The code was personally created considering my teaching experience and observation on numerous pieces of students' scripts. Also, I have taken into account student centered-learning without neglecting guidance which in our educational system, for some students, their learning style greatly depends on the teacher. Please refer to appendix # 1 to see the marking code which was applied. I believe that this code, considers the

most frequent errors and mistakes that university students make and could aid students in improving their writing skills.

The marking code was designed using abbreviations for each type of error. For instance, a grammar error is represented by a simple “g”. When a word is missing in a sentence, an “mw” will be marked. A few examples are provided below and as it was mentioned, the code, with the definition for each abbreviation, can be found in appendix 1.

Some pieces of the code were designed according to students’ common errors. Such as, in speaking and writing, it is frequently observed the absence of the “s” for third person singular in simple present tense. Also, the lack of the simple past which is much used for telling events, stories, anecdotes, etc. is misused for other tenses. So, I believed it was necessary to be specific between verb tense “vt” and verb form “vf” in order to have the student make the proper improvement. The following examples are taken from students’ scripts which are not included in the appendices.

Student’s example:

- *She do (vf) her homework every day.*
In this sentence, the verb tense is correct because it is mentioning a “simple present” and this can be confirmed due to the time expression “every day”. However, the subject is *she* and this pronoun must carry an *s* or *es* (depending on the verb) at the end.
- *Last year, I travel (vt) to Chile for an exchange program.*
This example needs to have the verb *travel* in simple past tense because the time expression *last year* implies the time the event occurred.

Marking the difference between the tense and form, the student could become aware of not neglecting the “s” for the first example as well as recalling the importance of writing the verbs in a past tense for expressing past events.

This same thought was applied for word form “wf” and wrong word “ww”. The following examples will illustrate the difference:

Student’s example:

- You know how people say ghosts are a constant (ww/g) of what they were doing before they died?
- All of them are good, thank you for repost(wf) and answer(wf) the sentences, have a good week. Good job. (wait for stacey’s response)

In the first example, “constant” could be considered a wrong word because it seems the student wants to express “proof” or “evidence” according to the context of the post. A “g” was added to give the student a hint that he is using an adjective instead of a noun which would be the needed part of speech due to the article “a” before.

For the second example, *wf* is highlighted twice in order to let the student know that the word is appropriate, but the form of speech is not. It is necessary to edit it to a gerund form (*reposting* and *answering*) so that the pattern of the sentence is accurate.

This type of marking code would work best with university level rather than with younger students since I believe a more “general” marking code could be used with them; e.g. underlining a spelling error or simply circling a grammar mistake. However, it could be possible to train younger students to use this code by introducing new “abbreviations” every year, semester, period, etc.

As it can be observed in appendices 3 and 4, which are students’ scripts with the marking code applied, all the abbreviations were included in the middle of a parenthesis. This is due to the fact that all the marking was done electronically (as mentioned before, on a Word document) and it was necessary to distinguish the code from the rest of the text. Students were aware of this during a brief informative session in a face-to-face class before receiving their first feedback via the institutional mail.

3.2.4 Interview with Students

In any research, essay or writing, it is reasonable to consider both sides of the coin. In this section of the action research, a total of four students were interviewed; two were those who corrected the activities and the other two had not used this tool. It was important for the students to know also the opportunity of improving their writings was not taken advantage of.

An interview schedule was designed for students and it can be consulted in appendix 2. During one of the face-to-face classes, as students did a few exercises from a handout on one of the topics which was being reviewed in class, each of the four students were asked to step outside in order to be interviewed using a recording. A smart phone with a recording application was used for this stage and the transcriptions may be read in the appendices 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Before each interview, it was explained to all students who were involved that the information provided would only be used for this study and their identities would not be revealed.

The main objective of the interviews was to find out what students thought about the use of this marking code and if they would make any changes or suggestions to improve it.

To sum up this chapter, the research procedure and methodology were described step by step so now the findings can be revealed.

Chapter Four: Finding and Analysis

“Get the habit of analysis – analysis will in time enable synthesis to become your habit of mind.”

Frank Lloyd Wright

As Wright claims, analysis aids understanding parts of which a whole. Analysis is a routine part of our classes, and meaningful insights may be provided in order to improve weaknesses that appear in our students’ learning process or our teaching. In this chapter, the results will be presented along with analysis and reflections which arose from the data collection stage.

4.1 Students’ Scripts Changes

As previously mentioned, in chapter 3, two students’ scripts were analyzed and, their scripts may be referenced in appendices 3 and 4.

It was necessary to cut and paste from the forum in which the students’ posts were written. As previously explained, all their posts were copied and pasted into a file and the marking code was used. In the appendices, the lines of the scripts were numbered in to order to ease reference. It was necessary to occasionally mark 2 errors within the same parenthesis because there were two types of mistakes in the same word.

To compare the scripts before and after the corrections, the following table was included:

Marking code (type of error)	Student A				Student B			
	Before	Total of Errors	After	Total of Errors	Before	Total of Errors	After	Total of Errors
mw	5	28	0	0	3	34	1	4
sp	2		0		7		1	
nn	2		0		4		1	
vt	0		0		1		0	
g	2		0		2		0	
ww	4		0		4		0	
n	1		0		0		0	
wo	0		0		2		0	
c	0		0		2		0	
p	7		0		8		1	
l	1		0		0		0	
vf	1		0		1		0	
E	0		0		0		0	
wf	1		0		0		0	
?	0		0		0		0	
-	0		0		0		0	

Table 7: Students' Results Before and After Using the Marking Code to Correct Their Scripts

Referring to the table above, it can be observed that student A had 20 errors, with the marking code and the student was able to correct all of them. Therefore, the marking code was an appropriate tool to improve his writing. For instance, in lines 4, 5 and 6 (of appendix 3), there were punctuation errors which included a comma. This may be observed in the *p* row.

Fortunately, the student was able to improve those. There could have been a mistake on my behalf, which is on line 5, appendix 3. The following is the original sentence written by the student: "At first (mw) guess (p) we might think it is a haunted house". I suggested adding a word before "guess", believing a pronoun was missing. After reviewing the sentences for a second time, I realized that it could have been the student's intention to use "guess" as a noun and not a verb. In spite of this, the student did not ask for clarification on this point so there was a high probability that it was incorrect.

Zamel (1985:79) implies that ESL teachers misread students' texts and sometimes are inconsistent in reactions and give vague prescriptions. This should be taken into account to avoid incongruity and; therefore, confusion.

The other student, student B was not able to correct all her errors; in fact, 2 new errors appeared after the correction (described below). She had a total of 34 errors prior to the correction. Afterwards, she had 4 errors, so there was a significant improvement: 30 fewer errors.

Looking into the errors she failed to correct, firstly on line 6 (of appendix 6) in which it was marked that there was a "mw" (missing word), the student made a change that introduced an error into her script. She had previously written "The first photo of the wedding was from (mw) aerial point" (appendix 4 line 6). Obviously, she was only missing the article "an", but she was not aware of that and decided to change the word "aerial" for "bird". This could have been a "slip" in which she perhaps misunderstood the code. It seems she applied the "ww" (wrong word) marking code.

Secondly, the other error which appeared on line 7, appendix 6 was not corrected and another type of error was introduced. In appendix 4, line 7 she wrote: "and maybe that house it(nn) could be in the downtown of the city". The code "nn" was intended to make her aware that the word "it" was not necessary. However, she decided to write a period and not capitalize the following word: "and maybe that house could be downtown. where it might be the university of art". In this case, it could have been another misunderstanding of the code.

Thirdly, on appendix 4, line 10 there was a spelling error with the word "because" (beacuse), and despite marking it with "sp", the same error appeared in the correction (appendix 6, line 10). This could have been a common typo probably caused by typing at a high speed. Neglecting to

correct it could have been due to laziness or not checking carefully to see whether all errors were corrected.

Lastly, on appendix 4, lines 12 and 13 the following line had the mark of “not necessary”: And maybe(p) the owner of the house it(nn) may be the uncle of the bride and that's why he might give her the house for the wedding(nn). It was recommended to delete the whole underlined phrase because it was already mentioned “a house”, so it was to repetitive to keep it. When the correction was returned, this was the change: “Perhaps the owner of the house may be the uncle of the bride, and that's why he might give it to her the house for the wedding”. It can be noticed that “maybe” which only had a “p” (intending to note the need for a comma) but, instead, the word “maybe” was changed to “perhaps” and “house for the wedding” was not deleted. This could have occurred because the student did not consult the code or it could have been a “slip” caused by lack of attention.

4.2 Regarding Run-On Sentences

As discussed in chapter 2, section 2.3, run-on sentences are quite common among Spanish speakers and some of the causes are lack or overuse of punctuation, connectors or conjunctions, misuse of complex sentences as well as Spanish interference. This study considers these issues while looking into the students’ scripts.

Observing the table, punctuation errors are the highest, 8 for both students. Hence, not all are related to run-on sentences. For example, in appendix 3 (student A), lines 1 to 8; it was necessary to have a comma to separate extra information. In line 10, there is a run-on sentence which needed a period to conclude the idea. In lines 19, 20 and 21, there is a second run-on sentence. It would be suggested after “moments” to place a period and delete “but” in order to begin “they” with a capital letter. In lines 22, 23, 24 and 25 there is a third run-on which needs a period after “so.”

In the case of student B, she also has several of her punctuation mistakes due to not using them to separate extra information. In lines 2, 3 and 4, she wrote a run-on which required a period after “you”. Lines 6, 7 and 8 needed a period after house. It also was necessary to delete “and” to begin “maybe” with a capital letter. In lines 9, 10 and 11, there is another run-on as well. This sentences needs a period after “fresh”. She also omits using comma to pause after a connector (such as line 14, appendix 4) and in another example, on line 18, she simply excluded an apostrophe for the contraction “do not”.

In these samples (appendices 3 and 4), most of the run-ons were caused not necessarily lack of punctuation, but misuse it. It seems students believe that using comma splices is a solution to make proper stops or pauses.

The implementation of the marking code seemed to help although a few run-on sentences can be seen in the corrected versions (appendices 5 and 6).

4.3 Students' Interviews

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.4, four students were interviewed: two had made corrections and two had not. It was thought necessary to know why the corrections were not being made in those cases.

The transcripts of the students' interviews may be consulted in appendices 7, 8, 9 and 10. Appendices 7 and 8 belong to the students who did make corrections on their scripts using the marking code (students A and B respectively from the scripts). Appendices 9 and 10 belong to students who did not make corrections on their scripts which are students C and D. Each one will be analyzed according to the order in which they were interviewed.

First of all, student A stated that he used the code because it served as a guide to know where the error was. Regarding the challenge of using the symbols (or abbreviations), he mentioned it was simple to use and he would not suggest any changes to it since the code explicitly described the type of error that needed attention. He also thinks that this code should be used in the rest of his English classes.

Second, student B felt that the code was useful, although the first time she attempted to use it, she did not understand it and decided to use "logic" to correct her mistakes. She suggested that pasting the code at the top of her file could have aided her significantly. E.g., the teacher could copy-paste the list at the top of the activity to be revised. She realized that her writing process may improve by realizing what type of errors she makes and the use of the code can definitely provide that if it is used consistently. Like her classmate (student A), she believes this code could be a good resource in future English courses.

As student B mentioned using "logic" when she did not understand how to use the code at first, this could be a valid reason for not making the proper corrections. She could also have felt too lazy to go into the course's platform and find the marking code list. This student is the same from appendices 4 and 6 who had a higher number of errors after correcting. Despite not referring to the marking code consistently, she was able to correct a considerable amount of errors.

Third, student C, (who is the first of the two who did not make corrections), expressed that he had never used the marking code before. He had two reasons: he had gotten good scores on his activities and also he had recently gotten a job which did not allow him enough time to correct; although, he mentioned that if he ever failed any of the activities, he would use the code.

Finally, the fourth interviewee (student D) also said that he had never corrected his activities due to lack of time.

Going through the students' replies for the interviews, there does not seem to be a strong negative feeling towards the use of the marking code. The only explanations given for not correcting the scripts were the lack of time and satisfactory grades. One interviewee (student B) mentioned that she did not understand how to use the code the first time; however, she admitted that it was only necessary to access the marking code in a more convenient way.

After reviewing all the data, it can be concluded that using a tool such as an adapted marking code may guide students successfully to realize the type of errors they make more often and correct them; and it is clear that the students who use the marking code truly appreciate this kind of support.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Suggestions

In this final chapter, the findings along with the analysis will be discussed in order to make suggestions for applying a marking code in a successful way for an EFL or ESL class.

One of the issues regarding the marking code which is provided to students electronically at the beginning of every blended course seems to be the ease of access to it. It is always placed as one of the important documents at the top of the online platform and this is explained and shown to the class with a laptop and projector. It could be printed out and supplied one for each student. It could even be printed on colored paper, with the recommendation that students keep it where they will be working during the online hours of the class.

As one of the students suggested, the code could be pasted into the top of the file that they receive. This would involve extra work for the teacher besides all the other copying and pasting from the activities in order to check their scripts. So perhaps students could be warned that it will be pasted only once into their document which has the posts. If they need further reference, they could use the printed version of the code (or the document with their posts they receive from their teacher, or the online document with the code from the platform).

Due to possible misunderstanding when interpreting students' errors, as occurred with student's A scripts, additional notes could be used when correcting. Not all the time does the code substitute for a whole error or mistake. When it is necessary to ask the student to clarify something, a parenthesis could include the question or additional notes may be written as general feedback at the end of the activity.

Communication outside the face-to-face class is mandatory. Besides the online platform for the online hours, there is also an institutional mail. Unfortunately, most students use it only to receive and download the documents on which they receive feedback. An option could be having informal means of communication with the students. Currently, there are several and popular mobile and online applications which may be downloaded into almost any smartphone. A Facebook (social network) group can be created, or a Whatsapp (application for text messaging) group may have the same purpose. Also a Twitter (micro blogging and instant messaging social network) can be provided for students who prefer to use this network.

This informal communication has its disadvantages which could be a time when students can get out of control due to texting during inappropriate hours. I have personally dealt with this by making my students aware that contacting me after a specific hour, will not guarantee a response. The other disadvantage, informality, can be taken into account by ensuring that all communication with students is registered in the course's official platform. In my experience, these options have supported my communication significantly. Young people nowadays are always connected to the Internet and most also have a smart phone.

Also, peer feedback may be a smart temporary variation. As Rollinson (2005:29) mentions, it is a time-consuming activity, but it is not wasted time. After a couple of feedback sessions, when students have realized how the code works, it could be possible to have a peer correction session. A student's scripts could be first organized by the teacher (copying and pasting the posts into the document), yet not applying the marking code. Then, the class may be organized into pairs or groups of three. Afterwards, the document is sent to the students as they were set. For instance, if Mark and Ann are students and they form a pair, Ann's document is sent to Mark and Mark's document is sent to Ann. the corrections could be applied by the corresponding student on a laptop and then sent back to the student for a final revision. It can be considered to have this variation during class time in order to have monitoring from the teacher. This can be quite time-consuming for the face-to-face hours and there can also be a high probability that some errors may be overseen.

Despite the disadvantages of organizing and providing a space for peer correction, there is an important and better side that is that students will be more aware of their own mistakes by identifying those of others.

Concerning the feedback provided by the teacher, it could be considered to choose those errors that are mostly common among their writing. A list could be provided to the class and students could do cooperative activities in which they decide what the correct form for those errors or mistakes is. This could help realize why the student makes a specific mistake and it may arise the awareness in those students who did not make the mistakes in order to prevent writing them.

Inside the marking code, it could be considered to be more specific with the code "g" (grammar). Perhaps using "pos" (part of speech) might be an option; however, the teacher would have to prepare a lesson or activity to make students aware of a part of speech in order to know how to make changes.

Regarding the run-on sentences, being Spanish speakers does not automatically mean they will always write run-on sentences. It is a regular action, which was confirmed by Montano in her study as well as in this one. Despite the fact that most students from the blended courses have studied English throughout their lives since they were in kindergarten or elementary grades, Spanish is a strong influence in their EFL courses. This influence must be considered to teach students the contrasts with English as it is discussed in the following paragraph.

Spanish and English have some similarities. As Englander (2010:65) mentions, both languages have similar scholarly writing styles except Spanish is more prone to be more flowery and ornate. Flowery and ornate are characteristics that make the language "fancier" with elaborated vocabulary. This could be a possible explanation for why not all Spanish speakers write run-on sentences besides considering. In addition, all the influence we receive from English-speaking countries (especially, the United States) since childhood.

A way to aid students on run-ons is to make them aware of how punctuation differs between English and Spanish. In Spanish, it is regular to use commas whenever a pause is intended. In the case of English, a period is more likely to be used for a pause or to end an idea. This may help students to avoid comma splices; contrasting texts in both languages. Also, a text in English without any punctuation could be used and students would have to decide if a comma or period is appropriate.

Leki (1998:3) suggests that students need to develop strategies for producing texts and preparing and polishing their scripts by considering form, format, accuracy, and correctness. This should be taken into consideration when the teacher prepares lessons and writing activities.

Another suggestion, which Santos (2010:117) has made, is to encourage students to use dictionaries more often, especially when correcting to check spelling, meaning and that the word actually exists. Several cognates exist in English and Spanish, but students must also become aware of false cognates. In this case, a dictionary could help them confirm the existence of words.

A piece of advice I give students is to take advantage of the word processor Word offers. Students always receive their scripts with the marking code on through this program and it should be exploited.

These suggestions will vary depending on the circumstances and context of the classroom. It is a teacher's job to accommodate the needs of the class according to what resources they have available. This should be taken into consideration for the sake of improving students' writing.

Conclusions

Crawford (2005:48) claims writing is not a “fixed” nor “stable” process and, once it is removed from its “imaginary discourse community” which is the environment created in an English language classroom. This can cause the act of writing to become blurry in actual practice. An example can be, as mentioned in this study, students’ activities that depend on the topic and what other students respond as well. In addition to the cognitive processes which cannot be seen within the writing products (Pamplon, 2010:75). In summary, writing in ESL or EFL is an interesting and complex task.

Nevertheless, Campbell (1998) and De Miguel (2011) claim, that writing should be practiced in a cooperative way with classmates and with supervision from the teacher. Definitely, writing is a skill which should be accompanied with guidance so that feedback is not only provided after the production stage is over, but also during.

Considering the previous paragraphs, as teachers, it is our responsibility to encourage and find ways to aid our students to improve in the four macro-skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking). However, we should keep in mind that it is also an important role that every day will require updating. Today, a marking code could help; probably tomorrow another correcting method will be the ideal one. The objective is to always look for those alternate ways which could aid and enhance the students’ learning process.

Bibliography

- Barron, F. (2010) Rubrics for Writing Guidelines. Mimeo
- Bell, J. (1987) Doing Your Research Project. Open University Press
- Bitchener, J. (2005) The Effect of Different Types of Corrective Feedback on ESL Student Writing. *Journal on Second Language Writing 14*
- Black, P., Christine H., Clare ., Bethan, M., and Dylan W. 2004 Working Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan 86 (1): 9–21.*
- Brown, H.D. (1994) Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. *San Francisco State University* Prentice Hall Regents
- Bruce L., Berg & Lune, H. (2013) Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Pearson
- Campbell, C. (1998) Teaching Second-Language Writing: Interacting with Text. Heinle and Heinle Publishers
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1989) Research Methods in Education. London, Routledge
- Crawford, T. (2005) The Cultural Rhetoric of Second Language Writing in Mexico. *EFL Writing in Mexican Universities* Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit
- De Miguel Varela, R. (2011) Is Written Feedback Reflected in Undergraduate Students Better Written Outcomes? Mimeo
- Del Rio, M. (2013) Research Proposal: Run-On Sentences. Mimeo
- Encinas, Keranen and Salazar (2010) An Overview of EFL Writing Research in Mexico: what is investigated and how. *EFL Writing in Mexican Universities* Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit
- Englander, K. (2010) But It Would Be Good in Spanish: An Analysis of Awkward Scholarly Writing in English by L2 Writers. *EFL Writing in Mexican Universities* Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit
- Firat Altay, I. (2007) Run-On and Stringy Sentences in Writing. *Journal in Language and Linguistic Studies Vol. 3, No. 1*
- Frajzyngier, Z. (1996) Grammaticalization of the Complex Sentences: A case study in Chadic. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
- Greestein, L. (2010) What Teachers Really Need to Know About Formative Assessment. Library of Congress

- Heffernan and Lincoln, J.E. (1986) *Writing – A College Handbook*. London: Norton
- Hyland, F. & K. (2006) *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues*. CUP
- Jung, M. (2013) Types of Errors in College Students' L2 Writing in EFL Environments. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 17(2), 123-140
- Lamb, M. (1977) An Application of Error Analysis to Comma Splices and Fused Sentences. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)
- Leki, I. (1998) *Academic Writing*. CUP
- Lesk, M. (1997) *How Much Information Is There in the World?* University of Arizona
<http://www.lesk.com/mlesk/ksg97/ksg.html>
(Accessed Nov. 14, 2014)
- Lewis, M. (2002) *The Lexical Approach*. Thomson and Heinle
- Mason, R. (1998) *Global education: trends and applications*.
http://www.aln.org/alnweb/magazine/vol2_issue2/Masonfinal.htm
(Accessed Oct. 25, 2014)
- Montano-Harmon, M. R. (1991) Discourse Features of Written Mexican Spanish: Current Research in Contrastive Rhetoric and Its Implications. *The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese*
- Nunan, D. (1992) *Research Methods in Language Learning*. CUP
- Pamplon, E. N. (2010) *The Writing Process in L1 and FL: A Protocol Based Study* *EFL Writing in Mexican Universities: Research and Experience*
- Perez Sanchez, A. M. (2013) A Corpus Based Analysis of Errors in Adult EFL Writings. *Revista Nebrija de Lingüística Aplicada* 12, Num. Especial – Actas de Congreso
- Rollinson, P. (2005) Using Peer Feedback in the ESL Writing Class. *ELT Journal* vol. 59 iss. 1
- Rovai, Alfred P. ,and Jordan, H. M. (2004) Blended Learning and Sense of Community: A Comparative Analysis with Traditional and Fully Online Courses. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*
- Sheehy, K. (2013) Online Course Enrollments Climbs for 10th Straight Year US News Education
<http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2013/01/08/online-course-enrollment-climbs-for-10th-straight-year>

(Accessed Nov. 2, 2014)

St. John, M. J. (1987) Writing Processes of Spanish Scientists in English. *English for Specific Purposes* Volume 6, Issue 2

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2011) *The Condition for Education*

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011033.pdf>

(Accessed Oct. 28, 2014)

Zamel, V. (1985) Responding to Student Writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (1), 79 - 101

List of Tables

- 1 PCI/Blended regarding CEFR**
- 2 Intermediate Certificate Results (Perez)**
- 3 Correction Methods**
- 4 Comparison of English and Spanish (Montano)**
- 5 Length and Number of Sentences (Montano)**
- 6 Types of Sentences (Montano)**
- 7 Table Students' Results Before and After Using the Marking Code to Correct Their Scripts**

Lists of Appendices

Appendix 1 Developed Marking Code (based on Bartram and Walton)

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Appendix 3 Student A's scripts (uncorrected with marking code)

Appendix 4 Student B's scripts (uncorrected with marking code)

Appendix 5 Student A's scripts (corrected)

Appendix 6 Student B's scripts (corrected)

Appendix 7 Student A's recording transcription

Appendix 8 Student B's recording transcription

Appendix 9 Student C's recording transcription

Appendix 10 Student D's Recording Transcription

Appendix 11 Consent Forms

Appendices

Appendix 1 Developed Marking Code (based on Bartram and Walton)

mw = missing word
sp = spelling mistake
nn = not necessary
vt = verb tense
vf = verb form
g = grammar mistake
ww = wrong word
n = number (singular to plural or viceversa)
wf = wrong form
wo = word order
c = capital letter or viceversa
p = punctuation
| = separate the words or contractions
___ ? = incomprehensible
Eng = please translate

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

This data collection instrument intends to gather information on how students have felt on the process with the use of the marking code when improving their writing. In addition, it is applied to have qualitative data on the usefulness of the tool from the student's perception.

1. Did you use the suggested marking code to correct your writing?

If answered "no" to question 1, please explain why you didn't.

If answered “yes”, please go to questions 3 – 5.

2. If you replied “yes” to the previous question, was it easy or challenging to use? Please give details for your choice.
3. If possible, would you change, eliminate or add any other symbols to the codes? If you could make changes, what would these be?
4. Did your writing improve? If so, in what ways did it improve?
5. Do you believe this code could help you in future language classes? If not, what could?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Appendix 3 Student A’s scripts (uncorrected with marking code)

1 We have this aerial picture from a private wedding which shows us an unexpected element in it;
2 some strange hooded figures in the background. We can appreciate different elements of the
3 wedding and deduce(sp) that it could be either an American or a European wedding. From what we
4 can see(p) it must be an old building. At (mw) first guess(p) we might think it is a haunted house,
5 and those(l)may be demons or ghosts. Nevertheless, in a rational thought(p) chances are almost zero
6 for that possibility. (2 mw) Science-speaking(mw/p)those creatures can't be real; they must be
7 either wax (or another(wf) material) figures or costumes. It could be a private collection, or a
8 museum, or the backstage of a theater, or some storage space.

9 Hey classmate,

10 I think it is probably the most logical answer to these figures, I thought these could also be part of
11 a private collection, but I would rather think they are for a museum or a play.(p) Because;(p) who
12 would ever have something like that for(ww) their own house?

13 Hey classmate!

14 Well, the ghost part was only a wild guess of what most people would say right after looking at this
15 picture. Personally, I wouldn't believe that. Though, why couldn't ghosts be in groups? I think if they
16 were real, they could be in groups. It is like you know how people say ghosts are a constant(ww)
17 of what they were doing before they died? What if they'd been there at that house, together,
18 gathered as a sect or something, and(nn/p) a fire started and(nn/p) they all died, and they were

19 now stuck there? Or just like this series called American Horror Story, in which many people died in
20 the same house at different times and moments, but they were all stuck in the same place
21 drafted(ww) to coexist.

22 I agree with you at the chance that it may be Europe, because of the kind of wedding. And the fact
23 that it is not at a church is one of the reasons that make(vf) me think so,(p) you know how in the
24 USA and Europe most weddings are celebrated at different spaces, such as barns, libraries,
25 old houses and anything but churches. I really believe it can't be medieval times, buildings then
26 were made from other materials, and the clothing was far to(sp) different. Though the figures(n)-
27 creatures could be from some tale of the medieval times.

28 I think that your deduction might be the funniest one, in a good way. Though, (mw) probably is way
29 to(g) detailed to be real, you would need to know the bride to know some of the things you
30 mentioned. In(ww)the other hand, I should really bring out the fact that the structures at each part
31 of the picture are really different so they must be separated buildings. I agree with you, it must be
32 an old house and also those(g) could be some kind of art.

Appendix 4 Student B's scripts (uncorrected with marking code)

1 Hi classmate!

2 I like your post too, and yes (mw) is very fuunny to read each of the theories. I think yours is the one
3 that I like more, why? because(c) I thought almost the same than(ww) you, I thought that the weird
4 figures might be a collection of a meseum(sp) or part of the characters of (mw) theater's Play(c).

5 See you!

6 The first photo of the wedding was from (mw) aerial point, and from the high view you can see that
7 it may be an old house, and maybe that house it(nn) could be in the downtown of the city, where
8 it might be the university of art. So(p) all this(g) hooded figures could be part of the costumes of
9 a(g) old Play(c). And maybe the artist who made the costumes leave(vt) it there because the
10 glue might be fresh, so she leave(vt) it outside to make it(wo) sure get(vf) dry, beacuse(sp)
11 it can't be fresh for the next presentation.

12 And maybe(p) the owner of the house it(nn) may be the uncle of the bride, and that's why
13 he might give her the house for the wedding(nn). But, for sure all the hooded figures can't go

14 to the after party,(p) because they are not dressed for the ocation(sp). But(p) it could be a really
15 funny party, but not for the bride.

16 Hi classmate!

17 Is funny what(wo) are(nn) you said! But, are you sure that the figures could be humans? Because
18 maybe they are aliens or monsters(p) we dont(p) know!

19 But I don't think that the creepy and misterious(sp) figures are the guests of the bride and groom,
20 beacuse(sp) they look(ww)outsaid(sp) of the house, they look that(ww) they are in a different

21 please(sp).

22 See you(p)

Appendix 5 Student A's scripts (corrected)

1 We have this aerial picture from a private wedding which shows us an unexpected element in it;
2 some strange hooded figures in the background. We can appreciate different elements of the
3 wedding and deduct that it could be either an American or a European wedding. From what we can
4 see, it must be an old building. At first glance, we might think it is a haunted house, and those
5 may be demons or ghosts. Nevertheless, in a rational thought, chances are almost zero for that
6 possibility. Also, in a science-speaking way, those creatures can't be real; they must be either wax
7 figures or costumes. It could be a private collection, or a museum, or the backstage of a theater, or
8 some storage space.

9 Hey classmate,

10 I think it is probably the most logical answer to these figures, I thought these could also be part of
11 a private collection, but I would rather think they are for a museum or a play, because who would
12 ever have something like that for their own house?

13 Hey classmate!

14 Well, the ghost part was only a wild guess of what most people would say right after looking at this
15 picture. Personally, I wouldn't believe that. Though, why couldn't ghosts be in groups? I think if they
16 were real, they could be in groups. It is like, you know how people say ghosts are a shadow of
17 what they were doing before they died? What if they'd been there at that house, together, gathered
18 as a sect or something? A fire started, they all died, and they were now stuck there? Or just
19 like this series called American Horror Story, in which many people died in the same house at
20 different times and moments, but they were all stuck in the same place destined to coexist.

21 I agree with you at the chance that it may be Europe, because of the kind of wedding. And the fact
22 that it is not at a church is one of the reasons that made me think so. You know how in the USA and
23 Europe most weddings are celebrated at different spaces, such as barns and libraries, and old
24 houses and anything but churches. I really believe it can't be medieval times, buildings then were
25 made from other materials, and the clothing was far too different. Though, the figures (or
26 creatures) could be from some tale of the medieval times.

27 I think that your deduction might be the funniest one, in a good way. Though, it is probably way too
28 detailed to be real, you would need to know the bride to know some of the things you mentioned.
29 On the other hand, I should really bring out the fact that the structures at each part of the picture
30 are really different so they must be separated buildings. I agree with you, it must be an old house
31 and also those figures could be some kind of art.

Appendix 6 Student B's scripts (corrected)

1 Hi classmate!

2 I like your post too, and yes it was very funny to read each of the theories. I think yours is the

3 one that I like the most because I thought almost the same as you. I thought that the weird
4 figures might be a collection of a museum or characters from theater plays.

5 See you!

6 The first photo of the wedding was from birds point of view, from this view you can see that it
7 may be an old house, and maybe that house could be downtown. where it might be the
8 university of art. All the hooded figures could be a part of the costumes from an old play. And
9 maybe the artist who made the costumes left it there because the glue might be fresh, so she
10 left it outside to make sure it was dry, because it can't be fresh for the next presentation.

11 Perhaps the owner of the house may be the uncle of the bride, and that's why he might give
12 her the house for the wedding. But, for sure all the hooded figures can't go to the after
13 party, because they are not dressed for the occasion. Still, it could be a really funny party, but
14 not for the bride.

15 Hi classmate!

16 I laughed a lot at what you said! But, are you sure that the figures could be humans? Because
17 maybe they are aliens, or monsters we don't know!

18 But I don't think that the creepy and mysterious figures are the guests of the bride and groom,
19 because they looked outside of the house, they looked like they were in a different places.

20 See you!

Appendix 7 Student A's recording transcription

Teacher: Hi (student's name). All right, let's talk about the activities' corrections that you have been doing in the course. So, did you use the marking code to correct your writing in the activities?

Student: Yeah, because I can see where are my mistakes and I can, I can correct them.

Teacher: So, was it easy or challenging to use that code?

Student: Actually no because the writing codes tell me everything that I am wrong so it was very easy to find the problem and correct it.

Teacher: And from the symbols that I used, the letters like the "mw", etc. Would you change any of those symbols that maybe you thought, well, would you make any changes?

Student: I, I wouldn't because I think is very clearly. I can understand them easily, is not too hard to understand them, ok?

Teacher: Ok, do you think your writing improved after using the code?

Student: I think it does because (ah) now, the same, I can see my problem and my mistakes and I can learn actually from my own writes, and (...) by you telling me the mistakes and is very easy.

Now I can see, now I can write better and be careful with those mistakes and (...) I think it does.

Teacher: Ok, the last question. Do you think this code could help you in the future...?

Student: I think if, if every English class have this, this code, it would be better because I can learn more easier and find my own mistakes.

Teacher: All right, thank you very much.

Appendix 8 Student B's recording transcription

Teacher: Ok, hello, thank you for accepting this interview. All right, when you corrected your activities, did you use the code that is in our Moodle?

Student: Yeah, well, I, ah, the first time that I saw it I didn't understand what it means, but then I used like the logic, like this word I need to change it the time or I need to put another subject or change it.

Teacher: Ok, and, so you think, you thought it was easy or challenging to use because you mentioned something right?

Student: Yeah, in the beginning I didn't understand, like what it means, like these letters, but after like read it and see my mistakes and compare it to the letter, I catch, like logic...

Teacher: Ok.

Student: ...Like the logic, like the correction.

Teacher: Ok, all right, so at first the code didn't exactly didn't tell you, didn't help you, but later you had to observe...ok, that's, I just wanted to understand that.

Student: (...) *Nodding

Teacher: If it could be possible, would change any of the symbols or eliminate any symbols from the code?

Student: Maybe it can be like a list, like a list in the beginning with a, a parenthesis?

Teacher: Yes.

Student: Like in the parenthesis, I don't know, if the parenthesis say "s" what is the meaning of "s"? Like subject and maybe just have the list, then you have the list. Ah this is subject, ah this is a verb, oh this is a time that I need to change in the verb. So maybe just have the meaning exactly of each word, could be easier.

Teacher: Ok, so you would prefer that instead of letters that it were the full word?

Student: No, could be the letters in the beginning of the page, like...um...in the beginning of the page, can be just a list, like with the, like um...

Teacher: Having the code there?

Student: Yeah, and the meaning.

Teacher: All right, I see what you mean. And, um, do you feel that your writing improved using that code?

Student: I think one of the best things you can do when you're learning a language, I think is see your mistakes. Then, correct it again. I think it is good.

Teacher: Ok, so you felt that your writing did improve by seeing your mistakes?

Student: Yeah, well I need to keep practicing, but I think it is a process like really works, like when you, like correct your mistakes. More that you are conscious about it.

Teacher: All right, and do you believe this code could help you in future English classes?

Student: I think it could be work because it is pretty like logic and it is pretty easy that each mistake have a, the parenthesis with the, just like this list in the top that the meaning of each one could have it faster and I'll take the time, like oh what is this letter? What is this? Just have it the list in the top of the page...

Teacher: So it could be more practical?

Student: Yes.
Teacher: Ok, thank you very much.
Student: You're welcome.

Appendix 9 Student C's recording transcription

Teacher: Thank you for accepting this interview. Ah, so did you, to correct the activities, did you use the suggested marking code?
Student: No, I haven't done it yet.
Teacher: Why not? Can you give me details, please?
Student: Because I consider that I have a good grade and, well, I just got a job. I don't have time for correcting something that I consider that I have a good grade.
Teacher: So, time and a good grade?
Student: I don't know. If I failed the activity, I would do it, but it's not the case.
Teacher: Ok, thank you very much.

Appendix 10 Student D's Recording Transcription

Teacher: Hi, thank you for accepting this interview. So, have you used the marking code the writing in the activity?
Student: Never.
Teacher: Can you tell me why not?
Student: Well, I haven't corrected my activities with that correcting code because I have, I don't have the time to do it. I have a lot of things to do. I work, I play soccer, I study, So I have many things to do instead of correcting my, my activity.
Teacher: Ok, thank you very much.
Student:

Appendix 11 Consent Forms

University St Mark & St John

Ethics Policy Form 1: Student Research Ethics Checklist

All researchers have a responsibility to follow the University College's Ethics Policy, as well as any academic or professional code of practice or guidelines relevant to the specific research project. This form should normally be completed prior to the commencement of data collection.

Name of Applicant	Supervisor / Module leader
Marisol Guadalupe Del Rio	Katy Salisbury

Faculty	Proposed start date for research
FEHW - CILTE	August 18, 2014
Title and brief summary of project	
This should explain the aim and methods of the research, in terms understandable by a non-specialist	
Addressing L2 Learners' Writing Problems in a Blended Program, with Specific Reference to Run-On Sentences.	
A marking code was applied to check students' scripts in order to analyze improvements. An interview schedule was applied to students and this was recorded.	

Section 1:

Does the research involve:	YES	NO
1. Living human subjects?	X	
2. Documentary material that is not already in the public domain? ¹	X	

If you have answered **NO** to both of the questions above, 'ethics release' is indicated and there is no need to pursue ethical scrutiny further. **Complete section 3** and forward this form to your supervisor or module leader. If you have answered **YES** to either question, proceed to **Section 2**.

Section 2:

	YES	NO
1. Does the research involve participants who are considered to be vulnerable, who lack capacity or who are unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)	X	
2. Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial		X

¹ Examples may include, but are not limited to, personal letters, diaries, medical records, and administrative records of organisations.

access to the groups/individuals to be recruited ² ? (e.g. for access to students at school, or to members of a particular organization)		
3. Will the research involve access to records of personal or confidential information concerning identifiable individuals, either living or recently deceased?		X
3. Will the research involve the use of administrative data or secure data? (e.g. student records held by a school or college, medical records)		X
5. Will the deception of participants (including covert observation in non-public places) be necessary at any time?		X
6. Will the research involve discussion of sensitive topics? (e.g sexual activity, drug use)		X
7. Will the research involve members of the public in a research capacity, helping to shape methodology and/or to collect data? (e.g. participatory research)		X
8. Will the research involve visual or vocal methods where participants or other individuals may be identifiable in the data used or generated?		X
9. Will the research involve any drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins and other supplements) being administered to the participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?		X
10. Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?		X
11. Is the research likely to involve or result in participants experiencing pain or more than mild discomfort?		X
12. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? (both research participants and their living relatives should be considered)		X
13. Will the research involve prolonged or repetitive testing of participants?		X

² A gatekeeper is a person through whom a researcher is able to access the research subject/s. Without the cooperation of the gatekeeper, the research would not be possible.

14. Will the research involve respondents through the Internet?	X	
15. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
16. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?		X
17. Will the research place the safety of the researcher(s) at risk?		X
18. Will the research be undertaken outside of the UK?	X	
19. Will the research or its dissemination involve data sharing of confidential information beyond the initial consent given?		X

If you have answered **NO** to all of the questions above, 'ethics release' is indicated and there is no need to pursue ethical scrutiny further. **Complete section 3** and forward this form to your supervisor or module leader. If you have answered **YES** to any question, you must apply for a Certificate of Ethical Approval for Student Research (Appendix 4) using the process described in section 3.2.5.

Section 3:

Signature of applicant

I declare that I have read the Ethics Policy and will follow the guidelines therein:

Signature: Marisol del Rio

Date: June 18. 2014

Signature of supervisor / module leader

I declare that I have read the completed Ethics Checklist and the research described accords with my understanding of the proposed work.

Signature

Date:



Name of Applicant	Name of supervisor / module leader
Marisol Guadalupe Del Rio	Katy Salisbury
Faculty	
FEHW - CILTE	
Title of project	
Tentative title: Reasons on why students write run-on sentences and what can be done to prevent them.	
Timeframe of research	
Data collection phases: students' writings (before and after) teacher's interview and/ or survey	
Data Collection Phases: Writings (second half of August and September)	
Purpose of research	
To find out if a marking code can help students with writing problem and run-on sentences	
To find the origins of run-on sentences among English language students and find how to help students prevent from writing them.	
Justification for the research	
Indicate the contribute to knowledge, policy, practice and/or peoples' lives that the research is anticipated to make	
For Spanish speakers, run-on sentences are mostly common when writing. It might be the interference of L1 but, I believe that researching on this area, there might be ways to help preventing them. Therefore, reading any type of writing produced by the students will aid to facilitate what the message they want to get across is. This would assist in better comprehension for the reader. It would also as well, demonstrate that the learner holds an appropriate level at his writing skill in order to communicate properly.	
Participants in the research	
Provide details of the population to be studied, and sampling procedures to be used	
The students will be language students who are currently studying a major (some students in this blended program have already done most of their credits for their major but, have not been able to receive their university diploma due to their missing requirements regarding the language) and so that they receive their diploma once they are done with all their credits. The language teacher will also be another participant and she / he will provide her / his experience and knowledge on this writing aspect. She / he will also apply the necessary steps to help students prevent this problem.	
Recruitment procedures	
This should explain the means by which participants in the research will be recruited. If any incentive	

and/or compensation (financial or other) is to be offered to participants, this should be clearly explained.
No incentives will be offered. A blended level 4 or 5 will be chosen. The teacher will be asked if the group could be chosen for this research and students will be explained how the process will be.
Informed consent Explain the information that will be provided to potential participants, and procedures for gaining consent The teacher will be asked if she or he will be willing to help students in this particular aspect.
Methods Outline the methods of data collection and analysis
Interview schedule and collecting students' scripts
Confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and disposal Provide explanation of any measures to preserve confidentiality and anonymity, including specific explanation of data storage and disposal plans. (Note that there may be need to store data for some years after completion of the project.)
Everything was under the consent of students and school administration
Ethical considerations and potential risks to participants Outline the ethical issues you think the research raises. Where potential risks to participants' or researchers' physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing may be present, explain any steps that will be taken to minimize these.
None
Published ethical guidelines to be followed Identify the professional code(s) of practice and/or ethical guidelines relevant to the subject domain of the research. Examples can be found in section 4 of the Ethics Policy.

Signature of applicant

I declare that I have read the Ethics Policy and will follow the guidelines therein:

Signature:
Marisol del Rio

Signature of Programme Leader / Head of Subject or Department / Chair of Faculty Ethics Committee

I confirm that this project has been approved for the stated period:

Signature:

Date:

July 18, 2014

Date:

Note that a Certificate of Ethical Approval does not connote an expert assessment of the research or of the possible risks involved, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility of researchers for all research undertaken by them, and for its effects on human subjects

List of Figures

Figure 1: Comparison of English and Spanish (Montano)