

Acceptable (?) Variations in the Judgements of Error Gravity

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Resumo

O estudo da gravidade dos erros tem sido objecto de alguns estudos que incidem especialmente no julgamento comparativo feito por falantes nativos e não nativos da língua em questão. Neste estudo tento alargar o âmbito da investigação, considerando também até que ponto os anos de experiência dos professores convidados a responder ao questionário influenciam a sua atitude face aos erros dos aprendentes.

Abstract

The study of error gravity has been the object of some research which has considered the comparative judgement made by native and non-native speakers of the language involved. In this paper I have tried to expand the scope of research and considered how much the teachers' years of experience can influence their attitude towards learners' errors.

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Anyone who does research in the EFL area cannot do without regularly reading specialized journals. It is in the latter that new ideas, results of experiments (be they successful or otherwise), and the latest reflections on the state of the foreign-language teaching profession are to be found. However, in order to have a more general overview of the state of the art, the researcher and the teacher should now and then visit a well stocked bookshop (be it Dillons, Waterstones, Foyle's or others) and browse through the books in the applied linguistics and foreign-language teaching sections. This is what I did recently, and the feeling I had after having looked at the latest books was that what was generally accepted five or six years ago is being seriously questioned now, and ten-year-old books filled with sensible proposals now appear outdated, indeed almost obsolete.

This recalling of a recent experience has to do with the wide popularity and practice of error analysis some twenty years ago and with the fact that practically no one refers to it at present⁽¹⁾. One might try to find an explanation for

⁽¹⁾ This paper was finished in 1996, and after that Longman published the excellent *Errors in Language Learning and Use*, by Carl James.

this change, and some reason could certainly be found. This, however, is neither the place nor the moment to do it. But I am absolutely sure that nobody attributes the quasi banishment of error analysis to the circumstance of learners having suddenly stopped producing deviant forms in what they write and say in the foreign languages they are learning. This, unfortunately, is not the situation, and it may be opportune to make attempts with a view to revitalizing error analysis as a means of programming and assessing our work as teachers and our students' performance on more solid bases. Even if error analysis is no longer the fashion, it may well be worth the while to concentrate on our students' errors, on their probable causes - which may sometimes be ourselves or the methods we use - and on the possible means of preventing them. If we read again S. Pit Corder (1967 and 1971), Gerry Abbott (1980 and 1984), Gerhard Nickel (1972), Jan Svartvik (1973), Margareta Olsson (1974), Carl James (1972, 1977 and 1982), Jack Richards (1974) and many others, we will easily come to the conclusion that it would be unwise on our part to let ourselves be attracted by new trends without careful prior evaluation of what they propose. The explanation of errors, especially those more frequently committed in our classrooms, should deserve coordinated study carried out by teams of teachers specifically appointed for that purpose. The result of this might be a set of agreed strategies seen as most valid for attenuating the error problem. Again this is a question that goes beyond the purpose of this article, whose subject is criteria in the evaluation of error gravity.

The problem has been the object of study by several investigators, and opinions diverge as to the factors that should be taken into account so that a given error analyst may consider when a deviant form can be labelled more or less serious. For the recent communicative movement - which has never shown a great tendency towards penalizing errors or recognizing great importance in their correction - the violation of rules was the more serious when it interfered with communication; in other words, when what learners wrote or said was not understood, the error should be given attention. On the other hand, when communication works, communicativists said, even when characterized by deviations from the rules traditionally considered grave by other methodological approaches and criteria, errors, namely formal errors, were not important.

The problem of error gravity has already been the object of some research, namely in the United Kingdom (James 1977), and in Greece (Hughes & Lascaratou 1982). Both these studies conclude with the recommendation that their conclusions should not be seen as definitive and investigation on this subject should be continued. To a certain extent that is what I am trying to do in the present paper.

With a view to contributing some more reflection in enabling to arrive at conclusions about what people think about error gravity, I decided to organize a survey, especially addressed to teachers both in Portuguese and British educa-

tional institutions, comparing their opinions with those of non-teachers whose mother tongue is English⁽²⁾. With that purpose in mind, I collected in recently taken written examinations, more or less randomly, 32 sentences containing errors. These examinations had been recently taken by 12th-grade school students as candidates for English studies at Portuguese state universities. The papers were marked mostly by university teachers whose mother tongue is English.

The Portuguese teachers of English who answered the survey were divided into three groups: those with less than five years of teaching experience, more than 5 years, and more than ten years. The teachers who are native speakers of English were grouped according to where they taught at the time of the survey: in the United Kingdom or in Portugal. The number of responders varied from group to group, and consequently the data provided by the smaller groups may not be so reliable as those furnished by the larger groups. Responders were asked to classify each error on a scale from 1 to 5 in which 1 corresponded to the least serious errors and 5 to the most serious ones⁽³⁾.

The following table shows how the different groups of assessors were constituted:

| TEACHERS | | | | | Natives (Non-Teachers) | Totals |
|------------|----------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|--------|
| Portuguese | | | British ⁽⁴⁾ | | | |
| -5 Years | +5 Years | +10 Years | In Portugal | In the UK | | |
| 31 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 19 | | |
| 47 | | | 25 | | 24 | 96 |
| 72 | | | | | | |

Table 1 - Distribution of responders

Both James and Hughes & Lascaratou tried to find out whether native speakers of English (teachers or non-teachers) tend to be more tolerant of errors than teachers of English whose mother tongue is not the language they teach. Both studies concluded that native speakers are inclined to impose light penalties on errors when they understand what the learner intended to communicate, a reading of the gravity phenomenon coincident with what was said above about the communicativist view of the problem. James, however, raises a very interesting question in asking:

⁽²⁾ I must thank some of my colleagues at the Faculdade de Letras do Porto, the board of the ANPLI (Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Língua Inglesa), Amélia Hutchinson of the University of Salford (Department of Modern Languages), and Mike Harland of the University of Glasgow for their very generous and helpful cooperation.

⁽³⁾ After having received the answers, I concluded that it would have been advantageous to include a zero-level of gravity as some of the respondents, especially among those in the UK, considered that some sentences presented to them as containing deviant forms are fully acceptable.

⁽⁴⁾ All of these were native speakers of English, but some of them had nationalities other than British.

“It would be interesting to investigate whether there is any positive correlation, for non-native assessors, between their own level of English proficiency and the severity with which they penalise errors. Do foreign teachers of English become more tolerant of errors as their own proficiency increases?” (p. 118).

According to the data provided by my own study - displayed in table 2 - the argute professor’s suspicion is fully confirmed. As a matter of fact the group of Portuguese teachers with less than five years of teaching experience (some of them just teachers in training) was the one, among Portuguese teachers, who penalized deviances the most severely. Their average rate of gravity is 3.53, only surpassed by English-native-speaking teachers in Portugal, who proved to be the strictest of all groups of assessors with an average of 3.60. Besides that, James’s suspicion about the growth of tolerance with the increase of proficiency is again confirmed by my data: teachers with more than five years of experience were less strict (3.43) than their younger colleagues and more severe than their elders (3.34).

| Groups | | Partial averages | | Overall average |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------|-----------------|
| Teachers | Portuguese | -5 years | 3.53 | 3.43 |
| | | +5 years | 3.43 | |
| | | +10 years | 3.34 | |
| | Native-speakers | In Portugal | 3.60 | 3.26 |
| | | In UK | 2.93 | |
| Non-teachers | | 2.79 | | 3.27 |

Table 2 - Comparative overview of all groups

On the other hand, the most tolerant group of teachers was that of English-speaking teachers who teach in the UK, even though not so tolerant as British non-teachers. This panorama gives us some curious points for analysis. For example, one may immediately wonder what makes native-speaking teachers so tolerant in their country and so strict when they teach abroad. Is it the contact with local reality, where according to the data of this study the average Portuguese teacher tends to be more demanding than his/her average British counterpart? Or do teachers judge more severely the product of what could be their own work? In other words, teachers do their best to teach the foreign language to their students and expect the latter to respond to their efforts with effective learning⁽⁵⁾. When this does not happen, teachers may feel frustrated, and frustration could be a stepping-stone to stricter assessment. When in their own country, they may feel like mingling with their other countrymen

⁽⁵⁾ Davies’s article deals partly with this problem in a very interesting way.

and judge more generously the errors made by foreigners who endeavour to speak or write in their own language.

It is also interesting to note what concrete errors each group of assessors considered the most serious.

| Groups | Errors | Gravity |
|------------------------|---|---------|
| Group I ⁽⁶⁾ | * I leave in Europe | 4.58 |
| Group II | * I leave in Europe | 4.42 |
| Group III | * The Europeans tooked the land by force * Mr. Jordan knew that he had the righth to seized the cattle | 4.44 |
| Group IV | * He didn't spoke English | 4.50 |
| Group V | * He didn't spoke English | 3.94 |
| Group VI | * I leave in Europe | 3.95 |

Table 3 - Most serious errors

Three groups considered **I leave in Europe* the most serious of all errors. The error is the consequence of the non-distinction in Portuguese between the sounds /i/ and /i:/, the latter being the only one existing in standard Portuguese. I doubt, however, whether any of the assessors missed the meaning intended by the student who made the error. Communication most certainly worked here, and there was no place for ambiguity. Even so the mistake was severely penalized and very surprisingly by the native-speaking non-teachers. Therefore it becomes apparent that the degree of communicative success is not the only criterion used by people in assessing the gravity of language errors. What other factors intervene here?

The two groups of native-speaking teachers elected the same error (**He didn't spoke English*) as the most serious, although assigning considerably different gravity levels: UK teachers 3.94, teachers in Portugal 4.50. Redundancy of the past-tense mark is a relatively frequent occurrence in the production of elementary students whose familiarity with this English form of verb conjugation has not been fully assimilated. The students who sat this exam could not be considered (in terms of time spent on learning English) beginners, or even intermediate students by standard learning-time criteria. But here again communication was not hindered by the deviant form as all of the assessors immediately realized that the intended message was *He didn't speak English*. The viewpoint question raised by Davies seems to apply here, and that viewpoint is almost certainly the pedagogical one. It is frustrating for any teacher to find

⁽⁶⁾ Henceforth the groups of assessors will be referred to as follows: Group I - Portuguese teachers with less than five years of experience; Group II - Portuguese teachers with more than five years of experience; Group III - Portuguese teachers with more than ten years of experience; Group IV - English native speaking teachers in the UK; Group V - English native speaking teachers in Portugal; Group VI - British non-teachers.

out that after 5-7 years of English-language learning a student has not yet learned a basic rule on which teachers always insist. The frustration of legitimate expectations must have functioned as a decisive factor.

**The Europeans tooked the land by force and *Mr. Jordan knew that he had the right to seized the cattle* were equally attributed a 4.44 degree of gravity by Portuguese teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience. In these cases, too, communication worked without ambiguity, but within the Portuguese tradition of foreign language teaching the penalization of such errors is perfectly justified. *Take* is a verb of frequent use, and students at this level of learning are supposed to know and use its simple past without hesitation; and every teacher would strongly react to the incompetent learner who after 5-7 years of learning the language is still unable to use *to seize* instead of *to seized*.

Some attention should be paid to the fact that three of the groups (i.e. I, II and VI), that is to say 50%, considered as most serious a non-grammatical verb: the substitution of *leave* for *live*, which goes against the current opinion that non-native-speaking teachers tend to penalize grammatical errors more severely than errors of another sort. In this case we cannot classify this error as typically lexical since it occurs very probably in consequence of wrong pronunciation. In the end, however, it results in lexical confusion.

The following table shows how often each gravity level was used by the different groups of assessors.

| Groups | Gravity levels | | | | | % of most used levels |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| I | 58 | 133 | 255 | 288 | 254 | 29.14% |
| II | 21 | 30 | 54 | 74 | 42 | 33.48% |
| III | 30 | 55 | 63 | 64 | 86 | 28.85% |
| IV | 13 | 22 | 46 | 64 | 45 | 32.16% |
| V | 121 | 101 | 113 | 126 | 136 | 22.78% |
| VI | 142 | 162 | 199 | 168 | 92 | 26.08% |
| Totals | 385 | 503 | 730 | 784 | 655 | 25.80% |
| Total use made of levels | | | | | 3,057 | |

Table 4 - Relative use of the gravity levels

It should be noticed that level 4 is in the first place, followed by level 3 and 5. Level 4 was the most used by three groups, level 5 by two groups, and level 3 by only one group. Therefore it is perfectly legitimate to conclude that, according to the assessors' judgement, the errors collected were really serious.

If we divide the errors into three groups comprehending word order, lexis, and grammar, the result is again of some interest.

Groups V and VI (UK teachers and UK non-teachers) confirm current opinions that native speakers tend to penalise lexical errors more strictly than

| Groups | Order | Average | Lexis | Average | Grammar | Average |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| I | 2.88 | 2.61 | 3.59 | 3.31 | 3.60 | 3.55 |
| II | 2.75 | | 3.15 | | 3.59 | |
| III | 2.22 | | 3.21 | | 3.48 | |
| IV | 2.95 | 2.40 | 3.52 | 3.49 | 3.68 | 3.33 |
| V | 1.85 | | 3.46 | | 2.99 | |
| VI | 1.48 | | 3.34 | | 2.87 | |

Table 5 - Relative gravity of error groups

grammatical errors. The exception to this rule is group IV (native-speaking teachers working in Portugal) who not only penalized grammatical errors more severely than lexical ones but who were also the strictest of all groups including those formed by Portuguese teachers. The latter, again according to current opinions, would be expected to mark grammar errors as the worst of all. And so they did: all of the three groups of Portuguese assessors, without exception, considered grammatical deviances particularly serious.

In the guise of conclusion it could be said - with the reservations imposed by the rather limited data used in this study - that there seems to be among those teachers who teach English in Portugal a certain proximity in the judgement of errors made by their students. This can certainly be taken as a tranquillizing indication for those students who must sit decisive exams to proceed with their studies. There will always be individual oscillations that, in the end, may signify that a student who is assessed by a stricter examiner or by a more tolerant one will have his fortune negatively or positively affected because there are no totally objective criteria for the judgement of errors. But in the area of the human sciences - language study being a part of it - will it ever be possible to reach a minimally satisfactory level of objectivity? Certainly not.

In spite of that, it is useful that research continues to be done around error gravity and its results largely circulated among the teaching profession for discussion. By such steps the amplitude of variation in the judgement of error gravity will most certainly be reduced, and as a result of all that all those involved will benefit: learners, teachers and the credibility of our work.

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APPENDIXES

A - List of errors submitted to assessment

- Are you: 1. a native speaker of English? Yes No
2. a teacher? No Yes - less than 5 years
3. Have you taught English for... - more than 5 years?
- more than 10 years?

Write 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 in the box before each of the following sentences to show how serious you consider the errors it contains. "1" will be written to mean the most tolerable mistake and "5" to show the most serious error. "2", "3", and "4" should be used to show intermediate degrees of error gravity.

1. Articles

- a) * As an European citizen I feel...
(As a European citizen I feel...)
- b) * The love is also important to better understanding among people
(Love is also important to better understanding among people)
- c) * The cultures of the Europe
(The cultures of Europe)

2.1 Verbs (tense)

- a) * He didn't spoke English
(He didn't speak English)
- b) * The Europeans tooked the land by force
(The Europeans took the land by force)
- c) * Neither of them speaked the other's language
(Neither of them spoke the other's language)
- d) * He couldn't be payed by the chief
(He couldn't be paid by the chief)
- e) * Mr. Jordan knew that he had the right to seized the cattle
(Mr. Jordan Knew that he had the right to seize the cattle)

2.2 Verbs (concord)

- a) * This suggests that there aren't a good relationship between Jordan and the old chief.

(this suggests that there isn't a good relationship between Jordan and the old chief)

- b) [] * Mr. Jordan look triumphant because he thinks...
(Mr. Jordan looks triumphant because he thinks...)

3. Redundant it

- a) [] * The theoretical project of a united Europe, especially in economy, it's a fact that led us to think...
(The theoretical project of a united Europe, especially in economy, is a fact that led us to think...)
- b) [] * The narrator's involvement it's explained in this way...
(The narrator's involvement is explained in this way...)

4. Negation

- a) [] * Yet we couldn't do nothing
(Yet we could do nothing/couldn't do anything)

5. Order

- a) [] * The author is trying to show who is really the boss
(The author is trying to show who the boss really is)
- b) [] * When the colonists came this all changed
(When the colonists came all this changed)
- c) [] * The colonists never liked very much the Indians
(The colonists never liked the Indians very much)

6.1 Concord

(Determiner/modifier - noun)

- a) [] * That will be good for every countries
(That will be good for every country)
- b) [] * And then they spent too many time to understand something
(And then they spent too much time in understanding something)
- c) [] * A long conversation with very difficulties to understand each other
(A long conversation with many difficulties to understand each other)
- d) [] * ...Because this animals represent different things
(...Because these/those animals represent different things)

6.2 Concord

(subject-verb)

- a) [] * Our people begins to be unemployed
(Our people begin to be unemployed)

- b) [] * The United States of America are⁽⁷⁾ helping the Third World
(The United States of America is helping the Third World)

7.1 Adjectives (degree)

- a) [] * But the issue is much more deep⁽⁸⁾ than that
(But the issue is much deeper than that)
- b) [] * But things aren't as worse as that
(But things aren't as bad as that)

7.2 Adjectives (modifiers)

- a) [] * Because they had differents ways of seeing things
(Because they had different ways of seeing things)

8. Lexis

- a) [] * ...there are many wars that were excused⁽⁹⁾
(...there are many unnecessary wars)
- b) [] * with the lecture of this passage we can see...
(with the reading of this passage we can see...)
- c) [] * Things have to be done with carefull
(Things have to be done with care/carefully)
- d) [] * One aspect that will contribute a little to that is the common
coin⁽¹⁰⁾
(One aspect that will contribute a little to that is the common
currency)
- e) [] * The white people thought that they were more civilized
(The white people thought that they were more civilized)
- f) [] * I leave in Europe
(I live in Europe)
- g) [] * The chief seamed to be old and tired
(The chief seemed to be old and tired)

⁽⁷⁾ Some of the assessors considered this form acceptable

⁽⁸⁾ Some of the assessors considered this form acceptable

⁽⁹⁾ Some of the assessors considered this form acceptable

⁽¹⁰⁾ Some of the assessors considered this form acceptable

B - Portuguese teachers with less than 5 years of teaching

| Error areas | | Gravity levels | | | | | Average | |
|---|----|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. articles | a | 14 | 10 | 6 | 1 | - | 1.80 | 2.69 |
| | b | 2 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 3 | 3.03 | |
| | c | 1 | 7 | 12 | 5 | 6 | 3.25 | |
| 2.1 Verbs (tense) | a | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 16 | 4.12 | 3.65 |
| | b | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 3.64 | |
| | c | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 3.64 | |
| | d | 3 | 8 | 11 | 5 | 4 | 2.96 | |
| | e | 0 | 3 | 3 | 13 | 12 | 3.90 | |
| 2.2 Verbs (concord) | a | 0 | 2 | 3 | 13 | 13 | 4.19 | 4.07 |
| | b | 1 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 14 | 3.96 | |
| 3. Dummy it | a | 3 | 9 | 11 | 3 | 6 | 2.93 | 3.22 |
| | b | 1 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 3.51 | |
| 4. Negation | a | 1 | 2 | 9 | 16 | 3 | 3.58 | 3.58 |
| 5. Word order | a* | 6 | 8 | 13 | 3 | 0 | 2.43 | 2.88 |
| | b* | 3 | 6 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 2.80 | |
| | c | 2 | 2 | 11 | 13 | 3 | 3.41 | |
| 6.1 Concord (determiner- modifier/noun) | a | 3 | 4 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 3.09 | 3.88 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 6 | 14 | 9 | 3.96 | |
| | c | 0 | 1 | 4 | 15 | 11 | 4.16 | |
| | d | 0 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 13 | 4.32 | |
| 6.2 Concord (noun/verb) | a | 1 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 3.45 | 3.11 |
| | b | 6 | 11 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 2.77 | |
| 7.1 Adjectiver (degree) | a | 1 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 3.83 | 3.91 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 5 | 15 | 9 | 4.00 | |
| 7.2 Adjective | a* | 0 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 16 | 4.30 | 4.30 |
| 8. Lexis | a | 0 | 2 | 17 | 5 | 7 | 3.54 | 3.59 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 8 | 3.93 | |
| | c | 3 | 1 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 3.77 | |
| | d | 2 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 1 | 2.93 | |
| | e | 0 | 6 | 8 | 12 | 6 | 3.35 | |
| | f | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 20 | 4.58 | |
| | g* | 6 | 4 | 3 | 12 | 6 | 3.03 | |
| Totals | | 58 | 133 | 255 | 288 | 254 | 3.50 | 3.53 |
| | | | | | | 988 | | |

* One responder did not answer this item.

C - Portuguese teachers with more than 5 years of teaching

| Error areas | | Gravity levels | | | | | Average | |
|---|----|----------------|----|----|----|-----|---------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. articles | a | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.00 | 2.22 |
| | b | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2.85 | |
| | c* | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2.83 | |
| 2.1 Verbs (tense) | a | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4.00 | 4.08 |
| | b | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4.14 | |
| | c | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4.26 | |
| | d | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3.71 | |
| | e | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 4.26 | |
| 2.2 Verbs (concord) | a | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 4.14 | 3.99 |
| | b | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3.85 | |
| 3. Dummy it | a | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3.14 | 3.35 |
| | b | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 3.57 | |
| 4. Negation | a | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| 5. Word order | a | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2.42 | 2.75 |
| | b | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2.42 | |
| | c | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3.42 | |
| 6.1 Concord (determiner- modifier/noun) | a | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3.00 | 3.67 |
| | b | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3.85 | |
| | c | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4.14 | |
| | d | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3.71 | |
| 6.2 Concord (noun/verb) | a | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4.00 | 3.50 |
| | b | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3.00 | |
| 7.1 Adjectiver (degree) | a* | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.16 | 3.24 |
| | b* | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3.33 | |
| 7.2 Adjective | a | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4.26 | 4.26 |
| 8. Lexis | a | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2.85 | 3.15 |
| | b | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 3.26 | |
| | c | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3.42 | |
| | d | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.57 | |
| | e | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3.14 | |
| | f | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 4.42 | |
| | g | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2.42 | |
| Totals | | 21 | 30 | 54 | 74 | 42 | 3.39 | 3.47 |
| | | | | | | 221 | | |

* One responder did not answer this item.

D - Portuguese teachers with more than 10 years of teaching

| Error areas | | Gravity levels | | | | | Average | |
|---|---|----------------|----|----|----|-----|---------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. articles | a | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2.44 | 2.81 |
| | b | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2.77 | |
| | c | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3.22 | |
| 2.1 Verbs (tense) | a | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4.33 | 4.01 |
| | b | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 4.44 | |
| | c | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4.33 | |
| | d | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2.55 | |
| | e | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 4.44 | |
| 2.2 Verbs (concord) | a | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4.33 | 4.05 |
| | b | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3.77 | |
| 3. Dummy it | a | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2.66 | 2.77 |
| | b | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.88 | |
| 4. Negation | a | 0 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2.77 | 2.77 |
| 5. Word order | a | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2.22 | 2.22 |
| | b | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.00 | |
| | c | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2.44 | |
| 6.1 Concord (determiner- modifier/noun) | a | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3.66 | 3.69 |
| | b | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3.88 | |
| | c | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3.88 | |
| | d | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3.55 | |
| 6.2 Concord (noun/verb) | a | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3.77 | 3.21 |
| | b | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2.66 | |
| 7.1 Adjectiver (degree) | a | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3.66 | 3.77 |
| | b | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3.88 | |
| 7.2 Adjective | a | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4.33 | 4.33 |
| 8. Lexis | a | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3.77 | 3.21 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3.66 | |
| | c | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3.55 | |
| | d | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2.88 | |
| | e | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 2.88 | |
| | f | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3.77 | |
| | g | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2.00 | |
| Totals | | 30 | 66 | 63 | 64 | 86 | 3.35 | 3.34 |
| | | | | | | 288 | | |

* One responder did not answer this item.

E - Native English-speaking teachers working in Portugal

| Error areas | | Gravity levels | | | | | Average | |
|---|----|----------------|----|----|----|-----|---------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. articles | a | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2.33 | 3.10 |
| | b | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3.16 | |
| | c | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3.83 | |
| 2.1 Verbs (tense) | a | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4.50 | 3.73 |
| | b | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4.00 | |
| | c | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3.83 | |
| | d | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2.16 | |
| | e | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4.16 | |
| 2.2 Verbs (concord) | a | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3.66 | 3.83 |
| | b | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4.00 | |
| 3. Dummy it | a | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 4.16 | 4.16 |
| | b | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4.16 | |
| 4. Negation | a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3.83 | 3.83 |
| 5. Word order | a | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2.66 | 2.95 |
| | b* | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2.20 | |
| | c* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4.00 | |
| 6.1 Concord (determiner- modifier/noun) | a | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3.83 | 3.91 |
| | b | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3.83 | |
| | c | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4.16 | |
| | d | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3.83 | |
| 6.2 Concord (noun/verb) | a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3.50 | 3.16 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2.83 | |
| 7.1 Adjectiver (degree) | a | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2.50 | 3.25 |
| | b | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 4.00 | |
| 7.2 Adjective | a | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4.16 | 4.16 |
| 8. Lexis | a | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3.83 | 3.52 |
| | b | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 3.83 | |
| | c | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4.33 | |
| | d | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2.83 | |
| | e | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.16 | |
| | f | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4.16 | |
| | g | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2.50 | |
| Totals | | 13 | 22 | 46 | 64 | 45 | 3.56 | 3.60 |
| | | | | | | 190 | | |

* One responder did not answer this item.

F - British teachers in the United Kingdom

| Error areas | | Gravity levels | | | | | Average | |
|---|-----|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. articles | a | 9 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2.26 | 2.85 |
| | b | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 3.21 | |
| | c | 1 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 3.10 | |
| 2.1 Verbs (tense) | a | 0 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 3.94 | 3.34 |
| | b | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 3.63 | |
| | c | 1 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3.68 | |
| | d | 11 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1.84 | |
| | e | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3.63 | |
| 2.2 Verbs (concord) | a | 0 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 3.36 | 3.34 |
| | b | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3.31 | |
| 3. Dummy it | a | 6 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 2.84 | 2.94 |
| | b | 4 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3.05 | |
| 4. Negation | a | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2.73 | 2.73 |
| 5. Word order | a* | 14 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1.55 | 1.85 |
| | b** | 14 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1.23 | |
| | c* | 2 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2.77 | |
| 6.1 Concord (determiner- modifier/noun) | a | 0 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 3.63 | 3.74 |
| | b | 1 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 3.73 | |
| | c | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 4.31 | |
| | d | 2 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 3.31 | |
| 6.2 Concord (noun/verb) | a | 3 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2.84 | 2.30 |
| | b* | 12 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1.77 | |
| 7.1 Adjectiver (degree) | a** | 10 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1.58 | 2.55 |
| | b | 1 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3.52 | |
| 7.2 Adjective | a | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 3.31 | 3.31 |
| 8. Lexis | a* | 2 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 3.61 | 3.46 |
| | b | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 3.84 | |
| | c | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 4.26 | |
| | d* | 4 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 2.94 | |
| | e | 1 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 3.36 | |
| | f | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 3.78 | |
| | g | 8 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2.47 | |
| Totals | | 121 | 101 | 113 | 129 | 136 | 3.07 | 2.94 |
| | | | | | | 600 | | |

* One responder did not answer this item.
 * Two responders did not answer this item.

G - Native speakers of English (non-teachers)

| Error areas | | Gravity levels | | | | | Average | |
|---|----|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. articles | a | 9 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2.08 | 2.72 |
| | b | 4 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2.79 | |
| | c | 1 | 4 | 10 | 5 | 4 | 3.29 | |
| 2.1 Verbs (tense) | a | 0 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 3.50 | 3.16 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 3.54 | |
| | c* | 0 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 3.20 | |
| | d | 9 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1.79 | |
| | e | 1 | 3 | 14 | 4 | 2 | 3.79 | |
| 2.2 Verbs (concord) | a | 0 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 3.58 | 3.56 |
| | b | 0 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 3.54 | |
| 3. Dummy it | a | 6 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2.33 | 2.44 |
| | b* | 3 | 11 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2.56 | |
| 4. Negation | a | 0 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 3.33 | 3.33 |
| 5. Word order | a* | 21 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.08 | 1.48 |
| | b* | 22 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.04 | |
| | c* | 4 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 2.34 | |
| 6.1 Concord (determiner- modifier/noun) | a | 1 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 3.25 | 3.58 |
| | b | 1 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 3 | 3.58 | |
| | c | 0 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 3.83 | |
| | d | 2 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 3.66 | |
| 6.2 Concord (noun/verb) | a | 4 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2.75 | 2.16 |
| | b | 14 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1.58 | |
| 7.1 Adjectiver (degree) | a | 20 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.16 | 1.89 |
| | b | 2 | 8 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 2.62 | |
| 7.2 Adjective | a | 2 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 3.04 | 3.04 |
| 8. Lexis | a | 2 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 3.54 | 3.34 |
| | b | 1 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 3.45 | |
| | c | 0 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 4.00 | |
| | d | 4 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 2.66 | |
| | e | 1 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 3.25 | |
| | f | 1 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 8 | 3.95 | |
| | g | 7 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 2.54 | |
| Totals | | 142 | 162 | 199 | 168 | 92 | 2.89 | 2.79 |
| | | | | | | 763 | | |

* One responder did not answer this item.