A Contrastive Analysis: English Causative Constructions in EFL Spanish and Italian Students

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Abstract

This research investigates and contrasts error patterns in English causative constructions with *have* among Italian and Spanish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, employing Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy to classify and analyze errors. The analysis provides a systematic, descriptive account of recurring challenges in causative forms. By categorizing errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, the research facilitates a structured contrast of linguistic difficulties encountered by Italian and Spanish learners. The findings highlight the utility of error analysis as a tool for identifying pedagogical priorities, encouraging further research on how educators might leverage these results—particularly the contrasts in error profiles between learner groups—to develop targeted materials and methods aligned with observed patterns. This approach underscores the value of evidence-based instruction in fostering mastery of causative structures, emphasizing adaptation to empirically identified challenges rather than causal explanations.

Keywords: EFL, Causative *have*, Spanish students, Italian students, Error analysis, Surface Strategy Taxonomy

1. Introduction

According to Inoue (2023, p. 43), "the essence of language is to convey meaning, which is generally achieved through syntactic patterns". Foreign language learners demonstrate significant motivation to master the diverse syntactic structures that a target language presents to achieve communicative competence. According to Hanim (2023) grammar proficiency facilitates enhanced expressive capacity and interpretive comprehension among language learners. The absence of grammatical structure engenders linguistic disorder, thereby impeding effective communication. Grammatical competence is instrumental not merely for linguistic accuracy, but also for responsible and meaningful discourse in English. This fundamental relationship between grammatical knowledge and communicative efficacy underscores the necessity of grammar acquisition in language development. When acquiring a foreign language at the upper-intermediate level (B2.1 or B2.2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), learners frequently encounter difficulties with certain complex grammatical constructions. Hanim (2023) stated that the causative *have* construction is particularly problematic for learners at this proficiency level.

The theory of causative construction has received intense scrutiny over the past few decades (Kastovsky, 1973; Baron, 1974; Comrie, 1989; Kemmer & Verhagen, 1994; Wierzbicka, 1998). According to Pinker (1989), the causative construction represents a fundamental syntactic pattern in English grammar. This structure demonstrates that an agent can be indirectly responsible for initiating an action while not directly executing it. In such constructions, the grammatical subject functions as the causal agent that prompts another entity to perform the specified action.

Moreno (1993) stated that in numerous languages, Spanish and Italian among them, periphrastic causative constructions can be systematically described and frequently demonstrate an association with the verb *make*.

Azar (2002) built upon the theoretical framework established by Moreno's (1993) research on causative constructions, specifying that the verbs *make*, *have*, and *get* can function as causatives to express that an agent X causes another entity Y to perform an action. The causative verb *make* conveys a semantic component of coercion or compulsion, implying that the agent exerts force upon the recipient to perform an action. In contrast, the causative *have* encompasses a semantic dimension of request or instruction, suggesting a hierarchical relationship

wherein compliance is expected but with less overt force than *make*. The causative *get* demonstrates a persuasive modality, indicating that the agent employs influence or convincing strategies to elicit action from the recipient.

Shibatani (2002) provided a comprehensive overview of the primary research challenges in causation studies at the beginning of the 21st century. He conceptualized causation as a cognitive category, positing it as an ideal domain for cross-linguistic investigation. This approach facilitates the examination of language universals through systematic cross-linguistic comparative analysis.

Recently Moretti (2022) has examined the behavior of the causative *make* and causative *do* in Middle English, with particular emphasis on identifying the distinctive semantic domains of the infinitives with which they co-occur. The findings suggest that *make* began to appear in nonagentive contexts during the early stages of this period—specifically, as early as the second sub-period. Conversely, *do* gradually became restricted to specific semantic niches, a pattern that became particularly pronounced in late Middle English.

Whereas periphrastic causative constructions have been extensively examined in the literature from various theoretical perspectives, the acquisition and usage patterns of these constructions among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students remain comparatively understudied.

Gilquin (2010) investigated advanced learners' written production of causatives (*cause*, *get*, *have*, and *make*) appearing in the second version of the International Corpus of Learner English. Her findings revealed that the [X make Y Vinf] construction is significantly overused by learners across various first language (L1) backgrounds, suggesting this feature constitutes a universal characteristic in learner language. Additional findings included the overuse of specific constructions by learners from particular L1 backgrounds and the emergence of non-standard complementation patterns.

In another studied conducted in 2016, Gilquin postulated that teachers should modify their instructional methodologies to address learners' particular linguistic challenges by implementing remedial interventions. Regarding causative syntactic structures, it would therefore be advantageous to familiarize students with the diverse constructions available for expressing causation, elucidating the contextual environments in which these structures predominantly manifest, thereby discouraging the excessive utilization of active patterns incorporating the lexical item *make*. The research suggests that learners should not only diversify their causative expression through more varied constructions but also expand their deployment of these structures to encompass a broader spectrum of non-finite verbal elements, with particular emphasis on specialized verbs that demonstrate distinctive collocational preferences with specific causative constructions.

Benati and Batziou (2019) examined the effects of structured input and structured output—delivered either in isolation or in combination—on the acquisition of English causative forms among 54 intermediate-level Chinese EFL students. They concluded that structured input, as well as the combination of structured input with structured output, facilitated learners' accurate processing of English causative forms. These approaches proved more effective than structured output alone or control conditions in enhancing learners' ability to interpret English causative forms correctly at the discourse level.

Wijawa and Winstin (2023) investigated Indonesian EFL learners' explicit knowledge, processing, and use of English periphrastic causative constructions (*make*, *have*, and *get*). Their study involved 40 participants (20 native English speakers and 20 Indonesian university-level B1 EFL learners). Results indicated that Indonesian learners could effectively employ their knowledge to identify *causees* in passive causative sentences. However, the learners generally demonstrated deficiencies in their explicit knowledge of the target constructions, which led to the production of incorrect causative verbs and syntactic patterns.

Gilquin (2023) analyzed the processes through which English causative constructions with *make* are produced by French-speaking learners. Her research demonstrated that causative constructions frequently undergo modifications (e.g., typographical corrections or changes in complement type) or are completely eliminated during the writing process. In some instances, these alterations occur as a direct consequence of dictionary consultation.

The present research investigation will focus specifically on the causative construction with the verb *have*, because this particular causative structure constitutes the sole representation of causative constructions in the prescribed curriculum material (*English File*, fourth edition by Oxford University Press). This targeted approach is methodologically justified by the fact that the participant population, comprising students selected as research subjects, will engage exclusively with this causative form during their course of study.

This research aims to provide valuable insights that may serve as a pedagogical reference for educators in evaluating and enhancing the teaching learning process. Furthermore, these research outcomes can function as a significant resource for language learners, facilitating their acquisition of proficiency in the correct application of

causative constructions with *have*.

What are EFL Spanish and Italian students' high-frequency errors in English exercises about the causative?

In order to answer our research question, we have adopted the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (Dulay et al., 1982). The selection of this taxonomic framework is justified by the authors' assertion that this categorization of grammatical errors "holds much promise for researchers concerned with identifying cognitive processes that underlie the learner's reconstruction of the new language. It also makes us aware that learner's errors are based on some logic" (1982, p. 150).

This taxonomic framework encompasses four distinct categories:

1) Omission

2) Addition

3) Misformation

4) Misordering

Omission

According to Dulay et al. (1982, p. 154), omission refers to "the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance." This category encompasses grammatical morphemes such as noun and verb inflections (the -s in *cats*, the -ed in *matched*, or the -ing in *running*), articles, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions.

Addition

Addition is characterized by "the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance" (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 156). Addition errors comprise three subcategories: double marking (when two items are marked for the same feature, such as past tense marked in both the auxiliary and the verb; negation marked in both the auxiliary and the quantifier; or objects expressed redundantly with pronouns); regularization (when a marker is erroneously applied to exceptional items that do not take the marker, exemplified by the incorrect past form *cutted* for the irregular verb *cut*); and simple additions (addition errors that do not constitute double marking or regularization).

Misformation

The principal characteristic of misformation is "the wrong form of the morpheme or structure" (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 158). This category includes regularizations (the learner supplies an incorrect form); archi-forms (learners select one member of a class to represent others in that class, such as using "this" for all demonstratives including "these," "that," and "those"); and alternating forms (free alternation of various members of a class, such as masculine for feminine, accusative for nominative, or past participle instead of simple past).

Misordering

Misordering refers to "the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance" (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 162), as exemplified in the sentence "I don't know what is he doing."

2. Method

For the purposes of this investigation, participants were selected from the Language Center at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, specifically comprising students who commenced their B2.2 level English studies in February 2025. The research sample (60 students) was stratified into two distinct cohorts: 30 participants of Spanish nationality and 30 participants of Italian nationality, with the latter pursuing their studies at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria through participation in the Erasmus mobility program. All participants were enrolled in nonlinguistic academic disciplines and represented diverse educational backgrounds, including the sciences, architecture, as well as recent graduates and individuals not currently engaged in formal education. Admission to the B2.2 course was standardized across all participants through a uniform placement test established by the Language Centre. This placement test consisted of two assessment components: (1) a comprehensive evaluation of grammatical knowledge and lexical proficiency, with items calibrated across CEFR levels A1 through C1, and (2) an oral proficiency interview. During the inaugural session of the B2.2 English course, a diagnostic assessment was administered to both cohorts (Spanish and Italian nationality groups). This instrument was designed specifically to evaluate participants' comprehension and production of the causative "have" construction. Participants were explicitly informed that the objective of this diagnostic tool was to identify knowledge gaps and establish baseline proficiency levels regarding this grammatical structure, because it constituted one of the central components of the course curriculum.

The assessment instrument required participants to perform syntactic transformations on 10 sentences, applying the causative *have* construction while maintaining semantic equivalence.

The assessment instrument is presented below:

Transform these sentences using the causative *have*.

A renowned architect designed their new eco-friendly villa before construction began.

They _____ by a renowned architect before construction began.

The software development company is creating a custom app for our business needs.

We _____ for our business needs.

A team of landscapers will plant drought-resistant shrubs around the office complex next week.

The management _____ around the office complex next week.

An experienced tailor has altered the bridesmaids' dresses to ensure a perfect fit.

The bride _____ to ensure a perfect fit.

A specialist mechanic must service the vintage car's engine before the exhibition.

The owner _____ before the exhibition.

Professional cleaners had deep-cleaned the entire house after the renovation work.

The homeowners _____ after the renovation work.

A licensed contractor is going to install the solar water heating system next month.

They _____ next month.

A nutritionist has been planning balanced meal programs for the athletes since January.

The coaching staff _____ since January.

A skilled artisan will have restored the antique furniture by the time the museum reopens.

The curators _____ by the time the museum reopens.

A certified dog groomer trims our poodle's coat every six weeks to maintain its condition.

We _____ every six weeks to maintain its condition.

3. Analysis

Upon compilation of our corpus, which comprised 300 sentences completed by 30 native Italian speakers and 300 sentences completed by 30 native Spanish speakers, we conducted error analysis by categorizing the mistakes according to the taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982).

In the following paragraphs, we first present the analysis of the Italian participants' responses, followed by an examination of the data from the Spanish participants.

3.1 Italian Students' Error Analysis

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of errors committed by Italian participants, categorized according to the taxonomy developed by Dulay et al. (1982).

Table 1. Italian students' errors

	Omission	Addition	Misformation	Misordering	Left blank	Correct sentence
Student 1	10	0	9	9	0	0
Student 2	14	0	3	0	0	0
Student 3	6	0	3	3	0	2
Student 4	9	0	8	2	1	0
Student 5	3	0	2	0	0	6
Student 6	6	0	2	1	0	3
Student 7	0	0	2	0	0	8
Student 8	12	0	5	1	0	2
Student 9	0	0	1	0	0	9
Student 10	20	0	10	0	0	0
Student 11	0	0	4	0	2	4
Student 12	7	0	6	1	0	1
Student 13	4	0	10	5	0	0
Student 14	0	0	3	1	6	1
Student 15	20	0	10	0	0	0
Student 16	14	0	8	0	0	0
Student 17	14	0	9	2	0	0
Student 18	20	0	10	0	0	0
Student 19	11	0	5	1	3	0
Student 20	1	0	3	1	0	7
Student 21	20	0	10	0	0	0
Student 22	18	9	9	0	0	0
Student 23	0	0	7	0	0	3
Student 24	5	0	8	4	0	0
Student 25	13	0	7	4	0	0
Student 26	0	0	7	10	0	0
Student 27	4	0	5	3	1	0
Student 28	6	0	3	2	2	4
Student 29	0	0	1	0	0	9
Student 30	20	0	10	0	0	0
Total occurrences	257	0	180	50	15	59

As evidenced from Figure 1 below, the grammatical errors committed by Italian students predominantly involved omission (46%), followed by misformation (32%), and misordering (9%). A small percentage of responses (3%) were left blank, whereas 10% of the sentences were constructed correctly.
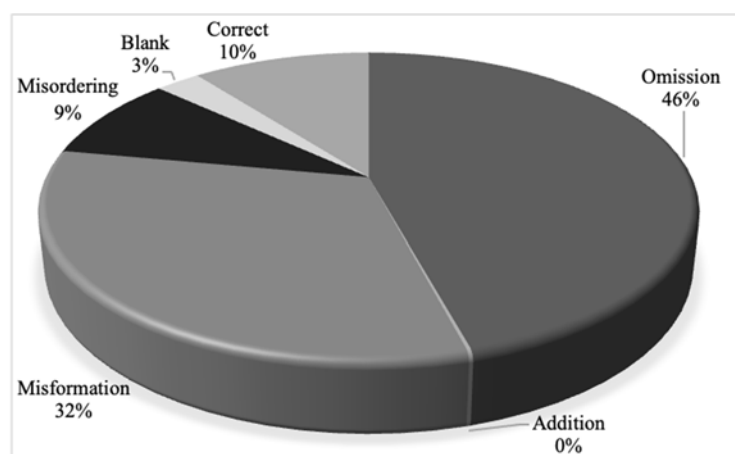

Figure 1. Percentage of Italian Students' errors

Regarding the specific nature of these errors, a detailed analysis for each category has been conducted.

Omission Errors

Of the 257 instances of omission identified, the errors can be categorized as follows: in 35 cases, the morpheme -*ed* was not appended to the regular past participle of the verb; in 65 cases, the past participle was completely omitted, and in 57 instances, the object was omitted. In 100 occurrences both object and past participles were omitted. The example cited below demonstrate these patterns of omission.

Omission of the past participle of the verb:

They had their villa by a renowned architect before construction began.

We have got a custom app for our business needs.

We have our poodle's coat every six weeks to maintain its condition.

Omission of the object:

They got designed by a renowned architect before construction began.

The management will have drought-resistant shrubs around the office complex next week.

The bride get altered to ensure a perfect fit.

Omission of the morpheme -ed in regular past participles:

They get the solar water heating system instal next month.

The coaching staff had balanced meal programs plan since January.

The curators will have the furniture restore by the time the museum reopens.

Omission of both object and past participle:

T*he management will have around the office complex next week.*

The coaching staff have since January.

We have every six weeks to maintain its condition.

Misformation Errors

Concerning misformation, the 180 documented occurrences primarily involved alternating forms. Specifically, 125 instances represented tense inconsistencies in which the students employed verb tenses that were incongruent with those in the source sentences. The remaining 55 occurrences pertained to archi-forms: in five cases, students inappropriately added the morpheme "got" to verb "have," while in 50 instances, students incorrectly used the bare infinitive form "have."

We can see some sentences in the following examples of archi-forms:

"The homeowners had their entire house deep-cleaned after the renovation work" instead of "The homeowners had had their entire house deep-cleaned after the renovation work."

"They will have the solar water heating system installed next month" instead of "They are going to have the solar water heating system installed next month."

"The owner have before the exhibition" instead of "The owner must have the vintage car's engine serviced before the exhibition."

"The curators have by the time the museum reopens" instead of "The curators will have had the antique furniture restored by the time the museum reopens."

Misordering

The 50 sentences exhibiting misordering errors demonstrated correct tense usage; however, students incorrectly positioned the object and past participle within the sentence structure.

Some examples follow:

They are going to have installed the solar water heating system next month.

The coaching staff have been having planned balanced meal programs since January.

We have trimmed our poodle's coat every six weeks to maintain its condition.

Figure 2 illustrates the specific subcategories of errors committed by Italian students classified according to the taxonomy developed by Dulay et al. (1982).
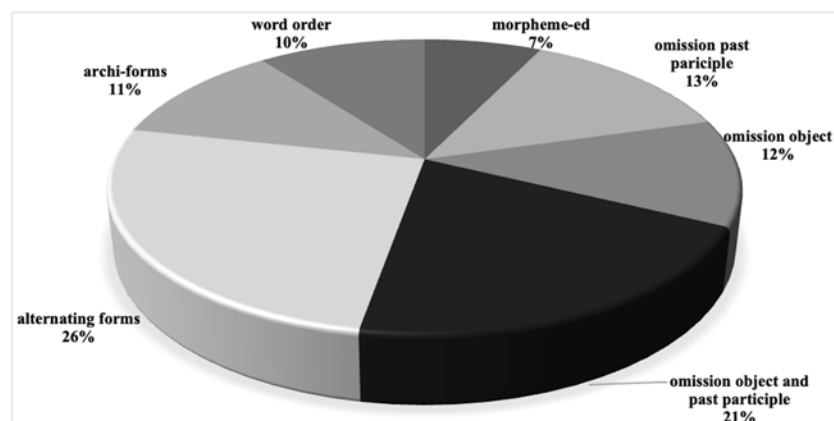
Figure 2. Subcategories of Errors Committed by Italian Students according to Dulay at al. (1982)

Upon analysis of error patterns among native Italian-speaking students, several significant trends emerge. The most prevalent error type was the alternating form (26%), characterized by incorrect tense selection. The second most common error involved the simultaneous omission of both object and past participle (21%), followed by isolated omissions of the past participle (13%) and object (12%), respectively. The use of archi-forms constituted 11% of errors, specifically manifested through the inappropriate substitution of bare infinitives for conjugated verb forms. Word order errors, in which appropriate tense was selected but elements were incorrectly sequenced, accounted for 10% of instances. Finally, the omission of the -ed morpheme in regular past participle formations represented 7% of the observed errors.

3.2 Spanish Students' Error Analysis

Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of errors committed by Spanish participants, categorized according to the taxonomy developed by Dulay et al. (1982).

Table 2. Spanish students' errors

	Omission	Addition	Misformation	Misordering	Left blank	Correct sentences
Student 1	3	0	10	10	0	0
Student 2	0	0	9	0	0	5
Student 3	0	0	10	10	0	0
Student 4	4	0	9	9	1	0
Student 5	5	0	6	6	3	0
Student 6	7	0	9	7	0	0
Student 7	0	0	2	1	0	7
Student 8	4	0	10	10	0	0
Student 9	0	0	5	0	0	5
Student 10	3	0	5	7	2	1
Student 11	0	0	7	0	0	3
Student 12	2	0	3	4	5	0
Student 13	0	0	0	0	0	10
Student 14	0	0	5	0	0	6
Student 15	1	0	2	9	1	0
Student 16	0	0	4	0	0	6
Student 17	5	0	7	8	0	0
Student 18	9	0	10	10	0	0
Student 19	2	0	10	10	0	0
Student 20	8	0	8	3	0	0
Student 21	16	3	9	8	0	0
Student 22	9	0	9	0	1	0

Student 23	14	0	10	0	0	0
Student 24	9	0	10	5	0	0
Student 25	10	0	10	0	0	0
Student 26	4	0	2	0	0	7
Student 27	0	0	0	0	0	10
Student 28	12	0	6	4	0	4
Student 29	5	0	5	4	0	3
Student 30	4	0	4	5	0	4
Total occurrences	136	3	196	130	13	71

Analysis of the Figure 3 shows that the most common grammatical errors made by Spanish students were misformation (36%), followed by omission and misordering (25% and 24%, respectively). A small number of responses (2%) were left blank, whereas 13% of the sentences were correctly constructed. Interestingly, 1% of the errors fell under the addition category, which was not observed in the Italian data.
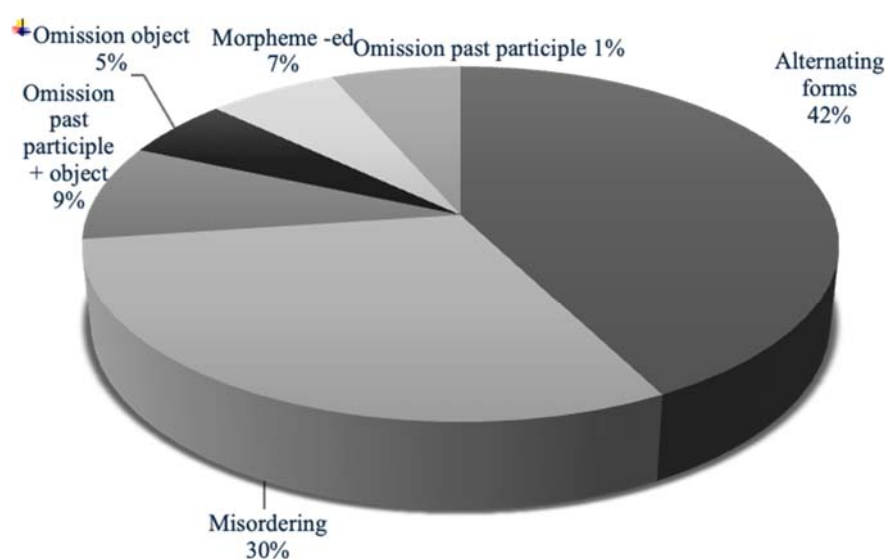
Figure 3. Percentage of Spanish Students' Errors.

Regarding the specific nature of these errors, a detailed analysis for each category has been conducted.

Misformation Errors

The analysis found 196 instances of misformation, primarily involving inconsistent verb forms. A total of 183 cases had tense errors, in which students used verb tenses that did not match the source text. The remaining 13 cases involved archi-forms: two instances of students inappropriately adding "got" to "have", and nine cases of students incorrectly using the bare infinitive "have". Additionally, two cases showed students representing a class with a single member.

The examples below illustrate these archi-form patterns:

"The curators have gotten the antique furniture restored by the time the museum reopens" instead of "The curators will have had the antique furniture restored by the time the museum reopens."

"The bride have had the bridesmaids' dresses altered to ensure a perfect fit" instead of "The bride has had the bridesmaids' dresses altered to ensure a perfect fit."

"They had designed our new eco-friendly villa before construction began" instead of "They had their new eco-friendly villa designed before the construction began."

Omission Errors

The 136 instances of omission were classified as follows: in 26 cases, the regular past participle was lacking the -ed morpheme; in 29 cases, the past participle was completely missing; and in 24 instances, the object was omitted.

Additionally, 38 occurrences involved the omission of both the object and the past participle. For the Spanish student cohort, a new subcategory was introduced, because some students failed to include the causative verb, accounting for 19 occurrences.

The examples cited below demonstrate these patterns of omission:

Omission of the morpheme -ed in regular past participles:

The management will have plant drought-resistant shrubs around the office complex next week.

They are going to have install the solar water heating system next month.

The owner must have service the vintage car before the exhibition.

Omission of the past participle of the verb:

We are getting a custom app for our business needs.

We will have the solar water heating system next month.

The coaching staff have been meal programs since January.

Omission of the object:

They have been designed by a renowned architect before construction began.

The bride has had altered by an experienced tailor to ensure a perfect fit.

We are getting trimmed by a certified dog groomer every six weeks to maintain its condition.

Omission of both object and past participle:

We have a certified dog groomer trims every six weeks to maintain its condition.

We had software for our business needs.

The coaching staff have been planning since January.

Omission of the causative verb *have*:

We are been created a custom app for our business needs.

The coaching staff is being planned balanced meal programs since January.

They eco-friendly villa was designed by a renowned architect before construction began.

Misordering

The data indicate 130 instances exhibiting misordering errors, with the majority co-occurring alongside additional category errors, such as omission and misformation. This suggests a complex relationship among different error types, in which misordering often coincides with other error patterns, and demonstrates significant discrepancies compared to the data for the Italian student's cohort.

Some examples are shown:

The management will have plant drought-resistant shrubs around the office complex next week.

The coaching staff has been planned balanced meal programs since June.

Addition

Our analysis of the Spanish student cohort found three instances of simple additions, accounting for only 1% of the errors identified.

The homeowners had contract clean after the renovation work.

The management of the landscapers will plant drought-resistant around the office complex next week.

The coaching staffhas been waiting for the meal program since January.

An examination of grammatical errors among Spanish students reveals distinct patterns. The dominant issue was misformation, marked by incorrect verb tense usage (39%). Following this, combined omissions of objects and past participles represented 8% of errors, whereas individual omissions included absent past participles (6%), missing objects (5%), and lack of -ed endings in regular past participles (6%). A specific type of omission—excluding causative verbs (4%)—emerged as a unique challenge for Spanish learners. Word order mistakes or misordering (28%) often coincided with other errors, reflecting broader difficulties in structuring sentences coherently. Less frequent were archi-form errors (3%), such as inserting *got* unnecessarily after *have* or misusing the bare infinitive *have*. Additionally, unnecessary word additions (1%) - a category absent in Italian students'
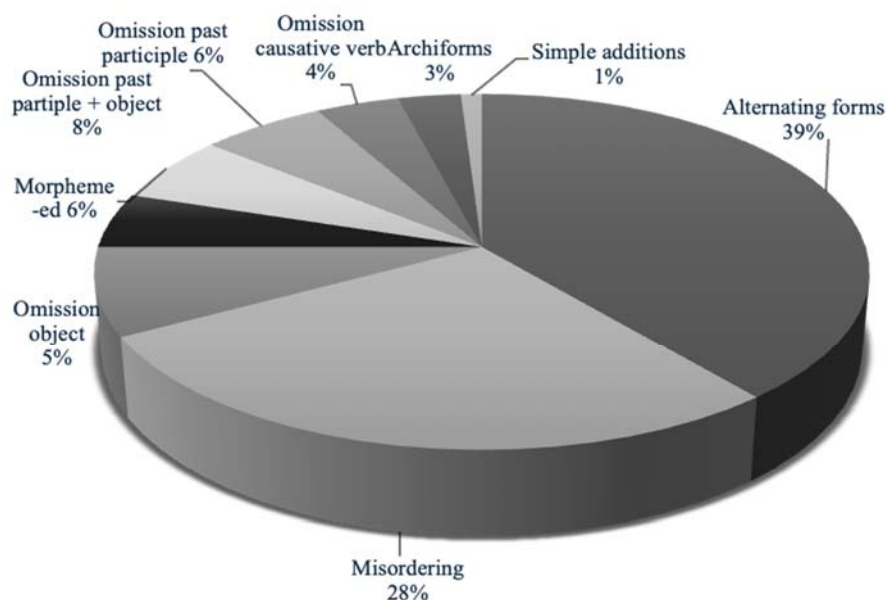
data were sporadically observed.

Figure 4. Subcategories of Errors Committed by Spanish Students According to Dulay et al. (1982)

In essence, Spanish students' concerns involved aligning verb tenses with context and managing omissions, particularly with participles and objects. Unique syntactic difficulties, such as causative verb exclusion, further distinguished their error profile. The interplay of word order issues with other mistakes highlights systemic challenges in mastering English sentence architecture.

4. Conclusions

The comparative analysis of high-frequency errors in English causative exercises among Italian and Spanish EFL students reveals distinct patterns. Below is a synthesis of the findings organized into comparative tables.

Table 3. Error distribution in Italian vs. Spanish students

Error category	Italian students	Spanish students
Omission	46%	25%
Misformation	32%	36%
Misordering	9%	24%
Addition	0%	1%
Left blank	3%	2%
Correct sentences	10%	13%

Table 4. Subcategory breakdown of errors

Category	Italian students	Spanish students
Omission	- Combined object & past participle (21%) - Isolated past participle (13%) - Isolated object (12%) - Missing *-ed* morpheme (7%)	- Combined object & past participle (11%) - Isolated past participle (9%) - Isolated object (7%) - Missing *-ed* morpheme (8%) - Causative verb exclusion (6%)
Misformation	- Tense inconsistencies (26%) - Archi-forms (11%): bare infinitives, *have + got*	- Tense inconsistencies (36%) - Archi-forms (3%): bare infinitives, *have + got* - Single-member class misrepresentation (1%)
Misordering	Incorrect object/participle placement (10%)	Co-occurrence with omission/misformation (24%)
Unique features	None	- Addition errors (1%) - Causative verb omission (4%)

5. Findings

1) Omission dominance in Italian students:

Italian students struggled most with omission (46%), particularly omitting both objects and past participles (21%) or individual elements (past participles at 13%).

2) Misformation focus on Spanish students:

Spanish students' primary challenge was misformation (36%) driven by tense inconsistencies or alternating forms.

3) Contrasts in misordering:

Whereas Italian misordering (9%) involved isolated word placement errors, Spanish misordering (24%) frequently coincided with omissions or misformations, indicating systemic syntactic challenges.

4) Unique Spanish issues:

  Spanish learners exhibited addition errors (1%) and causative verb omission (6%), absent in Italian data.

5) Archi-forms:

Both groups misused bare infinitives (*have* instead of *has*), but Italians overused have + got more frequently (11% vs. 3% in Spanish).

Our analysis highlights distinct error profiles in English causative constructions among Spanish and Italian EFL learners with Italian students exhibiting higher rates of omission and Spanish learners demonstrating greater challenges with misformation and unique addition errors. Both groups diverged in their use of misordering, syntactic accuracy, and causative verb usage.

A notable observation is that students across both groups appeared unprepared to manage the syntactic and morphological demands of causative structures, as evidenced by recurrent errors in retaining required elements and aligning verb forms. Furthermore, the low proportion of correctly constructed sentences (10% for Italian students; 13% for Spanish students) underscores students' limited readiness to apply causative forms accurately.

These findings underscore the importance of tailored pedagogical interventions to address group-specific error patterns, such as retention drills for Italian learners and tense-alignment exercises for Spanish learners. Future research could expand this inquiry by exploring error trends across additional language backgrounds, assessing the efficacy of targeted instructional strategies, or investigating causative acquisition in varied communicative contexts.

Further studies might also examine longitudinal progressions or the interplay between error types and proficiency levels, offering deeper insights into optimizing EFL instruction for diverse learner populations.

Authors' contributions

Professor Yeste Ruiz and Professor Vedaschi Ozzola were responsible for study design and revising. Prof. Yeste Ruiz was responsible for the Spanish students' data collection; Prof. Vedaschi Ozzola for te Italian ones. All authors drafted the manuscript, revised it and approved the final manuscript.

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