

## Tackling Intermediate Students' Fossilized Grammatical Errors in Speech Through Self-Evaluation and Self-Monitoring Strategies

Reparación de los errores fosilizados de estudiantes de nivel intermedio en su habla por medio de estrategias de autoevaluación y automonitoreo

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The purpose of this action research study was to help English language intermediate students tackle fossilized grammatical errors in their speech, which were verb form, missing subject, and word choice. In order to do so, the researcher used visual input such as pictures and colored stickers for self-monitoring purposes, as well as self-evaluation charts for participants to follow up on their process; additionally, voice recordings and field notes were used to help the researcher keep track of students' progress. Results showed that participants developed more awareness and attentiveness towards their fossilized mistakes which were reflected in the repairs they were able to make along the implementation process.

*Key words:* English language learning, fossilization, self-evaluation, self-monitoring.

El propósito de este estudio de investigación-acción fue ayudar a estudiantes de inglés de nivel intermedio a minimizar errores gramaticales fosilizados en su habla, los cuales fueron forma verbal, falta de sujeto y la selección de vocabulario apropiado. Para lograr esto, el investigador usó estímulos visuales tales como fotos y calcomanías coloridas para propósitos de auto-monitoreo, al igual que formatos de autoevaluación para que los estudiantes siguieran su proceso; adicionalmente, grabaciones de voz y notas de campo fueron usadas para ayudar al investigador a hacer seguimiento de los participantes. Los resultados mostraron que los participantes desarrollaron más conciencia y atención hacia sus errores fosilizados, lo cual se reflejó en las correcciones que pudieron hacer a través de la implementación del estudio.

*Palabras clave:* aprendizaje del idioma inglés, autoevaluación, auto-monitoreo, fosilización.

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## Introduction

The study took place at Centro Colombo Americano's (CCA) downtown branch (Bogotá) with 14 adult intermediate students who had been studying English for an average of two years. Most of them are professionals who hold bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees and were studying English because most of them needed to take international exams such as TOEFL or IELTS as a job requirement or in order to apply to a foreign university. For the needs analysis to take place, which involved a series of teacher's observations, the analysis of recorded samples from students through the use of an online tool called *vocaroo.com*, and a survey which participants completed, I discovered that while students had acquired a great level of fluency, their accuracy was being affected by different fossilized errors in their speech. This matches Brown's (2007) idea that it is quite common to "encounter" in a learner's language different "erroneous" elements in their production despite their fluent command of the language.

The results from the recordings showed the highest frequency of fossilization in verb formation, especially in the present and past forms. Additionally, on a lower scale but also with a high frequency, students made repeated mistakes omitting the subject of a sentence. Also, with a similar frequency, students misused vocabulary which did not match some ideas they intended to express. On the survey results, verb formation and tenses were two categories students pointed out as two of their most common mistakes, which matched results on recordings. Likewise, surveys showed that students seemed to be familiar with some learning strategies, of which self-monitoring was one of the most common. However, this shows that even though they had an idea of some learning strategies, they misused them or did not know how to implement them, which is evident in their oral performance on the recordings for the needs analysis. As a result, the research question was stated as follows:

To what extent might self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies help adult intermediate students tackle their fossilized grammatical errors in speech?

Consequently, the specific objective of the research study was: To analyze the impact self-monitoring and self-evaluation may have on adult intermediate students' verb form, missing subject, and word choice fossilized mistakes.

## Literature Review

Fossilization is a term coined by Selinker (1972) who described it as a permanent local cessation of development in a language system or subsystem. This phenomenon affects most, if not all second language (L2) learners/users due to the fact that it can manifest itself in particular areas of a language which can be phonological, grammatical, or lexical (Han & Odlin, 2006). As some scholars might agree with the fact that such issue must be tackled, others have focused their attention on other elements of language development which somehow have disregarded the use of accuracy. For instance, Brown (2001), Ellis (2004), Higgs and Clifford (1982), Nunan (2004), and Savignon (2005), among others, have carried out studies related to providing students with meaningful interaction, for which communication has played the most important role in the classroom, pushing teachers to create opportunities for students to interact and convey meaning (Terrell, 1991). On the one hand, students' fluency in their L2 has increased thanks to the importance given by teachers to the role of interaction, but on the other hand, accuracy has been disregarded and fossilization has become a more common issue among learners.

Nonetheless, other scholars have tried to redirect their attention on accuracy; for instance, Spada (1997) refers to form-focused instruction as a pedagogical effort to draw students' attention to language form which can be done in an implicit or explicit way. Additionally, Ellis (2002) sees form-focused instruction as something necessary to develop L2 knowledge, an idea that agrees

with Norris and Ortega (2000), who analyzed 49 form-focused instruction studies and concluded that explicit instruction had been more effective for students to gain accuracy than implicit instruction and that such effect had been durable. This information helps us understand that focusing on form is also a feasible way to help students in their L2 learning. Brown (2007) states that the quality of the language of many students has been affected by errors that were not tackled on time, probably due to the lack of awareness, for which Brown refers to form-focused instruction as conscious learning in which learners exercise an intentional control of their attention to an aspect of input or output. Such awareness is connected to identifying errors that are produced when communication is taking place; additionally, some studies have been carried out (Hennessey, 1999; Kuhn & Dean, 2004; Martinez, 2006) and all of them have agreed that focusing on the way students construct their ideas is really important to avoid the acquisition of errors. This might have helped several teachers re-direct their attention towards form.

Han (2003) states that there is a lack of empirical studies on fossilization; therefore, evidence of fossilization has been anecdotal. However, several studies have been carried out regarding this phenomenon. Wei (2008) carried out a study on the implications of interlanguage (IL) fossilization in L2, for which he described five types of fossilization taking into account his native language, which is Chinese. The results showed phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic fossilization; however, the current study was focused on morphological and syntactic fossilization, which are more related to the spoken grammatical fossilized errors identified in the population of this study. Additionally, Qian and Xiao (2010), in a theoretical study on fossilization, stated that when it happens on a temporary basis it could be considered the greatest difficulty in second language acquisition, and mentioned that taking action that seeks to tackle emerging mistakes positively is a good option to avoid and resolve temporary fossilization.

They focused their attention on three strategies which, according to them, could prevent fossilization: (a) taking the right attitude towards students' mistakes, (b) paying attention to verbal output by grasping the relationship between accuracy and fluency, and (c) providing students with strategic feedback.

Hasbún (2007) carried out a study with 159 English as a foreign language (EFL) university students for which eight different writing samples from each participant were analyzed. Such samples were evaluated and errors were classified according to an error taxonomy; the most common errors were classified into eight categories: vocabulary, prepositions, pronouns, plurals, word order, agreement, verb forms (different from agreement), and spelling. This study shows a commonality with the present study for which verb forms, agreement, and word order are related to the three main spoken fossilized errors discovered in the current population.

As mentioned above, there have been several studies which attempt to describe the phenomenon of fossilization; however, while some of them focus on strategies to minimize the impact of fossilization or to prevent them from happening in EFL learners (Qian & Xiao, 2010); others focus on identifying different types of fossilized errors from a written or pragmatic perspective (Hasbún, 2007; Wei, 2008).

### Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) state that through the use of meta-cognitive strategies students might gain awareness that they lack due to the fact that these strategies "involve thinking about one's learning process" (p. 8). This agrees with Brown's (2007) idea that the quality of students' language has been affected due to a lack of awareness; consequently, conscious learning needs to take place, in other words, learners need to take intentional control of their attention. For the above reasons, two meta-cognitive strategies will be described and discussed below: self-monitoring and self-evaluation.

### Self-Monitoring

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined self-monitoring as "checking one's comprehension during listening or reading or checking the accuracy and/or appropriateness of one's oral or written production when it's taking place" (p. 46). Additionally, Brown (2007) refers to this concept as: "correcting one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or for appropriateness, related to the setting or to the people who are present" (p. 134). Something both authors have in common is that they refer to accuracy for which self-monitoring could be useful. Nonetheless, some scholars have had differences of opinion regarding the use of self-monitoring. For instance, Krashen (1990) proposed a hypothesis for which, in a learning process, students can monitor their language production and self-correct mistakes they might detect; however, he says that monitoring does not favor accuracy and does not help acquisition. Krashen (2003) states that too much self-monitoring at a time is damaging for the acquisition of a language; however, Terrell (1991) says that whereas Krashen's hypothesis can work for children's language acquisition, adults need a greater amount of strategies in order to acquire language. In other words, strategies become necessary and self-monitoring plays a vital role in adult-language learning because it helps students regulate or be aware of comprehension at a task.

There have been several studies on self-monitoring; for instance, Levelt (1989) proposed the "perceptual loop" theory which intends to "check the intended message for its appropriateness, inspects the speech plan, and detects errors prior to its articulation" (p. 2). More recently, Chang's study (2010) examined the effect of self-monitoring on EFL online learners' academic performance and motivational beliefs with 90 college students. The study explored the effects of the use of self-monitoring strategies for study time, study environment, and predicting test score in a web-based course. Results evidenced that participants who had used a self-monitoring strategy had experienced

better academic performances and their motivation had increased compared to those who had not done it. It helped them complete academic tasks, alerting them to breakdowns in attention and comprehension. Additionally, Sánchez Luján (2012) conducted a study on the effects of self-monitoring and self-reflection in A1 adult learners in a blended environment at a Colombian university offering distance studies. Participants were asked to observe and record their own behavior, which was registered through self-assessment tools. Results showed that students were able to identify areas of improvement on their own. Additionally, some of them expanded their level of reflection and monitoring and even developed awareness and the ability to reflect on their own learning.

In other studies, Pillai (2006) conducted a research study whose intention was to explore what repairs in the spontaneous production of speech revealed about the psycholinguistic processes of self-monitoring and self-repair. Results showed that speech is not stopped immediately upon detection of a problem or production of an error; additionally, speakers seemed to have a tendency to continue speaking longer before they interrupted themselves. In another study, Kormos (2000) investigated the role of attention in monitoring second language speech production analyzing the frequency for self-repairs and the correction rate of errors in the speech of 40 native speakers of Hungarian. Results showed that in L2 speech, error repairs had been more frequent than repairs in L1. Findings also showed that lexical errors were repaired considerably more frequently than grammatical errors in L1 and L2. Furthermore, results showed that students who had higher levels of proficiency in their L2 had corrected fewer mistakes than learners who had been at pre-intermediate levels. It was confirmed that L2 learners pay particular attention to lexical choice. In other words, it seems to be especially important in the case of L2 speakers that their production requires more attention than in L1. The above studies evidence a clear importance in the use of self-monitoring in order to help

students tackle accuracy. Some authors focused their attention on improving students' academic performance (Chang, 2010; Sánchez Luján, 2012); others focused on self-repairs (Kormos, 2000; Pillai, 2006), and others on enhancing students' motivation and autonomy.

None of the studies found have tried to tackle spoken fossilized errors, even though their ideas suggest that it could be feasible to tackle such errors. For these reasons, self-monitoring was used for this study.

### Self-Evaluation

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined self-evaluation as "checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against a standard after it has been completed" (p. 46) whereas Brown (2007) refines the same definition as "checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy" (p. 134). Both definitions have something in common: students assess their own performance for a specific task which has taken place in a communication act. The concept of accuracy is part of the definition which means that self-evaluation can directly help students in the process of tackling their accuracy.

Studies on self-evaluation or what some may refer to as "self-assessment" indistinctively, have been done; for instance, Schraeder (1996) made an attempt to foster independent learning by providing students with rubrics and checklists for self-assessing; she found that her students gained confidence and their self-esteem had been enhanced considerably because they had gained a sense of independence by taking the responsibility for their own learning. Min (2005) conducted a similar study and discovered that students benefited from this process in skills improvement, confidence build-up, language acquisition, and meta-cognitive strategy use. Additionally, Tamjid and Birjandi (2011), reviewing different empirical studies related to self-assessment or self-evaluation, concluded that providing students with the opportunity to self- or peer-assess will help them improve their metacognition which then will

guide them to be better thinkers and learners. In all three cases, authors see self-evaluation as an effective tool which could provide something participants from the current study needed: improvement.

In the study by Sánchez Luján (2012) results also showed that by participating in self-assessment practice, learners were able to identify their weaknesses, become aware of issues related to listening, speaking, and vocabulary, and become more responsible for their learning, showing positive reflections towards their self-efficacy and autonomy in the foreign language learning process. Additionally, Arciniegas (2008) conducted a study with high-beginner adult EFL learners during a three-month cycle at the CCA. He used learning journals to achieve learning goals. He concluded that due to the fact that students had had the opportunity to reflect upon their performance, they had been able to spot their own weaknesses and strengths. These helped them decide what was needed to cope with difficult aspects of the language. Additionally, Alvarez and Muñoz (2007) carried out a study in a language center at a private university in Colombia. The purpose of the study was to examine students' attitude towards self-assessment; participants consisted of 94 students who received training in self-assessment by using self-assessment forms. Results revealed that most students showed a positive attitude towards self-assessment and found it especially valuable for raising their awareness for the learning process. This is another piece of evidence of the usefulness of using self-assessment with the current population; it could help them raise awareness of their learning process, and more specifically, on how to tackle spoken grammatical fossilized errors.

From the above studies, it can be concluded that: First, several studies on self-assessing or self-evaluation have been carried out during the last decade whose foci have varied; some have studied how the combination of self-assessment with other learning strategies could help students improve their performance or raise awareness as regards their learning process, as in the case of

Sánchez Luján (2012) whose strategies matched the ones implemented in the current study. Others have focused on the usefulness of using self-assessment techniques to improve students' self-directed learning. Another interesting finding is that authors do not seem to agree on the difference between self-evaluation and self-assessment; some of them use such words indistinctively as in the case of Alvarez and Muñoz (2007), Arciniegas (2008), and Goto and Lee (2006), among others. However, based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) definition, they are not so different after all; and as a conclusive idea, the current study has referred to both terms indistinctively as well, and will continue doing so throughout the article.

## Method

The type of study carried out was action research because it involved "taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts" (Burns, 2010, p. 2). Burns also states that the main aim of action research is to identify a problematic situation and intervene, whose intention is to bring about changes and improvements. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) described four broad phases in a cycle research: the first one is *planning*, where the researcher identifies a problem and thinks of an action plan to bring about improvements. For the present study, a needs analysis took place through teacher's observations, the analysis of recorded samples from students, and a survey which participants completed. Also, I discovered that while students had acquired a great level of fluency, their accuracy was being affected by different fossilized errors in their speech. The second is *action*; here the plan is revised throughout the intervention. For the present study, the use of self-monitoring strategies like visual input and self-evaluation strategies such as charts took place. The third is *observation*; here the researcher observes the effects of the intervention on the participants and context. In my case, I observed participants' performance and collected data through

field notes and voice recordings. Finally, the fourth stage is *reflection*, where the main goal is to evaluate and describe the effects that the action had on the context. For the present study, I was able to identify a significant impact on participants' grammatical mistakes which is described in the data analysis.

## Data Collection Instruments

According to Hendricks (2009), the implementation of multiple data collection strategies guarantees credibility in the research findings. As for this study, three instruments were used: first, *field notes* which, according to Hatch (2002), provide the principal data that can be gathered through observation; I used this instrument through implementation in order to observe how participants self-monitored while interaction was taking place. The second tool was *artifacts* which, according to Hendricks, are tools that can help determine whether an intervention has had an impact; the types of artifacts were "student-generated artifacts" (p. 81). They were a voice recording web tool called *vocaroo.com* and self-evaluation forms. With the former, participants recorded their voices in three different moments: firstly, for the needs analysis, secondly, in the middle of the implementation, and thirdly, at the end of the implementation process (a total of three recordings per student). The objective for the second and third recordings was to confirm to which extent students' self-monitoring had increased. With the latter, participants evaluated their own work towards a specific goal: to self-monitor. Finally, *transcripts* from recordings were used in order to examine and analyze data in detail which could guarantee a better and more reliable analysis (Burns, 1999).

In order to analyze raw data and make sense of them, I used the grounded theory approach, which is a systematic procedure that is used to generate a theory that explains a process, an action, or an interaction about a topic; in the present study, it helped to derive theory inductively from the data, which were systematically

gathered and analyzed through a research process to discover categories, concepts, and properties and their interrelations (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Consequently, I decided to use grounded theory for two reasons: Firstly, because existing theories had not addressed the issue that was studied in the same exact way (Caicedo, 2011; Hasbún, 2007; Qian & Xiao, 2010; Wei, 2008); secondly, because this theory offered a step-by-step, systematic procedure for analyzing data which helped me go from open and axial to selective coding. With the initial open coding, I was able to form initial categories of information through segmenting information from which categories and subcategories in a very general way emerged. Later, with axial coding I selected specific open coding categories and positioned those at the center of the process which made them become the core categories of the study. Finally, with the selective coding I wrote the theory that emerged from the relation among the core categories from the axial coding.

### Implementation

At the CCA, lessons are developed through the completion of tasks which requires a rigorous structuring of sessions by dividing activities into mini-steps or mini-tasks, each activity with its own set-up, execution, and evaluation stage. Additionally, the lesson needs to be communicative which means that interaction is a must and there always has to be a “communicative event” which is described as an authentic, meaningful, outcome-driven performance that includes structures, vocabulary, functions, and topics from the day's lesson which go beyond practice activities included in the textbook used. Because of the nature of the research question, most of the implementation took place on the “communicative event” and “assessment” stages. The former because it was the most complete speaking opportunity for students to interact and use their oral skills in which fossilized grammatical errors in speech took place; consequently, self-monitoring fit into this particular stage of the lesson. For the latter,

having an assessment stage allowed participants to use self-evaluation forms and reflect upon what they had done, and decide on an action plan.

As mentioned above, the main sources of analysis were participants' self-evaluation forms, my field notes, and participants' transcripts from three recordings they made for the pre, while, and post stages. From the beginning of the implementation process, participants kept their self-evaluations in a folder which I collected three times during the whole process. I made copies of participants' reflections and filed them with my field notes accordingly; in other words, a set of field notes would be filed with the self-evaluation forms that matched the same session. Additionally, during the communicative events of each session, participants used the visual input to help them notice the areas they needed to pay attention to while speaking through pairs or group discussions. Such visual aids were colored stickers which represented areas to pay attention to (red = verb forms, blue = vocabulary, and yellow = missing subject); students would paste them on their faces for their peers to self-monitor. Once the event was over, students would reflect upon their performance by filling out self-evaluation forms. I would monitor students' performance and pay close attention to their monitoring in order to take notes on field notes forms; via this tool, relevant information was gathered which was analyzed and used in the triangulation process. Furthermore, in the middle and at the end of the implementation process, participants recorded their voices using *vocaroo.com* answering to a question related to their achievements in life. They sent their recordings to their e-mails and thanks to their level and willingness to participate in the research project, they made the transcriptions by themselves and e-mailed them to me.

### Results

Table 1 represents the three main categories that emerged from data. The first category refers to an apparent sense of awareness students started developing

towards the three main fossilized mistakes they were aiming at tackling. The second category refers to the fact that participants seem to have started developing a degree of attentiveness regarding their fossilized mistakes which could be evidenced in their repairs when interacting or trying to convey meaning. Finally, the third category refers to participants' apparent development of progressiveness regarding the tackling of their fossilized errors. These three categories will be described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

**Table 1.** Categories That Emerged From Data

<b>Research question:</b>		
To which extent might self-monitoring and self-evaluation help adult intermediate students tackle fossilized grammatical errors in speech at a private Colombian institution?		
Categories	Developing Attentiveness	<i>The effect of attentiveness on repairs</i>
	Developing Awareness of Fossilized Mistakes	
	Developing a Sense of Progressiveness in Tackling Fossilized Errors	<i>Progressiveness on self-repairs</i>

### Category 1: Developing Attentiveness

At the CCA, students are usually instructed with cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) from the very beginning of their learning process. One of the main purposes of the institution is to help students become autonomous self-regulated learners; consequently, students' attentiveness towards their learning is enhanced on a daily basis. Nonetheless, attention towards accuracy tends to decrease, but it seems that the implementation of this study had an effect on the participants' attentiveness. Attention, as stated by Kormos (2000), plays a vital role in learners'

self-repairs. The data show that participants have started to develop attentiveness towards their speech and the common errors they produce which could be evidenced in a subcategory that was identified: The effect of attentiveness on repairs. In the following part, I will describe how this subcategory emerged.

#### Subcategory: The Effect of Attentiveness on Repairs

It appears to be that participants of this study showed an improvement on the degree of self-repairs regarding their fossilized errors in speech. Students were given visual aids (Appendix) whose purpose was to help them be attentive to what areas of their language to pay attention to. As a result, such visual aids had an effect on participants' attentiveness in a positive way. For instance, whenever students were paying attention to the visual aids, there was an increase in their self-repairs. As it can be observed in the excerpts below, in all cases presented, participants were attentive to the visual aids and were able to monitor the accuracy of their speech, especially regarding verb forms. This may suggest that the level of attention students had when self-repairing (Kormos, 2000) their speech may have had a bigger impact on fossilized mistakes related to verb forms.

I has - had already been to... (SE<sup>1</sup>, field notes 2)

We take - took turns to fulfill all the reps... (SA, transcript, recording middle implementation)

She need, needed, needs to decide on... (SE, field notes 1)

Since I was in school, I had problems with that... (SH, field notes 2)

People who is/are important... (SJ, field notes 4)

In contrast, whenever attentiveness was not part of participants' priority while interacting, the degree of self-repairs decreased. This was witnessed in my observations, which evidenced this lack of attentiveness to visual aids or because they got distracted by some external factor, or simply their attention was not focused

<sup>1</sup> s (student); A, B, I, etc. (letters assigned to each participant).

on the areas they had been asked to self-monitor. They seemed not to repair their mistakes, as can be observed in the following excerpts.

How is possible..." (SI, field notes 1)

And I fight [referring to a past experience] with the guys... (SD, field notes 2)

When the person is an authority and have... (SF, field notes 2)

I was the person who swimming the best... (SH, transcript, recording middle implementation)

Sometimes I start talking without paying attention... (SG, self-evaluation 5)

I didn't pay attention to verbs sometimes. (SJ, self-evaluation 4)

I forget to pay attention to the words. (SI, self-evaluation 3)

For instance, when people of different don't sharing a native language. (SD, transcript, recording last stage implementation)

Based on teacher's observations (field-notes and transcripts analysis) and students' conclusions (self-evaluations), it seems that the degree of attention students have on their language could affect the degree of self-repairs they produce at a given task. In part this agrees with Kormos and Trebits (2011) when they state that due to working memory constraints, attentional resources are limited. And in spite of the strategies used, such memory constraints affected participants' attention. As it can be observed in the first group of excerpts, participants were more successful at self-repairing their language mistakes when their attention was focused. However, whenever their attention decreased, their degree of self-repairs decreased considerably. This matches the idea of approaching error correction on form and meaning (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006) in which students develop the ability to pay attention to the forms they are using and the meaning they are conveying at the same time; here, attention is the primary resource which guarantees success when self-repairing. In other words, when participants' attention was focused on the elements they knew they needed to pay attention to, their self-repairs were more evident.

## Category 2: Developing Awareness of Fossilized Mistakes

Metacognitive awareness is described by Birdsong (1989) as "a reflection of the growth of two skill components involved in language processing: the analysis of linguistic knowledge into structured categories and the control of attentional procedures to select and process specific linguistic information" (p. 498). It is interesting to see how the above definition connects attention (the previous category) with awareness. Although Birdsong referred to two different components, I considered that the control of attentional procedures to select and process specific linguistic information is the area where this category emerged.

Participants had acquired fluency throughout their extensive experience learning English; however, fossilized mistakes in speech had become common when interacting with others. Even though they had been trained in cognitive and metacognitive strategies for some time, because of the nature of the mistakes, such mistakes had become hard to detect in spite of the knowledge they had of specific grammatical topics. This has been evidenced in different studies mentioned previously such as Hasbún's (2007) and Romero's (2002) who have stated that in spite of students' knowledge of certain grammar topics, certain elements still fossilize, or as Han and Odlin (2006) state, such cessation of development happens due to different reasons such as transfer, social factors, and compensation strategies. However, the implementation of self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies seems to have helped participants develop awareness towards the fossilized mistakes this study aimed at helping them to tackle. In other words, students appeared to have discovered they had fossilized elements belonging to their language, and this was a very important step in order to aim at tackling a given mistake. As the scripts below show, students were able to select and process specific linguistic information which corresponded to their fossilized errors thus producing repairs on vocabulary, verb forms, and subject missing.

My parents did a life changing...MADE a life change... (sc, field notes 1)

I try to use correctly verb forms and auxiliaries. I have to practice past tenses. I am looking for exercises related to verb forms. Sometimes I forget the subject, pay attention to the way I organize my ideas. (SB, self-evaluation 1)

She need, needed, needs to decide on... (SE, field notes 2)

I tried to use different verb forms and auxiliaries. I forget some past forms, I need to learn them. I tried to use the adjectives in a good way. I have problems to use the adverbs. I tried to use the correct order, when I am talking I forget to use the subject, I need to monitor my speech. (SE, self-evaluation 1)

She lose...LOST her temper... (SA, field notes 2)

I try to correct myself all the time. I need to identify the different problems in verb forms, review in order to identify all the problems.

I try to use new vocabulary. I try to stop and correct if I make a mistake. (SG, self-evaluation 1)

It's crucial that she be able to say no... (SD, field notes 3)

Yes, I use verb forms. I need to work on the auxiliaries. I need to use them and be more attentive to the verb forms. I did well the use of adjectives and nouns, I need to work on the adverbs. I monitor the way I organize my ideas, I have to be careful when I use question forms. (SJ, self-evaluation 2)

Students' self-evaluations were vital in order to make the association with what was observed in their performance while self-monitoring. It seems that being aware of the areas of improvement helped them monitor more effectively their speech and, at times, tackle some specific fossilized mistakes which match studies such as Nakatani's (2005) and Leow's (2000) who agree on the fact that awareness-raising has helped students improve their performance, especially in speaking. As an example, it can be observed above that participants made reference to verb forms, the vocabulary they used (adjectives, nouns, adverbs), and the use of the subject in the sentences. This can be used as clear proof of students' development of awareness on the fossilized mistakes they needed to pay attention to.

### Category 3: A Sense of Progressiveness in Tackling Fossilized Errors

Data have also shown that some participants seem to have had a progressive improvement towards tackling some of their fossilized errors in speech, which means that in spite of the difficulties they might have had at the beginning of the process, progressively there seemed to be an improvement in their self-repairs. Additionally, it will be explained that apparently one of the fossilized errors (verb forms) appears to have been the strongest area in students' self-repairs.

#### Subcategory: Progressiveness in Self-Repairs

Different studies have come to the conclusion that self-monitoring has improved students' performance (Chang, 2010; Kormos, 2000; Sánchez Luján, 2012). Interestingly, the following excerpts taken from students' recordings and my field notes are examples of how participants showed a progressive improvement in their performance. Firstly, the transcript from sc indicates a progression in the way the student used verb forms when describing his experiences. In this case, he had been asked to describe a heroic experience he had had before. Data seem to show a progression in the sense that for the first lines, several mistakes were made regarding verb forms; however, as the story continues, the usage of verbs is more accurate and as observed, he was able to correct mistakes he had produced at the beginning of the talk (self-repair).

We went to a river we start eating like a BBQ and we actually have in that moment a dog his name was Toby in a moment while we was eating Toby star to run out from us and go to the river he goes in the river and the current was too strong so we went with my brother and tried to save him because he was getting too far from us I started swimming and I had the opportunity to grab Toby while I was trying to swim to the shore with him I started to get really really nervous so I started also like to drown and I was really scared. (sc, transcript 1, part of middle implementation recording)

Secondly, as the following excerpts from SA's performance throughout several sessions show, there seems to be a progression or improvement towards his utterances. On the first field note, I registered an error in the form of the second verb; however, the following observations showed that the same student progressively tackled more effectively verb forms and tenses compared to the first session. As a result, it could be concluded that this category shows an apparent progression in participants' tackling of verb form fossilized errors. Even though at times participants' self-repaired mistakes related to vocabulary and missing subject, a progression on these fossilized mistakes was not observed or found in the data.

My father traveled for two months, so I need it... (SA, field notes 1)

She lose... LOST her temper... (SA, field notes 2)

She had helped him... (SA, field notes 4)

To sum up, there appeared to be a progressive improvement in participants' self-repairs through self-monitoring, and such improvement was more evidenced on verb form repairs whilst repairs on the other two elements this study pretended to help students tackle (word choice and missing subject) did not have progressive improvement. Interestingly, these results show a mismatch compared to what has been observed in previous studies (Fathman, 1980; Kormos, 2000; Poulisse & Bongaerts, 1994) which concluded that L2 learners paid considerably more attention to lexical appropriacy and in some cases phonological appropriacy rather than to grammatical elements such as verb forms. In other words, this study seems to be presenting a different tendency towards students' self-repairs and attention development. Additionally, it appears to be that focusing on more than one fossilized mistake in the study did not help participants focus on more than just one area, which may be considered for further studies.

## Discussion

As has been previously pointed out, each relevant aspect of this study (fossilization, self-monitoring,

self-evaluation) had been addressed by different researchers (Alvarez & Muñoz, 2007; Arciniegas, 2008; Caicedo, 2011; Chang, 2010; Goto & Lee, 2006; Hasbún, 2007; Kormos, 2000; Pillai, 2006; Qian & Xiao, 2010; Sánchez Luján, 2012; Wei, 2008); however, none had tried to address fossilization from the present study's point of view. Results can be taken as relevant data which firstly had an important impact on my teaching practices; I have implemented similar strategies with other students and classes in order to help them tackle similar issues regarding fossilized grammatical mistakes. Additionally, fellow teachers from the institution where the study took place have become knowledgeable of these results thanks to teacher training courses where I have had the opportunity to share such practices, and many of those attending have expressed their willingness to adopt similar practices in their classrooms.

Moreover, in the national or English language teaching (ELT) international context it is necessary to re-think the practices which are attempting to help students tackle fossilized errors in their speech, due to the fact that this is an area which has not been explored much in the last years. For this reason, this study could help raise awareness on the fossilization phenomena nationally and internationally and possibly cause a bigger impact than the one it had on me or my fellow colleagues.

All in all, this research process allowed me to discover how self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies impacted positively participants' grammatical fossilized errors in speech. Additionally, it is necessary to point out that self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies need to be taken into account on a regular basis when lesson planning due to the fact that in spite of an increase in teachers' practices using metacognitive strategies, people's minds towards thinking of their own learning can still be lacking. Consequently, several considerations need to be taken into account in order to aim at taking the best out of these strategies.

- Self-monitoring and self-evaluation require clear guidelines to avoid students' subjectivity to interfere.
- Training in self-monitoring has to be focused on specific language or learning elements in order to facilitate students' engagement and attention.
- Forms with the right questions and prompts facilitate students' and teacher's self-reflections.
- Strategies such as self-monitoring and self-evaluation should be worked one at a time, being too ambitious may interfere with students' success upon using such strategies.
- Emphasis on the impact that metacognitive strategies have on people's lifelong learning needs to be stated in class.

There are several elements to consider when implementing self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies in the classroom. Following clear rules of thumb may guarantee students' taking advantage of the opportunity, or on the contrary, not doing so may bring up negative effects on students' learning and could mislead them towards misunderstanding or even rejection.

To conclude, fossilization is a phenomenon which deserves further inquiry and attention. For instance, there are many more fossilized language subsystems that have not been taken into consideration in my context; consequently, carrying out research on other fossilized mistakes may also bring about useful insights which could affect positively the local and even national or international ELT scenario. Additionally, strategies such as self-monitoring and self-evaluation have been used and could be used in order to tackle different language issues; however, for further research it would be really interesting to inquire into peer-assessment practices in order to find out what the effect of this strategy would be on fossilization. Finally, the idea of carrying out the present study with a bigger population or even with more than one group and more fellow researchers could also bring additional data which could definitely contribute to the understanding of the ways of tackling fossilized

grammatical errors in speech. It would also be of interest to the academic community to perform a comparative study with participants with different native languages and cultural backgrounds to find out their commonalities and differences in terms of error fossilization and the strategies they employ to overcome them.

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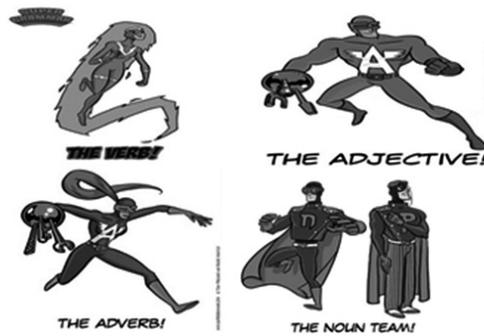
## Appendix: Visual Aids

### SELF-MONITOR



- While speaking pay attention to...

### SELF-MONITOR



- While speaking pay attention to...

### SELF-MONITOR VERB TENSES at pppst.com



While speaking pay attention to...

All pictures adapted from [www.supergrammar.com](http://www.supergrammar.com), <http://www.supergrammar.com/p/top-secretfacebook-friends-page.html>, and <http://english76.webnode.es/topics/verb-tenses/>