Universidad de Valladolid

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS

DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

THE USE OF ARTICLES IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH AS SECOND LANGUAGES

Teresa Esguevillas Castro

TUTORA: RAQUEL FERNÁNDEZ FUERTES

2015- 2016

ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides a compilation of empirical data on the acquisition of the article system in non-native English and Spanish speakers. Even though both languages have an article system, this grammatical structure behaves somehow differently in Spanish and English. The present study explores both the similarities and differences between the two languages and how they affect the production of L2 English and L2 Spanish speakers. This study incorporates an analysis of the results obtained via a translation task focusing on the use of articles. The data analysis shows that, even though the article system is a grammatical property which exists in both languages, it presents problems to the non-native speakers mainly due to transfer from the specific grammatical properties of their respective L2s.

KEYWORDS: Articles, second language acquisition, English, Spanish, L1, L2, transfer, cross-linguistic influence.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo aporta una recopilación de datos empíricos sobre la adquisición de los artículos por parte de hablantes no nativos de inglés y de español. Aunque esta categoría gramatical está presente en las dos lenguas, presenta peculiaridades que la hacen diferente en cierta manera en español y en inglés. El presente estudio explora las similitudes y las diferencias entre las dos lenguas y como éstas afectan a la producción de hablantes L2 inglés y L2 español. Este estudio incorpora un análisis de los resultados obtenidos utilizando una test de traducción que se centra en el uso de los artículos. El análisis de los datos muestra que, aunque el sistema de artículos es una propiedad gramatical existente en las dos lenguas, los hablantes no nativos de las dos lenguas tienen problemas con algunas de las especificaciones de los artículos debido principalmente a la transferencia de las propiedades gramaticales específicas de sus respectivas L2.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Artículos, adquisición de una segunda lengua, inglés, español, L1, L2, transferencia, influencia cros-lingüística.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition (henceforth, SLA) refers to the learning of a second language (L2) when a first language (L1) has already been acquired (Keating (2016): 2). This is an arduous task for non-native speakers, especially when dealing with some specific grammar properties in the target language which might differ somehow from those in the L1 grammar.

The present undergraduate dissertation is based on an empirical data study which deals with the data from L2 English and L2 Spanish speakers when they have to produce definite, indefinite and null articles in their respective L2 (i.e. Spanish and English). In this regard, Spanish and English articles share some properties: they have an article system which is bound to the noun. Nevertheless, articles work differently in some cases. For instance, both languages have articles, but only Spanish has the distinction between gender and number reflected in the morphology of articles; both languages have null articles, but only English uses them in generic contexts. These similarities and differences will be explored below in more detail.

In the following examples the relation between noun phrases and articles can be seen in terms of how articles behave similarly in English and Spanish, as in (1) and (2), and how they behave differently in the two languages, as in (3) compared to (4).

(1)　a. Bring me the book/ a book

　　　b.　　　　the spoon/ a spoon

　　　c.　　　　 the books/ the spoons

(2)　a. Traéme el libro/ un libro

　　　b.　　　　la cuchara/ una cuchara

　　　c.　　　　las cucharas/ unas cucharas

Examples in (1) and (2) show similarities in both languages in the sense that both languages have both indefinite and definite articles. Furthermore, they have the

distinction between singular, as in example (1a) compared to (1c) in English, or in Spanish in (2) where the singular form is illustrated in (2a) compared to the plural form shown in (2c).

(3)   a. ø People are crazy
        b. ø Milk is white
        c. ø Clouds are dark

(4)   a. La gente está loca
        b. La leche es blanca
        c. Las nubes están oscuras

In these sets of examples in (3) and (4), the differences between English and Spanish structures can also be appreciated. In the set of examples (3), it can be seen that there is a null article (marked by ø). In the Spanish counterparts in (4), an overt article appears in all the structures, both singular and plural. A more detailed approach to the similarities and differences between the article systems in these two languages will be presented below.

The article system is gradually acquired as the L2 speaker gets more proficient. However, this grammatical property, articles, presents some difficulties for English and Spanish speakers who are learning their L2 (i.e. Spanish and English respectively). These difficulties are due to the influence that the L1s have into the L2s, a phenomenon known as cross-linguistic influence or transfer. One of the controversial issues is the lack of gender and number agreement in English. This could be an advantage for L1 Spanish-L2 English learners but not so for L1 English-L2 Spanish learners as they will have to acquire a more complex article system. Therefore, this grammatical property can cause difficulties for L2 Spanish speakers.

In this respect, the empirical data analysed in this dissertation about the participants' production of articles will show the preferences they have in order to choose an article, considering the following facts: L1 Spanish speakers will be more

sensitive to the different types of articles although they will have to learn the existent variations in the English article system. Besides, on the contrary, L1 English speakers will have to learn the gender and number distinction that appears in the Spanish article system and that is lacking in their L1.

This undergraduate dissertation is divided into the following sections: section 2 deals with some general notions on bilingualism with a focus on the interaction between the L1 and the L2 in order to illustrate the acquisition context of the participants in this experimental study; section 3 deals with the linguistic account of articles in English and Spanish; section 4 presents a summary of the previous works that have been done on the acquisition of articles. The methodology used to carry out the experimental study is presented in section 5, which also includes the description of the predictions that guide this study based on data collection (e.g. test design, participants' profile). Section 6 presents the results of the data analysis taking into account the initial predictions. Finally, the conclusion in section 7 discusses the main points.

2. INTRODUCTION TO BILINGUALISM

This section deals with the different types of bilinguals. This distinction is important since my dissertation is focused on the acquisition of articles by one specific type of bilinguals, in particular the L2 bilinguals. Hereafter, an approach to bilingualism will go into detail in order to differentiate the type of bilingual that is going to be analysed.

Bilingualism is the capacity of an individual to speak two or more languages. According to Weinreich ((1953): 5), cited by Cook and Singleton (2014), *"the practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism and the persons involved, bilinguals"*.

The acquisition of the L2 differs from the acquisition of the L1 in many respects. The L1 is acquired from birth in a natural context by interacting with parents, other children and other adults; while the L2 is learnt later on and usually in an institutional context. Therefore, when the L2 is being learnt there is a previous linguistic experience (i.e. the acquisition of the L1) which could guide the way the L2 is learnt.

In this respect it can be said that there are two main types of bilinguals. The first type is a person who has acquired two languages simultaneously from birth, referred to as *"simultaneous child bilingualism"* (Unsworth, (2005): 5). However, the proficiency of the two L1s could be more or less balanced and it varies depending on the amount of exposure as well as other factors. In principle, the more amount of exposure, the better; that is, if a child is receiving a great amount of input, he will be more success in the learning of the second L1. The second type of bilingual is a person who has acquired two languages sequentially, that is, the L1 has been acquired before the L2 and, consequently, the speaker will be more proficient in the L1. Hence, an *"L2 user is somebody who is actively using a language other than their first"* (Cook and Singleton (2014): 4). It is the L2 bilingual who will be considered and analysed in this undergraduate dissertation.

In order to present a detail approach to L2 bilingualism, it is necessary to consider some defining properties of the SLA process: cross-linguistic influence or transfer, age, exposure, input, instruction, and interlanguage.

The process of L2 acquisition is very complex since there are two languages interacting at the same time in one brain. This interaction typically results in cross-linguistic influence from the L1 into the L2. Above all, in the initial stages of the L2 learning process, the speaker can transfer the L1 properties into the L2, making this transfer negative or positive depending on whether the final L2 output is adult-like (positive transfer) or non-adult-like (negative transfer). As argued by Van Patten and Williams (2006), positive transfer is when learners do not have problems in the acquisition of some grammatical properties as these can be supported by their L1. Whereas negative transfer supposes the learners have difficulties and consequently

errors in the production of the L2. As stated by Saville-Troike (2012), when a specific grammatical feature coincides in the two languages (i.e. L1 and L2) and so, if the speaker already knows it in the L1, it will be fairly easy to learn it in the L2. This is considered to have a positive effect, or positive transfer. On the contrary if a grammatical feature does not coincide in both languages, it is likely to have negative transfer from the L1 into the L2. Therefore, the speaker must finally have notions of the L1 and the L2 separately. The different features will be learnt through constant exposure to the L2.

Age is one of the most important properties in the acquisition of an L2, as it is very influential. It is widely known that the sooner the acquisition starts, the better. Many authors as, for instance, Lennenberg (1967) have discussed the existence of a critical period. A critical period is a specific period of time in childhood in which children are more sensitive to acquire and learn new languages. There are many opinions about this concept. There are authors that apart from believing that there is a critical period, they think that this period is divided into different stages, depending on the different linguistics aspects and so, there is a specific and different critical period for phonetics, syntax, morphology, etc. The importance of the concept of age in evident in immigration cases. In those families who come to a new country and have to learn a new language, the younger members of the family, the more likely they are to acquire better the language rather than the older ones. Nevertheless, the age factor does not mean that the adults cannot be successful in the acquisition of a new language. They actually can, but it implies more effort, that is, and the final attainment might probably be less successful than that reached by children. Contrarily, some authors disagree with the idea that only children can reach a native-like competence. Friederici, Steinhauer and Pfeifer (2002) have completed a case study in which they predicted that adult L2 learners (people beyond the critical period) could achieve the same level of proficiency as children. As their results confirm their predictions, they concluded that for the specific group of people they analysed and for the specific grammatical structure they tested there was not a critical period differentiating children and adults. Exposure is a factor that influences the proficiency of the L2.

The next factor which interacts in the L2 acquisition process is the type of learning context: natural context or instructed context. The former is developed in a social environment, that is, people learn the L2 through constant exposure and input they receive as they are in contact with native people in daily life activities. Exposure is the amount of input that a speaker receives from a language, the L2 in this case. Input is the language that the speaker hears that will help him to communicate with others, as Van Patten stated (1996). On the contrary, instructed learning is developed in institutional contexts (i.e. schools). Apart from the context in which a language is learnt, it is important to take into account the type of instruction: bilingual or immersion programs. They differ in the amount of exposure to the L2. As they occur in educational contexts, the quantity of subjects taught in the L2 varies depending on the type of instruction. In bilingual programs, only some subjects are taught in the L2. Contrarily, immersion programs imply that speakers are constantly in contact with an L2 environment. In this respect, the amount of input provided in the immersion program is higher than that in the bilingual program. Indeed, immersion is defined by Johnson and Swain ((1997): 15) as *"the one that uses the L2 medium of instruction although students have little or no L2 proficiency on entry to immersion"*.

Transfer is another defining factor in the acquisition of an L2. Transfer is the process by which some of the grammatical properties of the L1 are brought into the L2. According to Yule ((2006): 191) *"transfer means using sounds, expressions or structures from the L1 when performing in the L2"*. In short, and in the words of Lightbown and Spada ((2006): 35), it is *"the influence of the learner's first language"*. Transfer also has to do with the proficiency in the L2, meaning that, the more proficient the less negative transfer a speaker will have.

The last property is the notion of interlanguage. The interlanguage is a linguistic system that is in an intermediate system between the L1 and the L2. In this way, it incorporates rules from the L1 and the L2 but it also includes its own rules. Yule ((1985): 167) defines interlanguage *"as the in-between system used in L2 acquisition which contains aspects of the L1 and the L2 but which is an inherently variable system*

with rules of its own". Example in (5) produced by an L1 Spanish-L2 English speaker illustrates the part of interlanguage that cannot be attributed to either the L1 or the L2.

(5)   **She** name is María.   (Yule (2006): 167)

As example (5) shows, the use of the personal pronoun 'she' is grammatically incorrect. This construction is not an adult-like production in English since a possessive is needed instead, i.e. 'her'. Besides, it is ungrammatical in Spanish as well, because we need the possessive 'su', too.

3.   SOME DEFINING PROPERTIES OF ARTICLES

This section deals with a presentation of the different types of articles that exist in both languages paying attention first to similarities between English and Spanish and second to differences.

3.1 ENGLISH AND SPANISH ARTICLES: COMMON PROPERTIES

Articles belong to the category of determiners and they state if the noun is definite or indefinite. Articles can be grouped according to form and use. Regarding form and their respective contexts of use, both languages share common points and articles can be divided into definite, indefinite and null.

Regarding definite articles, in English the article used is 'the' and in Spanish is 'el' (plus its gender and number inflected forms 'la', 'los' and 'las'). Both are clearly overt. Huddleston (2002) and Leonetti (2000) state that 'the' and 'el' can precede all types of nouns. This means that definite articles in both languages can go before a singular or a plural countable noun, or before an uncountable noun. In examples (6) and (7), nouns are countable and specific, and, because of that, they are preceded by the determiner 'the'/'el'. Since this article is used to refer to specific contexts, as

argued by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), 'the' and 'el' are used in NPs to indicate that the noun refers to something known by both the speaker and the addressee, as illustrated in (6) and (7).

(6)   a. **El** niño está contento
        b. **The** boy is happy

(7)   a. **Los** niños están contentos
        b. **The** boys are happy

Both sentences in (6) are singular and they behave the same way because they clearly identify without hesitation who the happy boy is for both the speaker and the addressee. For that reason, the articles required are definite ones as in 'the boy' and 'el niño' and they make the reference of the corresponding nouns specific. In (7), the definite article is used in the same way in Spanish and in English as well. 'The' and 'los' specify which boys are happy, so the addressee can identify the referent. The plural form of the definite article is linked to the concept of totality, because at the time it is specifying which referent it is. It is also giving a connotation of uniqueness, that is, it entails that all the boys referred to are happy. Huddleston and Pullum ((2002): 369) state that *"the uniqueness applies now to a set or quantity rather than to an individual. It is to be understood, however, that the set or quantity is maximal"*.

With regards to uncountable nouns, definite articles can precede them in both languages, as we can see in (8).

(8)   a. Trae **el** agua
        b. Bring **the** water

'Water' and 'agua' are uncountable nouns and they are preceded by the definite article, because it specifies the water that the speaker specifically wants to have.

Moreover, definite articles usually have anaphoric reference as well, as in example (9). The definite article links the noun 'girl' and 'niña' to the proper noun mentioned before which also appears marked in bold type. 'Elena' and Paula' are the referents (in both languages) for the noun in the second sentence 'girls'/ 'niñas' and the element linking them is the definite article 'the'/'las'.

(9)   a. **Elena and Paula** are at school**. The** girls have brought their books**.**

b. **Elena y Paula** están en el colegio. **Las** niñas han traído sus libros.

Regarding indefinite articles, in both languages they are overt and are used in singular contexts, because 'a/an' (in English) or 'un' and their inflected forms (in Spanish) express singularity. Additionally, they can be used in specific and generic contexts. The indefinite article is used in specific contexts, when there is a concrete referent that is being talked about, as exemplified in (10), and the indefinite article introduces that referent. Therefore, *"the addressee is not being expected to be able to identify anything"* (Huddleston and Pullum (2002): 371).

(10)   a. My mum has **a** dog

b. Mi madre tiene **un** perro

In (10), 'dog' is specific because it is only one dog we are referring at; it is not any dog but my mum's dog, so it is identifying which dog it is.

On the contrary, in generic contexts, the referent is not previously identified, because it is introduced for the first time, as shown in (11).

(11)   a. **A** boy will come

b. **Un** chico vendrá

In (11), 'a boy' or 'un chico' is not identified as having a clear referent because it can be any boy, that is why it is not specific but generic. Neither the addressee nor the speaker can identify which boy it is.

Another common characteristic of indefinite articles in English and in Spanish is that they have an intrinsic connotation because of its singularity, as represented in (12).

(12)   a. **A/one** boy will come

          b. **Un** chico vendrá

In (12a) the indefinite article can be substituted by 'one' in English. In Spanish (12b), the determiner and the numeral share the same form 'un'. However, it also has the connotation of the numeral one in sentence (12b). What this expresses is quantity, because it determines how many boys will come, and as it is in singular, it is just one. As opposed to example (12), example (13) shows that the indefinite article does not always have a numeral connotation as it cannot be substituted by 'one'.

(13)   a. She is **a** teacher

          b. Ella es **una** profesora

Regarding null articles, they are not overt as they do not appear overtly expressed in the sentence, and that is why they are called null or empty. This article can be found with uncountable nouns and plural countable nouns. If we are dealing with a plural noun, it corresponds to a generic context, as illustrated in (14).

(14)   a. We are **ø** students

          b. Somos **ø** estudiantes

On the contrary, if we are using singular uncountable nouns, a null article needs to be placed before them, as exemplified in (15) in both Spanish and English, because the speaker is not specifying which water he wants.

(15)   a. Give me **ø** water

          b. Dame **ø** agua

3.2. ENGLISH AND SPANISH ARTICLES: DIFFERENT PROPERTIES

Having considered the similarities in the use of articles in both languages, now we have to consider the differences that exist between English and Spanish article systems.

In terms of form, definite and indefinite articles in English differ from Spanish ones in gender and number marking and agreement with the noun. Firstly, considering definite articles, it is important to state that Spanish ones are inflected for gender and number and that they agree in gender and number with the rest of the NP components (nouns and adjectives). Contrarily, English definite articles present the same article form for singular and plural contexts and it does not differentiate between masculine or feminine not even in the case of animate nouns, as shown in (16) and (17).

(16)   a. **El** niño está contento/ **Los** niños están contentos
        b. **The** boy is happy/   **The** boys are happy

(17)   a. **La** niña está contenta/ **Las** niñas están contentas
        b. **The** girl is happy/   **The** girls are happy

Definite articles in Spanish are classified according to gender and number as we can see in (16a) and (17a). In contrast, the English definite article does not change into plural or feminine, but rather the same form is maintained, as illustrated in (16b) and (17b).

Spanish articles are always inflected even though the noun that follows does not have any specific or independent gender or number overt mark, as exemplified in (18) to (20).

(18)   a. **El** taxista/ **la** taxista

           [the taxi driver]

      b. **Un** taxista/ **una** taxista

           [a taxi driver]

(19)   a. **el** cura/ **la** cura

           [the priest] / [the cure]

      b. **un** cura/ **una** cura

           [a priest] [a cure]

(20)   a. **El** bíceps/ **los** bíceps

           [the biceps]/ [the biceps]

      b. **Un** bíceps/ **Unos** bíceps

           [a biceps]/ [some biceps]

Example (18) deals with a Spanish noun that has the same form in feminine and in masculine: although the definite or indefinite article is changed into the masculine or the feminine form, the form of the noun does not change, that is, there are no morphological variations in the noun according to gender. Comparing example (18) and example (19), a difference can be appreciated. This difference is that in example (19) if the gender is changed, the meaning is also changed whereas in example (18) the meaning does not change. Example (20) has to do with number agreement between an article and a noun. In this case, the noun chosen ends in –s, which is the typical inflection to form the plural in Spanish. As illustrated in (20), whether the article is in singular or in plural, the form of the noun does not change, as it is still ending in –s.

Spanish indefinite articles, as in (18b) and (19b) are inflected for gender and number, as well as definite ones. That is, on the one hand, they have a masculine and feminine form and, on the other hand, they have a singular and plural form. Nevertheless, in English, indefinite articles can only be used in singular contexts, because they do not have a plural form. The examples below (21 and 22) illustrate that

in Spanish there is a distinction in terms of the gender and number, similar to the one in (16) and (17) for the definite article, whereas in English there is not.

(21)   a. **Un** chico vendrá/ **Unos** chicos vendrán

          b. **A** boy will come/ **Some** boys will come

(22)   a. **Una** chica vendrá / **Unas** chicas vendrán

          b. **A** girl will come/ **Some** girls will come

As we can see in examples (21a) and (22a), Spanish has four forms of the indefinite articles, the plural and the singular, the masculine and the feminine, 'un'/'unos' or 'una'/'unas', whereas in English, 'a'/'an' is the only indefinite article used, as in (21b) and (22b). However, as in English there is no plural form of the indefinite article, it is substituted by the quantifier 'some', and the Spanish equivalent is 'unos' or 'unas', as in (21a) and (22a). However, 'some' can also refer to another determiner quantifier in Spanish 'algunos', as in (23b). Sometimes 'alguno' can alternate with the indefinite article in Spanish, as in this case in (23b), but not in others, as in (24).

(23)   a. **Unos** chicos vendrán

          b. **Algunos** chicos vendrán

                [Some boys will come]

(24)   a. **Algunas** verduras están podridas

          b. ***Unas** verduras están podridas

                [Some vegetables are rotten]

Regarding null articles, they can be classified into two groups depending on the use they have in both languages. These two groups correspond to generic and specific contexts. With regards to generic contexts, null articles can be used in English (25a) whereas in Spanish a definite article is always needed (25b).

(25)   a. ø Teachers are strict

   b. **Los** profesores son estrictos

As in (25a), according to Quirk et al. ((1985): 274), null articles are placed in English when they are accompanying plural countable nouns that have a generic reference. However, in Spanish (25b), in the same context, a definite article is required in its plural form.

In specific contexts in English there are some examples in which null articles are required, while in Spanish a definite article is required.

(26)   a. I don't like **ø** Chanel perfume

   b. No me gusta **el** perfume de Chanel

As illustrated in English in (26a), 'Chanel' functions as a premodifier of 'perfume', and so the noun is considered to have a specific reference, and, as it is already specified, there is no need to use the definite article in English. However, in Spanish (26b), 'Chanel' functions as a postmodifier of 'perfume', which means that the context is also specific, because the perfume is being identified as one from Chanel and not from any other brand.

4. PREVIOUS WORKS ON THE ACQUISITION OF ARTICLES

In this section I review three studies which deal with the acquisition of articles in an L2: the first is from Ionin et al. (2004), the second by Zdorenko and Paradis (2008) and the last one from Morales (2011).

Ionin et al. (2004) propose a study of the article system of two languages: English and Samoan. This study is focused on the definiteness and specificity of the articles, aspects that can be attributed to both languages. In particular, definiteness can be attributed to English, as it distinguishes between definite and indefinite articles.

Moreover, in the case of specificity, it can be attributed to Samoan, as this language distinguishes between specific and generic contexts.

The participants analysed are 30 L1 Russian (i.e. a language without an article system) and 24 L1 Spanish (i.e. language with an article system), both groups of participants having English as their L2. These authors conclude that as Spanish has an article system, participants are more accurate in the production of English articles than Russian speakers. This means, then, that article properties in the L1 have an effect in the learning of the L2.

Zdorenko and Paradis (2008) base their study on Ionin et al.'s (2004) study. Their study has the same type of participants as the previous one, that is, they select a total number of 17 participants, one group of participants has an L1 without an article system (Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Japanese), while the other group has an L1 with an article system (Spanish, Romanian and Arabic). The main purpose of this study is to prove if transfer from the L1 to the L2 occurs. In order to verify the role of transfer in an L2, they present some hypotheses: they predict a misuse of the definite article in [+ specific, – definite] contexts and in [– specific, + definite] contexts.

Participants are analysed by using longitudinal oral data which consist of creating stories from a picture. Zdorenko and Paradis (2008) complete their study in five rounds lasting two years approximately.

Finally, after having analysed the results, they conclude that all the participants are more successful in definite contexts. Indeed, participants are more accurate in the production of definite articles rather than the indefinite and null articles. In fact, null articles are more problematic for those participants whose L1 do not have an article system.

Table 1. Mean proportions of error types by group.

L1 Group	Mean	t-value	p-value
Incorrect a in definite context:			
[−article]	.013		
[+article]	.010	$t(15)=0.477$	$p=.641$
Null article in definite context:			
[−article]	.088		
[+article]	.029	$t(15)=2.375$	$p=.036*$
Incorrect the in indefinite context:			
[−article]	.281		
[+article]	.249	$t(15)=0.459$	$p=.653$
Null article in indefinite context:			
[−article]	.035		
[+article]	.009	$t(15)=2.638$	$p=.019*$

Zdorenko and Paradis (2008): table 1, page 244

As we can see in the table 1, the lowest error rate is found in the definite contexts, whereas the highest error rate is found in the indefinite contexts. Furthermore, in table 1, it can be seen that null articles present problems as well specially for speakers of [–article] languages.

The study carried out by Morales (2011) is also related to the topic of articles. This author discusses previous works on this topic, and she presents her own study on articles. Morales (2011) completes an analysis with 30 L1 Spanish participants whose L2 is English. She also uses a control group constituted by 5 English native speakers. She conducts the same test as that in Ionin et al. (2004) but she varies the number of items that appear in the test. The task of the participants consists of filling in the blanks with articles.

Table 2. Accuracy in specific and generic contexts of L1 Spanish speakers.

	[+ definite]: target: *the*	[− definite]: target: *a*
[+ specific]	92% ***the***	86% ***a***
	8% *a*	14% *the*
[− specific]	92% ***the***	91% ***a***
	8% *a*	9% *the*

Morales (2011): table 1, page 87

As it can be seen in table 2, the results are the following: in [+ definite] and [+/–specific] contexts, L1 Spanish speakers produce the definite article in 92% of the cases. Contrarily, in [– definite] and [+/– specific], participants produce, in most cases, the indefinite article but the percentage of correctness is not as high as in definite articles.

The conclusions reached by Morales are that participants have more errors in the use of the indefinite article than in the use of the definite article. Moreover, participants do not have errors in the omission of the articles in the case of L1 Spanish, as other previous works suggest with L1s with an article system. Therefore, she agrees with Zdorenko and Paradis (2008) that Spanish speakers "*transfer the category Determiner from their L1 functional structure to the L2*" (Zdorenko and Paradis (2008), as cited by Morales ((2011): 88). In short, Morales (2011) concludes that children are affected by definiteness and, therefore, they transfer their L1 semantic knowledge to the L2**.**

5. PREDICTIONS

The main objective of this empirical study is to detect whether L1 Spanish and L1 English speakers who are learning Spanish and English as their L2 find difficulties when choosing which article corresponds to the context presented.

English and Spanish have an article system which differs in some aspects (as in section 3.2) and which shows common properties, too (as in section 3.1). Therefore, the main question is whether L2 learners will have difficulties in the acquisition of the article system of their corresponding L2 in the common properties or rather only in those issues in which their L1 and their L2 differ.

This first two sets of predictions, 1 and 2, deal with the common properties of the articles that the two languages share. Predictions 3 to 6 deal with the differing properties and, in particular, they are organized as follows: prediction 3 is for L2 English speakers and predictions 4, 5 and 6 are for L2 Spanish speakers.

1. a. Native-like production (definite articles): When contexts are [– generic], L2 English and L2 Spanish participants will not have difficulties in the production of a definite and indefinite article in English, as illustrated in (27).

(27)   a. **Las** manzanas rojas están ricas.   **[– generic]**   **source text**
       b. **The** red apples are delicious.   **[– generic]**   **target text**

In English, the definite article is also used if the noun is [– generic] (i.e. we are referring to some specific red apples). Therefore, as this is a common use in English and Spanish, no errors are expected in this case.

b. Native-like production (indefinite articles): When contexts are [– generic], L2 English and L2 Spanish participants will not have problems in the production of indefinite articles in English and in Spanish, as shown in (28).

(28)   a. Mi madre tiene un perro   **[– generic]**   **source text**
       b. My mum has a dog   **[– generic]**   **target text**

Indefinite articles are used also in the noun is [+ generic], when they are introducing a new item. In this case, as the use is the same in both languages, no errors are expected.

2. Native-like production (null articles): When contexts are [+ generic] L2 English and L2 Spanish participants will not have difficulties in the production of null articles as shown in (29).

(29)   a. Somos estudiantes   **[+ generic]**   **source text**
       b. We are students   **[+ generic]**   **target text**

No errors are expected as the use is the same in both languages.

3. Non-native-like production (overgeneralisation of the definite article): When contexts are [+ generic], Spanish participants will have problems with the use of the English null article. So they will use a definite article, thus transferring from their L1, as exemplified in (30).

(30)   a. **Las** manzanas están ricas   **[+ generic]**   **source text**
           b.* **The** apples are delicious   **[+ generic]**   **target text**

As it is not a specific context but a generic context, a null article should be used instead of a definite one in English.

4. Non-native-like production (gender agreement): As in English the article system does not include gender marking, participants will have difficulties distinguishing between masculine and feminine article forms, as exemplified in (31).

(31)   a. **The** flowers are there.   **source text**
           b. * L**o**s flores están ahí   **target text**

5. Non-native-like production (null article): When contexts are [+ generic] L1 English participants will overproduce the null article. Participants will have difficulties when they have a null article in English and an overt definite article is required in Spanish. An example of overgeneralization of null articles appears in (32).

(32)   a. **ø** Houses are yellow   **[+ generic]**   **source text**
           b. **ø** *Casas son amarillas   **[+ generic]**   **target text**

These structures could be produced because there is negative transfer from the L1 into the L2. Furthermore, it is also a matter of literal translation. This could be associated, above all, with the overgeneralization of the null articles produced instead the definite article.

6. Non-native-like production (number agreement): L1 English participants are predicted to have problems in the case of number agreement as in English and Spanish number agreement does not coincide in the article system.

(33) a. The boy is happy/ The boys are happy   **source text**
       b. El niño está contento/ Los niños están contentos   **target text**

So as to reach some conclusions with respect to these predictions, an analysis of empirical data has been carried out by eliciting data from English and Spanish participants, as it will be explained in the following section.

6 . METHODOLOGY

In the following subsections the empirical study is presented. The subsections involve a total description of the process accomplished: classification of the participants, and the tasks designed and given to the participants in order to collect the empirical data.

6.1 PARTICIPANTS

This research study was pursued with a total of 20 participants divided in two groups (10 participants whose L1 was Spanish and 10 participants whose L1 was English). The ages of both groups ranged from 20 to 40 years old. Both L1 groups have the same level in their L2, that is, they have a B2 level, upper-intermediate according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFRL). Moreover, L1 Spanish participants are tested in Valladolid (Spain), while English native speakers are tested in Valladolid (Spain) and also Leicester (England).

6.2 TEST DESIGN

The data elicitation tasks involve article structures. They have been designed in order to analyse the production of the participants. The elicitation process involves two translation tasks. These tasks have been designed according to the level of participants. Thus, the vocabulary and the grammatical structures have been carefully selected in order not to suggest any problem to the participants relative to complex grammatical constructions or vocabulary.

The translation tasks consist of a total of 81 experimental structures arranged at random. L1 Spanish participants have to translate them all into English and L1 English participants have to translate them into Spanish. 56 structures out of 81 contain articles and the 25 remaining structures do not contain articles, but other grammatical properties (i.e. pronouns, proper nouns), that is, they are distractor structures. 24 out of 56 experimental structures have the same type of article in English and in Spanish (as in the properties discussed in section 3.1 above), and 32 out of 56 have articles that differ in both languages (as in the properties discussed in section 3.2 above). Both translations tasks are attached in the appendix (section 9).

Table 3 offers a summary of the different structure types and the number of each structure type included in the tasks.

Table 3. Organization of structures

ENGLISH = SPANISH		
SPECIFIC	Definite→ 8 structures	
	Indefinite → 4 structures	
GENERIC	Indefinite → 4 structures	
	Null → 8 structures	
ENGLISH ≠ SPANISH		
SPECIFIC	· Definite → 8 structures	Indefinite → 8 structures
	· Indefinite →8 structures	Null → 8 structures
GENERIC	· Definite → 8 structures	Indefinite → 8 structures
	· Indefinite → 8 structures	Null→ 8 structures

It should be pointed out that two different translation tasks have been elaborated: one for the L2 English participant group and one for the L2 Spanish participant group.

Furthermore, in these translation tasks, two sets of structures are included in the tasks, as in table 3: a set of structures dealing with the similar uses of articles in English and in Spanish and a set of structures dealing with different uses. The first set is common to both tasks while the second is specific for each one. The different experimental sets as in table 3 will be presented in detail in the following sections.

These translation tasks allow us to observe the cross-linguistic influence from the L1 to the L2 in the case of article properties. Furthermore, we will observe the choices made by the participants when translating, whether they tend to choose the definite, indefinite or null article.

6.2.1 COMMON SET OF STRUCTURES

The first set of structures in the tasks deals with the similar uses in English and in Spanish. As this part of the tasks is common for both types of participants, it contains the same set structures in each of the translation tasks. Structures are classified firstly according to the context they belong to (specific and generic) and, within each context, structures are arranged depending on article type (definite, indefinite and null).

Regarding specific contexts, there are structures with definite and indefinite articles. The definite condition has 8 structures which include 2 cases of masculine singular (as in example (34a)), 2 are masculine plural (as in (34b)), 2 are feminine singular (as in (34c)) and finally 2 are feminine plural structures (as in (34d)).

(34) a. El pájaro canta ← → The bird sings   **[+ masculine] [+ singular]**

b. Los perros son pequeños ←→ The dogs are small

[+ masculine] [– singular]

c. La entrenadora se enfadó ←→ The coach got angry

[– masculine] [+ singular]

d. Las flores son rojas ←→ The flowers are red

[– masculine] [– singular]

The indefinite condition has 4 structures which include 2 feminine singular (as in example (35a)) and 2 masculine singular (as in (35b)). In this set of structures, the plural has not been considered since its use changes between Spanish and English, and at this point just similarities are considered.

(35)   a. Tengo una jaula para mis pájaros ←→ I have a cage for my birds

[– masculine] [+ singular]

b. Alberto tiene un perro ←→ Alberto has a dog

[+ masculine] [+ singular]

The set of structures in the generic context are arranged into indefinite and null. As the definite article in this context does not work alike in English and in Spanish, it is not going to be taken into account for now. In the case of the indefinite condition, there are 4 structures selected which include 2 feminine singular (as in (36a)) and 2 feminine singular (as in (36b)). In this set of structures, the plural form is not considered as there is no plural form for the English indefinite article. Other variants will be contemplated further on.

(36)   a. Haz una foto ←→ Take a picture   **[– masculine] [+ singular]**
b. Quiero un perro blanco ←→ I want a white dog

[+ masculine] [+ singular]

The null category includes a set of 8 structures which contain 2 feminine singular sentences (as in example (37a)), and 2 feminine plural (as in example (37b)); and 2 masculine singular (as (37c)), and 2 masculine plural (as in (37d)).

(37)   a. Dame agua ←→ Give me water   **[– masculine] [+ singular]**
b. Hay estrellas esta noche ←→There are stars tonight

[– masculine] [– singular]

c. Miguel come pan ←→ Miguel eats bread   **[+ masculine] [+ singular]**
d. Somos estudiantes ←→ We are students   **[+ masculine] [– singular]**

Furthermore, added to these similar use of articles, there is another set of structures common to both tasks, called distractors. These structures are not analysing articles, therefore, they contain other grammatical properties. They have been proposed in order to obscure the intention of the test. The distractors will be mixed with the article structures at random. Some of the distractors are shown in the examples in (38).

(38)　a. Alejandro vive bien ←→ Alejandro lives well

b. Beyonce canta genial ←→ Beyonce sings really well

c. Dan vive en Miami ahora ←→ Dan lives now in Miami

d. Elena se va de viaje ←→ Elena is going to travel

e. En Santander llueve mucho ←→ In Santander, it rains a lot

6.2.2 SPECIFIC SETS OF STRUCTURES

In the second set of structures, article uses which do not coincide in both languages are being considered. As in this part the tests are designed specifically for each target language (i.e. English and Spanish), the L2 English test will be explained first and then, the L2 Spanish test.

6.2.2.1 L2 ENGLISH TEST

In the L2 English test, structures are also arranged according to contexts, that is, specific and generic. Within these contexts, sentences are organized conforming to article type, in this case, definite and indefinite. Reference has not been made to null articles since sentences are categorized in line with the source Spanish articles.

In this way, regarding specific contexts, the definite condition has 8 structures which include 4 masculine structures (2 singular (as in (39a)) and 2 plural (as in (39b))

and the other 4 structures are feminine (2 singular (as in (39c)) and 2 plural (as in (39d)).

SOURCE STRUCTURE →   TARGET STRUCTURE

(39)   a. El vino blanco es caro → ø White wine is expensive

[+ masculine] [+ singular]

b. Odio los meses de invierno →I hate ø winter months

[+ masculine] [– singular]

c. La colonia huele bien → ø Perfume smells nice

[– masculine] [+ singular]

d. Las bailarinas son altas → ø Dancers are tall **[– masculine] [– singular]**

As this section is specific to L2 English, it is important to clarify that these structures have to be translated from the source language (Spanish) into the target language (English).

The indefinite condition contains 8 structures including 4 masculine sentences (2 singular (as in (40a)), and 2 plural (as in (40b)) and other 4 structures which are feminine, 2 singular (as in (40c)), and 2 plural (as in (40d)).

(40)   a. Conocí a un actor → I met an actor   **[+ masculine] [+ singular]**

b. Cómprame unos bombones → Buy me some chocolates

[+ masculine] [–singular]

c. Tuve a una buena profesora → I had a good teacher

[– masculine] [+ singular]

d. Tengo unas botas nuevas → I have some new boots

[– masculine] [– singular]

In the case of generic contexts, the definite condition includes a set of 8 structures contain 2 feminine singular (as in example (41a)), 2 feminine plural (as in (41b)). Furthermore, it includes 2 masculine singular (as in (41c)) and 2 masculine plural (as in (41d)).

(41)   a. La cerveza es muy conocida aquí → ø Beer is very well-known here

                                                                  [– masculine] [+ singular]

        b. Las chicas corren → ø Girls run   **[– masculine] [– singular]**

        c. El agua es transparente → ø Water is transparent

                                                                   [+ masculine] [+ singular]

        d. Los libros son interesantes → ø Books are interesting

                                                                   [+ masculine] [– singular]

The indefinite condition is arranged in a set of 8 structures, too. It includes 4 masculine structures (2 singular (as in (42a)) and 2 plural (as in (42b)) and 4 feminine structures (2 singular, as in (42c)) and 2 plural (as in (42d)).

(42)   a. Coge un paraguas → Take an umbrella   **[+ masculine] [+ singular]**

        b. Unos chicos se fueron → Some boys left   **[+ masculine] [– singular]**

        c. Coge una manzana de ahí → Take an apple from there

                                                          [– masculine] [+ singular]

        d. Cómprame unas flores → Buy me some flowers

                                                          [– mascuiline] [– singular]

6.2.2.2 L2 SPANISH TEST

In what follows the part of the test specific for the L2 Spanish participants is presented. In this case, reference has not been made to definite articles since sentences are categorized in line with the source English articles. That is, the definite condition does not differ in both languages. Therefore, only indefinite and null structures in both contexts are included in this section.

In the case of the indefinite condition, there are a total of 8 structures which include 4 masculine structures (2 singular (as in (43a)) and 2 plural (as in (43b)) and 4 feminine structures (2 singular (as in (43c)) and 2 plural (as in (43d)).

SOURCE STRUCTURE   →   TARGET STRUCTURE

(43) a. An eagle is here → Un águila está aquí   **[+ masculine] [+ singular]**

   b. Some boys are drinking there → Unos chicos están bebiendo allí

   [+ masculine] [– singular]

   c. She was an accountant → Era contable   **[– masculine] [+ singular]**

   d. Some girls are reading here → Unas chicas están leyendo aquí

   [– masculine] [– singular]

This section is also specific to L2 Spanish participants, therefore, participants are going to translate the structures from the source language (i.e. English) into the target language (i.e. Spanish).

The null category includes a set of 8 structures which contain 4 feminine structures (2 singular (as in (44a)) and 2 plural (as in example (44b)) and 4 masculine structures (2 singular (as in (44c)) and 2 plural (as in (44d)).

(44) a. I am at ø university → Estoy en la Universidad

   [– masculine] [+ singular]

   b. ø Winter seasons are cold. → Las estaciones de invierno son frías

   [– masculine] [– singular]

   c. ø Dark chocolate is bitter → El chocolate negro es amargo

   [+ masculine] [+ singular]

   d. I hate ø winter months→ Odio los meses de invierno

   [+ masculine] [– singular]

The set of structures in the generic contest are organized also in indefinite and null conditions. In this way, the indefinite condition has 8 sentences which include 4 masculine structures (2 singular (as in (45a)) and 2 plural (as in example (45b)) and 4 feminine structures (2 singular (as in (45c)) and 2 plural (as in example (45d)).

(45)   a. An octopus is swimming → Un pulpo está nadando

[+ masculine] [+ singular]

b. Some boys talked → Unos chicos hablaron

[+ masculine] [– singular]

c. An angry woman is dangerous → Una mujer enfadada es peligrosa

[– masculine] [+ singular]

d. We see some giraffes → Vemos unas jirafas

[– masculine] [– singular]

The null condition contains a set of 8 structures. It includes 4 masculine structures (2 singular (as in (46a)) and 2 plural (as in (46b)) and other 4 feminine sentences (2 singular (as in (46c)) and 2 plural (as in example (46d)).

(46)   a. ø Weather is crazy → El tiempo está loco   **[+ masculine] [+ singular]**

b. ø Books are interesting → Los libros son interesantes

[+ masculine] [– singular]

c. ø Health is important → La salud es importante

[– masculine] [+ singular]

d. ø Stars shine → Las estrellas brillan   **[– masculine] [– singular]**

7. RESULTS

After having carried out the two translation tasks, this section deals with the data analysis extracted from the results obtained from the tasks. Data have been classified and organized according to the issues under consideration presented in the predictions (section 5). The data obtained from the tasks were arranged in an Excel document which appears attached to this undergraduate dissertation.

In the translation tasks, the three types of articles (definite, indefinite and null) were classified in terms of correctness, that is, they were classified into incorrect and correct. If they were incorrect, the analysis would go a step further in order to know

what type of error occurred (e.g. an error because of the context, article type, gender marking). In this way, it is possible to observe the participants' tendency to produce one type of article or another as well as to determine the type of L1 influence, if any.

Taking into account the two tasks completed, one from the L2 English participants and one from the L2 Spanish participants, the analysis is organized as follows: first an overall approach to the data based on correctness is presented for both participants' groups (table 4); secondly, table 5 and 6 offer an overall approach to the production of the different types of participants in a more specific way, taking into account the contexts (i.e. specific and generic) and the article system (i.e. definite, indefinite and null).

Table 4 reveals the percentage of the incorrect and correct responses of the participants according to the article choice included in the tasks.

Table 4. Rate of incorrect and correct responses.

	Incorrect	Correct
L2 English	112 (20%)	448 (80%)
L2 Spanish	133 (23.7%)	427 (76.2%)

The first group, the L2 English, has 80% of the responses correct while the rest 20% are incorrect. The results of the L2 Spanish are similar: 76.2% of the responses are correct while 23.7% are incorrect. As it can be appreciated, both participant groups have almost the same accuracy rates in general terms. Furthermore, none of them has a high percentage of errors.

Table 5 shows the percentage of error according to the similar and different uses of the articles in English and in Spanish.

Table 5. Error rate in the production of common and different structures.

	L2 English	L2 Spanish
Spanish =English	21 (3.7%)	17 (3%)
Spanish ≠ English	91 (16.2%)	116 (20.7%)
Total	112 (20%)	133 (23.7%)

Comparing the similar uses to the different ones, results reveal that in both participant groups there are errors. However, the highest error rate is in the L2 Spanish group as they reach 20% whereas, in the case of the L2 English group, they reach 16.2%. Both error rates for both groups correspond to the uses in which English and Spanish differ, as the error rate in the similar uses between the two languages are lower for both participant groups (3.7% for the L2 Spanish and 3% for the L2 English). Therefore, table 5 shows that the most problematic structures are the ones that differ in the use of articles.

Table 6 deals with the L2 English general results. The data collected are classified according to article type (i.e. definite and indefinite) and context type (i.e. specific and generic).

Table 6. L2 English total results according to context and article type.

		Incorrect	**Correct**
SPECIFIC	Definite	49/160 (30.6%)	111/ 160 (69.4%)
	Indefinite	10/ 120 (8.3%)	110/120 (91.7%)
Sub-total		**59/280 (21%)**	**221/280 (78.9%)**
GENERIC	Definite	34/80 (42.5%)	46/80 (57.5%)
	Indefinite	35/120 (29.1%)	85/120 (70.9%)
	Null	18/160 (11.2%)	142/160 (88.8%)
Sub-total		**87/360 (24.1%)**	**273/360 (75.8%)**
TOTAL		146	494

Comparing both contexts, the most remarkable issue is that the highest rate of errors is in the generic context (24.1% versus 21%), although the difference is not big. Within each of the contexts, in particular the specific context, the type of article that poses a problem for L2 English participants is the definite article. Similarly, in the generic context, the definite article also poses a problem for this group of participants.

Table 7 deals with the L2 Spanish general results. The data collected are classified according to the article type and context.

Table 7. L2 Spanish total results according to context and article type.

		Incorrect	Correct
	Definite	5/80 (6.2%)	75/80 (93.7%)
SPECIFIC	Indefinite	41/120 (34.1%)	79/120 (65.8%)
	Null	24/80 (30%)	56/80 (70%)
Sub-total		**70/280 (25%)**	**210/280 (75%)**
GENERIC	Indefinite	34/120 (28.3%)	86/120 (71.6%)
	Null	29/160 (18.1%)	131/160 (81.8%)
Sub-total		**63/280 (22.5%)**	**217/ 280 (77.5%)**
TOTAL		133	427

Comparing both contexts, it can be seen that the highest rate of error is found in the specific context (25% versus 22.5%), although again the difference is not important. Within each of the contexts, in this case the specific context, it can be observed that the most problematic type of article is the indefinite article. In the generic context, the most problematic type of article is also the indefinite one.

Hereafter, the results will be itemised according to the different aspects (type of article, context, gender, number) in order to go in line with the predictions presented in section 5.

1. a. Native-like production (definite articles): When contexts are [– generic], L2 English and L2 Spanish participants will not have difficulties in the production of a definite and indefinite article in English.

Table 8. L2 English and L2 Spanish: definite articles in [– generic] contexts.

[– Generic] and definite article	Incorrect	Correct
L2 English	49/160 (30.6%)	111/ 160 (69.4%)
L2 Spanish	5/80 (6.2%)	75/80 (93.7%)

Comparing both groups of participants, it can be seen the incorrect production of the definite article by L2 English participants is 30.6% versus the incorrect production of L2 Spanish that is 6.2%. As table 8 shows, L2 English and L2 Spanish participants show a high rate of accuracy in the production of the definite condition. None of the two groups has great difficulties in the production of this type of article,

but L2 Spanish learners show lowest difficulties than L2 English ones. Prediction 1a has, therefore, been confirmed.

1. b. Native-like production (indefinite articles): When contexts are [– generic] L2 English and L2 Spanish participants will not have problems in the production of indefinite articles in English and in Spanish.

Table 9. L2 English and L2 Spanish: indefinite articles in [– generic] contexts.

[–Generic] and indefinite articles	Incorrect	Correct
L2 English	10/ 120 (8.3%)	110/120 (91.7%)
L2 Spanish	41/120 (34.1%)	79/120 (65.8%)

Comparing both groups of participants, table 9 shows that L2 English participants have an error rate of 8.3% and the L2 Spanish participants of 34.1%. The group of participants that produce the indefinite article more accurately is, therefore, the L2 English one, contrary to what happens with the definite articles (as in table 8 above and prediction 1a). According to the results obtained, prediction 1b has been confirmed.

2. Native-like production (null articles): When contexts are [+ generic], L2 English and L2 Spanish participants will not have difficulties in the production of null articles.

Table 10. L2 English and L2 Spanish: null articles in [+ generic] context.

[+ Generic] in null articles	Incorrect	Correct
L2 English	18/160 (11.2%)	142/160 (88.8%)
L2 Spanish	29/160 (18.1%)	131/160 (81.8%)

Taking into account the results obtained by the two groups of participants, table 10 shows that in the null condition, the L2 English participants have produced 11.2% of incorrect answers. The L2 Spanish group has produced 18.1% incorrect answers. Therefore, none of both groups of participants have problems in the production of null articles in [+ generic] contexts and so prediction 2 has been confirmed.

3. Non-native-like production (overgeneralisation of the definite article): When contexts are [+ generic], L2 English participants will have problems with the use of the English null article and will, therefore, overextend the use of the definite article with the English null article is required.

Table 11. L2 English: null article in [+ generic] context.

		Incorrect	**Correct**
[+ Generic]	**Null**	18/160 (11.2%)	142/160 (88.8%)

Table 11 shows the rate of errors produced by L2 English participants according to the null condition. The percentage of error is 11.2%, so therefore, it is assumable that the errors in the null condition are not significant. According to the results obtained, the prediction has been rejected. The low error rate may be due to the overgeneralization of the definite article as in Spanish it is more frequent the use of definite article rather than the null one.

4. Non-native-like production (null article): When contexts are [+ generic], L2 Spanish participants will overproduce the null article. Participants will have difficulties when they have a null article in English and an overt definite article is required in Spanish.

Table 12. L2 Spanish: null article in [+ generic] context.

		Incorrect	**Correct**
[+ Generic]	**Null**	29/160 (18.1%)	131/160 (81.8%)

Table 12 illustrates that in the null articles the error rate is 18.1%, that is, the error rate is not very high and, therefore, L2 Spanish participants do not present an overuse of null articles in [+generic] contexts. Therefore, the prediction has been rejected.

5. Non-native-like production (gender agreement): As in English the article system does not include gender marking, participants will have difficulties distinguishing between masculine and feminine article forms.

Table 13. L2 Spanish: Gender agreement.

	Incorrect	**Correct**
[– masculine]	11/560 (1.9%)	549/560 (98.1%)
[+ masculine]	4/560 (0.7%)	556 (99.3%)

Comparing both genders in terms of correctness, it can be seen that for L2 Spanish participants gender agreement does not pose a problem. It is true that there are cases of incorrect answers but it is not meaningful as it is 1.9% of error in the [– masculine] and 0.7% in the [+ masculine] condition. Hence, this prediction has been rejected.

6. Native-like production (number agreement): L2 Spanish participants are predicted to have problems in the case of number agreement as in English and Spanish number agreement does not coincide in the article system.

Table 14. L2 Spanish: singular and plural.

	L2 English	**L2 Spanish**
Singular	6/560 (1%)	0/560 (0%)
Plural	9/560 (1.6%)	6/560 (1%)
Total	15/560 (2.6%)	6/560 (1%)

Comparing between both language groups, i.e. L2 English and L2 Spanish, as in table 14, it can be appreciated that L2 Spanish participants have a higher accuracy rate as in the total they have only 1% of error rate. Nevertheless, this rate of error is not considered as meaningful because it is minimal for both language groups (2.6% in the case of the L2 English and 1% for the L2 Spanish). Differently from what it was predicted, L2 English participants do not have problems in number agreement. Consequently, this prediction has been rejected.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The present undergraduate dissertation has proposed a comparative analysis of the different types of articles that exist in English and in Spanish. In order to be able to carry out the analysis, data from 10 L1 Spanish-L2 English and 10 L1 English-L2 Spanish

participants have been compiled using two translation tasks. Once the data have been collected, the data analysis has shown whether the initial predictions were confirmed or rejected.

As it was previously argued in section 5, English and Spanish have an article system, which shares some common properties (as in section 3.1) and which differs in some other properties (as in section 3.2). Participants show that they have more problems when choosing articles that do not behave similarly in English and Spanish, according to the results of the analysis.

The study has revealed the participant's difficulty when choosing an article in their L2. Participants have difficulties when opting between contexts (i.e. specific and generic) and when opting between types of articles (i.e. definite, indefinite, and null). Indeed, the most remarkable difficulty in the production of articles has been reflected in the production of definite and null articles rather that in the production of indefinite articles. Participants are able to produce the articles but they commit errors related to overgeneralization, in the case of the definite article, or to misuse, in the case of the null condition.

Contrarily to what Morales (2011) concluded, that participants have more errors in the use of indefinite articles rather than in the use of definite ones, this conclusion goes in line with the results of L2 Spanish participants. However, the present data analysis from the L2 English has revealed that, they do not have much difficulties in the production of indefinite articles, but in the production of the definite. Furthermore, considering the different types of contexts, the conclusions reached by Morales (2011) show that the production of indefinite articles is less accurate in [+ specific] contexts rather than in [– specific] ones. Similar results are found in this case study, since L2 English learners perform the indefinite articles better in [+ specific] rather than in [– specific].

Contrarily, in the case of L2 Spanish, data analysis has revealed that gender agreement does not pose a problem for this group of participants. However, normally,

participants tend to use the masculine instead of the feminine when a feminine noun is present. Therefore, their few errors are in the [– masculine] structures.

As it was expected and as it was discussed by Zdorenko and Paradis (2008), both groups of participants have shown cross-linguistic influence from their L1 to their L2 as they transfer the grammatical properties of their L1 into the L2. This can be appreciated in the results obtained. English, as it lacks gender marks, poses a problem for L1 English speakers as this characteristic has to be learnt separately and without the 'help' of the L1. In the case of L2 English, L1 Spanish speakers have to learn how to use the articles in specific differing context.

9. APPENDIX

9.1 L2 ENGLISH TEST (L1 Spanish> L2 English)

1. Tengo una jaula para mis pájaros
2. El sol brilla
3. Esa chica tiene unos ojos bonitos
4. Dan vive en Miami ahora
5. Los perros son pequeños
6. Los champús ecológicos son caros
7. Quiero una camiseta azul
8. Compró pollo para comer
9. Conocía a un actor
10. El pájaro canta
11. Construyó un muro
12. Odio los meses de invierno
13. Quiero un perro blanco
14. La entrenadora se enfadó
15. Las flores son rojas
16. Mi amiga quiere bailar
17. Dame agua
18. Sara compró ropa
19. El chocolate negro está amargo
20. Las camisetas están sucias
21. Las chicas corren
22. Mi hermana grita mucho
23. Somos estudiantes
24. Cómprame unos bombones
25. El vino blanco es caro
26. Alberto tiene un perro
27. La colonia huele bien
28. Un chico habló
29. He comprado libros

30. Marta vive en Madrid

31. Alejandro vive bien

32. Miguel come pan

33. Tengo una casa allí

34. Mi casa es vieja

35. Tuve una excelente profesora

36. Canarias es bonito

37. La salud es importante

38. Unas amigas vienen aquí

39. Las bailarinas son altas

40. Haz una foto

41. La cerveza es muy conocida aquí

42. Mis vacaciones son en verano

43. Hay estrellas esta noche

44. Unos trabajadores se quedaron aquí

45. Los libros son interesantes

46. Los jóvenes gritan

47. Luis está triste

48. Ven a Madrid

49. Unos chicos se fueron

50. Quiero verte

51. Cómprame unas flores

52. Compraré unas gafas mañana

53. Sara está viniendo

54. Me voy mañana

55. En Santander llueve mucho

56. Un elefante come mucho

57. María va a Cádiz

58. Mi madre quiere su coche

59. Mi hermano tiene todo organizado

60. Elena se va de viaje

61. Las modelos están demasiado delgadas

62. La leche es blanca

63. Coge una manzana de ahí

64. La llave se rompió

65. Beyoncé canta genial

66. Valencia es bonita

67. Los niños juegan al fútbol

68. Mis padres viajan mucho

69. Mi perro ladra mucho

70. Coge un paraguas

71. Tengo una naranja en mi mano

72. Vi a un águila ayer

73. Tengo galletas

74. Me alegro de que vengas

75. El agua es transparente

76. Ve a una universidad

77. ¿Qué haces hoy?

78. Tengo unas botas nuevas

79. Lo envié ayer

80. El arroz es blanco

81. Las estrellas brillan

9.2 L2 SPANISH TEST (L1 English> L2 Spanish)

1. The bird sings
2. My sister shouts a lot
3. An angry woman is dangerous
4. I have a house there
5. My friend wants to dance
6. She was an accountant
7. Take a picture
8. I am at university
9. Give me water
10. Health is important
11. Dan lives in Miami now
12. The sun shines
13. I have a cage for my birds
14. Madrid is beautiful
15. I want a White dog
16. Alejandro lives well
17. Sara bought clothes
18. I ate an Apple
19. Marta lives in Madrid
20. Maria is in bed
21. An ant cannot swim
22. My house is old
23. Milk is White
24. The house is Green
25. He built a Wall
26. I want to see you
27. I want a blue T- shirt
28. My holidays are in summer
29. Miguel eats bread
30. Some girls are reading here
31. Luis is sad

32. Dark chocolate is bitter

33. Come to Madrid

34. An elephant is running

35. Weather is crazy

36. In Santander, it rains a lot

37. The key is blue

38. Alberto has a dog

39. A girl talks

40. He bought chicken

41. Some butterflies are being born now

42. Sara is coming

43. White wine is expensive

44. An octopus is swimming

45. I am leaving tomorrow

46. Wine is red

47. The dogs are small

48. There are stars tonight

49. An eagle is here

50. My mother wants her car

51. Winter seasons are cold

52. Some students arrived late

53. Stars shine

54. Maria goes to Cadiz

55. The boys play football

56. I have biscuits

57. An ecologist vive

58. Destiny's Child are back

59. My brother has everything organised

60. Some boys talked

61. Elena is going to travel

62. Models are thin

63. I love you

64. The flowers are red

65. We are students

66. Valencia is beautiful

67. Some boys are drinking here

68. I sent it yesterday

69. I hate Winter months

70. We see some giraffes

71. My parents travel a lot

72. Books are interesting

73. Beyonce sings really well

74. The T-shirts are dirty

75. I have bought books

76. They are playing some instruments

77. I hate long-lasting tattoos

78. I'm glad you come

79. I made some cakes

80. My cousin studies a lot

81. Youths shout

10. REFERENCES

Biber, Douglas. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow: Longman, 1999. Print.

Bosque, Ignacio and Demonte, Violeta. *Gramática Descriptiva de la Lengua Española*. Madrid: Espasa, 1999. Print.

Cook, Vivian and Singleton, David. *Key Topics in Second Language Acquisition*. Bristol: MM textbooks, 2014. Print.

Friederici, Angela D., Steinhauer, Karsten and Pfeifer, Erdmut. "Brain Signatures Of Artificial Language Processing: Evidence Challenging The Critical Period Hypothesis". *PNAS* vol.99, 2016. http://www.pnas.org/content/99/1/529.full.pdf

Huddleston, Rodney and Pullum, Geoffrey. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.

Ionin, Tania, Zubizarreta, Maria Luisa and Maldonado, Salvador. "Sources of Linguistic Knowledge in the Second Language Acquisition". *Lingua.* Vol.118, 2008. http://www.international.ucla.edu/media/files/sources.pdf.

Keating, Gregory. *Second Language Acquisition. The Basics.* Oxon: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Lightbown, Patsy and Spada, Nina Margaret. *How Languages Are Learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.

Van Patten, Bill and Williams, Jessica. *Theories in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxon: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Yule, George. *The Study of Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Zdorenko, Tatiana and Paradis, Johanne. "The Acquisition of Articles in Child Second Language English: fluctuationn, transfer or both?" *Second Language Research.* Vol.24. 2008. Print.