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An Analysis of the Subject in Children's Tales:
A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper applies Comparative Grammar Studies to the analysis of the subject as grammatical function in the tale “Puss in Boots” both in English and Spanish in order to prove whether the realization of the subject exhibits irregularities than can be associated to the tale as children’s literature. More specifically, the principal objective is to confirm whether the Spanish version includes a higher number of overt pronouns than it could be expected from any other text, i.e. a frequency similar to the total found English version as a result of a possible greater simplicity for being aimed at children. Results show no specific features with regard to overt pronominal subjects in Spanish. Besides, evidence is found showing null subjects in English in a higher proportion than it could be expected on the basis of the theoretical foundations.

Key words: Comparative Grammar, subject, children’s literature, overt pronouns, null subjects.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo aplica los estudios de Gramática Comparada al análisis del sujeto como función gramatical en el cuento infantil “El gato con botas”, en inglés y en español, con el fin de demostrar si dicho cuento presenta irregularidades en la realización del sujeto que puedan ser asociadas al hecho de que pertenezca a literatura infantil. Concretamente, el objetivo es confirmar si la versión en español incluye un número de pronombres explícitos más elevado de lo que sería común en cualquier otro texto, es decir, un número similar al encontrado en la versión en inglés como resultado de una posible simplicidad por estar dirigido a niños. Los resultados no muestran características específicas en cuanto a los pronombres sujeto explícitos en español. Por otra parte, se ha hallado un resultado de sujetos nulos en inglés mayor del que se habría esperado teniendo en cuenta la base teórica.

Palabras clave: Gramática Comparada, sujeto, literatura infantil, pronombres explícitos, sujetos nulos.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is not something under discussion that the subject has been an element of the utmost importance from the very outset in all grammatical theories. From the first analysis of the subject by Aristotle around the 4th century BC until the present times, a lot of research has been carried out on this notion. It has been quite recently, however, that it has been studied as the grammatical function we consider it today. First Perlmutter in 1971 and then Chomsky in 1981 tackled the issue of the subject and developed a complete theory on how languages work regarding this constituent of the sentence on the basis of Generative Grammar. This tradition is not the only one committed to the subject, though at present it is one of the most influential in all language courses.

For its part, considering fairy tales as simple texts devoted to ensure the correct comprehension by children could be obvious from many perspectives. In accordance with Shavit (2009), children's literature is considered to derive from the specific children's needs, and thus it is assumed that the vocabulary employed by tale writers is not complicated since children's stories seek for simplicity. Nonetheless, this arises the question of whether the lack of complexity is also found in syntax and therefore it affects the native constructions, making them to be simpler, or rather it does not influence the native structures perceived as normal of the natural language.

The present paper makes an application of comparative studies to the analysis of the subject as a grammatical function in a children's tale, taking as starting point the already mentioned Generative Grammar School. More specifically, this work examines and contrasts the realization of the subject in both the Spanish and the English version of the traditional children's story "Puss in Boots" with the final intention of proving whether the assumptions made throughout the study are verified or refuted. In terms of structure, it can be divided into five main sections, namely, previous assumptions and hypothesis, theoretical foundations, description of the written material and description of the methodology employed, and finally results and discussion.

First of all, some assumptions which derive from the theoretical foundations precede to the main hypothesis that leads the study. Some mention is made of other research articles and how they have been of use in order to draw the hypothesis. A theoretical background is then provided as a framework for a proper understanding of the ideas developed in the

work. It contains some general clarifications of Generative Grammar as a backdrop to introduce the Principles and Parameters Theory and, subsequently, it expands on some principles that are relevant to this study of subject. The “Null-Subject Parameter” is the following aspect included in this theoretical section, fundamental in this paper. Finally, a brief mention to the “Avoid Pronoun Principle” is included. In the second part of the theoretical background it is included some information about the concept of genre and how it is regarded in this essay with the purpose of providing a general idea of the features of children’s stories. The term *tale* has been mainly used throughout this paper instead of the previously mentioned *children’s stories* in order to allude to the fixed literary genre and not to any story aimed at children, yet the latter has been employed seeking to avoid repetition in some cases.

A description of the written material, which includes a justification for the choice of “Puss in Boots” as the tale that meets the required conditions for this study, is then developed together with some elucidation on the case study method research. Then, the methodology applied to the analysis of the subjects that appear in the written material is thoroughly detailed for a better clarification of the succeeding part, in which results are displayed at the same time that an extended discussion on the similarities and differences among the varied types of subject and their frequency in the two languages is developed. In the final section, more general conclusions are drawn supported by all previous information, and hints for further research are likewise suggested as final remark.

From this introduction it can be concluded that the major objective of this paper is to carry out a comparative analysis of two apparently dissimilar languages. This implies that the secondary objectives of this work are to provide a sufficient theoretical background both of grammar and genre studies, to apply the theoretical background to the analysis of a grammatical function in a given type of text, and to apply the case study research to establish and contrast hypotheses on the basis of the theoretical framework.

2. OVERT PERSONAL PRONOUNS

In addition to the theoretical foundations that will serve to classify English and Spanish in terms of their functioning regarding null subjects, it is required to look at the possible realizations of the subject in both of them in order to establish hypotheses under accurate data. Note that the classification that has been used to arrange all formal types of subject

extracted from the tales is going to be presented in the section 5. *Methodology*, and that is why this part of the essay does not contain a detailed explanation of the possible grammatical subjects in the clause. Instead, this section presents a comparative overview of the theoretical aspects applied to the two languages under analysis in order to give an overview of the assumptions that follow from the “Null Subject Parameter” and the main hypothesis that has been drawn.

The Noun Phrase (NP) is the most common grammatical unit that functions as the subject of the clause in both Spanish and English. Nevertheless, it is also possible for subjects to be personal pronouns, wh-pronouns or subordinate clauses among others. Broadly speaking, there exists a consistency between the possible grammatical realizations of the subject in the two languages under analysis, English and Spanish. For this reason, the presumption is that there will not be any significant difference in the number of overt subjects being other than personal pronouns, i.e. NPs, wh-pronouns or demonstrative pronouns. A significant disagreement is, nevertheless, found among the two languages when the subject of a clause is realized by a personal pronoun. Spanish is a [+ null-subject] language in which overt subjects can be dropped, but it is also possible that pronouns appear as overt subjects. However, it presents a constraint according to which non-referential subjects cannot be overt so that the English constructions in which the expletive *it* or the existential *there* appear as non-referential subjects are impossible in Spanish. As a result, the prediction is to find a number of null subjects in Spanish as being the equivalence of the expletive subjects in English.

Along the lines of Fernández Soriano’s 1989 article “Strong Pronouns in Null-Subject Languages and the Avoid Pronoun Principle” and Perales and Portillo Mayorga’s 2006 article “Sobre las propiedades referenciales de los sujetos nulos y pronominales del español oral y escrito”, the main hypothesis has been posed. The first article argues that *pro* is compulsory in those instances in which it is licensed and identified; and evidence from the second article shows the significant higher preference for null subjects in both written and oral discourse by native speakers of Spanish. These conclusions suggest that a text written in Spanish would present a substantially smaller number of personal pronouns in the subject position than any text written in English. The question that arouses is whether this statement can be applied to literary texts and, more specifically, children’s tales.

From the previous notions it is predicted that the number of overt pronouns realizing the subject will be substantially higher in the English text because English pronouns cannot be licensed or identified due to a lack of strong agreement. In parallel, if Chomsky's assertion that non-overt pronouns are preferred to the null ones is taken into consideration together with Perales and Portillo Mayorga's conclusion that native speakers of Spanish show preference to overt pronouns, it could be assumed that the number of overt pronouns in Spanish is radically smaller than in the English version. Intuitively speaking, notwithstanding the previous theoretical background, it is hypothesized that (iv) the number of overt subjects realized by personal pronouns in the Spanish adaptation will be larger and more consequential than in any other text genre.

This results from the fact that writers should have their audience in mind (Swales 1990) when writing in order to avoid any case of possible misunderstanding. In the case of children's tales and for the purposes of this paper, this misunderstanding is translated into any instance in which a subject pronoun is not easily identified. Since the objective of this work is not the comparison among tales and other texts, this hypothesis will be confirmed or refuted exclusively on the basis of the data obtained. In this particular case, a similar amount of personal pronouns is expected to be found in both the English and the Spanish version of the tale so that the hypothesis could be confirmed; whilst excessive differences would be reason enough to refute it.

In the article previously referred to, Fernández Soriano makes use of a conclusion reached in a previous article in which she evidenced that foreign students learning Spanish as a second language (L2) overused the explicit pronoun due to the fact that they did not have enough familiarity with the strong agreement of Spanish verbs. If this postulation is extrapolated, it could be applied *mutatis mutandis* to children as readers of written tales. Although the issue of whether the readers of the tales under analysis are native or not is not object of study in this paper, the fact that children are not familiarized enough with strong agreement could give rise to error in the understanding of clauses if the Spanish tale presents a considerable lack of subject pronouns. This is the misunderstanding previously referred to that is the support for drawing the hypothesis, and it will be related to a brief comment to anaphoric relationships both inside and outside the clause. In any way, a theoretical background both of the notion of subject and on the notion of *tale* as

literary genre is going to be presented in the following sections of this paper in order to provide a deeper insight of the discussion.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

3.1 Subject from a generative approach

As it is widely known, the subject is a central issue regarding grammatical relations in the sentence in almost all language theories. Apart from the Chomskyan tradition, which will be developed in this section, Perlmutter (1971) was the other major figure who took notice of the possibility of null subjects in some languages. Nonetheless, a clarification of how the term *subject* can be understood is needed prior to any other notion. The reference to the concept of *subject* is not restricted to a single idea, but to several denotations depending on what sense of the term we make reference to. It deals with the meaning of subject if we take a semantic approach, for example; or it is about the relation among the subject and the rest of constituents of a sentence if we take a syntactic approach. For the purposes of this work, it is necessary to understand *subject* as a grammatical function – and not as a grammatical category/feature– which establishes syntactical relations within the sentence.

Along the lines of Chomsky (1981, 1982), the present work will take a generative approach to the study of language essentially because it will apply the principles and parameters theory to the comparative analysis of a given grammatical function, as it is the subject, in two typologically different languages, English and Spanish. However, some previous remarks upon more general concepts are necessary in order to achieve a complete understanding of how this generative method has been applied in this paper.

The main objective of Generative Grammar is to define the innate knowledge of language. For this purpose, Chomsky proposed the notion of Universal Grammar (UG) as being a set of innate faculties previous to all knowledge of language that allows us to judge whether an utterance is correct or not. Because of the universal quality of this UG, the generative approach is aimed at finding consistent features in the study of the particular grammar of a language in relation to the grammar of other languages. Universal Grammar thereby accounts for the basis of Chomsky's 1981 principles and parameters theory, whose main objective is to define the constants of language by distinguishing at the same time cross-linguistic variations among languages. Whereas principles refer to those

constants of language, i.e. invariable properties common to all human languages, parameters are clusters of properties specific to a given language or group of languages, that is, groups of properties subject to cross-linguistic variation.

This paper concentrates on two principles and one parameter (Chomsky 1981, 1982) that are fundamental to analyze the subject, understood as the external argument of the verb. First, the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) which demonstrates that all clauses require a subject; and second, the Empty Category Principle (ECP) which states that non-overt elements must be licensed and properly identified. Empty categories (*ec*) are non-overt elements, that is, null constituents that have no phonetic representation in the clause. In parallel, the present study focuses on the “Null Subject Parameter” or “*pro*-drop Parameter”, which distinguishes among two groups of languages depending on whether they allow a null-subject to appear in the clause or they do not permit null-subjects. This parameter is essential to the study of the subject because it allows us to make a distinction among the two languages under analysis.

Although the null-subject parameter consists of four properties that permit us to make a comparison between Spanish and English, we will pay attention only to three of them, the ones that are relevant in the subsequent analysis of the written material. The first property deals with having null-subjects in tensed or finite clauses (1); the second one is about the possibility of having an overt subject in post-verbal position (2); the third property considers the possibility of a null-subject in clauses with weather-type verbs and in expletive constructions (3); and the fourth one is concerned with the possibility of an explicit complementizer in embedded clauses whose subject has been moved (4).

(1) (a) *ec* canto una canción / *yo* canto una canción

(b) **ec* sing a song / *I* sing a song

(2) (a) ha llamado *María*

(b) * has phoned *Mary*

(3) (a) *ec* nieva / **ello* nieva

(b) **ec* snows / *it* snows

(4) (a) who do you think *ec* passed the exam? / *who do you think that passed the exam?

(b) *¿quién crees *ec* ha aprobado el examen? / ¿quién crees que ha aprobado el examen?

Even though the fourth property is not pertinent in this study, it has been exemplified in order to provide a better illumination of the classification of the two languages. The examples above show English as a [- null subject] language since it does not agree with any of them, whereas they show Spanish as a [+ null subject] language because it complies with these three properties. In other words, while non-overt elements cannot appear as the subject in finite clauses in English, either overt elements or empty categories can realize the subject in Spanish –under certain constraints as it has been showed in the previous section. It is important to bear in mind that there are some isolated exceptions in which languages could exhibit irregularities. For example, the first property states that English does not allow an empty category to be the subject of a finite clause, but empty categories can actually appear as null subjects in non-finite clauses, as it can be observed in (5).

(5) (a) She remembers [*ec* closing the window]

(b) She wants [*ec* to go to the cinema]

In this case, the non-overt subject of the English gerund (5) (a) or infinitive (5) (b) is identified by means of their antecedent *she*, which permits us to recover their content, following thereby the Empty Category Principle. Spanish, by contrast, has been claimed to have a strong verbal inflection that allows null subjects to be fully identified so that finite clauses can present non-overt subjects¹. Although both of them meet the definition of *empty category*, their meaning is recovered according to different concerns², what leads us to distinguish among *PRO* as being the subject in the first case, and *pro* as being the subject in the second one. Thus, the Spanish *pro* in (6) (a) fulfills the Empty Category Principle given that the non-overt subject is identified by the rich agreement of the verb; whereas the null subject in (6) (b) cannot be identified in view of the fact that English has been claimed to have a weak inflectional system which does not allow to identify null subjects.

(6) (a) *pro* como un bocadillo

¹ See Haegeman 2002 for an exhaustive comparison between Italian rich agreement and English poor agreement. Notice that Italian and Spanish are analogous in their behavior regarding null subjects.

² See Haegeman 2002, 398-405.

(b) **pro* eat a sandwich

As it has been already mentioned, subjects can be realized by different parts of speech. Nonetheless, from the previous theoretical foundations it can be concluded that subjects realized by personal pronouns are the most controversial instance in the typology. The structures in (7) are equivalent to the ones in (6), but they present overt pronouns as the subject.

(7) (a) *yo* como un bocadillo

(b) *I* eat a sandwich

All in all, it could be thought that in any [+ null-subject] language, such as Spanish, which allows both null and overt pronouns, the choice between the use of an overt pronoun or the use of *pro* is determined by the context in which a given clause appears and therefore (6) (a) and (7) (a) can be mutually alternated without any restrictions. Fernández Soriano (1989) proposed in this regard the “Avoid Pronoun Principle”, in which she argued that special focus is given in any construction in which an overt pronoun is used as the subject in a [+ null subject] language; and consequently the explicit subject is eschewed in favor of the covert option in all cases it can be fully identified. In spite of the multiple objections this principle has raised, there is still some essential content to be accepted from it, such as the less radical insight of Chomsky (1981), who a long time before claimed that a non-overt pronoun, whenever it is licensed and identified, is preferred to an overt one.

3.2 Conception of genre

Throughout the history of the world, literature has been one of the most difficult fields to define. In general terms, it could be described as the achievement of an aesthetic beauty by means of the art of words. All literary texts are non-spontaneous creations which usually deviate from the normal use of language to achieve something more than the normal communication (Swales 1990), what means that literature makes use of certain resources, figures, and features of language that make literary texts aesthetically pleasant. All the previous aspects must be tackled from the point of view of genre and register. According to Swales, “a genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (Swales 1990, 58). As it can be inferred from the previous remarks, the notion of genre does not only affect communicative purposes, but also issues of content and style. In this study, a genre-based

approach has been applied in which genre is understood as Bhatia's definition that follows:

Genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s). (Bhatia 1993, 13)

Each literary genre shows therefore a series of patterns with regard to structure and lexicogrammatical features that allow the audience identify a given text in the context of a specific genre. Even though there exists a lot of controversy when it comes to define the terms genre and register, it is not the objective in this work. Despite that debate, we will consider register in a broad sense, in other words, as the language variations that depend on the context in which they are used, so both concepts, genre and register, must be closely related for an appropriate use of texts in different communicative situations.

Following the lines of Albentosa Hernández and Moya Guijarro's 2001 work, it must be also borne in mind the differentiation between oral and written discourse. As they point out, both discourses are characterized by a succession of syntactic, pragmatic and lexico-semantic features that make a distinction between them. Whereas written discourse is believed to exhibit a larger lexical density than oral speech, it is not the case with regard to grammatical intricacy. In this work, it is made clear that written discourse does not present any added complexity that could be owing to specific grammatical structures and, furthermore, that readers make use of their knowledge of general grammar in order to understand written texts when lexical density makes them especially complex.

In order to narrow the purpose of this paper, the preceding remarks need to be applied to the tale as a children's literary genre. Tales are a prepared-text genre in the sense that "their producers are conventionally expected to consider their anticipated audiences and readerships" (Swales 1990, 62), as in every other text genre. This conception implies that tales exhibit simplicity in structural terms, what is achieved by means of brevity and intensity regarding the plot, and by presenting only a main character who experiences a single circumstance at the same time –although several secondary characters usually appear in the story (Castro Alonso 1984). This presumptive simplicity is going to be

analyzed henceforth with regard to the subject as a grammatical function in “Puss in Boots” by Charles Perrault.

4. MATERIAL: A CHILDREN’S TALE

Several characteristics of “Puss in Boots” have been taken into consideration in order to determine this tale as one of the best choices that could be analyzed in this essay. First and foremost, “The Master Cat; or, Puss in Boots” – more widely known simply as “Puss in Boots” – is a children’s traditional tale written by the French author Charles Perrault in the 17th century. He published this tale in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* or *Les Contes de ma mère l’Oye*, with the original title of “Le Maître chat ou le Chat botté”. It must be borne in mind, however, the fact that this and all traditional stories had an oral origin and tradition, so Perrault was not the original writer but made a written record of the oral story. There exists an earlier written version of this tale by the Italian author Gianfrancesco Straparola, who included “Puss in Boots” together with other 74 novellas in his *Piacevoli notti* (16th century). Nonetheless, Perrault established a convention concerning the structure, characters, and plot, and started thereby the notion of tale as a literary genre written for children which would subsequently develop the features mentioned in the previous section.

Among the traits of “Puss in Boots”, the balance between direct and indirect speech has been one of the main reasons why this specific story has been chosen in order to do the grammatical analysis and interpretation of the subject. In the two languages analyzed, English and Spanish, this tale exhibits a significant balance between dialogue and third person narration which contributes to the analysis of complete texts. Any tale with monotonous style, i.e. an excessive number of sentences in direct –or indirect– speech, would cause a notable tendency towards misleading results for not being diverse enough. In addition to this, the characters in the story have been taken into account. For the purposes of this work, it is important to have some possibility of misunderstanding when trying to recover the content of an overt pronoun in English or a null subject in Spanish, and the fact of having a majority of male characters opposite to a single female character in the tale is a good starting point.

With regard to the research method, the case study –traditionally employed in the social sciences field– has been applied in this work for two main reasons. First of all, the analysis

of the subject has been done manually, so the difficulty this process entails requires a careful study on moderate-sized texts, as the chosen tale is. And secondly, this research method has been put into practice in order to present the different stages the study has gone through when compiling the data, that is to say, to appropriately present the results obtained in a clear way, to adequately interpret those results on the basis of the theoretical background, and to discuss the evidence with a view to providing final conclusions and the basis of a broader study.

5. METHODOLOGY

Since the subject can be realized by different grammatical structures, a table including a formal typology³ of all kinds of subjects found in the texts has been employed to display the data. A simple but laborious process has been followed in order to achieve an adequate study of the two tales under examination. First of all, an analysis of the written material has been done manually, that is to say, the subject of each clause that appear in the two texts has been analyzed following the formal typology shown in TABLE 1. Secondly, the frequency of each subject type has been included in the table by means of figures, including both the absolute frequency and the relative frequency of the subjects in each text, and those figures have been displayed in adjoining cells to facilitate the contrastive study. Finally, a series of charts that will be shown in the next section has been created from the initial figures in the cases in which special emphasis has been required to accurately compare data.

Table 1 – Table structure model of the subject formal typology

Subject formal typology				EN N of subjects (total of 252)	P N of subjects (total of 219)	EN Relative Frequency %	SP Relative Frequency %
Referential	Overt	Full NPs	Simple				
			Complex				
		Demonstrative pronouns					
		Wh-pronouns	Relative				
			Interrogative				
		Personal pronouns					
	Null	Null N					
Null NP		Finite					

³ This table is a modification of an original typology extracted from Fernández Fuertes, Raquel. “The organization of the clause.” *English Language: Descriptive Grammar III*. Universidad de Valladolid. 2012

			Non-finite				
Non-referential	Overt	<i>it</i>					
		<i>there</i>					
	Null						

Source: Fernández Fuertes, Raquel. "The organization of the clause." *English Language: Descriptive Grammar III*. Universidad de Valladolid. 2012

An explanation of the subject types in the table with authentic examples taken from the texts in order to illustrate the criteria employed in the process is provided below. In the examples, subjects have been underlined and appear together with the verb and some other part of the clause whenever needed. The starting point in this classification is a double typology depending on whether subjects are referential or non-referential. In both cases, referential and non-referential subjects, there is a subdivision between overt and null, i.e. between phonetically present subjects and those realized by empty categories. However, six areas have been invalidated due to the impossibility of having those subjects in each language. As it was explained in the theoretical background, there is no possibility of having non-referential subjects in English realized by empty categories. The reverse is the case in Spanish; it is not possible to have non-referential subjects realized by overt elements –such as the expletive *it* or the existential *there* in English.

Overt referential subjects is the largest group in the classification due to the different types of grammatical structures a subject can be realized by. Instances of full noun phrases (NP) are shown in the underlined structures of (8) and (9).

- (8) (a) the partition was soon made
- (b) el chico tenía tal confianza en la astucia de su gato
- (9) (a) the poor young fellow was quite comfortless at having so poor a lot
- (b) el pobre chico se desconsoló al verse con tan pobre patrimonio

Both (8) (a) and (8) (b) are simple NPs in which a noun is the head of the phrase and it is accompanied by a determiner; and the second one, complex NPs whose head is a noun and it is accompanied by pre-modifiers and/or post-modifiers together with a determiner (9) (a) (b). Examples of personal pronouns as the subject are shown in (10); and demonstrative pronouns in (11). Instances in (12) are subjects realized by relative wh-pronouns; and the instance in (13) is an example of an interrogative pronoun as the subject of the clause –notice that no cases of interrogative wh-pronouns have been found as subjects in the English text.

- (10) (a) they would soon have eaten up all the poor patrimony
 (b) él había llamado en su auxilio con todas sus fuerzas
- (11) (a) this is a meadow
 (b) respondió éste
- (12) (a) the cat, who heard all this
 (b) murió un molinero que tenía tres hijos
- (13) (a) -
 (b) aunque no comprendía cuáles pudieran ser sus instintos

With respect to the null referential subjects group, it has been taken into account whether only a part of the NP or rather the whole phrase has been dropped. The basic constituent in an NP is the noun as the head, but it can also be accompanied by the determiner and even pre-modifiers and post-modifiers. In the text, some cases in which nouns do not appear in the sentence but there is still a NP –whose head is null or covert– have been found, and they can be seen in (13). Within the NPs which did not present any content but were empty categories, it can be distinguished between those realizing the subject of a finite clause –comprising a tensed or finite verb– or *pro* (14) and those that realize the subject of a non-finite clause –including a non-finite verb– or *PRO* (15).

- (13) (a) the eldest had the mill
 (b) el pequeño no tuvo otra herencia que el gato
- (14) (a) he went into de palace and *pro* asked to speak
 (b) *pro* le había visto desplegar tanto ingenio
- (15) (a) you have nothing else *PRO* to do
 (b) no tendré más remedio que *PRO* morir de hambre

The non-referential subjects are shown in the following examples, in which (16) illustrates the expletive *it* and (17) the existential *there*, both of them overt in English. In (18) it can be seen an example of the Spanish equivalents to the previous non-referential constructions, which can be only realized by null constituents.

- (17) (a) it will be owing to yourself only
 (b) -
- (18) (a) there was a miller
 (b) -

(19) (a) -

(b) había gran número de conejos

6. RESULTS

Considering that the classification used in the analysis has been based on a double typology, the presentation of results and its discussion is going to be divided into two parts as an initial attempt of organization. First the non-referential subjects are going to be displayed because they are less in number and then the referential subjects will be thoroughly presented, separately when needed, in order to avoid possible misunderstandings. Instead of presenting data and conclusions in an independent way, both data and discussion will be alternated for practical purposes.

Table 2 shows all the data obtained in the analysis of the two tales. As it has been explained in the methodology, results have been displayed in a comparative way in order to facilitate the contrastive analysis. First the raw frequency or absolute frequency has been presented for both English and Spanish, and then the relative frequencies – percentage out of the total number of subjects in each tale– have been displayed for each subject type in the two languages. This does not mean, however, that either raw or relative frequencies will exclusively be used in the discussion. In some cases and for clarification purposes, a specific frequency has been calculated out of the total number of a given subject type, such as the comparison among null subjects and overt subjects out of the referential subjects found in each language. As a reminder, six cells have been invalidated due to the fact that English and Spanish present some constraints that make impossible those subjects. Before taking into independent consideration each group of subjects, it is important to remark that the total number of both null and overt subjects in the English tale is 252 from a total number of 1,726 words in the tale; whereas the Spanish version presents a total of 219 subjects out of 1,524 words in total in the text. In this respect it must be borne in mind that, as it was already mentioned in previous sections of the paper, both texts are not translations derived one from another but independent texts which are considered to be analogous. The lack of equality is originated in the differences among the operations of structural correspondences in each language (Stockwell 1965). Differences are therefore explicable and do not lead to biased conclusions since they have been borne in mind in the discussion.

Table 2- Subject formal typology

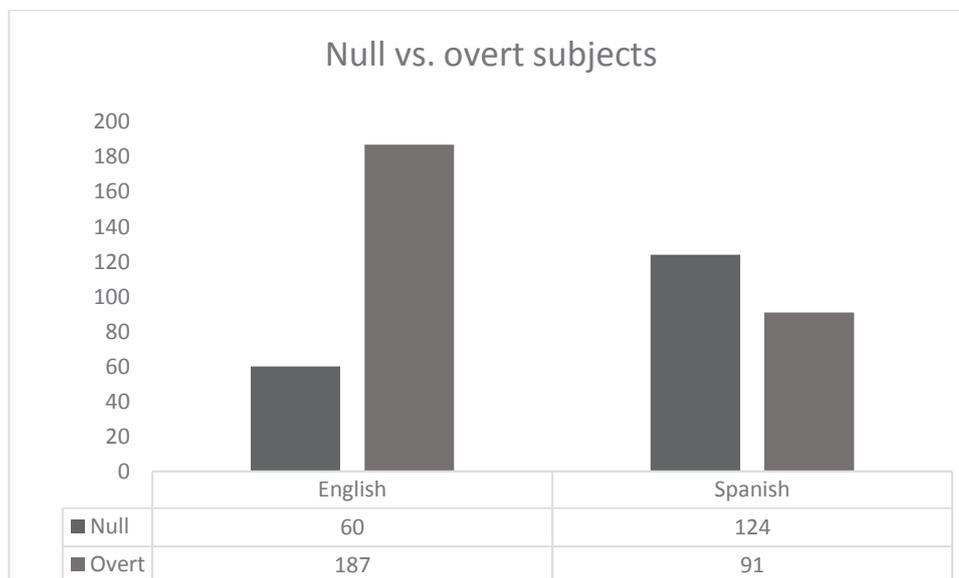
Subject formal typology				EN N of subjects (total of 252)	SP N of subjects (total of 219)	EN Relative Frequency %	SP Relative Frequency %
Referential	Overt	Full NPs	Simple	59	60	23	27
			Complex	19	9	7	4
		Demonstrative pronouns		2	3	0.8	1.4
		Wh-pronouns	Relative	18	15	7	7
			Interrogative	-	2	-	0.9
		Personal pronouns		89	2	35	0.9
	Null	Null N		4	3		1.4
		Null NP	Finite	19	94	2	43
			Non-finite	37	29	15	13
Non-referential	Overt	<i>it</i>		1		0.4	
		<i>there</i>		4		1.6	
	Null					4	1.8

Non-referential subjects are the less common category that realize the subject in the two tales both in Spanish and in English. Due to the small figures that appear in the table, a separate focus is thought to be superfluous in this case. Since the expletive *it* and the existential *there* are not an option in Spanish; and conversely, the null referential subject is not possible in English, it was predicted that a similar number of each structure was to be found in each language. Table 2 shows 2% of non-referential subjects in English and 1.8% of non-referential subjects in Spanish. From this almost equal numbers –it is important to remember that English subjects are slightly higher in number than the Spanish ones– it follows that tales exhibit very similar characteristics as regards to non-referential subjects, even though they are realized by completely different structures in each of the two languages studied.

Referential subjects are going to be the focus from now on. They are the most frequent in the typology in the two languages, both in variety and results. However, unquestionable differences can be observed in Figure 1 among English and Spanish. Whereas 124 null subjects have been found in the Spanish tale, only 60 null subjects have been detected in the English story. The difference is even bigger if we pay attention to the other pair of structures, 91 overt subjects in Spanish versus a total of 187 in the English version. This figures need to be judged having in mind the total number of referential subjects collected from each language, which is 247 in English and 217 in Spanish. The great majority of

English overt subjects, 75% out of the referential subjects, is not something unexpected if we have into account the theoretical framework, where English was claimed to be a [-null subject] language.

Figure 1- Overt versus null subjects. English / Spanish comparison



On the other hand, the preponderance of null subjects in Spanish would have been expected to be at least similar since this language was classified as a [+ null subject] language. Nevertheless, Spanish has been found to present a 57% of null subjects out of the total number of referential subjects. From these frequencies, the Spanish null subjects cannot be claimed to be corresponding to the English overt subjects. Moreover, there is a relatively high frequency of null subjects in English. It is true that English has been previously explained that it allows non-overt elements to be the subject in non-tensed clauses, yet 24% is a relatively high frequency of subjects of non-finite clauses in a short text like the tale studied here. Further elucidation on this issue will be subsequently provided together with the analysis of null subjects.

Among overt subjects –remember that only subclasses of referential subjects are going to be discussed hereafter unless otherwise specified– full Noun Phrases have been claimed to be the most common structure that realizes the subject in any language. If both simple and complex NPs are contrasted to the remaining types of overt subject –except for personal pronouns, which will be later discussed in isolation–, this affirmation can be easily confirmed with the help of Figure 2. If on the other hand we pay attention to the comparison the graph shows, i.e. simple and complex NPs separately, we can easily

observe almost the same frequency of simple NP realization in the two languages. The subject type realized by noun phrases is therefore the only category that meets both features; it is the most common and the most uniform type found in the two languages. The fact of analyzing the same tale is crucial for this to happen, that is to say, authors have the need to use the same persons or things as subject of the clauses. It is quite a coincidence, though, the alike results obtained in the simple NPs category.

Nevertheless, a considerable difference among Noun Phrases can be seen in the complex type. English shows the highest number of these NPs. This could be due to the fact that it is a language that tends to present a high amount of pre-modifiers (Stockwell 1965). Since tales are literary creations which also seek for an aesthetic beauty, and provided the previous remark on English word order, the use of complex noun phrases may be seen as natural language even for children. On the contrary, we may presume that it is not so common in Spanish given that pre-modifiers are not a common feature of everyday speech, but more of written texts due to their intricacy. This may be connected to the conception of tale as a genre aimed at children, which accounts for an assumed simplicity.

Figure 2- Overt subjects' classification. English / Spanish comparison

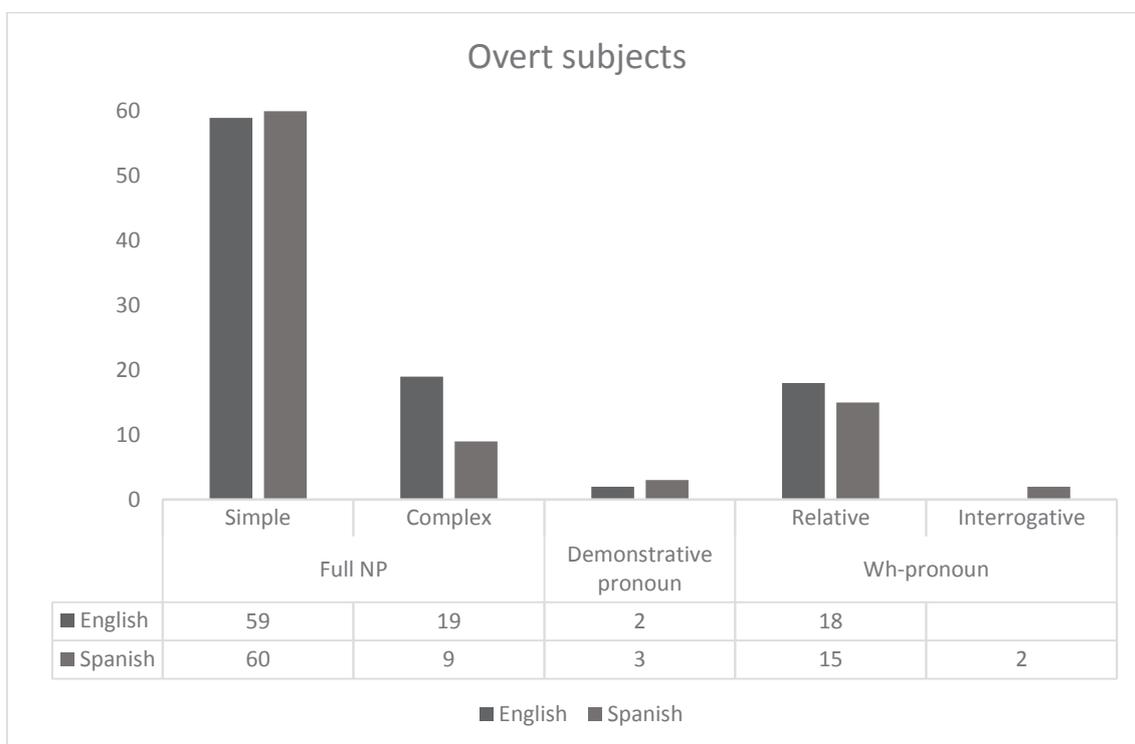


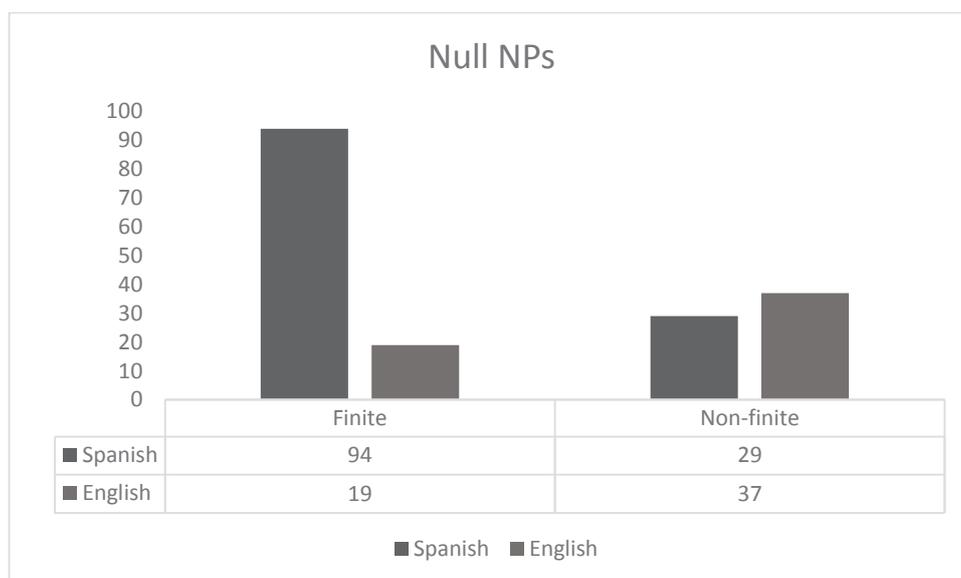
Figure 2 reveals that very similar results have been found as to demonstrative and wh-pronouns in both languages. The lack of heterogeneity in the possible grammatical

phrases that can realize the subject in English and Spanish accounts for this fact, which provides evidence enough to confirm the previously stated assumption that no significant differences were going to be detected in the two tales among the types of overt subjects displayed in Figure 2, notwithstanding the already discussed case of complex NPs.

With reference to the analysis of personal pronouns, which is the ultimate aim in this project, a comparison of the results obtained to other research studies would have been required in order to contrast the hypotheses if data had not been so clarifying. As a matter of fact, an isolated overview of overt personal pronouns is not required due to the immense difference between the frequency of personal pronouns that has been found in the two texts. Whilst the Spanish version has only 2 overt pronouns, the English text has a total of 89 personal pronouns. It is thus indisputable that the number of English pronouns that realize the subject in the tale is not only substantially higher, as it was inferred from the theoretical foundations, but exceedingly larger than the number of Spanish pronouns. The high frequency of English overt pronouns is originated in the impossibility of null subjects in that language. In other words, where the Spanish tale presents null subjects to avoid unnecessary repetition, English must include an overt subject inexorably.

Before this matter of personal pronouns is more deeply taken into consideration, an insight of the null subjects' data is going to be provided. In the methodology it was revealed that null subjects have been classified into two different options, those which lack only the head, i.e. the noun, denominated *null N* in the table; and those which have no content at all, that is, empty categories, designated as *null NP*. A total of 4 instances of the former typology have been found in the English text, and 3 cases in the Spanish one. Since null nouns do not present any inequality, but numbers almost coincide, it has been deemed appropriated not to go into more detail here.

Figure 3- Null subjects in finite and non-finite clauses. English / Spanish comparison



By contrast, it is striking to note such dissimilar figures among null NPs, which at a first glance are considered to deserve further discussion. Figure 3 reflects a comparison among null elements which were detected to be the subject of finite clauses or *pro* and the empty categories which were found to be the subject of non-finite clauses, known as *PRO*. An allusion to the number of null subjects in English was made before for being a too high frequency for belonging exclusively to the group of null subjects of non-tensed clauses. Although there is a great number of *PRO* in this text, neither the frequency nor the difference between Spanish and English is something unusual. This is due to the fact that *PRO* is largely determined by the grammatical construction which verbs take in each language. It can be appreciated now that, conversely to what it has been explained in the theoretical framework, this tale presents finite clauses with null subjects in English. In spite of the fact that the frequency of *pro* in the English text is not determining if we compare it to the Spanish data, its presence is contradictory to the theoretical background provided.

It has been remarked that, notwithstanding the theory, Descriptive Grammar explains exceptions that occur in some cases in all languages. Following the generative approach, some instances in which null elements appear as the subject of finite clauses are accepted, such as diary writings, where null subjects are easily identified with the writer. In this specific case, we can allude first to the special features literature makes use of in order to achieve aesthetic beauty; and second to the concept of anaphoric reference. In the

theoretical foundations of this paper, literature has been characterized by special features that seek for aesthetic beauty and this is in a certain way the main observation that has triggered the study. In addition, in terms of structure, the English tale presents well-defined paragraphs in which subjects are not mixed. To put it another way, it is very distinctive how the subject is usually the same along quite a few clauses often separated by commas –so there are cases of both, intra-sentential and extra-sentential anaphors and it does not make any change–, having the first of these a noun phrase. This NP at the beginning of each excerpt of the story is crucial for readers to properly identify the anaphoric reference of subject pronouns. Therefore, this accounts for the fact that *pro* appears as a subject in the 31% of the clauses that have null subjects in the English tale. Finally, Figure 3 allows us to observe a conclusive overall result of null subjects in tensed clauses in the Spanish text. Before going into further elucidation of null subjects, a remark regarding personal pronouns is necessary. The main hypothesis predicted that the number of overt personal pronouns in Spanish would be higher and more decisive than in any other text genre. This was justified *a priori* by means of an intended simplicity in the tale which would have led the writer to use overt pronouns more frequently than it would be done in a natural way in order to avoid any potential misunderstanding. There is no need of percentage or isolated graphs to display these figures since the difference is clearly seen; only two overt pronouns are the subject in the Spanish text whilst 89 are found in English.

Hitherto, the three assumptions stated before the hypothesis have been confirmed by means of the data obtained; being the three of them originated in theoretical aspects triggered by grammatical issues. As for the hypothesis, it presumes to some extent results contrary to what it would be expected if we based our description exclusively on the theoretical framework developed in this paper–yet those presupposed results are actually grammatically correct and have been properly justified. Given the fact that the most frequent typologies in the table are null referential NPs for Spanish and overt personal pronouns for English, it was deemed necessary to compare these two data. If the theoretical background is again recalled, and considering that both percentages are substantially similar, we can conclude that the frequency of overt personal pronouns in English, 36% of the referential subjects, is the equivalent for the 43% of the referential subjects which are *pro* in Spanish. Furthermore, the already discussed outstanding

difference among the 35% of personal pronouns in English – a total of 89 pronouns– versus the 0.9% of personal pronouns in Spanish –a total of 2 pronouns– is reason enough, as it has been advanced in previous sections, to reject the hypothesis. In view of this, it can be concluded that “Puss in Boots” does not show a particularly high number of overt subjects in Spanish for being children’s literature as it was expected.

7. CONCLUSION

The main aim in this study was to prove whether a different syntax from that of normal language is used in tales for children. Yet from a comparative approach of English and Spanish, this study concentrates on a single grammatical function in a single tale and, following the case study research method, an exhaustive manual analysis has been developed in order to establish and contrast a hypothesis on the basis of Generative Grammar. Conversely to what had been hypothesized, not only the Spanish tale presents a concluding number of null subjects which clearly show that non-overt subjects are not seen as an impediment for children to understand tales, but also the English one presents a considerable number of these cases in which some difficulty could be thought to exist due to the complexity of identification of such pronouns given the lack of strong verbal inflection. Broadly speaking, the ideas explored in the theoretical background are in general terms supported by the results obtained. Even the “Avoid the Pronoun Principle”, which seems to be drastic in content, could be somehow reflected in the lack of overt personal pronouns among the Spanish data.

Three assumptions have been proved to be true. Firstly, the number of overt referential subjects realized by noun phrases, *wh*-pronouns, and demonstrative pronouns has been proved to be very similar because of the parallelism between the realization of the subject in English and Spanish with regard to those grammatical structures. Secondly, the amount of non-referential subjects is almost identical in both stories. Although non-referential subjects are necessarily realized by null constituents in Spanish and by overt constituents in English, both structures are equivalent of each other in the two languages and this is the reason why the tale presents an equal frequency in both of them. And finally, the overall result of overt subject pronouns in the English tale is substantially higher than in the Spanish tale.

Nonetheless, an exceptional result has been detected in the null subjects of tensed clauses in English, which according to the “Null Subject Parameter” were not a possibility in this language. This finding can be properly justified by means of the structure of the tale, which presents a noun phrase at the beginning of those groups of sentences that lack subject pronouns. The noun phrase is the reference of the null subjects and it easily allows the interpretation of those empty categories. In this sense, a brief mention has been made as to the anaphoric reference of the subjects found for clarification purposes, yet it is a complex concept that deserves a complete paper on its own.

On the other hand, the presence of null subjects in tensed clauses in English could be connected to the main hypothesis of this paper and thereby considered a feature specific to literary texts. Instead of evidence supporting a greater number of overt subjects as a result of simplicity in the Spanish tale, evidence showing a higher frequency of null subjects in English could be associated with the already referred to specific characteristics of literary genres. In brief, evidence is found in the present paper to affirm that the Spanish version of the tale fulfills the features of Spanish general language as far as the realization of the subject is concerned, whereas the English version exhibits certain variations that deviate from the prescriptive use of the English language.

Since this paper is a case study and thus rather limited as to the number of tales studied, it would be object of further research to investigate different texts by the same author of the tale analyzed here in order to contrast the main conclusions reached. Another interesting possibility would be to compare more versions in different languages and thereby expand the comparative study to a wider number of languages to prove whether the behavior of languages has to do with the fact of belonging to the [+ null subject] or to the [- null subject] option of the parameter. Similarly, it would be possible to contrast several tales written by different authors to confirm the lack of special features associated to the nature of tales as a literary genre written for children with regard to overt subjects in the Spanish version and the presence of particularities as for null subjects in the English version. All things considered, the present study opens the possibility to further theoretical and practical investigation which, following the trend in Comparative Grammar, could serve to practical application in foreign language teaching and, more specifically, to foreign language teaching for young learners due to the nature of the texts analyzed.

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