

Spanish Language Interference in the English Learning Process for Students of the  
English Immersion Program by MESCYT.

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## *Abstract*

The learning process of English as a Foreign Language is a tricky challenge to face when it comes to deal with Spanish native speakers. Most of the time, people compare the structures and uses of both languages (the native and the target one), which causes an interference in the learning process and may result on failure or poorly achieved results.

This research proposal has emerged due to the necessity to study and pay careful attention to the phenomenon described above, since it represents a problem for teachers when it comes to evaluate outcomes and their performance as educators as well. In Dominican Republic, there is program, which is the perfect scenario for a research of this kind since it is the most popular, and effective course in the whole country, not mentioning that it is sponsored by the government.

The study has been focused on the English Immersion Program by MESCYT at Universidad Evangélica Nacional in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. The population to be subject of this research is the classroom 305-morning and afternoon shifts.

Literary Review has been sought in order to point out the relevance of the topic from different perspectives and nations. Special attention to specific learning skills such as reading and writing has been paid. The methodology, questionnaire, tools, references and results based on hypothesis have been incorporated.

**Keywords:** Immersion Program, Learning Process, Native Language, Target Language, Interference, ESL students, EFL students, Learning skills.

## *Introduction*

Learning a second language is a tough process, it is even more difficult when the student uses his or her native language as crutches to help stepping toward new information. The English Immersion Program has a policy which tries to avoid Spanish during the teaching-learning process, it is not possible for teachers to achieve this in a 100% all the time, students make it hard, they believe it will impossible for them to learn English without using their language as a reference. Student defy the teachers, translate and relate everything with Spanish inside the classroom, in their minds and outside the classroom; consequently, the learning results are considerably affected.

Chapter I states the problem and its importance in a briefly explanation. It also contains a definition for the keywords terms in order to better expose the topic of this research. In this chapter the research questions are presented, the general and specific objectives are clearly described.

Chapter II contains a wide breakdown of information on the subject taken from different sources which study the topic from different realities but focused on linguistic and communicative skills. Geographical and historical backgrounds are presented.

Chapter III carries out the methodology, design and tools for the research proposal, how the information has been gathered and the materials that were needed for this purpose.

Chapter IV presents a discussion of the research questions in details, and the conclusions.

## Chapter I: Theoretical Framework

### *Statement of the Problem*

The English immersion program by MESCYT is a program for students of the Dominican Republic in which they have the opportunity to intensively learn a foreign language at no cost.

Even though teachers are trained to give an excellent and successful experience to the students, most of them feel scared, with low confidence and insecure about the process. As a consequence, they Afincar the process on the use of Spanish for translation of "difficult" words and expressions or "to better understand" specific grammar topics.

The use of Spanish, as already described causes interference in the learning process which results on confusion, low level of understanding, unsuccessful achievement of "second language speaker" individuals, lack of proficiency at listening, poor structure formation ability or vocabulary, lack of fluency at speaking and communicating in general.

### *Importance of the Problem*

In order to achieve a successful result in an almost 100% of the population of the English Immersion Program, it is necessary to pay attention to the use of Spanish and create strategies that help avoiding or controlling the situation as much as possible.

Teachers' success will be represented in a high level by how their students are able to put translation and comparison aside and dive into the only-english learning process. Once they are completely able to take the risk and forget about Spanish, results will increase positively for the program as well as for the demanding community.

### *Hypothesis*

Unsucessfull results after finishing the English Immersion Program Are due in a 60% to the use of Spanish outside the classroom, when doing homework or even inside the classroom as the students process new information comparing it with Spanish or translating into Spanish in their minds.

### *Justification*

Students who have followed the teachers instruction and have forgotten about Spanish during their learning process have obtained proficiency at understanding and using the language as well as a considerable fluency when speaking. On the other hand, students who were always translating and comparing with their mother tongue only got the half or less of the proficiency observed in the first group, some of them learned enough to communicate but forgot the information some months after finishing the program.

### *General Objective*

To define and study the interference caused by spanish in the English as a Foreign Language learning process and the impact or consequences it brings for students in classroom 305-morning and afternoon shifts of the English Immersion Program by MESCYT at Universidad Evangélica Nacional in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic.

### *Specific Objectives*

- 1.- To Identify the factors that suppress students from creating confidence on the learning process of EFL without using Spanish.
- 2.- To explain the consequences provoked by the use of Spanish in the EFL process.
- 3.- To discover the students' position about the use of Spanish and how they consider it is helpful for their EFL process.

### *Research Questions*

- 1.-What are the consequences of using Spanish as a reference for learning EFL?
- 2.-What are the factors that lead students to create a sense of dependence on translation and comparison of the native language with the target one?
- 3.-When it comes to results, how significant are the differences between a person who finished the program without using spanish and one never used it?
- 4.-How can teachers manage to avoid in a 100% the use of spanish in students and inspire them to think in English during all the process?
- 5.-Why is it so unhealthy for the process to permit the interference and how is it demonstrated?
- 6.-Which strategies or teaching techniques better fit with a non spanish teaching environment?

### *Definition of Terms*

#### *The English Immersion Program in the Dominican Republic*

##### *Description*

It is a program of English as a foreign language of four hours a day carried out in universities, institutes recognized by the teaching of English as a foreign language and in centers under the coordination of the MESCyT. In its pilot phase, the program lasted 600 hours. Classes are taught entirely in English and in all spaces of the centers where the program is run, all staff, including students, must speak only English.

##### *Overall objective*

Contribute to raise the quality of Higher Education students, increase the competitiveness of the Dominican Republic in the national and international market by training human resources and enhance the economic development of the Dominican Republic.

##### *Methodology*

The teaching is taught in morning, evening and evening hours. Students have at their disposal free of charge: textbooks, workbooks, CD and / or cassette and computer-assisted software for the teaching of English as a foreign language. This software allows students to reinforce what they have learned in face-to-face classes; Accelerate your learning in an easy and entertaining way, and at the same time, develop the basic skills in the area of computer science. In the implementation phase, the duration of the program was extended to 700 class hours as part of the adjustments made to the development of the same after the evaluation of the Pilot phase. The student with a scholarship in this program must have time for four hours. CTO (2015).

According to Apolinar (2018) *“The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MESCyT) reached historical figures this year that ends, by graduating 9,506 students of the English Immersion Program for Competitiveness.*

*The institution also awarded the largest number of national scholarships, for a total of 7,964, in addition to receiving in the country the highest number of international scholarship graduates, 993 professionals who enter the labor market.*

*During 2014, the MESCyT granted 1,629 international scholarships that included masters and doctorates in more than 35 universities in Spain, France, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil and others distributed in Europe and Latin America.*

*To these achievements is added the approval of 54 research projects, from 20 institutions of higher education and research centers, with an investment of RD \$ 428,721,578.59. The MESCyT achieved the highest number of winners of entrepreneurship projects, 12 business plans presented by 18 universities were selected this year The Minister of Higher Education, Ligia Amada Melo, also highlighted the progress in the redesign of university*

*careers, especially in the areas of engineering, teacher training, medicine and nursing, covering 110 curricula of 15 universities.*

#### *English by Immersion*

*The Immersion English for Competitiveness Program started as a pilot plan in 2005, and for this year it was taught in 75 centers, distributed in 26 provinces and the National District. To date, 56,155 university students have graduated from this program. A survey applied this year to 3,336 graduates of this program in 2013, showed that 1,201 obtained a job at the end of the course, attributing 64% to knowledge of English. Likewise, of the 732 that were working, 28.5% were promoted in their job due to the command of the language, which allowed them to increase their income.*

*Of those who obtained employment at the end of the program, 50% earn a salary between RD \$ 10,000 and RD \$ 20,000; 22.2% receive between RD \$ 20,000 and RD \$ 30,000 and 5.6% earn more than RD \$ 30,000.*

*The results of a study published by Education First (EF), Dominican Republic occupies the 23rd position in the World Ranking of the English Level Index and number two in Latin America". Apolinar (Listin Diario, 2018)*

*The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.*

#### *History*

The Commission for the Reform and Modernization of the State, created in 1996, assumed the responsibility of producing a proposal for a law to organize the National System of Science and Technology. To this end, some 200 people and some 80 institutions of the State and Civil or Decentralized Society met in order to hold workshops and consultations on the meaning and relevance of science and technology.

These workshops and consultations produced a document that recommended the creation of a body to regulate and promote science and technology activities. As a result of this, the approval and promulgation of Law No. 139-01 was created, the Secretary of State for Higher Education, Science and Technology (MESCyT) was created with three SubSecretariats: Higher Education, Administration and Science and Technology. At the end of 2009 it became the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MESCyT).

#### *View*

Higher education is a permanent process that takes place after secondary or secondary education, leading to a degree at a higher technical level, undergraduate or graduate level.

It is fundamental for the development of society, insofar as it depends on its capacity for innovation and promotes the production, appropriation and application of knowledge for sustainable human development and the promotion of values and attitudes that tend to the realization of the human being, expanding its possibilities to contribute to the development of society as a whole and the production of goods and services.

Higher education, production and access to scientific knowledge and technologies are rights of all citizens, therefore, the development of them is a public service, inherent in the social purpose of the State.



### *Mission*

Promote the national policy in Higher Education and in Science and Technology, which are two inseparable fields, as established by Law No. 139-01. Although it is a complex mission, detailed in the aforementioned law, in the various regulations and guidelines of the President of the Republic, three major commitments for the Minister of this matter could be proposed. The first is to get the institutions to function as a system, that is, to collaborate, to integrate harmoniously with the rest of the State bodies and with counterpart organizations in the region and in the world.

The second commitment on which we must strive, no less important of course, is in the quality of our work: our institutions must train the best professionals and our research centers must generate science and technology that truly drive national development. With that purpose, we are committed to the permanent assessment and development of five-year diagnostic. A third obligation that could be mentioned is communication and information.

It is essential that the institutions covered by the System maintain qualitative and quantitative information mechanisms that allow self-assessment, constant rectification, the relationship with other organizations and with the sectors to which we owe. Reliable statistics on all processes, information systems, printed and digital publications, and good service to users at all points where we find them and them, would be a manifestation of this latest commitment.

### *Objectives*

Formulate public policies related to higher education, science and technology. Regulate, organize, modernize and reformulate higher education in the country, ensuring its normal and correct functioning. Promote the development of science and technology at the national level, with special interest in productive activities and social service, ensuring that said operation responds to the needs of the country. Define the duties and responsibilities of higher education institutions to ensure an adequate level of excellence, both in higher education, in science and technology.

It is the organ of the Executive Power, in the branch of Higher Education, Science and Technology, in charge of promoting, regulating and administering the National System of those areas. In accordance with its powers, it oversees the execution of all the provisions of Law 139-01 and the policies issued by the Executive Branch. It is the responsibility of this office to supervise the System as a whole. Therefore, it monitors compliance with policies, the evaluation of all bodies and the coordination of their work.

To that end, it is based on the Deputy Ministries of Higher Education and Science and Technology, on studies of the dependencies and on the decisions of the National Council of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The Strategic Plan for Science, Technology and Innovation can be defined as a tool for political, institutional and financial articulation of the National Science, Technology and Innovation System. Its formulation comes from both the mandate of Law No. 139-01, regarding the formulation of scientific and technological policies, and the articulation of the National System of Innovation and

Technological Development (SNIDT), created by Decree No. 190- 07

In this context, the MESCYT has proposed to formulate with the participation and as part of the set of actors that make up both SNIDT and other external sectors, the Strategic Plan for Science, Technology and Innovation, whose formulation process aims to: Contribute with the competitive improvement of the national productive sectors through the articulation of these with the national system of higher education, science and technology. Support the process of integration and economic transformation required by the country for its successful insertion in regional trade integration schemes such as DR-CAFTA. Strengthen the process of national economic transition planned within the framework of the National Systemic Competitiveness Plan towards an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

[www.mescyt.gob.do](http://www.mescyt.gob.do)

### *10 Definitions of Learning*

1. “A change in human disposition or capability that persists over a period of time and is not simply ascribable to processes of growth.”  
— *From The Conditions of Learning by Robert Gagne*
  
2. “Learning is the relatively permanent change in a person’s knowledge or behavior due to experience. This definition has three components: 1) the duration of the change is long-term rather than short-term; 2) the locus of the change is the content and structure of knowledge in memory or the behavior of the learner; 3) the cause of the change is the learner’s experience in the environment rather than fatigue, motivation, drugs, physical condition or physiologic intervention.”  
— *From Learning in Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Richard E. Mayer*
  
3. “We define learning as the transformative process of taking in information that—when internalized and mixed with what we have experienced—changes what we know and builds on what we do. It’s based on input, process, and reflection. It is what changes us.”  
— *From The New Social Learning by Tony Bingham and Marcia Conner*
  
4. “It has been suggested that the term learning defies precise definition because it is put to multiple uses. Learning is used to refer to (1) the acquisition and mastery of what is already known about something, (2) the extension and clarification of meaning of one’s experience, or (3) an organized, intentional process of testing ideas relevant to problems. In other words, it is used to describe a product, a process, or a function.”  
— *From Learning How to Learn: Applied Theory for Adults by R.M. Smith*

5. “Acquiring knowledge and skills and having them readily available from memory so you can make sense of future problems and opportunities.” (Listen to an interview with one of the authors.)

-From *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* by Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, Mark A. McDaniel

6. “A process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential of improved performance and future learning.”

-From *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* by Susan Ambrose, et al.

7. “The process of gaining knowledge and expertise.”

-From *The Adult Learner* by Malcolm Knowles

8. “Learning involves strengthening correct responses and weakening incorrect responses. Learning involves adding new information to your memory. Learning involves making sense of the presented material by attending to relevant information, mentally reorganizing it, and connecting it with what you already know.”

-From *eLearning and the Science of Instruction* by Ruth C. Clark and Richard E. Mayer

9. “A persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learner’s experience and interaction with the world.”

-From *Psychology of Learning for Instruction* by M. Driscoll

10. “Learning is a process that occurs within nebulous environments of shifting core elements – not entirely under the control of the individual. Learning (defined as actionable knowledge) can reside outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database), is focused on connecting specialized information sets, and the connections that enable us to learn more are more important than our current state of knowing.”

-From *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age* by George Siemens  
[/thelearningcoach.com/learning/10-definitions-learning/](http://thelearningcoach.com/learning/10-definitions-learning/)

### *Native language*

In most cases, the term native language refers to the language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives. Also known as a mother tongue, first language, or arterial language.

A person who has more than one native language is regarded as bilingual or multilingual. Contemporary linguists and educators commonly use the term L1 to refer to a first or native language, and the term L2 to refer to a second language or a foreign language that's being studied.

As David Crystal has observed, the term native language (like native speaker) "has become a sensitive one in those parts of the world where native has developed demeaning connotations" (Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics). The term is avoided by some specialists in World English and New Englishes.

### Examples and Observations

"[Leonard] Bloomfield (1933) defines a native language as one learned on one's mother's knee, and claims that no one is perfectly sure in a language that is acquired later. 'The first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language' (1933: 43). This definition equates a native speaker with a mother tongue speaker. Bloomfield's definition also assumes that age is the critical factor in language learning and that native speakers provide the best models, although he does say that, in rare instances, it is possible for a foreigner to speak as well as a native.

"The assumptions behind all these terms are that a person will speak the language they learn first better than languages they learn later, and that a person who learns a language later cannot speak it as well as a person who has learned the language as their first language. But it is clearly not necessarily true that the language a person learns first is the one they will always be best at ..."

*(Andy Kirkpatrick, World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press, 2007)*

### Native Language Acquisition

"A native language is generally the first one a child is exposed to. Some early studies referred to the process of learning one's first or native language as First Language Acquisition or FLA, but because many, perhaps most, children in the world are exposed to more than one language almost from birth, a child may have more than one native language. As a consequence, specialists now prefer the term native language acquisition (NLA); it is more accurate and includes all sorts of childhood situations."

*(Fredric Field, Bilingualism in the USA: The Case of the Chicano-Latino Community. John Benjamins, 2011).*

### Language Acquisition and Language Change

"Our native language is like a second skin, so much a part of us we resist the idea that it is constantly changing, constantly being renewed. Though we know intellectually that the English we speak today and the English of Shakespeare's time are very different, we tend to think of them as the same--static rather than dynamic."

*(Casey Miller and Kate Swift, The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing, 2nd ed. iUniverse, 2000)*

"Languages change because they are used by human beings, not machines. Human beings share common physiological and cognitive characteristics, but members of a speech community differ slightly in their knowledge and use of their shared language. Speakers of different regions, social classes, and generations use language differently in different situations (register variation). As children acquire their native language, they are exposed to this synchronic variation within their language. For example, speakers of any generation use more and less formal language depending on the situation. Parents (and other adults) tend to use more informal language to children. Children may acquire some informal features of the language in preference to their formal alternatives, and incremental changes in the language (tending toward greater informality) accumulate over generations. (This may help explain why each generation seems to feel that following generations are ruder and less eloquent, and are corrupting the language!) When a later generation acquires an innovation in the language introduced by a previous generation, the language changes." (*Shaligram Shukla and Jeff Connor-Linton, "Language Change." An Introduction to Language And Linguistics, ed. by Ralph W. Fasold and Jeff Connor-Linton. Cambridge University Press, 2006*)

#### Margaret Cho on Her Native Language

"It was hard for me to do the show [All-American Girl] because a lot of people didn't even understand the concept of Asian-American. I was on a morning show, and the host said, 'Awright, Margaret, we're changing over to an ABC affiliate! So why don't you tell our viewers in your native language that we're making that transition?' So I looked at the camera and said, 'Um, they're changing over to an ABC affiliate.'" (*Margaret Cho, I Have Chosen to Stay and Fight. Penguin, 2006*)

#### Joanna Czechowska on Reclaiming a Native Language

"As a child growing up in Derby [England] in the 60s I spoke Polish beautifully, thanks to my grandmother. While my mother went out to work, my grandmother, who spoke no English, looked after me, teaching me to speak her native tongue. Babcia, as we called her, dressed in black with stout brown shoes, wore her grey hair in a bun, and carried a walking stick.

"But my love affair with Polish culture began to fade when I was five--the year Babcia died.

"My sisters and I continued to go to Polish school, but the language would not return. Despite the efforts of my father, even a family trip to Poland in 1965 could not bring it back. When six years later my father died too, at just 53, our Polish connection almost ceased to exist. I left Derby and went to university in London. I never spoke Polish, never ate Polish food nor visited Poland. My childhood was gone and almost forgotten.

"Then in 2004, more than 30 years later, things changed again. A new wave of Polish immigrants had arrived and I began to hear the language of my childhood all around me--every time I got on a bus. I saw Polish newspapers in the capital and Polish food for sale in

the shops. The language sounded so familiar yet somehow distant--as if it were something I tried to grab but was always out of reach.

"I began to write a novel [The Black Madonna of Derby] about a fictional Polish family and, at the same time, decided to enroll at a Polish language school.

"Each week I went through half-remembered phrases, getting bogged down in the intricate grammar and impossible inflections. When my book was published, it put me back in touch with school friends who like me were second-generation Polish. And strangely, in my language classes, I still had my accent and I found words and phrases would sometimes come unbidden, long lost speech patterns making a sudden reappearance. I had found my childhood again."

*Richard Nordquist, professor of English and Rhetoric who wrote college-level Grammar and Composition textbooks. March 23, 2019*

#### *Foreign Language*

A foreign language is a language originally from another country than the speaker. However, there must be a defined distinction between foreign and second language. It is also a language not spoken in the native country of the person referred to, i.e., an English speaker living in Spain can say that Spanish is a foreign language to him or her. These two characterisations do not exhaust the possible definitions, however, and the label is occasionally applied in ways that are variously misleading or factually inaccurate.

Some children learn more than one language from birth or from a very young age: they are bilingual or multilingual. These children can be said to have two, three or more mother tongues: neither language is foreign to that child, even if one language is a foreign language for the vast majority of people in the child's birth country. For example, a child learning English from his English father and Irish at school in Ireland can speak both English and Irish, but neither is a foreign language to him. This is common in countries such as India, South Africa, or Canada due to these countries having multiple official languages.

In general, it is believed that children have advantage to learning a foreign language over adults. However, there are studies which have shown adult students are better at foreign language learning than child students. It is because adults have pre-existing knowledge of how grammar works, and a superior ability of memorizing vocabulary.

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\\_language](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_language)

#### *English as a Foreign Language*

Definition

A traditional term for the use or study of the English language by non-native speakers in countries where English is generally not a local medium of communication.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) corresponds roughly to the Expanding Circle described by linguist Braj Kachru in "Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle" (1985).

Example and Observations:

"ESL and EFL instructional approaches differ in significant ways. ESL is based on the premise that English is the language of the community and the school and that students have access to English models. EFL is usually learned in environments where the language of the community and the school is not English. EFL teachers have the difficult task of finding access to and providing English models for their students. . . . As the number of ESL students has increased in schools across North America, more classrooms and school have become more like EFL than ESL environments."

*(Lee Gunderson, ESL (ELL) Literacy Instruction: A Guidebook to Theory and Practice, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2009)*

#### Distinctions Between ESL and EFL

"Although ESL (English as Second Language) and EFL (English as Foreign Language) are often used interchangeably, there are unique differences between the two. . . .

"ESL countries are nations where the medium of instruction in education and government is in English, although English may not be the native language.

"On the other hand, EFL countries do not use English as a medium of instruction but English is taught in schools. Malaysia was once considered an ESL country but now leans more towards EFL.

"The methods and approaches of teaching English as a second language and foreign language do differ greatly."

*(Christopher Fernandez, "Of English Teachers Then and Now." The Star [Malaysia], November 11, 2012)*

"The distinction between second language and foreign language is not, however, a sharp one, and there are cases, like Indonesia, where classification is disputable. Moreover, there is a considerable amount of variation in the roles played by second languages, for example in education, in the fields of discourse used, and in the giving of prestige or power. In India, the medium of instruction in schools was changed from English to the regional languages after Independence, and subsequently there has been a gradual process of Indianization of the universities, which at one time were all English-medium."

*(Charles Barber, The English Language: A Historical Introduction. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000)*

"Indonesia, a former Dutch colony, used to emphasize the teaching of Dutch . . . The movement towards English as a foreign language began at independence, and English is now the main foreign language being learned in Indonesia. English is taught for eight or nine years from primary school (from Grade 4 or 5) through high school (Renandya, 2000). The main objective is to provide reading skills to enable Indonesians to read science-related materials in English."

*(Maria Lourdes S. Bautista and Andrew B. Gonzalez, "Southeast Asian Englishes." The Handbook of World Englishes, ed. by Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, and Cecil L. Nelson. Blackwell, 2006)*

### *ESL VS EFL*

#### *Similarities between First and Second Language Acquisition Developmental Sequences*

Researchers have carried out numerous studies to understand the nature of first and second language acquisition. These studies have revealed that both first and second language learners follow a pattern of development, which is mainly followed despite exceptions. Rod Ellis (1984) covers the idea of developmental sequences in detail and outlines three developmental stages: the silent period, formulaic speech, and structural and semantic simplification.

Research in natural settings where unplanned language, such as the learner language that results from attempts by learners to express meaning more or less spontaneously, is used to show that both first and second language learners pass through a similar initial stage, the silent period. Children acquiring their first language go through a period of listening to the language they are exposed to. During this period the child tries to discover what language is. In the case of second language acquisition, learners opt for a silent period when immediate production is not required from them. In general, however, many second language learners - especially classroom learners- are urged to speak. The fact that there is a silent period in both first and second language learners (when given the opportunity) is widely accepted. However, there is disagreement on what contribution the silent period has in second language acquisition. While Krashen (1982) argues that it builds competence in the learner via listening, Gibbons (1985, cited in Ellis, 1994) argues that it is a stage of incomprehension.

The second developmental stage is termed formulaic speech. Formulaic speech is defined as expressions which are learnt as unanalysable wholes and employed on particular occasions (Lyons, 1968, cited in Ellis, 1994). Krashen (1982) suggests that these expressions can have the form of routines (whole utterances learned as memorized chunks - e.g. I don't know.), patterns (partially unanalyzed utterances with one or more slots - e.g. Can I have a \_?), and Ellis (1994) suggests that these expressions can consist of entire scripts such as greetings. The literature points out that formulaic speech is not only present



in both first and second language acquisition but also present in the speech of adult native speakers.

In the third stage the first and second language learners apply structural and semantic simplifications to their language.

Structural simplifications take the form of omitting grammatical functors (e.g. articles, auxiliary verbs) and semantic simplifications take the form of omitting content words (e. g. nouns, verbs). There are two suggested reasons why such simplifications occur. The first reason is that learners may not have yet acquired the necessary linguistic forms. The second reason is that they are unable to access linguistic forms during production.

These three stages show us that L1 and L2 learners go through similar stages of development with the exception that L2 learners are urged to skip the silent period.

However, learners do not only show a pattern in developmental sequences, but also in the order in which they acquire certain grammatical morphemes.

### Acquisition Order

Researchers have tried to find out if there is an order of acquisition in acquiring grammatical morphemes. The findings are important but contradictory and have implications on first and second language acquisition. Morpheme studies aimed to investigate the acquisition of grammatical functions such as articles or inflectional features such as the plural -s. An important research in this field is that of Roger Brown (1973, cited in McLaughlin, 1987). According to Brown, there is a common - invariant - sequence of acquisition for at least 14 function words in English as a first language - noun and verb inflections, prepositions, and articles. Findings of these studies pointed out that there is a definite order in the acquisition of morphemes in English first language learners. Other morpheme studies were carried out on various functors suggesting that an order of acquisition does exist.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) review studies which have proposed that the acquisition of question words (what, where, who, why, when, and how), show a great similarity in first and second language acquisition. Based on the morpheme studies in L2 acquisition, Krashen (1982) put forward the Natural Order Hypothesis which he developed to account for second language acquisition. He claimed that we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order. This acquisition order is not determined by simplicity or the order of rules taught in the class.

Thus far it seems as if L1 acquisition and L2 acquisition follow similar routes, however, other morpheme studies have shown that not all first language learners follow the order of acquisition predicted. There appears to be inter-learner variation in the order of acquisition. Wells (1986b, in Ellis, 1994) proposes inter-learner variables affecting the order of acquisition as sex, intelligence, social background, rate of learning, and experience of linguistic interaction.

Furthermore, McLaughlin (1987) claims that evidence from research shows that the learner's first language has an effect on acquisitional sequences which either slows their

development or modifies it. He adds that, considerable individual variation in how learners acquire a second language, such as different learning, performance, and communication strategies, obscure the acquisitional sequences for certain constructions. Therefore, McLaughlin (1987) argues that "Krashen's claim that an invariant natural order is always found is simply not true" (p. 33).

The above arguments show that there seems to exist an order of acquisition in both first and second language acquisition. Hence, one should be careful not to claim for an invariant order of acquisition but for a more flexible order of acquisition and be aware of the variations affecting this order.

### Linguistic Universals and Markedness

There are two approaches to linguistic universals. The first approach was put forward by Greenberg (1966, in Ellis 1994) and termed typological universals. Typological universals are based on cross-linguistic comparisons on a wide range of languages drawn from different language families to discover which features they have in common (e.g. all languages have nouns, verbs etc.). The second approach is the generative school represented by Chomsky. The aim is to study individual languages in great depth in order to identify the principles of grammar which underlie and govern specific rules. This approach was later termed as Universal Grammar (Ellis, 1994).

The most relevant aspect of both approaches that relates to L1 and L2 acquisition is that some features in a language are marked and some are unmarked. According to typological universals, unmarked features are those that are universal or present in most languages and which the learners tend to transfer. Marked rules are language specific features which the learner resists transferring. According to Universal Grammar, core rules, such as word order, are innate and can be arrived at through the application of general, abstract principles of language structure. Peripheral rules are rules that are not governed by universal principles. Peripheral elements are those that are derived from the history of the language, that have been borrowed from other languages, or that have arisen accidentally. These elements are marked. Peripheral aspects are more difficult to learn (Ellis, 1994; McLaughlin, 1987).

Even though neither of these approaches aimed at explaining first or second language acquisition, the results of both are applicable. The findings show that unmarked features are learned earlier and easier than marked rules in both the first and the second language while unmarked forms require more time and effort by the learner.

### Input

Input is defined as "language which a learner hears or receives and from which he or she can learn" (Richards et al., 1989, p. 143) and its importance is widely accepted. Behaviorist views hold that there is a direct relationship between input and output. In order to obtain favorable habits the language learner must be given feedback, which constitutes the

input. Interactionist views of language acquisition also hold that verbal interaction, or input, is crucial for language acquisition.

Stephen Krashen (1982) has put forward the Input Hypothesis which reveals the importance he places on input. He argues that the learner needs to receive comprehensible input to acquire language. Information about the grammar is automatically available when the input is understood. Krashen argues that the input a first language learner receives is simple and comprehensible at the beginning and is getting slightly more complicated. With this argument, he supports his next argument that input should be slightly above the level of the language learner ( $i+1$ ). Only in doing so can the second language learner move forward. He argues that the second language learner should be exposed to the target language as much as possible and that the lack of comprehensible input will cause the language learner to be held up in his development (Ellis, 1994; McLaughlin, 1987).

The Interactionist Approach to first language acquisition holds that one to one interaction gives the child access to language which is adjusted to his or her level of comprehension, therefore, interaction is seen as crucial and impersonal sources of language (such as TV and radio) are seen as insufficient. Consequently, verbal interaction is seen to be crucial for language leaning since it helps to make the facts of the second language salient to the learner. Similarly, intersectional modifications which take place in the conversations between native and non-native speakers are seen as necessary to make input comprehensible for the second language learner (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Ellis, 1994).

There is, however, a contradicting view to the importance of input in first and second language acquisition. Chomsky (see Ellis, 1994; McLaughlin, 1991) argues that input is essential but that input alone cannot explain first language acquisition because it contains ungrammaticalities and disfluencies which make it an inadequate source of information for language acquisition. Children would not be able to distinguish what is grammatical and ungrammatical based on such input. Furthermore, input underdetermines linguistic competence. He argues that input alone does not supply learners with all the information they need to discover rules of the L1. Therefore, he points out that the child must be equipped with knowledge that enables the learners to overcome the deficiencies of the input. Later, Universal Grammar researchers have drawn implications to second language acquisition from these arguments. It is believed that the same arguments for the inadequacy of input in first language acquisition also account for second language acquisition.

Consequently, when learning a first language, learners must rely on the knowledge they are equipped with; and when learning a second language, learners must rely on the L1.

These arguments show us that both input and the knowledge that the child is equipped with are important and should interact for learning and development to take place. Therefore, one should not be favored over the other.

### Behavioristic Views of Language Acquisition

The similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition is seen in the Behavioristic Approach originally which tries to explain learning in general. The famous psychologist Pavlov tried

to explain learning in terms of conditioning and habit formation. Following Pavlov, B. F. Skinner tried to explain language learning in terms of operant conditioning. This view sees language as a behavior to be taught. A small part of the foreign language acts as a stimulus to which the learner responds (e.g. by repetition). When the learner is 100 % successful, the teacher reinforces by praise or approval.

Consequently, the likelihood of the behavior is increased. However, if the learner responds inappropriately then the behavior is punished and the likelihood of this behavior to occur is decreased (Brown, 1994). In other words, children imitate a piece of language they hear and if they receive positive reinforcement they continue to imitate and practice that piece of language which then turns into a 'habit' (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Similarly, basing on the Behavioristic Approach it is assumed that a person learning a second language starts off with the habits associated with the first language. These habits interfere with those needed for second language speech and new habits of language are formed. Errors produced by the second language learner are seen as first language habits interfering with second language habits. This approach advises the immediate treatment of learner errors (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Some regular and routine aspects of language might be learned through stimulus/response but this does not seem to account for the more grammatical structures of the language. The Behavioristic Approach holds that language acquisition is environmentally determined, that the environment provides the language learner with language, which acts as a stimulus, to which the language learner responds. However, L1 and L2 learners form and repeat sentences they have not heard of before. Therefore, this approach fails to account for the creative language use of L1 and L2 learners.

#### Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky has made a social emphasis on education in general and language education in particular. Vygotsky (1982, cited in Daniels, 1996, p. 171-172) explains the ZPD as follows:

“The child is able to copy a series of actions which surpass his or her own capacities, but only within limits. By means of copying, the child is able to perform much better when together with and guided by adults than when left alone, and can do so with understanding and independently. The difference between the level of solved tasks that can be performed with adult guidance and help and the level of independently solved tasks is the zone of proximal development.” (p. 117)

When children come across a problem they cannot solve themselves they turn to others for help. Thus, collaboration with another person is important for a child to learn. Otherwise, development would not be possible. Learning collaboratively with others precedes and shapes development. A good example for this process is said to be the development of literacy (Gallaway & Richards, 1994; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Vygotsky asserts that through using language children take part in the intellectual life of the community. In order to negotiate meaning, collaboration between the child and the members of the community is required. Considering language education, instruction creates

the zone of proximal development, stimulating a series of inner developmental processes (Daniels, 1996; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). According to the ZPD, assistance and collaboration are crucial for learning and development. The teacher's assistance and students' collaboration with their teacher and their peers is inevitable for L2 development. The teacher's most important classroom work "is to provide for the social interaction within the community of learners such that the learners may move from what they know to what they don't yet know" (Hawkins, 2001, p. 375).

The ZPD also asserts that "what one can do today with assistance is indicative of what one will be able to do independently in the future" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 210). Thus, development achieved and development potential are equally emphasized. The ZPD concept can aid educators to understand aspects of students' emerging capacities that are in early stages of maturation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

### *Differences in First and Second Language Acquisition*

The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis Krashen (1982) claims that there are two ways for an adult to approach a second language: "adults can (1) 'acquire,' which is the way children 'get' their first language, subconsciously, through informal, implicit learning. Once you have acquired something you're not always aware you have done it. It just feels natural; it feels as if it has always been there. Quite distinct from acquisition is (2) conscious learning. This is knowing about language, explicit, formal linguistic knowledge of the language." (p.17)

Krashen continues to argue that learning does not turn into acquisition. He obviously sees first language acquisition and second language acquisition as two different phenomena. Yet, he suggests that acquisition may occur in the classroom when communication is emphasized through dialogues, role playing, and other meaningful interaction. As a language teacher, one should be careful when evaluating the claims related to acquisition and learning. Through focused input and focused practice learning may turn into acquisition.

### The Critical Period Hypothesis

The Critical Period Hypothesis holds that there is "a biologically determined period of life when language can be acquired more easily and beyond which time language is increasingly difficult to acquire" (Brown 1994, p. 52). This hypothesis is based on the ideas of the psychologist Eric Lenneberg. His argument was that various capacities mature according to a fairly fixed schedule during which language emerges in children when anatomical, physiological, motor, neural, and cognitive development allow it to emerge. He added that there is a critical, biologically determined period of language acquisition between the ages of 2 and 12 (McLaughlin, 1987). Originally the notion of critical period was connected only to first language acquisition but later it was applied to second language acquisition as well.

Consequently, it is argued that a critical period for second language acquisition is due until puberty.

In order to explain the validity of the critical period in second language acquisition neurological, psychomotor, and cognitive arguments were examined (Brown, 1994). These have mostly tried to explain why adult language learners are not able to reach full competence and native like pronunciation in the second language.

*Neurological Considerations:* There is an attempt to explain the difference between first and second language acquisition through lateralization in the brain. Steinberg (1997) explains lateralization as follows, "the brain assigns, as it were, certain structures and functions to certain hemispheres of the brain. Language, logical and analytical operations, and higher mathematics, for example, generally occur in the left hemisphere of the brain, while the right hemisphere is superior at recognizing emotions, recognizing faces and taking in the structures of things globally without analysis. This separation of structure and function in the hemispheres is technically referred to as lateralization". (p. 179)

Thomas Scovel (1969, in Brown, 1994) put forward that there is a relationship between lateralization and second language acquisition. Scovel suggests that the plasticity of the brain before puberty enables first and second language acquisition to take place easily. After puberty, the brain loses its plasticity and lateralization is accomplished. He argues that lateralization makes it difficult for people to be able ever again to easily acquire fluent control of the second language or native-like pronunciation.

There is a counter argument related to the cognitive development of the brain. Cognitively, this lateralization enables the person to reach the capability of abstraction, of formal thinking, and of direct perception which start from puberty on. This shows that adults possess superior cognitive capacity due to left hemisphere dominance. Then, the following question arises: How come that adults who have a cognitive superiority are not able to learn a second language successfully? Researchers are still trying to find an answer to this question. A tentative answer to this question is that the dominance of the left hemisphere leads the adult to tend to overanalyze and to be too intellectually centered on the task of second language learning (Brown, 1994). Again, there are adults who are able to learn a second language successfully, but factors like affective variables seem to play an important role in such cases.

*Psychomotor Consideration:* These considerations try to explain the reason why adult second language learners cannot obtain native-like pronunciation in the second language. Starting from birth, speech muscles gradually develop until after the age of 5. Then, until puberty the speech muscles maintain their flexibility. Scientists argue that the flexibility of children's speech muscles is the reason for why they can easily acquire native-like pronunciation both in the first and in the second language. The decline of the flexibility in the speech muscles, however, prevents adult second language learners to reach native-like pronunciation in the second language (Brown, 1994).

*Affective Considerations:* Although the affective domain includes many factors such as inhibition, attitudes, anxiety, and motivation, this paper will examine only the first two. While anxiety and motivation are mainly related to adult second language learning, child first language learners have not developed or are just in the process of developing such affective factors.

While inhibitions pose no difficulty for children acquiring their first or second language, they propose to be intervening in adult second language acquisition. Inhibitions can be defined as ego boundaries the person builds in order to protect his or her ego. As the child matures it develops a sense of self-identity and towards puberty it acquires the feeling to protect this self-identity and develop inhibitions which are heightened during puberty. Alexander Guiora (cited in Brown, 1994) proposed the idea of the language ego to account for the identity a person develops in reference to the language he/she speaks. Through puberty the child's ego is flexible and dynamic but as the child reaches puberty the language ego becomes protective due to physical, cognitive, and emotional changes at this stage. The language ego tries to protect the ego of the young adult by clinging to the security of the native language. Acquiring a second language means also acquiring a new language ego which can be very difficult for adults who have built up inhibitions to protect their ego. Mistakes can be seen as threats to one's ego. With the fear to make mistakes the adult language learner can resist to speak in the classroom.

A second affective factor, which is formed by the cognitive development of a person, that can make second language acquisition difficult for an adult is attitude. Young children are not cognitively enough developed to possess attitudes towards races, cultures, ethnic groups, and languages. As the child reaches school age, attitudes are acquired. It is agreed that negative attitudes towards the target language, target language speakers, the target language culture, and the social value of learning a second language can impede language learning while positive attitudes can enhance learning (Ellis, 1994; Brown, 1994).

Stephen Krashen has developed The Affective Filter Hypothesis to account for the effects of affective variables on second language acquisition. He argues that affective variables can act as a mental block, also termed affective filter, and prevent comprehensible input to be absorbed. When the learner is unmotivated and lacks confidence the affective filter goes up. When the learner is not anxious and wants to be a member of the group speaking the target language the filter goes down. He adds that children are at an advantage when learning a first or second language because their affective filter is low while adults are likely to have a higher affective filter due to events that occurred in adolescence (Krashen, 1982; McLaughlin, 1987).

The critical period shows concrete differences between L1 and L2 acquisition because it is based on the internal factors of the learner. The arguments of the critical period are mainly based on pronunciation, neglecting grammatical and semantic competence.

## Fossilization

Fossilization is used to label the process by which non-target norms become fixed in Interlanguage. The possible causes for fossilization are suggested to be age (learners' brains loose plasticity at a critical age, therefore, certain linguistic features cannot be mastered), lack of desire to articulate (learners' make no effort to adopt target language norms because of various social and psychological factors), communicative pressure (the learner is pressured to communicate ideas above his/her linguistic competence), lack of learning opportunity, and the nature of the feedback on learners' use of L2 (positive cognitive feedback leads to fossilization while negative feedback helps avoid fossilization)(Ellis, 1994; McLaughlin, 1987).

Based on the factors related to fossilization it can easily be inferred that fossilization is unique to L2 acquisition. It is hardly possible to see a child acquiring his/her first language to fossilize certain forms of language.

### Social Factors

Ellis (1994) differentiates between two social contexts in second language learning and outlines them as follows:

#### *a. Natural Contexts*

Second language learning in majority language contexts: the target language serves as the native language and the language learner is a member of an ethnic minority group (e.g. Turkish workers in Germany).

Second language learning in official language contexts: the second language functions as an official language (e.g. English in Nigeria).

Second language learning in international contexts: the second language is used for interpersonal communication in countries where it is neither learnt as a mother tongue nor used as an official language (e.g. in arts, science, academic, etc.)

#### *b. Educational Contexts*

*Segregation:* the second language is taught to learners in a separate context from the native speakers of the target language.

*Mother tongue maintenance:* learners of minority groups are either given classes in their mother tongue or they are educated through the medium of their mother tongue.

*Submersion:* right from the beginning L2 learners are taught with native speakers.

*The language classroom:* the target language is taught as a subject only and is not commonly used as a medium of communication outside the classroom.

The difference of the contexts of first and second language acquisition play an important role in the acquisition process.

While it is possible to learn a second language in various contexts, first language acquisition takes place only in a natural context and in the social group the child is growing up and where the child gets L1 input only. The different contexts for second language



acquisition can also lead to variations in second language proficiency due to affective factors.

Schuman (1986, cited in McLaughlin, 1987; Ellis, 1994) has put forward the Acculturation Theory to account for second language acquisition development in natural settings. He defines acculturation as the process of becoming adapted to a new culture and his claim is that contact with the target language and culture is crucial. The process of acculturation requires both social and psychological adaptation. Learning the appropriate linguistic habits to function within the target language group is one part of this process. Acculturation is determined by the degree of social and psychological 'distance' between the learner and the target-language culture. According to this hypothesis, the greater contact with L2 speakers and culture takes place the more acquisition occurs.

Another social factor that leads to a difference between first and second language acquisition is that of the learner's

choice of target language variety. SLA assumes that learners are targeted at the standard dialect of the L2. Beebe (1985, in Ellis, 1994) observed some deviations in L2 learners' from Standard English. She suggests that these may not be errors but a reflection of a dialect which the learner has targeted (e.g. Black English). The choice of the reference group

is determined by the social context and the learner's attitude to that variety of language. In settings where the L2 is an official language (such as in India), the reference group may be educated users of the L2 in the learner's own country rather than a native speaker.

It is important to note here that in first language acquisition one has no chance to make such a conscious choice. The environment and social group a person is born into automatically determines the language variety to be acquired.

Therefore, deviations from the standard language are not seen as a failure to acquire the language. However, such deviations may wrongly be attributed to failure if present in the second language.

### *Implications for Language Teachers*

To understand the nature of L1 acquisition, researchers have tried to explain how children progress from "no language"

to their mother tongue. In L2 acquisition, however, the process is more complicated as learners already have knowledge of their L1. The Interlanguage Theory plays a crucial role in arriving at findings on how L2 learners move from their mother tongue towards the target language. This means that we cannot talk about the Interlanguage of a child but that we can talk about the Interlanguage of the L2 learner.

Language learning to take place depends on various factors, which means that the language teacher has to account for these factors as much as possible. However, none of the theories or factors mentioned in this paper is on its own explanatory enough to account for the complex process of language learning. Every finding or explanation should be considered

in interaction with the others. This means that a language teacher cannot base his/her teaching solely on any single theory or claim within the framework of L2 or L1 acquisition. The above similarities and differences between first and second language acquisition provide the language teachers with information to aid them in their profession. This information can help the teacher in designing classroom activities, designing the syllabus, choosing an appropriate method, understanding the learning processes of his/her students, and guiding his/her students in the language learning process.

The first discussion in terms of the similarities and differences between L2 and L1 acquisition was related to developmental sequences which plays an important role in the cognitive development of learners. Knowing that in L1 acquisition learners have the right to keep silent and process the input would be quite beneficial under ideal teaching situations. Even though this silent period promotes language processing in L1 acquisition, it is quite hard, even impossible, to apply it in L2 acquisition. The teaching conditions and the grading legislations may force the teacher to ask students for immature production. Knowing the need for such a period but not being able to allow for it should at least make the teacher understand erroneous production, inhibited students, or high anxiety in the classroom. Even

though the idea of silent period may not be applicable directly into teaching, it gives an idea of why some students resist or avoid to produce the language taught.

Formulaic speech, the second stage of developmental sequences, is said to be present in both first and second language acquisition and also present in the speech of adult native speakers. Thus, language teachers might consider teaching their students samples of some useful and frequently used phrases. Students can then refer to these phrases in situations that require immediate communication. Finally, in the last step of developmental sequences learners apply structural and semantic simplifications to their language. Knowing this can help language teachers understand erroneous or imperfect language production of certain language items such as omitting language functors or omitting content words.

The second phenomena is acquisition order of language learning (both L1 and L2), and can have a great impact on syllabus design. As Krashen (1982) put forward, we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order. Knowing which structures are learned prior to others helps in ordering the content of the syllabus. Similarly, studies on marked and unmarked structures correspond to the acquisition order. Designing the syllabus by taking these findings into account takes the burden of trying to figure out which structures to teach first and which ones later.

The notion of markedness also has implications for language teachers. It is asserted that marked features are learned earlier and easier than marked rules in both the first and the second language. On the other hand, unmarked forms require more time and effort by the learner and are more difficult to learn (Ellis 1994; McLaughlin, 1987). Considering markedness, language teachers could find out the unmarked features of the target language and plan their lessons so that they spend more time on unmarked features. Furthermore, the idea of markedness could help teachers understand why their students fail to learn or have difficulty in learning certain features of the target language.

The issue of input has an explanatory effect both in L1 and in L2 acquisition, which means that it has direct implications for the language teacher. Language teachers are the main source of input in the classroom. A teacher wishing to provide comprehensible input will have to modify his/her language according to the level of students and speak at such a speed that the students can follow. The teacher can use lots of activities requiring the students to interact with each other or with the teacher. Pair work, information gap activities, and classroom discussions are a good source for input. However, overwhelming students with input that is quite above their language capacity might result in lack of self-confidence and resistance to learn the language. So, using input to promote language learning is beneficial as long as it is aimed at the level of the students.

Even though the Behavioristic approach lacks to explain the creative aspect of language production, it helps to understand how in teaching/learning, stimulus/response helps to master both grammatical patterns and phonological patterns. To make use of this knowledge at the right time in the process of teaching depends on whether the teacher has been able to identify when stimulus/ response can be used for the benefit of the learning. However, an important point here which is to be kept in mind is the age and level of the students in mind. While younger learners might find such an education enjoyable, older learners might get easily bored. In addition, learning language habits might be useful for students with lower levels of proficiency; students with a higher level of proficiency may not benefit the same amount.

The final issue related to the similarities of L1 and L2 acquisition is the ZPD. The importance of assistance and collaboration has useful implications for language teachers. Language teachers should try to assist their students as much as possible by providing them with language necessary to pass to the next level of language competence. The role of the teacher is to direct action within school activity in a manner appropriate to the learner's level of development, the cultural and social environment (Daniels, 1996). It can also be suggested that teachers promote teacher-student interaction or peer-interaction. As Hawkins (2001) states, "It is via this kind of interaction that knowledge very gradually gets built" (p. 374). This is possible through the use of collaborative activities such as pair work or group work where students are required to negotiate meaning. Furthermore, teachers could benefit from the ZPD to understand aspects of students' emerging capacities. That is, language tests should be viewed as both indicators of students' achieved abilities and also students' future capabilities.

When we come to the differences attributed to L1 and L2 acquisition, the starting point should be terms themselves, "acquisition" and "learning". Although it is argued that learning and acquisition are quite distinct processes, a language teacher should consider the possibility that extensive practice in the classroom can lead to acquisition. However, it should be kept in mind that not everything taught becomes acquired. So, expectations regarding the quality of learning should be set realistically.

The Critical Period hypothesis is one of the key differences leading to variations in L1 and L2 acquisition. It is widely accepted that children are better in pronunciation, whereas

adults are faster and better learning in rules and pragmatics. Knowing this may guide a teacher who is teaching adults towards practicing pronunciation, if this is one of the objectives in learning the language on the side of the learner. Another important point related to the critical period regards affective factors. While it does not cause a problem in L1 acquisition, the learners of L2 are faced with inhibition and attitudes. The affective states of our students are very important since these are the major factors intervening in language learning. Adult or young adult language learners need to be relaxed and comfortable to create positive attitudes to the language and the language learning process. In addition, teachers need to free their students from inhibitions so that students can freely interact and use the language. This can only be possible if they build up trust and understanding between themselves and their students. More positive than negative feedback, more praise than criticism might be the first step.

The issue of fossilization is only attributable to L2 acquisition. While all L1 learners reach full competence in the target language, some forms in the target language of the L2 learners might be fossilized. Teachers can prevent fossilization by correcting repeated errors of their students or they can practice problematic language more than non-problematic language. One should be aware that once fossilization takes place, it is very difficult to get rid of. Therefore, teachers should act with caution and help their students to prevent fossilization. The last factor to be mentioned regards social issues. It was previously stated that second language learners may choose to learn a language variety other than the standard form depending on the speech community they are taking as a reference. Such is the case in natural settings and not in classroom settings. Therefore, it is the teacher's (or the teaching institution's) responsibility to decide on which variety of the target language to take as the norm. It is important to make students aware of the different varieties of the target language, but in terms of teaching, there should be consistency.

## Chapter II: Literary Review

*Advanced Leadership Institute 2010*

*Research Paper On Interference of L1 (Spanish) In The Writing Of EFL Students*

I have always observed that my EFL students and other students who are in the process of learning EFL show different features that belong in the Spanish language while speaking English. Also, when I am revising their written work, I notice that those elements are evident in what they produce. In the earliest stage of this research, some of my beliefs could be confirmed. First, I believed L1 (in this case, Spanish) interferes with L2 (in this case, English). Also, I did believe that this, in many aspects, constituted a hindrance to the development of their skills in the target language if not treated adequately.

### Definitions of Interference

In general, interference can be defined as an extraneous energy, from natural or manmade sources, that impedes the reception of desired signals. Since the subject of this research belongs in applied linguistics, it would be healthy if we referred to a linguistic definition, which states that interference and transfer are the same, so transfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.

This is not the first research in the field. Sharon Adelman Reyes and Trina Lynn Vallone found that “ELL (English Language Learners) Students’ prior knowledge is encoded in their home languages and therefore, their home languages are clearly related to their learning of English and other academic content.” Hypothetically, I had the belief that an important part of the answer to successful second or foreign language learning was the use of the second or foreign language together with study and practice. Other research confirmed this hypothesis by stating that “Continuous exposure to the second language and its use for communicative purposes in authentic circumstances may imitate language acquisition (Adelman and Lynn, P. 4).”

Interference is not always negative. In this research, the positive part of interference is stated, and is supported by the fact that “...the role of the first language (L1) is crucial to the development of proficiency in the second (L2) (collier, 1989), (Adelman and Lynn, P. Pages 5 and 6).” In the particular case of writing, interference plays a very important role due to “Writers will transfer writing abilities and strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to their second language (Alexandrer Friedlander, 1990), (Barbara Kroll p.109).”

An aspect that we found in this research is that in their learning process, students tend to translate from their mother tongue to the target language. In terms of the negative effect of interference other researchers found that “If ESL writers retrieve information about a writing topic from memory in their first language and then have to translate into English before writing anything down, this act of translation can lead to an overload of their short-term memory and a diminishment in the quality of their writing (Alexandrer Friedlander, 1990).” On the other hand, in terms of positive interference, “(Chelala), Lay (1987),

Jonson (1985), and John and Titroe (1987) found that switches to the first language aided ESL writers in retrieval of topic information (Alexandrer Friedlander, 1990), (Barbara Kroll p. 110).”

With all these findings in terms of research on the subject, Teachers and students might find a lot of hope when they see that interference is not static phenomena. On the contrary, “As writers acquire more English, such first language use would lessen (Alexandrer Friedlander., 1990), (Barbara Kroll p. 111).” Thus, the key to vanish interference, as previously stated, is insisting in studying, practicing, and using the language as much as possible in order to reach a higher and higher level due to “More advanced users of English have developed their proficiency to such a level that their native language does not interfere with their writing in English (Alexandrer Friedlander, 1990), (Barbara Kroll p. 111-112).” Furthermore, more data is available which assure that “Transfer is a pervasive strategy all through the learning process, but that learners at more developed stages of acquisition transfer less and show types of lexical transfer (Celaya 2007, Celaya and Torres, Gost and Celaya 2005, Naves et al. 2005).”

When examining student work for this research, the occurrence of errors related to the structure of Spanish was high. In this tenor, a research that is strictly related to ours conducted by María Rosa Alonso Alonso showed that “The linguistic structures of the mother tongue are the main cause of interference when writing in L2. Students tend to apply the rules of the first language when they do not know the rules of the second language (Page 7). In her study, Alonso also found that “...the structures of the mother tongue represent the main factor of interference in the L2. Phonetic, orthographic, syntactic, or semantic similarity to the items in the L, are also problematic for Spanish students (Alonso Alonso, P. 13).”

#### Analysis of student work

After having analyzed 11 samples of student work collected in an English Grammar course at Centro Universitario Regional del Nordeste, CURNE, in San Francisco de Macorís, Dominican Republic, results show that the most frequent case of interference deals with the use of Spanish Structures in the writing of their sentences in English. In this tenor, the most frequent case is the use of the article “the”, which could be translated like “el” or “la” depending on gender in Spanish. There are many cases in which the definite article “the” is not used in English. Such a case could be when referring to “church” or “work.” The expression “go to the church” was found 9 times in the 11 samples that were studied. There is a case in which students transfer the use of plural form in verbs in Spanish to their sentences in English. In Spanish, verb forms show agreement with plural subjects. For instance, the endings “-amos” and “-an” that are used to denote the plural form when conjugating verbs. It is also important to note that since in Spanish, the plural form of nouns is formed with a final “s”, a student added an “s” to the verb when conjugating it in the 3rd. person plural. For example, he or she wrote “people likes.” Also, the opposite happens. Average Dominicans tend not to pronounce the final “s” that go at the end of different words and that case is transferred to the written mode. In one of

the samples, a student did not use the final “s” in the conjugation of a verb in the third person singular. For example, he or she wrote “everybody think.”

The second most frequent occurrence of interference had to do with direct translation, in which the basic pattern of the English language was kind of lost. In this case, the translation of one single word occurred 7 times. For example, the preposition “of” was translated into “de” in order to form the possessive, which resulted in the Spanish-like structure “...a custom of our country.”

The third most frequent interference of Spanish in the writing of the English language noticed in the student work was the direct, or word for word translation of expressions in Spanish into English, which made the text in English sound like Spanish. In Spanish there is an expression used to introduce series of elements separated by commas in a row. This expression is “como son” (“such as” in English). An actual example found in the samples goes like “...as are my summary, my oral presentation...” This case was found three times when analysing the samples. The same amount of occurrence was found in terms of the elisions of words that occur in the Spanish language. For example, the subject is elided, being the writer able to start a sentence or a clause just with the verb. This case appeared three times. For example, a sentence or clause like “... is very dangerous” whose equivalent in Spanish is “...es muy peligroso” Was found in the samples. Besides, the same happened with the elision of the comma before the conjunction “and”, which in Spanish is “Y.” A clear illustration is the series “honesty, truth and justice.”

Other signs of interference were found and their occurrence happened only in single occasions. For example, sometimes it seems as if the student is creating his or her own words. To illustrate this case, we have the case of the expression “retiro carismático” in Spanish. In English, this would be like “charismatic retreat.” A student wrote “carismatic retire.” He or she kept the English structure, but he or she used words that sounded Spanish to convey his or her message. Another example is the use of words in Spanish. The expression “vigilia pascual” that would be “easter vigil mass” in English appeared 3 times in the samples. Also, the word “viacrucis” that would be “stations of the cross” in English was found once.

#### Conclusions to Research Paper:

These findings lead us to confirm that the L1 -Spanish, in the particular case of the students from the CURNE in San Francisco de Macorís- interferes with the learning of the L2 – English. According to the samples of student work examined, this interferes in both a positive way in a negative way. In the first case, the students use their native language as a strategy to convey message. In the second case, that interference is shown in errors that could block the full understanding in the part of the reader. This is the case, among others, of the use of words in Spanish and words and expressions that seem to be created by the student. Teachers must be aware of the fact that this is a stage in the development of skills in the learning of the English language. If the process is managed adequately, the interference will be fading.

The previously presented research process affects my practice as a teacher of writing in a positive way. My own findings with my students help me see interference of the L1 in the learning of the L2 as something normal. Therefore, as a teacher of writing I have the

mission of finding strategies that tackle interference such as practices in which the students be exposed to English spoken by natives more often and other practices. As a result, I will keep recommending that they create their own conditions in order to expose themselves to English spoken by natives. Cable TV and the Internet are tools that can help a big deal. I also keep in mind that the goal is to accelerate the fading of interference of the L1.

*-Plymouth 2010*

*Spanish Interference in EFL Writing Skills: A Case of Ecuadorian Senior High Schools Writing in EFL*

Writing is a skill that demands great effort and commitment. For this reason, it is often difficult for students to master this skill in a foreign language. József (2001) claims “writing is among the most complex human activities because it involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects.” Without doubt, writing is considered a challenging task even in one’s mother tongue. According to Harmer (2004), being able to write is just as vital for “speakers” of a foreign language as it is for others who speak their native tongue. Despite the fact that writing is not learned naturally and needs to be systematically taught, it is essential for communication. For this reason, it constitutes a fundamental aspect of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses.

Conversely, Kroll (2003) argues “there is a demand today for teachers with a high level of pedagogical understanding and expertise in the different aspects of writing instruction, from curriculum development, to classroom pedagogy, to assessment.” Consequently, teachers should remain informed of these aspects of the teaching-learning process and acquire expertise in EFL writing instruction. One of the key problem areas is the therefore mother tongue interference, which is the tendency of the learners to apply the rules of the native

language since they do not know the structures of the target language (Alonso, 1997).

**Mother Tongue Interference**

Research on L2 interference has shown that foreign language learners tend to be highly dependent on L1 structures and vocabulary, especially when producing suitable responses in the target language. Beardsmore (1982) explains that many of the difficulties foreign language learners have with the lexicon and grammar of the target language are caused by the transfer of linguistic habits from the native language, which leads to errors and mistakes. It is important to highlight that there is a clear distinction between errors and mistakes. Ellis (1997) establishes that errors reveal gaps in the learner’s knowledge. These errors mainly occur because the learner does not have a good command of the foreign language. On the other hand, mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance.

Interestingly, these transfer errors repeatedly occur in the four English language skills. Language transfer, however, is not always negative. It can be positive as well. Positive transfer occurs when the similarities between the mother tongue and the target language help learners acquire L2. Conversely, negative transfer takes place when the differences between the mother tongue and the target language cause errors when learning L2. It



can be said that similarities can undermine students' acquisition of the target language, for example, by using false cognates/false friends (Calvo, 2005).

With regard to writing skills, most of the errors that occur in L2 writing are related to the transfer of grammatical structures (Alonso, 1997). This suggests that the mother tongue is the main cause of interference when writing in a foreign language and the main influence at a psycholinguistic level, in other words, thinking in the mother tongue.

It is also important to know what types of mother interference errors occur in EFL writing. This aspect is tackled by Berthold, Mangubhai and Batorowicz (1997), who define grammatical interference as the L1's influence on the L2, namely in terms of word order, pronoun and determinant usage, verb tense, and mood. They also state that interference at a lexical level refers to the borrowing of words from one language and attempting to make them sound more natural in the L2. Additionally, there is orthographic interference, which involves altering the spelling of one language and applying it to another one.

Similarly, Dam (2010) explains that Spanish-speaking English language learners make interference errors by borrowing patterns from their mother tongue. He provides various types of typical interference errors such as articles, gender, number, personal pronouns, relative pronouns, adjectives, prepositions, possessives, question formation, negation, verb tenses, passive voice, word order, and false cognates.

## Results

After applying the frequency distribution of the data gathered in Excel tables, the results were the following:

The information from the students' questionnaire indicated that the usage of grammar structures and vocabulary are the most challenging areas for Ecuadorian students writing in English. As far as the strategies that the students used when writing in English, the results showed that 76% think in Spanish first and then translate their ideas into English.

Unfortunately, only 18% write directly in English without translating. The remaining 6% avoided answering this question. These results demonstrated that the mother tongue produced significant interference when students write in the target language.

For the teachers' questionnaire, 78% of respondents reported that one of the key strategies that their students use when writing in English is to first think in Spanish and then translate their ideas into English.

In addition, there were diverse responses to the variables regarding the level of L1 interference. In this respect, the interviewed teachers stated that the highest frequency of interference occurred in invented words, the position of adjectives, and word order. On the other hand, the lowest frequency occurred with the following variables: false cognates, misuse of comparatives and superlatives and misuse of gender forms.

In terms of teaching strategies to avoid Spanish interference, 23% of the teachers encouraged their students to read frequently; 22% of teachers used kinesthetic activities; 17% used bilingual dictionaries; 15% used English exclusively in the classroom; and 11% used translation exercises.

In this study, both high and low frequency interference errors were identified. High frequency interference errors included misuse of verbs (20%), omission of personal and object pronouns (16%), misuse of prepositions (11%), overuse of articles (9%), incorrect

word order (9%), and misuse of articles (5%). Conversely, low frequency errors included the omission of prepositions (4%), false cognates (4%), the omission of articles (3%), the misuse of personal and object pronouns (3%), invented words (3%), and poor noun concordance (2%). Other variables, which are identified in this study as “Others” (see Fig. 1), had the lowest frequencies (2% or less), which included misuse of possessives, pluralization of adjectives, omission of verbs, incorrect position of adjectives, omission of possessives, misuse of intensifiers, misuse of negation, misuse of relative pronouns, overuse of personal and object pronouns, incorrect use of negation or double negation, orthographic errors, omission of nouns, omission of relative pronouns, and incorrect gender of nouns.

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*The Role of the Mother Tongue in the Learning of English as a Foreign Language:  
Transfer  
Methodological implications of the mother tongue within the classroom*

As we already know, transfer does not only undergo difficulties, but it can also facilitate the learning of our students; according to Carver (1983: 88) the mother tongue can

have some methodological usefulness in the ELT. He also proposes certain situations in which the L1 can be employed, but considering some basic assumptions:

- The mother tongue is not forbidden by authorities.
- The teacher and students share the mother tongue.
- There is just one mother tongue in the classroom.
- Students have an academic knowledge of the mother tongue.

(Adapted from the original)

Students, as Spratt (1985: 199-202) explains, tend to use the L1 when they are lost or they do not know a word; when they do not understand quite well the instructions or activities; or when they want to be relaxed. Bueno González (1992: 164) also considers what has been called “task management”, that is, students come to their mother tongue when they organize the different steps of an activity, turns, etc. or they comment on what they have to do.

Translation as a strategy and an activity

The use of the mother tongue is rigorously linked to translation from two different perspectives, as a strategy employed by students or as an activity proposed by the teacher in class.

In the history of the teaching of foreign languages, translation has an essential role in the Grammar-Translation method, but it has received plenty of criticisms. In Bueno Gonzalez’s opinion, translation is useful for two reasons:

- It reflects the mind operation of foreign language learners; so that it becomes a strategy helping the student in learning. Thus, it has a role in the process of

acquiring a language.

- It is a concrete activity carried out in the class, as has been described above. Sometimes, quick translation is employed even in direct methods, mainly in the first stages or with beginners. Therefore, from my viewpoint we should consider the L1 as a means more than an obstacle.

According to Deller and Rinvoluceri (2002: 77), translation may be a sort of alternative for varying the regular methodology of the class, and it may be useful to catch students' attention when they realise the usefulness of knowing two languages and that they can translate texts from one language to another. In their own words, "Playing with two languages will fascinate the students with strong linguistic intelligences".

### Phonetics and Phonology

First of all, we should take into account that Spanish and English consonant systems present many similitudes; nonetheless, the Spanish vocalic system differs considerably from the English one. This may pose difficulties in the Spaniards' pronunciation of English. Four

different features are commonly found in Spaniards' pronunciation of English:

- Difficulty in recognizing and using English vowels.
- Strong devoicing of final voiced consonants.
- Even sentence rhythm, without the typical prominences of English making understanding difficult for English listeners.
- Narrower range of pitch (in European speakers), producing a boring effect.

(Coe, 2001: 91)

As Mott (2005: 245) explains, in the learning of foreign languages the speakers "tend to transfer their own sound system and produce sounds which they have been accustomed to making since they first learned to speak. Thus, our pronunciation of foreign language is inhibited by our own articulatory habits." Additionally, the Spanish should remember that phonemes are not letters, and consequently, that there is no correspondence among them as we will discuss below.

### How spelling influences pronunciation

In the Spanish language there is a sort of correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. This habit is transmitted to the English language by Spanish speakers, provoking, as Coe (2001: 94) says, the pronunciation of "English words letter by letter". Some examples provided by the aforesaid author are: asked as /asket/, break as /break/, answer as /answer/, and friend as /frien/, although in this case there is also reduction because the final cluster.

As regards the example described as overdifferentiation, Coe (2001: 94) classifies it as an error provoked by the correspondence spelling-pronunciation in Spanish. He explains that "in Spanish [...] double r is rolled [...], and this habit carries over."

Mott (2005: 245) explains that "the fact two languages use the same alphabet deceives

us into believing that the same symbol used in the two languages has an identical value.” Therefore, we could say that the fact that this occurs between the Spanish and English languages sometimes gives rise to the assumption that the Spanish sound would be similar or identical to the English one. An example given by Mott (2005: 245) would be “the [d] of Spanish lado is identical to the [d] of English door or made”.

#### Grammar: Morphology and Syntax

Coe (2001: 98) compares English with Spanish, saying that Spanish has “highly inflected verb systems; have freer word order; show gender and number in adjectives and nouns; have no modal auxiliaries; use the passive much less and have a subjunctive mood.” Mainly, what I am going to comment on in the section is based on Coe (2001: 98 - 109), even most of the examples will be taken from this reference.

I would also like to take into account Lardiere’s (2005) Feature Re-assembly hypothesis. This hypothesis mainly “postulates that learning a second language involves figuring out how to reconfigure the formal features of the native language and those available from UG into new or different configurations in the L2” (Slabakova, 2013: 6). Therefore, those features which are different can pose a problem in L2 learning as there is a language variation (see Adger 2003).

#### Word-order and omissions

First of all, word-order should be considered as the Spanish language has a freer word order than English, which is quite fixed. This will pose different problems such as subject-verb inversion in statements, the position of frequency adverbs and adverbials or the order of adjectives.

Considering Subject-verb inversion, sometimes Spaniards invert the subject and the verb in statements because of the influence of Spanish as it has a less fixed word order, for instance, \*Arrived the fireman ten minutes later. Although this is not discussed by Coe (2001), we should say Spanish learners do not commonly apply the subject-auxiliary inversion in questions, as it does not happen in the Spanish language, for example \*Where you are going? Once they learn it, they tend to overgeneralize that, and they apply it in indirect questions, e.g. \*I don’t know where are you going.

The Spanish language also permits not to use the subject in the sentence, so Spanish learners sometimes forget it in English. Corder (1967) proposes an instance connected to this kind of error, e.g. \*Is the book of my friend. According to Corder (1967) “the omission of the subject pronoun and the use of the ‘of the’ possessive appear to be due to Spanish interference.”

Coming back to Coe (2001), we should consider that learning where to place adverbs of frequency may be difficult for Spaniards as this is something new for them, e.g. \*I go always to the park, \*Often she has helped or \*She often has helped. But also placing adverbials correctly may be difficult for Spanish speakers as in Spanish they do not have a fixed order. This produces instances as the following \*They took to the hospital her mother or Mrs. Smith speaks very well English.

Adjectives also present another difficulty for Spaniards. Adjectives in English in an

attributive position always come before the noun; whereas in Spanish tend to follow it, e.g. \*the day amazing or \*they live in a house white.

The same happens with the fixed order of adjectives, as in Spanish they do not follow any order. So the following example, I bought a beautiful, long, red, Italian, silk tie"3, a Spaniard could produce it correctly because the learner has learnt it by heart or unconsciously; if not, the learner will place adjectives in a wrong order, e.g. \*I bought a long, silk, Italian, red, beautiful tie.

*-UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación  
The Interference of First Language and Second Language Acquisition  
The Acquisition of L2*

The only way a learner can start to communicate in a second language is the time a learner begins to assume word-for-word translation equivalence or it is thought that every L1 word has one translation in L2 by the learners (Blum-Kulka & Levenston, as cited in Bhela, 1999, p. 30).

When learners of second language want to write or speak in the target language, they tend to rely on their first language structures. If the structures are different, then a lot of errors occur in L1 thus this indicates an interference of first language on second language (Decherts & Dillis, as cited in Bhela, 1999, p. 22). Interference is the errors that can be traced back to the first language, while the learners use the second language (Lott, as cited in Bhela, 1999, p.22).

A learner has difficulties in second language such as phonology, vocabulary and grammar due to the interference of habits from L1 and L2 (Beardsmore, 1982). Those errors that occur in learning of second language cause interference which are categorized as follows: 1. Developmental errors: the errors that are not related to learner's first language. 2. Ambiguous errors: the errors that involve interference and developmental errors. 3. Unique errors: those errors which cannot be categorized neither in interference nor developmental errors. Interference is the result of old habits of the first language, and it must be unlearned before the learning of the new habits of second language (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982).

Learners of second language tend to transfer the forms, meaning and culture of their L1 to the foreign language and culture when attempting to speak the language. By learning L2 habits, L1 habits are also transferred and then the errors occur (Beebe & Seliger, as cited in Nemati & Taghizadeh, 2006). Similarly Beardsmore (1982) suggests that if the learners have difficulty in phonology, vocabulary and grammar of L2, there are due to the interference of habits from L1.

Towell and Hawkins (as cited in Nemati & Taghizadeh, 2013, p.2479) point out that very few L2 learners become successful in achieving native speakers level, the majority of L2 learners cannot achieve native speakers level of ability.

Further, Dulay et al. (1982) showed that the path of second language acquisition is different from the acquisition of first language, but the errors of L1 and L2 learners are very similar. Selinker (1983) points out that there are two types of transfer in learning a second language: positive and negative transfer. In positive transfer, L1 facilitates the

acquisition of second language, but in negative transfer the first language has negative impacts on L2 and interferes in L1.

As Odlin (1989) points out when negative transfer occurs, we can study learners with different native language and compare them to find out the effect of L1 in learning a second language. First language can be considered as a tool for language acquisition to solve learning and communication problems. Faerch and Kasper (1987) argued that transfer is a

mental and communicative process through which L2 learners develop their inter language skills by activating and using their previous linguistic knowledge. Lord (2008) mentions that “while many researchers analyze the effect of second language acquisition on the first language, very few studies examine the converse situation.

The Merge Hypothesis of Fleg (1987, 2005) points out that “the merging of phonetic properties of phones that are similar in the L1 and L2 can potentially impact not only the acquired language but the native one as well”. For example, an English speaker with higher proficiency in Spanish can have problem both in English and Spanish. He pronounces Spanish with English characteristics, and he pronounces English words less English-like than a monolingual English speaker would. Learners who acquire an L2 cannot pronounce the words native-like both in L1 and L2. Thus there are 3 options for the learners: 1- They can preserve their L1, but they cannot achieve native-like L2 pronunciation. 2- They lose their L1 and achieve native-like L2 pronunciation. 3- They lose native-like pronunciation both in L1 and L2.

“One might think that with increasing skill, learners become more capable of functioning autonomously in the L2” (e.g. Segalowitz & Hulstijn, as cited in Sunderman & Kroll, 2006, p.388).

However, recent evidence that demonstrates parallel activation of words in both languages during visual and spoken word recognition suggests that acquiring proficiency in a L2 does not imply that the individual has acquired the ability to switch off the influence of the L1. (e.g. van Hell & Dijkstra; van Wijnendaele & Brysbaert, as cited in Sunderman & Kroll, 2006, p.388) B. L2 Acquisition of Child vs. Adult Researchers have found the relationship between the age and some aspects of the second language (Tohidian & Tohidian, 2009). As Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) find out, the age is an important factor in building a second language. Moreover, McLaughlin (as cited in Nemati & Taghizade, 2013, p.2477) suggests the optimal way to learn a second language is to learn two languages simultaneously at birth.

There are two parts that Lennenberg (1967) suggested for second language acquisition: firstly, normal language learning which occurs in childhood. Secondly, reaching the age of puberty. In this stage, brain loses its elasticity and reorganizational capacities which are necessary for language acquisition. At an early stage, in childhood, human can learn languages, if it is not done, it will reduce by the stage of puberty. In childhood the left hemisphere is more involved in language and speech than right hemisphere. After that in stage of puberty, the two hemispheres become quite specialized for function because the children have inability in transferring and recalling the vocabulary of the first language. This is the advantage for them in learning a language without interference from their first language.

Acquisition of second language before the age of about 12 has higher chance because lateralization is not completed yet. The performer's first language of adult's second language performance is the only major source for many years.

(Lado, as cited in Krashen, 1981). Moreover, Lenneberg (1967) proposed that learners must acquire second language which acquire within childhood. Secondly reaching the age by puberty, that in this part brain loses its plasticity and reorganizational capacities necessary for language acquisition. Because the children have more flexible brain than adults, thus the children are superior to adults in learning a second language. They can learn language easily because the cortex of children is more plastic than older learners (Lenneberg, 1967; Penfield & Roberts, 1959).

When child efforts to express himself, his or her parents become happy and accept his bits of words. They understand what he says, they never correct a child's pronunciation or grammar, but the teacher in class does care what the students say, they always correct their sentences and that is why the class is not a real place compared with the conversation between mother and child (Nemati & Taghizade, 2013).

“For instance, the morpheme studies showed that the order of acquisition of a group of English morphemes was the same for children and adults” (Bailey, Madden, & Krashen, 1974). Adult L2 acquisition is very similar to child L1 acquisition as some researchers such as Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) argued, and in this process L1 background of learners does not have any effect on L2. Adult language acquisition typically falls far short of native like competence.

Various explanations have been proposed for this limited attainment, such as critical periods for language acquisition, socio cultural differences, motivational differences, and restricted input. It shows that “adults have difficulty in the associative learning of form-meaning relations in linguistic constructions”. (Ellis & Sagarra, 2010, p. 554)

### L1 Transfer in L2 Writing

When the learners feel gaps in their L2 syntactical structures for writing in L2, they use syntactical structures of their first language (Bhela, 1999). Where there are similarities between the structures of L1 and L2 because of lack of understanding of the learners in L1 an error occurs in L2 (Bhela, 1999).

In L2 writing, transfer can be considered both as a learning device and as a strategy to solve communication problems (Karim & Nassaji, 2013). Language learners may use the L1 strategies in their L2 writing because of similarities in L1 and L2. If the learner's knowledge of the target language is not enough, the learner relies on her or his L1 to express his or her idea and this reliance can be positive and negative (Karim & Nassaji, 2013). Ringbom (1987) points out the learners use L1 as a tool both for composing and for sampling the composing and for simplifying the complexity of the L2 writing task.

The examination of Lameta-Tufuga (as cited in Nation, 2001, p.3) shows that if learners have discussion in their first language before writing task in the second language, they can perform better in writing task in English because they have opportunity to fully understand the content of the task. Knight (as cited in Nation, 2001, p.3) also came to the similar findings. If the learners have a preparatory L1 discussion in groups, they can do much

better in the L2 written task than the learners had a preparatory L2 discussion in group. Therefore, if learners want to gain a higher level of L2 performance, L1 plays a useful role in helping the learners. The L1 is a useful tool like other tools which should be used in learning L2 but should not be overused (Nation, 2001).

#### Similarities of L1 and L2 Writing Strategies

Many researchers studied the writing strategies of L1 and L2 and found there are similarities between the two (Karim & Nassaji, 2013). When the writers with lower proficiency write in second language may not be able to easily transfer L1-based strategies, and they use their L1 source some matters, such as generating idea, monitoring and lexical-searching purposes. The L2 readers have access to their L1 and often use their L1 as a reading strategy (Carson & Carrel, as cited in Namati & Taghizade, 2013, p.2481).

Silva (1993) carried out an empirical study to scrutinize L1 and L2 writing. The participants of this study had a variety of conditions. At least 27 dissimilar L1s were represented. The participants were university students in the U.S. who had highly developed levels of English proficiency and showed an extensive range of levels of writing capability.

Silva mentions that his study demonstrated that writers who were asked to do in L1 and L2 dedicated more concentration to producing fabric in L2 than in L1, and discovered content production in L2 more complex and less flourishing. A great deal of the materials produced in L2 were not used in the students' written text (Silva, 1993).

Besides, Silva discovered that writers did less arrangement, at the comprehensive and restricted levels. Comprehensive level denotes that the writer is coping with the subject from a diversity of viewpoints. Limited level signifies that the writer is dealing with her syntactic and lexical alternatives in the background of her own written text. Based on Silva (1993), L2 writers did less aim-setting and had more trouble arranging produced material (the same writers did not have this trouble in L1). Generally, adult L2 writing was less effectual than L1 writing. Regarding lower level concern, L2 writing was stylistically diverse and less complex in formation. Although there are many differences in L1 and L2 reading, Jiang (as cited in Nemati & Taghizade, 2013, p.2481) marked that if the learner has good educational background in L1 that their reading skills and strategies have developed, they apply these skills and strategies when they are reading in L2.

Matsumoto's (1995) investigation in Japan demonstrated that experienced EFL writers employ strategies like those employed by skillful native English speakers. An interview with four Japanese university instructors on their processes and strategies for writing a research article in English as a foreign language (EFL) was conducted. The participants of this study were researchers who held degrees in the humanities from universities in the U.S. and had published articles in both English and Japanese. All the participants began learning EFL at the age of 13. Results of the study discovered that the participants used the equal process and used the identical strategies across L1 and L2 writing.

An attractive discovery in this study demonstrates that all of the participants stated that they do not include L1-to-L2 translation into their research article writing processes, i.e., they do not write in Japanese initially and after that translate the text into English.



Furthermore, participants' observation on writing in L1/L2 and writing ordinarily were alike.

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### Chapter III: Methodological Design

#### *Method*

A descriptive method and comparison based on results were implemented for this research in order to obtain genuine answers and prove of the subject. Different students learning strategies should be study.

#### *Population*

The study was implemented with 36 students from the English Immersion Program at Universidad Nacional Evangelica (UNEV), Santiago. The chosen groups are the classroom 305, morning shift and the same classroom inthe afternoon shift.

#### *Tools*

A questionnarie allowed the researchers to identify the strategies students use for studying at home and the use they make of Spanish in order to complete their homework tasks.

Analysing data and results before comparing and concluding is a key element to cover.

## Chapter IV: Discussion

### *Overview*

#### Research Questions Discussions:

Discussion to question 1.-What are the consequences of using Spanish as a reference for learning EFL?

-The consequences of using Spanish inside the EFL classrooms are visible in the outcomes of many communicative actions when using/developing different skills of the four basic skills to be developed by foreign language learners.

Discussion to Question 2.-What are the factors that lead students to create a sense of dependence on translation and comparison of the native language with the target one?

-The factors that lead students to create a sense of dependence on translation and of comparison with their native language are, not doubt whatsoever more visible in the early stages of their academic life, that is to say the beginning courses or levels when sometimes using the dictionary is allowed or when a very traditional EFL teacher allows those translations or such dictionaries in their classes. Some of them do that (45%) consulted, as a medium of negotiating with them till they are ready (not the case of the immersion programs) to the next step where the target language is used as a means of communication the same time is being learned.

Discussion to Question 3.-When it comes to results, how significant are the differences between a person who finished the program without using Spanish and one never used it?

-As per the result published by the national authorities, a great deal of English speakers, a very meaningful amount or number of graduates of the above referred program shown significant differences nearly to 90% in comparison to other non-professional programs, that is to say, programs that do not lead to obtain a Bachelor's Degree title in a private or public college or university. The thing is that not anybody who manage to finish this program is able to do so, if he or she lacks the inner or linguistic ability (language smart, see also multiple intelligences) for becoming a near native speaker.

Discussion to Question 4.-How can teachers manage to avoid in a 100% the use of Spanish in students and inspire them to think in English during all the process?

-As far as the results and or conclusion shows, no teachers (-100%) have confessed his/her being guilty of letting their students doing so.

Discussion to Question 5.-Why is it so unhealthy for the process to permit the interference and how is it demonstrated?

-The Native language interference is always an undesirable but, unavoidable fact in the EFL learning process that mostly occur at the beginner's level, especially if they are a

monolingual group which is the case of EFL schools or institutions abroad any English speaking country, like us, the Dominican Republic. Not the same happens if it is a class conformed by students of different nationalities or linguistic backgrounds or nationalities, where as opposite of what occur here, English clearly becomes not only the language being learned or the target language, but the language for mutual understanding in and outside the classroom.

Discussion to Question 6.-Which strategies or teaching techniques better fit with a non spanish teaching environment?

-As discussed before, today's society needs, that is to say, the need for communication when traveling, studying, making business or living in an English speaking country have launched the necessity for using the communicative approach of this field, where communicative strategies and/or techniques are amply used in the EFL classrooms, in opposition to those that still maintain a traditional methodology like the so-called G-T-Method.

### *Conclusions*

As a manner of conclusion, our final words have to inevitably order as to confirm what has said before, and that is: 1.- Research on L2 interference has shown that foreign language learners tend to be highly dependent on L1 structures and vocabulary, especially when producing suitable responses in the target language. Beardsmore (1982) explains that many of the difficulties foreign language learners have with the lexicon and grammar of the target language are caused by the transfer of linguistic habits from the native language, which leads to errors and mistakes. 2.- Writing is a skill that demands great effort and commitment. For this reason, it is often difficult for students to master this skill in a foreign language. József (2001) claims "writing is among the most complex human activities because it involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects." Without doubt, writing is considered a challenging task even in one's mother tongue. According to Harmer (2004), being able to write is just as vital for "speakers" of a foreign language as it is for others who speak their native tongue. Despite the fact that writing is not learned naturally and needs to be systematically taught, it is essential for communication. For this reason, it constitutes a fundamental aspect of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses.

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