

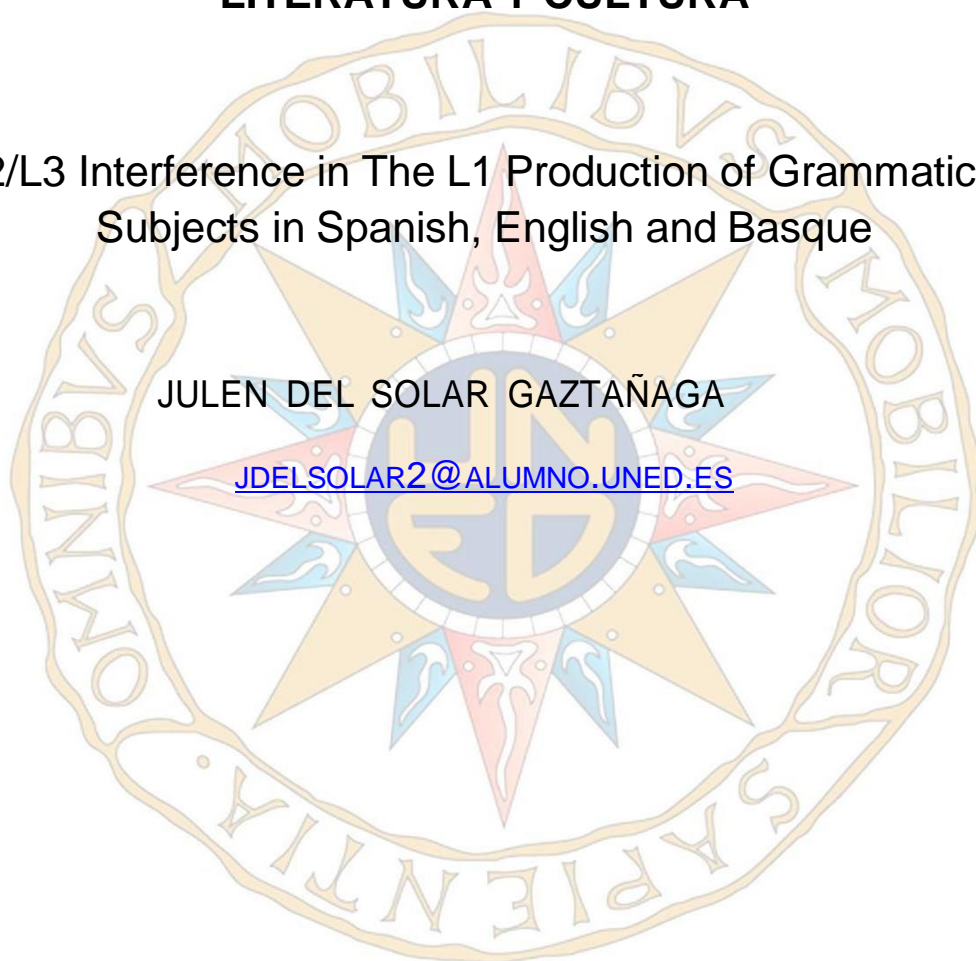


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L2/L3 Interference in The L1 Production of Grammatical
Subjects in Spanish, English and Basque

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ABSTRACT

There is not a great bulk of empirical studies on first language (L1) attrition caused by the influence of a second (L2) and/or a third language (L3). This TFG aims to provide further information on the influence of an L2 and/or an L3 the L1 (and vice-versa), under the Universal Grammar framework (Tsimpili et al. 2004, Pavlenko 2000). More specifically, it investigates the production of grammatical subjects in the domain of syntax. The grammatical subject has different properties depending on the language, namely Basque and Spanish allow the null grammatical subject, contrariwise, English does not. Considering the crosslinguistic differences that underlie the formation of grammatical subjects in the three target languages, we have conducted an empirical study. We have examined 82 participants (age: 18-63) who are enrolled in Basque B2/C1 course or English B2/C1 course at the Official School of Languages. The participants of this study are asked to translate some sentences from their L2/L3 (Basque or English) to the L1 (Spanish) in order to examine the influence of the L1 on the L2/L3, and the L1 attrition due to L2/L3 influence. Our results evidence that the L2/L3 English students produce more grammatical subjects in Spanish when compared to the L2 Basque learning students. However, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Keywords: Interference, language attrition, L1, L2, L3 Universal Grammar, principle and parameters theory, Basque, English, Spanish, grammatical subject, study case.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Languages are not a static continuum; in fact, they tend to change overtime and, when they do not change anymore, we refer to them as “dead languages”. This ability to change accounts for the “evolution” of the languages throughout time. There are different reasons which promote these changes in languages, and these changes do not affect to a particular characteristic, although there are some which tend to go under more changes, as can be the lexicon of a language.

According to Chacón (2021), the contact of different languages is one of the main reasons for language variation. Globalization and technology have accelerated the changes in languages (at least on the lexicon); new words are quickly created and some of them remain on the vocabulary. For instance, the word “tuit” in Spanish, which comes from the English word “tweet”. This word has been adapted to Spanish due to the high influence of Twitter. Lexicon changes are the easiest to occur, but are not the only changes that might happen due to globalization. It has been seen throughout history that when two languages come into contact, one or both languages might overcome changes in one or more fields. We can see a clear example of this on the changes on the English language, which drastically change most of its features after the Norman Conquest in 1071 (Baugh & Cable 2002).

Learning a new language (as opposed to acquiring it¹) is not an easy task. Adults struggle when they try to learn a new language, making it a long process which takes a lot of effort. On the other hand, children do not seem to have these struggles. Early stages of syntax and morphology are learnt faster by adults, but children seem to acquire better proficiency on the long run (Krashen, Scarcella & Long 1979).

There seems to be a critical period for the acquisition of the first language (L1), which goes from age 2 to 12, and it would rely on the neuroplasticity of the

¹ See **2.1 Universal Grammar** for more information.

left hemisphere of the brain (Lenneberg 1967). After this period, automatic acquisition by exposure does not seem to happen, and languages have to be learnt in a conscious way.

Nevertheless, does learning a new language as adults affect the grammar of the (L1) and, if it does, how is that interference? On this TFG, we will research the influence a second/third language (L2/L3) on the L1 grammar, when the L1 is in a favoured environment, under the Universal Grammar (UG) theory. In particular, we will investigate the production of grammatical subjects in three different languages: Basque, Spanish and English. This study has been conducted in Bilbao, the capital city of Bizkaia, in Spain.

Spain is, culturally speaking, a rich country with great diversity. In its territory, we can find the existence of four different languages: Spanish, Galician, Catalanian and Basque. The first three languages have a common origin, Latin. On the other hand, Basque does not come from the same family languages as it is the case of the other three, which present a very different grammar. In the domain of grammatical subjects, Spanish and Basque seem to have more things in common than English. Spanish, as seen in (1), and Basque, as seen in (2), allow the omission of the grammatical subject, however, English, as seen in (3) does not allow it.

- (1) Da a luz en un taxi con la ayuda de la policía
gives birth in a taxi with the help of the police
'She gives birth in a taxi with the help of the police'

[Márquez 2011:66]

- (2) Esan du petrolio-a garesti- tzera doala
say has petrol- the expensive-more it-is-going-to
'He/she has said that the petrol is going to get more expensive'

[Ezeizabarrena 2013: 315]

- (3) *Speaks English

[Fontanella & Sandmann 2008: 29]

In this context, a lot of people are exposed to these two different languages in the Basque Country. Basque and Spanish are mandatory languages to work for public institutions (*Ley 10/1982, de 24 de noviembre, básica de normalización del uso del Euskera, 2012*). As a consequence, many people with Spanish as their L1 choose to learn Basque as adults. On the other hand, due to globalization, English seems to have taken the lead as the international communication language, forcing people to learn it in order to opt for better job opportunities (or other reasons, such as traveling abroad). For a person with a low proficiency level, it seems normal to produce ungrammaticalities on the FL. Some of these ungrammaticalities have been influenced by their L1. For instance, the use of “*fishes” instead of “fish” when talking about more than one fish, rather than different species of fishes.

This TFG is structured as follows. Section 2 addresses the theoretical framework of the TFG. Section 3 reviews previous empirical studies on the acquisition of grammatical subjects as and on L1 attrition. Section 4 displays the Research Questions of the study. Section 5 presents the methodology used for the study. Section 6 displays the results obtained from the study. Section 7 shows the discussion of the obtained results. Section 8 displays the final conclusion of the TFG.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

Chomsky (1965) argues that language is an innate ability of humans. This innate ability is what allows humans to learn a language. He refers to this ability as UG. According to Mairal-Usón et al. (2019), the internalized language (I-language) is a state of the Faculty of Human Language (F_{HL}). To be more precise, the I-language is the final state of the F_{HL} , also known as a language. The theory surrounding this ability has the aim to postulate a theory which would delimit which grammatical properties are shared by all languages (Laka 2002).

In this section, we address two issues, namely, the language acquisition process and L2 development.

Chomsky (1981) argues that learning a language means setting certain parameters. This parameter setting would result in the grammar of the language. He also argues that we have something called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in our brain, which allows people to learn a language. Although the LAD is an automatic process, it cannot work on its own, it needs external input. The language a child acquires in this unconscious way is what we call L1 (or mother tongue). In a study case conducted by Paradise and Genesse (1996) on bilingual children acquiring French and English as their L1, they have observed that these children acquired both languages “autonomously”, thus there was no interference between the two languages when they were acquiring the grammatical categories.

Although “acquiring” and “learning” a language are used interchangeably in many environments, Cook and Newson (2007) make a clearer distinction between these two developmental processes. They argue that acquiring a language implies that the language is developed in a subconscious way while language learning is a conscious process. Thus, an L2 is learnt rather than acquired. This is not absolute because children do it in a subconscious way, and, therefore, age plays an important role in L2 acquisition (Slabakova 2013).

There are different approaches on the availability of UG in foreign language learning (FLL). In this study, we will follow the maturational UG Approach, which suggests that as the brain matures with the pass of time, the flexibility that children have to learn a language disappears, thus, there are traces of the L1 on the L2(Newport 1990).

According to Khoshsima & Banaruee (2015: 2115-2116), learning an L2 is influenced by the L1. They argue that if there are similarities in the L1 and the L2, there are fewer errors in the L2, “but if there are no or little similarities of the structure of first language and second language, learner is faced with a lot of problems in L2 acquisition and it is not easy for them to learn”. They also debate

that many factors play an important role on the interference (e.g. proficiency level).

According to Pavlenko (2000), interference is a highly debated topic in bilingualism and second language acquisition (SLA). She argues that most of the research done on interference concerns the L1 interfering on the SLA and that there are not many researches on the L2 interfering on the L1.

The L2 does not have the same status as the L1. That is, the L2 begins with L1 language, since the grammar of the L1 is available (Cook & Newson 2007). Phinney (1987: 226) defends the idea that “the [L2] learner begins with the setting of L1, and generalizes them to the L2, until the input data forces him/her to reset”.

Bermúdez-Margaretto et al. (2021) identify three major factors that influence L1 attrition: the age of onset, the degree of continued L1 use, and the attitude towards the L1. The first factor refers to whether the L2 speaker has completely discontinued their input and output of the L1 before puberty, which can significantly affect L1 attrition. The second factor is that a high degree of continued L1 use results in better L1 retention. Finally, the third factor concerns negative attitudes towards the L1, which have been found to be associated with L1 attrition.

2.2 THE SPANISH, BASQUE AND ENGLISH GRAMMATICAL SUBJECTS

In Spanish (Llorach 2000), as in (4), and Basque (Villasante 1980; Altuna et al. 1991), as in (5), the verb in finite clauses contains a morpheme which distinguishes the person (among other characteristics) of the grammatical subject. This characteristic makes the grammatical subject an omissible chunk of the clause.

- (4) Lllaman a la puerta
Call.3p at the door
'They knock at the door.'

[Márquez 2011: 67]

- (5) Ekarri dut lore-a
Bring AUX-1s flower-the
'I brought the flower'

[Ezeizabarrena 2013: 314]

In the case of impersonal verbs, such as weather verbs, as in (6) and (7), there is no grammatical subject, but the verb agrees in third person singular form.

- (6) Llovía a cantaros cuando llegué a la estación
Rain.3s pouring when arrived at the station
'It was raining a lot when I arrived at the station'

[Andión-Herrero et al. 2020:157]

- (7) Bart gauean izotza bota du
at-night ice throw AUX.3s
'There was a frost at night'

[Ezeizabarrena 2013: 315]

In English, a verb in the third person in singular in the present of the indicative mood contains the morpheme –s, while the other forms do not contain any distinctive morphemes. The lack of verbal agreement does not allow the omission of the grammatical subject², as displayed in (8) (Downing 2016).

- (8) *Telephoned John

² More information below in section **2.3 THE PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS THEORY**

2.3 THE PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS THEORY

The Principles and Parameters (P&P) theory proposes that the UG has two main components: principles and parameters (Rizz 1989). The principles are a set of rules that all the languages have on their grammar. For instance, the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) says that every clause demands an argument (a grammatical subject) in the tense phrase (TP) node (Chomsky 1995). The parameters refer to the sets of rules that a language might or might not have. In the case of the Pro-Drop Parameter, the grammatical subject of a clause can be dropped if the context is favourable for it, and if the language shows a rich verbal morphology (Rodríguez-Ordóñez & Sainzmaza-Lecanda 2016), as illustrated in (9) where the grammatical subject *ni* in Basque is omitted:

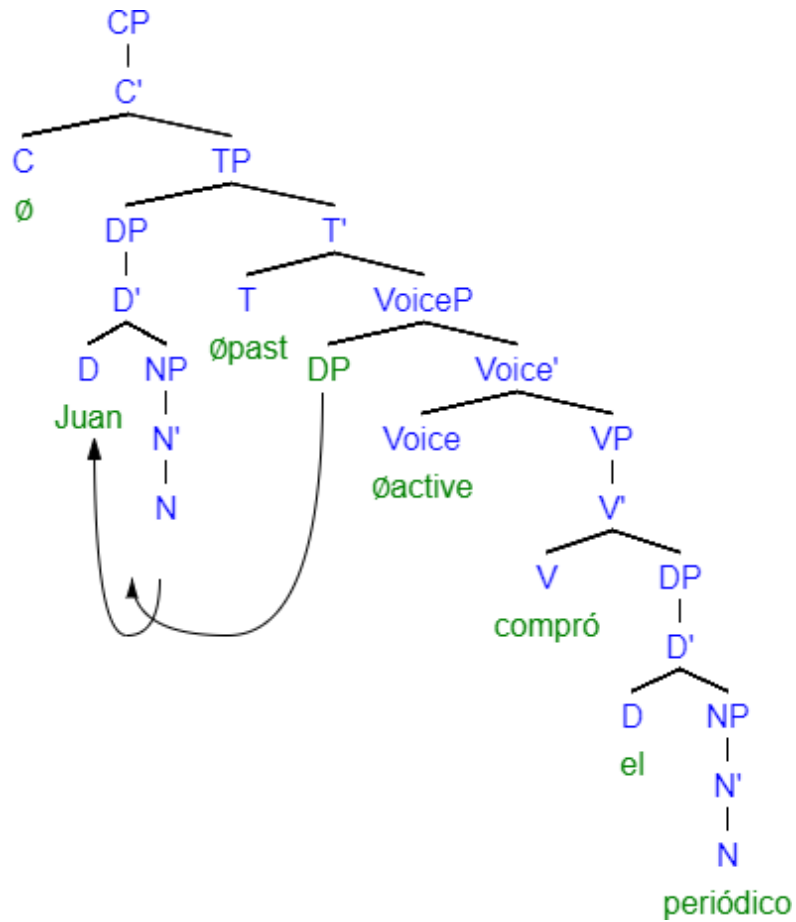
- (9) \emptyset etxe-ra noa
 House-to go.1s
 'I go to the house'

[Rodríguez-Ordóñez & Sainzmaza-Lecanda 2016: 39]

How is it possible for a language to be able to drop the grammatical subject when the EPP demands one? In Spanish, as displayed in (11) the grammatical subject can be omitted when the verb expresses who the grammatical subject is. As shown in (10), the grammatical subject ends in the node Tense Phrase (TP), satisfying the EPP. On the other hand, (11) does not have a grammatical subject; rather, an argument is required in the node TP. In order to satisfy the EPP, we do it so via a null argument (\emptyset). Both clauses carry the same information, even when we drop the grammatical subject. This feature is also seen in Basque, as displayed in (12), where the grammatical subject also ends in the node TP and in (13), where there is no grammatical subject, but \emptyset fulfills its role.

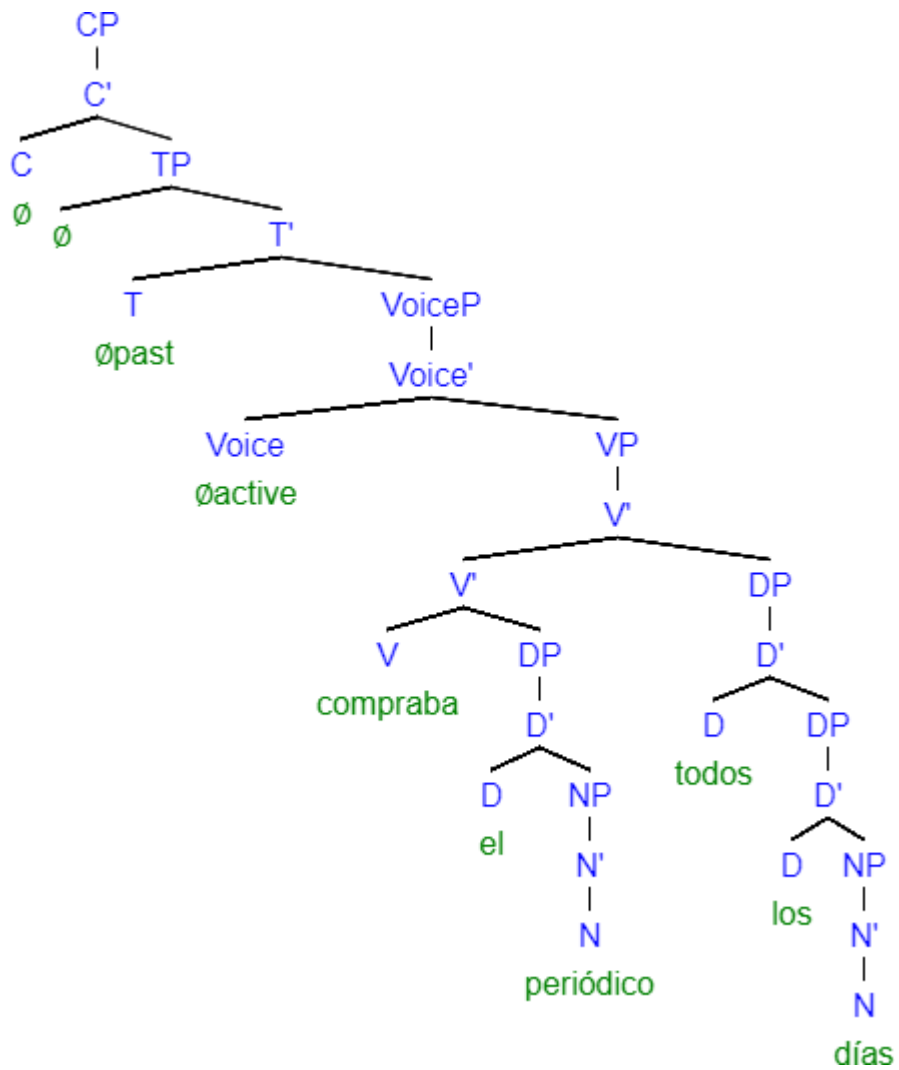
(10) Juan compró el periódico
 Juan.SUBJ bought the newspaper
 'Juan bought the newspaper'

[Olarrea 2012:605]



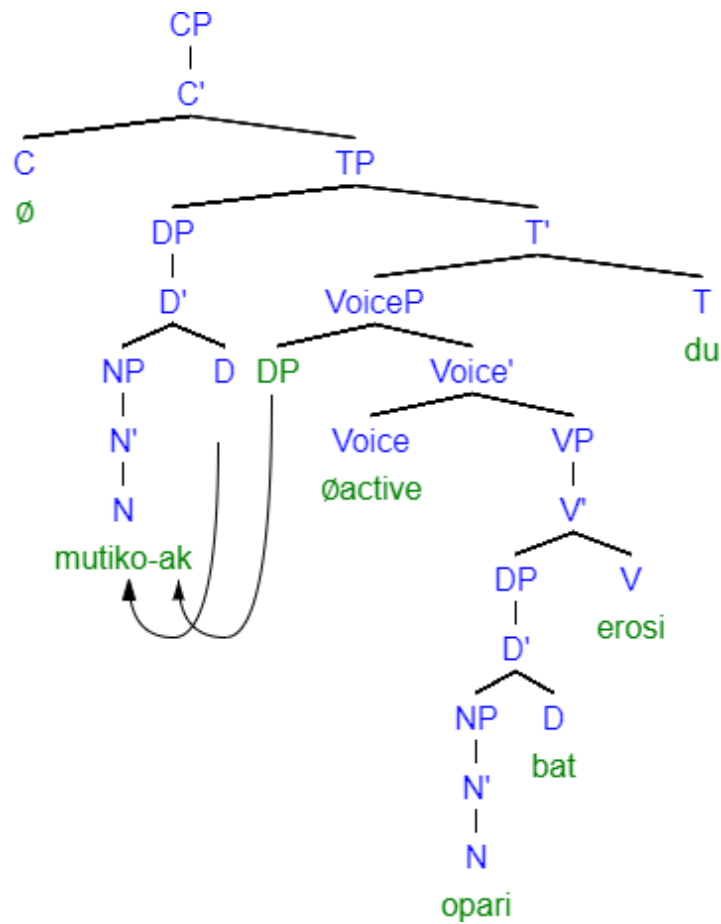
(11) Compraba el periódico todos los días
 Used-to-buy the newspaper every day
 "I used to buy on Tuesdays"

[Olarrea 2012:604]



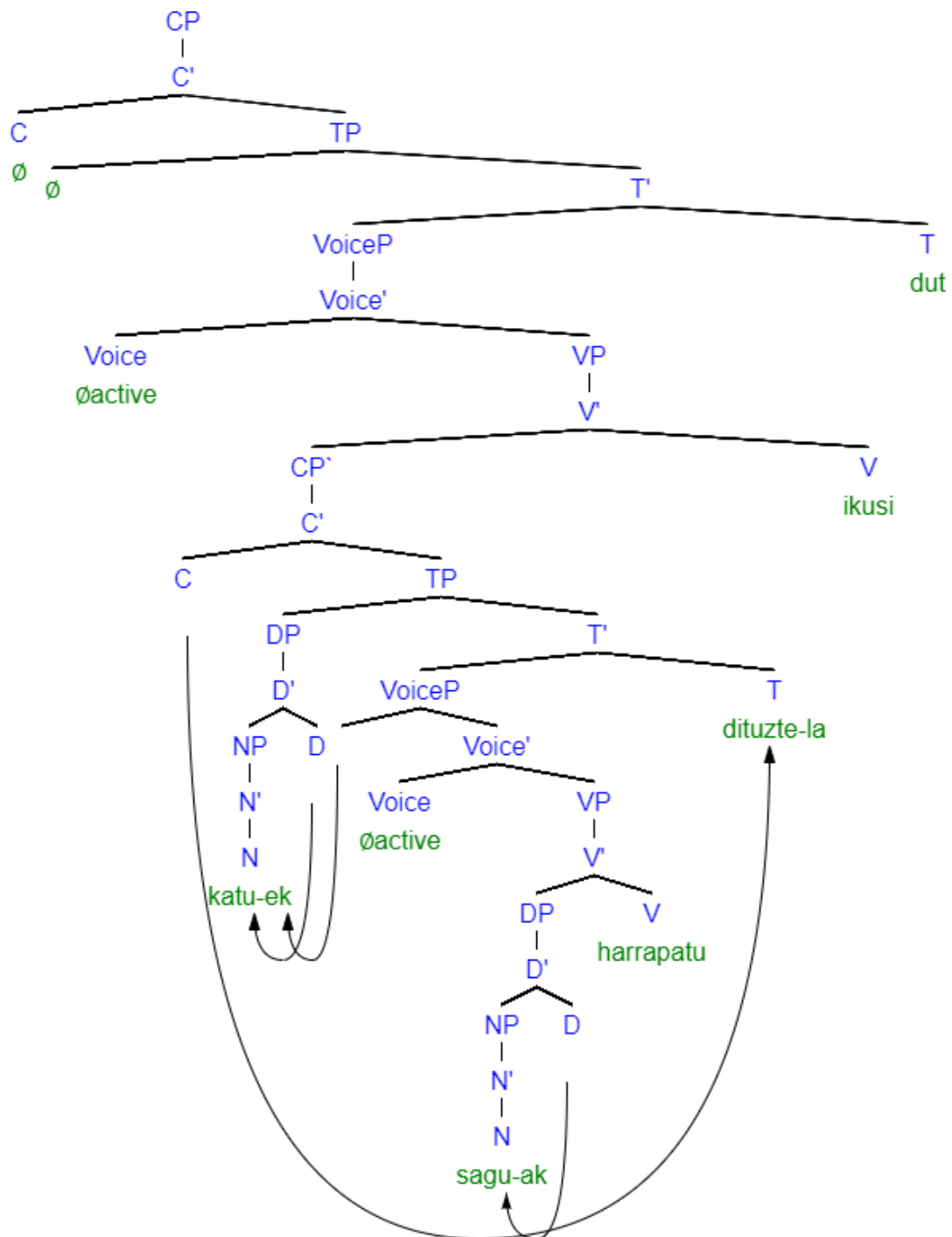
(12) Mutiko-ak opari bat erosi du
 Boy-the-SUBJ present one buy AUX.3s
 'The boy has bought a present'

[Urtzi 2022:489]



(13) Katu-ek sagu-ak harrapatu dituzte-la ikusi dut
 cat-the.SUBJ mouse-the caught AUX.3p-that seen AUX.1sE
 'I saw that the cats caught the mice'

[Rezac et al. 2014: 1280]



The [+pro-drop] feature is not exhibited in every language. An instance of this can be seen in English, where the grammatical subject is always mandatory, except for the imperative mood.

While (14) and (15) are both grammatically correct (Downing, 2016), (15) implies something different. It is in the imperative mood and, therefore, the grammatical subject is formed in second person singular. In other words, (15) differs from (14), which is constructed in the indicative mood and the grammatical subject is in first person.

(14) You open the door

[Huntley 1980: 291]

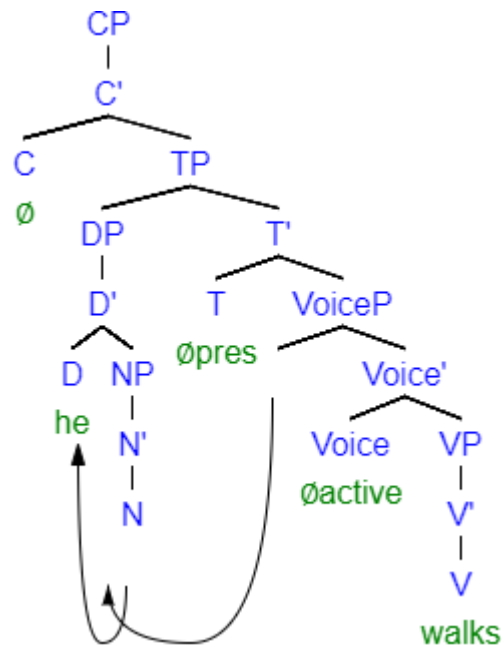
(15) Open the door!

[Huntley 1980: 288]

If we would want to produce a sentence in the third person singular of the indicative mood, the grammatical subject becomes a mandatory category, and the omission of the grammatical subject makes the sentence ungrammatical. This is illustrated in the trees (16) and (17). The clause (17) is ungrammatical because, as it has been stated above, only the imperative mood allows for the omission of the grammatical subject in the English language and that, even though English is a [-pro-drop] language, it allows the pro-drop parameter in certain situations (Zanuttini 2008). The inflection –s in the verb suggests that the verb is in the present indicative mood, and that the grammatical subject has to be in third person and singular, as in (16). Since English does not allow the Pro-drop parameter, the TP node is empty and the EPP is not satisfied.

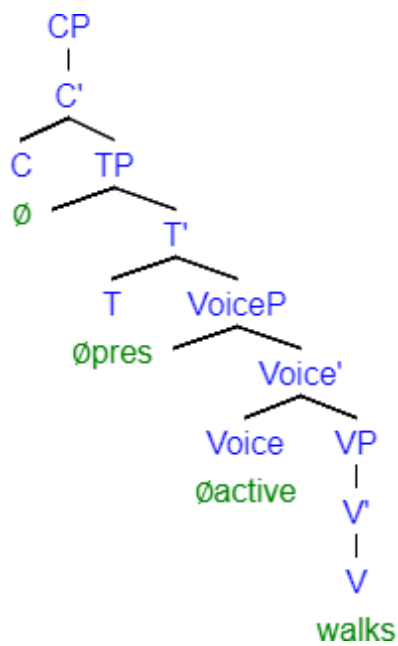
(16) He walks

[Villa-García & Suárez-Palma 2016:335]



(17) *Walks

[Villa-García & Suárez-Palma 2016:335]



3. PREVIOUS EMPIRICAL STUDIES

3.1 ON THE ACQUISITION OF GRAMMATICAL SUBJECTS

It has been observed that the production of grammatical subjects in an L2 is influenced by the L1 (White 1985; Lipski 1989; García 1998; Antonova-Ünlü 2015; Yamada & Miyamoto 2017). This influence can be either positive or negative, depending on the characteristics of both languages. As illustrated in Table 1, if the L1 and the L2 are both [+pro-drop] or [-pro-drop], the transfer of this parameter will be a positive one for the L2. On the other hand, if the L1 or the L2 is [+pro-drop] and the other one is [-pro-drop], the transfer of this parameter will be negative for the L2.

Table 1: *Types of Transfer* (own elaboration)

	L2 [+pro-drop]	L2 [-pro-drop]
L1 [+pro-drop]	Positive Transfer	Negative Transfer
L1 [-pro-drop]	Negative Transfer	Positive Transfer

L1 Spanish speakers seem to transfer the [+pro-drop] parameter into their L2, regardless of the fact that the L2 allows or disallows this parameter (White 1985; García 1998; Pérez-Leroux & Glass 1999). The level of the L2 is also relevant to the L1 influence on the L2 production. Students with lower proficiency levels tend to produce similar output to their L1, and that the parameter resets (or is maintained) as the proficiency of the speaker improves in the L2. This can be seen on studies carried on L1 Spanish and French speakers learning English as their L2. These studies show that there is L1 influence on the early stages of the production of grammatical subject in the L2. (White 1985, 1989). On the other hand, Prentza (2014:1775) argues that the “null and postverbal subject structures, as well as to the possibility of extracting subjects across an overt complementizer are active in the L2 grammars of Greek learners of English even at advanced levels”. Rodríguez-Ordóñez & Sainzmaza-Lecanda (2017) argue in their research that Basque as L2 is influenced by the L1 Spanish. The less Basque proficiency, the higher the number of overt grammatical subjects are produced, which is closer to the rates of the Peninsular Spanish Monolinguals.

3.2 ON THE ATTRITION OF THE L1

Some studies (Pavlenko 2000, Pavlenko & Jarvis 2002, Dominguez (2012) have shown that, under certain conditions, the L1 undergoes an attrition process that affects the morphosyntax of the L1. Tsimpli et al. (2004) made a study on 20 Italian and 19 Greek participants (both [+pro-drop] languages) with English as L2. This study had the aim to research the influence of the L2 English on the production of grammatical subjects of the L1. They did not find evidence on attrition of the L1 production of grammatical subjects influenced by a [-pro-drop] language. On the other hand, the research conveyed by Shin and Otheguy (2005) displayed that the participants of their study, with Spanish as L1, were influenced by English as L2 in the production of grammatical subjects. Where they produced a higher quantity of the nonspecific overt grammatical subject *ellos* in comparison to monolingual Spanish speakers.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering previous formal accounts (section 2) and earlier empirical studies (section 3) on the production of grammatical subjects we have formulated 2 research questions (RQs, henceforth).

RQ 1. Does the L2/L3 affect the production of the grammatical subject in the L1, as analyzed in participants that have Basque as an L2, English as an L2 or L3 and Spanish as their L1?

Based on RQ 1, we predict that our participants' production of grammatical subject in their L1 is not expected to be influenced by the grammatical properties of subjects in their L2 or their L3. In particular, the grammatical subjects in the three languages involve the following properties: (a) in the case of Spanish, grammatical subjects can be null or overt; (b) in Basque, the grammatical subject presents analogous properties as in Spanish; and (c) in the case of English, grammatical subjects are always overt. This prediction follows the research conducted by Tsimpli et al. (2004), where L1 attrition of the [+pro-drop] feature in

Greek and Italian participants was not found despite the grammatical divergences of English as their L2, which has the [-pro-drop] feature.

RQ 2. Do the L2/L3 show signs of interference after being acquired in a constitutionalized environment?

Based on RQ 2, we also predict that there might be some interference of the L1 into the L2 or the L3. Following Rodríguez-Ordóñez & Sainzmaza-Lecanda (2017), L2 Basque participants with a lower language proficiency level of the L2 are more prone to be influenced by their L1. In particular, higher production rates of overt grammatical subjects in their L2 or their L3 are expected to be reflected in their production as a result of the influence of their L1. English as an L2 or as an L3 is also vulnerable to the production of grammatical subjects due to the influence of a [+pro-drop] language in their L1, in line with the studies carried out by White (1985, 1989), García (1998) Pérez-Leroux & Glass (1999) and Prentza (2014).

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study live in the Basque Country. According to the Basque Country's Official Bulletin (BCOB), society is plurilingual, and, thus Basque, Spanish and English are mandatory at schools (Decree 236/2015). However, the social status is not the same for the three languages. That is, Spanish tends to be the native language, while Basque and English are the second and third language. Some students that attend the Official School of Languages (OSL, henceforth) might have no knowledge of some of these languages. For the purposes of this study, we will not consider participants that do not have Spanish as their L1.

As shown in Table 2, 82 native Spanish-speaker students will take part on this study (29 boys; 53 girls). 40 of the students will be learning Basque as their L2 (14 boys; 28 girls) and the other 40 English as their L2/L3 (15 boys; 25 girls).

These two groups will be enrolled in either a B2 or a C1 language course, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe 2021). These students attend the OSL in Bilbao, in the Basque Country.

Table 2: *The selection of participants*

Language Group	N	Proficiency Level
Basque	42	B2 (n=20)
		C1 (n=22)
English	40	B2 (n=20)
		C1 (n=20)

5.2 TASKS AND PROCEDURES

The participants are asked to complete a translation task (TT) (see appendix 1-4). The TT includes two parts, one for each language, that is, one for Basque and another one for English. The first TT consists of 9 sentences: the first 3 sentences are in the L1 and the participants need to translate it to their L2, the following sentences are provided in the L2 (that is, English) and the participants have to translate them into their L1. There are 4 different versions of the TT. The first two versions are prepared for the participants with Basque as their L2. The first version (annex 1) of these consists of two activities. The first activity has 3 phrases that have to be translated from Spanish to the L2. In the second activity, the participants have to translate 6 phrases from their L2 to the L1. The second version (annex 2) consists of 1 activity. This activity has 6 phrases on the L2/L3 of the participant, and the participants have to translate these phrases to the L1, as depicted in (18) and (19) of annex 2 and annex 4, respectively; these sentences are the same in the Basque and English sets. The second activity from the first version, and the first activity of the second version are the same. The other two versions are prepared for the participants with English as their L2/L3, and they follow the same pattern as the Basque version (annex 3 is the same as annex 1, and annex 4 is the same as annex 2) Before

the beginning of the task, the participants will be instructed to write down the first translation that comes to their mind in order to do it as truthful as possible. They will have 10 minutes to complete the TT. We will only analyze the translations from the L2/L3 into the L1.

(18) b) Bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu

(19) b) She pets every cat on her path

6. DATA ANALYSIS

The data gathered have been structured in 8 tables. Each table represents a different group where the TT was taken. Ungrammaticalities or orthography mistakes have not been taking into account if they did not interfere with the production of the grammatical subject.

As depicted in Table 3, all participants of the B2 Basque group with the SET A (annex 1) have translated sentence a) and sentence e) with overt grammatical subjects, and only one has translated sentence f) with an overt grammatical subject. On the other hand, all participants of the same group have translated sentences b), c), and d) with a null grammatical subject, and nine have translated sentence f) with a null grammatical subject.

Table 3: *Basque B2 SET A*

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) Joni lagunekin parkean jolastea gustatzen zaio.	10	0
b) Bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu.	0	10

c) Etxerako lanak egin behar dituzu!	0	10
d) Ez zait inioiz izozkia gustatu.	0	10
e) Zalantzarik gabe, hau ez da auto ona.	10	0
f) Produkto ona izan balitz, asmatzaileak aberastu egingo ziren.	1	9

As depicted in Table 4, all participants of the B2 Basque group with the SET B (annex 2) have translated sentence a) and sentence e) with overt grammatical subjects, and only one has translated sentence f) with an overt grammatical subject. On the other hand, all participants of the same group have translated sentences b), c), and d) with a null grammatical subject, and eight have translated sentence f) with a null grammatical subject. One person did not translate sentence f).

Table 4: *Basque B2 SET B*

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) Joni lagunekin parkean jolastea gustatzen zaio.	10	0
b) Bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu.	0	10
c) Etxerako lanak egin behar dituzu!	0	10
d) Ez zait inioiz izozkia gustatu.	0	10
e) Zalantzarik gabe, hau ez da auto ona.	10	0

f) Produkto ona izan balitz, asmatzaileak aberastu egingo ziren.	1	8
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As depicted in Table 5, all participants of the C1 Basque group with the SET A (annex 1) have translated sentence a) and sentence e) with overt grammatical subjects. On the other hand, all participants of the same group have translated sentences b), c), d) and f) with a null grammatical subject.

Table 5: *Basque C1 SET A*

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) Joni lagunekin parkean jolastea gustatzen zaio.	11	0
b) Bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu.	0	11
c) Etxerako lanak egin behar dituzu!	0	11
d) Ez zait inioiz izozkia gustatu.	0	11
e) Zalantzarik gabe, hau ez da auto ona.	11	0
f) Produkto ona izan balitz, asmatzaileak aberastu egingo ziren.	0	11

As depicted in Table 6, all participants of the C1 Basque group with the SET B (annex 2) have translated sentence a) and sentence e) with overt grammatical subjects. On the other hand, all participants of the same group have translated sentences b), c), d) and f) with a null grammatical subject.

Table 6: Basque C1 SET B

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) Joni lagunekin parkean jolastea gustatzen zaio.	11	0
b) Bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu.	0	11
c) Etxerako lanak egin behar dituzu!	0	11
d) Ez zait inioiz izozkia gustatu.	0	11
e) Zalantzarik gabe, hau ez da auto ona.	11	0
f) Produkto ona izan balitz, asmatzaileak aberastu egingo ziren.	0	11

As depicted in Table 7, all participants of the B2 English group with the SET A (annex 3) have translated sentence a) with an overt grammatical subject. 5 have translated sentence b) with an overt grammatical subject, 3 with sentence c) and 2 with sentence d). On the other hand, 1 person has translated sentence b) with a null grammatical subject, 7 people sentence c), 8 people sentence d), and all of them sentences e) and f). Four participants did not translate sentence b).

Table 7: English B2 SET A

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) John likes to play with his friends at the park	10	0

b) She pets every cat on her path.	5	1
c) You must do your homework!	3	7
d) I have never liked ice cream.	2	8
e) It is certainly not a good car.	0	10
f) Had it been a good product, the inventors would have become rich.	0	10

As depicted in Table 8, all participants of the B2 English group with the SET B (annex 4) have translated sentence a) with an overt grammatical subject. 9 have translated sentence b) with an overt grammatical subject and 1 with sentence c). On the other hand, 1 person has translated sentence b) with a null grammatical subject, 9 people sentence c), and all of the participants have translated sentences d), e) and f) with null grammatical subjects.

Table 8: *English B2 SET B*

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) John likes to play with his friends at the park	10	0
b) She pets every cat on her path.	9	1
c) You must do your homework!	1	9
d) I have never liked ice cream.	0	10
e) It is certainly not a good car.	0	10

f) Had it been a good product, the inventors would have become rich.	0	10
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As depicted in Table 9, all participants of the C1 English group with the SET A (annex 3) have translated sentence a) with an overt grammatical subject. 8 have translated sentence b) with an overt grammatical subject, 1 with sentence c), 1 with sentence d) and 1 with sentence e). On the other hand, 2 people have translated sentence b) with a null grammatical subject, 9 people on sentences c), d) and e); and all of them in sentence f).

Table 9: *English C1 SET A*

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) John likes to play with his friends at the park	10	0
b) She pets every cat on her path.	8	2
c) You must do your homework!	1	9
d) I have never liked ice cream.	1	9
e) It is certainly not a good car.	1	9
f) Had it been a good product, the inventors would have become rich.	0	10

As depicted in Table 10, all participants of the C1 English group with the SET B (annex 4) have translated sentences a) and b) with an overt grammatical subject, and 1 person in sentences d) and e). On the other hand, all of them have translated sentences c) and f) with a null grammatical subject, and 9 people have translated sentences d) and e) with a null grammatical subject.

Table 10: English C1 SET B

Sentences to Translate	Overt Grammatical Subject	Null Grammatical Subject
a) John likes to play with his friends at the park	10	0
b) She pets every cat on her path.	10	0
c) You must do your homework!	0	10
d) I have never liked ice cream.	1	9
e) It is certainly not a good car.	1	9
f) Had it been a good product, the inventors would have become rich.	0	10

7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings examined in our data reveal some differences between the Basque and the English group. The participants of the Basque group have followed the same tendency to either produce overt grammatical subjects or null grammatical subjects. Notwithstanding, there is a variance in sentence e), where 4.8% chose to produce an overt grammatical subject and 95.12% produced a null grammatical subject.

On the other hand, the English group shows more discrepancy in their results. The only concordance on their results can be seen in sentences a) and f), with 100% of overt grammatical subjects in sentence a) and 100% of null grammatical subjects in sentence f). In sentence b), 11.11% of the participants do not produce the grammatical subject in their translations, as opposed to

sentences c), d) and e), where, in these cases, the participants produce 87.50%, 90% and 95% of null grammatical subjects, respectively.

On the one hand, the Basque group evidences that 4.76% of the participants with SET A produced an overt grammatical subject in sentence f), and 5% of the participants with SET B did the same. However, 10.53% of the output of the participants of the B2 group reflect an overt grammatical subject in this sentence, compared the C1 group who did not produce overt grammatical subjects in sentence f). This higher production of overt grammatical subjects by the B2 students is in concordance to the research conducted by Rodríguez-Ordóñez & Sainzmaza-Lecanda (2017), where they found that the lower the proficiency of Basque as L2 was, the higher number of overt grammatical subjects were produced, answering our RQ 2: yes, there is an influence of the L1 Spanish on the L2 Basque.

In the TT of both languages, SET A included 3 translations from Spanish into the target language; these sentences were supposed to influence their grammatical subject production. Our data have evidenced that there seems to be more variation on the overt grammatical subject production in the English group than in the Basque group. In the English group, not only the production is not homogenous, but the group with the SET A generated more overt grammatical subjects, as it was expected. On the other hand, the Basque group does not show any variation regardless of the set they are given. This suggests that the 3 translations have not influenced the participants' outcome. Does that mean that it worked for the English group and not to the Basque group? It might be the rationale behind our findings. However, we also have to consider that the variation in the English group could have accounted for another reason behind the data analysed, as it is the case of a word-to-word translation.

The Basque sheet included two sentences to be translated with overt grammatical subjects, a) and b). These two sentences were produced with the same overt grammatical subjects by the Basque group. On the other hand, the English sheet involved overt grammatical subjects in all the sentences. The last two sentences addressed grammatical subjects with a "dummy it". This would explain why sentences e) and f) are the sentences with fewer overt grammatical

subjects produced by the English group. In addition, sentences a) and b) are the two with most overt grammatical subjects in their translations, with 100% and 88.89%, respectively. This might be accounted for by the fact that the grammatical subjects of these sentences bear more information than the grammatical subjects of the remaining sentences, and the participants might have felt the need to write them. This contrasts the grammatical subjects in sentences c) and d) where they could be completely recovered by the verb cue. However, some participants did produce the overt grammatical subjects in c), d) and e), which might show signs of L1 interference on the L2/L3, supporting the studies by White (1985, 1989), García (1998) Pérez-Leroux & Glass (1999) and Prentza (2014), and also answering, again our RQ 2.

Overall, the English group produced 2% more overt grammatical subjects than the English group, these concords with the research conducted by Tsimpli et al. (2004), where they stated that there was no attrition of the L1 on the production of grammatical subjects influenced by the L2, answering our RQ 1.

The English group with the SET A also reflected 2% more than the group with the SET B. The proficiency level in English does not seem to have influenced on the production of grammatical subjects. However, the B2 Basque group showed 2% more grammatical subjects when compared to the results observed in the C1 group.

8. CONCLUSION

Our study has investigated the influence of the L1 Spanish on the L2/L3 Basque/English on the L1 and, conversely, the influence of the L2/L3 on the L1 specifically the production of subjects L2/L3. As observed in the results examined in this study, although there might be some indicators of L1 attrition, these indicators do not seem to be relevant enough (only 2% variation). Thus, we should take our findings with caution to assume that the L2/L3 attrites the L1 production if the L1 is the main language spoken in the people's environment. Since all the participants speak Spanish on their daily basis, their L2/L3 might not

have the chance to erode it. As Kasparian et al. (2017: 35) show in their study, L1 attrition does happen “after a period of predominant L2 exposure/use in a non-L1-dominant environment”. Thus, similar empirical studies that investigate other language profiles, such as in the case of De Bot, Gommans & Rossing (1991), would help to shed further light on the topic.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Basque Task SET A

Basque Translation Task – SET A

1. Itzul itzazu euskeraraz hurrengo esaldiak.

a) Yo siempre escucho música en el tren.

.....

b) Tú podrías hacer eso con los ojos cerrados.

.....

c) ¡Ellos siempre hacen lo que quieren!

.....

2. Itzul itzazu gaztelaniaraz hurrengo esaldiak.

a) Joni lagunekin parkean jolastea gustatzen zaio.

.....

b) Bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu.

.....

a) Etxerako lanak egin behar dituzu!

.....

b) Ez zait inoiz izozkia gustatu.

.....

c) Zalantzarik gabe, hau ez da auto ona.

.....

d) Produkto ona izan balitz, asmatzaileak aberastu egingo ziren.

.....

Annex 2: Basque Task SET B

Basque Translation Task– SET B

1. Itzul itzazu gaztelaniaraz hurrengo esaldiak.
 - a) Joni lagunekin parkean jolastea gustatzen zaio.
.....
 - b) bere bidean dauden katu guztiak laztantzen ditu.
.....
 - c) Etxerako lanak egin behar dituzu!
.....
 - d) Ez zait inioiz izozkia gustatu.
.....
 - e) Zalantzarik gabe, hau ez da auto ona.
.....
 - f) Produkto ona izan balitz, asmatzaileak aberastu egingo ziren.
.....

Annex 3: English Task SET A

English Translation Task – SET A

1. Translate the following sentences from Spanish to English

a) Yo siempre escucho música en el tren.

.....

b) Tú podrías hacer eso con los ojos cerrados.

.....

c) ¡Ellos siempre hacen lo que quieren!

.....

2. Translate the following sentences from English to Spanish

e) John likes to play with his friends at the park.

.....

f) She pets every cat on her path.

.....

g) You must do your homework!

.....

h) I have never liked ice cream.

.....

i) It is certainly not a good car.

.....

j) Had it been a good product, the inventors would have become rich.

.....

Annex 4 English Task SET B

English Translation Task – SET B

1. Translate the following sentences from English to Spanish

a) John likes to play with his friends at the park.

.....

b) She pets every cat on her path.

.....

c) You must do your homework!

.....

d) I have never liked ice cream.

.....

e) It is certainly not a good car.

.....

f) Had it been a good product, the inventors would have become rich.

.....