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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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**El muchacha tiene tres balón:
Number and Gender
in the Spanish of a Group of Francophone Learners**

Joyce L. S. Garavito-Bruhn

A Thesis

in

The Program

of

Applied Linguistics

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada**

April 1986

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ABSTRACT

El muchacha tiene tres balón:

Number and Gender in the Spanish of a Group of Francophone Learners

Joyce L. S. Garavito-Bruhn

A transcription of the Spanish produced by a group of native speakers of French learning Spanish as a second language in a secondary school in Quebec is analyzed in order to obtain a description of the noun phrase in the interlanguage of these learners, particularly with regard to gender and number markings on nouns and gender and number agreement between nouns, articles and adjectives.

Progression is found in the acquisition of the plural in nouns. In the lower level studied we find first the overgeneralization of the singular, followed by the acquisition of the short /s/ plural and, finally, in the higher level, the plural is mastered.

There is no progression regarding number and gender agreement, which is a problem at both levels, although the rate of error is not as high as it is for the formation of the plural in the first stage of acquisition. It is of interest to note that a higher rate of error is found when the head noun belongs to the natural gender category and/or is clearly marked for gender.

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INTRODUCTION

From 1977 to 1982 a study of English second language learning by French-speaking students was conducted at Concordia University in Montreal. A part of this study covered the acquisition of the English "s" morphemes by these francophone learners. The plural formation of nouns was discovered to be a particular area of difficulty for them.

During an informal discussion I was asked whether francophone students in my Spanish class had similar problems. I laughed and assured the speaker that the Spanish plural was easy and nobody ever had problems with it. This showed how little I knew.

After several subsequent discussions, Dr. Lightbown, who had originally researched the "s" morphemes project, suggested I investigate, with a similar study, whether francophone learners mastered the plural easily. This was the original purpose of this study. But when I started working on it, so many other questions came to my mind that the project expanded considerably. Many questions came during the review of the literature, during the error analysis stage, even during the oral interviews performed to collect the necessary data. Some of these questions I have attempted to answer here.

In the first chapter I will cover the theoretical framework which serves as a basis for the study. In the second chapter I review the literature on the acquisition of Spanish as a first and as a second language. In the third I try to define precisely the goal of the study: a description of gender and number in nouns and number and gender agreement between nouns, articles and adjectives in the interlanguages of francophone learners acquiring Spanish as a second language in the classroom. The learners are high school students, some of whom have taken Spanish for one year, some for two.

In the fourth chapter I explain the methods I use to collect the data and analyse it. Chapter five deals with the patterns of error found in the sample and attempts to interpret the results in terms of current theory. The sixth chapter reviews the problem, the results and the conclusions.

Chapter 1

(STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

During the structuralist period in linguistics, contrastive analysis was one of the cornerstones of applied linguistics and language teaching methodology. The language acquisition process, framed within the then current behaviouristic theories of learning, was viewed as "an experience by means of which new habits of sentence formation are acquired and used for communication" (Stockwell, Bowen and Martin, 1965, p.295). Because errors could become habits, one of the major tasks of the teacher was to help the learner avoid the production of any deviant forms. Contrastive analysis was seen as providing necessary information on the areas of potential difficulty and error.

Contrastive analysis, in second language learning theories the comparison of the learner's native language (L1) and the language being acquired (L2), was supposed to yield information on the areas of difficulty within the L2 and predict possible errors, many of which could be accounted for, according to this theory, by "negative transfer" or "interference" of the native language forms or structures into the second language.

We can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. (Lado, 1957, p VII)

The definition of what constituted difficulty depended on the level of difference or similarity between the structures being compared, the more "difficult" being those forms or structures which differed the most from one language to the other. Transfer would be "negative", "positive" or "neutral" depending on the distance between the items compared.

A student may have some habitual responses which are contrary to the responses required for a new skill which he is trying to master (negative) or which are similar to the new responses (positive) or which have no relation to them (zero). This notion of transfer is applicable throughout the structure of the language: the sound system, the grammar, the vocabulary. (Stockwell and Bowen, 1965, p.9)

With changing views on the processes involved in acquiring a first and a second language the notion of transfer came under severe criticism. Learning a language is no longer considered to be mainly a question of habit formation but rather a complex process which actively involves the learner.

The evidence for this is to be found in studies on the order of acquisition of a subset of English morphemes (Dulay and Burt, 1974a, b; Bailey, Madden and Krashen, 1974; Krashen, 1977) and on the developmental sequences followed by L2 learners before mastery of certain grammatical patterns, such as the formation of interrogation and negation (Raven, 1968, 1970; Hatch, 1974; Wode, 1976, 1981). This research has been interpreted as showing that, as had previously been found for L1 learners, L2 learners follow a certain pattern which seems to be similar for all regardless of age (Bailey, Madden and Krashen, 1974; Fathman, 1975) or native language (Dulay and Burt, 1973; 1974 a, b.). This order has been found to be similar, but not identical, to that found in L1 studies.

In particular, Dulay and Burt have championed the idea that transfer plays a negligible role in L2 acquisition, maintaining that research shows that "transfer of L1 syntactic patterns (product transfer) rarely occurs" (Dulay and Burt, 1976, p.72). They affirm that less than five per cent of errors committed by children learning a second language and between eight and twenty three percent of errors committed by adults can be attributed to transfer. However, they limit their definition of transfer to one based on a behaviouristic view of language acquisition:

A process described as the automatic, uncontrolled, and subconscious use of past learned behaviours in the attempt to produce new responses. (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, p.101)

A more flexible view of transfer as "the use of past knowledge and experience in new situations (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, p.101), is not considered precise enough to be useful for research.

According to Dulay and Burt, the difference in the rate of transfer between children and adults can be explained by the greater facility adults have at conscious learning and their possible use of transfer to aid them in achieving quick results.

The availability of conscious rules...permits very early production. Adults can use the patterns of their first language and insert L2 vocabulary words in the slots. This allows immediate participation in sample conversation. Using such unnatural means for producing language has its limitations, however, and learners who acquire the new language system subconsciously will eventually surpass those who are dependent on conscious rules, despite the conscious learner's headstart. (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, p.91)

This process of filling native language grammatical patterns with foreign language words is not generally accepted to be true transfer and is usually referred to as relexification. It does not seem to have been a subject of any kind of extensive research, and seems to stand in need of some sort of definition. On the face of it, this process of relexification may take place between languages such as Italian and

Spanish, but between English and Arabic? English and Urdu? And if it did serve to facilitate participation in conversation, however simple, it would certainly have proved its use, however unnatural the method.

Discounting this "instant" type of transfer, the most serious problem with any kind of computation of the number of errors due to transfer or any other origin lies, as Dulay, Burt and Krashen point out (1982), in the criteria used to classify errors. Traditionally, errors have been assigned to a certain category, depending on whether they were similar to errors made by first language learners of the target language or to the native tongue. For example, in Andersen (1979) we find:

In second language acquisition, the learner relies on previously-learned forms to express himself when he has not yet learned the appropriate form. When an error resulting from this inappropriate use of the previously-learned form is similar to an error made by a child learning his first language, the error is usually called a developmental error, an error due to second language overgeneralization, or an intralingual error. When the error is clearly similar to a construction in the learner's native language, it is usually said to be due to transfer or interference from the native language. (Andersen, 1979, p.44).

Unfortunately, as anybody who has tried to analyse errors knows, this either/or categorization does not always work, as many errors could be classified under both headings or under neither. Dulay, Burt and Krashen call the former "ambiguous errors", and in their subsequent analysis discount this category:

Since the purpose of this study was to resolve certain theoretical issues revolving around proportions of developmental and interlingual errors, the ambiguous errors were excluded from further analysis and thus not reflected in the final counts. (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, , 1982, N.B.p.175)

This is unfortunate because there is a large body of work emerging which shows that transfer is particularly important in these "ambiguous errors" and that transfer may fit very well in the language learning process as seen by Dulay and Burt in their creative construction hypothesis, by which the learner forms, tests and refines hypotheses about the language he is acquiring, following general acquisitional processes and leading to a highly systematic sequence of developmental stages. Taylor points out that "overgeneralization and transfer learning strategies appear to be two distinctly different linguistic manifestations of one psychological process" (1975, p.66). This psychological process is one of generalization from what is known, in one case the learner's incomplete knowledge of L2 and, in another, his native language. Sharwood Smith (1979, p.350) further argues that given this fact it is difficult to apply the term "creative" to only one of these processes and exclude the other, as Dulay and Burt would.

A more recent view of transfer is that, far from being automatic, the emergence of transfer from the first language is determined by formal properties in the L2 and their relation to L1 structures and by

general principles of language acquisition. Transfer interacts with developing structures and the resulting errors often appear as "ambiguous".

Zobl (1980) has pointed out that language contact theories were misapplied to contrastive analysis, as transfer from one language to another, according to these theories, takes place under certain restrictive conditions regarding the formal properties of the receiving language and the degree of congruence between the two languages. In the case of second language learning, the L2, or, to be exact, the structures in the learner's interlanguage at a particular moment, must, because of certain internal properties, be capable of giving rise to transfer. Transfer does not automatically take place whenever languages are different, but rather, "structural transfer is selective along a developmental and a formal axis" (Zobl, 1980a, p. 54). Furthermore, it is not difference between languages which triggers transfer, but rather compatability between the structures in the L2 developmental stage and the L1 structure (Zobl, 1980b).

Kellerman (1977, 1978) points out the importance of the learner's perception of the distance between the L1 and the L2. If the learner sees the languages as similar, he is more likely to "project" (Kellerman's terminology) from the native language to the target language. But even this perception is limited by what the learner considers transferable. If an element is seen to be language specific, (e.g., idiomatic expressions), it is not likely to be transferred.

It has also been shown that transfer works in accordance with general acquisition principles and strategies (Zobl, 1980a,b; Andersen, 1981). As a clear statement of a working hypothesis about the nature of transfer we may quote Andersen's "Transfer to Somewhere Principle":

A grammatical form or structure will occur consistently and to a significant extent in the interlanguage as a result of transfer if and only if (a) natural acquisitional principles are consistent with the L1 structure or (2) there already exists within the L2 input the potential for (mis-)generalization from the input to produce the same form or structure. Furthermore, in such transfer preference is given in the resulting interlanguage to FREE, INVARIANT, functionally SIMPLE morphemes which are congruent with the L1 and L2 (or there is congruence between the L1 and natural acquisitional processes) and the morphemes occur FREQUENTLY in the L1 and/or the L2. (Andersen 1981 p.7. Emphasis in the original)

This ongoing process of refinement of the concept of transfer and the research it is based on serves to explain many facts not only about the complex nature of some errors, but also why some errors predicted by contrastive analysis fail to appear. It has also helped to understand the process of "fossilization" (Selinker, 1972). It has been suggested (Andersen, 1981; Zobl, 1980b) that errors caused by the interaction of interlingual and intralingual causes are more difficult to eradicate. Because of transfer, some stages in the developmental sequences through which most learners pass in acquiring

a structure may be unduly lengthened for some, while other stages may never appear. In Spanish, for example, negation is formed by placing "no" before the verb. Although most English L2 learners go through a stage in which negation in English is constructed by a preverbal negative, this stage may be more persistent in Spanish speakers (Zobl, 1980b).

Wode, Bahns, Bedey and Frank (1978) conclude that at the present time it is essential to look at the "developmental sequences" that lead to mastery.

One can predict that there can be no universal order of acquisition for English. Since reliance on L1 is an integral part of L2 acquisition, for both the naturalistic and the tutored varieties (Wode 1976a-b, 1977b), it follows that any L2 developmental sequence of a given structural area of English will differ as a function of the L1 acquired previously. This, in turn, is bound to reflect back on the gross overall morpheme order. (Wode, et al., 1978)

Presumably, Wode et al.'s assertions would apply to all languages. They are based, at least in part, on the analysis performed by Wode, et al. on the acquisition of the English plural by four German-speaking children. Although the plural has generally been found to be acquired relatively soon in comparison to the other morphemes which have been studied, these researchers found that even for this "easy" form there were several steps followed by the children before near mastery was achieved. First, they found an uninflected form, which could "look like" a singular or a plural but which was used in all situations.

This was followed by two forms, which the children take to be either singular or plural, with a "plural" used for plural intention and a "singular" which is used for both. In other words, the children's singular can be overgeneralized, but not the plural. This is followed by near-normal use.

A study by Mace-Matluck (1978, p.86) demonstrates the influence of L1 on the order of morpheme acquisition of the English plural and possessive forms. Mace-Matluck observes, for example, that Cantonese, Tagalog and Ilokano speakers acquire control of the English possessive /s/ morpheme quite soon due to the fact that their L1, like English, postposes a particle to indicate possession. They are slower to master the plural and have more trouble with it, again, according to Mace-Matluck, because their L1 does not inflect nouns for number. Spanish inflects for the plural and not the possessive, and her research shows that Spanish speakers learning English do indeed have difficulty with the latter but not with the former.

On the other hand, the acquisition of the English plural by Spanish speakers has been considered a classical example for the non-existence of transfer in second language learning. A study by Natalicio and Natalicio (1971) shows Spanish speakers acquire the English plural allomorphs in the same order as native speakers, that is, first the /s/ and /z/ allomorphs and later the /ez/. Dulay and Burt argue that, given that the Spanish plural is always voiceless (/s/ or /es/), the learners should have acquired the /s/ allomorph

first and the /z/ and /ɛz/ allomorphs later (Dulay and Burt, 1974, p.112, 113).

The Natalicio and Natalicio study was based on a Berko-type test (Berko, 1958) in which nonsense words are used to elicit the different forms. This type of test, as we shall see in chapter 2, is very popular in studies on the acquisition of Spanish. As a note of interest, Anisfeld and Tucker (1967) have shown that, for learners of English as a first language, the rate of accuracy seems to be different in tasks of recognition and production. This would suggest that tests based on nonsense words should be considered in combination with other tests to insure greater reliability of results.

Although Natalicio and Natalicio's results do point to the inadequacy of transfer as the simple explanation for the order of acquisition of the English plural allomorphs by Spanish speakers, it is not correct to affirm that voicing is all the learner has to acquire. The distribution of the plural morphemes in both English and Spanish rests on the syllable structure possible in each language, and this distribution is quite different in Spanish and in English. The basic syllable in Spanish is CV or CVC, and a consonant followed by an /s/ is not possible. One might anticipate that a learner would soon notice that the short plural is more frequent in English and might tend to overgeneralize it.

As a matter of fact, if a learner were to follow Spanish pluralization rules, he would supply long plurals for all the nonsense words administered by Natalicio and Natalicio, except perhaps two, (those ending in /w/ and /y/), as they do not seem to have used vowel-ending words in their test (See Natalicio and Natalicio, 1971 p.1303).

The problem of acquiring the plural could be simpler for an English learner of Spanish. The CVC syllable exists in his language and is more "natural" in phonetic terms than that which governs the plural allomorph distribution in his own language.

Work done as part of a project conducted in Montreal on the classroom acquisition of English by francophones (Lightbown 1982, 1983a,b) shows that reporting an order of relative accuracy of morpheme production leaves out a great deal of information. Although this study did not refute Krashen's "natural order", it showed that the pattern of acquisition of the English morphemes was quite complex and could be influenced by several factors, including, up to a point, instructional practices and materials and, at least in the case of the plural, first language background.

The subjects of this research, a group of francophone learners of English, 99 in all, were followed in and out of class over a period of two or three years, with final reports covering the learning of English from grade six to grade eleven. Most heard little English

outside the school, so the classroom provided their principal contact with the language.

As part of this investigation Lightbown conducted a study of the acquisition by these learners of six English morphemes: plural, copula, progressive auxiliary, possessive, third person singular and the progressive -ing form. One of the tasks used to elicit learner language was in the form of a communication game, in which students had to describe pictures which their interlocutor could not see, (A full description of this "Picture Card Game" may be found in chapter IV).

During the period covered by the research this game was played three times with those learners who, at the beginning, were in their sixth and eighth year of school, and twice with those who were in the tenth grade.

The game was tape recorded, transcribed and an analysis was carried out in order to determine the accuracy rate in relation to the obligatory contexts of the six English morphemes. One of the purposes of this was to be able to compare the results with previous research, in particular with Krashen's "natural order" of acquisition.

Although the order of accuracy was similar to that found by Krashen, there are some interesting differences, as can be seen by examining figure A.

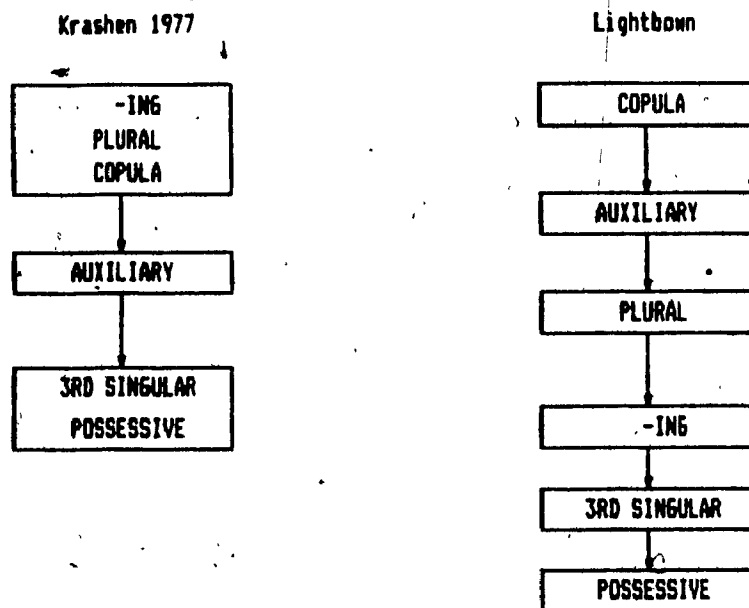


FIGURE A

Adaptation of Krashen's (1977) "Proposed 'Natural Order' for Second Language Acquisition" compared with accuracy order observed in [Lightbown's] study. In Krashen's order, morphemes in the same box are not considered to have a fixed order relative to each other (Lightbown, 1982).

Although only the auxiliary is in a different position with respect to the other morphemes in the Lightbown study, it was found that the overall rate of error and the variations in rate of acquisition over time differed to such an extent between the plural and the copula that it did not warrant putting them in the same box and leaving the auxiliary below.

The overall accuracy rates for the copula and the auxiliary /-s/ were high (98% and 89%, respectively), and they did not change much over time. The progressive /-ing/, with an overall accuracy of 50%, started with an accuracy rate of 69%, and then dropped to 39% the following year, rising again only in the eleventh grade. The plural, on the other hand, was low (below 50%) at the beginning, and, though it increased slowly and steadily, was still below 65% accuracy in the older students.

A comparison of these results with the subjects' accuracy on a written grammaticality judgement test and in compositions confirmed that, for these francophone learners, the formation of the English plural is quite difficult, with high rates of error and slow acquisition.

Given the fact that the English plural is considered an "easy" form to acquire for learners of differing first language, age and sex, as may be seen by its high position in the order of acquisition hierarchy, we must explain why francophones in particular have trouble with it. Lightbown concludes that "the fact that the plural -s is not pronounced in French is probably an important factor interfering with its being produced in oral and written English and even occasionally in written French (Lightbown, 1983a, p.17).

This explanation accords well with Andersen's "Transfer to Somewhere Principle". Simplification, in this case the omission of the

English plural morpheme, is consistent with French L1 in which the plural is usually not pronounced, and "there already exists within the L2 input the potential for (mis)generalization" (Andersen, 1981, p.2), given that the singular is usually more frequent than the plural in natural English input.

Furthermore, if the notion of plurality can be expressed by a free morpheme such as a numeral, it is possible this will be used in preference to a bound /-s/ morpheme, or at least considered sufficient to express the intended meaning. On the other hand, it could be predicted that the acquisition of the English plural should be simplified by the fact that it is postposed and reflects a clear semantic category (see Slobin's operating principles, 1973).

If transfer is operating in conjunction with simplification in the interlanguage of these learners it should also operate in the acquisition of the Spanish plural, which is quite similar (though not identical) to the English. I determined, therefore, to investigate this idea further by performing a similar test to that administered in the Lightbown study (i.e. the Picture Card Game) to a group of high school francophone learners of Spanish, in order to examine the pattern of errors, if any, found in their expression of plurality. Because the plural in Spanish extends over the noun phrase in the form of agreement between articles, nouns and adjectives, it would be insufficient to examine the nouns without looking at the whole noun phrase.

Upon studying the noun phrases found in the data it struck me that if I neglected to examine gender as well I would be passing over some very interesting information. In the first place, gender is realized in the same set of words and is closely linked to number. Secondly, it holds interest in the fact that it presents quite a different problem to the learner.

Although natural gender represents an overt semantic difference, grammatical gender does not. It is far from being considered "easy" to learn by most students and teachers of Spanish L2 and is usually ranked very low in most studies of the acquisition of Spanish L2 by English speakers (see chapter 2). On the other hand, grammatical and natural gender are marked in French and follow similar agreement rules. In many cases gender is the same in both French and Spanish, but there are no studies that make direct comparisons of the gender of nouns in the two languages. It would, in any case, be impossible to judge a priori whether learners could be led to overgeneralize the similarity or not. It is possible that there is no direct transfer of gender in individual words but rather that a francophone's expectations about how gender functions and therefore his approach to the problem would be different from a learner with an L1 background such as English, where the noun phrase is not marked for grammatical gender.

The plan of the present study is, then, to examine the patterns of error found in the noun phrase in a sample of speech collected from three groups of French L1 high school learners of Spanish as an L2, two of which have taken Spanish for about one year and the other for almost two years, in order to discover whether there is evidence that transfer operating in conjunction with language acquisition processes such as simplification, overgeneralization, etc., is a factor in determining the form the noun phrase takes in these learners' interlanguage, or rather interlanguages, as they are surely not all at the same stage of development.

In order to do this it is necessary to know the types of errors children learning Spanish as their native language make and the types of errors Spanish L2 learners from different backgrounds make. A similarity between one or the other or both of these and the present group would give a strong indication as to which processes are predominant. We will therefore examine the literature in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will be divided in two parts. In the first I will survey the literature on the development of number and gender in the noun phrase in Spanish acquired as a native language, and in the second, the literature on child and adult Spanish L2. The first part will, in turn, be subdivided into an examination of:

1. The formation of the plural in nouns.
2. Endings in nouns that indicate gender.
3. Number and gender agreement between nouns, articles and adjectives.

Each subdivision will include a general description of the target language regarding the point in question.

NOUN PHRASE DEVELOPMENT IN SPANISH L1

Formation of the plural in nouns.

There are two plural allomorphs in Spanish. Nouns ending in a vowel take an /-s/ in the plural; nouns ending in a consonant take an /-es/, because Spanish does not allow a cluster of a consonant plus an /s/ in the same syllable. It must be noted, however, that the pronunciation of syllable final /s/ varies in different dialects, being either clearly pronounced, pronounced as an aspiration or not pronounced. Speakers of dialects which delete or aspirate plurals, also delete or aspirate all syllable final /s/.

Development of the plural.

One of Slobin's suggested universals for the acquisition of language states:

The following stages of linguistic marking of a semantic notion are typically observed: (1) no marking, (2) appropriate marking in limited cases, (3) overgeneralization of marking often accompanied by redundant marking, (4) full adult system. (1973, p.205)

We do not find direct evidence for stage three with respect to the formation of the plural in Spanish and the literature offers little information about when stage four is reached.

Montes Giraldo (1974, 1976), who took notes on the language development of his four children, gives a few examples which could be considered evidence for stage one or two, that is, overuse of the unmarked singular, the latest occurrence at 3;4 years. Occasionally a numeral seems to carry the burden of plurality. Unfortunately, we do not know the frequency of these errors and, to complicate the picture, some of these children have not acquired the [s] phoneme. Example:

Form produced	*To uva
Correct form	Dos uvas
	Two grapes

Mazeika's subject (1970) was a bilingual English/Spanish boy whose playtime monologues were recorded between the ages of 28 and 30 months. At this stage the plural inflection has been acquired but not completely mastered, which would correspond to Slobin's stage 2. It is interesting to note that "the single suffix /-s/ is used exclusively" but it is not made clear whether consonant ending words are left unmarked or marked incorrectly. It is also noted that the child never transfers the English /z/ plural allomorph to Spanish (p.100).

Fantini (1974) reports on the acquisition of English and Spanish by his son Mario, whose emerging speech he noted and recorded from birth to about five and a half years of age. Although he was

interested primarily in sociolinguistic aspects, he does give a partial-linguistic analysis of the data.

According to Fantini, "morphology was the last aspect of language to emerge" and was still incipient by age three (p.192). The child's first plural appears at age 2;8. Contrary to Mazeika's subject, only the long plural was produced at the early stages. Words ending in a vowel were not pluralized. By age three, the short plural emerged (p.198).

Kernan and Blount (1966) administered a Berko (1958) type test, which is based on nonsense words, to their subjects who were monolingual Spanish speaking children from a small town in Jalisco, Mexico. They ranged in age from five to twelve years, and were, somewhat arbitrarily, divided into three groups, children from five to seven, eight to ten and eleven to twelve years respectively. Martínez Bernal (1972) administered a similar test to 26 children from two schools, one group ranging in age from five to six, the other from six to eight years. These were children who spoke either Spanish only or Spanish and English at home and were enrolled in a Bilingual Bicultural school program in Tucson, Arizona.

Both Kernan and Blount and Martínez Bernal administered their tests in a fixed order, Martínez Bernal following the predicted order of difficulty based in part on Kernan and Blount's results. Both researchers tested for the plural and not for the singular, and both

checked only production and not comprehension and recognition of the forms. (These criticisms are levelled at this type of test by Natalicio and Natalicio, 1969).

The results regarding the plural were similar in both cases: the short /-s/ plural was found to be acquired early and maintained, while the long /-es/ plural did not seem to have been "internalized" by age twelve in the Kernan and Blount study or by age eight in the Martínez Bernal. The percentage of correct answers for the /-s/ plural ranges from 93% to 100% for the three groups in the Kernan and Blount study, and was 86% for the older group and 94% correct for the younger in the Martínez Bernal study. For the long plural, however, Kernan and Blount found 43%, 38% and 53% correct answers for each age group respectively. It should be noted that they had only one example of the long plural in their test. Martínez Bernal found 25% accuracy for the older group and 42% for the younger in her study.

Both studies also agree on the type of error committed: repetition of the singular for both types of plural accounted for the majority of errors, and in the case of the long plural there was also the addition of /-s/ in place of /-es/. This last accounted for 20% of the errors in the Martínez Bernal study. In this type of error the children would be breaking not only a grammatical rule but also a rule of Spanish syllable structure.

These results are comparable to those found by the administration of similar tests to native English speaking children. Berko (1958), Anisfeld and Tucker (1967) and Natalicio and Natalicio (1971) all found the late acquisition of the long English plural in comparison to the /s/ and /z/ allomorphs. As I noted in chapter 1 these results were not corroborated in Anisfeld and Tucker (1967) when the task involved was not production but rather recognition, in which the /-z/ allomorph of the plural appeared significantly easier, with fewer errors, and there was no difference between the /-s/ and /-iz/.

It seems obvious that tests such as these based on nonsense words should be used with caution and preferably in conjunction with others. Although it may be safe to say that the Spanish and English long plurals take longer to acquire, we cannot infer from errors on nonsense words on a test that the forms have not been mastered in natural situations with known words, unless there is other evidence to support this contention. Unfortunately, the results of studies of natural language (Montes Giraldo, 1974; Fantini, 1976; Mazeika, 1971) do not provide such unambiguous evidence.

Gender markings on nouns

It has usually been considered that gender is intrinsic to Spanish nouns (See Stockwell and Bowen, 1965, p.43). The simplest description of Spanish gender endings is to say that nouns ending in -o are usually, but not always, masculine, and those ending in -a

are usually , but not always, feminine. Most textbooks would consider that other endings (except perhaps -ción, and -d which are feminine) give no indication of gender.

Most nouns in which gender is semantically based (natural gender) indicate the sex opposition by the appropriate o/a endings (hijo [son]/ hija [daughter]), but some do not (hombre [man]/ mujer [woman]). In a small group of nouns the feminine ending -a is added to the consonant ending masculine form (profesor [male professor]/ profesora [female professor]).

In general, semantic or natural gender corresponds to grammatical gender. All nouns, however, have grammatical gender, which follows no particular logic. If a noun itself is not marked unambiguously, its gender can be inferred from agreement in the noun phrase or with predicate nouns or adjectives.

It is also important to note that the masculine is the unmarked form as it is used when gender is not explicit or when groups of masculine and feminine elements are referred to.

Of interest because it may shed light on the approach a first (or second) language learner may take to acquiring gender is the theory that endings other than o/a give clear indication of the probability of the noun being masculine or feminine. Bull (1965, p.105-110) affirms that 98% of nouns ending in -a, -d, -ción/sión, -sis

or -itis are feminine, or rather, in his terminology, match the -a ending form of the adjective, while 96% of those ending in -a, -i, -n, -o, -r, match equivalent masculine endings.

Sánchez Sadek, Kiraithe and Villarreal (1975) conducted a test in which 315 Spanish monolinguals and Spanish/English bilinguals from pre-kindergarten through third grade in California, were asked to match nonsense words with the aforementioned endings to appropriate adjectives. The mean proportion of correct answers was above 50% for monolinguals and bilinguals. However, for both groups, the level of mastery was higher for -o matching patterns than for -a.

Doman (1982, p.11) has suggested that the higher accuracy for the masculine could be explained as the result of failure to actively apply any agreement rule, resulting in the production of the unmarked form. She also objects to Bull's rule because it is based on frequency of words in the lexicon and not on the frequency in discourse. It is still an open question whether children could be guided by the endings of words to guess the gender.

Development of gender markings on nouns.

Very little has been said in general in first language studies about the acquisition of noun endings and their relation to gender. Mazeika (1971, p.101) in the study already described, mentions that at the time he studied his bilingual subject, the o/a dichotomy and its

relation to sex had not been completely learned, as could be seen by the use of the feminine ending -a on a noun whose gender, semantically based, is clearly masculine:

Form produced	*papacita
	(feminine ending)
correct form	papacito
	(masculine ending)
	father

Montes Giraldo (1976 p.24) describes the overextension of the o/a endings to other types of nouns, for example:

Form produced	*una fola
	(feminine, -a ending)
Correct form	una flor
	(feminine, consonant ending)
	a flower

Form produced	*mujala
	(feminine, -a ending)
Correct form	mujer
	(feminine, consonant ending)
	woman

In these forms, produced at 34 months, the child has replaced consonant endings for an -a ending, thus regularizing the noun. As Eve Clark (1984, p.24) notes "this not only clarifies their gender but also regularizes the stress placement as penultimate rather than as final syllable". It would also, naturally, make it easier to form the plural.

Similar errors were found by Cohen in his study of Mexican Americans in California. He was comparing, among other things, the Spanish of 45 children enrolled in a kindergarten and first grade bilingual program with 45 others enrolled in an English only school. But only about four of these children produced words such as the following in the course of story telling tests:

Form produced *nieva
(feminine, -a ending)

Correct form nieve
(feminine, -e ending)
snow

Form produced *arbol
(masculine, -o ending)

Correct form arbol
(masculine, consonant ending)
tree

There is, then, some evidence that children tend to overgeneralize the o/a endings, as predicted in Slobin's stage 3.

Gender and number agreement.

Spanish modifiers and determiners must agree in gender and number with the head noun. For the purpose of this study the main interest is in articles and adjectives. The picture description task was not expected to elicit many pronouns, demonstratives, possessives, etc.

The definite articles are el, la, los and las. The masculine article is homophonous with the masculine pronoun el. The singular feminine and both plurals are homophonous with the clitic direct object pronouns.

The indefinite articles are un and una. The plural unos and unas are only used to convey the meaning more or less equivalent to the English "some". Ex: Trajimos regalos [We brought presents]. Trajimos unos regalos [We brought some presents].

As far as gender is concerned there are two kinds of adjectives: those with two endings, -o masculine, -a feminine, and those with one ending, a consonant or another vowel, usually -e. Some consonant ending adjectives, notably nationalities, form the feminine by adding -a.

Adjectives form the plural the same way nouns do: by adding /-s/ if the adjective ends in a vowel, /-es/ if it ends in a consonant.

Development of article-noun number and gender agreement.

Reports on Spanish L1 acquisition suggest that articles appear very early. Montes Giraldo (1974) documents the appearance of the definite article between the ages of 1;8 and 2;2 years, though not always in the adult form. At a preliminary stage the children use some sort of indeterminate morpheme before nouns, such as /a/ or /ə/, (e.g. *tete* [baby bottle]). This eventually is replaced by the adult form and later the indefinite article appears. He also notes the incorrect synthesis of the article and the noun which has been found in other L1 studies. The child treats the article and the noun as one unit, for example:

Form produced	<i>xlilo,</i>
Correct forms	<i>el hilo</i> the thread.


Similar findings are reported on by Fantini (1976). His subject, Mario, at age 2;3, also begins by sporadically using some sort of indeterminate, variant morpheme before nouns. This continues until age 2;7, at which time the article *la* emerges and is used with all nouns, including nouns with natural masculine gender. But only a month later, the masculine article *el* appears in a few instances. It is never overused and the feminine is still the prevailing form.

Fantini reports that by the age of five his subject's acquisition of Spanish morphology seems complete. At this age he is given the Kernan and Blount test and responds correctly on all items relating to noun phrase morphology.

Mazeika's two and a half year old subject consistently overgeneralizes the feminine definite article, which would put him at the beginning stage with la operating as a neuter.

González (1970) conducted a cross-sectional study of children between the ages of two and five, three children at each age level, about three months apart. The method of elicitation was conversational. Also used was a Berko-type test of nonsense words. The purpose of the study was to determine "the normal sequence of development of Spanish grammatical patterns" (p.2). At age two there are no instances of a plural article and at least one child still uses an overgeneralized "neuter" article although combined with indiscriminate use of el and la and the omission of the article altogether.

By 2;6 plural articles have appeared. Regarding gender we find variation in the rate of acquisition up to about 3;9. At 3;6, for example, one child uses la in all cases, while others seem to have achieved mastery or near mastery much earlier. (There are only 3 instances of deviation at age 2;9 and none at 3;3.)



A later acquisition of gender agreement in articles is reported by Brisk (1972). She studied seven five year old children from northern New Mexico, two from a large urban center and five from a rural district where the Hispanic culture was fairly isolated. The method for collecting the data was free elicitation. Judging by T-unit length, Brisk concludes that the urban group had a lower degree of linguistic maturity (p.37). It is one of these subjects who consistently (76% of the time) used a feminine article for masculine nouns, and also for any English borrowings, including those with natural gender, as in "la grandpa" (p.102). The rural children committed errors in gender but often self corrected shortly after (p.103). Other errors by her subjects were the omission of articles, and one subject lacked number agreement within the noun phrase."

A subsequent study conducted by Brisk (1976) also showed the relatively late acquisition of article gender agreement. Twenty one first grade children were tested, 16 in Boston and 5 in Argentina. Some of the children were asked to make a choice between a masculine or feminine article to accompany a noun, for example between la marqueta or el marqueta. This proved difficult so others were asked to incorporate the noun in a sentence.

There were two types of errors: omissions and the use of inappropriate gender. Overall there was no significant difference in the number of overgeneralizations of the masculine or the feminine, but "the children who made the most total errors also made the largest

number of errors in changing a masculine to a feminine gender" (p.151). Also of note is the fact that "noun endings do help the child in deciding which article to use", but "in analysing the nouns in particular one can also conclude familiarity with the word is important." For example, the word torta, which was unknown to the children, appeared with five errors, while lápiz, well known, had none (p 151).

The five-year old bilingual subjects studied by Cohen (1973) also produced errors in lack of article-noun gender and number agreement, and article omission. These are not so numerous as startling because of the age of the children and because the errors so often cover semantically based gender nouns:

Form produced \$un señora

(un: masc. sing. art, señoras: fem. sing. noun)

Correct form una señora

(una: fem. sing. art., señoras: fem. sing. noun)

a lady (woman)

Form produced \$la hombre

(la: fem. sing. art., hombres: masc. sing. noun)

Correct form el hombre

(el: masc. sing. art., hombres: masc. sing. noun)

the man

Flores (1973) suggests that this type of error does not seem typical of monolingual Spanish children acquiring their native language, at least not at school age (Flores, 1973, p.60). This was attested to by Cohen himself who administered the Bilingual Syntax Measure (Burt, Dulay and Hernández-Chávez, 1973) to a group of Ecuadorian second graders and found no instances of error regarding definite articles (Cohen, 1976).

Padilla and Lindholm's (1976) findings also fail to establish late acquisition for article gender agreement. They collected samples in English and Spanish from 19 bilingual children between the ages of two and six years, four months. They analyzed samples of natural language and found that definite and indefinite articles are used by all the children and there are few errors of gender or number agreement.

Gili y Gaya (1972) studied material collected by the Consejo Superior de Enseñanza of Puerto Rico. He studied samples collected by teachers from 50 children in the pre-school age (from four to seven years old) in the 1940's. As far as articles and demonstratives are concerned, he states that by age four number and gender agreement are acquired with few deviations. He asserts that "gender is learned by the association of each noun with the article, adjective and pronouns that agree with it; the idea of this permanent association is connected to the meaning of the noun and functions without important hesitation at the age of 4 years, long before children are capable of

establishing analogies by the endings or have a concept of the sexes" (p.50). (The children in the 40's must have been more naive than the children of today.)

Dulay, Burt and Hernández Chávez (1976), who administered their field test of the BSM to 1146 Spanish American children from kindergarten through grade 2, rated article gender agreement as slightly more difficult than the present subjunctive, giving it a score range from 63 to 74%. However, they note that article gender was dropped from subsequent form of the BSM "due to inconsistencies in scoring" (p. 27).

To summarize, we seem to have three types of errors in the acquisition of Spanish articles: omission, use of one exclusive article, or indiscriminate use of both. As to the relative time or ease of acquisition there is little agreement: some researchers find it established quite early for all or some subjects (Padilla and Lindholm (1976), González (1970), Gili y Gaya (1972)); others find it a very difficult structure (Brisk (1972, 1976), Dulay, Burt and Hernández Chávez (1976)). Some of the differences could reflect differences in the methods of testing. In natural language the child will tend to use words he is familiar with and use them correctly, whereas structured elicitation tasks with nonsense words or unfamiliar words will produce different results. It is also possible, and even probable, that the acquisition of gender does not occur in a straight line but that a child changes tactics or directions at different

points of development. That is, words which are correctly marked at one time may be marked incorrectly at a later time as the child moves to a different stage in rule knowledge.

There seems to be some evidence that the form preferred for overgeneralization of the definite article is the feminine la, although the frequency of occurrence in the input would seem to be higher for the masculine given that it is the unmarked form.

Development of adjective-noun number and gender agreement.

At ~~two~~ and a half years of age, Mazeika's (1971, p.102) subject had not acquired gender agreement for adjectives and number had appeared only in the use of demonstratives.

Montes Giraldo (1976, p.15) does not mention adjective gender in particular, but he gives two interesting examples of errors. One by a child of 2;10 who fails to make an agreement between an adjective and himself. He self corrected when his father asked him if he was a woman. Another child at 2;6 overgeneralized gender to the verb:

Form produced

Yo cano ela tiquitica y a niño cano elo tiquitico.

ela: verb, 3rd p. sing.; elo: verb, 3rd p.sing, incorrect -o masc.

ending, made to agree with niño: masc. sing. noun and tiquitico: masc. sing. adj.

Correct form

Yo cuando era chiquitica y el niño cuando era chiquitico.

When I was small and when the boy was small.

It is a pity Montes Giraldo does not indicate the frequency of these errors.

González (1970) notes that the last number agreement error in his corpus was found at 3;3. Gender errors, on the other hand, occur, though infrequently, up to the age of 6;0 (González, 1968, quoted in González, 1970, p.161). But, as is the case with the article, there seem to be several subjects of his that acquire it early, (at least at 3;3 years), and show no deviations.

Brisk (1972) also notes lack of gender and number agreement in the speech of her subjects, but it is not consistent. Gili y Gaya (1972) implies that acquisition is established by age four years at the latest. Padilla and Lindholm (1976, p.135) report "there was very consistent agreement in number and gender between the noun and the adjective" in their speech samples, and note the establishment of adjectives as slightly later than that of articles. Burt, Dulay and

Hernández Chávez rate adjective agreement as considerably easier than the article.

There is little evidence on whether number or gender agreement is established first in adjectives. González' evidence seems to point to number being acquired first. Van Naerssen (1979) leans to this opinion in her review of L1 studies.

To summarize, we are faced with conflicting opinions as to when adjective agreement is established. There is no evidence on which form, if any, is preferred at first, nor is there any indication as to whether agreement is easier with nouns marked for gender or having natural gender. It seems probable that the acquisition of agreement should continue even after a stage of seeming control. It is, after all, closely linked to the acquisition of vocabulary.

NOUN PHRASE DEVELOPMENT IN SPANISH L2

I will divide this section in two parts, one dealing with the literature on child Spanish L2 acquisition and the other on adult L2. There are two reasons for this decision. First, Van Naerssen, who compared the order of acquisition of Spanish morphemes for L1 and L2, found that "there was no significant correlation between the child and adult second/foreign language orders" (Van Naerssen, 1981 p.22). According to her, cognitive maturity seems to be a significant variable in the acquisition of Spanish.

The other reason is that there is a unity within the studies treating child L2. They all, with two exceptions, deal with the same projects: the Culver City Spanish Immersion Program. The exceptions are Dato (1970, 1975) and Andersen (1982).

The acquisition of Spanish as a second language by children.

The Culver City Spanish Immersion Program.

This program was begun in 1971. That year 19 English speaking children were enrolled in a Spanish immersion kindergarten class. As in the Canadian immersion programs, these children heard only the second language from their teacher. They were given no formal training in the second language and, although encouraged to speak Spanish, they were not forced to do so. In kindergarten their Spanish was seldom corrected, but this changed in the first grade.

In their first year in the program (kindergarten), seven students were chosen by Cathcart (1972) for an in-depth look at their Spanish language use in class. She observed the children for ten one hour periods, but she also used notes taken by the teacher and other graduate students. The subjects' production was not very extensive, so it is difficult to arrive at very general conclusions.

The formation of the plural is not investigated by Cathcart, but

the data show many examples of words in the plural, particularly in the last period, and occasionally it is possible to confirm that the context does in reality call for the plural (see p.103). There are no cases of obvious omission of the plural. It would seem that it is one of the first morphemes acquired by these English-speaking children in an immersion environment.

As to gender in noun endings, even an understanding of its function seems not to have been acquired. Example:

Question

¿Quién es tu amiga?

(Amiga: fem. sing. noun)

Who is your friend (female)?

Answer

David

Errors in the article consisted of omission, and substitution of un for uno. There seems to be only one example of lack of gender agreement between article and noun (p. 103):

Form produced la papel

(la: fem. sing. art., papel: masc. sing. noun)

Correct form el papel

(el: masc. sing. art. papel: masc. sing. noun)

the paper

The total number of articles produced was about 26. It should be remembered that vocabulary was very limited and at this stage articles may have been learned as part of the noun.

There was generally not much evidence for agreement between nouns and adjectives, although number agreement seemed easier than gender. Except for one child, there is no overgeneralized preference for one gender.

In the second year (first grade), Flores (1973) looked in particular at the children's morphological rules of agreement. He examined data collected in the classroom over a period of five months from eight of the children and administered two tests and one story telling task to all fifteen. At this stage, he finds more complete and longer sentences. There is also an increase in vocabulary.

As in Cathcart's study, a great deal of the information relevant to this investigation comes from examining the published data because the questions asked here are not the same as those of the author.

The results of the tests seem to show that number in nouns is no problem for these students. All except one produced the correct forms of the short and long plural, and all produced a singular when called for, though not necessarily the expected vocabulary item.

Regarding the article, Flores points out the the greatest improvement seems to be in the fact that articles are no longer omitted (p.52). Un is still occasionally replaced by uno.

Agreement, on the other hand, is a big problem. "Errors in this field ranged from lack of agreement in gender or number to lack of agreement in both gender and number" (p.52). As would be expected, the singular was overgeneralized, but never the plural.

Noun-adjective agreement is similar, with many errors. Again looking at the results of Test I, where a feminine noun-adjective combination should have been changed to the plural, six of the children produced a singular masculine adjective, three a masculine plural and only three gave the correct form. On test II, where the children were asked to supply the color of items showed them, ten gave a correct masculine plural adjective and four an incorrectly singular masculine adjective, for one picture, but on the other picture only one gave the correct feminine plural form, three supplying a masculine plural and ten a singular masculine form. It would seem, then, that the number morphemes are beginning to appear in the adjective, but there is a strong tendency to use an invariant masculine singular adjective. At this stage, then, "there is no real control over the distribution of gender and number markers" (Flores, 1973, p.54).

Flores (p.61) indicates that his impression and that of many native speakers is that these types of errors are not found, at least in such a striking form, in monolinguals, and if they are, the stage in which they appear is very short. As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, there is some evidence to back this, though it is far from conclusive.

Cohen (1974) administered an oral language achievement test to the children in the Culver City program, before and after the summer recess between the first and second grades. At this time, there were fourteen children in the program. One of the areas Cohen was interested in was the change that might have taken place relating to adjective and article noun agreement.

Results show that definite article agreement errors increased slightly, but the most dramatic change was from a tendency to overuse the masculine singular on the pretest (61% overuse of the masculine, 39% of the feminine), to overuse of the feminine (30% overuse of the masculine, 70% overuse of the feminine) (p.59).

The same did not happen with indefinite articles, where Cohen found a decrease in overall errors but a definite increase in the use of masculine articles with feminine nouns (from 72% in the pretest to 91% in the post test).

Regarding adjectives, there was a slight increase in the overuse of the masculine. Cohen notes that most errors in gender occurred where the gender of the noun was clearly marked, for example:

Form produced

la niño

(la: fem. sing. art., niño: masc. sing. noun, natural gender)

Correct form

el niño

(el: masc. sing. art., niño: masc. sing. noun)

the boy

Form produced

la carro

(la: fem. sing. art., carro: masc. sing. noun, -o ending)

Correct form

el carro

(el: masc. sing. art., carro: masc. sing. noun)

the car

Boyd (1975) administered six tests, among which were the Kernan and Blount morphology test, the Bilingual Syntax Measure and a story telling task, and recorded the twelve children still in the Culver City immersion program at the end of the second grade.

Basing her conclusions on the results of the administration of the morphology test, Boyd affirms that "the rules for the formation of plurals....had become firmly established "(p. 127). The long plural again appears more difficult.

Gender, on the other hand, is still a problem. Article gender is one of the "major error categories" (p.130), but there is no marked group tendency towards either the masculine or the feminine. This is not the case for adjectives, which did show overuse of the masculine. As we can see, the preference for the feminine article found by Cohen after the grade 1-2 summer recess seems to have disappeared and results are closer to those obtained by Cohen before the recess.

At the end of four years of immersion (grade 3), Cohen (1976) administered the Bilingual Syntax Measure to the ten remaining children and compared the results with those found for the administration of the same test at the end of the second grade and with answers supplied by 21 second graders in Ecuador.

He finds there is improvement for the definite masculine article, "within the zone termed near mastery" (p.365). On the other hand, there is loss for the feminine article, showing the children are back to an overextension of the masculine. The masculine plural seems to be acquired. It too is overextended to replace the feminine, but las at least makes an appearance. The Ecuadorian children made no error in gender agreement with the definite article.

Plann (1978) did a cross sectional study of 24 students in grades 1 through 4 (this last is the original group), and measured gender and number agreement. She affirms that there is no "definite trend of improvement accross the grades" (p.120) and says that this, "plus the systematicity of the errors, suggests that these errors have been fossilized" (p.130).

Article-noun number agreement rules seem to have been acquired by the higher grades. The most accurate of the definite articles was the masculine plural. However it replaced the feminine plural 100% of the time. There seems to be a slight tendency to prefer the masculine singular over the feminine, but both were overused.

The masculine indefinite article was the more accurate of the indefinite articles, except in the fourth grade children, "who correspondingly scored lowest on the masculine form" (p. 121).

Adjective-noun agreement again showed a preference for the masculine singular. Number agreement was not established, although there was "a growing awareness" (p. 128).

We will now turn to the two studies that are not related to the Culver City Immersion Program.

Dato (1970, 1975) studied the acquisition of Spanish by his four year old English dominant son in Madrid over a period of ten months. The child was taped in a naturalistic setting twice a month and the data were compared to similar data obtained from four other children.

The subject begins with single words and adds definite articles around the time of the third recording and uses them consistently, even with words he transfers from English. Indefinite articles and plurals appear next.

Adjectives appear quite early, usually in a pre-noun position, but this is almost corrected by the tenth recording.

Around five and a half months Dato mentions "indications of greater awareness of the notion of number agreement between nouns and qualifiers" (p.31), but lack of gender agreement continues, although with some improvement, up to the last recording.

Andersen (1982) studied a transcription of a one hour oral interview with a twelve year old boy who had learned Spanish as a second language in Puerto Rico. He was "a conversationally-fluid, but non-proficient second language (SL) speaker of Spanish " (p.1). The object of the research was to determine what the subject does with gender (p.2). Andersen's answer is that "Anthony (the subject) marks clear inherent gender - sex - overtly, clearly and consistently, but

[...] disregards totally all other gender marking" (p.4).

The learner generally uses the correct endings of the noun, but he has only two invariant article forms, the indefinite un and the definite la, and only one adjective form, the masculine singular. As we can see, his is truly a "simplified" system and seems to diverge considerably from the descriptions found previously in this chapter.

Analyzing data taken from the same subject two years later, Andersen (1984) finds that gender agreement has improved and the masculine article el has replaced the feminine as the overgeneralized form (p.8).

Summary of child Spanish second language acquisition.

Regarding the acquisition of number and gender by English speaking children learning Spanish as a second language, there is some evidence for the following.

1. Rules for the formation of the plural are acquired early. The long plural is slightly more difficult.

2. Number agreement is acquired earlier than gender. This might appear to reflect the principle that a semantically based form is acquired earlier, but the problem with gender extends to natural gender as well as grammatical gender.

3. Number agreement is acquired first in articles, later in adjectives.

4. Gender agreement is a persistent problem, none of the subjects studied having mastered it.

5. Regarding gender in articles, there seem to be at least two strategies which change as the child's language develops or according to the conditions: (a) random choice of gender, masculine or feminine, (b) preference for one invariant article. An extreme example of this was Andersen's subject. Learners not only seem to fluctuate from one strategy to the other, but occasionally both are present together, one being used, for example, for singular articles, the other for plural. We also find fluctuation in the form chosen to overuse, the masculine or the feminine.

6. Regarding adjectives, there seems to be a general tendency to use the masculine singular form as invariant. This seems to be a more stable strategy than that found in the acquisition of articles and seems to persist over quite a long period of time.

7. Overt marking for gender on the noun does not seem to affect the choice of article or adjective. Nor, as we have seen, does natural gender.

The acquisition of Spanish as a second language by adults.

The four studies of adult Spanish second language acquisition described here all deal with American university students. There are no examples of informal acquisition, though one group, that studied by Van Naerssen (1980, 1981) was following Tracy Terrell's "natural approach" (Krashen and Terrell, 1984).

Formation of the plural.

Van Naerssen (1980) reports on a pilot study conducted with 15 first year college English native speakers and, subsequently (1981), on a study involving 27 students. The method of elicitation was semi-naturalistic, in that the students were asked to speak as much as possible in response to a fixed set of questions during an examination.

Although the formation of the plural was not a particular point of interest, in a personal communication to Dr. P. Lightbown, Van Naerssen said that, of 539 obligatory contexts for a plural noun, there were only 14 failures to add the plural endings (about 2.6%) and seven failed attempts to add the correct form of which four were English cognates or transfers of English words.

LoCoco (1976) found similar results in her analysis of

compositions written by a group of American students in their first year of Spanish. There were from 42 to 48 subjects and they wrote compositions in four periods, two in each semester. In total LoCoco found only eight errors of omission of the plural in the second and fourth compositions and only three in the third.

Tapia Hernández (1978) conducted a study in which she looked at the correlation between answers to a discrete point test and knowledge of rules in the learning of Spanish. Her subjects were 30 students who had completed or were taking advanced Spanish at the University of Texas. She found the plural was in the 90% to 100% accuracy range.

Gender in nouns.

There is very little information in the literature on the development of gender in relation to noun endings, perhaps because this is not a problem. Van Naerssen (1980, p.147) states that her subjects "had relatively little difficulty with initially choosing the gender of the noun to be modified." I take this to mean the problem of gender was in the agreement of the noun with adjectives and articles, and not in the noun endings themselves.

Tapia Hernández also touches the question of gender in nouns, but the information is not very reliable. Students were asked only to state the gender of three nouns, one -o ending, one -a ending and a feminine noun ending in an -d. They were to identify the gender as masculine, feminine or neuter. The most frequent error was to mark the

-d ending noun as neuter. However, as two correct answers out of three were sufficient for a question to be judged correct, this item scored between 90% and 100% correct on this test of "rule application".

Gender agreement.

Van Naerssen (1979), surveys most available data on Spanish L2 and arrives at a composite hierarchy of difficulty for the acquisition of a number of Spanish morphemes. She concludes that adult second language learners acquire gender agreement late and have a continued high error rate (p.24). In general this correlates with child first and second language acquisition data, although adjective-noun gender agreement seems to slightly precede article-noun gender agreement. On the other hand, adjective-noun number agreement seems to appear quite early, while article-noun number is later, separated by four ranks. Children, as we have seen, seem to acquire number in articles first.

LoCoco (1976) also identifies lack of adjective and determiner noun agreement as errors committed by at least 25% of the students. The percentage of determiner errors was lower. The masculine singular is the form most overgeneralized.

This is similar to findings by Doman (1982), whose subjects, 117 college students, made twice as many errors in producing the feminine as when producing the masculine. She also finds evidence for a relation between the o/a noun endings and rate of error, in that the

rate of error in agreement was only 5% in regular nouns ending in -o or -a, while it was 17% in nouns with other endings. The rate jumped to 27% when the nouns were exceptions to the o/a ending rule (ex: la mano [the hand]). Pronominal modifiers, usually definite articles, seem to be easier (8% error rate) than post nominal, usually adjectives (24% rate of error).

Summary of adult Spanish second language acquisition.

Regarding English-speaking adult second language acquirers of Spanish as a second language we may say that:

1. The formation of the plural is acquired early, as it seems to have been for children.
2. Noun endings themselves do not seem to be a problem.
3. Agreement is again a serious problem. Number seems to appear first in adjectives and articles and gender much later. This last has not been mastered by any of the groups studied.

In the next chapter I will attempt to clarify the goals of the present research in view of what has been learned from the literature.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As I pointed out in chapter 1, present day research views transfer as a process which works in conjunction with other factors, some of which are intralingual in nature, resulting in the particular forms typical of different stages of learners' interlanguage.

This explains in part the difficulties encountered when researchers attempt to classify errors as simply interlingual or intralingual. The results are never completely convincing and it is obvious that a clear cut, black or white description does not characterize the realities of the situation.

The principal goal of this research will be a description of the Spanish noun phrase in the interlanguages of francophone high school subjects. This description includes patterns of error and should point to areas of difficulty for these learners. I will also note any striking differences in individual tendencies. I believe this kind of descriptive information is potentially valuable for those involved in the preparation of materials for the classroom and for teachers of Spanish to similar groups.

This description will then be compared to what we have learned from the literature in the hope of gaining some insight into the processes involved. Regarding the formation of the plural, if the patterns found are similar to those found at some stage of Spanish first language acquisition but are radically different from those found by researchers in the Spanish L2 of anglophones (which is the only other group studied so far), the explanation may in part at least lie in the differences between English and French, particularly in view of the results obtained by Lightbown (1983a,b), who found that the formation of the English plural was a lingering problem for francophones but not for English L2 learners from most other L1 backgrounds.

The factors involved in the acquisition of gender are more complicated, and explanations must be even more tentative than those possible for the acquisition of the plural. Research on the acquisition of gender by Spanish L1 speakers has, as we have seen, yielded rather contradictory results, possibly because there is no one path to mastery and possibly because the paths followed are complex and changes are rapid.

Second language acquisition researchers conclude that gender agreement is difficult for anglophone learners, with high frequencies of errors and late mastery. In the traditional view this is the result of negative transfer, because gender agreement does not exist in English but is obligatory in Spanish, creating what Stockwell, Bowen

and Martin (1965, p. 284) term a "negative correspondence". But, obviously, the opportunities for error lie primarily within the language, given the unpredictability of gender.

When French is the first language, the variables are different. Evidence for transfer, this time positive, could be argued if the frequency of errors were to be significantly lower when gender is the same in both languages. However, this sounds simpler than it is. We would have to know what vocabulary items would probably be used in French under the same circumstances, in this case in response to a set of pictures. Translating back from the Spanish form produced by the learner into a French word we think means the same is quite inadequate. For example, in this study the words "ropa roja" [red clothes] were often used to describe the clothes of a figure in a red skirt. Would this translate in the learners' mind to *vêtement*, *habit*, *robe*, *jupe*, etc.? It is useless to speculate.

A particular area of interest because it may give some indication as to how the learner approaches the problem of gender is agreement between articles, adjectives and nouns where gender is semantically based. Second language acquisition research has pointed to a surprising number of errors in this domain. Given that natural gender works in a similar way in both French and Spanish, a high incidence of error would certainly seem to exclude, or at least reduce, the role of transfer, given that natural gender works in the same way in French and in Spanish.

Besides comparing the description of the data to what information is known about the acquisition of Spanish, I will attempt a comparison between the two levels of Spanish studied, the elementary level, consisting of students who have taken about one year of Spanish, and the more advanced group, who have taken Spanish for almost two years. It is possible that different learner strategies will be found at the two stages.

I will now attempt to break down these general points into more precise and manageable questions.

Questions regarding the formation of the plural:

1. Have the subjects mastered the singular-plural contrast in Spanish? If not, what kinds of errors do they make?

First language learners use the singular exclusively for an undetermined period of time at a stage when their language system is quite simple. English speaking Spanish L2 learners seem to have no difficulty and to master the system very quickly.

2. Is the long "es" plural more difficult for the learners than the short plural?

The long plural is acquired later than the short plural by native speakers. There is no published evidence for L2 learners.

3. Is the number of errors greater when a numeral is present in the noun phrase?

Such a finding might indicate that the learners consider the plural as redundant under these circumstances. There is no evidence for Spanish L1 or L2. Anisfeld and Tucker (1967, p.1207), in their paper on the acquisition of the English plural by native speakers, conclude that "6-year old children do not consider numbers equal in status to the standard markers but, rather, as substitutes to fall back on when the proper marker is not known."

Gender in nouns.

1. Do these learners use the natural gender distinction correctly? In other words, does what they say correspond to reality?

There are instances of misuse of the endings by native speakers, but we do not know their frequency or duration. We also find a few examples among second language learners, but this is not an area which has been studied in any detail.

2. Is there any evidence of overgeneralization of the regular o/a endings, of the type found in first language learners (Arbolo for arbol, etc.)?

Article-noun agreement.

1. Is number agreement established?

Evidence for when number appears in native language acquisition is not conclusive. In second language acquisition, number agreement seems to precede gender, at least in adult L2.

2. Is gender agreement established? If it is not, is there a tendency to overgeneralize one form of article over the other, are errors random or is this point subject to individual variation?

Research seems to show a tendency to overgeneralize the feminine definite article at least at some stage of the acquisition of Spanish as a first language, and the same appeared at certain points in child second language acquisition, although the masculine seemed generally to be favored in the latter.

3. Are there fewer errors in gender agreement when the noun belongs to the natural gender category?

Errors of lack of agreement between articles and nouns transparent for gender have been noted in first language speakers, usually bilingual children in the United States. These were surprising because the children were of school age, and they do not sound "natural" to native speakers. Regarding child second language

acquisition there seems to be a high frequency of error in this area. There is no evidence for adult second language learners.

4. Are there fewer errors when the noun is clearly marked for gender?

There is evidence of a high incidence of errors for child second language learners even when the noun is clearly marked for gender. The noun endings seem to facilitate agreement for adults.

5. Do definite and indefinite articles appear to be equally difficult?

The definite article appears first in first and second language acquisition, but there is no evidence of frequencies of errors regarding gender agreement.

Adjective-noun agreement.

According to the literature on Spanish second language acquisition, adjective agreement is acquired late. The most typical error is the overuse of the masculine singular form of adjectives which change -o to -a and the singular of all others. Therefore we may ask of the present group of students the following:

1. Is there any attempt to distinguish number in the adjective?

2. Is there any attempt to distinguish gender in the adjective?

3. Which is the most common form of error?

As answers are found to these questions based on the grammatical features of the language, I will also attempt to answer questions on the differences noted between the two groups of learners, level 1 and level 2. In particular, I will examine the following questions:

On the formation of the plural:

1. Is there a change in error rate from the first to the second level?

2. If there is change, does it affect the long and the short plurals, or only one?

On gender in nouns.

1. Is there any change in the appropriateness of noun endings in regard to context?

On agreement between adjectives, articles and nouns.

1. Is there any change in the frequency of errors?
2. Is there any shift in the direction of errors, for example, from overuse of one gender to the other?
3. Does it seem that number agreement appears earlier?
4. Does article agreement precede adjective agreement?
5. Is there any change in error frequency and type in cases where the gender of the noun is clear because of its form or referent?

To summarize, I am asking how these learners use nouns and noun modifiers in their Spanish L2, how what they do relates to previous studies of Spanish first and second language acquisition in order to attempt an explanation of the factors which lead to the forms found, and, finally, what differences are found at two different stages of acquisition.

In the next chapter I will describe the procedures used in the present study.

Chapter 4 PROCEDURES

Subjects.

The subjects were francophone students who were studying in a high school on the South Shore, outside Montreal.

Spanish was an elective course in this school and there were two levels. The first level was made up of secondary III and a few secondary IV students, the second of secondary IV and secondary V students. Two classes of the first level, comprising 32 students, and one class of the second level, comprising 12 students, were tested. (Two or three students were absent the week of the interviews).

Before the test was administered, the students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix B) in order to determine their first language, what other languages they spoke and what contact they had with Spanish outside the classroom.

In the first level all respondents spoke French at home except one whose first language was Portuguese and who was consequently eliminated from the analysis. Two of the subjects sometimes spoke English to their father or mother and one had at one time attended an

English school. None spoke Spanish to anybody outside the classroom and none had travelled to a Spanish speaking country. Their only outside contact with Spanish seemed to be listening to the singer Julio Iglesias and the rock group ABBA singing in Spanish. Even this applied to only about half the group.

The results for the second level were similar. One respondent spoke English besides French at home and one had attended an English school. One occasionally spoke Greek to his father but French was usually the home language. One tried to practice Spanish with a friend outside the classroom and two said they had visited a Spanish speaking country for a short period of time. For both groups, then, contact with the language is limited to the classroom.

Regarding the learners' contact with English, instruction in this language in Quebec schools begins in the last years of elementary, so these students will have had at least formal classroom contact with this language for four or five years.

The level 1 students received four 30 minute periods of Spanish per week, level 2 received three. The textbook used was Qué tal, Carmen? (Dabène and Colin, 1968). Lessons in this text are presented in the form of dialogues illustrated by pictures, followed by questions, grammatical exercises and then a section of free expression.

The test was administered about one month before the end of the school year. Level 1 learners were then studying lesson 12; level two students, lesson 24.

Method of elicitation.

I was the interviewer for all the students. I was given office space and the teacher sent the students, one by one, during her class period. I was able to interview about four students per period and the interviews took place between the 14th and the 22nd of May, 1981. Instructions were usually given in Spanish.

As in the Lightbown study, the subjects played a guessing game with me. I had a set of four cards in front of me. The student would pick a card from a duplicate set and try to describe it so I could guess which one it was. Each student was presented with eight sets, except for a small number who did not seem to have understood the instructions and were therefore given a trial run with an extra set. Six of these sets, including the extra, were also used in the Lightbown study. Three new ones were added because there did not seem to be enough opportunities to produce the long plural in the originals.

Analysis of the data.

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed following the guidelines of the Lightbown and Barkman (1978) research, that is, normal spelling was used unless the word was not recognized or there was a striking problem with pronunciation. Intonation at the end of phrases, self corrections and exact repetitions were also marked.

A special sheet was prepared for the analysis of the transcriptions (See Appendix B). Each phrase containing a noun or an adjective was marked for appropriate or inappropriate usage of the article, the noun and the adjective. In this way, I obtained the number of obligatory contexts and the deviations.

In general, in the case of self corrections, only the correction (the final version produced by the student) was counted, although, naturally, a "self correction" does not necessarily lead to a corrected form. For example:

Form produced

La niña hay una, un vestido verde.

(una: fem. sing. art.)

Corrected to

(un: masc. sing article, vestido: masc. sing noun)

Correct form

La niña tiene un vestido verde.

The girl is (has) a green dress.

Only the second, in this case, correct, article is counted.

Form produced

Y la, los ~~casas~~ son negro.

(la: fem. sing. art)

Corrected to

(los: masc. pl. art., casas: fem. pl. noun)

Correct form

Y las casas son negras.

And the houses are black.

Only the second article is counted, correct as to number but incorrect as to gender.

In the quantitative analyses, self repetitions were only counted, once. For example:

El contrario de derecha, el contrario de derecha.

The opposite of right, the opposite of right.

The exact repetition of a word uttered by the interviewer was not counted. However, if the word was changed, expanded by the

addition of an element such as an article or incorporated into a phrase or sentence, it is then counted. For example:

Interviewer: Torta.

Subject : Torta.

(cake)

The noun torta is not counted

Interviewer: Ah, borrador.

Subject : Hay dos borrador.

(do (dos): plural numeral. Borrador: sing. noun)

Correct form: Hay dos borradores.

There are two erasers.

Borrador was counted in the noun category as incorrectly singular.

Articles were marked incorrect when they lacked gender and-or number agreement with the noun or when they were omitted. It was also noted when uno was used instead of un, although if it preceded a masculine singular noun it was considered correct for gender and number. As this was not a study of definiteness, the correct usage of definite or indefinite articles was not particularly noted, but, as the context was relatively simple and straightforward, there seemed no evidence of problems in this area.

If an article agreed with the noun but the noun was used

incorrectly as to gender, the gender of the article was considered incorrect in spite of agreement. This was very rare. Examples:

El señor es pequeño (The picture showed a girl).

(el: masc. sing. art., señor: masc. sing. noun)

The man is small.

Article, noun and adjective are considered incorrectly masculine.

The endings of nouns were analyzed as to gender and number, and it was noted whether it was a case of natural gender and if so whether it belonged to an o/a type word, consonant (usually r)/a type or other type. If the noun did not refer to an entity with natural gender, I noted whether it was clearly marked for gender. The type of plural was also examined. Originally phonetic similarity and gender similarity with the French were also considered, but this information proved difficult to judge so it was not used.

Unintelligible words were not included in the analysis because there could be no referent to judge by.

If a French or an English word was given a Spanish pronunciation, or if the word was intelligible but distorted, it was not analyzed as to gender, but it was taken into account when considering number, given that the rules for number can be applied depending on the ending and that there would be a referent to compare with. Examples:

Form produced

...y dos crayones rojos

Correct form

...y dos lápices rojos

...and two red pencils

Crayones was counted as a correct long plural noun:

Form produced

Hay dos gortas

Correct form

Hay dos tortas

There are two cakes.

Gortas was considered a correct short plural noun.

Because the pictures used were quite simple, the adjectives that appear in the sample were common and limited in number, and they are usually lexically correct, with perhaps a few difficulties in pronunciation. There are no instances where an adjective is discarded because it is not intelligible. Errors consist primarily of lack of agreement, but note was also taken of incorrect position or failure to shorten an adjective when it precedes the noun. For example:

Form produced

Una ropa rojo.

(Una: fem. sing. art., ropa: fem. sing. noun, rojo: masc. sing. adj.)

Correct form

Ropa roja.

Red clothes.

Rojo is considered incorrect as to gender.

Form produced

Tiene largas pelo.

(largas: fem. pl. noun, incorrect position, pelo: masc. sing. noun)

Correct form

Tiene pelo largo

He-she has long hair

Largas was counted as incorrect as to number and gender, and it was noted that the position was inappropriate.

Having analyzed the type and number of errors and correct instances of the different points under investigation with relation to the total obligatory contexts, I calculated the group percentages and studied their variations in hopes of answering the questions set out previously. The results are found in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

In describing the results, I will follow the research questions as outlined in chapter 3.

Questions regarding the formation of the plural.

1. Have the subjects mastered the singular / plural contrast in Spanish? If not, what kinds of errors do they make?

The answer to the first part of this question seems to be no, they have not acquired the formation of the plural in Spanish.

We find variation in the percentage of error within and between the groups, but the almost universal type of error is the overgeneralization of the singular form, although there are some instances of overgeneralization of the plural.

The group that shows the greatest difficulty with the production of plural forms is one of the first year Spanish classes, which we shall call group 1. These learners have a class average of 47% of errors, that is, instances in which they used a singular form in a context that called for the plural. Figure 1, Group 1 shows that two thirds of the students have a percentage of error above 40%, showing these learners were far from mastery of this form.

The second group of first year Spanish students, which we will refer to as group 2, shows a lower percentage of error, 28%. Figure 1, group 2 shows the different distribution of errors, with four fifths of the students under the 40% level.

Level 2 students, group 3, show near mastery of the singular/plural distinction, with a class average of 10% error in the production of the plural. Figure 1, Group 3, shows the distribution of error in the group. As can be seen, only one student still has a problem, with 55% of errors.

Table 1 shows a comparison of the three groups in the production of the plural and the singular forms of nouns.

Table 1

Formation of the plural. Comparison of total number of nouns, obligatory contexts for the plural and the singular and percentages of error in Groups 1, 2 and 3.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
a. Nouns	665	742	653
b. Plural	269	270	242
c. % of error	47%	28%	10%
d. Singular	396	472	411
e. % of error	3%	4%	3%

a.: Total number of nouns in each group.

b.: Total number of obligatory contexts for the plural form of nouns in each group.

c.: Percentage of errors in the formation of the plural in each group, i.e., overgeneralization of the singular.

d.: Total number of obligatory contexts for the singular form of nouns in each group.

e.: Percentage of errors in the production of the singular in each group, i.e., overgeneralization of the plural.

2. Is the long (-es) plural more difficult for the learners than the short plural?

The answer is a definite yes for group 2. There is a considerable difference in the rate of error in the production of the short and the long plurals for this class, 10% and 53 % respectively. The difference is much smaller for groups 1 and 3. The rate of error in the production of the long plural is also high in group 1, 53%, so it becomes evident that the difference between group 1 and 2 in the rate of overgeneralization of the singular lies not in the production of the plural in general, but rather in the additional difficulty that Group 1 shows in forming the plural of vowel ending words. Their rate of error for this last was 42%, while Group 2, on the other hand, shows only 10% error in the production of the -s plural.

Group 3 (level 2) showed slightly more difficulty in supplying the plural for consonant-ending words, 16% vs. only 5% for the short plural.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of errors in the short plural /-s/ in the three groups.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of errors in the long /-es/ plural in the three groups respectively.

Figure 4 compares the rate of error between the two types of plural within groups 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2 shows the differences in rate of error in the production of the long and the short plurals in the three groups.

Table 2

* Formation of the plural. Comparison of total number of vowel and consonant ending nouns, obligatory contexts for the plural and percentages of error in the production of the long and the short plural in Groups 1, 2 and 3.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
a. -V end. nouns	466	513	471
b. Plural	158	156	151
c. % of error	42%	10%	5%
d. -C end. nouns	199	114	182
e. Plural	111	114	91
f. % of error	53%	53%	16%

- a. Total number of vowel ending nouns in each group.
- b. Total number of obligatory contexts for the short /-s/ plural.
- c. Percentage of error in the production of the short /-s/ plural in each group.
- d. Total number of consonant ending nouns in each group.
- e. Total number of obligatory contexts for the long /-es/ plural.
- f. Percentage of error in the production of the short /-s/ plural in each group.

FIGURE 1

FORMATION OF THE PLURAL

Distribution within each group of the percentage of errors
in the formation of the plural (Overuse of the singular)

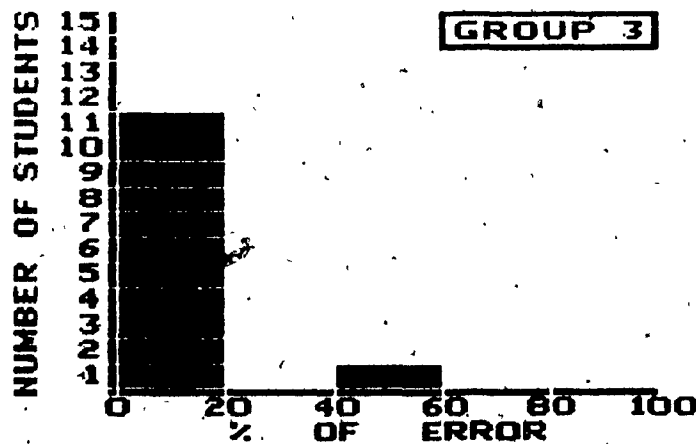
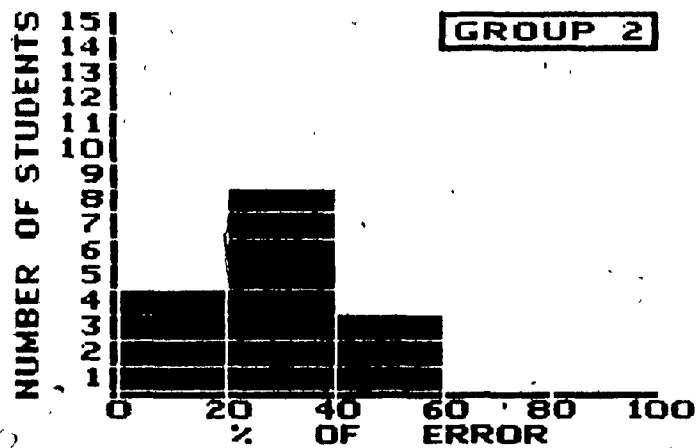
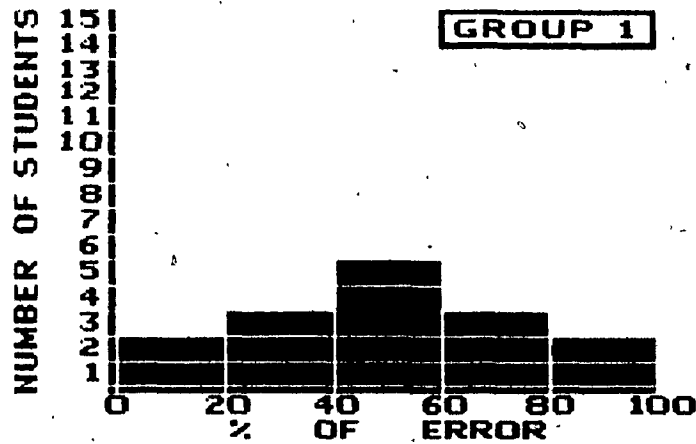


FIGURE 2

FORMATION OF THE PLURAL

Distribution within each group of the percentages of errors in the formation of the plural of vowel ending nouns.

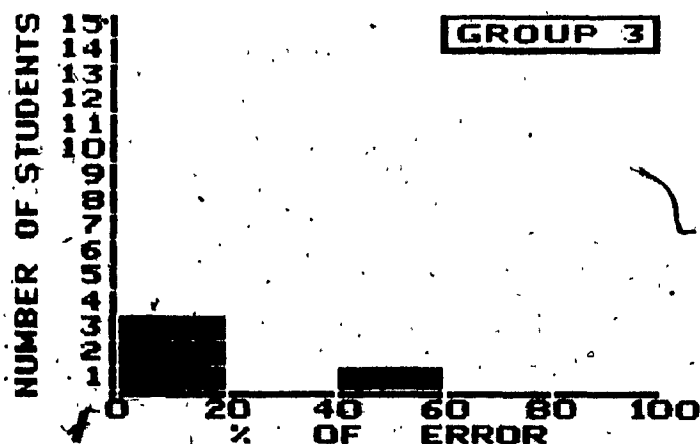
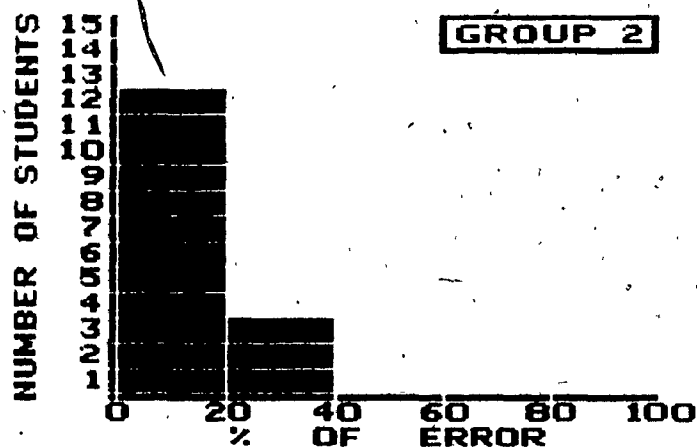
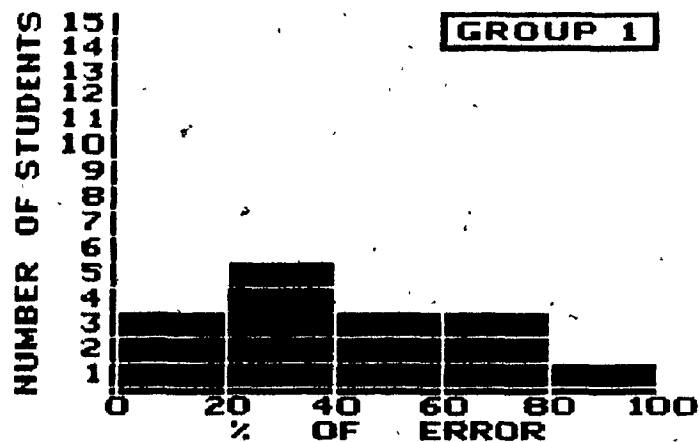


FIGURE 3

FORMATION OF THE PLURAL

Distribution within each group of the percentages of errors in the formation of the plural of consonant ending nouns.

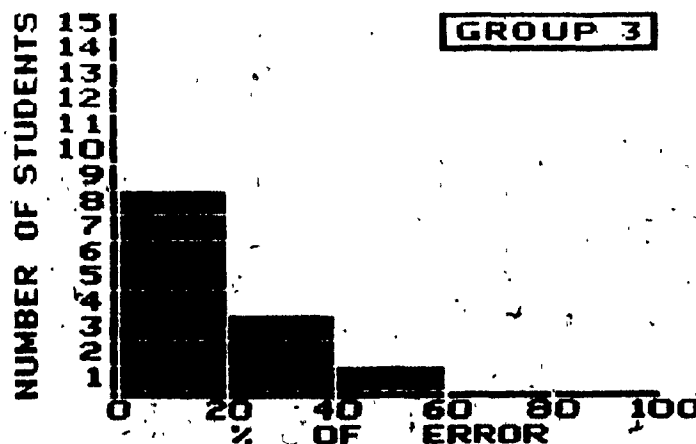
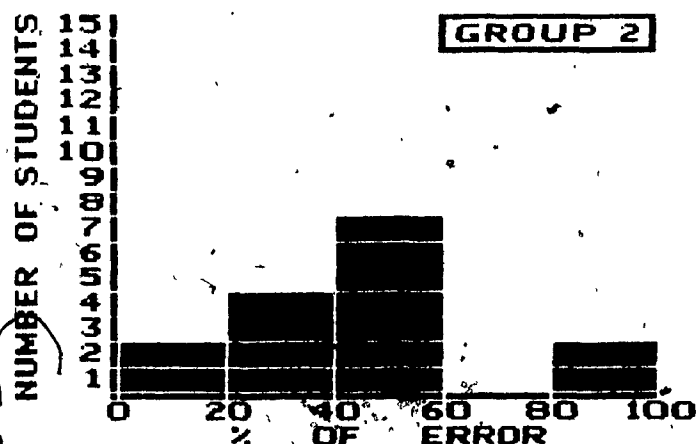
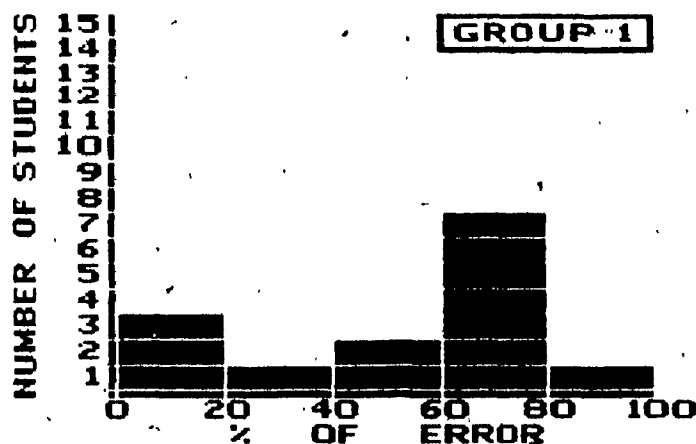
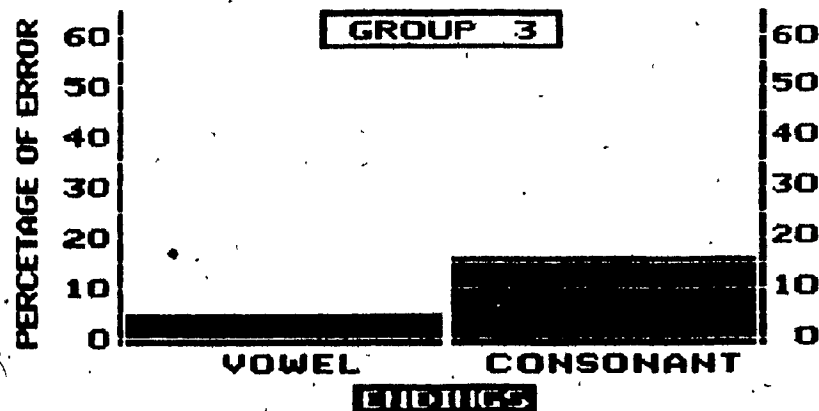
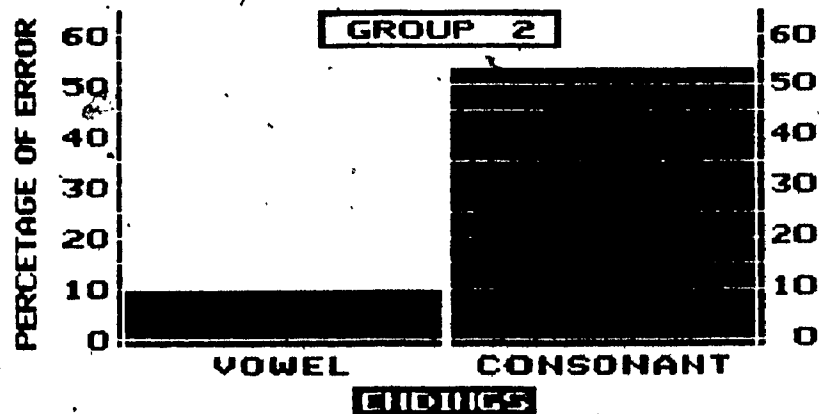
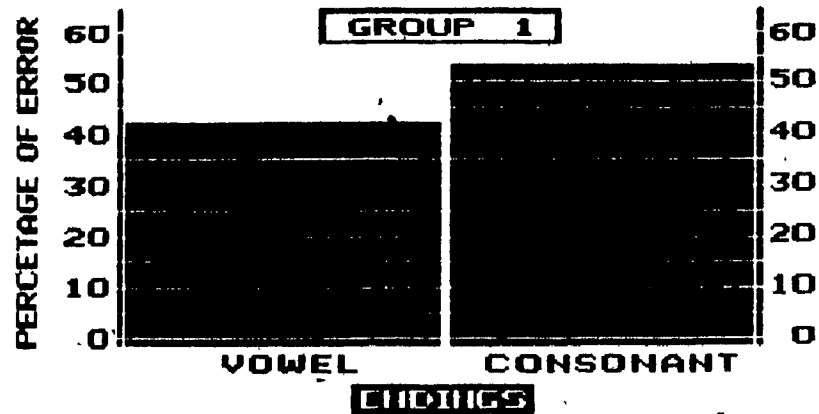


FIGURE 4

FORMATION OF THE PLURAL

Comparison of total percentages of errors for each group in the formation of the plural of vowel and consonant ending nouns.



3. Is the number of errors greater when a numeral is present?

Due to the fact that the pictures used in the test show small numbers of people and objects, it is not surprising that the data produced many more plural nouns with a numeral than without.

Again we find a striking difference between Groups 1 and 2, although both show a higher percentage of error in the presence of a numeral. In the latter group, the difference is 23% for nouns without a numeral to 30% for those with a numeral, while in the former it is a difference of 24% and 54%.

Table 3 compares the three groups in their production of the plural with and without a quantifier.

Table 3

Formation of the plural. Comparison of the total number of nouns with and without a plural quantifier and the percentages of error in each category in each of the three groups.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
a. Quantifier	195	204	162
b. % of error	54%	30%	10%
c. No quantifier	74	66	80
d. % of error	24%	23%	9%

a. Total number of plural nouns modified by a quantifier in each group.

b. Percentage of errors in the production of the plural of nouns modified by a plural quantifier.

c. Total number of nouns not modified by a plural quantifier in each group.

d. Percentage of errors in the production of the plural of nouns not modified by a plural quantifier.

Gender in nouns.

1. Do these learners use the natural gender distinction correctly? In other words, does what they say correspond to reality?

The answer to this question is yes, the endings of nouns are produced correctly by the learners in all three groups. There are errors, and the errors are striking because they seem so strange, but they are small in number.

Group 1 produced a total of 641 nouns. (This does not include 47 which were either not recognizable or not Spanish, and 41 which were exact repetitions.) Of these there were only 10 Spanish words with the wrong ending, such as "estudianta" for "estudiante". Of these, only five led to an error in gender, one in an o/a ending word, four in words with a consonant-ending masculine form and an -a ending feminine.

Group 2 produced 648 nouns. (This does not include 35 unintelligible or non-Spanish words and 32 exact repetitions.) Of these, 17 were Spanish words with the wrong ending, nine led to an error in gender, four of which were realized in o/a words, three in consonant/a words.

Level 2 produced 640 nouns. (This did not include 38 unintelligible or non-Spanish words and 26 exact repetitions.) Ten of these had the wrong ending, of which six led to an error in gender. Two were words with an o/a distinction, two words ended in a consonant or an -a.

Table 4 summarizes the data on the gender markings on nouns.

Table 4

Gender marking in nouns.

Comparison of the production of nouns and the number of errors in noun endings in the three groups.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Total nouns	641	648	640
# of errors	10	17	10
# of gender errors	5	9	6
o/a ending errors	1	4	2
Consonant/a errors	4	3	2

Total nouns: total number of nouns clearly in Spanish produced in data. This excludes hispanized English or French words, which have been included when the formation of the plural was considered.

of errors: total number of errors in the ending of Spanish nouns.

of gender errors: total number of errors in the ending of Spanish nouns which lead to an error in gender.

o/a gender errors: total number of errors in the ending of Spanish nouns which were realized in regular o/a ending nouns.

Consonant/a errors: total number of errors in the ending of Spanish nouns which were realized in consonant ending masculine/a-ending feminine nouns.

2. Is there any evidence of overgeneralization of the regular o/a endings, such as is found in first language acquisition?

There was none at all.

3. Article noun agreement.

1. Is number agreement established?

In this section I will be treating only definite articles, because, as was explained in chapter 2, the indefinite plural has a particular meaning and is not generally used.

The sample yielded many quantifiers. Bearing in mind, then, that the total number of plural articles is quite small in comparison to singular articles, we again find a kind of gradation between groups 1, 2 and 3.

The difference between groups 1 and 2 lay in the production of the masculine plural definite article, which group 2 controls considerably more than group 1: 23% errors for the latter vs. only 8% for the former. On the other hand, the rate of error was high for both groups in the case of the feminine plural: 45% errors for group 1, 41% for group 2.

Group 3 (level 2) seems to exhibit near acquisition for both masculine and feminine plural articles, with only 4% errors in each case.

A look at the types of error committed shows that the most frequent substitution for las in level 1 was the masculine plural los, and, in group 1, the most frequent substitution for los was the masculine singular el.

Group 2 had 11% of errors consisting in the overuse of the singular (six errors). One student in this group overused the plural five times.

Group 3 produced only one overused singular form and one missing plural article.

Singular articles were omitted by group 1 4% of the time (14 times), and by group 2 3% of the time (11 cases). As we can see, omission of articles does not seem to be a problem for these learners.

Table 5 shows the total percentages of errors and the breakdown between the masculine and the feminine for the three groups.

Table 5

Article-noun agreement: number.

Comparison of the three groups regarding the production of plural articles and the rate of errors with respect to obligatory contexts for the masculine and the feminine plural.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
*Oblig. Con. Pl.	50	54	51
% of error (a)	28%	13%	4%
Oblig. Con. Masc. Pl.	39	25	25
% of error (b)	23%	8%	4%*
% of error <u>el/los</u>	15%	4%	-
% of error <u>las/los</u>	5%*	-	4%*
% of error <u>la/los</u>	3%*	4%*	-
Oblig. Con. Fem. Pl.	11	29	26
% of error (c)	45%	41%	4%
% of error <u>la/las</u>	9%*	7%*	-
% of error <u>los/las</u>	36%	28%	-
% of error <u>el/la</u>	-	7%*	4%*

(Notes found on next page)

Notes to Table 5

* one error

** two errors

Oblig. Con. Pl.: total number of obligatory contexts for the plural article.

% of error (a): percentage of errors in the production of plural articles.

Oblig. Con. Masc.: total number of obligatory contexts for the masculine plural article.

% of error (b): percentage of errors in the production of masculine plural articles.

% error el/los: percentage of errors affecting number only; el is used for los.

% of error las/los: percentage of errors in gender only; las is used for los.

% of error la/los: percentage of errors in gender and number; la is used for los.

Oblig. Con. Fem. Pl.: total number of obligatory contexts for the feminine plural article.

% of error (c): percentage of errors in the production of feminine plural articles.

% of error la/las: percentage of errors affecting number only; la is used for las.

% of error los/las: percentage of errors affecting gender only; los is used for las.

% of error el/las: percentage of errors affecting number and gender; el is used for las.

2. Is gender agreement established? If it is not, is there a tendency to overgeneralize one form of article over the other, are errors random or is this point subject to individual variation?

The answer to the first part of this question is no, there is still a problem with gender agreement between noun and article, but, at least in the lower level, the percentage of error is not as high as that found for the production of the plural. In other words, for Groups 1 and 2, the formation of the plural, considered an "easy" to learn rule in all the research with anglophones, is more difficult than the "difficult" acquisition of gender.

Groups 1 and 2 committed 19% and 17% errors in gender agreement between the article and the noun and the level 2 students, 13%.

Table 6 shows the number of obligatory contexts, the percentage in error due to gender, the percentage in other types of error, mostly errors of omission, and the instances of overuse of the article.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of errors in article-noun gender agreement in each of the three groups.

Table 6

Article-noun agreement: gender.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Total	415	488	435
% of error (gender)	19%	18%	11%
% of error (other)	4%	2%	3%
Number overuse	6	6	4

Totals: total number of obligatory contexts for the article (singular and plural)

% of error (gender): percentage in errors consisting in the wrong choice of gender for the article.

% of error (other): percentage of errors not related to gender, primarily omission of the article.

Number overuse: total number of instances of overuse of an article in contexts where it was not required, for example when a numeral was present.

Regarding the second part of this question, in all three groups we find a higher percentage of overgeneralization of the masculine contexts which call for a feminine article. Group 1 overused the masculine 29% of the time against 10% overuse of the feminine, group 2, 23% against 13% and group 3, 14% against 8%.

Nevertheless, when looking at the results for individual students, we find learners who tend to overuse one form, usually the masculine but, in some cases, the feminine, almost exclusively. Lack of preference usually indicated a low percentage of error in general.

Table 7 shows the distribution of errors according to gender.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of errors consisting in the overgeneralization of the masculine in each of the three groups.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of errors consisting in the overgeneralization of the feminine in each of the three groups.

Figure 8 compares the overgeneralization of the masculine and the feminine forms in each of the three groups.

Table 7

Article-noun agreement: gender.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Total masc.obl.con.	220	258	197
% of errors (a)	10%	13%	8%
Total fem.obl.con.	195	230	197
% of errors (b)	29%	23%	14%

Total masc.obl.con.: Total number of obligatory contexts for the masculine article.

% of errors (a): Percentage of errors in the production of the masculine article, that is, overgeneralization of the feminine form.

Total fem.obl.con.: Total number of obligatory contexts for the feminine article.

% of errors (b): Percentage of errors in the production of the feminine article, that is, overgeneralization of the masculine form.

FIGURE 5

ARTICLE-NOUN AGREEMENT: GENDER

Distribution within each group of the percentages of error in gender agreement between articles and nouns.

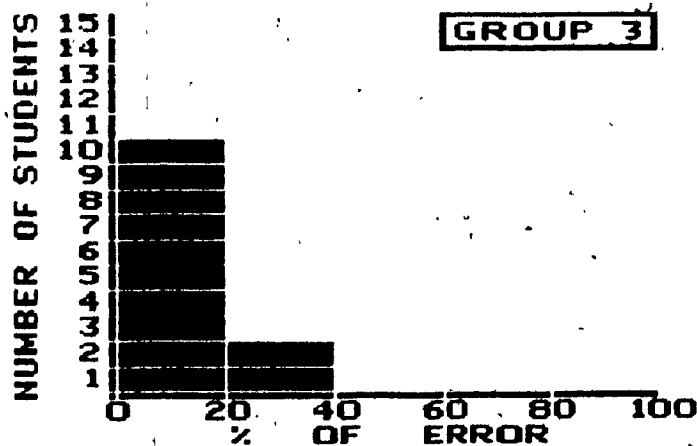
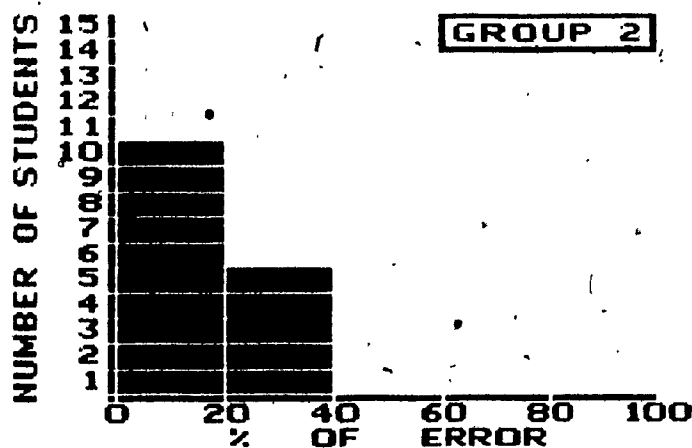
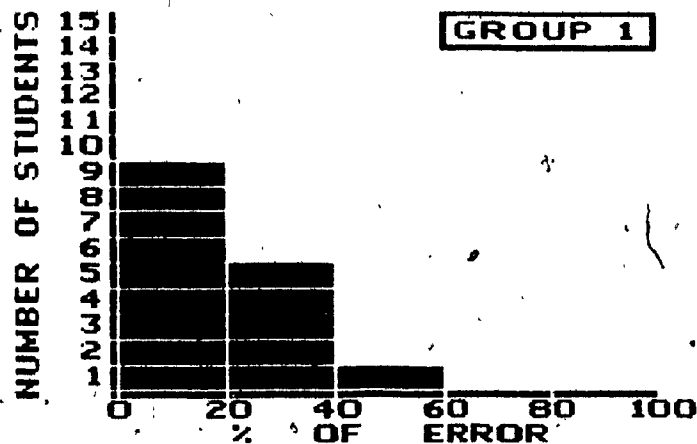


FIGURE 6

ARTICLE-NOUN AGREEMENT: GENDER

Distribution within each group of the percentages of errors in article-noun gender agreement consisting in the overgeneralization of the masculine in obligatory contexts for the feminine article.

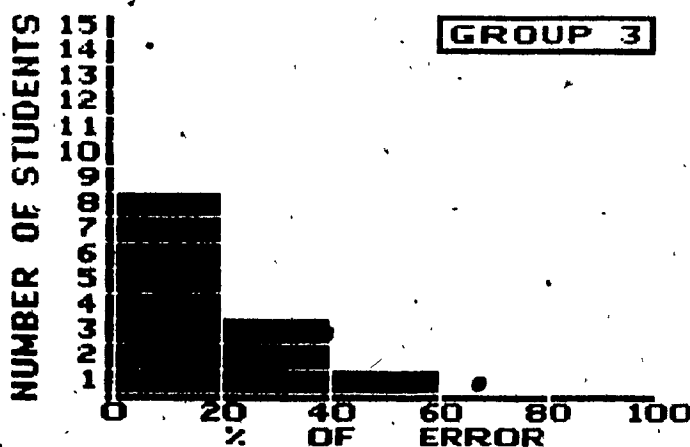
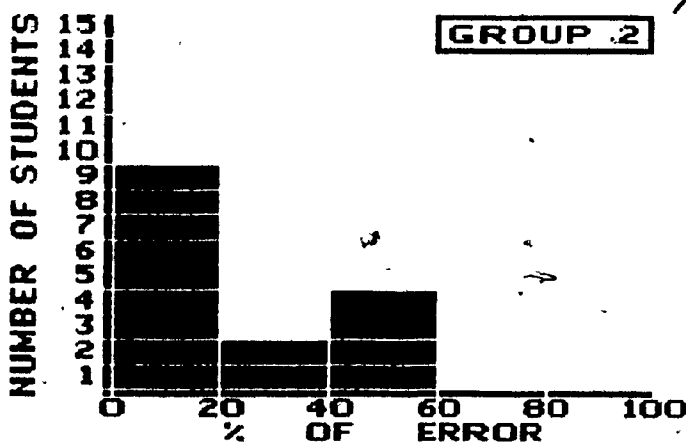
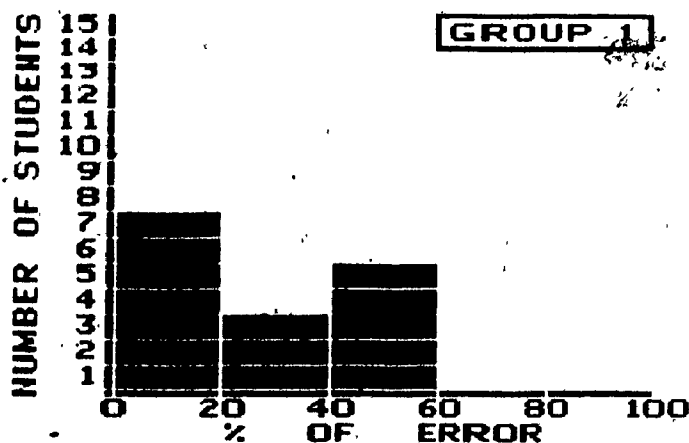


FIGURE 7

ARTICLE-NOUN AGREEMENT: GENDER

Distribution within each group of the percentages of errors in article-noun gender agreement consisting in the overgeneralization of the feminine in obligatory contexts for the masculine article.

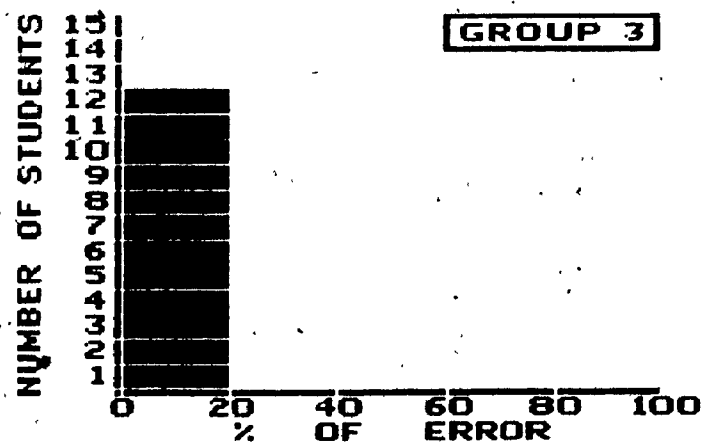
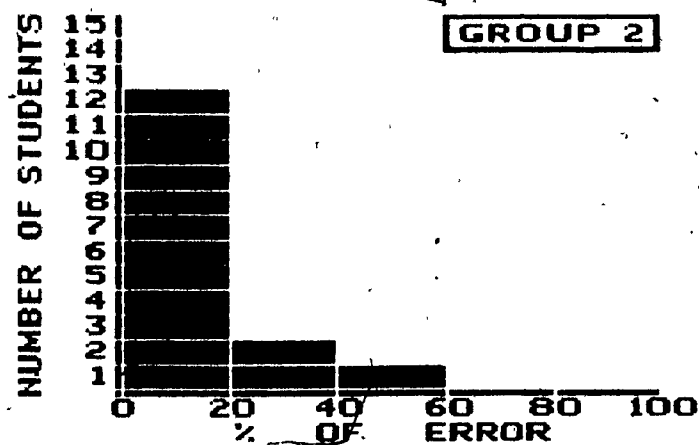
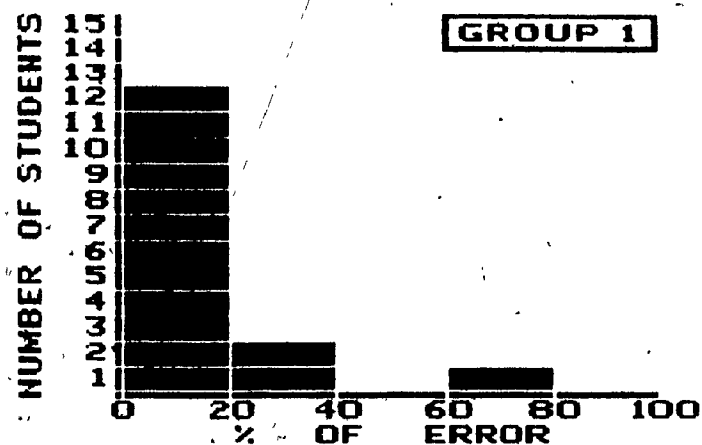
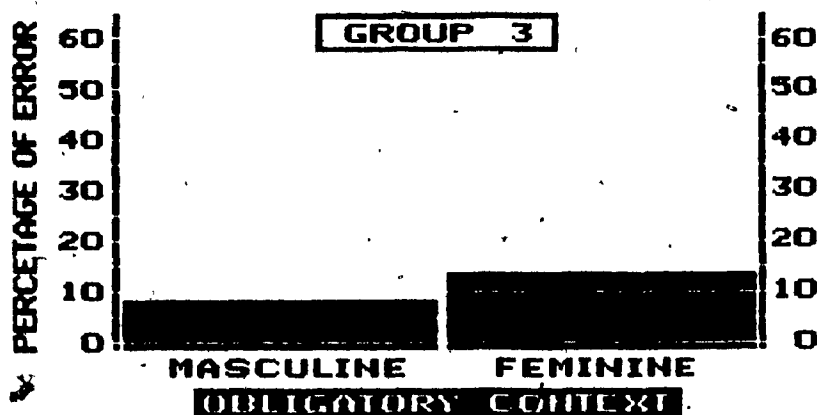
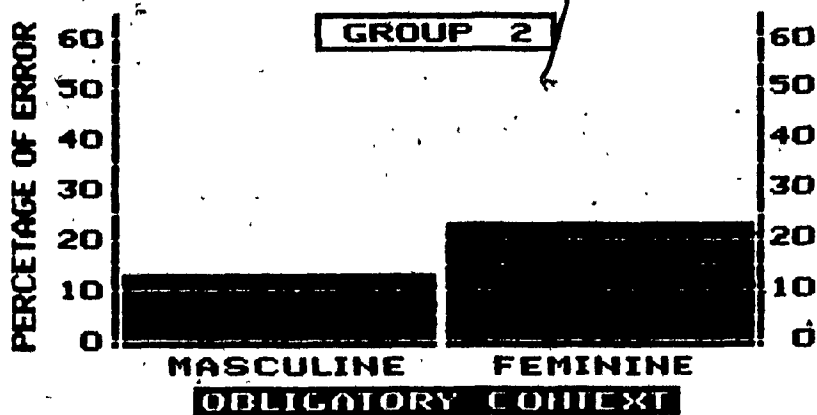
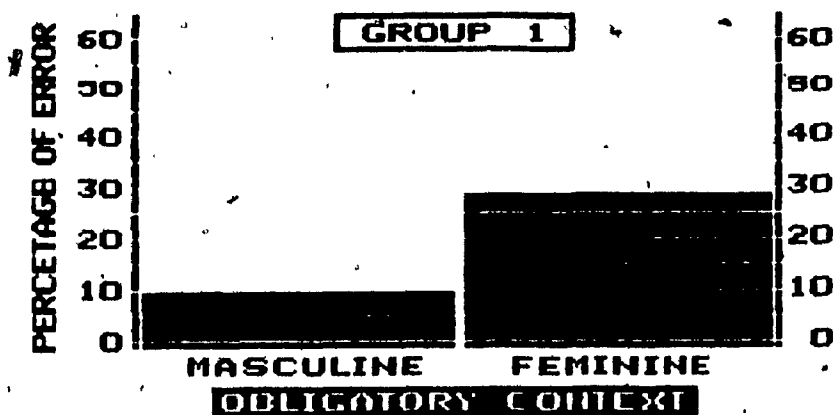


FIGURE 8

ARTICLE-NOUN AGREEMENT: GENDER

Comparison within each group of the total percentages of errors in gender agreement between articles and nouns consisting in overgeneralization of the masculine and of the feminine.



3. Are there fewer errors in gender agreement when the noun belongs to the natural gender category?

No, in all three groups there were more errors when the noun was transparent for gender. The percentage of error was 25%, 21% and 14% for groups 1, 2 and 3 respectively, against 14%, 15% and 10% for grammatical gender only nouns in each of the three groups.

4. Are there fewer errors when the noun is clearly marked for gender?

Again we find that there were more errors in gender committed by the learners in the first level when the noun was clearly marked by an -o or -a ending. Exceptions to the gender rule (a feminine noun ending in -o, or a masculine noun ending in -a, for example la mano (fem) or el día (masc.)), which appeared in the sample no more than ten times in total, were not included here.

- The percentage of error in Group 1 was 23% for nouns ending in -o or -a, vs. only 12% for other ending nouns. The percentages were 21% and 8% for Group 2.

In Level 2 the percentages had evened out, with 11% error for an article modifying an o/a ending noun and 10% for others.

I investigated the relationship between natural or grammatical gender and the type of ending. As we have seen in chapter 2, sex can be expressed by the o/a distinction (niño-niña), consonant, often an -r for the masculine form and the addition of an -a for the feminine (profesor-profesora), or by different endings or words (actor - actriz, hombre-mujer). Of this last group there were not many examples found in the sample, 30 in total, 18 of which were produced by students in the second year of Spanish. In all, there was only one error in gender between the article and a noun of this type, made by a student in the second level.

Regarding the other endings, in the first level, the articles accompanying natural gender nouns ending in a consonant (r)/+a were more frequently correct. In groups 1 and 2 the percentages of error were 33% and 24% respectively in articles modifying nouns ending in o/a, while it was 22% and 16% for the other type of ending.

In level 2 there seems to have been a shift in vocabulary type and, as we have seen, there were more hombre-mujer type words than consonant (r)/+a type. Of the latter there were only 12 examples, four of these lacked agreement in gender. It is therefore difficult to make a meaningful comparison. The rate of error was 14% for o/a ending words.

The results are further complicated if we study the genders separately. Following the general tendencies of the three groups, we find that the masculine in natural gender nouns is overwhelmingly generalized in cases calling for a feminine article. Groups 2 and 3 produced no examples of overgeneralization of the feminine la for masculine el in natural gender nouns. The surprising thing is that, given that both types of nouns, the o/a ending and the consonant (r)/a ending nouns have a feminine form ending in -a, and that, as we have seen, there is a larger percentage of errors in the o/a type of words, we must conclude that gender agreement between the noun and the article is more difficult, resulting in more deviations, if the corresponding masculine is an -o ending word than if it ends in a consonant. This is very clear in group 1: 41% errors of overgeneralization of the masculine el in feminine nouns belonging to the o/a type, 23% in feminine nouns belonging to the consonant/a type. It is less clear in group 2, because the number of instances of the latter type were rarer. The percentage of error for the article modifying o/a type feminine nouns was 38% and 22% for the consonant/a feminine nouns, but the total number of instances was only 18, with four errors.

Looking at grammatical gender, we again find greater difficulty with words ending in -o or -a than other endings. The percentages of error are 22% and 19% for articles modifying regular -o or -a ending words, 11% and 8% for other nouns.

In level 2 this difference has disappeared, with 10% error in one case and 10% in the other.

Tables 8, 9 and 10 show the breakdown of errors in the article for head nouns with natural and grammatical gender, for nouns with clear masculine or feminine endings and the relation between the two.

Table 8

Article-noun agreement: gender.

Comparison of the percentages of error in the gender of the article when the gender of the head noun is semantically based and when it is not.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Total N.G. nouns	138	149	106
% of error (a)	25%	21%	14%
Total G.G. nouns	277	340	328
% of error (b)	14%	15%	10%

Total N.G. nouns: Total number of head nouns the gender of which was semantically based.

% of error (a): Percentage of error in the gender of articles modifying a natural gender noun.

Total G.G. nouns: Total number of head nouns with grammatical gender only.

% of error (b): Percentage of error in the gender of articles modifying a grammatical gender noun.

Table 9

Article-noun agreement: gender.

Comparison of the percentages of errors in the gender of the article when the head noun is clearly marked for gender by an -o or an -a ending and when it is not. (This includes natural gender nouns.)

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Total o - a nouns	255	339	288
% of error (a)	23%	21%	11%
Total unmarked nouns	157	136	135
% of error (b)	12%	8%	10%

Total o - a nouns: Total number of articles modifying nouns which were clearly marked for gender by an -o or an -a ending (excluding exceptions).

% of error (a): Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a head noun which was clearly marked for gender.

Total unmarked nouns: Total number of articles modifying nouns which were not marked for gender, that is, nouns ending in a consonant or a vowel not an -o or an -a.

% of error (b): Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun unmarked for gender.

Table 10

Article-noun agreement: gender.

Production of agreement depending on two variables: the type of gender realized by the head noun (i.e. natural or grammatical) and the type of ending (-o - -a, consonant/-a; other).

Natural gender.

% of error

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
+o/a ending	33%	24%	14%
+Cons./a ending	22%	16%	33%
other	-8	-8	6%
+o (masc.)	10%	-	-
+cons. (masc.)	20%	12%	-8
+a (fem., masc.-o)	41%	38%	21%
+a (fem., masc.-Cons.)	23%	22%	40%

Grammatical gender.

+o - a	21%	19%	10%
+other	11%	8%	10%

(Notes found on next page)

(Notes on Table 10)

* 1 error.

■ Small number of obligatory contexts.

Natural gender.

+o/a ending: Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the natural gender category and was clearly marked for gender by an -o or an -a ending (exceptions excluded).

+Cons./a ending: Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the natural gender category and was marked only in the feminine by the addition of an -a to the consonant ending masculine form.

+o (masc): Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the natural gender category, was masculine and ended in an -o.

+Cons. (masc): Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the natural gender category, was masculine, ended in a consonant and had a corresponding feminine form ending in an -a.

+a (fem., masc.-o): Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the natural gender category, was feminine, ended in -a and had a corresponding masculine form ending in -o.

+a (fem., masc.-cons.): Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the natural gender category, was feminine, ended in -a and had a corresponding masculine form ending in a consonant.

Grammatical gender.

+o - a: Percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the grammatical gender category and was clearly marked for gender by an -o or an -a ending.

+other: percentage of articles that failed to agree in gender with a noun that belonged to the grammatical gender category and was not marked for gender.

5. Do definite and indefinite articles appear to be equally difficult?

The percentage of error for the indefinite article is higher in all three groups. The rates of error are 15%, 14% and 7% of errors in the definite article for the three groups respectively, and 26%, 21% and 15% for the indefinite. In both definite and indefinite articles the tendency is to overuse the masculine, the error rate for the

feminine being consistently higher. But, as we have seen, individuals may vary on this point.

Table 11 shows the total percentages of error in the three groups and the breakdown according to gender.

Table 11

Article-noun agreement: definiteness.

Comparison of the percentages of errors in the three groups of agreement between definite and indefinite articles and nouns.

Percentages of error

	Definite			Indefinite		
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Total	15%	14%	7%	25%	21%	15%
Masc.	6%	8%	8%	14%	16%	7%
Fem.	22%	18%	8%	43%	37%	27%

Total: Total percentages of errors in agreement between definite and indefinite articles and the noun.

Masc.: Percentages of errors in agreement between masculine definite and indefinite articles and the noun.

Fem.: Percentages of errors in agreement between feminine definite and indefinite articles and the noun.

Adjective noun agreement.

1. Is there any attempt to distinguish number in the adjective?

There is a high frequency of omission of plural endings in all three groups, group 1 showing the highest with 63% of error, and groups 2 and 3 at a similar level of 46% and 41% respectively. The pattern is similar if we examine adjectives ending in a vowel, because these make up most of the sample, with 61%, 42% and 37% errors in the three groups respectively. There were not many adjectives ending in a consonant present in the sample, but the rate of omission of the plural endings would seem to be even higher: 6 errors out of 8 instances in group 1, 7 out of 9 in 2 and 6 out of 9 in 3.

Table 12 shows the total number of obligatory contexts for the singular and the plural, the percentages of errors, and the percentages according to the type of plural.

Table 12

Adjective-noun agreement: number.

Comparison of the percentages of errors found in number agreement between nouns and adjectives.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Oblig. Con. Sing.	113	204	136
% of error (a)	6%	2%	6%
Oblig. Con. Pl.	65	61	63
% of error (b)	63%	46%	41%
Total -V. ending	57	50	54
% of error (c)	61%	42%	37%
Total -C. ending	8	9	9
% of error (d)	75%	78%	67%

Oblig. Con. Sing.: Total number of obligatory contexts for a singular adjective.

% of error (a): Percentages of errors in number agreement between the adjective and a singular noun, that is, overgeneralization of the plural.

Oblig. Con. Pl.: Total number of obligatory contexts for a plural adjective.

% of error (b): Percentages of errors in number agreement between the adjective and a plural noun, that is, overgeneralization of the singular.

Total -V ending: Total number of adjectives that end in a vowel which modify a plural noun.

% of error (c): Percentages of errors in number agreement between the adjective and a plural noun in which the adjective ends in a vowel.

Total -C ending: Total number of adjectives that end in a consonant which modify a plural noun.

% of error (d): Percentages of errors in number agreement between the adjective and a plural noun in which the adjective ends in a consonant.

2. Is there any attempt to distinguish gender in the adjective where adjectives are marked for gender?

As a matter of fact, the rate of error for gender in adjectives is lower than that for number agreement. This is probably due to the fact that the masculine is usually used appropriately with a low rate of error and also overused for the feminine, which correspondingly shows a very high percentage of error. Of course, as we have seen in nouns, the plural is particularly difficult for these learners.

The total percentages of error in the gender of the adjective are 36%, 19% and 25% for groups 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The percentages of error for the feminine form are 68%, 60% and 54% for the three groups respectively.

Table 13 summarizes the percentages of error in gender agreement between nouns and adjectives.

Table 13

Adjective-noun agreement: gender.

Percentages of errors of gender agreement between nouns and adjectives which are marked for gender by o - a endings.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
% error o-a end.	36%	19%	25%
% error -o end.	12%	6%	5%
% error -a end.	68%	60%	54%

% error o/a end.: total percentages of error in agreement when the adjective is marked for gender.

% error -o end.: Percentages of error in agreement when the context calls for a masculine adjective and the adjective is marked for gender, that is, errors consisting in the overgeneralization of the feminine -a ending form of the adjective.

% error -a end.: Percentages of error in agreement when the context calls for a feminine adjective and the adjective is marked for gender, that is, errors consisting in the overgeneralization of the masculine -o ending form of the adjective.

3. Which are the most common types of error?

As we have seen above, the masculine overwhelmingly replaces the feminine. Given the high rate of error of omission of the plural, it is obvious that the singular masculine is persistently used as the basic, invariable form to cover all uses. We do not, in this instance, find individual variation of the kind found in the article. There are no learners who prefer the feminine form, and any differences depend rather on the level of mastery: more or fewer errors.

Nevertheless, if we look at the plural of adjectives that show gender endings, we see that the masculine plural is emerging, and by level two is the most common overgeneralized form for the feminine plural. Unfortunately, the number of obligatory feminine plural endings was not large in the sample, 13, 10 and 10 for each group respectively, so these findings are only tentative.

Table 14 shows the percentages of error for each adjective ending.

In the next section I will try to interpret these findings as to what they can tell us about the noun phrase in these learners' interlanguage.

Table 14

Adjective-noun agreements: gender and number.

Comparison of the percentages for each type of error.

% of error	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
-o for -os	49%	37%	29%
-as for -os	6%*	-	3%*
-a for -os	6%*	-	-
-a for -as	15%**	-	10%*
-os for -as @	31%	30%	70%
-o for -as	54%	30%	20%

* 1 error

** 2 errors

@small number of obligatory contexts.

-o for -os: The masculine singular form of the adjective is used for the masculine plural.

-as for -os: The feminine plural form of the adjective is used for the masculine plural.

-a for -os: the feminine singular form of the adjective is used for the masculine plural.

-a for -as: the feminine singular form of the adjective is used for the feminine plural.

-o for -as: the masculine singular form of the adjective is used for the feminine plural.

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

Formation of the plural.

Taking into account the total results set out in the first part of this chapter, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the group I have referred to as 1 is at a different stage of language development from that of group 2, although they are both level 1 groups. Why this is so it is useless to speculate, given that both groups used the same text, method and teacher and have received formal instruction for an equal amount of time.

With this in mind then, we may say the results show that francophone learners of Spanish do have difficulty with the production of the plural of nouns at the beginning stages, as did a similar group of students with the English plural in the Lightbown study.

Initially this problem covers both the long and the short form of the plural (-s and -es). At another, perhaps subsequent stage, the short plural reaches near acquisition levels (group 2), while the long plural is still below the 60% accuracy level. Finally, in level 2, both forms of the plural are acquired.

Besides the form of the plural itself, there also seems to be another factor which contributes to the high error rate, again most notably in group 1: the presence or absence of a quantifier. It may be that in the learners' simple interlanguage, a quantifier could be taken as sufficient as a plural marking.

As I noted in chapter 4, Anisfeld and Tucker (1967), who, among other things, studied the importance of numerals in native English children's production of the plural, found that six year olds "did not consider number equal in status to the standard marker but, rather, as substitutes to fall back on when the proper marker is not known" (p. 1207). I do not think this is the correct explanation in this case, because the high proportion of numerals in the sample would have decreased as the learners' control of the form progressed, but it remained similar in all three groups (74%, 76% and 67% of nouns modified by a plural numeral in each of the three groups respectively).

It is apparent by now that the present study supports the contention that the pattern of errors found in the formation of the plural in the interlanguage of this group of francophone Spanish second language learners provides evidence for both interlingual (transfer) and developmental processes. The errors are developmental because they have been shown to share some of the characteristics found in the Spanish of first language learners, such as a higher rate of error for the long plural, and because the higher frequency of the singular in the language plus language acquisition strategies such as simplification,

should naturally lead to an overgeneralization of the singular form. They are the result of transfer because, on the one hand, studies on the acquisition of Spanish by anglophones have shown that the singular plural distinction is mastered very quickly, while, on the other, francophones have been shown to have difficulty controlling these forms in a language in which the formation of the plural is relatively similar to Spanish: English.

It is in the rather surprising apparently linear progress found in the acquisition of the plural by these learners that the present results differ from those in the Lightbown study. This is probably due in part to the fact that the Spanish plural may be "easier" to acquire than the English because it is functionally simple and because the Spanish syllable structure is more natural. However, this difference also reflects the difference between the two groups studied in two important variables: motivation and success. English is an obligatory subject in the province of Quebec while Spanish is not. Not only did the students in the present study elect to study Spanish and were therefore probably well motivated, but those in the second level have been judged by their teachers and themselves to be successful learners or they would not have chosen to continue. That many students do drop out can be seen in the numbers: more than 30 students in the first year, less than 15 in the second. So perhaps we must limit our conclusions and say that good learners of Spanish as a second language eventually manage to acquire control over the plural in Spanish. It remains to be seen what happens when the conditions are different.

Gender in nouns

As was found by Van Naerssen (1980) and Andersen (1982) for English subjects, francophone learners have no trouble assigning the correct endings, including gender markers, to nouns. This is possibly a process linked to the acquisition of vocabulary, about which we do not know very much.

Article-noun gender and number agreement.

If we look at number in the article we again find progress. The second level students seem to master the distinction, with above 90% accuracy. Group 2 is quite close to a 90% accuracy rate and group 1 again lags behind with 75%.

Gender is different. There is no progress, but, on the other hand, all three groups have an accuracy rate above 80%. This is comparable to the rates of error found in LoCoco for adult English speaking learners in the first two semesters of taking Spanish at a university (1975, p.49). On the other hand, Boyd found article gender to be one of the major error categories (1975 p. 131) and Van Naerssen (1981, p. 60) ranks article gender acquisition very low, following adjective-noun gender agreement.

The indefinite article had a slightly lower accuracy rate in all three groups. To summarize, then, we may say that article number seems to appear before article gender, and that definite article gender agreement appears to precede indefinite article agreement.

The tendency at all levels is to overgeneralize the masculine. This has been explained in the literature as an intralingual error, given the fact that the masculine is more frequent in Spanish. On the other hand, as was found by Cohen (1974) and Andersen (1982), individuals do not always show a preference for the masculine. In both Level 1 groups in this study, there were students with a marked preference for the feminine form, some who consistently overused the masculine and some who seemed to fluctuate between both. These different approaches by individuals possibly reflect different strategies or different stages of development.

Perhaps the most interesting and, in a way, surprising, result on gender agreement in this study is the relation of errors in the article to the type of head noun which it serves. As in the study by Cohen (1974), a high percentage of errors in article-noun gender agreement in the present sample was realized in cases where the gender of the head noun was semantically based. Not only this, but the o/a ending itself seems to open the door to error, as, in general o/a words produced about twice as many errors as other types. In the first level, this not only applies to natural gender words, but also to grammatical gender nouns. Furthermore, there are twice as many errors

of overgeneralization of the masculine in contexts that call for a feminine article if the corresponding masculine ends in an -o than if it ends in a consonant.

The explanation for the latter may lie in the fact that when we add an "a" to a consonant ending, we are in fact adding a syllable, which would make the difference more salient. On the other hand, findings for the plural do not support this, as the long plural also adds another syllable, and it is precisely this form which is the most difficult. The explanation would be incomplete in any case.

The high frequency of errors in articles modifying nouns which end in an -o or an -a and/or belong to the natural gender category indicates that transfer does not play a significant role in the patterns of error found in this sample, given that semantic gender in French works in a similar way to Spanish. The results also seem to contradict principles such as Slobin's Universal which states that "semantically consistent grammatical rules are acquired early and without significant error" (Slobin, 1973, p.207).

The explanation may lie in the strategies the learner uses to acquire vocabulary. Perhaps in unmarked words the article may be learned as a part of the word. On the other hand, words clearly marked for gender, because of their form or because their gender is semantically based, may have to be acquired as grammatical rules, which might take longer. For the present, we can only speculate.

Adjective noun agreement.

Van Naerssen (1981,p60) ranks adjective noun number agreement as acquired relatively early by learners of Spanish as a second language, in third place after the indefinite article and the negative word no. Adjective-noun gender agreement comes considerably later, slightly preceding article-noun gender agreement. These findings are for anglophone learners.

In the present study we again find the learners have a serious problem with the plural. The accuracy rate is below 40% for group 1, and increases to between 55% and 60% for groups 2 and 3. Again the short plural is easier than the long.

I consider that these results may be given a similar explanation to that used to understand the errors in the plural of nouns: transfer, Spanish intralinguistic or developmental factors and simplification strategies are all important elements that lead to a high percentage of overuse of the singular form.

Adjective gender agreement shows a lower error rate than the plural. The form overwhelmingly used was the masculine, which has a high accuracy rate and is also overgeneralized to replace the feminine, which correspondingly shows considerably more errors.

Similar results to these regarding gender, as we have seen in chapter 2, were found for anglophone learners and also for Spanish native speakers. The masculine can be considered the unmarked form of the adjective and the one most frequently heard in normal speech. It is therefore logical that in any attempt to simplify it should be the masculine singular which is used as an invariant form.

In the first chapter of this study I noted how current theories on second language acquisition attempt to define and delimit the different factors which intervene in the different stages of a learner's interlanguage. It is these factors, interlingual and/or intralingual and/or the result of the learner's strategies, which best serve to explain the appropriate and inappropriate forms found in the present study. In other words, no one element can be held to account for the findings, and the acquisition of the noun phrase seems to be complex and the result of many interplaying causes, many of which we probably still do not know. In any case, the principal goal of this study, to provide a description of the noun phrase in the interlanguages of francophone learners of Spanish at different stages of acquisition, has been achieved.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the first chapter I reviewed the different stages through which applied linguistics has travelled in its attitude towards transfer and its role in second language learning. During the structuralist period it was viewed as central to the language learning process. Later, with the new techniques in error analysis, researchers realized that the explanation to many errors lay in the second language itself and the strategies used by the learner in acquiring it. The learners' approach to the task seemed to be comparable to that of first language learners. As a result, the acquisition of a second language was said to follow a systematic pattern which was similar for all learners of the same target language. For some time, then, the role of transfer seemed to be negligible.

In recent years, however, this role has been steadily reevaluated, and, as we now see it, the principles on which transfer works are different and more complex than those hypothesized by traditional contrastive analysis. The emergence of transfer in the learner's speech depends on many factors: the forms and structures present in the learner's interlanguage, the input, the perceived similarity between the L1 and the L2, the forms and structures in the

target language which give rise to developmental errors, general principles of language acquisition, etc..

In this framework, the explanation for errors may be both developmental and interlingual. Therefore, the fact that a form resembles a developmental error is not enough to classify it as such. It is necessary to compare it with errors made by other learners of different language backgrounds and also to compare its course over time, as it has been suggested that transfer may contribute to fossilization (Zobl, 1980; Andersen, 1982).

In the present paper I worked with a group of francophone high school students who were learning Spanish in a formal setting. My objective was to obtain a description of nouns and their modifiers (adjectives and articles), in the students' interlanguages. I also intended to compare these learners' errors with those found in the literature for first and second language learners of Spanish to determine, if possible, whether transfer was in any way linked to the forms found. Finally, I studied learners who were at two different levels and I compared the results for the two groups.

I found several areas of difficulty. The formation of the plural in nouns and adjectives was one. The problem regarding nouns had disappeared in the group of students who were in their second year. Adjectives, on the other hand, seemed to constitute a more persistent difficulty, and there were many errors in all three groups studied,

though the learners in group 3 do seem to have begun to produce number agreement.

The most common error was the substitution of the singular form for the plural, which is also found in young children learning Spanish as a first language. As the input, with frequent singular forms, and a strategy of simplification would naturally lead to overgeneralization of the singular, this error has been classified as developmental. In addition, the fact that the rate of error was much higher than that found in the literature for English L1 learners of Spanish L2 (Van Næss, 1981; Burt, Dulay and Hernández-Chávez, 1976), leads me to suggest this form is influenced by transfer from the French L1.

The fact that the errors disappeared in the second year and were therefore less persistent than was found in the acquisition of the English plural by Francophone learners can be explained if one considers that the English plural is more complex in the distribution of its allomorphs than the Spanish, and the /-s/ ending is not simple but has several functions. Furthermore, the group of students in the present study were highly motivated and the Level 2 group may be considered to consist of "good language learners" whose progress could have been more rapid than that expected of a randomly selected group of learners.

It is not easy to judge how necessary the plural is to communication. In the present study a numeral often clarified the meaning, and, in theory, so would a plural article, but as a matter of fact plural articles did not accompany nouns in the singular form which had plural referents.

Another area of difficulty was that of gender. This was not surprising considering the findings of the review of the literature. The rate of error for gender was, nevertheless, generally lower than the rate for the plural and lower than in the previous research with anglophone learners. But in this case there did not seem to be any evidence of improvement between the levels studied.

I rule out transfer as an important variable upon examining the relation of gender in articles to natural gender. Natural gender operates in a similar way in French and Spanish. Furthermore, the feminine singular article is perfectly homophonous: la in both languages. Despite this, the accuracy level was lower when the gender of the noun was semantically based.

But the fact that transfer does not seem to play a part here does not enlighten us very much. The literature on first language learning does not seem to agree on the emergence of gender, and I have been unable to find a study on how natural gender marking develops in the

language of Spanish L1 learners. It is possibly acquired simultaneously with the concepts behind it.

Cohen (1974, 1976) also found that anglophone learners in the second and third years of Spanish immersion made many errors in gender agreement between the article and the noun when the noun was clearly marked for gender. We may, therefore, tentatively label these errors as intralingual.

Language acquisition principles, which emphasize the importance of clear semantic differentiation in language acquisition, also fail dismally here. This is particularly important to language teaching methodology, with its current emphasis on meaning over grammatical form. Lack of semantic gender agreement could quite clearly hinder communication, as Andersen finds it does for his subject (1982, p.14). Furthermore, in my opinion, it leads to errors that would quite likely cause laughter in a native speaker and therefore embarrassment for the learner.

Zobl (1982, 1983) studied the acquisition of the English possessives "his" and "her" by French L1 speakers. In English, these possessives agree in gender with the gender of the possessor (anaphoric agreement), while in French possessives agree in gender with the gender of the entity possessed. Zobl found that "the semantic domain membership of the entity possessed is decisive for the difficulty of the rule" (Zobl, 1983, p.3). Control of the rule for

nonhuman entities implied acquisition for human entities, but not vice versa. Agreement between the possessive and human entities was found to be more difficult than between the possessive and nonhuman entities.

Zobl theorizes that the acquisition of agreement with the marked forms, in this case marked +human, "projects" to unmarked forms, but not the opposite.

In the present study we also find that the acquisition of agreement with nouns marked for gender, which are also usually +human, is more difficult than agreement with unmarked forms. It remains to be examined in future studies whether control of the marked form agreement does indeed predict control of the unmarked, but not the opposite.

Whatever the answer may be, this is certainly a question which warrants further investigation. We need to know how first and second language learners approach the question of gender, and whether other groups of learners of different language backgrounds and ages have the same patterns of error and development.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1A

Formation of the plural.

Production of the singular and the plural of nouns.

Totals for individual students.

Group 1

	Singular		Plural	
	Nouns	% of error	Nouns	% of error
Chantal	34	-	18	-
Sonia	36	3*	21	5*
Marc	33	3*	39	23
Jacqueline	28	4*	16	31
Nathalie	24	-	13	38
Josee	18	6*	18	44
Caroline	35	6**	12	50
Johanne	23	-	14	50
Lise	27	11	20	55
Alain	23	4*	22	59
Dominique	26	4*	16	62
Manon	26	8**	22	68
Emilienne	24	-	13	69
Linda	12	-	13	85
Lyne	27	-	21	86

Group 2

	Singular		Plural	
	Nouns	% of error	Nouns	% of error
Line	43	-	19	5*
Judith	23	-	15	7*
Micheline	25	-	21	14
Joseph	31	6**	19	16
Sylvie	22	-	14	21
Carole	20	5*	22	23
Manon	46	7	18	28
Marie	38	-	17	29
Magda	18	-	16	31
Josee	43	2*	15	33
Suzanne	46	4**	27	37
Janet	23	4*	18	39
Julie	32	-	18	45
Josephine	20	5*	17	47
Sandra	42	2*	14	50

Group 3

	Singular		Plural	
	Nouns	% of error	Nouns	% of error
Helene	25	8**	17	-
Chantal	67	4	24	4*
Lyne	32	-	22	5*
Cecile	29	3*	21	5*
Julie	32	3*	20	5*
Michel	39	3*	17	6*
Lynda	36	-	30	7**
M. Claude	43	2*	21	10**
Manon	30	-	20	10**
Richard	35	-	14	14**
Sylvain	24	21	25	16
Margot	19	-	11	55

* 1 error

** 2 errors

Nouns: Number of nouns produced by student, that is, number of obligatory contexts for the singular and the plural.

% of error: Percentage of errors produced by student in relation to the obligatory contexts of the singular and the plural, that is, percentage of overgeneralization of the plural and the singular.

Table 2A

Formation of the plural.

Comparison of the production of the plural on the total number of nouns and on consonant and vowel ending nouns by individual students.

Group 1

% of error in the plural

	Total	-V ending	-C ending
Chantal	-	-	-
Sonia	6*	8*	-
Marc	23	24	22
Jacqueline	31	36	20
Nathalie	38	25	44
Josee	44	33	56
Caroline	50	29	80
Johanne	50	17	75
Lise	55	45	67
Alain	59	57	62
Dominique	62	55	80
Manon	68	65	80
Emilienne	69	71	67
Linda	85	71	100
Lyne	86	91	80

Group 2

% of error in the plural

	Total	-V ending	-C ending
Line	5*	-	16*
Judith	7*	-	13*
Micheline	14	8*	22
Joseph	16	9*	25
Sylvie	21	-	50
Carole	23	8*	40
Manon	28	-	62
Marie	29	8*	100
Magda	31	33	29
Josee	33	11*	67
Suzanne	37	7*	75
Janet	39	10	75
Julie	44	10	88
Josephine	47	30	71
Sandra	50	29	71

Group 3

% of error in the plural

	Total	-V ending	-C ending
Helene	-	-	-
Chantal	4*	-	9*
Lyne	5*	-	16*
Cecile	5*	-	11*
Julie	5*	-	12*
Michel	6*	-	11*
Lynda	6*	9*	-
M. Claude	10**	-	25**
Manon	10**	9*	11*
Richard	14**	-	33**
Sylvain	16	6*	37
Margot	55	57	50

* 1 error

** 2 errors

Totals: Total percentage of errors in the plural by individual students.

-V ending: Percentage of errors in nouns ending in a vowel.

-C ending: Percentage of errors in nouns ending in a consonant.

Table 3A

Formation of the plural.

Comparison of the number of errors made with and without a quantifier in the three groups.

Group 1

	Total	-Quant.	# error.a	+Quant	# error.b
Josee	18	7	1	11	7
Caroline	12	3	2	9	4
Linda	13	2	-	11	11
Manon	22	7	3	15	12
Lynne	21	5	2	16	14
Dominique	16	-	-	16	10
Sonia	21	8	1	13	-
Lise	20	9	5	11	6
Nathalie	13	2	1	11	4
Johanne	14	4	2	10	5
Alain	22	4	-	18	13
Marc	30	13	-	17	7
Jacqueline	16	5	1	11	4
Chantal	18	5	13	-	-
Emilienne	13	-	-	13	9

Group 2

	Total	-Quant.	# error.a	+Quant.	# error.b
Suzanne	27	12	2	15	8
Magda	16	2	-	14	5
Joseph	19	4	1	15	2
Line	19	5	-	14	1
Micheline	21	1	-	20	3
Janet	18	4	1	14	6
Carole	22	11	2	11	3
Marie	17	9	1	8	4
Manon	18	1	-	17	5
Josee	15	-	-	15	5
Sandra	14	2	1	12	6
Sylvie	14	5	2	9	1
Judith	15	4	1	11	-
Josephine	17	2	2	15	6
Julie	18	4	2	14	6

Group 3

	Total	-Quant.	# error.a	+Quant.	# error.b
Richard	14	4	1	10	1
Lynda	30	13	2	17	-
Margot	11	2	1	9	5
Sylvain	25	9	1	16	3
Manon	20	3	-	17	2
Michel	17	6	1	11	-
Helene	17	6	-	11	-
Cecile	21	3	-	18	1
Julie	20	10	-	10	1
Lyne	22	9	-	13	1
Chantal	24	7	-	17	1
M. Claude	21	8	1	13	1

Total: total number of obligatory contexts for the plural.

-Quant.: Total number of nouns which constituted an obligatory context for the plural that were not modified by a plural quantifier.

error a.: Number of errors committed by learners in the production of the plural of nouns not modified by a quantifier.

+Quant.: Total number of nouns which constituted an obligatory context for the plural that were modified by a plural quantifier.

error b.: Number of errors committed by learners in the production of the plural of nouns modified by a quantifier.

Table 4A

Article-noun agreement: gender.

Individual students

Total number of obligatory contexts for articles, obligatory contexts for masculine articles and feminine articles; percentages in errors for each category.

Group 1

	Obl. Con. Art.		Obl. Con. Masc.		Obl. Con. Fem	
	Total	% error	Total	% error	Total	% error
Alain	28	4*	16	-	12	8*
Nathalie	24	4*	12	-	12	8*
Dominique	21	10*	11	18**	10	-
Manon	27	11	18	11**	9	11*
Lyne	28	14	19	-	9	44
Marc	40	15	20	10**	20	20
Lise	32	16	21	-	10	50
Josée	28	18	17	24	11	9*
Sonia	39	18	15	6*	24	25
Jacqueline	31	23	18	-	13	54
Johanne	20	25	10	30	10	20**
Emilienne	20	30	5	20*	15	33
Caroline	33	30	14	-	19	53
Chantal	35	31	19	16	16	50
Linda	9	56	5	80	4	25*

Group 2

	Obl. Con. Art.		Obl. Con. Masc.		Obl. Con. Fem	
	Total	% error	Total	% error	Total	% error
Julie	37	3*	14	-	23	.4*
Sylvie	24	4*	16	6*	8	-
Line	45	9	20	20	25	-
Marie	44	9	24	4*	20	15
Janet	23	13	10	10*	13	16**
Joseph	37	14	20	10**	17	18
Judith	23	13	16	19	7	-
Josephine	17	18	11	-	6	50
Magda	17	18	8	25**	9	11*
Micheline	24	21	12	42	12	-
Carole	27	22	17	-	10	30
Sandra	42	24	23	4*	19	47
Manon	45	27	30	14	15	53
Josée	39	31	20	35	19	26
Suzanne	43	33	17	6	27	48

Group 3

	Obl. Con. Art.		Obl. Con. Masc.		Obl. Con. Fem	
	Total	% error	Total	% error	Total	% error
Lyne	37	-	17	-	20	-
Michel	39	5**	18	-	21	10**
Richard	33	6**	15	7*	18	6*
M. Claude	44	7	18	11**	26	4*
Linda	41	7	14	7*	27	7**
Julie	36	11	15	20	21	5*
Cecile	32	12	17	12**	16	12**
Manon	31	13	18	-	13	31
Chantal	69	15	32	6*	37	22
Helene	27	15	15	20	12	8*
Sylvain	26	23	10	10*	16	31
Margot	19	32	8	-	11	55

*1 error

** 2 errors

Obl. Con. Art.: Obligatory contexts for an article.

Obl. Con. Masc.: Obligatory contexts for a masculine article.

Obl. Con. Fem.: Obligatory contexts for a feminine article.

Table 5A

Preference for masculine.

	Total % of error	Obl. Con. Masc. % of error	Obl. Con. Fem. % of error
Group 1			
Jacqueline	23	-	54
Caroline	30	-	53
Lise	16	-	50
Chantal	31	16	50
Lyne	14	-	44
Emilienne	30	20*	33
Sonia	18	7*	25
Marc	15	20*	20

Group 2

Manon	27	13	53
Josephine	18	-	50
Suzanne	33	6*	48
Sandra	24	4*	47
Carole	22	-	30

Group 3

Margot	32	-	55
Sylvain	23	10*	31
Manon	13	-	31
Chantal	14	6*	22

Preference for feminine.

	Total % of error	Obl. Con. Masc. % of error	Obl. Con. Fem. % of error
Group 1			
Linda	56	80	25*
Johanne	25	30	20**
Josee	18	24	9**
Group 2			
Micheline	21	42	-
Lise	9	20	-
Judith	13	19	-

No obvious preference

	Total % of error	Obl. Con. Masc. % of error	Obl. Con. Fem. % of error
Group 1			
Manon	11	11**	11*
Dominique	10	18**	-
Nathalie	4	-	8*
Alain	4	-	8*
Group 2			
Josee	31	35	26
Magda	18	25**	11*
Joseph	14	10**	17
Janet	13	10*	16**
Marie	9	4*	15
Sylvie	4	6*	-
Julie	3	-	4*
Group 3			
Helene	15	20	8*
Cecile	12*	12**	12**
Julie	11	20	5*
Lynda	7	7*	7**
M. Claude	7	11**	4*
Richard	6	7*	6*
Michel	5	-	10*
Lyne	-	-	-

* 1 error

** 2 errors

Obl. Con. Masc. : Obligatory contexts for a masculine article.

Obl. Con. Fem. : Obligatory contexts for a feminine article.

Table 6A

Article-noun agreement: gender.

Natural gender.

Classification of natural gender nouns according to their ending, and tabulation of the total number of errors in article noun agreement committed in each class of nouns by individual students.

Group 1

	N.G.		o/a ending nouns						Cons./a ending nouns					
	Total		Total		-o		-a		Total		-Cons		-a	
	T		T		T		T		T		T		T	
	Wer		Wer		Wer		Wer		Wer		Wer		Wer	
Josee	10	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	9	1	2	-	7	1
Caroline	6	5	4	4	-	-	4	4	1	1	-	-	1	1
Linda	6	4	3	1	-	-	3	1	3	3	3	3	-	-
Manon	14	2	6	1	4	1	2	-	7	3	2	-	5	3
Lyne	9	2	6	1	5	-	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	1
Domintque	7	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Sonia	11	3	8	2	2	1	6	1	2	1	-	-	2	1
Lise	8	2	5	2	-	-	5	2	3	-	2	-	1	-
Nathalie	11	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	10	-	5	-	5	-
Johanne	10	2	5	1	-	-	5	1	5	1	2	1	3	1
Alain	7	-	5	-	2	-	3	-	2	-	1	-	1	-
Marc	11	3	10	3	2	-	8	3	1	-	1	-	-	-
Jacqueline	10	4	8	4	3	-	5	4	2	-	-	-	2	-
Chantal	10	2	7	2	2	-	5	2	2	-	-	-	2	-
Emilienne	8	5	7	5	-	-	7	5	1	-	1	-	-	-

Group 2

Suzanne	14	10	11	8	-	-	11	8	3	2	3	2	-	-
Magda	3	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	2	1
Joseph	12	2	10	2	5	-	5	2	1	-	-	-	1	-
Line	10	-	9	-	5	-	4	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Micheline	6	-	5	-	1	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Janet	8	2	6	2	-	-	6	2	2	-	2	-	-	-
Carole	13	1	5	1	4	-	1	1	7	-	5	-	2	-
Marie	11	-	8	-	4	-	4	-	3	-	3	-	-	-
Manon	16	6	14	6	4	-	10	6	2	-	2	-	-	-
Josee	12	2	7	2	2	-	5	2	5	-	1	-	4	-
Sandra	14	5	7	2	5	-	2	2	7	3	3	-	4	3
Sylvie	5	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	4	-	-	-	4	-
Judith	7	-	6	-	3	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Josephine	7	3	4	2	2	-	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	-
Julie	11	-	10	-	3	-	7	-	1	-	1	-	-	-

Group 3

	N.G.		o/a ending nouns						Cons./a ending nouns					
	Total		Total		-o		-a		Total		-Cons		-a	
	T %er		T %er		T %er		T %er		T %er		T %er		T %er	
	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er
Richard	7	-	5	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lynda	11	1	11	1	3	-	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Margot	6	1	4	1	2	-	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Sylvain	7	4	5	3	-	-	5	3	1	1	-	-	1	1
Manon	5	1	3	1	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Michel	7	1	6	1	2	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Helene	7	1	3	-	2	-	1	-	4	1	1	-	3	1
Cecile	13	1	11	1	6	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Julie	7	-	5	-	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Lyne	8	1	3	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Chantal	16	3	15	3	5	-	10	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
M. Claude	12	1	5	-	2	-	3	-	4	1	-	-	4	1

T: Total number of obligatory contexts.

%er: Percentage of error in article noun agreement..

Total N.G.: Total number of nouns that belong to the natural gender category.

Total o/a ending nouns: Total number of nouns which belong to the natural gender category and that are marked for gender by o/a endings.

Total Cons./a ending nouns: Total number of nouns which belong to the natural gender category in which the masculine ends in a consonant and the feminine is formed by adding an -a to the masculine.

Table 7A

Article -noun agreement: gender.

Grammatical gender.

Classification of grammatical gender nouns according to their ending and tabulation of the total number of errors in article noun agreement committed in each class of nouns by individual students.

	Total		o - a		other	
	T	#er	T	#er	T	#er
Group 1						
Josee	18	4	10	2	8	2
Caroline	27	5	16	4	11	1
Linda	3	1	3	1	-	-
Manon	13	1	2	-	12	-
Lyne	19	2	13	2	7	-
Dominique	14	2	6	-	8	2
Sonia	28	3	18	3	10	-
Lise	24	2	6	1	17	1
Nathalie	13	1	6	1	7	-
Johanne	10	3	1	-	9	3
Alain	21	-	14	-	6	-
Marc	29	3	15	1	14	2
Jacqueline	21	3	12	2	8	-
Chantal	25	9	15	8	8	1
Emilienne	12	-	14	-	5	-
Group 2						
Suzanne	30	4	18	4	11	-
Magda	14	2	9	1	5	1
Joseph	22	3	22	3	-	-
Line	35	4	27	4	9	-
Micheline	18	5	14	5	4	-
Janet	14	1	6	-	8	1
Carole	14	2	7	1	7	1
Marie	33	4	21	3	11	1
Manon	29	6	24	4	5	2
Josee	27	10	19	8	8	2
Sandra	28	8	17	5	11	-
Sylvie	19	1	11	-	8	1
Judith	16	3	7	2	9	1
Josephine	10	-	3	-	7	-
Julie	26	1	17	1	9	-

Group 3

	Total		o - a		other	
	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er
Richard	26	1	17	-	9	1
Lynda	29	1	24	1	5	-
Margot	13	4	6	3	7	1
Sylvain	19	2	15	1	4	1
Manon	26	3	14	2	12	1
Michel	32	1	20	1	12	1
Helene	20	2	16	1	4	1
Cecile	20	3	12	1	8	2
Julie	29	4	11	2	18	2
Lynne	29	-	18	-	11	-
Chantal	52	7	31	6	21	1
M. Claude	26	2	18	-	8	2

T: Total number of obligatory contexts

%er: Percentage of error in article noun agreement.

o - a: Total number of nouns which belong to the grammatical gender category and that are marked for gender with an -o or an -a ending.

other: Total number of grammatical gender nouns which are not marked for gender.

Table 8A

Article noun agreement: gender.
 Classification of nouns according to their endings and tabulation of
 the total number of errors in article-noun agreement committed in each
 class of nouns by individual students. (Included here are natural
 gender nouns)

	o - a		other	
	T	#er	T	#er
Group 1				
Josee	18	3	10	2
Caroline	21	9	12	1
Linda	6	2	3	3
Manon	13	4	14	2
Lyne	20	4	8	-
Dominique	9	-	12	2
Sonia	28	6	11	-
Lise	12	3	19	1
Nathalie	12	1	12	-
Johanne	9	1	11	4
Alain	20	-	7	-
Marc	25	4	15	2
Jacqueline	22	6	8	-
Chantal	26	10	9	1
Emilienne	14	5	6	-
Group 2				
Suzanne	29	12	14	2
Magda	12	2	5	1
Joseph	28	5	-	-
Line	36	4	9	-
Micheline	19	5	5	-
Janet	12	2	10	1
Carole	14	2	13	1
Marie	29	3	14	-
Manon	38	10	7	2
Josee	30	10	9	2
Sandra	28	10	13	-
Sylvie	16	-	8	1
Judith	13	2	10	1
Josephine	8	3	9	1
Julie	27	1	10	-

Group 3

	o - a		other	
	T	#er	T	#er
Richard	22	-	11	1
Lynda	35	2	5	-
Margot	10	4	8	1
Sylvain	21	5	5	1
Manon	17	3	14	1
Michel	26		13	-
Helene	22	2	5	1
Cecile	23	2	10	2
Julie	17	2	18	2
Lynne	22	-	14	1
Chantal	46	9	21	1
M. Claude	27	1	11	2

T: Total number of obligatory contexts.

#er.: Percentage of error in article noun agreement.

o - a: Total number of nouns marked for gender with an-o or an -a ending.

other: Total number of nouns not marked for gender (i. e. ending in a consonant or a vowel not an o or an a)

Table 9A

Article-noun agreement: gender and definiteness
 Comparison of percentages of error in agreement between definite and indefinite articles and nouns. Breakdown of definite and indefinite articles according to gender.

	Definite articles						Indefinite articles					
	Total		Masc.		Fem.		Total		Masc.		Fem.	
	-----		-----		-----		-----		-----		-----	
	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er
Group 1												
Josee	18	1	9	1	9	-	9	4	7	3	2	1
Caroline	11	1	2	-	9	1	19	9	10	-	9	9
Linda	1	1	-	-	1	1	8	4	5	4	3	-
Manon	22	3	12	1	10	2	4	-	4	-	-	-
Lyne	17	4	2	-	5	4	6	1	3	-	3	-
Dominique	5	-	2	-	3	-	14	2	8	2	6	-
Sonia	15	3	5	-	10	3	24	4	10	1	14	3
Lise	25	4	16	-	9	4	7	2	5	-	2	2
Nathalie	15	-	4	-	11	-	9	1	8	-	1	1
Johanne	9	3	5	1	4	2	11	2	5	2	6	-
Alain	17	-	8	-	9	-	11	-	8	-	3	-
Marc	22	4	11	2	11	2	18	2	9	-	9	2
Jaqueline	10	1	4	-	6	1	21	7	13	-	8	7
Chantal	10	1	6	1	4	-	25	10	13	2	12	8
Emilienne	15	5	3	-	12	5	5	1	3	1	2	-
Group 2												
Suzanne	32	11	8	-	24	11	10	3	8	1	2	2
Magda	6	1	2	1	4	-	10	2	6	1	4	1
Joseph	19	1	7	-	12	1	17	3	13	2	4	1
Line	23	-	5	-	18	-	21	4	15	4	6	-
Micheline	11	1	2	1	9	-	13	4	10	4	3	-
Janet	16	2	6	1	10	1	6	1	4	-	2	1
Carole	21	5	13	-	8	5	6	1	4	-	2	1
Marie	20	2	6	-	14	2	24	2	18	1	6	1
Manon	17	5	9	3	8	2	28	7	21	1	7	6
Josee	8	-	1	-	7	-	31	12	21	8	10	4
Sandra	26	5	13	-	13	5	15	4	11	1	4	3
Sylvie	14	1	6	1	8	-	10	-	10	-	-	-
Judith	15	1	8	1	7	-	8	2	8	2	-	-
Josephine	11	1	6	-	5	1	6	1	5	-	1	1
Julie	18	1	6	-	12	1	19	2	7	-	12	2

	Definite articles						Indefinite articles					
	Total		Masc.		Fem.		Total		Masc.		Fem.	
	-----		-----		-----		-----		-----		-----	
	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er
Group 3												
Richard	18	1	6	1	12	-	15	1	9	-	6	1
Lynda	26	2	7	-	19	2	15	1	7	1	8	-
Margot	11	4	3	-	9	4	7	2	5	-	2	2
Sylvain	11	3	4	-	7	3	14	3	6	1	8	2
Manon	19	1	10	-	9	1	12	3	8	-	4	3
Michel	19	-	5	-	14	-	19	2	13	-	6	2
Helene	11	1	7	1	4	-	16	4	8	2	8	2
Cecile	14	1	7	-	7	-	17	3	9	2	8	1
Julie	28	1	9	3	19	1	8	-	6	-	2	-
Lynne	24	-	7	-	17	-	13	-	10	-	3	-
Chantal	36	1	12	-	24	1	33	9	20	2	13	7
M. Claude	23	2	8	2	15	-	21	1	10	-	11	1

T: Total number of obligatory contexts for articles.

%er: Percentage of error in article noun agreement.

Total: Total number of articles, masculine and feminine.

Table 10A

Adjective-noun agreement: gender.

Tabulation of the number of adjectives according to whether they are marked for gender by the o/a endings or not, and the number of errors in agreement between the noun and the adjective in each category committed by the individual students.

	o/a		-o		-a		other
	T	Wer	T	Wer	T	Wer	T
Group 1							
Josee	4	2	2	-	2	2	6
Caroline	11	4	3	-	8	4	1
Linda	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Manon	9	3	4	-	5	3	8
Lyne	8	1	6	-	2	1	11
Dominique	7	3	4	-	3	3	8
Sonia	5	2	3	-	2	2	8
Lise	14	6	9	1	5	5	3
Nathalie	9	4	6	2	3	2	-
Johanne	7	2	4	1	3	1	-
Alain	13	5	9	2	4	3	3
Marc	6	2	5	2	1	-	1
Jacqueline	10	5	5	-	5	5	8
Chantal	7	-	6	-	1	-	5
Emilienne	5	2	2	1	3	1	1
Group 2							
Magda	4	-	4	-	-	-	2
Julie	6	2	4	-	2	2	5
Suzanne	9	-	8	-	1	-	7
Joseph	11	4	7	1	4	3	7
Line	17	3	11	2	6	1	7
Micheline	6	1	5	1	1	-	6
Janet	4	2	2	-	2	2	3
Carole	6	1	5	-	1	1	1
Marie	15	6	8	-	7	6	6
Manon	14	3	11	1	3	2	8
Josee	6	-	6	-	-	-	11
Sandra	7	1	4	-	3	1	3
Sylvie	6	-	6	-	-	-	5
Judith	4	-	4	-	-	-	1
Josephine	3	-	3	-	-	-	4

	o/a		-o		-a		other
	T	%er	T	%er	T	%er	T
Group 3							
Richard	7	1	5	-	2	1	4
Lynda	17	7	11	2	6	5	10
Margot	2	-	2	-	-	-	5
Sylvain	12	2	6	-	6	2	10
Manon	9	2	6	-	3	2	5
Michel	13	-	10	-	3	-	7
Helene	10	2	8	-	2	2	6
Cecile	6	3	4	1	2	2	2
Julie	10	-	7	-	3	-	4
Lyne	7	3	2	-	5	3	2
Chantal	22	7	10	-	12	7	10
M. Claude	14	5	6	1	8	4	5

T: Total number of obligatory contexts.

%er: percentage of error in adjective-noun gender agreement.

o/a: Adjectives marked for gender with o/a endings.

-o: Obligatory contexts for masculine adjectives ending in -o

-a: Obligatory contexts for feminine adjectives ending in -a

other: adjectives not marked for gender.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE OF SPEECH FROM ONE OF THE LEARNERS

Transcription of the Spanish produced by one of the learners in the course of the picture card game.

The interviewer's speech is in capitals.

Punctuation marks refer to intonation. A description in English of each of the pictures chosen by the learner is given in parenthesis.

Student's name: Alain

Level 1 Group 1

(Picture shows a girl in a red skirt with three red balloons.)

Uh, hay una hija,

MHM.

uh, tengo uh tres balones, y los balones son ro- rojo,

MHM.

La s' la hija es contenta,

SI, ¿ES ESTE?

No. Uh, la roba, sa robe?

MHM.

es rojo.

AH, ES --- . OK.

MUY BIEN.

BUENO.

SI.

(Picture shows two houses, two trees and a sun)

Uh, hay uh, hay dos casa y dos árboles,

MHM,

uh, y el tiempo es uh, muy buenos.

MHM

Las casas son negro,

¿ES ESTA?

Sí,

(Picture shows four children around a table on which there is a birthday cake with four candles in it.)

Hay una hay dos hija y dos chico, uh es la uh hay una gâteau lo?

UN PASTEL

Un pastel, uh-, el pastel es rojo, uh los chica no la la chica hay cuatro año,

MHM, DE QUIEN ES EL CUM DE QUIEN ES EL ANIVERSARIO.

Uh, es el a aniversario de Pat,

¿ES ESTA?

Sí.

(Picture shows a table with two cakes on it. A boy is reaching out to one of the cakes.)

Uh, hay un chico y hay dos/pilas/, un es rojos y uh un amarillo,

MHM,

el chico es muy contenta,

¿QUE ESTA HACIENDO?

Uh, dos /pilas/,

OK. ¿ES ESTA?

Sí.

BUENO.

(Picture shows five children and a teacher in a classroom. There is a book on each child's desk. The clock shows it is eight thirty.)

Uh, hay cinco niñas que van a la escuela, hay uh siete treinta,

MHM

No, ocho treinta. Uh, hay dos uh niña y tres niño.

MHM

que hay son libros. No.

¿PERDON?

Que hay libros,

AH.

En la mesa.

ESTA.

Sí.

(Picture shows a girl sitting at a table. She is holding a book and two red pencils in one hand. On the table there are two blue and two yellow pencils, three sheets of paper and a book.)

Hay una señora que hay dos uh crayon,

UN CRAYON ES UN LAPIZ.

Un lápiz y un libros en la mesa, hay un libro, cuatro lápiz y tres folio en el en la table, comment dit-on ça, table?

LA MESA.

Uh, une table?

MESA.

Mesa. C'est tout.

EN LA MANO TIENE S' UH,

La mano tienes dos uh crayon -- y un libro.

AH, ES ESTA.

Sí.

(The picture shows a shop window in which we see three television sets and a record player. A dog is looking in at the window and a man is walking by.)

Uh, hay un perro y hay un uh un señor que pasa. El miro, el perro miro la televisión, hay tres televisión y un uh un discos, no.

SI.

Sí, y hay un discos. El perro es muy contenta.

¿EL PERRO? AJA.

C'est tout.

OH. ¿ES ESTA?

(Picture shows two women at a stop. One is wearing a blue dress and one a yellow dress. There is a red bus and two green trucks, one behind and one beside the red bus.)

Uh, hay un autobús, uh rojos y azul, hay two señora que -, voyons, que attendent, qui juga no, uh -, mais qui, qui attendent le,

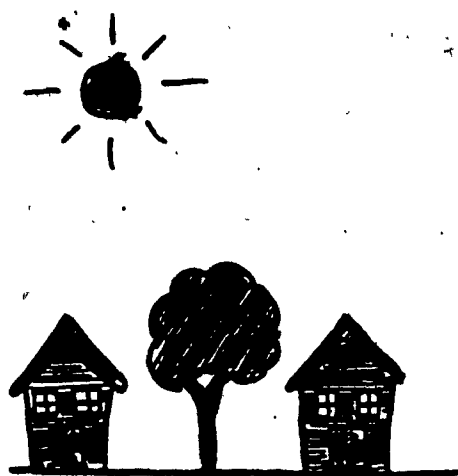
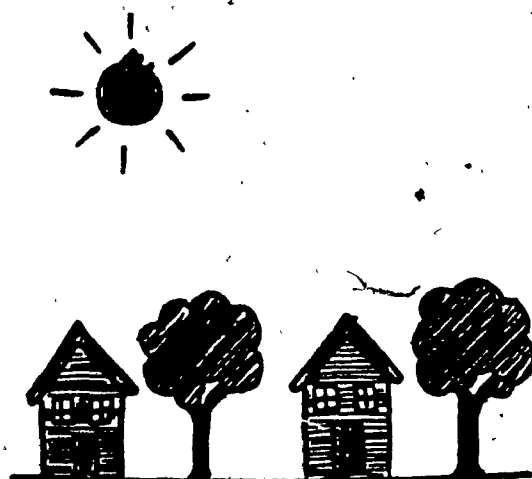
ESPERAN?

Ah, que esperando el autobús, hay un azul y un uh amarillos, hay dos camión,

AJA,

Uh, que es rojo y -, verde, c'est tout. Sí.

EXAMPLE OF THE SETS OF PICTURES USED IN THE PICTURE CARD GAME.



QUESTIONNAIRE USED TO EVALUATE LEARNER'S CONTACT WITH SPANISH

QUESTIONNAIRE

Nom: Alain
 Degré: (secondaire) sec III
 Age: 16 ans
 École _____

Pour les numéros 1 à 9, on te demande d'encercler la bonne réponse (exemple a).

Si la réponse que tu veux donner n'est pas inscrite, écris-la sur la ligne (exemple b).

Lorsqu'une question ne te concerne pas, fais un x sur la ligne (exemple c).

Voici les exemples:

a. Quelle est ton équipe de hockey préférée?

les Canadiens les Maples Leafs _____

b. Quelle est la couleur de tes cheveux?

bruns blonds

noirs

c. Quelle sorte d'auto possèdes-tu?

européenne canadienne

X

1. Quelle langue parles-tu d'habitude avec ta mère?

français anglais _____

2. Quelle est la langue maternelle de ta mère?

français anglais _____

3. Quelle langue parles-tu d'habitude avec ton père?

français

anglais _____

4- Quelle est la langue maternelle de ton père?

français

anglais _____

5- Quelle langue parles-tu d'habitude avec tes frères et soeurs?

français

anglais _____

6. As-tu déjà étudié dans une école anglaise?

oui

non

7. Est-ce qu'il y a quelqu'un, avec qui tu essaies de parler espagnol parce que cette personne ne parle bien ni français ni anglais?

oui

non

8- Est-ce que tu es déjà allé dans un pays de langue espagnole?

oui

non

Si oui, as-tu été là _____

moins d'une semaine?

entre 7 et 30 jours?

plus de 30 jours?

9. Est-ce que tu connais des chanteurs, des chanteuses ou des groupes musicaux qui chantent en espagnol?

oui

non

Peux-tu en nommer un? _____

NAME: Alain

[illegible]

SAMPLE SHEET CONSOLIDATING RAW DATA 1

NUMBER & GENDER IN THE NOUN PHRASE

NAME _____ TAPE No. _____

NOUNS

A	B	C	D	E	F
Total	Obl. Con. -o	Obl. Con. -a	Obl. Con. -oV	Obl. Con. -C	Obl. Con. -V(Total)
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

OVERUSE _____ COMMENTS : _____

NOTE: Exceptions to o/a gender rule. _____

	NUMBER	Total % Error	-V % Error	-C % Error
Total Obl. Con. Pl.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Obl. Con. S.	_____	_____	_____	_____

	TOTAL	Overuse Plural	Overuse Singular
Errors -o	_____	_____	_____
Errors -a	_____	_____	_____
Errors -oV	_____	_____	_____
Errors -C	_____	_____	_____
Total Errors -V	_____	_____	_____
Total (-V) + (-C)	_____	_____	_____

ARTICLES

A—	GENDER	Total	Obl. Con.	Total Error	%		
	TOTAL	-o	-a	-oV	-C	NG.	Gr.G
B—	Obl. Con. Masc.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	% OF ERROR	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %
C—	Obl. Con. Fem.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	% OF ERROR	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %
D—	OTHER	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

	NUMBER	% OF ERROR
Total Obl. Con. Pl.	_____	_____
Total Obl. Con. S.	_____	_____
ERRORS IN BOTH NUMBER & GENDER	_____	_____