## ABSTRACT

The following study is designed to determine the way how adult EFL learners are influenced by their native language (L1) when learning the foreign language (L2), with particular focus on the grammatical aspects of both languages. It aims to analyze the students' perceptions regarding the importance of L1 and L2 grammar for in terms of the L2 learning process. It also analyzes the extent to which this specific group of language learners may benefit from comparing L1 and L2 grammar for purposes of learning. The literary review in this work provides a general idea of the status of L1 influence on L2 in the adult EFL learning process. In addition, a study has been conducted on 9 adult EFL learners from the Universidad Del Azuay in order validate what has been stated by the theory. The findings demonstrate that most adults customarily rely on their L1 in order to communicate in the L2. Additionally, they seem to be highly affected by the grammar of their L1 when using the L2. By analyzing the learners' written tasks, it has been concluded that their lack of grammatical accuracy as well as transfer from the L1, caused a great deal of errors in the L2. This could be undoubtedly avoided if the learners were made aware of both the similarities and the differences in the language patterns between the two languages.

**Key Words:** adult, EFL learners, mother tongue, L1, native language, foreign language, L2, grammatical, learning, process, students, grammar, influence, target language, transfer.

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## FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

## CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

"Grammatical Influence of Spanish in Adult EFL Learners"

**Tesina previa a la obtención del Título de Licenciado(a) en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.**

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**Autores:** Álvaro Felipe Álvarez Romero

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2012

## AUTHORSHIP

The authors have complete responsibility for the opinions written in this work.

| | |
|---|---|
| Felipe Álvarez R. | Mayra Vanegas P. |

## DEDICATION

*This work is dedicated to my parents, who have always provided me with emotional and economic support that I needed in order to accomplish my dreams, and who have encouraged me to get to this aim. You are the best parents that a son can have.*

*To my brother and my sister, for being my life best friends, and for cheering me up during the hardest stages of my life.*

*To all my friends and classmates, for all the good moments that we have shared together, and for being by my side even if it was just for joking around.*

*Last but not least, to the most especial friend. For all the love you have poured on me, and for all I have been blessed me with, this work, my Lord, is for you.*

*Felipe Álvarez R.*

## DEDICATION

*I would like to dedicate this work to my Lord, Jesus, because he has been always with me at all moment and throughout all these years of study. To my mother, Noemi, who offered me unconditional love and support throughout all the four years of my career and during the development of this tesina. To my father, Eduardo, who teaches me how I must face the adversities that I find on the road every day. To my son, Joao, who has been always my inspiration to continue fighting in life. And finally, to all my relatives and friends who directly or indirectly have contributed to reach my goals.*

*Mayra Vanegas P.*

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# INTRODUCTION

It is true that learning a foreign language is usually a long and demanding process for all language learners. However, this process seems to be of particular complexity for the adult learners, since, according to Al-Harbi[1], they are not able to acquire the new language the way children do, in a natural way (145). On the contrary, they usually manifest high levels of influence from their mother tongue, which is often referred to as “interference” or “negative transfer” due to its potential for causing errors in L2 learning.

In the fields of L2 learning; however, not all the influence generated by the learners’ mother tongue is necessarily negative. As Michael Swan[2] recognizes, “mother tongue is responsible not only for errors, but also for much of what is correct in an interlanguage”. This, of course, suggests that the role the learners’ mother language has in the EFL learning process is worth being considered. In fact, Skehan[3] quoted in Swam, reports good language learners usually “refer back to their native language judiciously … and make effective cross-linguistic comparisons at different stages of language-learning”. Therefore, according to Kavaliauskienė, the learners should be encouraged to think “comparatively” so that they can be aware of the differences between their mother tongue and the target language (5). If this is accomplished, then the learners will be able to avoid what is negative and take advantage of the positive aspects generated by the influence of their mother tongue. As Ringbom[4] states, “the learner tends to assume that the system of L2 is more or less the same as in his L1 until he has discovered that it is not" (qtd. in Swan).

This work calls for a more positive consideration of the use the learners' mother tongue in the EFL classroom with especial emphasis on its grammar. As it will be demonstrated in this study, mother tongue grammar represents a useful tool of which both, the teacher and the learners can take advantage of in order to improve the teaching/learning process of the grammar of the target language.

# CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

## 1.1 GRAMMATICAL INFLUENCE OF SPANISH IN ADULT EFL LEARNERS

## 1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

When learning a foreign language, EFL students, especially adults, have a tendency to apply or transfer the grammatical rules and structures that are present in their native language into the target language. This is mainly due to the fact that most adults already have the grammatical structures of their first language assimilated in their minds. In addition, they have already passed what some authors call “the critical period for language acquisition” (around the age of 15 or so), when it is no longer plausible for them to attain full grammatical proficiency in the target language. Therefore, they usually tend to refer back to their mother tongue in order to understand and use the target language.

The fact that the students’ mother tongue and the target language they are learning may present a great deal of similarities in grammar forms presents an advantage in their learning process. However, there are also grammatical structures that are at great variance from language to language; these differences may end up having a counterproductive effect on learning a foreign language. This study is intended to determine how the grammar of a group of adult students’ native language positively or negatively influences their learning and use of the grammar of the target language, as well as to test the relevance and importance of the grammar of both, the mother tongue and the target language in the adult EFL learning process. Furthermore, we would like to determine whether the inclusion of explicit grammar teaching

involving the use of the grammatical structures of the two languages in the classroom can be used to the benefit of this particular cross-section of English students.

## 1.3 JUSTIFICATION

From our own experience as students of English, we are aware that our native language plays an important role when learning another language. This is true for all L2 learners, since, according to Caroll et al, they often seem to "understand a new language partly in terms of the kinds of knowledge [meanings or forms] already learned in the first language" (qtd. in Al-Harbi 145). Consequently, it is hard for any L2 learner, and especially for an adult student not to link or compare his/her mother tongue and the target language. Under these circumstances, total rejection in the use of L1 in an L2 classroom may result in teachers' and leaners` ignoring the fact that L1 could be positively used in some instances as a tool for enhancing the learning of L2. As previously stated, this investigation is intended to gather enough information about how adults can be assisted in their learning of the foreign language through a focused use of their native language in specific learning situations. This research is specifically important because of its theoretical and methodological implications in the teaching/learning process of adult EFL students.

## 1.4 OBJECTIVES

### 1.4.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To describe the role that Spanish grammar plays in the adult Spanish speaking English language learner.

### 1.4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To determine the way how L1 grammar affects their learning of the L2.

- To describe the importance of both L1 and L2 grammar in the adult EFL learning process.
- To test the relevance and usefulness of grammar, with special emphasis on L1 grammar, within the adult EFL learning environment.
- To determine whether L1 grammar may be used as a tool for improving the learning of L2 grammatical structures.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is oriented to answer the following questions:

- Do adults learn English in a different way than other learners?
- If so, how?
- What is the role that Spanish, and Spanish grammar play in adults' learning of English?
- Are adult EFL`s more oriented to grammar learning than other EFL learners?
- If so, how do adults feel towards grammar?
- Is grammar teaching relevant in the adult language learning process?
- Can L1 grammar be used to the benefit of adult students' learning of the English grammar?
- What can be done in the classroom in order to help adult Spanish speaking learners facilitate their studying of the English grammar?
- Which conclusions can be reached?

# CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

For purposes of clarification, it is important to point out that the majority of the research that has been carried out on the acquisition of languages other than the mother tongue is concerned with **second language** learning. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between the learning of a second or a foreign language.

Unlike mother tongue **(L1)** acquisition, which is considered to be a natural process, since no other language has an effect on it, the process of acquiring a second language **(L2)** is usually carried out in a very different way. A second language is often learned through formal instruction at school or even later in life, generally after the learner has already acquired at least a basis for his L1.

The terminology used to refer to L2 acquisition may differ in some ways as well. For instance, whenever a L2 is learned in an environment where it is not spoken as the official language, it is learned as a **foreign language,** e.g. an Ecuadorian learning English in Ecuador. On the other hand, if the L2 is learned within a cultural context in which it is spoken as an official language, the process is called **second language** learning, e.g. an Ecuadorian Learning English in The United States.

In short, L2 acquisition differs from L1 acquisition, in that L2 is typically learned in a non-natural way. Furthermore, L2 can be approached to as a foreign or as a second language depending on the cultural context in which it is learned.

## 2.2 THE ROLE OF L1 IN L2 ACQUISITION: An overview

According to Vivian Cook[5], quoted in Halasa and Al-Manaseer[6], "over the last century the use of L1 in classroom situations has been considered taboo in second language teaching." Nevertheless, authors such as David Atkinson[7] argue that the use of L1 in EFL teaching/learning environments has often been "neglected" in methodology as well as in teacher training (241). Research carried out on the issue has demonstrated "that the mother tongue has a strong influence on the way a second language is learned and used" (Kellerman 1984, Kellerman and Sharwood Smith 1986, Ringbom 1987, Odlin 1989, Perdue 1993, qtd. in Swan). It is widely known that current communicative approaches advocate total rejection of L1, Lado[8] himself thought that L1 should be set aside in L2 learning, as he considered it to be one of the chief sources of errors in L2 learning (qtd. in Halasa and Al-Manaseer). However, Cook believes that there should be a more positive consideration of L1 usage in the classroom, as it is permanently "present in the learner's mind." Therefore, trying to keep from using it would be non-natural. In addition, Cook states that "the first language must be used to convey grammatical forms and meanings, instructions and in class management" (qtd. in Halasa and Al-Manaseer).

In the book *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course,* written by Susan Gass[9] & Larry Selinker[10], it is stated that the role that native language or mother tongue plays in foreign and second language learning has been extensively studied during the course of language research history. They report that the study of the influence that the native language has on the learning of other languages has come to be known as "language transfer" (65). Yet other authors called it "cross-linguistic transfer", or even "interference." These terms have been used to refer to the process by which the previous knowledge of a language is applied to the learning of another language. Gass and Selinker report that this process of transferring does not only involve the formal aspects of language, but also all aspects and features

of the culture that speaks that language (65). Be that as it may, the specific concerns of this study are particularly the grammatical aspects of language learning, and how the mother tongue language (Spanish) grammar affects the learning of the foreign language (English) in adult people.

Previous research on this issue has demonstrated that one important factor in the learning of a foreign language is that students, and adults in particular, tend to make grammatical mistakes because of the influence of their mother tongue. In other words, they have a tendency to refer to the grammar of their native language in order to use the grammar of the target language (Al-Harbi 146). Many authors agree on the fact that as most adult people already have the grammatical structures of their native language assimilated in their minds, it becomes truly difficult for them to learn a new language without the interference of native grammatical structures.

In the article "The Place of Grammar Instruction in the Second/Foreign Language Curriculum," Rod Ellis[11] explains that after a person has passed the "critical period" (around age 15 or so), "the acquisition of full grammatical competence in a language is no longer possible" (18). According to Penfield cited by Clare Burstall[12] in the article "Factors Affecting Foreign-Language Learning: A Consideration of Some Recent Research Findings," the "optimum age for language learning is within the first decade of life, after which period a built-in biological clock inexorably records the lost educational opportunity" (15). Considering these asseverations, the appropriate age for an EFL student to learn the language is from four to ten years in age. After this period, adults' learning of a foreign language in a successful way becomes a much more complicated and demanding process. The direct implication of this theory for the present study is that, since adult students cannot achieve full competence in their learning of the foreign language, they may present higher levels of grammar transfer than other EFL learners.

Consequently, under this assumption, they will be more likely to make grammatical mistakes when using the target language.

In the book *Language Teaching & Linguistics: Surveys,* Corder[13] states that the grammatical errors that this situation may generate include "errors to levels of language description, i.e. errors of orthography or phonology, of morphology or syntax, of vocabulary, and within each level according to systems, e.g. vowel or consonant systems, tense, aspect, number, gender or case." (64-65). All these situations led to the creation of a systematic contrastive analysis theory as a way to minimize the errors by comparing and contrasting two languages and their potential problematic aspects.

This study is not intended to highlight any benefits or weaknesses of contrastive analysis, but rather to support the idea that as this method of contrastive analysis helps identifying the difficulties that may occur during the learning of L2 grammatical structures, an activity involving comparison and/or contrast of L1 and L2 could be applied at some stage of the teaching/learning process of adult students as a way of assisting their learning of the target language grammatical structures by comparing them with the grammatical structures of their native language. In this case, the idea is to make L2 learners aware of the structural similarities and differences of L1 and L2, thus stimulating a process of self-correction in instances where L1 transfer causes grammatical errors in L2, and also accelerating the learning of L2 when transferring generates correct grammar usage. If students are aware of the similarities and differences between L1 and L2, language interference (transfer) and intervention from their own language will be likely to be reduced.

## 2.3 LANGUAGE TRANSFER AND DIFFERENT THEORIES ON THE ISSUE

The term “transfer” has a behaviorist connotation, and it is used to refer to “the psychological process whereby prior learning is carried over into a new learning situation” (Gass and Selinker 66). It is generally believed that establishing mental links between L1 and L2 is a natural process in L2 learning. Brooks and Donato, quoted in Halasa and Al-Manaseer, state that "L1 use is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows the learners both to initiate and to sustain verbal interaction with one other." Robert Lado, as well, seems to recognize transfer as something natural in L2 learning:

> Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meaning of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture_ both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives (qtd. in Gass and Selinker 65).

However, no agreements have been reached on the actual effects that L1 causes over the learning of L2 (Yan Hui 97). Hui reports that the theories concerned with studying the effects of L1 over L2 acquisition present different viewpoints about this issue (97).

On the one hand, theories such as Contrastive Analysis and Contrastive Rhetoric have a “negative” point of view on the effects of L1 on L2. According to James and Lado, “L1 has more negative than positive effects on L2 learning,” and thusly they refer to these effects as “Interference or negative transfer” (qtd. in Yan Hui 98). The positive effects of L1 over L2 are known as “positive transfer or facilitation” (Gass and Selinker 67). For instance, if transferring an L1 structure into L2 produces correct L2 usage, it is said that

L2 experiences positive transfer, but if transferring causes incorrect L2 usage, it is said it experiences negative transfer, e.g.

| | Spanish | English |
|---|---|---|
| **Positive transfer** | Yo estoy comiendo una pizza. | I am eating a pizza. |
| **Negative Transfer** | ¿Puedes revisarme el deber? | You can review me the homework? |

The contrastive analysis theory was intended to “compare languages in order to determine potential errors for the ultimate purpose of isolating what needs to be learned and what does not need to be learned in L2 learning…” (Gass and Selinker 72). According to James, cited in Yan Hui, transfer across languages happens as a matter of fact and its effects are almost always negative. Also, he states that it is possible to analyze L1 and L2 differences to look for the possible difficulties that can emerge in L2 learning (98). The conclusion that can be drawn is that the fact of whether an L2 is hard or easy to learn is determined by the degree of difference (distance) between L1 and L2 (Yan Hui 98). The basic assumption of this theory then is that it is necessary to teach the problematic aspects resulting from comparing two languages (teach the differences), as the majority of errors in L2 learning are a result of the differences between L1 and L2. However, as Michael Swan states in one of his articles, it was noticed that not every single error in L2 learning was because of the “cross-linguistic differences” between L1 and L2. Furthermore, some of the instances that were seen in a simplistic way by contrastive analysis ended up being more difficult than expected (Mother Tongue on Second Language Vocabulary). Gass and Selinker explain that this caused linguists to question the relevance of the “contrastive analysis hypothesis” and to argue instead for “error analysis” (78).

In error analysis, the mistakes produced by L2 learners are not viewed as being a product of L1 interference. “[Errors] are not to be viewed solely as a product of imperfect learning… Rather they are to be viewed as indications of learners’ attempt to figure out some system” (Gass and Selinker 78). In other words, under this perspective, errors are considered to be the evidence that learning of L2 is taking place. According to this theory, the errors produced by L2 learners then may be of two types: “interlinguistic” (those that are the product of L1 transfer into L2) and “intralinguistic” errors (those that are the product of L2 complexities) (Gass and Selinker 79-80).

On the other hand, Yan Hui also analyses the Common Underlying Proficiency and the Creative Construction theories. The Common Underlying Proficiency theory has a positive point of view on the effects of L1 in L2 learning. The basic principle of this theory is that all languages share some universal aspects in common. Therefore, “the skills, knowledge, and concepts developed in L1 can be easily transferable to L2” (Yan Hui 98). In contrast, the Creative Construction theory, advocates no influence from L1 on L2, as it depends on the perception that L1 has little or no effect on L2 learning. Hui reports that Faerch and Kasper “claim that L2 and L1 learning progress in a similar way as a result of the innate mental mechanisms that L2 learners universally employ, and hence that L2 learning is largely unaffected by L1 transfer” (Yan Hui 99). Researchers on L1 acquisition such as Dulay & Burt, and Brown state that L2 acquisition is guided by these universal principles, i.e. Chomsky`s Universal Grammar Theory, and not by the learners` L1 (qtd. in DellaValle[14] 8)

In summary, the way language transfer and the effects of L1 on L2 learning are visualized is at great variance from theory to theory. Contrastive analysis and contrastive rhetoric have a negative view of L1 influence on L2, as they consider L1 negatively interferes L2 learning. These theories recognize two types of transfer:

- Positive, when transfer ends up producing correctness in L2 usage and,
- Negative, when L1 transfer causes incorrect L2 utterances.

According to these two theories, the amount of cross-linguistic influence between two languages depends on how different or distant those languages are. Error analysis, on the other hand, views errors produced by L2 learners as a signal that learning is successfully being accomplished. These errors may be of two types:

- Interlingual, when errors result from L1-L2 comparison.
- Intralingual, when errors are a result of L2's own complex aspects.

The Common Underlying Proficiency theory and the Creative Construction advocate positive and negative influence of the L1 respectively. The first theory states that all languages have universal aspects in common; therefore, many of those aspects may well be transferable into other languages. On the other hand, according to the second theory, L1 and L2 learning takes place in a similar way as a result of the same universal innate principles. Consequently, L1 has no effect on L2.

## 2.4 AVOIDANCE

In terms of language learning, the term "Avoidance" refers to the learner`s tendency to evade the use of certain structures that are considered difficult to produce. Avoidance is another factor in L2 learning that can be traced back to L1. According to Gass and Selinker, the structures that the learner uses or keeps from using may be greatly influenced by the learner`s L1. They provide extensive evidence that illustrates that the choice the learner has on whether to use a language structure or not to use it depends directly on the L1 (119). Additionally, Gass and Selinker state that factors, such as the differences and similarities between the Learner`s L1 and the L2, as well as the complexity of the L2 structure itself determine the level of avoidance in the

use of the target structure. However, they recognize that no other factor better predicts avoidance than L1-L2 differences (120).

## 2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT EFL LEARNER AS COMPARED TO OTHER LANGUAGE LEARNERS

It is important to point out that adults have certain characteristics that make this particular group of learners different from children and adolescents physically as well as intellectually, and even more in the educative area. Within the teaching-learning process of a foreign language, adults can be distinguished from younger learners mainly because they have already established a grammatical knowledge of their own native language, and they constantly compare their L1 with the L2 to learn (Tom and McKay 2). It is precisely this idea that adults have their own particular way to approach to learning which stimulated the creation of Andragogy, "the art and science of teaching adults", and which is something opposed to pedagogy. Andragogy or adult learning views adults as "mature, competent, experienced, multi-talented individuals, who live complex lives and fulfill a variety of different life roles" (Smith and Strong). According to Knowles et al. quoted in Kiely[15], Sandmann[16] and Truluck[17], adults' effective learning takes place differently because of their age-related characteristics:

1. Adults are more responsible, independent, and self-directed.
2. They possess a great deal of knowledge and experiences from which to build up new knowledge.
3. Their developmental and real-life issues determine their willingness to learn.
4. They have a problem-centered way of approaching learning, and their learning is oriented in terms of their current life situations. Consequently, they are highly motivated to learn if they observe that it is going to help them solve their real-life problems.
5. They often need to be conscious of what they are learning, and why they are learning it.

6. Their motivation is generally internal (20).

Jeremy Harmer[18] also proposes several characteristics that make adults as well as their learning process different from other learners. These characteristics are explained in detail in the following chart:

| Young Children | Adolescents | Adults |
|---|---|---|
| - They respond although they do not understand.<br>- They learn from everything around them: they learn indirectly rather than directly.<br>- They understand best when they see, hear, touch and interact rather than when they receive an explanation.<br>- Abstract concepts are difficult for them.<br>- They generally display a curiosity about the world and an enthusiasm for learning a language<br>- They like talking about themselves and respond to learning that uses their lives as the main topic.<br>- They love discovering things, making or drawing things, using their imagination, moving from one place to another, and solving puzzles.<br>- They have a short attention span; they can | - Despite their success in language learning, they are seen as problematic students.<br>- They commit passionately when they are engaged<br>- Most of them start to understand the need for learning.<br>- Their attention span is longer as a result of intellectual development.<br>- They can talk about abstract issues to a certain point.<br>- They can use many different ways of studying and practicing language.<br>- They search for identity and self-esteem; thus they need to feel good about themselves and valued in their learning environment.<br>- They need teacher and peer approval and are sensitive to criticism of their own age group. | - They can engage with abstract thought<br>- They have a whole range of (positive or negative) life and learning experiences.<br>- They have expectations about the learning process and they have their own patterns of learning<br>- They are more disciplined than the other age groups and know how to struggle on despite boredom<br>- Unlike other groups, they know why they are learning and what they want to achieve at the end.<br>- They sustain a certain level of motivation even for a distant goal, which is difficult for the other groups.<br>- They can be critical of teaching methods or they may feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar methods.<br>- Older adult students worry that their |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| easily get bored after 5-10 minutes. | | intellectual powers diminish by age.<br>- They are capable of concentrating on one specific activity longer than the other groups. |

Adapted from: Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th Ed.).* Essex: Pearson Longman, 2007. Print.

As demonstrated in the previous chart, adult learners are at great variance from other learners in many aspects, such as personality, life experiences, expectations, learning styles, motivation, ways of thinking, etc.; therefore, the strategies employed in the teaching-learning process of this particular group of learners should not be the same as the ones used with other groups of learners.

## 2.6 AGE AND L2 LEARNING ABILITY

Although numerous learner characteristics, such as intelligence, personality, aptitude, experiences, motivation, learning styles, etc., are widely considered to be factors that have a great effect on the way an L2 is learned, no other characteristic has been more thoroughly debated than “age”; age may be one of the most important factors with an implication on the learners` ability to learn an L2, as well as on the particular way these learners approach language learning**.**

Within the fields of L2 learning it is implicit that the younger the learner is, the better he/she learns a new language. This assumption arises partly from the observation that unlike their parents, immigrant children generally attain high levels of proficiency in the language of the new community where they live. Although adults may attain high levels of communicative ability as well, they almost never acquire a native-like fluency in the new language as children usually do. Consequently, adults are always going to show a noticeable

difference in certain language features, such as accent, word choice, grammar, etc., when compared to those people who began learning a new language earlier in age (Lightbown[19] and Spada[20] 41-42).

As stated previously, one of the theories that contribute to the assumption that adult language learning takes place differently from that of younger learners is the Critical Period Hypothesis, a theory of brain development and how the brain matures. The "critical period" hypothesis was set forth in the 1960's and, according to Lightbown and Spada, it claimed that the brain lost its flexibility for language learning after puberty, making L2 acquisition more difficult as an adult than as a child. As a result, adults are going to be governed in their learning by “more general learning abilities”, since the learning of a language that is carried out after this period is not going to be founded on the same innate principles that make L2 learning more natural and easier for children in their earlier years (42).

Contrary to the critical period hypothesis, other studies concerned with comparing L2 acquisition in children and adults have shown that while adult learning takes place differently from that of children, the ability to learn an L2 does not decrease with age. In fact, Lightbown and Spada report that adult learners are equally able to achieve high levels of language proficiency as children. Although children may have an advantage in attaining native-like fluency in the long run, adults and even adolescents actually learn languages more rapidly than children during early stages (42-49). These studies then indicate that learning a new language may actually be easier and more rapid for the adult than for the child at least at early levels.

Regardless of whether age of acquisition is a crucial factor for language learning as proposed by the critical period hypothesis, or that age has no relationship at all with the learner`s ability to learn an L2, what is of especial relevance to this study is that adults actually learn differently from children.

## 2.7 HOW DO ADULTS APPROACH LANGUAGE LEARNING?

Stephen Krashen[21], quoted in Lightbown and Spada, recognizes “acquisition” and “learning” as the two ways in which adults can engage into L2 learning. Krashen makes a clear distinction between these two terms because of the implications that they present in the learners` L2 proficiency (26).

On the one hand, acquisition is carried out in much in the same way as an L1 is acquired by children; namely, it is a more natural and unconscious process. Therefore, acquiring requires a great deal of interaction with the L2 by means of communicative contexts. This is done by providing the learner with a plethora of “comprehensible input” in the L2, and its result is that the learner will ultimately know how to use the language communicatively (qtd. in Lightbown and Spada 27-28).

Learning, on the other hand, is carried out in a more conscious way. Generally learning requires formal study and exposure to language structures and forms. It simply results in the learners` knowing about the target language (qtd. in Lightbown and Spada 27).

The differences between acquisition and learning as proposed by Krashen can be seen more in detail in the following chart:

| **Acquisition** | **Learning** |
|---|---|
| implicit, subconscious | explicit, conscious |
| informal situations | formal situations |
| uses grammatical 'feel' | uses grammatical rules |
| depends on attitude | depends on aptitude |
| stable order of acquisition | simple to complex order of learning |

(Birdsong David[22] 02)

Krashen emphasizes acquired language over learned language. According to Krashen, acquired language produces actual communication in the L2, while

learned language serves as a “monitor or editor” polishing and changing what has been acquired (Ligthbown and Spada 27).

From this, it can be assumed that although Krashen thinks that acquisition is more desirable than learning, he recognizes the importance of the formal aspect of language learning, as well. If L2 learning was carried out only through pure communication or in an unconscious way, much of what is produced by the learner would be grammatically incorrect as it would lack the accuracy needed so as to be understandable. According to White, “some grammatical forms cannot be acquired solely on the basis of comprehensible input and formal instruction is necessary to ensure that learners obtain the data the need to acquire these forms” (qtd. in Fotos[23] and Ellis 189).

## 2.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF L1 AND L2 GRAMMAR IN THE ADULT EFL LEARNING PROCESS

One key feature of adult L2 learners as compared to their younger counterparts, which is of particular interest to this study, is that they seem to be generally attracted towards the understanding of the rules of which that language is composed. According to Rivers, quoted in Kavaliauskienė and Užpalienė, “Adult learners are believed to be focused on form or correctness: they are particularly conscious of deviations from the established networks, and seek to understand the nature of the rule system”. Also, Hilles[24] and Sutton state that one of the main expectations that many adult L2 learners bring into the classroom is to receive formal grammar instruction as a part of their learning. As a result, they tend to be highly suspicious of teachers who are not able to explain to them at least the grammar basics of the language. Moreover, adults have the need to feel that they are advancing in their learning of a language and they often visualize their progress in terms of moving on from one grammar structure into one that logically follows (391). Considering these allegations, then it can be said that adults, more than other learners, will have a tendency to focus on the grammar of the L2 they

are learning. Consequently, they will often concentrate on making the sentences and utterances that they produce to be grammatically correct and coherent. In addition, adult learners will usually try to create their own grammar patterns and add them to the already acquired ones. This, of course may result in an appropriate combination of such patterns from their native language.

Summarizing Rod Ellis' ideas presented in his article "The Place of Grammar Instruction in the Second/Foreign Language Curriculum" concerning the importance of grammar within a second language learning context, it is stated that in traditional language teaching methods, grammar used to play a significant role. However, current communicative methodologies do not place too much emphasis on grammar as an important part of language learning (17). The author suggests three different perspectives for the teaching of grammar even in a communicative approach to language learning.

The first perspective, the "acquisition theory", states that most language learners, and mainly adults, are not able to attain high stages of proficiency in grammar. As stated before, this is especially true for adult learners as they have already passed the "critical period" (15 Years) when "the acquisition of full grammatical competence is no longer possible" (18). Another reason for this failure is that in an environment that is focused mainly on the communicative aspect of language, most students do not pay too much attention to the grammatical rules of the target language, but rather to "communicative sufficiency" which does not necessarily requires correct grammar usage (18).

The second perspective concerns the learner himself. Grammar has to be included within the communicative curriculum simply because the learner expects it to be so. Ellis explains that there is a tendency in adult people to be particularly attracted towards the understanding of grammar, since they

consider it to be a fundamental part of language; consequently, when adult learners are faced with grammar, they generally seem to be determined to understand the aspects of grammar that they notice (20).

The third perspective is taken from a “pedagogical” viewpoint. The problem is that most of the situations provided by communicative or functional approaches do not ensure an appropriate coverage of the grammatical rules of the target language. The main reason for this is that learners in general are likely to avoid the use of the grammatical structures which they consider difficult. Consequently, at the very moment they are required to use a specific structure in the target language by means of language functions, there is a lack of certainty that they are going to use the grammatical structure they are called for, unless it is overtly stated. For this reason, the author emphasizes the necessity of incorporating the structural aspect of language to its communicative aspect (21).

Finally, the author explains that in order to establish an appropriate approach to grammar teaching, it is necessary to focus on “awareness” instead of “performance”. What this means is that in addition to concentrating on the functional aspects of language, learners should be conscious of the formal aspects of the target language and on the creation of some kind of explicit representation of the target form as well (29).

## 2.9 TYPES OF ERRORS MADE BY ADULTS

The amount and types of mistakes produced by adults when learning an L2 are also different from those of other learners. According to Kavaliauskienė and Užpalienė, some linguistic problems such as fossilized errors (constant errors in the use of L2 rules that cannot be overcome or improved) and L1 transfer are likely to appear more frequently in adults that in other L2 learners. In addition, they report that the majority of errors produced by adults

are interference errors (errors produced as a result of L1 negative influence on L2).

What this means for this study is that in order to overcome these problems which seem to be of particular relevance in the adult L2 learning process, during the class, it is necessary to spend a certain amount of time out of each lesson to review and to analyze the grammar of the L2 and the influence generated by the grammar structures of the students` L1 as well. Within an L2 learning environment it is of chief importance that the assimilation of new language aspects is based on the linguistic knowledge of the mother tongue itself. A meaningful learning process is thus obtained, because it is a conscious and comprehensible assimilation of new information that can be meaningfully stored in the memory. This process of assimilation will be based on the mental association and comparison of the aspects and structures being learned in the L2 with the similar aspects and structures that are already acquired in the learner`s L1.

# CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The research scope in this study is intended to analyze adult learners' perspectives concerning the relevance of their L1 as well as L1's grammar in their learning of the L2. It also aims to analyze certain written tasks performed by the students with the ultimate purpose of discovering the degree of influence that the learners' L1 structural elements exert over their learning and use of the L2. This analysis is mainly focused on the grammatical and syntactical errors made by the participants in translation and writing exercises.

## 3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study methodology is designed to uncover certain aspects of language use in a particular sample of language learners. Therefore it has a chiefly deductive/descriptive purpose. It aims to analyze how this group of language learners was influenced in their learning by their L1, and to use the results of that analysis to draw some conclusions about the implications that this situation may have in their teaching-learning process of the L2.

## 3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The nine participants in this study were all adult Ecuadorian EFL students from the Universidad Del Azuay, all of them with different professions and different language needs. There were seven women, and two men. The participants` range of ages was from 31 to 61 years old. Their level of language proficiency was also diverse. There were two beginner students, six low-intermediate students, and one high-intermediate student. The amount of time that the students spent in the English classroom was two hours, three days per week for three months. This particular sample group of students was selected, since it met all the characteristics required in this study.

### 3.3 TASKS AND MATERIALS

The collection of data for this research was carried out in the following way: First, the participants were given a 12-question survey (appendix 1) which was meant to find out their perspectives and opinions regarding L1's role in their process of learning the L2. The majority of the questions in the survey were rated on the Likert scale, and each question included four possible choices: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, and (4) strongly disagree. The first two questions were designed to learn about how the learners view their use of the L2 to communicate and how this process of communication is affected by their L1. The following nine questions aimed to uncover the different viewpoints that students had about their L1 in relation to the foreign language learning process (how they felt towards grammar, influence of L1 grammar on L2, and comparison of L1 and L2 grammar). For questions nine and eleven, the participants were also asked to explain the reasons why they chose a specific item. These questions were intended to evaluate how important they considered the grammar of their L1 to be in L2 grammar learning, and whether they considered comparing the grammar of the L1 with the grammar of the L2 as useful for their learning process. The final section of the survey was a translation exercise consisting in a set of seven sentences that required the use of specific grammar forms in the L2. This section had the purpose of evaluating the students` degree of effective cross-linguistic transfer from the L1 into the L2. Each student was given a survey along with a brief explanation of what they were required to do in order to complete it.

Additionally, the students were given a writing task, which was chosen in accordance to the stage of the students' current lesson, on the topic "Pros and Cons of Wearing School Uniforms". First, the students were asked to brain storm on the topic as a class. Then, each student was asked to choose some ideas and to add new ideas of their own in order to write a short composition of about 100 words. This written sample provided a broader

source for L1 transfer analysis, thus allowing a more reliable corpus of data with which to determine how the structures of the learners' L1 affected their selection and use of the structures in the L2. This writing task was developed as a classroom activity in the presence of the teacher.

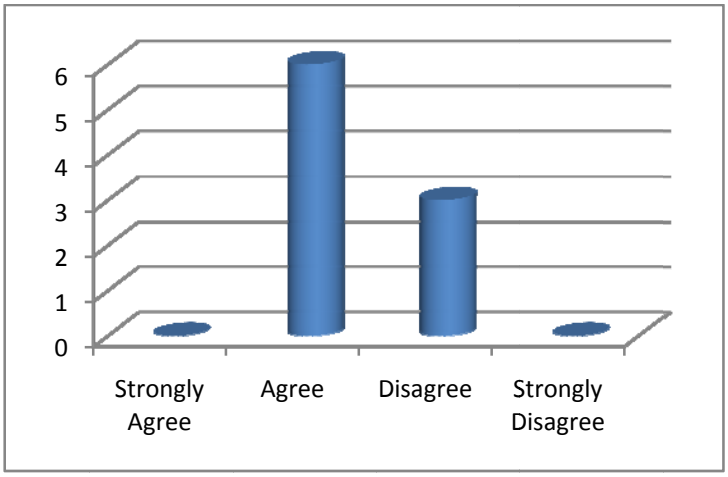
### 3.4 ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The criteria for analyzing the data included tabulating the information provided by the participants for the variables presented in each question or item. This information has been statistically processed, analyzed, and interpreted later on. The questions that required participants to explain the reasons for choosing certain options were analyzed keeping in mind the main trends that were highlighted by the participants. The final section of the survey, the translation exercise, as well as the writing task developed by the students were analyzed by taking into consideration aspects such as the degree of noticeable L1 grammar transfer into L2, correct L2 grammar usage, and incorrect L2 grammar usage. The terms used to express these aspects were: **Transfer** (when there was a clear degree of transfer), **Correct** (when there was correct use of grammatical structures), and **Incorrect** (when the learners made grammatical mistakes or avoided using the required language features).

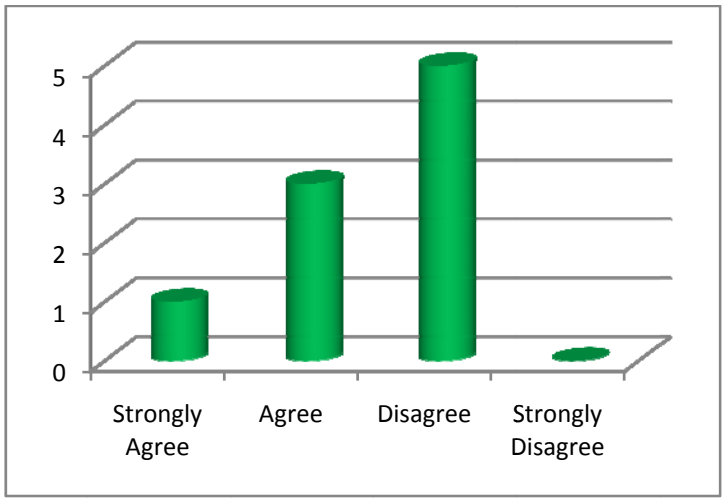
# CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

## 4.1 GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF RESULTS: SURVEY QUESTIONS

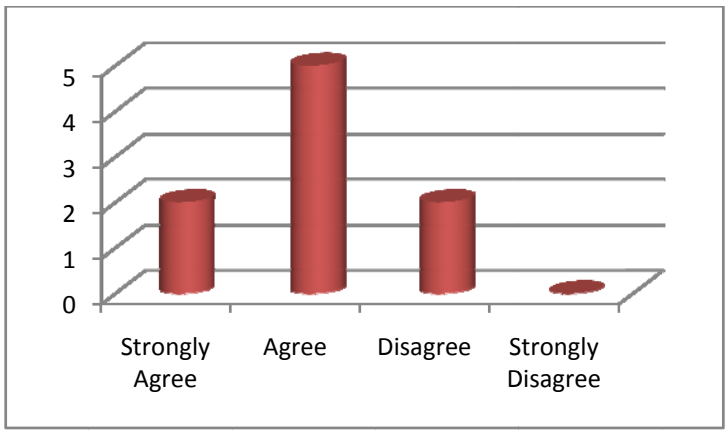
**1. When I have to speak or write something in English, I mentally structure what I want to say in Spanish.**



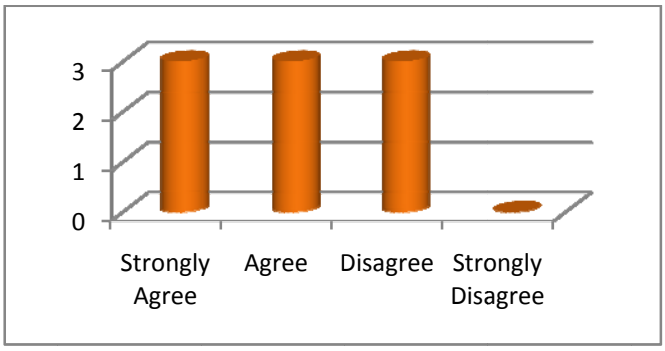

**2. I clearly express my ideas and opinions in English without using Spanish.**



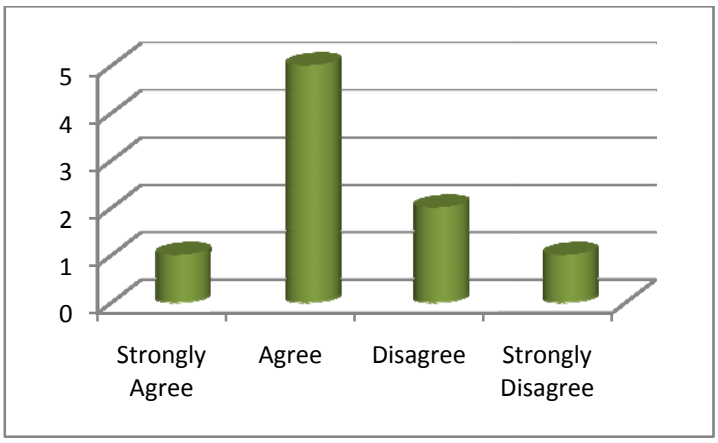
**3. If I do not compare the grammar of my mother tongue with that of that foreign language, I will learn faster.**



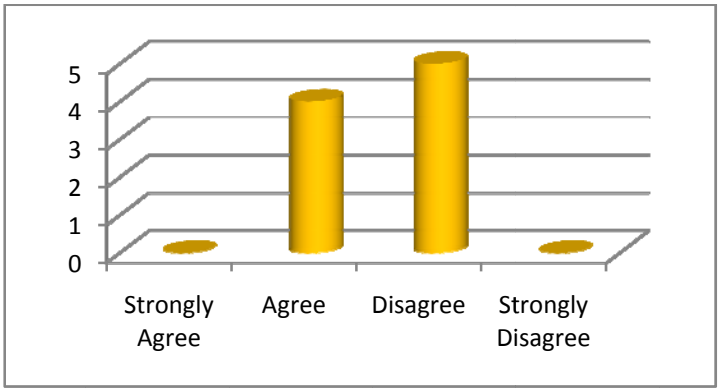

**4. I learn faster when the grammatical rules are similar to those of my language**



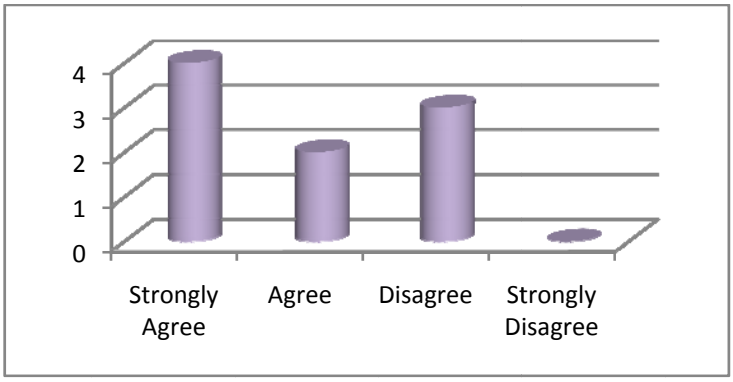
**5. I learn the rules first then I acquire the language to speak fluently.**



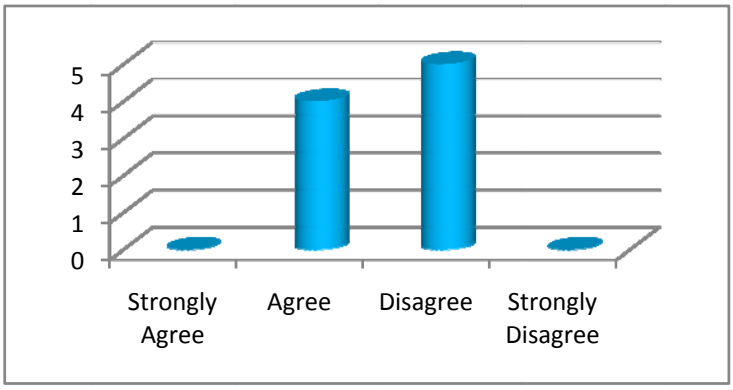

**6. Comparing the grammatical rules of my first language helps me understand the similar rules of the foreign language.**



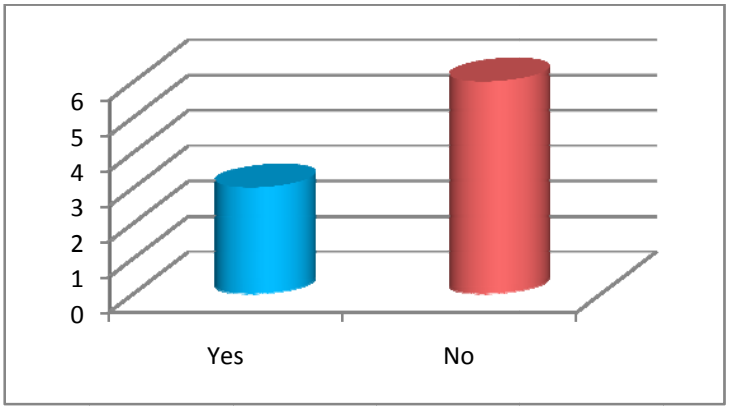

**7. I make mistakes because the grammatical rules of the foreign language are different from those of my first language.**



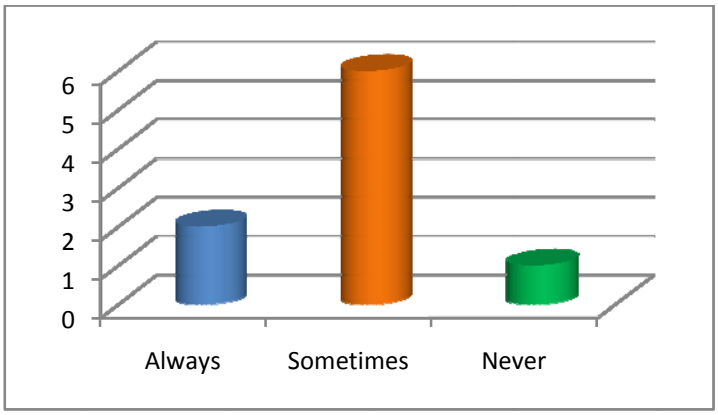
**8. I think that explaining the grammatical rules of my first language and then showing how the grammatical rules of the foreign language are different will help me avoid getting confused.**



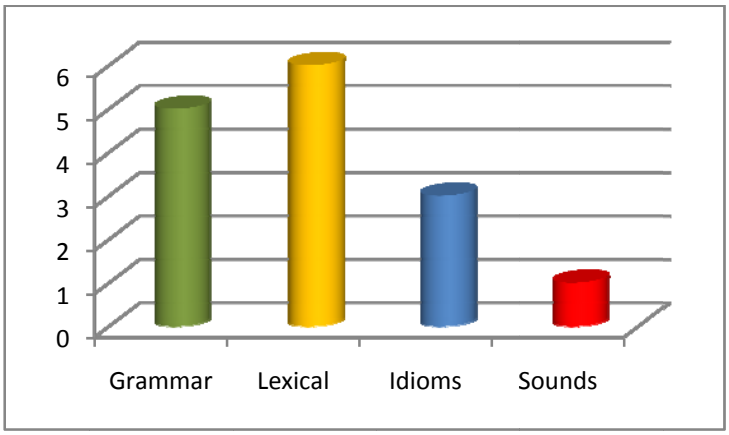

**9. Knowing the grammatical structures of my native language is important in order to learn the grammatical structures of the foreign language.**



**10. Not mentioning the grammatical rules of the first language would be more helpful.**




**11. Choose the areas where comparison would be helpful.**




### 4.1.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This study has attempted to learn about the contributors` perspectives of the language they are learning (English) as being directly related with their mother tongue (Spanish) for purposes of learning. In addition, the study has also sought to determine the amount of influence generated by the learners' L1 in their use of the L2. The findings show that the majority of the participants, 6 out of 9, have a tendency to rely on their L1 when they have to communicate in the L2 in an oral or written way. Moreover, 5 students believe that they were not able to clearly express their ideas in the L2 without

relating it to a certain degree with their L1. This, of course demonstrates that adults are highly affected by their L1 when learning an L2. Although only two participants think that they may benefit in their learning of the grammar of the L2 by comparing it with their L1, most participants (6 out of 9) have expressed that the similar structures of the two languages represent an advantage for their learning of the L2. They believe that the similar structures in L1 make it easier and faster for them to understand L2's new structures. Likewise, 7 participants coincide in their opinion that in order to be able to gain fluency in the target language, it is necessary to learn the grammar of the language first. This becomes quite obvious if we keep in mind what has been previously stated, specifically that adults, more than other learners, are attracted to grammar learning, since they view grammar as the main component of language. Although the majority of participants have expressed that establishing a direct comparison between L1 and L2 grammar is not unquestionably necessary for carrying out their learning process of the L2, almost half the participants believe that being conscious of the differences in form between the L1 and the L2 could be useful in order to avoid confusion in the use of L2 language features. In fact, of the 9 participants involved in this study, only 4 of them think that establishing cross-linguistic comparisons between their L1 and the L2 language structures helps them understand the similar structures of the L2. This is partly because, according what the majority of participants have stated, they visualize the grammar belonging to their L1 as different from that of the L2. Accordingly, 6 participants have recognized that they make grammatical mistakes when dealing with grammatical structures that are different in the two languages.

The data provided by the learners clearly demonstrates that the learners' tendency to transfer L1 grammar features into the L2 has not diminished even though they consider L1's grammar to be different from that of the L2 that they are learning. As a matter of fact, the translation exercise and the written task that the learners have been asked to complete evidenced that

they present high levels of cross-linguistic influence in their use of the L2. This is illustrated in greater detail in the following chart which displays the overall quantity of transfer **"T",** correct **"C",** and incorrect **"I"** L2 usage that each participant presented for each sentence in the translation exercise.

| Sentence / Participant | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | C | I | C | I | T | C | C |
| **2** | C | C | I | T | T | I | T |
| **3** | T | I | T | C | T | T | I |
| **4** | T | T | I | T | T | C | I |
| **5** | T | T | I | T | T | I | T |
| **6** | T | I | I | T | I | T | T |
| **7** | C | I | I | T | T | I | T |
| **8** | C | C | I | T | T | T | I |
| **9** | T | I | T | C | T | C | T |

### 4.1.2 TRANSFER ERRORS

Some of the most noticeable errors made by the participants in the translation exercise as well as in the written task, which may be traced back to their L1, are the following:

**Translation exercise:**

a) Hola Paul ¿A dónde vas?

**T.** Hi Paul, (to) where do you go?

**C.** Hi Paul, where are you going?

b) Voy a escribir un e-mail.

**T.** I go to write an e-mail.

**C.** I am going to write an e-mail.

c) Va a haber un concierto esta noche.

**T.** There is a concert this night.

**C.** There is going to be a concert tonight.

d) Yo sé tocar la guitarra.

**T.** I know play the guitar.

**C.** I can play the guitar.

e) ¿Con quién vives en tu casa?

**T.** With who do you live in your house?

**C.** Who do you live in your house with? With whom do you live in…?

f) Pablo no estuvo de acuerdo con mi decisión.

**T.** Pablo (don`t) was not agree with my decision.

**C.** Pablo did not agree with my decision.

g) Tengo tanto sueño que no quiero estudiar.

**T.** I have much sleep (dream), I don`t want to study.

**C.** I am so sleepy that I don`t want to study anymore.

**Written task:**

- I believe is beneficious use uniforms at school.

  **Spanish:** Yo creo que es beneficioso usar uniformes en la escuela.

  **Correct:** I believe it is beneficial to wear school uniforms.

- We can know at that school belong the students.

  **Spanish:** Podemos saber a qué escuela pertenecen los estudiantes.

  **Correct:** We can know what school the students belong to.

- Too is more easy for the mother.
  **Spanish:** También es más difícil para la madre.
  **Correct:** It is easier for their mother too.

- Not is important the fashion if not to study.
  **Spanish:** No es importante la moda sino estudiar.
  **Correct:** It is not what you wear (fashion); it is that you study.

- Keep clean the uniform.
  **Spanish:** Mantener limpio el uniforme.
  **Correct:** Keep the uniform clean.

- Have the uniform washed and dried.
  **Spanish:** Tener el uniforme lavado y seco.
  Correct: Keep the uniform clean and dry.

The sentences that have been produced by the participants indicate that their L1 has influenced not only how they structured the sentence, but also the words they chose in order to express the meaning. It is evident that the patterns that they have followed in order to formulate the sentences in the L2, i.e. word order, tense, word choice, etc., are very similar to the ones that they already have in their L1. Therefore, they are not errors that can be attributed to the complexity of the L2 itself (intralingual errors), but rather they seem to be directly related to the L1 of the participants (interlingual errors). In this case, the L2 has experienced "negative transfer," since the language features involved are different from those of the L1. However, there are also instances in which transferring L1 features into the L2 generates "positive transfer." In such a case, the adult learners would greatly benefit from being aware of the similarities and differences between their L1 and the L2 that they are learning, since they would be able to avoid negative transfer and to

take advantage of positive transfer. In addition, by analyzing the learners' writing tasks, it has been concluded that although they can communicate their ideas in a more or less semantically acceptable way, their lack of grammatical accuracy makes it harder for them to express themselves in a clearly understandable way. This, of course demonstrates the importance of building up the learners' awareness of the grammar of the L2.

# CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The previous study has been focused on the analysis of certain learning features of the adult EFL learner, such as their feeling towards L1 and L2 grammar, the influence that the grammar of their L1 generates over their learning and use of the L2, and how this influence helps or fails to help them in their learning process of the L2. By means of the theoretical research as well as the field study that have been carried out in this work, the following conclusions can be reached:

- Adults have demonstrated an absolute concern with learning grammar structures. They tend to focus on grammar in order to clearly understand its rules, and they need to know the whys of each rule, whereas younger learners do not seem to care about them that much. Keeping this in mind, adults would greatly benefit from the inclusion of explicit grammar teaching in the classroom. As Fotos and Ellis state, this could be done by means of "problem-solving tasks that require the learners to consciously analyze data in order to arrive at an explicit representation of the target feature" (192). Therefore, this does not mean that the Adult EFL classroom should be completely focused on form and on the learners' grammatical performance, but rather that it should be more concerned with raising learner`s awareness of the language features with the ultimate purpose of developing "cognitive understanding" in the learners (192).
- As Kavaliauskienė states, "all the learners [particularly adults] customarily rely on their mother tongue in learning English" (11). Therefore, they need to discover things by themselves, experiment, and construct their own structures in order to "store" the target

language in their long term memory. In this context, the mother tongue turns into an essential tool in adult learning. In addition, it makes their EFL learning environment friendlier.

- Since adults have a fixed grammatical structure in their native language, it helps them enormously when understanding EFL not only from the morphology of the language but also from its syntax. Once an adult learner has a grammatical feature understood in his/her own mother tongue, it is not difficult to apply, if not the same, a fairly similar structure to the language that is being learned.
- The use of activities involving L1 and L2 structure comparisons may help them a great deal in order to understand the grammar of the target language, since it gives them the chance to understand the language in a more complete way. Through the use of comparison, they can become aware that many language features of their L1 can be transferred positively into the L2. At the same time, they can also come to realize that not all the grammatical structures of the L2 have direct equivalents in their L1. This undoubtedly will help them in order use their previous knowledge of their L1 as a worthwhile tool in their learning of the L2, and it will also enable them to be conscious of the negative interference from their L1 so as to avoid it.
- It seems to be easier for adult learners to communicate in the L2 once they understand its grammar in light of their L1. It turns into a more flexible way of producing the language, and it makes communication in the L2 more natural.
- Transfer will always be present in the EFL classroom; this does not mean it is necessarily negative. In the case of adult learning, transfer helps them in order to grasp the meaning in a friendlier context. However, when they tend to use it too often, a little recommendation, or a call of attention, is more than enough to get them back on track. It is extremely important to take into account that these students are

highly motivated to learn the target language. This implies that a great deal of self-discipline is applied to their learning process.

- "The amount of L1 that they need depends on their proficiency and linguistic situations" (Kavaliauskienė 11).

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing these conclusions, it has been possible to provide some definite recommendations:

- The adult EFL classroom should contain a variety of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic activities which will actually help adults relate the new structures to their own. As stated before, through the use of comparisons and similarities, the learner is able to better understand, and therefore achieve the language in a better way. Questions such as "are there similar structures in your language?", "are there similar expressions in your language?" or "how do you say these expressions in your language?" should be common in this particular type of EFL classroom.
- The purpose of learning a new language is to communicate thoughts and share information about life and culture. **Therefore, it is important to recommend to teachers not to discard the use of the mother tongue in class because it is the previous knowledge of learners and particularly of adult learners, who use it like a guide to understand and learn a new language.**
- As the learning process in adults is not the same as in children, it is necessary to clearly teach each of the grammatical rules and use them in activities which are related with the students' experiences, and in this way the transfer that students are constantly producing can become a positive tool for their learning.
- The teacher in an EFL classroom should use the learners' L1positively, since it makes it easier for the teacher to teach and for the students to learn the language features of the L2 by directly

associating them with those that they already have in their L1. This can be done at initial levels of L2 acquisition. However, in order to develop communicative competence in the L2, it becomes important to help the learners' become gradually independent of their L1 at later stages of second language learning.

- Teachers should by all means recognize the L1 of their students in the classroom, and use the mother tongue in class as a tool in the learning process of a foreign language. As David Atkinson states **"to ignore the mother tongue in a monolingual classroom is almost certainly to teach with less than maximum efficiency"** (247).

## 5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was based on the analysis of nine adult EFL students' viewpoints about their own language learning process, and on the examination of certain aspects of their L2 grammar usage as well. As such, the number of participants involved in this study was small (nine participants) and they were adults of ages ranging from 31 to 61. Access to a bigger group of adult EFL learners has been limited, since all Institutions seem to group their students according to their proficiency level and not to their ages. In addition, because of the learners' schedule and the teacher's need to keep up with her classes, there was a limited access to the classroom (2 sessions of 2 hours each) which had a direct implication in the amount of tasks that could be developed. Finally, adults have shown to be less at ease when observed in their learning and this could have affected this study to a certain degree. This being the case, no generalizations to all adult foreign language learners should be made, unless the same conditions and circumstances are met.

## NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHORS

1 **Ahlam Al-Harbi**: Lecturer at the English Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Taif University, Saudi Arabia. Her academic interests are sociolinguistics and discourse analysis.

2 **Michael Swan** is known for influential articles on the communicative approach and on task-based learning.

3 **Peter Skehan:** Professor of Applied Linguistics at Thames Valley University from 1991-1999 and later at King's College, London from 1999-2003. He moved to Hong Kong in 2004 where he was Professor in the Department of English, CUHK until his retirement in 2009.

4 **Håkan Ringbom:** FD Professor Emeritus who his main research interests are: Second and third language acquisition, especially the role of language transfer; and tri- and multilingualism. He has lectured on applied linguistics, mainly second language acquisition, and the history of English.

5 **Vivian Cook:** Chiefly known for L2 learning research, in particular multi-competence, for his book on Universal Grammar, and for popular books on spelling and words.

6 **Najwa Hanna Halasa** and **Majeda Al-Manaseer:** Professors at the University of Jordan Language Centre.

7 **David Atkinson**: He has taught EFL and trained teachers in Portugal, Greece, Mexico, and Britain. At present he works at the British Institute, Palma de Mallorca.

8 **Robert Lado**: American expert on modern linguistics. He became a Professor of English and the Director of the University of Michigan's English Language Institute.

9 **Susan Gass**: A University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages. Her research is in Second Language Acquisition and it includes the areas of Input and Interaction, Language Universals and Language Transfer.

10 **Larry Selinker**: One of the founders and original contributors to the research field of Second Language Acquisition. He introduced the concepts Interlanguage, Fossilization, Language Transfer, and Learning and Communication Strategies.

11 **Rod Ellis**: Leading theorist of task-based language learning. He has written more than 30 books and 100 articles on second language acquisition.

12 **Clare Burstall:** Director of the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales.

13 **S.P. Corder:** He established in the 1960s the theory of “Error Analysis in SLA”.

14 **Angela Dellavalle:** English teacher for about 16 years, teaching English as a Second Language to a wide range of ages of learners-- elementary, middle school, high school, and adults from over 60 different countries.

15 **Richard Kiely:** has a PhD in language programme evaluation from the University of Warwick; his research interests include language programme evaluation, language teaching and teacher development, and language learning explored from language socialization and identity perspectives.

16 **Lorilee Sandmann:** has current research projects focused on leadership and organizational change in higher education’s institutionalization of community engagement, as well as faculty roles and rewards related to engaged scholarship.

17 **Truluck Janet:** She has an Ed.D., Adult Education, University of Georgia, and she works in the Department of Adult Education in the University of Georgia.

18 **Jeremy Harmer:** Author, trainer, conference presenter and seminar leader, faculty member for MATESOL at The New School in New York, trustee of International House and the International House World Organisation (IHWO).

19 **Patsy M. Lightbown: D**istinguished Professor Emerita at Concordia University in Montreal. Her research focuses on how instruction and feedback affect second-language acquisition in classrooms where the emphasis is on "communicative" or "content-based" language teaching.

20 **Nina Spada:** Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning, and the Program Coordinator for the Second Language Education Program at OISE. She is particularly interested in the role of form-focused instruction in second language acquisition (SLA). She has carried out large-scale classroom SLA research with both children and adults.

21 **Stephen Krashen:** Professor emeritus at the University of Southern California, who moved from the linguistics department to the faculty of the School of Education in 1994. He is a linguist, educational researcher, and activist.

22 **David Birdsong:** Professor specialized in Second Language Acquisition and French Linguistics.

23 **Sandra Fotos:** Teacher of English as a second or foreign language for many years and in various countries. She has edited professional journals, presented papers and invited talks at international conferences and published a number of books and articles on teaching, second language acquisition processes, and bilingualism.

24 **Sharon Hilles:** Professor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages. She is interested in first and second language acquisition and teaching English as a second language to adults.

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# APPENDICES

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participants,

We are working on a paper entitled “Grammatical Influence of Spanish in Adult EFL Learners.” We are studying the influence that your native language (Spanish) generates over the learning of the English language. If you do not mind, would you please help us answering the following questions? Your opinion and time are highly valued, and your help is greatly appreciated. **Thank you!**

**Age: _____** **Gender: F____ M____**

1. **When I have to speak or write something in English, I mentally structure what I want to say in Spanish.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

2. **I clearly express my ideas and opinions in English without using Spanish.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

3. **If I do not compare the grammar of my mother tongue with that of the foreign language, I will learn faster.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

4. **I learn faster when the grammatical rules are similar to those of my language.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

5. **I learn the rules first then I acquire the language to speak fluently.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

6. **Comparing the grammatical rules of my first language with those of English helps me understand the similar rules of the foreign language.**
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

7. **I make mistakes because the grammatical rules of the foreign language are different from those of my first language.**
   - ☐ Strongly agree
   - ☐ Agree
   - ☐ Disagree
   - ☐ Strongly disagree

8. **I think that explaining the grammatical rules of my first language and then showing how the grammatical rules of the foreign language are different will help me avoid getting confused.**
   - ☐ Strongly agree
   - ☐ Agree
   - ☐ Disagree
   - ☐ Strongly disagree

9. **Knowing the grammatical structures of my native language is important in order to learn the grammatical structures of the foreign language.**
   - ☐ Yes.
   - ☐ No.

   Why?

   _____

   _____

10. **Not mentioning the grammatical rules of the first language would be more helpful**
    - ☐ Always
    - ☐ Sometimes
    - ☐ Never

**11. Put a check mark (√ ) next to the areas, where comparison would be helpful:**

- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Some lexical items
- ☐ Idioms
- ☐ Sounds

Why?

_____

_____

**12. Translate the following sentences:**

1) Hola Paul ¿A dónde te vas?

_____

2) Voy a escribir un e-mail.

_____

3) Va a haber un concierto esta noche.

_____

4) Yo sé tocar la guitarra.

_____

5) ¿Con quién vives en tu casa?

_____

6) Pablo no estuvo de acuerdo con mi decisión

_____

7) Tengo tanto sueño que no quiero estudiar.

_____

**THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!**

Adapted from: Al-Harbi, Ahlam. “Mother Tongue Maintenance and Second Language Sustenance: A Two-Way Language Teaching Method.”