

Linguistic Transfer: Case Study

Transferencia lingüística: Estudio de Caso
 Transferência de idiomas: estudo de caso

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Abstract

Introduction: This article is part of a descriptive research developed between 2019 and 2022 with the students of the Modern Languages Program of the University of Caldas, Colombia. It deals with the presence of other languages in a base language (language in use) at the scriptural level. **Objective:** The main objective of the research is to explain the phenomenon of transfer in light of the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels and to be able to determine whether or not it is an ungrammaticality, as well as the reasons why this phenomenon occurs in language learning. **Methodology:** We made use of a method based on a series of interviews with foreign language teachers in Colombia and some surveys of language students. **Results:** Then a linguistic analysis was applied to a series of written texts where transfer was evident. **Conclusion:** Finally, it was concluded that the phenomena of transfer and interference do not occur due to the hierarchy of acquisition over learning, nor due to the kinship of languages or similarities between them, but because of the affinities derived from the greater use or contact with the linguistic code.

Keywords: language instruction; Comparative linguistics; Foreign language; Transfer; Language change¹.

Resumen

Introducción: Este artículo hace parte de una investigación descriptiva desarrollada entre 2019 y 2022 con los estudiantes del Programa de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Caldas, Colombia. Se trata de la presencia de otros idiomas en un idioma base (lengua en uso) a nivel escritural. **Objetivo:** El objetivo principal de la investigación es explicar el fenómeno de la transferencia a la luz de los niveles sintáctico, semántico y pragmático y poder determinar si se trata o no de una agramaticalidad, así como las razones por las que se produce este fenómeno en el aprendizaje de lenguas. **Metodología:** Aplicamos una serie de entrevistas a profesores de lenguas extranjeras en Colombia y algunas encuestas a estudiantes de lenguas. **Resultados:** presentamos un análisis lingüístico a una serie de textos escritos donde se evidenciaba la transferencia. **Conclusiones:** encontramos que los fenómenos de transferencia e interferencia no ocurren por la jerarquía de la adquisición sobre el aprendizaje, ni por el parentesco de las lenguas o similitudes entre ellas, sino por las afinidades derivadas del mayor uso o contacto con el código lingüístico.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de idiomas; Lingüística comparada; Lengua extranjera; Transferencia cambio lingüístico.

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Resumo

¹ The key terms have been recovered from the Unesco Thesaurus



Introdução: Este artigo faz parte de uma pesquisa descritiva desenvolvida entre 2019 e 2022 com alunos do Programa de Línguas Modernas da Universidade de Caldas, Colômbia. Ele trata da presença de outras línguas em uma língua de base (língua em uso) em nível escritural. **Objetivo:** o principal objetivo da pesquisa é explicar o fenômeno da transferência à luz dos níveis sintático, semântico e pragmático e ser capaz de determinar se é ou não uma agramaticalidade, bem como as razões pelas quais esse fenômeno ocorre no aprendizado de idiomas. **Metodologia:** com base em uma série de entrevistas com professores de línguas estrangeiras na Colômbia e algumas pesquisas com alunos de idiomas. **Resultado:** A análise linguística foi então aplicada a uma série de textos escritos em que a transferência era evidente. **Conclusão:** Por fim, concluiu-se que os fenômenos de transferência e interferência não ocorrem pela hierarquia da aquisição sobre a aprendizagem, nem pelo parentesco das línguas ou semelhanças entre elas, mas pelas afinidades derivadas do maior uso ou contato com o código linguístico.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de idiomas, linguística comparativa, língua estrangeira, transferência, mudança de idioma.



INTRODUCTION

This article is a partial result of an investigation entitled *The grammar of the mother tongue and foreign languages: towards a reconciling didactics of theory with use initiated in 2019* and carried out in the Modern Languages Program of the University of Caldas, Colombia. The study took as its target population 100 students who accredited B1 and B2 levels in English and French according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This same population also took courses in other languages such as Italian and Portuguese at basic levels. It is important to clarify that Spanish is their mother tongue, henceforth MT. From some unexpected findings during the study process, we wanted to dwell on the phenomenon of transfer that we found in various writings made by students at times of the evaluation of foreign language (henceforth FL) production.

We discovered a latent phenomenon in the students' writings in which the linguistic transfer from one foreign language to another was evidenced, granting the appropriate syntactic and semantic function, but in a different code. Thus, for example, we found phrases like (...) *Ma mère and mon père travaillent* (...). As can be seen, in this writing exercise in French, the author of this sentence used the illative conjunction 'and', typical of English, instead of 'et' in French. This phenomenon caught our attention since what we initially thought was a mix-up was, in effect, a transfer. We were also struck by the fact that such a situation occurred between foreign languages and in no case the presence of the MT was found.

With this finding, as FL teachers, we made the decision to make a descriptive analysis of a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic nature that would allow us to explain the reasons why this phenomenon occurred.

The proposed methodology, based on a descriptive qualitative approach, focuses on the analysis of several written records of the English, French, Italian, and Portuguese courses in the Modern Languages Program of the University of Caldas and on the experiences of the students who have immersed themselves in learning these languages. The techniques and instruments used to collect information are the survey, the interview and the analysis of the records (written texts).

THEORETICAL FRAME

To delve into the purpose of the study that we set out to carry out, we consider essential to return to the theories on some necessary linguistic aspects that help us understand the errors, fossilizations and behaviours of language learners. As follows, we will focus on the notions of interference, linguistic transfer, code-switching, code-mixing borrowing and linguistic alternation.

When speaking of acquisition, as opposed to learning a foreign language, reference is made to the insertion of an individual in a linguistic environment that will provide him/her with the means for communication in the target language. On the contrary, when speaking of learning a FL, reference is made to the individual's assimilation process of a new linguistic system and with it, of a new communication system.

In this process, the analysis of students' errors in the FL in use is relevant -specifically the typification of errors, their frequencies² and their causes- to establish the state of learning during the process at the

² phonetic-phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and lexical.



various linguistic levels and thus, intervene it.

In these terms, the most common error is Linguistic Interference, which Thiemer (1980) classifies as internal and external. The first covers the structural and morphological alterations within the same linguistic system of the language. The second studies the influence of structures known in other languages since, during the process of learning a FL, students are exposed to a permanent conflict between norms and customs acquired in their MT and the structures of the FL they are learning. In this way, the frequent association of diverse linguistic systems influences mental operations within the FL learning process. In this regard, Tibor (1997) classifies external interference into two types of influences: the one produced by MT and FL and the one generated by FL1 and FL2. For a better understanding of the subject, we present a brief description of the concepts most closely related to the phenomenon:

Contrastive analysis

The learning of a FL "is the process by which an individual acquires a level of linguistic and communicative competence that allows him to enter into interaction with a linguistic community that is not his own" (Santos, 1992, p. 118). This learning process, under a research perspective, materializes some studies that result in various teaching models and that can be seen in Contrastive Linguistics. Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis are two of those models that best explain the scientific discipline.

Contrastive Linguistics compares various linguistic systems to describe their differences and similarities. It starts from a synchronous temporal location. Its object is grammar to understand the structures of the target language, its most notorious difficulties for students and its influence on the learning process. In this way, the linguistic contrast of two or more languages helps to detect learning problems so that teachers can anticipate possible difficulties in teaching a FL, plan-teaching strategies, support material and methodological techniques that will help to overcome problems.

In the contrastive research model, a basic concept should be considered: Interference, defined by Santos (1992, p. 118) as "the phenomenon that occurs when an individual uses a phonetic, lexical, morphological or syntactic feature characteristic of a target language in his native tongue." The experience of teaching a FL has shown us that interference can occur with languages other than the MT. Contrastive linguistics and, in particular, its research studies, have been criticized to the extent that they consider interference as a source of errors made during the learning of the target language and do not consider all the possible reasons and causes that produce such errors.

Some considerations on error handling

Linguistic Interference has traditionally been understood as an error, tracing, linguistic turn that are unnecessary or incorrect uses of the target language. According to Sanz Gil (2021, p. 80), tracing is the set of lexical, semantic and morphosyntactic errors.

Of all these possibilities, the first thing we must clarify is that interference is the borrowing of a term by structural tracing (translated term) such as: ciencia ficción (science fiction), balompié (football), fin de semana (weekend), Jardín infantil (kindergarten) and others such as: ordenador (ordinateur), among others; or by neutralized foreignism (term extracted and phonetically adapted) from other languages to the target language such as: pizza (Italian), spinning and mouse (English), derrière and cliché (French). This adoption is known as



a neologism because it corresponds to the creation of new words when a language lacks proper designations, especially at a technological and cultural level.

For Czochralski (1971), there is a difference between borrowing and interference, since, while the borrowing is conscious, diachronic, accepted by the linguistic community because it is part of the language, the interference is unconscious, synchronous, dynamic, it occurs due to lack of knowledge of the language and it is part of the word.

According to Weinreich (1968), phenomena such as bilingualism and code switching are associated with linguistic interference caused by a deviation produced by the norms of the languages, as a result of their similarity with more than one of them. The author assures that the interference is due to the inability of the bilingual speaker to distinguish the languages. Such inability, assumed as a negative property of interference, is recognized by the multiplicity of communicative events in which foreign languages are mixed.

On the other hand, the interference could have the positive property since it allows every bilingual speaker to adapt linguistic skills and competences in their communicative purpose:

La mezcla del código que realiza el verdadero hablante bilingüe, cuando se comunica con otro bilingüe, es un fenómeno creativo que no implica necesariamente limitación en el uso de cada lengua, sino la posibilidad de mezclarlas por razones afectivas, expresivas o, incluso, críticas. Es algo muy distinto que recurrir a préstamos por falta de conocimiento de la palabra en el idioma que se habla (Flor, 1985, p.76)³

According to Flor (1985), interference is equal to code mixing, borrowing, and code switching, where the former (code mixing) is clearly positive and the latter (borrowing) is somewhat negative. For Clyne (1980), when the phenomenon has a negative character, it is considered interference and when it is positive it is considered transfer, despite the fact that some recent studies speak of negative transfer (Ferreira, 2020, p. 287) to refer to interlingual errors. From the conception of our research project, we lean towards the notions of transfer rather than interference because we share the vision that Clyne and other authors have on the subject (Alonso, 2020, p. 23). They consider transfer basically occurs when using a FL, MT is used either due to ignorance of the term or enunciation of the FL or when trying to relate a discursive construction with previous knowledge of the speaker or writer. In this case, the user draws on knowledge of other foreign languages in addition to the one in use. This linguistic nature phenomenon adopts a didactic role since it facilitates the learning task. This didactic function is assumed for the purpose of transferring the use of other languages to a first language and thus compensating for the limitations of the language in use.

We want to enunciate, in this part of our discourse, a phenomenon related to the object of our research and that is code mixing and code switching. The first conceived by Rijhwani et al., cited by Pratapa & Choudhury (2021, p. 158), as the phenomenon of mixing several languages in the same conversation. This mixture, which for Wardhaugh, cited by Mabule (2015, p. 341) constitutes a marker of solidarity in multilingual communities, is common in the informal use of languages, an example of which are social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram...) We will not consider this highly oral phenomenon that, furthermore, is due to a conscious use of languages. Our research work focuses on scriptural use and on a series of phenomena that occur unconsciously. The second, that is, code switching, according to Deuchar, cited by Bellamy et al. (2022, p. 6), corresponds to a natural and common phenomenon, both oral and written, in which various languages fluctuate among multi-

³ "The mixing of the code that the true bilingual speaker performs, when communicating with another bilingual, is a creative phenomenon that does not necessarily imply limitation in the use of each language, but rather the possibility of mixing them for affective, expressive or even critical reasons. It is something very different from resorting to borrowings due to lack of knowledge of the word in the language spoken" (Flor, 1985:76). Our translation.



lingual speakers. Here we emphasize that the users of foreign languages are already competent in them, that is, it is not about learning but about the natural use of them, which is far from our research topic.

Since language has a communicative function that goes beyond linguistic structures, the treatment of transfer cannot be restricted to the analysis of linguistic borrowing. Therefore, factors such as sociolinguistic aspects, speech community and pragmatic aspects must be considered. Many linguistic phenomena are explained from the cultural differences of the speakers.

Effects of Language Transfer in the Language Learning Process.

Teaching-learning methods of foreign languages, such as Direct and Audio-oral, arising from the structuralist and empiricist models as opposed to the Grammar-translation Method, the traditional one, assume that the acquisition of languages is a mechanical process by which habits are formed according to the principles of Skinner's behavioural theory (1968). When empiricists and structuralists argue that language is more than a system of rules, it is a set of habits, they maintain that the communicative use of language is spontaneous and that it does not obey a conscious intellectual process. In contrast, the rationalists argue that language is basically a set of rules that result in a creative process of language use. Through practice, the communicative use of language becomes an automatic process. Therefore, the speakers ignore the rule, as long as they do not transgress it. For rationalists, language acquisition should be understood as the ability to produce and not reproduce sentences (Gadre, 2006).

According to contrastive studies, the Direct, Audio-oral methods and their diversifications (Audio-visual and Communicative) for learning foreign languages have insisted on the negative role of the MT, since it interferes in the learning/acquisition process of the FL. The appearance here of interference (transfer according to Chandrasekhar, 1978), also extends to the multilingual situation, where it is possible to find speakers of several foreign languages (FL1, FL2) who continue learning others (FL3):

Let's suppose that the learner has a certain command of languages A, B, C, D and E and that, at present, he is learning language F, with A being his mother tongue... the language of the learner immediately perceives language F –according to Gestalt principles- and organizes what he is learning according to a defined pattern. If the new language has a greater resemblance to one of the languages that is not his mother tongue... let's say with the C language, then the transfer process occurs from the C language... (Chandrasekhar, 1978, p. 95).

This means that the similarity of linguistic structures (not necessarily with the mother tongue), facilitates the appearance of transfer, which according to Gadre (2006) is generated more by the vehicular language than by the mother tongue in multilingual contexts, understanding by vehicular language, that language of common use agreed between the speakers of different languages. In these terms, for Bravo Garcia (2021, p. 294), vehicular language corresponds to the lingua franca, that is, the language adopted for common understanding.

The fact that two languages (MT and FL1 or FL2 and FL3) have similar structures explains the presence of linguistic transfer. However, its effects on learning can have a positive connotation, as Lado (1973, p. 67) had said, "those structures that are similar will be easy to learn because they can be trans-



ferred and function satisfactorily in the foreign language". Thus, the internal structural factors (that is, those belonging to the formal part of the language), indicate the aspects that contain a level of complexity in learning, due to phonetic gaps, changes in morphemic functions, syntactic density and lexical insufficiency of the target language.

On the other hand, the treatment of the transfer -within the assimilation of FL1 when learning- cannot be relegated exclusively to the structural borrowing. There are also sociolinguistic factors that facilitate the appearance of transfer: attitudes of the speaking community, prestige of the vehicular language, cultural differences, individual characteristics of each student (psychological and physical) and the context of communication.

In pedagogical terms, when transfer is seen as an error, experience has shown that contrastive analysis can be useful to explain certain errors of students a posteriori, and not a priori, in the case of linguistically heterogeneous groups (natives of different nationalities). On the other hand, in the case of homogeneous groups, generally in an exolingual situation (factors external to FL), the teachers know well from experience what types of problems the students present.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

We sought to specify properties, characteristics and traits of linguistic phenomena in the use and learning of foreign languages. Based on a descriptive qualitative approach, we set out to develop a study that would account for the presence, regularity and causes of transfer in the written texts of the students of the Modern Languages Program of the University of Caldas, Colombia. This is how we proceeded to apply the following data collection instruments:

We interviewed 40 foreign language teachers from different university institutions in Colombia with the purpose of inquiring about the possibilities of transfer, interference, code switching, code mixing and linguistic alternation present in their classes at the scriptural level. They were asked if their students tend to embed or mix languages when writing a written text, how often, with what languages and with what type of words (linguistic units) or sentences.

We also applied a survey to 100 students of the Modern Languages Program at the University of Caldas, Colombia between 17 and 24 years old. They belonged to different levels of schooling (between the first and fourth year of training in foreign languages). The objective of the survey was to determine if the students surveyed considered that the learning of several foreign languages produced this phenomenon at the writing level.

Finally, with the purpose of identifying whether our finding corresponds to one or more of the following phenomena: interference, code mixing, code switching, transfer and linguistic alternation, we used an analytical matrix as a tool to discriminate the act of writing from the samples (cases) selected from the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic point of view. This matrix allowed us to break up the sentences and phrases affected by this phenomenon. We have called the altered segment of the sentence Clause (C) because it is the fraction that contains the linguistic units identified as parts of the affected sentence.



RESULTS

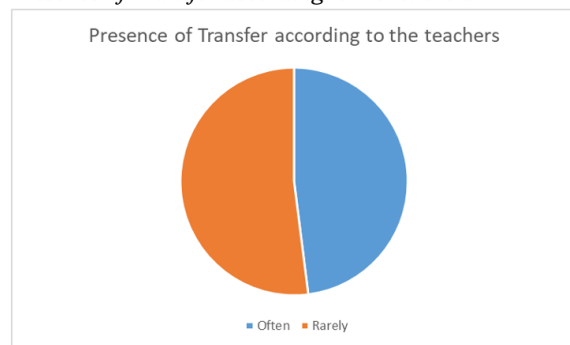
Results of the interview with teachers

100% of the teachers interviewed affirm that, during the development of their classes, students embed terms from other languages in the base language. This result confirms the need to intervene in this phenomenon in language teaching and learning processes.

48% of teachers say that it is a frequent phenomenon in student writing while 52% say that this phenomenon rarely happens. This shows that the transfer of terms is present in a good number of texts produced by students as the following graph shows.

Figure 1

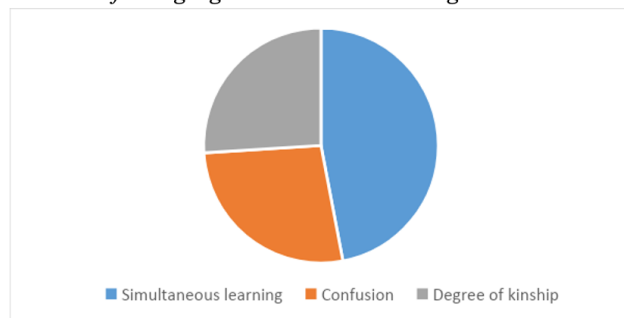
Presence of Transfer according to the teachers



37% have observed that the language that crosses the most with others is French, 32% think that it is English, 19% that it is Italian and 12% that it is Portuguese. These results indicate that the phenomenon of foreign language confusion occurs in writing in a significant way and that the language they resort to most frequently is French as the following graph shows.

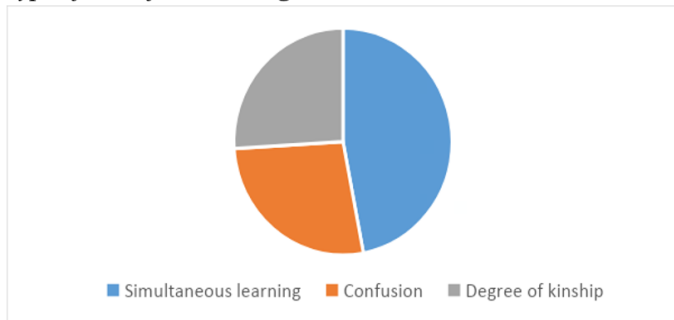
Figure 2

Presence of a language in the others according to the teachers



81% of the teachers interviewed have observed that this phenomenon occurs mainly in particles, 17% say it occurs in phrases and 2% in long sentences. The linguistic units that appear when transferring foreign languages correspond in a high percentage to conjunction, preposition and article type particles (58%) followed by vocabulary (27%) and finally adverb type connectors (15%) as the following graph shows.

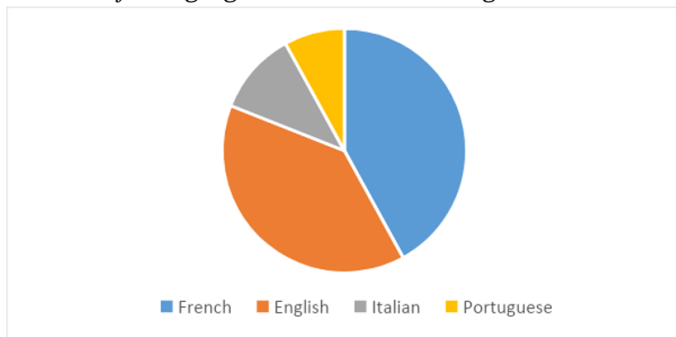
Figure 3
Type of Transfer according to the teachers



Results of the student survey

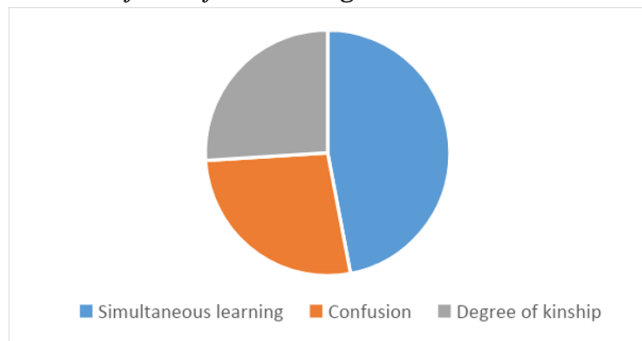
100% of the students surveyed state that they embed terms from other languages in their writings of a base language⁴. For 42% it happens with French, for 39% with English, for 11% with Italian and 8% with Portuguese as the following figure shows.

Figure 4
Presence of a language in the others according to the students



55% say that the transfer of foreign languages rarely occurs, while 45% say that it happens frequently. Note that the percentages are similar to the results obtained in the interviews with teachers as the following figure shows.

Figure 5
Presence of Transfer according to the students

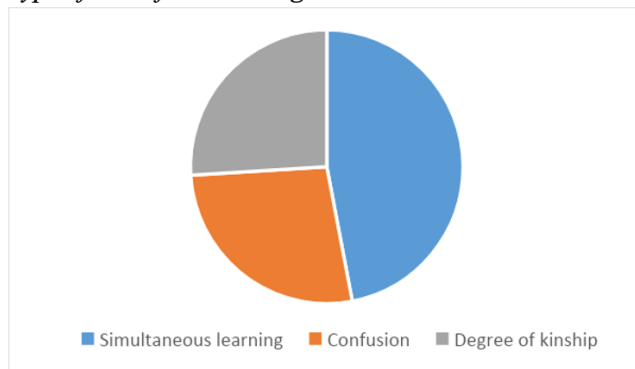


4 We call the *base language* the language in use at the time of writing.

There are some coincidences in the type of linguistic units in relation to the answers of the teachers. The phenomenon occurs most commonly in particles with 63%, followed by vocabulary with 30%, followed by connectors with 4% and finally phonetic combinations with 3%. All of the students affirm that this situation occurs exclusively in words 100% and never in complete statements as the following figure shows.

Figure 6

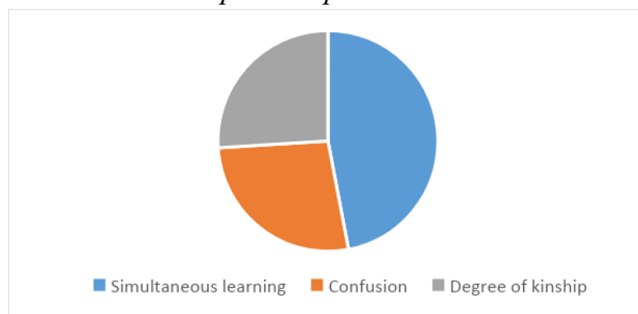
Type of Transfer according to the students



The students attribute the phenomenon in 47% to the simultaneous learning of foreign languages, in 27% to reasons such as: confusion and previous knowledge of one of them; and for 26% it is due to their degree of kinship as the following figure shows.

Figure 7

Considerations to explain this phenomenon



Result of the analysis of the written texts.

The global sample comprised 80 texts written by young people of both genders between 17 and 24 years of age, students of English, French, Italian and Portuguese as foreign languages at three different levels of learning: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Of the total corpus (80 cases) we will expose a representative sample of 10 with their respective analyses as follows:

The systematic study included five central elements: 1) Sample: a description that explains the nature of the text (case); 2) Clauses with: Transfer or Interference Events presented by the extracts where the phenomenon occurs; 3) Syntactic Composition: Functional Analysis of Immediate Constituents (syntactic level) that correspond to the morphosyntactic characteristics of the collected segments, in order to typify the units that can be identified by grammatical categories affected by the phenomenon; 4) Seman-

tic Composition: Analysis of Semic and Lexemic Units that shows the semantic characteristics of the terms or words affected by the transfer, in order to establish correspondences of the fields of meaning in the languages involved; and, finally, 5) Pragmatic appreciation: Pragmatic Analysis of Discursive Action that interprets the communicative pretensions in the analysed sentence sequences, according to the use of the language.

Table 1

Case 1

SAMPLE	Intermediate level Italian exam in which questions imply the previous reading of a fable.
CLAUSES WITH TRANSFER	C1: ...utilizava tuta la poca acqua calda que c'era. C2: La mia opinione sul libro est che questa fabula est molto istruttiva.
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>C1: the enunciation is made up of a verb, adverb, article, adjective, noun, adjective, transfer and verb. Structurally C1 presents an inconsistency in the use of the adverb 'tutta' (all), since the student is giving an adjective function to an adverb that modifies the noun 'acqua' (water) that already has the epithet adjective 'poca' (little), which is syntactically not allowed in a linguistic structure. Besides, there is a spelling mistake in the sentence. He should have written 'tutta' and not 'tuta'. This indicates that the student of the language presents construction difficulties; which could also explain the inappropriate use of the relative 'que' in French instead of 'che' in Italian.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: transfer in the relative pronoun 'que' in french, instead of 'che' in italian. • Syntactic function: adequate in the constituent 'que c'era' (there was). Inconsistent in the antecedent of the enunciation 'tuta la poca acqua' (all the little water). <p>C2: The enunciation is composed of an article, a possessive adjective, a noun, a preposition contracted with an article, a transfer, a relative pronoun, a demonstrative adjective, a noun, a transfer, an adverb, and an adjective.</p> <p>This lengthy, structurally adequate utterance features the same transfer in the verb category twice. Here the student used the copulative 'est' in French, instead of 'è' in Italian, and repeated it in the second part of the sentence. It is important to clarify that this student, both in C1 and in C2, presents a phenomenon, which, in different parts of the evaluation test, he uses appropriately: 'Penso che è migliore...' (I think it is better...).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: transfer in the verb 'est' in french, instead of 'è' in italian, with immediate repetition. • Syntactic function: adequate.
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	C1: In the student's conceptual system it is clearly established that the transfer represented in the relative pronoun is meaning "the hot water there was". In C2, in the same way, in the use of the verb, the student gives it a connecting function to express his opinion and achieve coherence in the discourse, rather than a meaning content.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	Both in C1 and in C2 the contaminants, although in different grammatical categories, have a connecting function that facilitates the cohesion of the structuring of the discourse so that it fulfills the required purpose: In C1 an explanatory phrase and in C2 an declarative phrase.

Note. Table created by author.

Table 2

Case 2

SAMPLE	Written text in French, beginner level. In it, the student is required to recount his activities from the previous weekend in order to use past tense.
CLAUSES WITH INTERFERENCE AND TRANSFER	C3: Je me suis reveillé alle 8:00 h. C4: J'ai déjeuné des arricot rouge avec le rice.
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C3: Structurally, the enunciation is made up of: subject pronoun, verb, interference, name and adjective, which is syntactically established in an inadequate way precisely because of the interference.



SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>The student of the French language, to indicate time, uses a contracted article with a preposition of the form 'alle 8:00' in Italian. For this type of sentence, the French structure does not admit article contractions, only the preposition 'à'. In other parts of the composition, he repeatedly used the same immediate constituent in the same structural form, but in French, that is, with the appropriate code, although with an incorrect structure: 'aux 10 heures..., aux 12 heures..., aux 11 heures..., aux 21 heures'. Later in the composition exercise he used a similar structure appropriately: 'à 20 heures'. This error indicates that, although the student knows or associates the correct structure, he assimilates the contraction in French to the Italian language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: interference in the preposition contracted with the definite article "alle" in Italian, instead of the preposition "à" in French. • syntactic function: inadequate due to article addition <p>C4: Structurally, the enunciation has the following constituents: pronoun, verb, partitive article, noun, adjective, preposition, definite article and transfer. The structure is inconsistent at the end of the sentence like this: "avec le riz". The definite article has no place because French requires a partitive of the type 'du' for this case of masculine food. The transfer is represented in the name 'rice' in English instead of 'riz' in French.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: transfer in the English noun "rice" instead of "riz" in French. • Syntactic function: Inadequate phrase due to the accompaniment of the definite article to the noun used, which had not been previously mentioned.
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	<p>In C3, the interference fulfills a more cohesive function than a significant one; due to its structural incorrectness it causes incoherence in the clause.</p> <p>In C4, the semantic substance is well formed, according to the conceptual system of the distinctive features of the name or noun: white and flourey edible seed, equivalent to French and English depending on the transfer presented.</p>
PRAGMATIC APPPRECIATION	<p>In C3, the student of the French language uses structural elements in order to indicate a certain time (eight in the morning) and with this, he shows the time he wakes up, within an explanatory speech of daily tasks of the weekend. This informative intention of past events does not fulfill its purpose due to deficiencies in coherence; however, the data provided allows the reader of the composition to intuit what the student wants to say in his act of writing.</p> <p>In C4, the student intends to explain, within a repertoire of foods, that he consumes rice for lunch. Statement that would fulfill the communicative function if it had used the noun "riz" in French and not in English; for this reason, there is an unnecessary transfer, which weakens the communicative event.</p>

Note. Table created by author.

Table 3
Case 3

SAMPLE	<p>Beginner level Portuguese midterm exam. The communicative event consists of a written text of around 150 words, in which the student must make a presentation of each member of a family.</p>
CLAUSES WITH TRANSFER	<p>C5: <i>Il filho é Jacobo</i> C6: <i>Il tio se chama Mauricio.</i></p>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>C5 is made up of transfer, noun, verb, and noun. The student of the Portuguese language, in his composition, introduced the enunciation with the masculine definite article 'Il' in Italian, instead of 'O' in Portuguese. According to the sentence, the student demonstrates that this constituent must fulfill the function of determiner for 'filho' (son), but he did it with the wrong code. The same situation occurs in C6 under the same circumstances, which means that the student does not know the term corresponding to the masculine definite article in the code he uses. Both C5 and C6 have an adequate syntactic structure, with the failure in the language different from the grammatical category that starts the clause.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: transfer in c5 and c6 of masculine singular definite article in Italian 'il' instead of 'o' in Portuguese. • Syntactic function: adequate.



SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	According to the system of meaning that the student of the Portuguese language demonstrates, the semantic unit expressed through an article has the function of assigning the corresponding gender and number to the name. In this case, masculine and singular both for 'filho' (son) as for 'tio' (uncle). In suitable circumstances of realization, the segments would be: "O filho", "O tio".
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	In both C5 and C6 the student of the Portuguese language seeks to give identity information about an uncle and a son. According to what the student wants to express in his written composition, the son and the uncle have a particular character. Therefore, it requires the use of a definite determiner in the case of the article with which it intends to denote that Jacobo is an only child, and Mauricio is the only uncle he has. The evaluated student expands some information about these two people in his act of writing. Thus, the transferred element fulfills its function of giving concreteness to the enunciation.

Note. Table created by author.

Table 4
Case 4

SAMPLE	Written text in French for a beginner level in which students are asked to describe the activities of a daily day.
CLAUSES WITH TRANSFER	C7: <i>Je prends a petit-déjeuner.</i> C8: <i>Je prends a déjeuner.</i> C9: <i>Je mange a dessert.</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	C7, C8 and C9 are made up of subject, verb, transfer and noun pronouns. The transfer, repeated in the three sequences, is equivalent to an indefinite article expressed in English 'a' that determines a masculine noun. Diagnosis: Transfer of the indefinite article in English 'a', instead of the masculine indefinite article 'un' in French. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntactic function: Adequate. C7, C8 and C9 will be structurally adequate within the base code: • C7: « Je prends un petit-déjeuner » • C8: « Je prends un déjeuner » • C9: « Je mange un dessert »
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	The distinctive features, used in the recurrence of the transfer (three times), indicate that the student makes adequate functional use of the particle, but in an inadequate code. The student knows that it is a determiner and considers that it is enough to indefinite the noun (for C7 breakfast, for C8 lunch and for C9 dessert). Although it is known that the article 'a' in English is neutral because it does not discriminate gender, it could not be established if the writer recognizes the need to establish gender in the base language and that, therefore, this would lead to clarifying the meaning. On the other hand, transfer could be understood not as the transfer of a different code word, but as the grammatical confusion of a structurally misplaced category. The letter 'a', that appears in all three sequences, exists in French and corresponds to the third person singular inflection of the verb 'avoir' (to have). If we consider this possibility, both C7, C8 and C9 would completely lose coherence.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since C7, C8 and C9 are part of a series of statements to describe the student's daily activities, it can be established that the writer presents the foods that he normally consumes, classifying them according to the time of day. Since the transfer in English refers to an indefinite article, the enunciation in C7 and C8 is not clear from a logical point of view. In the act of writing, it is observed how breakfast and lunch are composed (eggs, bread, coffee, juice, soup, beans, rice, potatoes); therefore, breakfast and lunch expressed in C7 and C8 are widely defined and explained. Thus, the transfer that fulfills the function of an indefinite article does not take place and for the act of writing in both sequences to be adequate, coherent and, above all, pertinent, a definite article of the type 'le' must be used. This phenomenon does not appear with C9 as an illocutionary act of writing and can be understood as a dessert of any nature and therefore it is well constructed according to the communicative intention.

Note. Table created by author.



Table 5

Case 5

SAMPLE	This is a composition written in French at a beginner level. The student must describe the activities carried out on a quotidian day.
CLAUSES WITH TRANSFER	<i>C10: Je parle et écoute music avec mes amis.</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	C10 is made up of subject pronoun, verb, conjunction, verb, transfer, preposition, possessive adjective, noun. This sequence features two construction flaws. The first is the transfer that the student expresses in English 'music' instead of 'musique' in French. The second meets the requirement of the French syntactic structure that in the case of 'listening to music' requires a preposition and article contraction as follows: 'J'écoute de la musique...'. C10 would be adequate: "Je parle et écoute de la musique avec mes amis". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: transfer in the singular name in English "music", instead of "musique" in French. • Syntactic function: Adequate in the grammatical category to which the transfer refers. Inadequate in the structure due to the lack of the partitive article
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	The transfer element that appears in C10 coincides both in French and in English. Both codes agree in minimal features of the conceptual system defined according to the mental object, that is, music means to us: melodic, harmonic and rhythmic sounds.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	C10 presents a contaminant that carries form features in the transfer from English to French. Although phonetically these linguistic units are close, scripturally they are located within a different spelling. This particular feature means that, regardless of the code used, there is an association, which helps to better understand the statement.

Note. Table created by author.

Table 6

Case 6

SAMPLE	Composition written in French at a beginner level in which the student must make a description of the activities carried out on a daily basis.
CLAUSES WITH INTERFERENCE AND TRANSFER	<i>C11: In le matin, je me réveille...</i> <i>C12: Je suis in la bibliothèque.</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	C11 is made up of interference, article, noun, pronoun, verb. This sequence, which begins with the interference, presents a flaw that we must consider taking into account that this cohesive form is inappropriate because the grammatical category, in which the interference is located, is a preposition used for the purpose of indicating time. In French syntax, this is unacceptable. For C11 to be correct, the sequence must be expressed as follows: 'le matin, je me réveille.' So, it is not possible to find the equivalent in the source language because it is an aggregate that affects the enunciation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagnosis: Interference in the addition of the preposition of time in English 'In'. • Syntactic function: It is not possible in French. <p>is made up of subject pronoun, verb, transfer, article, noun. Structurally, the constituent elements of the enunciation would be well expressed if instead of the preposition of place 'in' in English the student had respected the code and had used 'à' or 'dans' in French.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: Transfer in preposition of place in English 'in' for 'à' in French. - Syntactic function: Adequate.
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	In the case of C11, the transfer element with which the declarative sequence begins is superfluous. Therefore, the rest of the enunciation, without that addition, already has meaning and significance. In the case of C12, the writer shows awareness of the need to meaningfully connect the cohesive elements to achieve meaning. Therefore, the prepositive use, although in a different and inappropriate code, represents a spatial location required for clarity and coherence.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	For C11, getting up is a situation that he performs by clarifying the period of time in which he does it (in the morning). In the base language, 'le matin' already includes the implied content of duration (a moment or hour in the morning or during morning time). This is why a prepositional aggregate hinders the expository effect of the enunciation. A different situation occurs in C12 since the structure requires a prepositive use of place so that the discursive action fulfills an informative effect. Unfortunately, transfer defeats the intended purpose of the writer.

Note. Table created by author.



Table 7
Case 7

SAMPLE	Beginner level French midterm exam. In one item, the examinee is asked to complete with the contraction of the corresponding preposition and article.
CLAUSES WITH TRANSFER	<i>C13: La cafétéria est juste en face nella gymnase</i> <i>C14: Nous parlons delle cours et della vacances aussi.</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>C13 is made up of article, noun, verb, adverb, preposition, interference, noun. Since the evaluative exercise consists of completing the statements with one or two particles. In the case of the answer that the student must give, C13 is resolved with a preposition and article contraction in Italian 'nella' (in the) with which he intends to complete the sequence. If the corresponding code is preserved, the expected structure is: 'du (of the) in French, so that the enunciation would be: 'La cafétéria est juste en face du gymnase' (The cafeteria is just in front of the gym). As can be seen, the failure is not only one of language but of structure. There is no possibility of using 'nella' nor a feminine article if a masculine name, gym, is determined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: Interference in contracted article in Italian "nella" instead of "du" in French. • Syntactic function: Inadequate for the particle. <p>C14 is made up of a noun, subject, verb, interference, noun, conjunction, interference, noun, adverb. Similar to C13, C14 presents a first preposition and article contraction in Italian 'delle' (of the) to complete the enunciation thus: 'nous parlons delle cours...' equivalent to 'we talk about the courses....' This code interference in Italian does not fit the expected response. In French the gender and number correspondence must exist to achieve coherence. In the final part of the sequence the correct answer would be 'des' (of the) to complete holidays, but the examinee answered in Italian "della" equivalent to 'de la'. For the complete sequence to be adequate, C14 must be: 'nous parlons des cours et des vacances aussi' (We talk about courses and also about holidays).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis: Interference in the first article contracted in Italian 'delle' (incorrect) instead of 'des' in French and in the second article contracted in Italian "della" (incorrect) instead of 'des' in French. • Syntactic function: inadequate.
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	In C13 and C14 there is code inconsistency and improper use of particles. The sequences lose their logical sense and it can be established that the writer's conceptual system is insufficient to achieve coherence in the act of writing.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	C13 and C14 are proposals for an incomplete discourse that requires structural responses to achieve meaning. These responses are induced by the indication of the point to be evaluated, which alerts the grammatical category to be used. For the speech to have a happy realization, that is, to be correct, the evaluated person must understand the macro and microstructure, as well as the co-text. This task in C13 and in C14 was not achieved. The examinee used an inadequate code and attributed a grammatical use incorrect for the blank to be filled in.

Note. Table created by author.

Table 8
Case 8

SAMPLE	Composition exercise in English at a beginner level. The examinee is asked to narrate his last holiday.
CLAUSES WITH TRANSFER	<i>C15: We went to Guadalajara et to Mexico D.F.</i> <i>C16: I saw animals et big cities.</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>C15 is made up of a subject pronoun, verb, preposition, noun, transfer, preposition, and noun. Structurally, the enunciation is well constructed, with the exception of an embedded element that fulfills the function of illative conjunction in French 'et' instead of 'and' in English. In both English and French, the particle fulfills the function of uniting two elements.</p> <p>- Diagnosis: Transfer in illative conjunction in French 'et' instead of 'and' in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntactic function: Adequate. <p>C16 is made up of subject pronoun, verb, noun, transfer, adjective, noun. The sequence would be well constructed if the writer had used the correct code, that is, the base language. The transfer represented in an illative conjunction was expressed in French 'et' instead of 'and' in English. For C16 to be adequate, the statement should be: 'I saw animals and big cities.'</p>



SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>- Diagnosis: Transfer in illative conjunction in French 'et' instead of 'and' in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntactic function: adequate. <p>It is important to note that, in other parts of the discourse, the student uses the English conjunction 'and' appropriately. This means that the transfer is not due exclusively to lexical ignorance of the base language.</p>
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	In both C15 and C16, the student assumes the lexical function of the conjunction as an element that serves to link the terms that carry an idea of addition, rather than significant content.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	Both sequences C15 and C16 have an illocutionary value that can be characterized in C15 by the places visited: Guadalajara and Mexico and C16 by the knowledge of animals and big cities. C15 properly constructed, except for the transfer, present a clear and coherent communicative intention for the same idea shared by the elements joined by the conjunction: Guadalajara and Mexico are cities. While C16 does not coherently relate the lexemic units of the elements linked by the conjunction (animals and cities are not related). However, this last sequence has essence in its discursive action due to the value of the verb 'to see' (among the things that were perceived, there are animals and big cities). So, both acts of writing fulfill their informative and descriptive function within a holiday plan that would be successful if the same code had been used within the structure.

Note. Table created by author.

Table 9
Case 9

SAMPLE	Intermediate level Portuguese exam consists of completing sentences and answering some questions about the ideal holiday for each of the students.
CLAUSE WITH TRANSFER AND INTERFERENCE	<i>C17: Minhas férias ideais são em Santa Marta na plage, tomar o sol, nadar...</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>The enunciation is made up of: possessive adjective, noun, verb, preposition, noun, contraction of preposition + definite article, transfer, verb, definite article, noun and verb. Structurally, it presents several inconsistencies at the end of the sentence. First, the examinee uses a verb of the infinitive type instead of a gerund. The Portuguese syntax does not allow to complete a sentence whose main verb is the verb 'ser' (to be) by using an infinitive form. Second, the evaluated person makes use of a definite article for the expression 'tomar sol' (sunbathing), which in the Portuguese language is incorrect since the phrase does not require an article. Third, there is an embedded term 'plage' in French, instead of 'praia' in Portuguese. The answer: 'Minhas férias ideais são em Santa Marta na plage, tomar o sol, nadar...' does not cohesively obey the structural rules that allow the discourse to be coherently assumed. Therefore, the examinee had to use the discourse: 'Minhas férias ideais são em Santa Marta na praia, tomando sol, nadando...' (My ideal holidays are in Santa Marta on the beach, sunbathing, swimming...)</p> <p>- Diagnosis: Transfer in the name 'plage' in French instead of the Portuguese 'praia'. Interference in the use of the definite article since this determinant is not required in the Portuguese language for the expression 'tomar sol' and Interference for the use of infinitive to complete the sentence.</p> <p>- Syntactic function: Adequate due to the substantive function, but inadequate due to the loss of coherence in the complete structure.</p>
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	C17, seen particularly from the embedded element, shows that the student of the Portuguese language adequately relates the name "plage", identifying as semes: flat area covered with sand on the shores of the sea or river, a term that shares the same conceptual distinctions in Portuguese and French.
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	The enunciation obeys the question in Portuguese "como são as suas férias ideais? (How are your ideal holidays?). The adjacent pair is completed according to the communicative intention of the discursive event. The evaluative activity lets us establish that the student understands the question and gives the answer expected by the evaluator. C17 would be completely adequate if the student of the Portuguese language had used the same enunciation code. The fact of using the key word of the discourse in a language other than Portuguese, makes his answer an unsuccessful act of writing because it does not share the expected conditions of its elaboration.

Note. Table created by author.



Table 10
Case 10

SAMPLE	English phonetics evaluation, intermediate level. In one item the student is asked to write words of body parts that contain the phoneme [n] and the phoneme [ŋ] and that are indicated in an image. In the following analysis we do not refer to sentence clauses but to terms (T) due to the nature of the evaluative test.
TERMS WITH INTERFERENCE	T1: <i>dent</i> . T2: <i>talon</i>
SYNTACTIC COMPOSITION	<p>Since it is not about sentence sequences but about the use of terms, we cannot speak of syntactic structuring. The purpose of words is clearly phonetic identification. In the case of T1, the expected answer in English was 'tongue', but the student wrote 'dent' in French, which is incorrect. A similar situation occurs with T2, whose expected response in English was "ankle", but the examinee responded in French 'talon', which is also incorrect.</p> <p>Neither T1 or T2 correspond in the test to the requested term, nor in the embedded language. This indicates that the student does not know or has not assimilated the words in the base language that he replaces with correlational terms in another foreign language.</p> <p>- Diagnosis: T1 = Interference of the French name 'dent' equivalent to 'tooth' instead of 'tongue' in English. T2 = Interference of the name in 'talon' equivalent to 'heel' instead of 'ankle' in English. - Phonetic function: incorrect according to the indication in the exercise.</p>
SEMANTIC COMPOSITION	<p>Both T1 and T2 are clear signs of an inconsistency in the student's conceptual system. While the illustration shows the part of the body that corresponds to 'tongue' in English, the student writes 'dent' in French. Although both share distinctive semantic features (organs of the mouth), the seams of each one widely differentiate them: Tongue: mobile organ made up of numerous muscles covered with mucosa that intervene in the perception of taste, chewing, swallowing food and in the articulation of sounds. Tooth: bone piece covered with enamel or ivory located in the jaw and used for chewing.</p> <p>The same happens with T2 whose expected response, according to the indication of the illustration, is 'ankle' in English. Here the student wrote in French 'talon' (heel) whose minimal distinguishing features designate them as parts of the human foot. The semes assign distinctive characteristics to each one, differentiating them: Ankle: protuberance on each side of the throat of the foot. Heel: back of the foot.</p>
PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION	Since it is not an act of writing that allows establishing a minimal discourse, its effects are difficult to establish. Anyway, the adjacent pair to be completed is purely lexical and the student does not handle the terms in the phonetics test. He tries to solve the problem by resorting to another foreign language. In any case, he does not correctly complete the expected answer.

Note. Table created by author.

Of the total clauses analysed (136) corresponding to the 80 written texts collected in the corpus, we highlight the following:

Of the total of the clauses studied, 90% present transference as follows: 30% in the grammatical category of 'article', followed by 'name' with 28%. The grammatical categories of 'verb', 'preposition' and 'conjunction' each has 9% to 27%; Finally, the transfer with the 'pronoun' is presented with 5%. The highest percentage corresponds to articles and names and that according to the semantic and pragmatic analysis, the user of the base language and the embedded language has knowledge of the function and the co-textual and contextual meaning of the embedded term. The remaining 10% of all the clauses corresponds to the interference as follows: 6% in the use of 'article contracted with a preposition' and 4% of 'nouns'. The information provided by the semantic and pragmatic analysis show that the student made an error giving rise to ungrammaticality.

The most embedded language in the use of other base languages is English with 45%, followed by French with 30%, then Portuguese with 17% and finally Italian with 8%. These data allow us to infer that



both English and French are the languages with the greatest transfer, since they are the ones in which the students have greater knowledge or greater communicative competence. As the learning of foreign languages progresses and the level of competence in such languages increases, the phenomenon of transfer decreases.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The systematization of the information of the present study confirmed the theory of Clyne and other authors regarding that the interference is presented with a negative character (error) giving the written discourse an ungrammatical error while the transfer has a positive character since it shows a previous knowledge of the immediate constituents of the discursive action in the morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic fields. Thus, the studied population recognizes that both transfer and interference occur regularly in linguistic units and unconsciously when producing a written text. The cases studied do not present the phenomena: linguistic alternation, code switching and code mixing, since they are due to a conscious use of different languages in complete sentences.

The phenomena of transfer and interference do not occur because of the hierarchy of acquisition over learning, nor because of the kinship of languages or because of similarities in them. If we consider that the entire population studied has Spanish as their mother tongue (the only acquired language), it was expected that this would be the most embedded language in foreign language writings. However, the study showed a total absence of the phenomenon studied with MT. On the other hand, it happened mostly with English and French, languages they were learning, where they presented a high degree of competence compared to Italian and Portuguese. Now, if we recognize that Italian and Portuguese are more similar to Spanish on the phonetic, morphological and syntactic fields, it was to be expected that transfer would occur mostly with these two languages and not with English, a Germanic language.

From this study, we highlight the following conclusions:

- The linguistic transfer, according to the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic analyses, demonstrates that it is not an ungrammatical phenomenon due to the function it fulfills as an immediate constituent of the sentence, therefore, it does not correspond to an error.
- The transfer occurs with the languages in which the learners show greater mastery or competence. That is to say, the language with the best mastery appears in the one with the least mastery.
- The grammatical categories with the greatest transfer are articles and nouns.
- The greater the mastery of a foreign language, the less transfer.

As a new perspective of study, since the description of these linguistic phenomena observed in the domain of writing, allows easier access to a true communicative competence in FL, it would be very useful to carry out other similar studies in the domain of orality, where the acts of speech are the focus of discourse analysis.



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