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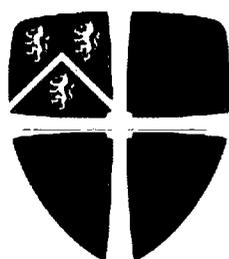
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# **The L2 Acquisition of Spanish Non-Nominative Subjects by Adult L1 English Speakers**

**Marcela A. Cazzoli-Goeta**

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**A Thesis presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**



**School of Linguistics and Language  
Department of Linguistics and English Language  
Durham University  
England  
2006**



**0 1 JUN 2006**

# **Abstract**

## **The L2 Acquisition of Spanish Non-Nominative Subjects by**

### **Adult L1 English Speakers**

**Marcela A. Cazzoli-Goeta**

This study investigates the adult second language (L2) acquisition of non-nominative, non-agentive subjects, a particular feature of the Spanish language also shared by other Indo-European and South Asian languages. The existence of non-nominative elements in Spec, IP with subject-like properties is well-documented in the literature. One of the first attempts to account for this phenomenon in Romance languages is Belletti and Rizzi (1988) on Italian. Masullo (1992, 1993) extends the analysis to Spanish, proposing the Non-Nominative Subject (NNSub) Parameter, whereby a language allows NNSubs as part of its core grammar only if nominative case is assigned in situ.

Spanish NNSubs can appear in unaccusative, dethematized, as well as impersonal constructions, and can be dative, accusative, or locative. These constituents are shown in Masullo (1992, 1993) not to occupy an A-bar position above IP, like topics and left-dislocated constituents, but rather Spec, IP, moving from the VP to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle. Languages like English and French, in which nominative case is checked in Spec, IP, disallow NNSubs.

The aim of this study is to understand the processes involved in the acquisition of this particular characteristic of Spanish and to determine the role of the learner's first

language (L1) in the process of acquisition. A study involving three groups of adult English L2 learners of Spanish at a British university and a control group was carried out to determine if L2 learners with a [-NNSub] L1 setting can reset the parameter to the Spanish [+NNSub] value. The learners belonged to one of three language levels: *Intermediate*, *Advanced* and *Advanced+* according to the number of years spent at university and their contact with Spanish in a Spanish speaking country. The test battery involved an aural preference task, an elicited imitation task, and a picture description task. Hypothesis A predicted that *Intermediate* L2 learners would show clear L1 effects on their data and that the NNSub parameter would not show resetting. Hypothesis B predicted that the more advanced L2 learners would be able to reset the NNSub parameter to accommodate NNSubs and dative case in their Interlanguage.

Results from the aural preference and the elicited imitation tasks show correspondence between the results per category in both tasks. Knowledge of unaccusativity and NNSubs develops steadily up to the *Advanced* level but it suffers a decline with the *Advanced+* learners. Results from the picture description task show that competence increases from the *Intermediate* to the *Advanced* level but that the percentage of non-target forms either stays at the same level or goes up with respect to the *Advanced+* group. This regression seen in the *Advanced+* data might be explained by the recent exposure to naturalistic input that the *Advanced* learners had just had.

The L2 data do not show enough evidence that the NNSub parameter has been reset. Most of the grammatical utterances contain the verbs *gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt', verbs which are part of the teaching curriculum. On the other hand, grammatical utterances involving other unaccusative verbs with NNSubs are rare. The fact that

teaching of these verbs is insufficient does not help the L2 learners overcome the learnability problem posed by the input. This problem stems from the L2 input not showing clear-cut signals to tell learners which verbs require a NNSub. In addition to this, native speakers' use of optional structures to substitute the constructions with NNSubs makes NNSubs even less salient in the input.

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree at Durham University or any other University.

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*For Andrés and our children,  
Annabella and Nicolás.*

*For your love and faith.*

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Martha Young-Scholten, for her support and understanding, without which I would not have been able to carry out this work. She had faith and encouragement for me at what possibly was the hardest and lowest period of my life. I owe her much more than words can express.

I am indebted to Pascual José Masullo, my external supervisor, who first got me interested in non-nominative subjects. I will never forget the pleasure of discussing Spanish syntax with him over endless cups of coffee.

I warmly thank Florence Myles and Teresa Parodi for agreeing to act as my two external examiners as well as for their interest and very useful comments in an earlier version of this thesis.

I am also very grateful to the members of staff at the Durham University School for Modern Languages, the Spanish Department and the Linguistics Department, for all their support and understanding. Special thanks go to Bonnie Schwartz, my first Ph.D. supervisor, who a long time ago pointed out to me that Spanish is an interesting language after all! I would also like to thank Joe Emonds for his moral and academic support in times when I needed encouragement.

This thesis would not exist if it were not for the willingness of my students at the Department of Spanish in Durham University (academic years 2002-2003 and 2003-

2004) who kindly agreed to be my test subjects. We enjoyed the data collection sessions and the parties afterwards!

I am very privileged to have a group of close friends who have been supporting me all the way. I would like to thank Lieve Van Espen for being there for me in all possible ways, as friend, proof reader, and shoulder to cry on. I am also indebted to my friends Jayne, Justine, Clare, James, Beccy and Chris for the chats and for keeping up my spirits when I was fed up with work. They cooked for me, looked after my kids and brought happiness to my life. I could not have finished this thesis without them.

Last but not least, my greatest thanks go to my parents, Elsa and Enrique, my husband Andrés and my children Annabella and Nicolás. They have all been my most solid support throughout these years. They make me the happiest person I could ever wish to be.

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# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

This thesis examines the adult second language acquisition of Spanish non-nominative<sup>1</sup> (henceforth NNSubs), non-agentive subjects<sup>2</sup>. Research has shown that the notion of 'subject' is difficult to define in a way that is universally valid. Subjects manifest differently across languages (Keenan, 1976; Comrie, 1989 and Primus, 1993 among others) and the syntactic properties attributed to them are not homogenous. Traditionally, subjects have been defined in terms of their semantic/pragmatic role and have been associated with an agent NP marked with nominative case. Research has shown, however, that not all subjects can be analysed in this way. The existence of constructions in which a nominative-marked argument appears in object position or an oblique NP in subject position (like NNSubs in Spanish) is evidence against the traditional approach. More modern syntactic theories have attempted to account for subjects in various ways and have drawn the distinction between the grammatical and the semantic subject of a sentence.

Generative Grammar under Government and Binding (Chomsky, 1981), for example, defines 'subject' in hierarchical terms, an NP dominated by S or IP and assigned case by INFL. Other approaches, like Relational Grammar (Perlmutter, 1983) or Lexical-Functional grammar (Bresnan, 1982), on the other hand, take the subject of a

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<sup>1</sup> Any case form taken by the NP subject which is not nominative.

<sup>2</sup> Also called 'quirky subjects' in the literature by Sigurðsson (1992), Masullo (1992, 1993), Cuervo (1999), and Rivero (2004) among others.

sentence to be the highest of a series of primitive grammatical relations: 1 (Subject) - 2 (Direct Object) - 3 (Indirect Object) - Non-terms (Oblique). The analysis of NNSubs in this thesis will assume Government and Binding (GB), also known as Principles and Parameters, introduced and developed by Chomsky in 1981, 1982, and 1986a, b, wherein the subject NP is assumed to fill the specifier position in the IP. Case considerations are very much a crucial part of the analysis for, as it will be shown, the existence of NNSubs poses a problem for GB.

Spanish is a nominative/accusative S-V-O language, where nominative is the case assigned to the NP specifier of IP, the default case for subjects of finite verbs (1.1). Only INFL assigns nominative case. However, because of Spanish's rich system of morphological case, nominative case does not uniquely mark grammatical subjects as subjects can also be accusative (1.2), dative (1.3), or locative (1.4). In GB terms, accusative case is normally assigned to the object of the verb or a preposition, dative case to indirect objects and locative to NPs expressing location .

(1.1) Todos los niños        fueron a la fiesta.

all the children-NOM went to the party

'All the children went to the party.'

(1.2) A Claudio        lo        nombraron        presidente.

to Claudio-ACC CL-ACC named        president

'Claudio was made president.'

(1.3) A mamá        le        gustó        la sorpresa.

to mum-DAT CL-DAT liked the surprise.

‘Mother loved the surprise.’

(1.4) En esta región crecen veinte variedades de papas.

in this region-LOC grow twenty varieties of potatoes

‘Twenty varieties of potatoes grow in this region.’

These various word orders are, to a large extent, lexically and semantically predictable, as they are prompted by a particular group of unaccusative verbs. Languages like Spanish, therefore, are classified as permitting NNSubs. Apart from Spanish, this phenomenon has been well documented in some Indo-European languages: Italian (Belletti and Rizzi, 1988), Spanish (Masullo, 1992 and 1993), Romanian (Dumitrescu and Masullo, 1996), Icelandic (Zaenen et al., 1985 and Sigurðsson, 1991) and South Asian languages (Verma and Mohanan, 1990) and Japanese (Ura, 2000) among others.

Does English allow NNSubs? Theoretically, nominative case is the unmarked form taken by the subject of a verb and, as English grammar books will state, it is the only case possibility in English finite clauses. Nevertheless, reversal constructions like those in (1.5) and (1.6) show that predicates with the theme-locative argument structure allow a word order in which a locative PP appears in subject position and a theme NP in the postverbal position. These Locative Inversion constructions are primarily discourse-driven and marked:

(1.5) Outside the door sat a young man.

(1.6) On the wall hung canvasses, but not paintings.

(Kim, 2003)

Spanish NNSubs, on the other hand, are arguments that form part of an unmarked constituent ordering and which behave like surface subjects in every relevant respect.

There are two ways in which the “subjecthood” of the dative, accusative and locative arguments in (1.2), (1.3), and (1.4) can be understood. In terms of Relational Grammar, González (1988) proposes that these arguments are Inversion Nominals. Inversion Nominals are underlying subjects that surface as indirect objects and which show some of the syntactic properties of subjects. The second kind of analysis, and the one pursued in this thesis, takes the preverbal dative, accusative or locative to be a quirky (and hence surface) subject. Masullo (1993) was the first to propose that these arguments can be analysed as quirky subjects, though different from those of Icelandic. The quirky subject analysis has been recently extended to a further class of psych verbs in Rivero (2004). Masullo’s tests of subjecthood will be spelled out in Chapter 2 where his analysis will be described in detail.

Masullo (1992, 1993) has also been the first to propose a parameter which predicts the languages that allow NNSubs. He proposes a new theoretical analysis for the occurrence of NNSubs in Spanish, thus extending Belletti and Rizzi’s (1988) work for Italian. Belletti and Rizzi categorise Italian psych verbs into three groups according to the different cases that the Experiencer can take:

1. Nominative -- the *temere* 'fear' verb class

2. Accusative -- the *preoccupare* 'worry' verb class
3. Dative -- the *piacere* 'like' verb class

Belletti and Rizzi (1988) argue that Italian (and Spanish) have *piacere* psych verb constructions which contain NNSubs as in the following:

- (1.7) A mi tía le gustan las telenovelas.  
 to my aunt-DAT CL-DAT like-PL the soaps-NOM  
 'My aunt likes soap operas.'

Masullo (1992: 118-146) spells out the categories of verbs that would typically allow NNSubs. The verbs in question are unaccusative and the categories belonging to this group are:

1. Psych verbs: *gustar* 'like', *sorprenderse* 'be surprised by', *antojarse* 'crave', *interesarse* 'be interested in', etc.
2. Raising predicates: *parecer* 'seem', *empezar* 'begin', *seguir* 'continue', etc.
3. Ergative verbs marked by the clitic *se*: *salirse* 'come off', *descoserse* 'come unstitched', *llenarse* 'fill', *caerse* 'fall accidentally', etc.
4. Verbs of involuntary bodily activities: *temblar* 'shake', *latir* 'beat', *salivar* 'salivate', *sangrar* 'bleed', etc.
5. Other unaccusative verbs forming an heterogeneous class: *faltar* 'lack', *corresponder* 'correspond', *llevar* 'take', *tocar* 'fall', *alcanzar* 'reach', *bastar* 'suffice', etc.

Apart from dative subjects, his analysis includes other non-nominal preverbal elements, like accusative (1.8) and locative (1.9) subjects.

(1.8) A Juan                    le                    robaron                    sus                    documentos.  
to Juan-ACC                    CL-ACC                    stole-PL                    his                    documents-NOM  
'Juan's documents got stolen.'

(1.9) Aquí                    no                    se                    come                    bien.  
here-LOC                    not                    SE                    eat                    well  
'Food is not good here.'

As mentioned earlier, these subjects raise implications for GB theory in terms of case, NP movement and argument chain formation (as in Chomsky 1981, 1986a). The basic problem posed by NNSubs is that they move to [Spec, IP] and nevertheless they are non-nominative. Masullo (1992, 1993) solves this problem by proposing that, in Spanish, case for postverbal subjects can be assigned via government by INFL, and that AGR is [+lexical] (Contreras, 1991) therefore assigning features canonically to the right. This turns Spec, IP into an available position to which any VP-internal constituent may raise, as case has already been discharged and will not be released again via spec-head agreement. This is why, in the cases of Spanish and Italian, Spec, IP can become an A'-position, as it is a non-theta and non-case assigning position. This is also the reason why NNSubs do not agree with INFL.

(1.10) A nadie                    le                    compraron regalos.  
to nobody-ACC            CL-ACC            bought-PL presents-NOM-PL

‘They didn't buy presents for anybody.’

In languages like English and French, AGR is [-lexical] and nominative case is checked in Spec, IP and assigned via spec-head agreement, which rules out the possibility of Spec, IP accommodating NNSubs. Spec, IP then remains an A-position, assigning a theta role and case to the subject of the sentence.

This difference in case assignment among languages prompts Masullo (1992, 1993) to postulate the NNSub Parameter by which a language can allow NNSubs as part of its core grammar only if nominative case is assigned in situ<sup>3</sup>. In other words, if a language is going to allow NNSubs, then it needs to license case assignment via government by INFL and AGR must be [+lexical].

From the point of view of L2 acquisition, this parametric difference leads to a crucial question: what happens when adult learners who speak a [-NNSub] language (like English) try to acquire a [+NNSub] language (like Spanish)? With this question in mind, a study was organized involving 3 groups of 20 university English speaking learners and 10 native Spanish speaking control subjects. They were given three tasks: an aural preference, an elicited imitation, and a picture description task.

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<sup>3</sup> As in Contreras (1991).

The aim of the study is to understand the processes involved in the acquisition of this particular characteristic of Spanish and to determine the role of the learner's first language and Universal Grammar in the process of acquisition.

This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 starts with a brief overview of the Spanish language. This is followed by an account of the grammatical framework of NNSubs, including the categories of verbs and constructions that require them and the issue of case assignment. Next, Masullo's (1992, 1993) proposal of a NNSub parameter is introduced and why languages like Spanish and Italian have a [+NNSub] setting of the parameter while English and French have a [-NNSub] setting is discussed. This section also introduces the connection between NNSubs and features associated with the Pro-drop Parameter: pro-drop, lack of expletives, and post-verbal nominative DPs. Lastly, and by referring to Grimshaw's Thematic Hierarchy (1990), why datives and accusatives have a tendency to appear preverbally in unaccusative constructions is discussed.

Chapter 3 discusses some of the central issues of language acquisition theory - principles and parameters, adult/post-puberty access to Universal Grammar, parameter resetting, etc. - and provides a background of related L1 and L2 acquisition studies, including research on the Pro-drop Parameter and Montrul's (1998) study on the acquisition of dative experiencers. Finally, the chapter looks at the teaching of Spanish as a L2 to find evidence of the amount of grammatical explanation and practice of NNSub structures in language textbooks.

Chapter 4 starts with a reminder of the aims of this study and points out the methodological difficulties relating to the elusive nature of NNSubs. It then describes the experimental tasks used for data collection and discusses methodological considerations regarding the use of the tasks involved. Finally, the chapter describes the characteristics and language learning background of each group of participants and details the procedure of data collection.

Chapter 5 presents the results of each of the three tasks and analyses the data in terms of frequency of use of NNSubs by each of the experimental groups, taking into account a series of categories based on the most common errors with unaccusative verbs. Performance is also measured in terms of four very common verbs: *gustar* 'like', *doler* 'hurt', *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack'.

Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the results through the hypotheses set out in Chapter 2 and the conclusion. The discussion includes reference to lexical optionality and the learnability problem and the conclusion offers suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 2

## 2 Non-Nominative Subjects in Spanish

### 2.1 Linguistic background

This chapter will deal with the theoretical considerations regarding the nature and use of Non-Nominative Subjects (NNSubs) and will present Masullo's (1992, 1993) proposal of a NNSub Parameter. To set the context for the discussion on NNSubs, the next section will outline the general characteristics of the Spanish language.

#### 2.1.1 Linguistic overview of the Spanish Language

Spanish is a nominative/accusative S-V-O language which shares the characteristics of other Indo-European languages. Spanish has a rich verbal morphology and exhibits overt movement of interrogatives and noun phrases. Like other Romance languages, Spanish is a head initial language, with heads (nouns, adjectives, prepositions and verbs) always preceding their complements. Gender is an inherent characteristic of nouns in Spanish and is inflected as either feminine or masculine, while determiners and adjectives must show gender and number agreement with the noun. Nouns are, however, not inflected for case. Spanish also has pronominal clitics, unstressed object pronouns which are verb related as direct (2.1) or indirect (2.2) objects (examples from Bosque and Demonte, 1999: 1530, 1550).

(2.1) **Esa película la** vi hace unos tres años.

that film CL saw about some three years

'I saw that film about three years ago.'

(2.2) Maggie **le** cocinó el pastel **a Gabriela**.

Maggie CL cooked the cake to Gabriela

'Maggie cooked the cake for Gabriela.'

Because Spanish has a rich morphology, it permits a flexible word order. So apart from its unmarked S-V-O order, V-S-O is also possible for most verbs, while the S-O-V or O-V-S orders are grammatical if the object is a pronoun. Spanish rich agreement morphology also makes the language pro-drop. This means that when the meaning of the pronominal subject can be recovered from the context, there is no need for the pronoun to be overt, thus it takes the form of an empty category *pro*, as in (2.3):

(2.3) (Yo) Quise ir pero (ellos) no me dejaron.

(I) wanted go but (they) no CL- let PL

'I wanted to go but they didn't let me.'

In addition, Spanish has two other individual characteristics: it uses the so-called 'Personal *a*' to precede animate<sup>4</sup> objects and requires clitic doubling of dative indirect objects. (2.4) is an example of both properties (Bosque and Demonte, 1999: 1548).

(2.4) Lola **le** comió la manzana **a Pablo**.

Lola CL-DAT ate the apple to Pablo-DAT

---

<sup>4</sup> Personal *a* 'to' can also be used with non-human animate objects and inanimate objects in specific situations (see Zagana, 2002:13-14).

‘Lola ate Pablo’s apple.’

Clitic doubling is obligatory with reflexive and pronominal indirect objects (2.5) and with clitic left dislocation constructions, where the doubled object precedes the clitic (2.6) (Montrul, 2004: 189):

(2.5) A ella **se**      **le** rompió    el      vestido.

to her SE      CL broke    the      dress

‘The teacher’s dress got broken.’

(2.6) **Las maletas las**      dejé    en el aeropuerto.

the suitcases CL      left    in the airport

‘I left the suitcases in the airport.’

Spanish has a nominative/accusative case system, which renders a more flexible word order, but which manifests morphologically only in personal pronouns and some relative pronouns. Nominative case is assigned to the subjects of finite clauses, indicative or subjunctive (2.7), the NP linked to the subject of the clause (2.8), and to participial (2.9) and infinitival (2.10) adjunct clauses. The following examples have been taken from Zagona (2002: 9):

(2.7) Insisto      **yo**      en que      lo hagas      **tú**.

insist-IND    I-NOM on    that      it do-SUBJ    you-NOM

‘I insist that you do it.’

(2.8) El campeón eres **tú**.  
the champion is you-NOM  
'The champion is you.'

(2.9) Llegada **ella**, empezó la fiesta.  
arrived she-NOM began the party  
'(With) her arrived, the party began.'

(2.10) De ganar **ellos**, los felicitaremos.  
of win they-NOM CL-DO-ACC congratulate-PL  
'If they win, we will congratulate them.'

Genitive case is assigned to the subject of a noun phrase and is marked by the preposition *de* 'of' followed by a noun (2.11) or by the genitive form of a pronominal (2.12) (examples from Zagona, 2002: 10):

(2.11) el retrato **de** Josefina  
the portrait-GEN of Josefina  
'Josefina's portrait.'

(2.12) **mis** libros  
my-PL-GEN books  
'my books'

Objective case is assigned to objects of prepositions and has three subclasses: accusative, dative and oblique. The case assigned to the object depends on whether the objects co-occur with a clitic and the form that this clitic assumes. Accusative case is assigned to the direct object of the verb (2.13), dative case to the indirect object of the verb (2.14), always preceded by Personal *a* 'to' (2.14) and oblique case to the object of prepositions (2.15). Of the three complements, the oblique is the only one that does not accept clitics (Zagona, 2002: 13):

(2.13) En el mercado **(los/les)**<sup>5</sup> vi **a los vecinos.**  
 in the market (CL-ACC) saw to the neighbours-ACC  
 'At the market I saw the neighbours.'

(2.14) Juan **le** mandó un paquete **a José.**  
 Juan CL-DAT sent a package to José-DAT  
 'Juan sent a package to José.'

(2.15) Hablaron de **Juan/él.**  
 spoke-PL of Juan/he  
 'They talked about him/Juan.'

Different languages have different ways of showing syntactic relationships between elements in a sentence. Case marking in English is quite restricted as there are only three cases (nominative, objective, and genitive) with few overtly marked case forms - the genitive (as in *the lady's bag*) and the pronoun system (e.g. *I, me, my, mine*).

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<sup>5</sup> The clitic in this sentence is not obligatory but its use is quite common in some Latin American varieties of Spanish.

As it has been shown briefly, Spanish case system is richer<sup>6</sup> though overt case marking is also quite limited. According to GB, even in cases when languages do not possess rich morphological case marking, like English or Spanish, they possess systems of abstract Case (written with a capital C) in which assigners like verbs, prepositions, and INFL assign abstract Case to NPs. Verbs and prepositions are said to assign accusative Case to NPs that they govern while INFL assigns nominative case to their governed NPs. This system ensures that all lexically realised NPs get Case and accounts for, e.g. the distribution of nominative and accusative case.

This very brief overview of Spanish has presented some general features about the language. A number of these characteristics belong to Spanish by virtue of being a Romance language but some others, like Personal *a* 'to' and clitic doubling with dative indirect objects are only found in few languages. Personal *a* 'to' together with clitic doubling are found in Spanish and Romanian (Popescu, 1997), while clitic doubling is found in spoken French (Kaiser, 1992) and Italian dialects (Rizzi, 1986; Poletto and Pollock, 2000). These special features will play a central role in the NNSub constructions - displaying dative, accusative or locative subjects - that this study will examine .

The remaining part of this section (2.1) will provide a linguistic introduction to Non-Nominative Subjects as a characteristic feature of the Spanish language. 2.1.2 will present the linguistic background of Non-Nominative Subjects while 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 will deal with related grammatical and discourse issues. The second part of this chapter will deal with language acquisition and will be subdivided into three parts: 2.2.1 and

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<sup>6</sup> Though not as rich as in languages like German, which has four or Finnish, which has fifteen.

2.2.2 will deal with language acquisition issues and L1 parameters, 2.2.3 with Principles and Parameters in the L2, 2.2.3 with access to UG and 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 with the Pro-drop Parameter and L2 parameter resetting. Section 2.3 will discuss the Non-Nominative Subject Parameter and 2.4 will provide details of the study.

### 2.1.2 Linguistic background of Non-Nominative Subjects

This thesis will examine the adult second language (L2) acquisition of Spanish non-agentive, Non-Nominative Subjects (NNSubs) by adult speakers of English. NNSubs are a characteristic feature of the Spanish language, as illustrated in the following sentences:

(2.16) A los niños les gusta el helado.  
to the children-DAT CL-DAT-PL likes the ice-cream  
'The children like ice-cream.'

(2.17) Al bebé le duelen las encías.  
to the baby-DAT CL-DAT hurt-PL the gums  
'The baby's gums are hurting.'

(2.18) (A mí) se me cayó la gorra.  
(to me-DAT) SE<sup>7</sup> CL-DAT fell the cap  
'I have dropped my cap.'

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<sup>7</sup> *Se de matización*: (lit.) 'se that adds a shade of meaning' (Butt and Benjamin, 2000: 358).

(2.19) Al pobre lo/le<sup>8</sup> llaman 'Monito'.  
to the poor-ACC CL-ACC call little monkey  
'They call the poor chap 'Little Monkey'.'

(2.20) En esta zona viven todos los mafiosos.  
in this area-LOC live all the Mafiosi  
'The Mafiosi live in this area.'

NNSubs have also been documented in other Romance languages like Italian (Belletti and Rizzi, 1988) and Romanian (Dumitrescu and Masullo, 1996) and in languages like Icelandic (Zaenen et al., 1985 and Sigurðsson, 1991) Japanese (Ura, 2000), Hindi (Mahajan, 1989) and in South Asian languages (Verma and Mohanan, 1990). Icelandic 'quirky' subject constructions, in particular, have attracted much attention in the literature (Sigurðsson, 1989, 1991, 2000; Rögnvaldsson, 1991; Masullo, 1993; Eythórsson, 2000, 2001b, Rivero, 2004; etc.) but they are different in nature from the Spanish NNSubs discussed in this study. Icelandic subjects are genitive, accusative or dative subjects with a lexically<sup>9</sup> selected non-nominative case (Sigurðsson, 1992), whereas in Spanish case is assigned structurally, which makes it possible to predict whether an argument will receive nominative, accusative or dative case (Masullo, 1992).

For the purpose of the present study, Masullo's (1992, 1993) work on Spanish will be used as the basis for the analysis, as he is the first to propose a parameter which

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<sup>8</sup> *Lo* is typically used in Latin America while *le* is the preferred form in Spain.

<sup>9</sup> Lexical case can be defined as being determined as a lexical property of certain heads, like V and P, rather than in terms of syntactic configuration (Freidin and Sprouse, 1991).

predicts the languages that allow NNSubs. Masullo demonstrates that Spanish (among other languages) presents sentences with a non-nominative element in Spec, IP, which functions as the subject of predication and which evinces properties of canonical or agreeing subjects. For convenience, it will be said that NNSubs occupy Spec, IP without specifying which functional/inflection projection is involved.

In his analysis, Masullo (1992: 118-146) spells out the categories of verbs that would typically allow NNSubs. The verbs in question are unaccusative and the categories belonging to this group are:

1. Psych verbs III<sup>10</sup>: *gustar* 'like', *sorprenderse* 'be surprised by', *antojarse* 'crave', *interesarse* 'be interested in', etc. For example:

(2.21) A mí                    me           gusta / interesa / encanta la comida española.  
to me-DAT    CL-DAT likes / interests / loves the food    Spanish  
'I like / am interested in / love Spanish food.'

(2.22) A la recepcionista    le           sorprendieron sus malos modales.  
to the receptionist-DAT CL-DAT surprised-PL his/her bad manners  
'The receptionist was surprised by his/her bad manners.'

2. Raising predicates: *parecer* 'seem', *empezar* 'begin', *seguir* 'continue', etc:

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<sup>10</sup> Verbs expressing psychological states. The ones requiring NNSubs are the *piacere* 'like' kind according to Belletti and Rizzi's classification (Belletti and Rizzi, 1988).

(2.23) A nadie le parece bien eso.  
to nobody-DAT CL-DAT seems right that-NOM  
'That does not seem right to anyone.'

(2.24) A ella le siguió molestando el vértigo.  
to her-DAT CL-DAT continued bothering the vertigo  
'She was still bothered by her vertigo.'

3. Ergative verbs marked by the clitic *se*: *salirse* 'come off', *descoserse* 'come unstitched', *llenarse* 'fill', *caerse* 'fall accidentally', etc:

(2.25) Al libro se le salió la tapa.  
to the book-DAT SE CL-DAT came off the cover-NOM  
'The book's cover has come off.'

(2.26) ¡A la reina se le descosió la blusa!  
to the queen-DAT SE CL-DAT came unstitched the blouse-NOM  
'The queen's blouse came unstitched!'

4. Verbs of involuntary bodily activities: *temblar* 'shake', *latir* 'beat', *salivar* 'salivate', *sangrar* 'bleed', etc:

(2.27) A mi abuelita le tiemblan las manos.  
to my granny-DAT CL-DAT shake the hands-NOM  
'My granny's hands are shaking.'

(2.28) Al perro le salivó la boca.  
to the dog CL-DAT salivated the mouth-NOM  
'The dog's mouth salivated.'

5. Other unaccusative verbs forming an heterogeneous class: *faltar* 'lack', *corresponder* 'correspond', *llevar* 'take', *tocar* 'fall', *alcanzar* 'reach', *bastar* 'suffice', etc:

(2.29) A ella le faltan tres días para viajar.  
to her-DAT CL-DAT lack three days to travel  
'She is travelling in three days.'

(2.30) A Mario le tocó hacer el servicio militar.  
to Mario-DAT CL-DAT fall do the service military  
'Mario has to do the military service.'

Masullo (1992) also explains that NNSubs can appear in unaccusative, dethematized, as well as impersonal constructions, and can be dative (2.31), accusative (2.32), or locative (2.33):

(2.31) A Andrés le gusta el golf.  
to Andrés-DAT CL-DAT likes the golf-NOM  
'Andrés likes golf.'

(2.32) A Daniel lo llaman 'Dany'.  
 to Daniel-ACC CL-ACC call-PL Dany-NOM  
 'They call Daniel 'Dany.'

(2.33) Aquí no crece el pasto.  
 here-LOC not grows the grass-NOM  
 '(The) grass does not grow here.'

In order to explain why the dative, impersonal or locative phrases - and not the nominative NPs agreeing with INFL - are the ones that appear in preverbal position, Masullo (1992: 118) takes Belletti and Rizzi's (1988) account for psych verbs. He extends this analysis to all the categories of verbs allowing NNSubs. According to this analysis, a predicate will allow a NNSub in Spanish so long as the predicate either does not select an external argument, as in the above examples, or, if it does, it has been dethematized, i.e. the external argument has incorporated either into INFL or into the verb. This is what happens in (2.34) below:

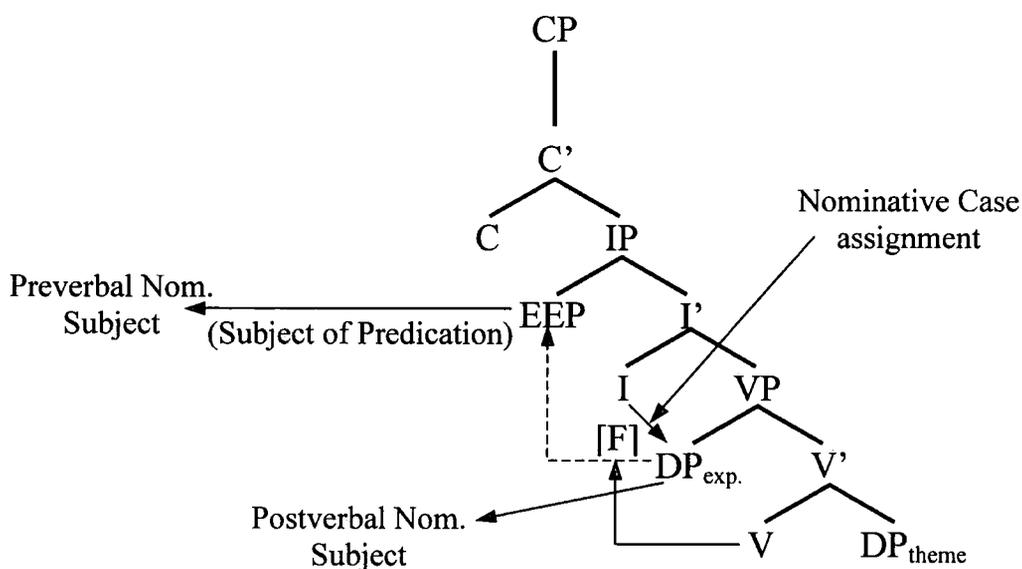
(2.34) A Juan lo consideran inteligente.  
 to John-ACC CL-ACC consider-PL intelligent  
 'They consider John intelligent.'

Impersonal constructions with *se* are also included in the group of verbs agreeable to NNSubs. The clitic *se* stands for a dethematized external argument, i.e. it has incorporated into INFL so that Spec, IP is available for an internal argument to raise to.

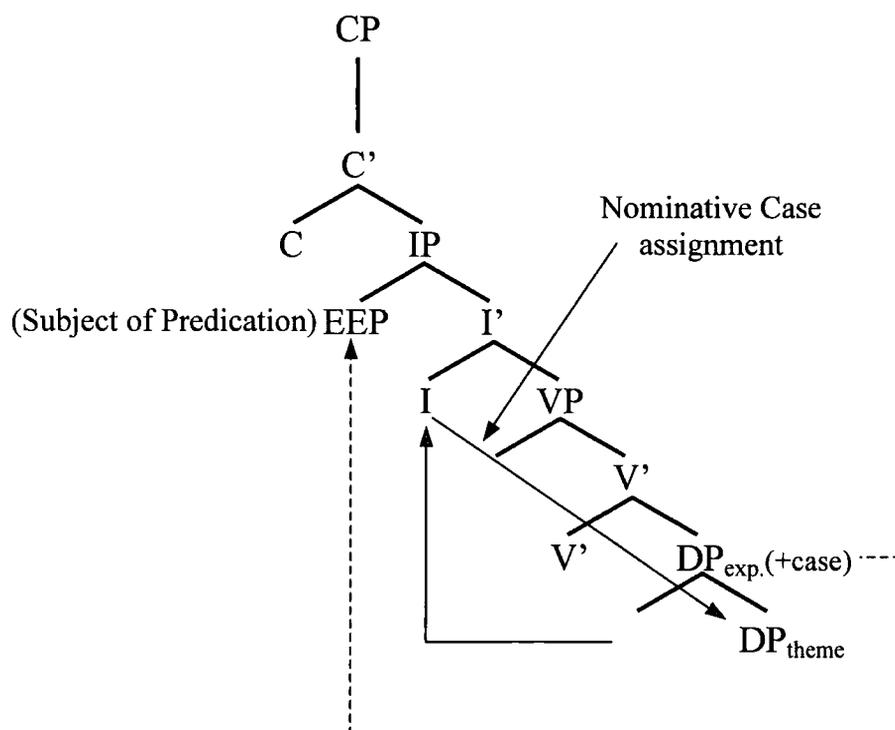
- (2.35) Aquí se hablan varios idiomas.  
 Here-LOC CL speak-PL several languages  
 ‘Several languages are spoken here.’

In all cases, the NNSub originates VP-internally and then raises to Spec, IP to check EPP, i.e. the Extended Projection Principle (Chomsky, 1981), as shown in the trees in (2.36) and (2.37):

(2.36)



(2.37)



To ensure that the NNSubs in these constructions display properties typically attributed to subjects in Spanish, they must 'pass' tests for subjecthood. Masullo (1993) presents evidence to show that NNSubs behave like ordinary subjects.

NNSubs behave like subjects with respect to raising. They must be raised to the Spec, IP of the main clause when they originate within the complement of a raising verb such as *parecer* 'seem', as seen in (2.38a) and (2.38b). On the other hand, neither NNSubs or nominative subjects can 'super-raise' (as shown in 2.39 a), something that left-dislocated elements can do (as in 2.39b) (Masullo, 1992: 123-124):

(2.38) a. A Adriana<sub>i</sub> parece gustarle la música coral t<sub>i</sub>.

Adriana-DAT seems to like-CL-DAT the music coral  
 ‘Adriana seems to like coral music.’

b. \*Parece a Adriana<sub>i</sub> gustarle la música coral t<sub>i</sub>.  
 seems to Adriana-DAT to like-CL-DAT the music coral

(2.39) a. \*A Adriana<sub>i</sub> parece que Marcos cree que t<sub>i</sub> le gusta la música coral t<sub>i</sub>.  
 to Adriana-DAT seems that Marcos believes that CL-DAT likes the music coral

b. A Adriana<sub>i</sub>, sí, parece que Marcos cree que le<sub>i</sub> gusta la música coral t<sub>i</sub>.  
 to Adriana, yes, seems that Mark believes that CL-DAT likes the music coral  
 ‘Adriana, yes, it seems that Mark believes that she likes coral music.’

There also is correspondence between NNSubs and nominative subjects with respect of the word order in Wh-questions (Masullo, 1992: 124-125). Postposition is obligatory in root clauses:

(2.40) a. ¿Qué compró Juan?  
 what bought John-NOM?  
 ‘What did John buy?’

b. \*¿Qué Juan compró?

what John-NOM bought?

‘What did John buy?’

c. ¿Qué le gusta a Juan?

what CL-DAT likes to John-DAT?

‘What does John like?’

d. \*¿Qué a Juan? le gusta?

what to John-DAT CL-DAT likes

‘What does John like?’

When postposition is not obligatory, as with interrogative words like *dónde* ‘where’, *cuándo* ‘when’, *por qué* ‘why’ and *cómo* ‘how come’, this is true for both NNSubs and nominative subjects:

(2.41) a. No sé cuándo/dónde/por qué/cómo a Juan se le

ocurrió eso.

not know when/where/why/how come to John-DAT SE CL-DAT

occurred that

‘I don’t know when/where/why/how come that idea occurred to John.’

b. No sé cuándo/dónde/por qué/cómo Juan tuvo esa idea.

not know when/where/why/how come John-NOM had that idea

‘I don’t know when/where/why/how come John got that idea.’

NNSubs differ from left dislocated elements (or topics) in very clear ways. Unlike left-dislocated constituents, as shown in example (2.42a) below (Masullo, 1992: 120) NNSubs can be quantified NPs, as in (2.42b):

(2.42) a. \*A nadie, el profesor lo dejará salir.  
 to nobody-ACC, the teacher-NOM CL-ACC will let go  
 'The teacher won't let anybody go.'

b. A nadie le gusta la música coral en esta casa.  
 to nobody-DAT CL-DAT likes the music choral in this house  
 'Nobody likes choral music in this house.'

Furthermore, unlike left-dislocated constituents, NNSubs can occur in embedded clauses and do not obstruct wh-extraction. Left-dislocated elements, on the other hand, are only partly acceptable in embedded clauses (Masullo, 1992: 120):

(2.43) a. Es una pena que a Marcos no le interese el arte.  
 is a shame that to Marcos-DAT no CL-DAT interests the arte  
 'It is a shame that Mark is not interested in art.'

b. ?? Es una pena que a Marcos el comité no le dará  
 una beca<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> However, this sentence would be grammatical if the present subjunctive were used in the subordinate clause: *Es una pena que a Marcos el comité no le dé una beca*. This means then that the occurrence of left-dislocated constituents in embedded clauses is not as marginal as first thought and may perhaps question the validity of this test of subjecthood.

is a shame that to Marcos-DAT the committee no CL-DAT will give  
a grant-ACC

'It is a shame that to Mark the committee will not give a grant.'

Additional evidence which points to the subjecthood of NNSubs is their possibility of modification by *alone* in English - *solamente* in Spanish. As expected, these subjects can be modified by *solamente* if in preverbal position, a possibility not available to topics, as the following examples show (Masullo, 1992: 121):

(2.44) a. A Julio solamente le pueden gustar las operas de Verdi.

to Julio-DAT alone CL-DAT can-PL like the operas of Verdi

'Julio alone can like Verdi's operas.'

b.\*A Julio solamente, su novia le regalará una grabación de  
Verdi.

to Julio-DAT alone his girlfriend CL-DAT will buy one recording of  
Verdi

'To Julio alone, his girlfriend will give him a recording of Verdi.'

NNSubs contrast with topics with respect to their being capable of modification by absolute constructions. In keeping with Williams (1980), Masullo points out that the requirement that these constructions must satisfy is that they be m-commanded by the element they modify or are predicated of. Thus in (2.45) below, the absolute construction can only be predicated of the subject (Enrique), as shown by the coindexation marked in (2.45) but not of the internal argument (Martín) (Masullo, 1992: 122):

(2.45) Una vez PRO<sub>i/\*j</sub> llegado a Buenos Aires, Enrique<sub>i</sub> conoció a Martín<sub>j</sub>.  
 one time PRO arrived to Buenos Aires, Enrique met to Martín  
 ‘Once he had arrived in Buenos Aires, Enrique met Martín.’

NNSubs can also be predicated of by absolute constructions:

(2.46) Una vez PRO<sub>i</sub> llegada a Buenos Aires, a Claudia<sub>i</sub>  
 le empezó a gustar el mate.  
 one time PRO arrived to Buenos Aires, to Claudia-DAT  
 CL-DAT started to like the mate  
 ‘Once arrived in Buenos Aires, Claudia started to like mate.’

However, true topics do not allow modification of any kind:

(2.47) \*PRO<sub>i</sub> Habiendo terminado los deberes, a los niños<sub>i</sub> la  
 madre los llevó al parque<sup>12</sup>.  
 PRO having finished the homework, to the children-DAT the  
 mother CL-PL-DAT take to the park  
 ‘Having finished their homework, the children, their mother took them  
 to the park.’

(Masullo, 1992: 122)

Topicalisation, clitic-left dislocation and Wh-extraction can license parasitic gaps, as in (2.48). However, movement of a non-nominative element to Spec, IP cannot

<sup>12</sup> This example, however, was deemed grammatical by a native speaker of Spanish.

license them (as in 2.49) (Masullo, 1993: 307-308).

(2.48) ¿A quién<sub>i</sub> t'<sub>i</sub> preocupa la situación del país t<sub>i</sub> sin desesperar e<sub>i</sub>?  
to whom worries the situation of the country without despairing  
'Who is worried about the country's situation without getting desperate?'

(2.49) \*A Juan<sub>i</sub> lo preocupa la situación del país t<sub>i</sub> sin desesperar e<sub>i</sub>.  
to John-DAT CL-DAT worries the situation of the country without despairing  
'John is worried about the country's situation without getting desperate.'

So far, it has been argued that Spanish NNSubs display properties typically attributed to subjects. It has also been pointed out that they are common with unaccusative verbs because they do not select an external argument<sup>13</sup>, and so Spec, IP is available for an internal argument to move to. But Spec, IP is also unoccupied at DS in the case of a predicate selecting an external argument in view of the VP-internal subject hypothesis. So why are NNSubs incompatible with transitive and unergative predicates? Masullo (1992) answers this by appealing to Grimshaw's (1990) Thematic Hierarchy, a ranking which establishes prominence relations, among possible semantic roles: when there are several arguments competing to become the subject of IP, the one occupying the highest position in the hierarchy will take priority (Masullo, 1992: 147).

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<sup>13</sup> Fernández Soriano (1999) claims that the dative is an external argument in constructions involving a verb with unaccusative *se*. So in the sentence *A Juan se le rompió el coche*, 'The car broke on John'/'John's car broke on-him', *A Juan* 'to Juan' is a quirky subject, an external argument of the construction (Fernández Soriano, 1999: 91).

Grimshaw takes the order of arguments in the Thematic Hierarchy to be as follows:

(2.50) (Agent(Experiencer(Goal/Source/Location(Theme))))

(Grimshaw, 1990: 8)

Masullo concludes that in unergative and transitive constructions, the agent will take priority over any other internal arguments to become subject of the entire clause. The occurrence of a NNSub is, therefore, improbable, even in cases where Spec, IP is empty at DS (Masullo, 1992: 148):

(2.51) DS: [IP[I' [VP José[VP dio un beso a María]]]]

‘José gave a kiss to María.’

SS<sub>1</sub>: [IP José<sub>i</sub>[I' le dio<sub>j</sub>[VP t<sub>i</sub> [VP t<sub>j</sub> un beso a María]]]]

SS<sub>2</sub>: \*[IP A María<sub>i</sub>[I' le dio<sub>j</sub>[VP t<sub>i</sub> José[VP t<sub>j</sub> un beso a María t<sub>i</sub>]]]]

SS<sub>3</sub>: \*[IP A María<sub>i</sub>[I' le dio<sub>j</sub>[VP t<sub>i</sub> [VP t<sub>j</sub> un beso t<sub>i</sub> ] José]]]

Masullo points out that the Thematic Hierarchy can be overridden by discorsal factors. SS<sub>2</sub> in (2.51) is not grammatical since it constitutes a violation of Contreras' (1989, 1991) Condition on Closed Domains. SS<sub>3</sub> would not be ungrammatical if *a María* were in contrast with another goal. Likewise, in (2.52a) below, the Thematic Hierarchy has again been overridden by discorsal factors. (2.52b) provides the unmarked version (Masullo, 1992: 148):

(2.52) a. [<sub>IP</sub> A ningún estudiante [<sub>I'</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> le            aceptó    el trabajo tarde] el profesor]]]

to no        student-DAT        CL-DAT accepted the work    late    the professor

‘The professor did not accept late homework from any of his students.’

b. El profesor    no le                aceptó    el trabajo tarde a ningún    estudiante.

the professor not CL-DAT    accepted the work    late to no        student-DAT

‘The professor did not accept late homework from any of his students.’

Although the precise formulation of the Thematic Hierarchy is controversial, it is accepted that Experiencer ranks above Theme (Jackendoff, 1990). Apart from Grimshaw (1990), Belletti and Rizzi (1988) also rank experiencers above themes. On the basis of this, Masullo concludes that experiencers will be higher than themes, whether they are in nominative or accusative case. He explains that this is the reason for the tendency of dative NPs to appear preverbally in unaccusative constructions (Masullo, 1992: 149):

In spite of being associated with the NNSub parameter, NNSubs co-occur with properties related to [+pro-drop] languages namely pro-drop (2.53), lack of expletives (2.54) and post-verbal nominative DPs in presentational sentences (2.55)<sup>14</sup>.

(2.53) Está    hablando        por        teléfono.

<sup>14</sup> Icelandic is an exception to this as it does not allow pro-drop and has an expletive pronoun, though only in Spec, CP (see Holmberg and Nikanne, 2002).

is speaking by telephone

'She/He is speaking on the phone.'

(2.54) Está lloviendo.

is raining

'It is raining.'

(2.55) Está empezando el partido.

is starting the match

'The match is starting.'

Apart from Spanish, [+pro-drop] Romance languages like Italian and Romanian also allow NNSubs, but [-pro-drop] languages like English and French, which need a lexical subject (2.56), which do possess expletive pronouns (2.57), and which do not allow postverbal subjects (unless they are licensed in an expletive chain) (2.58) do not permit NNSubs.:

(2.56) a. He is speaking on the phone.

b.\* Is speaking on the phone.

(2.57) a. It is raining.

b. \* Is raining.

(2.58) a. The match is starting now.

b.\* Is starting the match now.

Masullo links the clustering of the properties discussed above (the lack or presence of expletives, the existence or non-existence of postverbal subjects and the existence or non-existence of NNSubs) to the way in which nominative case is assigned in a given language. In languages like Spanish or Italian, nominative case is canonically assigned within VP via government by INFL. In languages like English and French, on the other hand, nominative case is uniformly assigned via spec-head agreement. In both cases, INFL contains features for Tense and Agreement (AGR) but it is the AGR features which will play a decisive role in the different ways in which Case is assigned. In Spanish and Italian, INFL assigns Case to an NP to its right, like other lexical categories in the language, thanks to the richness of agreement that these languages exhibit (e.g. person and number agreement markers) (Koopman and Sportiche, 1988, 1990, Contreras, 1991)<sup>15</sup>. In English and French, conversely, INFL assigns Case only to Spec, IP due to its non-lexical (non-rich) properties.

In Spanish, the rich lexical properties of the AGR features of INFL is what makes it pronominal or clitic-like and the reason why AGR absorbs Case (Rizzi, 1982). Two characteristic properties of languages where there is Case absorption by AGR is the existence of null and postverbal subjects. The clitic-like properties of AGR is what allows the identification of the null pronoun in a null subject through the person and number agreement morphology of the verb. Likewise, because AGR bears Case, subjects which occur postverbally render a well formed structure as they are Case marked within VP and governed by the verb.

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<sup>15</sup> Other issues may arise from this analysis but they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

If, given its rich lexical properties, Spanish is an AGR [+lexical] language, and if AGR assigns its features to the right, Masullo argues that Spec, IP can be filled with a VP internal argument that can raise to that position. As mentioned earlier, and according to Contreras (1991), this raised element does not get case by moving to Spec, IP as it already gets case by INFL government. This also accounts for the lack of agreement between the raised element and the head (Masullo, 1992: 152).

It has been mentioned earlier that Masullo takes Grimshaw's (1990) Thematic Hierarchy to explain the tendency of dative and accusative NPs to appear preverbally in unaccusative constructions. But what is the reason for the movement? Masullo (1992) appeals to the relation of Predication to account for the movement under discussion. Zagana (2002: 83) describes Predication as completing 'the interpretation of the predicate by associating it with its subject'. And because dative and accusative NPs can take a predicate, as they are referential expressions, they are an ideal candidate for movement.

To account for the differences between languages such as English and Spanish, Masullo (1992, 1993) proposes a parameter which predicts the languages that allow NNSubs: the Non-Nominative Subject Parameter. This parameter states that:

- i. A language will allow NNSubs as part of its core grammar only if Spec, IP can function as an A'-position<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Masullo (1992: 155) points out that the idea that Spec, IP can function like an A' position is not new. See Diesing (1990), Kathol (1989), Goodall (1991a and 1991b) and Arnaiz (1992).

ii. Spec, IP can become an A'-position only if nominative case can be assigned via government by INFL.

And, incorporating Contreras' proposal regarding the nature of AGR in Spanish, the second clause of the parameter can be reformulated as iii. below:

iii. Spec, IP can become an A'-position only if nominative case can be assigned via government by [+lexical] AGR.

(Masullo, 1992: 154)

The positive setting would apply to both Spanish and Italian, as they allow NNSubs and AGR is [+lexical], and the negative setting to English and French, which disallow NNSubs as nominative case is checked in Spec, IP and AGR is [-lexical]<sup>17</sup>.

The phenomenon under consideration is discussed in Cazzoli-Goeta, Masullo and Young-Scholten (2004) as stemming from deeper properties of the language. In Minimalist terms (Chomsky, 1995), they claim that while in English the D- features<sup>18</sup> of Tense are strong, triggering obligatory movement for nominative case checking, in Spanish, the D-features on Tense responsible for nominative case assignment are weak so that nominative case can be resolved within VP prior to spell out. The weak

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<sup>17</sup> Although not central to this study, reference has to be made at this point to Icelandic, to note that it seems to represent a counterexample to the parameter proposed by Masullo. It was briefly mentioned earlier that Icelandic possesses a different type of NNSub which is lexically governed by the verb. In addition, it is interesting to mention that Icelandic does not allow pro-drop, has an expletive pronoun (though only allowed in Spec, CP) and allows the nominative subject to be postponed (Holmberg and Nikanne, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> D-features are the ones which 'attract' a DP: person, number and case.

nominative feature will be checked at LF by moving D to Tense. This account is in keeping with the Functional Parametrization Hypothesis<sup>19</sup> (Chomsky, 1991) as well as theories of feature-strength (Chomsky, 1995 and Lasnik, 1999), according to which properties of functional categories are responsible for a wide range of disparate superficial phenomena.

Likewise, by appealing to the weak nature of the determiner features on Tense, Cazzoli-Goeta et al. (2004) spell out the cluster of properties just mentioned as shown in Table 2.1:

**Table 2.1 – Cluster of properties associated with NNSubs.**

| Language            | D-Features on T | Associated properties                          |  |
|---------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| English,<br>French  | Strong →        | obligatoriness of<br>expletives in<br>Spec, TP | Themes raise to T (in<br>unaccusative sentences)   |
| Spanish,<br>Italian | Weak →          | no expletives                                  | postverbal nominative DPs<br>need not raise – dissociation of<br>nominative DPs from the<br>subject of predication |

1. The obligatoriness of expletive pronouns in Spec, TP in English, where the strong determiner feature on Tense must be checked even in the absence of a thematic subject.
2. The verbal nominative DPs allowed by Spanish, especially in existential sentences. While V in Spanish must raise to Tense obligatorily, nominative DPs need not do so.

<sup>19</sup>The idea that parameters of Universal Grammar relate not to the computational system but to the functional elements in the lexicon.

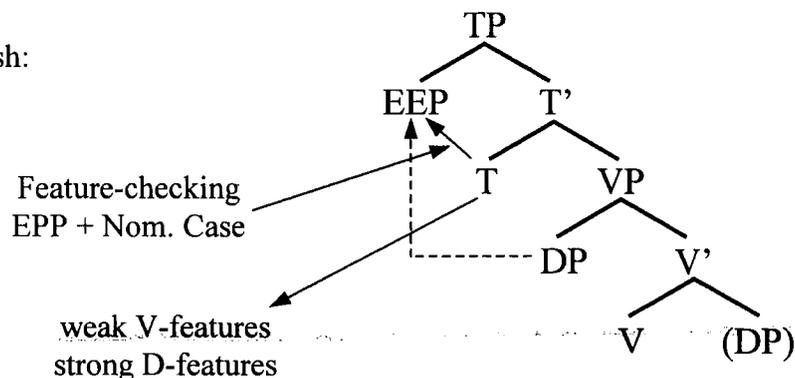
3. The dissociation in Spanish between nominative DPs from the subject of predication (Cazzoli-Goeta et al., 2004: 22).

If nominative case does not require movement to Spec, TP, the question arises as to what argument within the VP has priority to raise to Spec, TP to satisfy predication (or to check EPP). As mentioned earlier, following Belletti and Rizzi (1988), Grimshaw (1990) and others, Masullo (1992) argues that it is the argument highest in the Thematic Hierarchy which has priority to become the subject of predication. Since it is assumed that nominative case is uniformly assigned via government in Spanish, as in Contreras (1991), and never via spec-head agreement, the argument will raise to Spec, IP as a case-bearing constituent (Cazzoli-Goeta et al., 2004: 23).

Cazzoli-Goeta et al. (2004) also make reference to the Minimal Link Condition proposed by Chomsky (1995) as one that can be extended to the type of movement under consideration. This condition stipulates that if two elements compete for movement, the one closer to the attractor will have to move. Cazzoli-Goeta et al.'s (2004) claim is that experiencers, locatives and possessors are not only higher in the Thematic Hierarchy but also higher in the tree:

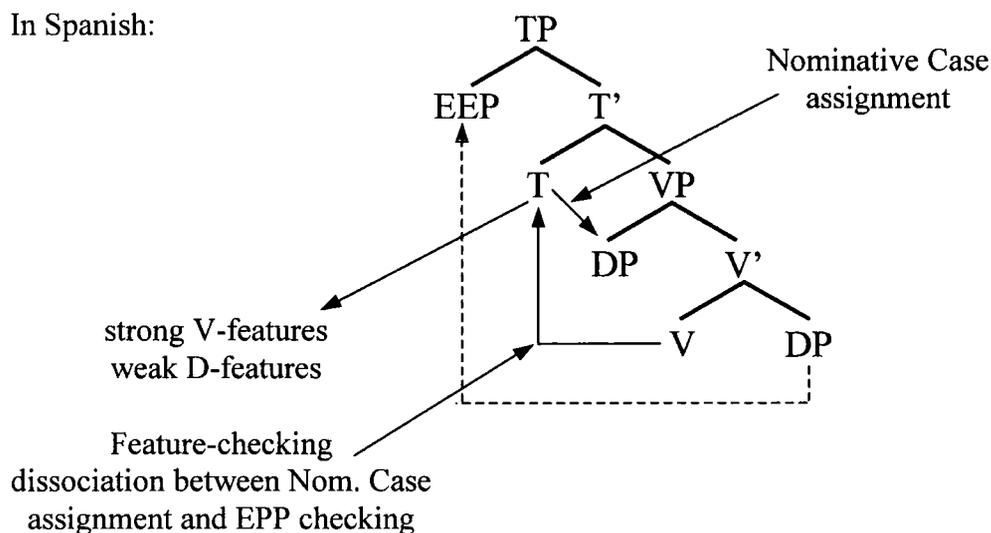
(2.59)

In English:



(2.60)

In Spanish:



To summarise, this section dealt with the theoretical issues regarding NNSubs in Spanish: the verbs and constructions that require them and the case that these subjects get. It also introduced Masullo's proposal of a NNSub parameter, which has a [+NNSub] setting in Spanish and Italian (as NNSubs are allowed and AGR is [+lexical]) and a [-NNSub] setting in English and French (as NNSubs are not allowed and AGR is [-lexical]). In connection to this, it was also pointed out that the occurrence of NNSubs in a language is not an isolated phenomenon but an association with a combination of features: pro-drop, lack of expletives, and post-verbal nominative DPs, i.e. a parameter, as proposed by Masullo (1992, 1993). Finally, by referring to Grimshaw's Thematic Hierarchy, it was explained why datives and accusatives have a tendency to appear preverbally in unaccusative constructions.

### 2.1.3 Unaccusative verbs with nominative subjects

The previous section examined Spanish NNSubs and the kind of verbs that require them. It has been pointed out (Masullo, 1992; 1993) that several of these verbs are unaccusative predicates, a particular group of verbs whose arguments are projected as internal arguments, a nominative theme and a dative/accusative/locative NP. The dative/accusative/locative NP moves to Spec, IP not to get case but to satisfy predication (or check EPP). Because the present study focuses on the acquisition of NNSubs, it will be important to bear in mind the fact that unaccusativity in Spanish can be manifested through two different structures. One of them generates two arguments, the second of which becomes the NNSub of the clause, as in (2.60) below, while the other one generates an internal argument that then becomes the nominative subject of the clause, as in (2.61) and (2.62) below.

(2.60) A María        le                    tiembla        la        voz.  
         to María-DAT CL-DAT        shake            the        voice  
         ‘María’s voice is shaking.’

(2.61) Los        estudiantes        llegaron.  
         the        students        arrived  
         ‘The students have arrived.’

(2.62) El        libro        apareció.  
         the        book        appeared  
         ‘The book has appeared.’

*Los estudiantes* and *el libro* appear as subjects of the verbs *llegaron* and *apareció* respectively and are themes, the things affected by the actions described by the verbs. As Zagona (2002: 153-4) points out, the subjects of these predicates function like proper subjects in that they agree with the verb, do not co-occur with case-marking preposition *a* 'to', and do not require clitic-doubling. However, these subjects are also objects as they are still linked to the complement of V, the position where the theta role was assigned.

Cross-linguistically, unaccusative (or ergative) verbs are those which originate with only one VP internal argument, a theme. This argument has to move to Spec, IP to get nominative case as unaccusative verbs can only assign one theta role to their argument. One class of unaccusative verbs of this type is the so-called 'presentational' verbs seen in (2.61) and (2.62), called like this because they introduce the existence or presence of a DP. This includes the verbs *llegar* 'arrive' and *aparecer* 'appear' (Zagona, 2002: 153)

In a study that deals with acquisition of NNSubs, it will be relevant in terms of the acquisition data to keep in mind that there are two possible unaccusative structures in Spanish, especially because one of them closely resembles the one used in English. (2.63a) and (2.63b) illustrate this similarity:

(2.63) a. The door opened.

b. La puerta            se        abrió.  
       the door-NOM     SE        opened  
       ‘The door opened.’

The Spanish unaccusative verb *abrirse* ‘open’ is used in much the same way as its English unaccusative counterpart *open*. However, (2.64a) and (2.64b) below show ungrammatical and grammatical instances of a different unaccusative use of the Spanish verb *abrir* ‘open’. (2.64a) is ungrammatical because, if produced with a neutral topic-focus intonation, the dative should raise to (non-case assigning) Spec, IP:

(2.64) a. \*La puerta        se le            abrió    a    Pedro. (neutral intonation)  
           the door-NOM SE CL-DAT opened to    Pedro-DAT  
           ‘He let the door open.’

b. A Pedro            se le            abrió    la puerta-NOM. (neutral intonation)  
           to Pedro-DAT SE CL-DAT opened the door  
           ‘Pedro let the door open.’

#### 2.1.4 Intonation patterns affecting word order

A related issue regarding the sentences with NNSubs is that, as with any grammatical declarative sentences involving any kind of subjects, the order of the constituents can be superseded by contextual information. Word order reflects what is considered old and new information in a sentence. If the intonation pattern of a sentence with a NNSub shows a common topic-focus structure, the sentence’s intonation peak

will fall on the part representing the new information, normally what is predicated of the NNSub, as in (2.65):

- (2.65) [A mí]<sub>TOPIC</sub> [me sorprendieron las noticias]<sub>FOCUS</sub>.  
to me-DAT CL-DAT surprised-PL the news  
'I was surprised by the news.'

However, if the focus of the sentence is the NNSub itself, the theme can raise to subject position and the NNSub can appear after the verb as in (2.66a):

- (2.66) a. [La noticia]<sub>TOPIC</sub> le sorprendió [a Miguel]<sub>FOCUS</sub>, no a mí.  
the news CL-DAT surprised- to Miguel-DAT, not to me  
'The news surprised Miguel, not me.'

Or the theme remains after the verb as in (2.66b) when the predicate and the theme become the topic of the sentence:

- b. [Le sorprendió la noticia]<sub>TOPIC</sub> [a Miguel]<sub>FOCUS</sub>, no a mí.  
CL-DAT surprised the news to Miguel-DAT, not to me  
'The news surprised Miguel, not me.'

Raising of the theme is also possible when it is left dislocated, as in (2.67):

(2.67) La billetera, me la acaban de robar.  
the wallet, CL-ACC CL-NOM finished of steal  
'My wallet has just been stolen.'

These various word orders show that the fact that Spanish, a language with a less fixed word order than English and French, allows information content to shape the syntactic component of the grammar (Zagona, 2002: 49). This flexibility poses implications for the analysis of data regarding the study of the NNSub parameter, and in particular the comparison of L2 data with native speakers' production. If there are varying intonation patterns in sentences produced by the L1 or L2 participants in the study to be discussed, this may cause confusion and misinterpretation of the results. It is essential that production data are carefully analysed from this point of view and that the intonation used when recording any task materials is clear and unambiguous.

# Chapter 3

## 3 Non-Nominative Subjects and Language Acquisition

### 3.1 Acquisition

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 has dealt with the theoretical considerations regarding the nature and use of Non-Nominative Subjects (NNSubs) and has presented Masullo's (1992, 1993) proposal of a NNSub Parameter. Chapter 3 will now deal with issues regarding second language acquisition (SLA) research and will review previous work related to the main topic of this study, the acquisition of Spanish NNSubs by adult speakers of English. As discussed earlier in this chapter, NNSubs are a particular aspect of Spanish grammar that is absent in English. In Spanish, the subject of a sentence can be dative, accusative or locative as well as nominative, whereas English, on the other hand, can only have nominative subjects. This is why, following Masullo's proposal for a parameter, Spanish is considered a [+NNSub] language and English a [-NNSub] language. The big research question is then: can English L2 learners acquire knowledge of NNSubs and the verbs that require them? In other words, can they re-set the NNSub parameter from [-NNSub] to [+NNSub]?

From the use of the terminology in the discussion so far, it will be evident that this study assumes a generative framework, with Universal Grammar (UG) and the theory of Principles and Parameters as outlined by Chomsky (1981, 1986a, and 1986b) at the centre of it. The theory of Principles and Parameters was introduced to account

for language variation, both from the perspectives of language diversity and acquisition. Within this theory, crosslinguistic variation is expressed through parameters whose settings show the ways in which some principles of UG operate differently from language to language. This theory also explains how, on the basis of language input, the different values are set during the process of first language (L1) acquisition. It also describes the interim grammars developed by children at various stages (e.g. Hyams, 1986; Manzini and Wexler, 1987; Meisel, 1995).

Input is crucial in this process of acquisition; it is indisputable that children need to be exposed to a language in order to be able to acquire it. Input is the raw data used by UG to build up a system of knowledge in a particular language and it is what allows the child to fix the settings of a particular parameter. In other words, parts of the language data, technically called 'triggers', serve as indicators of one parameter setting over another. Fixing a parameter can be defined as a 'triggering' process because one particular setting will have an effect on both the related properties of the same parameter and on other related parameters. There are a number of different views as to what exactly in the input counts as a 'trigger' (Clark, 1992; Clark and Roberts, 1993; Gibson and Wexler, 1994). There are also different positions as to the possibility of mis-triggering of a parameter setting and of the re-setting of values wrongly set (Fodor, 1998; Gibson and Wexler, 1994; Lightfoot, 1991, 1998).

To put this discussion of the fixing of parameter values into an appropriate context, the next sections will examine parameters in L1 and L2 acquisition. It will start with a discussion on the Null Subject or Pro-drop Parameter, one whose related properties are shared by the NNSub Parameter proposed by Masullo (1992, 1993).

Section 3.2 will introduce the NNSub Parameter in L2 acquisition and will discuss related research. Section 3.3 will talk about the study presented in this thesis and will examine the role of the input received by the study participants. Section 3.4 will outline the research questions and hypotheses and 3.5 will draw a conclusion to the chapter.

### 3.1.2 Parameters in L1 acquisition

One of the first and perhaps most thoroughly studied phenomena in L1 acquisition is the omission of pronominal subjects in early grammars. The Pro-drop or Null Subject Parameter (Chomsky, 1981; Jaeggli, 1982; Rizzi, 1982), closely related to the NNSub Parameter, divides languages into the categories of pro-drop languages like Spanish and Italian and non-pro-drop languages like French and English. Although there are different versions of this parameter<sup>20</sup>, all of them seem to agree on the basic fact: certain languages like Spanish and Italian allow potential omission of pronominal subjects in finite clauses. The appearance of overt pronominal and lexical subjects is grammatically optional and determined principally by the discourse-pragmatic context. This constitutes the [+pro-drop] value of the Pro-drop Parameter while the opposite value, [-pro-drop], holds for English and French, which always require a pronominal subject to be present. The Pro-drop Parameter is associated with a set of grammatical properties of the language: subject-verb inversion in simple sentences (3.1), the absence of pleonastic pronouns (3.2), rich verbal agreement (3.3), and *that*-trace sequences (3.4).

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<sup>20</sup> Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are pro-drop languages without rich inflectional systems, so verbs have no person and number inflections. Jaeggli and Safir (1989) proposed the Morphologically Uniformity Hypothesis (MUH) which attempted to provide a unified account of the pro-drop phenomenon for languages with rich inflection and those with no inflection at all. The MUH has been challenged, however, by empirical research which suggests that it is not adequate and reliable. Alternative accounts have been proposed, see Hawkins (2001) for a discussion on this topic.

(3.1) a. Llegó                      María.

          come-past-3sing    María

          ‘María has arrived.’

b. \*Arrived María.

(3.2) a. Llueve                      en todo el país.

          rain-pres-3sing    in all    the country

          ‘It is raining in the whole country.’

b. \*Rains in the whole country.

(3.3) a. Seguiremos            llamándolos    mañana.

          Continue-fut-1pl    ringing them    tomorrow

          ‘We will continue ringing them tomorrow.’

b. \*Will continue ringing them tomorrow.

(3.4) a. ¿Quién<sub>i</sub>            dijo                      que<sub>i</sub> vendría            a            casa?

          who<sub>i</sub>            say-past-3sing            that<sub>i</sub> would come            to            house?

          ‘Who did she/he say would come home?’

b. \*Who<sub>i</sub> did she/he say that<sub>i</sub> would come home?

Hyams (1986: 110) compared the early grammars of English and Italian and observed that in the early stages, children seem to treat subjects as optional in both languages. However, the two grammars differ in that early Italian contains postverbal subjects as well, something not present in the early English data. The following examples are from Hyams (1986: 111-112).

(3.5) E bello, eto è piccolino.

‘Is beautiful, this is little.’

(D 2;2)

(3.6) Giorgio le taglia.

‘Giorgio cuts them.’

(F 2;3)

(3.7) E andata a letto la farfallona.

‘Went to bed the butterfly.’

(C 2;2)

In her study, Hyams aims to explain how children manage to set the parameter for their language. She introduces the idea of a default value and suggests that children start the acquisition process with this setting. This setting would later on get confirmation from the input or would have to be re-set to match it. Hyams proposes that for both Italian and English children, the initial setting of the Pro-drop Parameter is the one which allows pro-drop, i.e. [+pro-drop]. For English speaking children, positive evidence (in the form of overt expletives) would lead them to determine that English takes the opposite setting [-pro-drop]. The Italian speaking children showed evidence of

setting of the parameter, as they produced postverbal subjects not allowed by a [-pro-drop] setting while the English speaking children, on the other hand, who would not hear a different word order in the input, abode by the SVO order.

The matter of whether there is an unmarked and a marked setting of the parameter, and which one is which, has been discussed at length in the literature. Studies looking at the acquisition of pro-drop have provided different suggestions, though the debate is still ongoing. Hyams (1986) and Hyams and Wexler (1993) maintain that the 'unmarked' setting related to the Pro-drop Parameter is [+pro-drop] and claim that early subjectless sentences are the result of the mis-setting of the pro-drop parameter and not violations of UG. The view is that children may adopt a positive value for this parameter, regardless of its value in their target language (Hyams 1986). Children would begin with a pro-drop-like grammar which would later on conform to the target grammar.

Lillo-Martin (1991) and Rizzi (1994a), on the other hand, argue that the initial value of the parameters is [-pro-drop]. Rizzi reports differences in the frequency of early null subjects depending on their position in the sentence. They are omitted in main clauses, though not in embedded clauses, and are also absent in sentence-initial position but not after a moved wh-element. Lillo-Martin argues that the reason for this is that the subject of the main clause is outside the domain where the pro-drop parameters are applied at first. Rizzi, alternatively, maintains that the matrix CP is considered optional in the early stages of acquisition.

As mentioned earlier, the syntactic variability amongst languages is expressed as a set of parameters which contain a limited number of settings. One of the central ideas of the Principles and Parameters framework is that parameters settings do not just instantiate differences but gather a cluster of seemingly unrelated syntactic properties. As discussed in section 2.1.2, the occurrence of Non-Nominative Subjects (NNSubs) in a language is not an isolated phenomenon but an association with a combination of features also linked to the Pro-drop Parameter. This makes the debate on markedness regarding the Pro-drop Parameter very relevant to the discussion of the settings of the Non-Nominative Subject Parameter. Cazzoli-Goeta et al. (2004: 24) claim that the unmarked and default setting of the parameter should be [+NNSub] as 'the subject of predication should be any referential expression about which something is said, regardless of the case it is in' (i.e. the unmarked option in UG is to dissociate subject from agreeing or nominative DP). This being the case, they argue that children exposed to Spanish will not need any special triggers to fix the NNSub Parameter, since the evidence in the input will simply confirm the expectations of UG. However, Cazzoli-Goeta et al. also point out that children will need to learn to restrict the possible elements that can appear in Spec, IP and will have to acquire how the different cases are assigned and manifested, as well as the relationship between agreement and case. Children exposed to English, on the other hand, will need to learn on the basis of positive evidence that Spec, IP can only be occupied by a nominative element agreeing with the verb, irrespective of its semantic properties.

White's position regarding default parametric values is that they should represent the most conservative, i.e. the less general hypothesis compatible with the input (White, 1989: 144) so that if necessary, input data can disconfirm it and the

parameter can be reset in the L2. Her reasoning is as follows: if the default setting is [-NNSub], an English L1 learner exposed to Spanish will start out producing nominative subjects only but will then 'notice' subconsciously the existence of NNSubs in the input. If the learner, however, starts out with a [+NNSub] setting, where both nominative and non-nominative subjects are allowed, the data will just confirm the parameter. If a Spanish L1 learner exposed to English begins with a [-NNSub] setting, the data will confirm this value but if the same L1 learner with a [+NNSub] setting is exposed to English, nothing in the data will force the initial grammar to change. Cazzoli-Goeta et al.'s (2004: 24) suggestion is that in the case of the English L1 child, the scarcity of NNSubs in the input will make the L1 learner restructure the grammar that starts out as [+NNSub]. What is more, the [-NNSub] input will show that there is no other possibility for the subject than to agree with the verb, which will make the absence of NNSubs more salient. Support for the claim that, like [+pro-drop], [+NNSub] is the unmarked and default value of the NNSub Parameter is found in early L1 acquisition data in both English and Spanish. Besides pro-drops, early child grammars show evidence of NNSubs, which are accusative or genitive DPs usually treated as instances of subjects marked with the wrong case.

The topic of children's realisation of subjects in the early stages of acquisition has been studied to a large extent in the literature. Children go through a stage when the use of subjects seems to be optional, irrespective of whether the target grammar requires one (Vainikka, 1993/1994; Rizzi, 1994a; Rhee and Wexler, 1995) or not (Grinstead, 1998, 2000). Research on early child Spanish and English grammars has shown that children start out producing utterances with NNSubs. The CHILDES Spanish corpus

database shows that the earliest manifestations of clear NNSubs take place at ages 2;3 and 2;11, revealing that the [+NNSub] setting is already operating by age 3;0:

(3.8) A mí            me            cabe.  
to me-DAT    CL-DAT    fits  
'It fits me.'  
(Mag, 2;3)

(3.9) (A José)        le            gusta Parchís.  
(to José - DAT) CL-DAT    likes Parchís.  
'José likes Parchís.'  
(Emilio, 2;11)

These subjects are clearly NNSubs as they would pass the tests of subjecthood described in section 2.1.2.

Vainikka (1993/1994) observed that children use oblique subjects, though different from the NNSubs described above, very early on in the process of L1 acquisition and that these reappear later on with wh-constructions once nominative case and INFL elements are acquired. The longitudinal data used by Vainikka for her study came from the CHILDES Database and involved five children: Adam (2;3-4;10), Naomi (1;1-5;1), Eve (1;6-2;3), Nina (1;11-3;3) and Sarah (2;3-5;1). Vainikka found oblique subjects in the early data of all five children. Some instances of Adam, Nina and Naomi's utterances are illustrated below (Vainikka, 1993/1994: 268):

(3.10) My see that. Adam see that.

(Adam, 2;3)

(3.11) My make red table.

(Nina, 2;0)

(3.12) Me love boat.

(Naomi, 2;3)

To account for this phenomenon, Vainikka adopts a developmental model termed the 'Weak Continuity Approach'. This model assumes gradual development of phrase structure so that functional projections are gradually acquired, from the VP to the IP to the CP (Vainikka, 1993/1994: 260) and a Case theory operating from the onset of acquisition (see also Clahsen, Eisenbeiss and Vainikka, 1994; Clahsen, Eisenbeiss and Penke, 1996; and Clahsen, Penke and Parodi, 1993/1994). Vainikka proposes that the subjects in examples (3.10) to (3.12) are allowed at this stage because the subject remains in its base VP-internal position, where it is assigned structural genitive Case by the verb (VP is the only structure available at this stage and so the subject is in the specifier position of the verb as head of the VP). When Inflection and the D-system become operative later on, this kind of Case error should begin to disappear as the Spec, IP position becomes available and the subject of the sentence can receive nominative case. However, empirical data in Vainikka's study showed that oblique subjects were still present in child speech after the children began to use modals or even some past tense forms, i.e. once children had moved from a VP to an IP. This happened, in particular, with *wh*-constructions. Vainikka argues that for those children producing oblique subjects at this stage, called by her the 'pre-CP stage' in GB terms, only

available as CP is not yet accessible in the surface syntax. 'If the children at this stage have not fully acquired the CP projection, CP elements could be expected exceptionally to occupy positions within the IP' (Vainikka, 1993/1994). In wh-questions at this 'pre-CP stage', Spec, IP is exceptionally occupied by a wh-element (or other CP-related material) which blocks movement to this position so the subject nominal is forced to remain in its Spec, VP position where it can only receive genitive Case. When the child reaches the CP stage, Spec IP is not occupied by CP elements and no more Case errors occur.

Vainikka's (1993/1994) empirical data also show that nominative subjects emerge quite early in the data of all the children with the exception of Nina. Nina did produce a few examples of nominative subjects but Vainikka takes them as exceptional instances (only 11% of all first person singular pronominal subjects) as she emphasises that 'the basic form of Nina's pronominal subjects was *my*' (Vainikka, 1993/1994: 273). However, Vainikka points out that the nominative subjects produced by the other four children did not include any instances of wh-questions or any other CP-related constructions. This partly supports Vainikka's developmental model though it also contradicts it since the children were producing nominative subjects at a time when they should only have knowledge of a bare VP structure.

### **3.1.3 Parameters in L2 acquisition.**

As in the L1 literature, a large number of L2 studies have also focused on the Pro-drop Parameter to investigate parameter-setting, markedness and clustering of properties (White, 1985b, 1986a; Flynn, 1987; Phinney, 1987; Liceras, 1989; Al-Kasey

and Pérez-Leroux, 1998; among others). The theory of Principles and Parameters, originally created to account for L1 adult and acquisition phenomena, has been used to explain L2 grammars, with the aim of establishing the nature of learners' Interlanguage and whether there is evidence of involvement of UG in L2 acquisition. It has also sought to specify the role of the L1 in the building of the L2 grammar and has intensely looked at cases of L2 parameter setting when the value is different from that of the L1.

The discussion of L2 learners' access to UG first needs to address the issue of age in the acquisition of a L2. Children and adults come to the L2 acquisition process with different neurological, cognitive and psychological characteristics. Children are normally perceived as being better and faster L2 learners (van de Craats, 2003) while adults make use of cognitive skills and self-discipline and can be affected by factors such as motivation and anxiety. Studies show that the order in which children acquire the syntax and morphemes of a language is highly similar in many cases between the L1 and L2. Similar patterns of accuracy in L2 acquisition were found in children (Dulay and Burt, 1973, 1974) and adult learners (Pica, 1985). (See also Clahsen and Muysken, 1986; Ellis, 1999; Pienemann, 1989; Schwartz, 2003.) The difference between the two age groups is, however, evident in their endstate grammar, i.e. the L2 grammatical representation of learners who have completed their acquisition process (but see Lazarova-Nikovska (2005) on age and transfer effects in early L2 development). Children L2 learners are more successful since the grammar of L2 adults tends to 'fossilise', getting permanently stable in a particular representation, e.g. due to the inability to reset a parameter that has a marked form in the L2 and an unmarked form in the L1. In spite of its association to a 'grammar that is permanently non-native' (White, 2003: 276), fossilisation does not preclude UG constrains, 'while convergence [with the

target grammar] would constitute evidence that UG constrains the steady-state grammar, the opposite conclusion cannot be drawn from failure to convergence' (White, 2003: 242).

Research on ultimate attainment in the L2 normally examines endstate grammars in the light of critical periods. In this respect, Penfield and Roberts (1959) and Lenneberg (1967) were the first to propose that there was a critical period for language acquisition. The Critical Period Hypothesis of Lenneberg (1967), proposed that normal language development could only occur within a limited age range prior to puberty, so that past this specific and limited time period native-like acquisition is no longer possible. While Lenneberg's focus was L1 acquisition, he also makes a claim about the acquisition of a second language (Lenneberg, 1967: 176):

'...automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person *can* learn to communicate in a foreign language at the age of forty. This does not trouble our basic hypothesis on age limitations because we may assume that the cerebral organization for language learning as such has taken place during childhood, and since natural languages tend to resemble one another in many fundamental aspects ..., the matrix of language skills is present.'

It is difficult to decide whether there is a critical period<sup>21</sup> in L2 acquisition and to identify its effects on L2 acquisition when a L1 is already in place. Studies like Patkowski (1980), Johnson and Newport (1989), Birdsong and Molis (2001), Birdsong (2002), Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003), among others, suggest that a critical period for second language learning does exist<sup>22</sup>. Birdsong (2002: 38) claims:

‘...age entails a loss of ability to learn a second language. It is clear that the sensitivity decline persists over the age spectrum: it is more a case of progressive losing than eventual loss. L2 learning appears to involve not a single monolithic faculty, but distinct neural and cognitive components with differential susceptibilities to the effects of age.’

Birdsong and Mollis (2001) point out that within the critical period there is decline with age and that there is a maximum age limit of approximately 15 years.

Bley-Vroman's (1989) Fundamental Difference Hypothesis explicitly highlights the difference that in his view the critical period makes in L2 acquisition. He claims that child language acquisition is guided by the principles and parameters of UG whereas adults no longer have access to UG: ‘the domain-specific language acquisition system of children ceases to operate in adults and adult foreign language acquisition resembles general adult learning’ (Bley-Vroman, 1989: 49). In his view, adults need to rely more

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<sup>21</sup> Eubank and Gregg (1999), Long (1990), Schachter (1996), Scovel (1988), and Seliger (1978), among others, have suggested that there are multiple critical periods for different aspects of the L2. The period for acquiring a native accent appears to be more sensitive than the period for acquiring a native grammar. There is also evidence of multiple critical periods for different components of the grammar.

<sup>22</sup> van Boxtel, Bongaerts and Coppens (2003), however, claim that it is possible for L2 learners who started acquiring the L2 long after puberty to reach a native level of proficiency.

on general problem solving skills to build the grammatical structure of the L2 input. His hypothesis, however, has been challenged (see Schwartz, 1990) as many researchers believe that UG is still accessible but through the grammatical properties of the L1.

There are different stances to the question of whether UG continues to function in adults. These proposals could be put together into two groups, those who believe there is no (or rather, indirect) access and those who say that there is (direct or partial) access to UG.

The 'no access' hypothesis is best represented by the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis proposed by Bley-Vroman in 1989 and is associated with Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis. Under this proposal, learners are subject to UG principles but cannot reset parameters. It has been supported by researchers like Clahsen and Muysken (1986, 1989), Schachter (1990), Liceras et al. (1997). This view proposes that the innate system that guides child acquisition no longer operates in adult L2 learning. There are fundamental differences between child L1 and adult L2 acquisition due to the claim that adult L2 grammars are not constrained by UG. This explains why L2 learning is often difficult and ultimately unsuccessful. L2 grammars, however, do not violate UG principles because of the learners' knowledge of their L1, whose parameter settings are transferred to the L2.

The opposite argument assumes that adult L2 learners still have access to UG. Here, however, researchers' opinions are divided. Some, like Flynn (1987), claim that the L2 learners' grammar shows no traces of L1 knowledge, i.e. L2 knowledge is arrived at independently of the L1 grammar. UG is just as active in L2 as it was in L1.

Some have even proposed that L2 settings are attainable without prior adoption of L1 settings (Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjono 1996; Flynn, 1987). On the other hand, other researchers like Schwartz (1987), White (1985b, 1986b, 1988 and 1989) and Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) characterise L2 knowledge as developing from a re-organised L1 knowledge with parameter resetting to suit the L2 grammar. In other words, the L2 learner assumes the principles and parameters from the L1 initially but, on the basis of input, parameter resetting is possible.

Very much connected with the subject of L2 accessibility to UG is the current research on the nature of IL representation, and in particular, on the L2 initial state. These theories are about the representation that L2 learners start out with, and the one that they use in the representation of the L2 input. There have been a variety of initial state claims:

1. The 'Full Transfer/Full Access' Hypothesis of Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) proposes that the entire L1 grammar (excluding lexical items) is the initial state. The grammar of the L2 learner is not just constrained by the L1 representations; re-structuring of the grammar will occur. This view is supported by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996, 2000), Haznedar (1997), and Slabakova (2000).
2. The 'Minimal Trees' Hypothesis of Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994, 1996) proposes that the initial state is a grammar with lexical but not functional categories. Phrase structure is built up from a VP up to a full clause, i.e. first there is an IP stage and then a CP one. This view is

supported by Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1994, 1996a and b, 1998) and Myles (2004).

3. The 'Valueless Features Hypothesis' of Eubank (1993/1994, 1994, 1996) proposes that the entire functional structure of the L1 is present in the initial stages of the Interlanguage of the L2 but without the feature values of the L1. This is because the functional categories of the L1 become valueless or inert. This view is supported by Eubank, Bischof, Huffstutler, Leek and West (1997) and Eubank and Grace (1998).

The three hypotheses discussed so far all agree that the L1 grammar shapes the L2 initial state. The next two proposals claim that the initial state of the L2 grammar contains no previous grammar but just UG.

4. The 'Initial Hypothesis of Syntax' of Platzack (1996) proposes that the initial state is UG, with functional categories set to the unmarked or weak value. All values are initially weak for L1 and L2 acquisition. Language acquisition is conceived as a process from unmarked values towards the values of the language to be acquired.
5. The 'Full Access Hypothesis' of Flynn (1986), Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjono (1996), and Martohardjono, Epstein and Flynn (1998) proposes that UG is fully available to the L2 learner though not through the L1 grammar. The initial state in L1 and L2 grammars is the same.

### 3.1.4 The Pro-drop Parameter in adult L2 acquisition

Findings from studies on the Pro-drop Parameter have been used as evidence in the debate of the kind of access that L2 learners have to UG. The consensus in current SLA research seems to be focusing on whether Interlanguage grammars exhibit properties of natural languages, either through the L1 or independent of it (White, 2003: 17).

One of the first studies to tackle UG access and parameter resetting was White's (1985b). Her study examines the role of the L1 in the adult L2 acquisition of the Pro-drop Parameter. She examined 73 adult L2 learners of English on different aspects of pro-drop to find out if there was transfer from their L1 into English. These learners had different levels of language proficiency; 54 were native speakers of [+pro-drop] Spanish, and 19 were native speakers of [-pro-drop] French. The participants took a grammaticality judgment task with 31 written sentences in English. 19 of these sentences tested for different aspects of the Null Subject or Pro-drop Parameter: pro-drop, subject-verb inversion, and *that*-trace effects. Of the 19 sentences, 16 were ungrammatical in English, but grammatical in Spanish in terms of pro-drop. The remaining three sentences were grammatical in English, but would have been unacceptable in Spanish.

White's first hypothesis predicted that L2 learners' access to UG was constrained by the parameter values set in the L1, i.e. that there was no direct access to UG. She expected that the Spanish participants would make errors which would show evidence of transfer from the L1 [+pro-drop]. White also expected the French [-pro-drop]

subjects to produce data resembling more closely those of native English [-pro-drop] speakers. The data that resulted from the grammaticality judgment test support this first hypothesis, as Spanish students did make transfer errors showing the carrying over of the L1 parametric value into English. Moreover, Spanish speakers were the ones more likely to accept an ungrammatical English sentence than the French speakers.

White's (1985b) other hypothesis involved clustering in L2 acquisition. Since the Pro-drop Parameter has a clustering of properties associated with it, she speculated that the setting or re-setting of the parameter in the L2 would affect all its properties. In other words, her prediction was that if a setting was lost in the L2, the related properties would be lost too. In the same way, if a particular parameter setting needed to be acquired in the L2, all of its properties would be acquired at the same time. Her study did not find enough evidence of the clustering of properties from the L1 in the L2<sup>23</sup>. It found instead, that certain aspects of the Pro-drop Parameter were more easily acquired than others. Subject-verb inversion in English, for instance, was recognized by many Spanish speakers as ungrammatical, although only a few of the learners associated inversion with the unacceptability of missing subjects. The correlation was lower between missing subjects and inversion with *that*-trace effects. From these results, White concluded that subject-verb inversion may not be a part of the clustering of properties of the Pro-drop Parameter and argued that the findings of her study do not lend enough support to prove or reject her hypothesis.

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<sup>23</sup> Hyams (1986) and Snyder and Stromswold (1997) provide evidence to support clustering in L1 acquisition. White (1985b) and Licerias (1988, 1989), on the other hand, report a lack of the clustering effects in L2 acquisition.

As in White (1985b), Phinney's (1987) hypothesis was that L2 learners first presuppose the L1 parameter values and that this results in predictable transfer errors in the L2 grammar. Phinney tested this hypothesis by examining written production data (compositions written in class) produced by two groups, one consisting of native Spanish students learning English and the other one containing native English students learning Spanish. This comparison is a very interesting one since in the same study there is performance data from L1s representing the two values of the Pro-drop Parameter. Their levels of L2 competence ranged from beginner to lower-intermediate levels. The aim of the task was to look for absence of subject pronouns, in the case of the English L2 learners, and the overuse of subject pronouns, in the case of the Spanish L2 learners.

The results show that it was easier for English learners of Spanish to drop pronominal subjects than for Spanish learners of English to insert subject pronouns in obligatory contexts. The data coming from the use of impersonal constructions are particularly unambiguous: in no cases did Spanish L2 learners use subjects in impersonal statements but 76% of the English L2 learners used pro-drop in impersonal constructions (Phinney, 1987: 234).

These findings also seem to support another of Phinney's hypotheses, that [+pro-drop] is the unmarked value of the parameter, i.e. the one first assumed by the L1 learner. This claim is based on the premise (as proposed by Hyams, 1986) that L2 learners find it easier to acquire unmarked settings than marked values, in other words, that it is easier to move from a [-pro-drop] language to a [+pro-drop] language than vice versa. Her study showed evidence of this as there was more L1 transfer in Spanish

speakers learning English than in English speakers learning Spanish. Therefore, it was easier for English speakers with a marked setting to switch to the unmarked setting in Spanish than for Spanish speakers to switch from their unmarked setting to the marked one.

Although sharing the same position regarding access to UG, White (1989) has a different view on markedness. She adheres to the Subset Principle, a form of the conservatism hypothesis (Barker, 1979) as formulated by Berwick (1985) Manzini and Wexler (1987) and Wexler and Manzini (1987). This principle states that learners make the most restrictive hypothesis consistent with the input and this helps produce rules that can only be originated or altered by positive evidence, 'the Subset Principle predicts that the learner's first choice is to assume [...] the grammar that is a subset of the other' (Gass and Selinker, 1994: 122). So, given a choice, the learner will unconsciously assume that the more limited grammar is the correct one.

The Subset Principle has inevitable implications for the way in which markedness is described given the emphasis on the role of positive evidence. White (1989: 146) maintains that, for any parameter, the setting which generates the subset language represents the unmarked value while the superset will be adopted only if there is positive evidence to confirm it. Going back to the issue of the default setting of the Pro-drop Parameter, while Hyams' (1983, 1986) and Phinney's proposal is that [+pro-drop] is the unmarked setting of the parameter, White believes that the default value of the parameter is [-pro-drop] as it is the setting that can be disconfirmed by the input data, 'given that the presence of pronouns is consistent with pro-drop languages, there seems to be no way for the learner to discover that English is not pro-drop on the basis of

positive data from pronouns alone so that there is a reanalysis of the Interlanguage grammar' (White, 1998a: 243). If the unmarked setting is [-pro-drop] then positive evidence can help the L1 learner 'unlearn' incorrect hypotheses.

Markedness is also discussed in detail by Licerias (1989), who supports Phinney's position that [+pro-drop] is unmarked. The difference is, however, that according to Licerias, L2 learners assume the unmarked setting – and not the L1 value – first before adjusting to the L2 values. Additionally, Licerias suggests that there is an implicational hierarchy relating the clustering of properties of the Pro-drop Parameter: pro-drop > subject-verb inversion > *that*-trace. She hypothesised that if the *that* trace property has been acquired then the other two properties have been acquired as well. By stating this hierarchy, Licerias implies that inversion and *that*-trace effects are part of the clustering of properties of the Pro-drop Parameter<sup>24</sup>.

Licerias' study was one of the first to test the Pro-drop Parameter from a [-pro-drop] language into a [+pro-drop] language. It involved four groups of French and English speakers learning Spanish divided into four proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate, advanced, and high advanced. The participants were 32 French speakers, 30 English speakers, and 5 Spanish speakers, all of them graduate students at the University of Ottawa. They were all given a grammaticality judgment test designed to test different aspects of the Pro-drop Parameter in Spanish: pro-drop, subject-verb inversion, and *that*-trace effects. As regards pro-drop, the findings showed that subjects

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<sup>24</sup> These properties are obviously only part of Romance and Germanic languages which are [+/-pro-drop]. There are other null subject languages, like Chinese or Turkish to which this discussion may not be relevant. It is important to point out, however, that the account discussed in this section represents the earliest thinking on the issue of pro-drop.

widely accepted them as being grammatical in Spanish, even among lower level learners. However, this was different from the native and non-native judgments in terms of the acceptability of subject-verb inversion. The French and English groups showed considerable variation in their acceptance of subject-verb inversions while the control group accepted all instances of inversion. This was also the case with *that*-trace effects. Liceras argues that since the pro-drop properties do not have the same status in L2 acquisition there is no clustering.

The results confirm Liceras' hypothesis that there is no clustering of pro-drop properties in L2 acquisition since the data show that they do not share the same status in L2 learners' Interlanguage. The results also indicate that the pro-drop property is a pre-requisite to subject-verb inversion and *that trace* effects because even the low level learners accepted the grammaticality of pro-drop in Spanish. This gives Liceras evidence that L2 learners did not begin with the L1 parameter but, rather, that they accepted the unmarked value, [+pro-drop]. The variable test results for subject-verb inversion and the poor performance on the *that*-trace sentences, on the other hand, make Liceras propose that L2 learners may tend to acquire simpler - less marked, less frequent - constructions, such as pro-drop before moving on to more marked properties, like verb-subject inversion and *that*-trace. These variable results, however, also cast doubt that subject-verb inversion and the *that*-trace effect are part of the Pro-drop Parameter. As a consequence, later research on pro-drop did not maintain the notion of an implicational hierarchy but studied pro-drop in connection with rich agreement and Case assignment.

Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux's (1998) study focuses on the acquisition of null expletives and null thematic subjects. In a [+pro-drop] language such as Spanish, null expletives refer to those cases where the subject position must remain empty as no thematic role is assigned to the subject. (e.g. *Es importante estudiar* - 'Is important to study'). In a [-pro-drop] language like English, subject pronouns are always required, whether it is an expletive or a thematic subject. The study aims to explain how the Pro-drop Parameter resetting may occur in L2 acquisition by testing three hypotheses: i. that there is no parameter for null expletives or for optional subject pronouns, ii. that the optional subject pronoun may be more difficult to learn than the null expletives, and iii. that the use of both properties increases simultaneously. To test these hypotheses, a comprehension task and a production task were given to 88 university students of different proficiency levels. The comprehension task asked students to match sentences with expletives and pronominal subjects with their corresponding interpretational pictures. The way in which the participants matched the pictures with the sentences would show how they interpreted and understood null-expletives and referential subjects in Spanish. The production task consisted of a cloze test with a paragraph containing 20 sentences with a blank at the beginning of each sentence. Students were asked to complete the blanks with either an overt pronoun or "Ø" if nothing was needed. For the comprehension task, Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux's prediction was that those students who had not reset the parameter to the [+pro-drop] Spanish value would pair the expletive sentences with the referential interpretations of the pictures. In the production task, the prediction was that the same students would overuse the subject pronouns for both the expletives and optional cases.

The results showed that L2 learners' errors in the use of null thematic subjects and null expletives decreased with the learners' increased proficiency. From the evidence showing that null pronominals occurring after null expletives have been acquired, Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux conclude that this is evidence that the two properties are related under the Pro-drop Parameter and that it confirms that L2 learners have access to UG parameters through the L1 parameter setting at first. Their conclusion is based on the correspondence between increased proficiency and increased use of null expletives and optional subject pronouns.

Liceras (1989) represents the argument that adult L2 learners still have access to UG. Her interpretation of the findings of her study is that UG is accessible to L2 learners without L1 interference. In her view, English speakers acquire the [+pro-drop] setting as the unmarked option, not because it is the setting of their L1. For Liceras, the L2 learner begins with the unmarked setting in much the same way that children develop their L1, 'the results indicate that most Spanish L2 learners do not start with the L1 setting in the case of pro-drop. Namely, the English non-pro-drop option is seldom transferred into the Interlanguage' (Liceras, 1989: 129).

White (1985b), Phinney (1987) and Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux (1998) represent the view that L2 learners' access to UG is constrained by the parameter values set in the L1 'the vast amount of available data on the reality of L1 interference suggests that this approach [that the L2 learner begins from scratch] is untenable' (Phinney, 1987: 226). Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux maintain the same position as Phinney by basing their view on their study of the simultaneous acquisition of pro-drop properties. They maintain that there are two distinct processes involved in SLA, one that 'allows an

initial transfer of a completed L1 grammar' and another one that 'is a constructive process based on the principles of UG' (Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux, 1998: 180). White endorses this argument by referring to the findings of her own study, 'the hypothesis that UG should be able to interact directly with L2 data, irrespective of the L1 experience, is disconfirmed' (White, 1985: 58).

To summarise, this section has discussed some of the research on the Pro-drop Parameter. These studies have tried to establish the role of the L1 parameter settings and whether or not there is parameter resetting to the L2 value. The primary aim in all of these studies has been to find evidence that can support or refute access to UG in L2 acquisition. Three of these studies have found evidence that L2 learners have access to UG through the L1 parameter setting at first but that this is followed by a decreased use of L1 settings with the learners' increased proficiency. Another study suggests that UG is accessible to L2 learners from the start, without L1 interference.

### **3.2 The role of input and learnability**

This thesis aims to look at the acquisition of NNSubs through a study which will examine the Interlanguage of English L2 learners of Spanish to find grammatical properties associated with knowledge of NNSubs. The objective is to find if classroom L2 learners are able to reset the parameter from [-NNSub] to [+NNsub] in spite of the learnability problem, as pointed out by Montrul (1998), posed by the verbs which require NNSubs and by the poor amount of relevant input, both naturalistic and in the classroom.

### 3.2.1 The input

While L1 acquisition takes place through the exposure to naturalistic input, or primary linguistic data, knowledge of a L2 may develop on the basis of a variety of types of input. These range from the situation where learners are immersed in the target language to the different kinds of classroom input determined by learning environments and teaching methods. The kind of naturalistic input received by L1 learners is called positive evidence, i.e. the primary linguistic data that they observe around them. Negative evidence, on the other hand, is information about what is not allowed in a language, i.e. what is ungrammatical. Children do not get much consistent negative evidence, if any, from parents or carers, although knowledge of ungrammaticality is nevertheless acquired. Classroom learners, however, receive both positive evidence and negative evidence in the form of grammatical explanations and corrections.

Research in SLA has sought to find out whether negative evidence of the kind received in an instructional setting, plays a positive role in the acquisition of the L2. Some researchers, such as White (1991) and Carroll and Swain (1993), have argued that negative evidence has positive effects. Others, for example, Schwartz and Gubala-Ryzak, (1992) and Schwartz (1993) are unconvinced about such effects, the argument being that, because negative evidence is information *about* a language, it is not the kind of input that UG can work with, 'it is in principle impossible for negative evidence to bring about parameter resetting' (White, 2003: 165). In her study on the learnability of the English passive by speakers of Japanese, Whitlow (1997) tested the efficiency of positive and negative evidence and found that there were no significant differences in the performance of the learners who had been flooded with positive data, those who had

received negative input and those who had had no information about passives. Her conclusion is that her findings support the claim that primary linguistic data is sufficient for L2 acquisition to occur. But is this true of all classroom settings?

Classroom learners are exposed to both kinds of evidence, positive and negative, but in the setting of a university language course the kind of input they receive is more in the form of explanations and corrections. Regarding the structure under investigation, NNSub constructions, it seems that primary linguistic data is not enough, both in terms of the amount offered to students and the effects it can have on the L2. The writer's teaching experience as a university language tutor for 8 years suggests that English L2 learners of Spanish tend to avoid use of verbs that require NNSubs (Schachter, 1974). Apart from avoidance, there is often unawareness as to the existence of this kind of subject and of the verbs requiring them. Contrary to Montrul's (1998) claim that learners eventually overcome the L1 influence, beginners, intermediate and also advanced learners' language production shows that NNSubs are not as frequent a feature of L2 Spanish as it is in L1 Spanish. Two exceptions to this are the verbs *gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt', which show an increment in the frequency of use across levels from intermediate to advanced. As described in the previous section, these two verbs are very frequent unaccusatives which require NNSubs:

(3.13) A todos        nos        gusta la        playa.

to all-DAT    CL-DAT like    the    beach

'We all like the beach.'

(3.14) A Clara        le        duelen los    pies.  
to Clara-DAT CL-DAT hurt    the    feet  
'Clara's feet hurt.'

*Gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt' are very common, very productive verbs in the Spanish language and are introduced in detail in classroom instruction and in textbooks. They are also well-practised in written and oral work. The other verbs discussed in the previous section of this chapter (e.g. raising predicates like *parecer* 'seem', *empezar* 'begin', ergative verbs with *se*, *salirse* 'come off', *descoserse* 'come unstitched'; verbs of involuntary bodily activities: *temblar* 'shake', *latir* 'beat', etc.) are also common and very much used in Spanish and in a variety of contexts. Some of these appear in instruction materials - some authors refer to them as *gustar*-like verbs - and are used by teachers in the classroom though not as often as the verbs *gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt'. It is not clear why these verbs do not receive as much attention by instruction materials and teachers but in some cases this may be due to the contexts where they appear; involuntary bodily activities verbs, for instance may be atypical of the traditional classroom environment. It may also be the case that L2 teachers, and materials designed for learners of [-NNSubs] languages try to make the L2 learning process, especially at the beginners level, less thorny by limiting the appearance of structures that do not resemble the learner's L1. The problem with this approach is that verbs requiring NNSubs do not form a small set of verbs of restricted use; rather, they are a large group whose items apply to an ample variety of situations.

NNSubs can be avoided by L2 learners because they can be optional in certain contexts. Sentences (3.15) and (3.16) are an example of this lexical optionality<sup>25</sup> allowed by Spanish. Certain contexts allow both unaccusative constructions as well as ergative or accusative ones with little, if any, change in meaning. For instance:

(3.15) A la maestra le **duele** la cabeza. / La maestra **tiene** dolor de cabeza.  
to the teacher CL-DAT hurts the head / the teacher has ache of head  
'The teacher has a headache.'

(3.16) A mí me **llevó** dos años perder peso. / **Estuve** dos años para perder peso.  
to me CL-DAT took two years lose weight / I was two years for lose weight  
'It took me two years to lose weight.'

Optional structures are available to the learner to replace the ones not available in the L2 but in some cases, these sound odd to native speakers or do not express the same meaning. This contrast is exemplified by (3.17) and (3.18):

(3.17) A ese perro le falta una pata.  
to that dog-DAT CL-DAT lacks one leg  
'That dog is missing a leg.'

(3.18) (??) Ese perro no tiene una pata.  
that dog no has one leg  
'That dog is missing a leg.'

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<sup>25</sup> Optionality is defined as 'involving the coexistence of two (or more) optimal forms, one of which is usually 'more grammatical' than the other' (Sorace, 2000: 94).

If L2 learners of different levels can use *gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt' accurately most of the time but do not use other NNSub verbs frequently or accurately, what does this mean in terms of the acquisition of this feature of the L2? Is it just that learners do not know the vocabulary or have they failed to internalise knowledge of NNSubs?

One way of answering this question is to look at the frequency with which these verbs appear in instruction materials. Table 3.1 presents a list of the verbs used or elicited in the three experimental tasks used in this study, ordering them in terms of frequency of use by native speakers. This frequency has been measured by searching the verbs in question on the Real Academia Española's Spanish database (*CREA*). The frequency was obtained by searching the verbs in the present and the past forms, singular and plural, together with clitic 'le'.

The table shows that native speakers use the first nine verbs more frequently, than the rest, as their meaning makes them applicable to a variety of contexts. The last six verbs, however, are more restricted to specific contexts. There are many more, unaccusative verbs which are also infrequent, but these were not used in the tasks.

Although the first nine verbs in Table 3.1 are very common in native speakers' production, L2 materials do not seem to reflect this very well. An examination of the grammar reference book *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* (Butt and Benjamin, 2000) and five current textbooks for teaching Spanish as a second language - *¡Claro que sí!* (Caycedo Garner, Rusch and Domínguez, 2004) and *Breakthrough Spanish* (Truscott, 1996) for beginners, *Camino al español* (Andrés Martínez, Bruce, Cook, Díez-Bonet and Trippett, 2004) for false beginners to intermediate learners and

*Noticias* (Bell and Schwartz, 2002) for intermediate and advanced learners – shows that NNSub verbs<sup>26</sup> are under-represented in language teaching materials

**Table 3.1 –Classification of verbs according to the frequency of L1 use.**

| Verbs requiring NNSubs                        | Category (as defined by Masullo, 1992, 1993) | Frequency on the CREA database |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Gustar/Molestar</i><br>'like'/'dislike' | Psych  | 8422 times (3371 documents)    |
| 2. <i>Faltar</i><br>'lack'                    | Unaccusative                                 | 2780 times (1775 documents)    |
| 3. <i>Parecer</i><br>'seem'                   | Raising pred.                                | 2771 times (1502 documents)    |
| 4. <i>Interesarse</i><br>'be interested'      | Ergative + <i>se</i>                         | 2368 times (1477 documents)    |
| 5. <i>Considerar</i><br>'consider'            | Psych  | 1025 times (823 documents)     |
| 6. <i>Ocurrirse</i><br>'occur'                | Psych  | 996 times (676 documents)      |
| 7. <i>Salirse</i><br>'come off'               | Ergative + <i>se</i>                         | 513 times (396 documents)      |
| 8. <i>Caerse</i><br>'fall accidentally'       | Ergative + <i>se</i>                         | 395 times (317 documents)      |
| 9. <i>Doler</i><br>'hurt'                     | Body functions                               | 369 times (267 documents)      |
| 10. <i>Quemarse</i><br>'burn accidentally'    | Ergative + <i>se</i>                         | 170 times (129 documents)      |
| 11. <i>Temblar</i><br>'shake'                 | Body functions                               | 75 times (61 documents)        |
| 12. <i>Romperse</i><br>'break accidentally'   | Ergative + <i>se</i>                         | 63 times (56 documents)        |
| 13. <i>Sangrar</i><br>'bleed'                 | Body functions                               | 27 times (24 documents)        |
| 14. <i>Latir</i><br>'beat'                    | Body functions                               | 11 times (11 documents)        |
| 15. <i>Descoserse</i><br>'unstitch'           | Ergative + <i>se</i>                         | 1 time (1 document)            |

<sup>26</sup> Verbs requiring a NNSub.

*A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* (Butt and Benjamin, 2000) is one of the most consulted and recommended books of its kind. It is comprehensible, detailed and well exemplified and has been designed for speakers of English, as the grammar is fully explained in that language. Regarding the verbs that require a NNSub, it is interesting to see that even though the book has whole chapters on verbs (Chapters 13 and 26), the use of *le/les* (Chapter 12), personal *a* 'to' (Chapter 22) and word order (Chapter 37), there is no reference to *gustar*-like verbs and nothing is mentioned about sentences which begin with an *a* 'to' phrase.

Spanish textbooks generally refer to NNSubs as 'indirect objects' occupying the subject position of sentences which use verbs like *gustar* 'like'. *Breakthrough Spanish* (Truscott, 1996: 168) and *¡Claro que sí!* (Caycedo Garner et al., 2004: 46-47) introduce *gustar* 'like' together with *me*, dative 'I' and the other indirect object pronouns as a chunk: *me gusta* 'I like', *le gusta* 'he/she likes', etc. *Breakthrough Spanish* describes the sentences with *gustar* 'like' as sounding the 'wrong way around' to English speakers and recommends learners to translate the sentences into 'it pleases (to me/him, etc.)' to understand them better. Both texts make reference to the plural form of the verb and to the fact that the verb agrees with the object/s that is/are liked. Finally, they explain why in some cases it is necessary for the *a* 'to' phrase to appear in the sentence. *Breakthrough Spanish* avoids the teaching of *doler* 'hurt', another very productive unaccusative verb, by teaching *tener dolor de* 'to have a pain/ache of' (1996: 118-119) and the only other NNSub verb introduced in the textbook, though again as a chunk, is *me parece* 'it seems to me' (1996: 152). *¡Claro que sí!*, on the other hand, pays attention to verbs requiring NNSubs either than *gustar* 'like'. It has two short grammar sections dealing with NNSub verbs, one which deals with 'Expressing Like, Dislikes,

Complaints and Opinions: Using verbs like *Gustar* (Garner et al., 2004: 265-266) and another one called 'Talking about Unintentional Occurrences: *Se me olvidó* and similar constructions' (Garner et al, 2004: 343). The verbs introduced in the first section are *encantar* 'love', *faltar* 'lack', *fascinar* 'find fascinating' and *molestar* 'be bothered' and in the second one, *caer* 'fall', *quemar* 'burn', *olvidar* 'forget', *perder* 'lose' and *romper* 'break' all followed by *SE*. Because all these verbs are used with clitics, the tendency is to introduce them together with the clitics as chunks so that learners can memorise them more easily. *Doler* 'hurt' is introduced in an oral exercise where it is pointed out in a short note that *doler* 'hurt' functions like *gustar* 'like' (Garner et al., 2004: 290).

*Camino al español* (Andrés Martínez et al., 2004: 107-108) has a grammar segment on *gustar* 'like' and *parecer* 'seem' similar to the ones in *Breakthrough Spanish* and *¡Claro que sí!*. There is reference to *doler* 'hurt' in an exercise but there is no reference to any other of the verbs that this study is considering. *Noticias* (Bell and Schwartz, 2002: 42-43) has a brief section on 'Using *gustar* and similar verbs' in which the structure of *gustar* 'like' is explained but in which the 'similar verbs' appear mentioned in a footnote. The textbook does not provide oral or written practice of these verbs.

The description above shows that the L2 Spanish syllabus gives perhaps insufficient attention to verbs taking NNSubs, an approach that does not match the frequency with which those verbs are used by native speakers. It is also quite evident that, contrary to other structures, there is not a standard way of introducing the verbs and their NNSubs in the context of L2 instruction. These verbs are either presented one by one in isolation or are described collectively as taking a direct object and an indirect

object which then becomes the subject of the sentence. This means that to learn this construction, L2 learners rely on restricted grammatical description and on the positive and negative input (in the form of instruction and correction) that the teacher may provide.

### 3.2.2 Learnability

Lack of L2 input, of any kind, affecting a particular construction has obvious hindering effects on the acquisition of that construction, particularly when there is also a learnability problem involved. Section 3.2.1 mentioned the learnability problem regarding psych verbs pointed out by Montrul (1998). Montrul explains that some psych verbs can belong to more than one of the categories identified by Belletti and Rizzi (1988). So for instance, the verb *molestar* ‘bother’ can belong both to the *preoccupare* ‘worry’ class and the *piacere* ‘like’ class (Montrul 1998: 30).

(3.19) Juan siempre molesta a Pedro (con la música fuerte).

Juan always bothers to Pedro-ACC (with the music loud)

‘Juan always bothers Pedro with the loud music.’

(3.20) A Pedro le molesta la música/Juan.

to Pedro CL-DAT bothers the music/Juan

‘The music/Juan bothers Pedro.’

Although for native speakers there is an obvious semantic difference between (3.19) and (3.20) – (3.19) expresses an intentional action whereas (3.20) is non-

intentional – this may not be so evident for Spanish L2 learners who see that *a Pedro* ‘to Pedro’ can be both subject and object with the same verb. A similar situation can be observed with other NNSub verbs, as in (3.21) where intonation can change the word order of the sentence, as the emphasis is on the theme:

(3.21) A esa chica le sangraba la cabeza muchísimo.  
to that girl CL-DAT was bleeding the head very much  
‘The girl’s head was bleeding a great amount.’

(3.22) La cabeza le sangraba muchísimo a esa chica.  
the head-THEME CL was bleeding very much to that girl.  
‘His/her head was bleeding a great amount.’

There is almost no semantic difference in the above sentences. (3.21) has the unaccusative verb *sangrar* ‘bleed’ and the subject is the theme *la cabeza* ‘the head’. In (3.22) though, the verb is still *sangrar* ‘bleed’ but the subject of the sentence is the dative experiencer *a esa chica* ‘to that girl’ while the theme remains post-verbally.

More elementary L2 learners may also find it confusing that *gustar* ‘like’ can be used in two different ways with exactly the same meaning:

(3.23) Yo sé que a él le gusté yo.  
I know that to him CL-DAT like me  
‘I know he liked me.’

(3.24) Yo sé que él gustó de mí.

I know that he liked of me

‘I know he liked me.’

The confusion that L2 learners may experience in this case does not just arise from the use of the preposition *de* ‘of’, which does not normally follow *gustar* ‘like’ but also from the fact that *gustar* ‘like’ takes a non-agentive, dative experiencer as subject in sentence (3.23) and a nominative, agentive subject in sentence (3.24). It may also be confusing for elementary L2 learners that some verbs, though expressing different meanings, can require a NNSub or a nominative subject depending of the context they are used in:

(3.25) Ella faltó a clase ayer.

she missed to class yesterday

‘She did not turn up for class yesterday.’

(3.26) A ella le faltó una clase ayer.

to her CL-DAT lacked one class yesterday

‘She had all but one class yesterday.’

In sentence (3.25), *faltar* means ‘to be absent’ and takes an agentive, nominative subject, and an *a* ‘to’ prepositional phrase expressing goal as complement while in (3.26), *faltar* ‘lack’ takes a non-agentive NNSub and a post-verbal theme.

To summarise, having looked at the poor emphasis given to NNSubs in language instruction and at how diverse the use of some NNSub verbs is, it is certain that there is likely to be a learnability problem associated with NNSubs. There are not always clear-cut, obvious signals in the L2 input that can guide the learner to become aware of when the verb requires a NNSub, a nominative theme or a nominative agent. Moreover, input containing NNSubs does not seem to be too common in the language classroom, as NNSubs do not appear often in teaching materials or textbooks. This situation is an example of a learnability problem in which the input underdetermines the knowledge that the learners may come up with.

### **3.3 The Non-Nominative Subject Parameter in language acquisition**

So far, this chapter has discussed the theoretical framework within which the present study is placed, both from the point of view of Spanish syntax and L2 acquisition theory. It has also explored the grammatical intricacies of the use of Non-Nominative Subjects (NNSubs) and has given a background of related L2 acquisition studies. It has also discussed issues pertaining the input and learnability. This section will now look at specific research on NNSubs both in L1 and L2 acquisition.

Research on the acquisition of NNSubs per se is sparse. The L1 acquisition of NNSubs in languages other than Romance has been examined by Masuyo (2001) for English, Lakshmi Bai (2004) for Tamil<sup>27</sup>, and Usha Rani and Sailaja (2004) for

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<sup>27</sup> Member of the Dravidian family of languages. This group includes approximately 26 languages that are mainly spoken in southern India and Sri Lanka, as well as certain areas in Pakistan, Nepal, and eastern and central India.

Telugu<sup>28</sup> among others. However, in Romance and Germanic languages, studies have mainly focused on the reasons why they emerge in early grammars, as in [-pro-drop] languages they are perceived as the result of errors in case-assignment (see Schütze and Wexler, 1996; Schütze, 1997; Wexler, Schütze, and Rice, 1998<sup>29</sup> (but also see De Cat, 2002, 2004).

One of the most relevant studies in connection with the L2 acquisition of NNSubs in Romance languages is Montrul (1998). She looked at the acquisition of dative experiencer subjects of psych verbs by French and English learners of Spanish. The aim of her study was to find whether L2 learners with L1s differing in how they assign case to experiencers - French has dative experiencers and English has nominative or accusative experiencers - come to have knowledge of the properties allowing experiencers in Spanish to become the subject of a psych verb while retaining the case-marking of an indirect object. The psych verbs under consideration are the verbs expressing psychological states. The ones requiring NNSubs are the Class III, *piacere* 'please' kind, according to Belletti and Rizzi's classification (Belletti and Rizzi, 1988). English lacks the *piacere* 'like' kind of psych verbs and experiencers that only carry nominative or accusative case. French has dative experiencers but lacks clitic doubling and is not pro-drop. Dative experiencers in French normally occur postverbally and are not accompanied by a clitic.

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<sup>28</sup> A Dravidian language, one of the 23 official national languages of India.

<sup>29</sup> Schütze and Wexler propose the Agreement and Tense Omission Model (ATOM). According to this, Case errors in child grammar are the result of the underspecification of Agreement. If the Agreement head is underspecified, the result is that the subject surfaces in the default case.

Montrul is also interested in the learnability problem<sup>30</sup> posed by psych verbs whose experiencer argument can be sometimes the subject of a sentence, as in (3.27) and sometimes an object, like in (3.28):

(3.27) Juan siempre molesta a Pedro con la música fuerte.  
Juan always bothers to Pedro-DAT with the music loud  
'Juan always bothers Pedro with the loud music.'

(3.28) A Pedro le molesta la música.  
to Pedro-DAT CL bothers the music  
'The music bothers Pedro.'

As she points out 'understanding how this knowledge is acquired is a significant part of understanding language acquisition' (Montrul, 1998: 28).

Two groups of learners and a control group participated in the study. The first experimental group consisted of 19 English speakers and the second one had 17 French speakers (Montrul, 1998: 35). These L2 learners were taking low-intermediate Spanish classes and were either enrolled in a two-semester course or would take intermediate Spanish for two consecutive semesters. Montrul's hypotheses were first that French-speaking learners would have less difficulty acquiring dative experiencers (since dative case already exists in French) and that they might omit the clitic or treat it as optional. Second, that English-speaking learners might treat experiencers as having nominative case. Last, that, provided that the L1 only plays a role in the earliest stages of the

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<sup>30</sup> The logical problem of language acquisition: the input underdetermines the unconscious knowledge of a language.

acquisition process, with time learners would be able to accept dative case (Montrul, 1998: 36-37).

The participants were administered an interpretation and a preference task. The interpretation task aimed at testing whether L2 learners could interpret dative experiencers as subjects. The preference task investigated knowledge that experiencers of unaccusatives are marked with dative case, that clitic doubling is a characteristic of Spanish, and the fact that clitic doubling is obligatory with experiencers. The study's results showed that both L2 groups had difficulty in accepting that experiencers can be subjects. They also highlighted that English-speaking learners in particular were confused about dative case, not just with unaccusative verbs but also with active verbs followed by goal arguments. Montrul attributes this either to L1 influence or to what the learners had been taught in the classroom, since dative experiencers are introduced as indirect objects. Both groups, however, used clitic doubling more often with dative experiencers than with indirect objects, which, according to Montrul, suggests that they had knowledge of the difference between the two. The findings also show that English acceptance of dative clitics was lower than the French, which was confirmed by the English learners preferring nominative NPs to dative experiencers as subjects. Lastly, Montrul claims that the results of this study agree with the hypothesis that learners eventually overcome the L1 influence and acquire aspects of the L2 grammar which are not part of the L1 (Montrul, 1998: 54-55). The learnability problem is, therefore, assumed to be solved by access to UG.

### 3.4 Research questions and hypotheses

This study will specifically look at the Interlanguage of English L2 learners of Spanish to find grammatical properties associated with knowledge of NNSubs that can reveal the answer to the following questions:

1. Does the evidence show that L2 knowledge of NNSubs develops independently from the L1 or is this working via L1 knowledge? Is there evidence for direct access to UG?
2. Are learners able to reset the NNSub Parameter? Do they show knowledge of dative or accusative case (through the use of case-marking preposition *a* 'to' and obligatory clitics) with subject experiencers?
3. Do the data show that there is a learnability problem regarding the verbs that require NNSubs?

Following Masullo's (1992, 1993) proposal of a NNSub Parameter, L2 learners of Spanish with a [-NNSub] setting will need to reset the parameter to the positive value to suit the Spanish grammar. Not only does English lack NNSubs and the *gustar* 'like' type of verbs but also English experiencers are not marked with dative case (they are either nominative or accusative). However, if, as suggested by Cazzoli-Goeta et al. (2004), [+NNSubs] is the default value of the parameter, L2 learners should eventually develop knowledge of NNSubs and should be able to reset the parameter. On the basis of this, the following specific hypotheses can be formulated:

Hypothesis A: Intermediate L2 learners will show some knowledge of NNSubs but there will be clear L1 effects in their data as the parameter will not have been reset yet. Their Interlanguage will manifest this by showing evidence of a lack of features associated with NNSubs (and related to the absence in English of NNSubs and dative case):

- a. Dropping of case-marking preposition *a* 'to' when the NNSub appears (or is moved) to sentence initial position, and/or
- b. Dropping of the dative/accusative clitic
- c. Raising of the nominative theme to Spec, IP
- d. Non-raising of the dative/accusative/locative, i.e. learners will leave the non-nominative constituent in its base position, after the verb
- e. 'Nominativisation' of the NNSub, which will show agreement with the verb

Hypothesis B: If the influence of the L1 is mostly characteristic of the early stages of the L2 grammar, and having had naturalistic input and instruction in NNSubs constructions, the more advanced L2 learners will show signs of parameter resetting. This will be seen in their ability to accept and produce sentences with NNSubs.

### **3.5 Conclusions**

This chapter has attempted to present an overview of the theoretical issues surrounding NNSubs: why they are allowed with certain verbs and how they are used. The aim has been to provide a framework within which to place the study that will be described in the next chapter. Chapter 4 will discuss the methodology used

in the collection of data: the test battery, accompanied by an account of related L2 methodology research, a description of the test subjects' groups, and an account of the way in which the experiment was conducted.

# Chapter 4

## 4 The Study: Methods and Materials

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described Non-Nominative Subjects (NNSubs) as a very common feature of both spoken and written Spanish. The present study aims to determine the Interlanguage competence of intermediate and advanced classroom L2 learners of Spanish by investigating their performance of NNSubs in different tasks and under different conditions. As can be gathered from the proficiency levels of the participants, the focus of the study is not the initial state of their grammar but the later stages, where the development of knowledge relevant to NNSubs could cause restructuring of the L2 grammar and parameter resetting.

The search for grammatical properties associated with NNSubs in the L2 learners' data can help provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses introduced in Chapter 3. The research questions concern the way in which acquisition of NNSubs takes place, i.e. whether it develops independently from the L1 or via L1 knowledge. They are also about finding out whether L2 learners are able to reset the NNSub parameter and whether there is a learnability problem regarding the verbs that require NNSubs. Failure to reset this parameter is expected to result in the L2 learners' Interlanguage showing evidence of a lack of related features: dropping of case-marking preposition *a* 'to' and/or dropping of the dative/accusative clitic, raising of the

nominative theme to Spec, IP, non-raising of the dative/accusative/locative and 'nominativisation' of the NNSub, which will show agreement with the verb.

NNSubs are characteristic of Spanish but the fact that NNSubs are optional in certain contexts and that they can be avoided fairly easily by the L2 learner brings about methodological implications regarding the kind of tests used.

One of the main concerns in setting up an experimental study to test such an elusive structure is establishing native speakers' performance in the control group. The native competence of these speakers allows a high degree of lexical optionality, particularly in production tasks, so that NNSubs might not be used as often as expected. As mentioned in the previous chapter (Section 3.3.1), certain contexts allow unaccusative constructions as well as ergative or accusative ones with little, if any, change in meaning:

(4.1) A la maestra le **duele** la cabeza. / La maestra **tiene** dolor de cabeza.  
to the teacher CL-DAT hurts the head / the teacher has ache of head  
'The teacher has a headache.'

(4.2) A mí me **llevó** dos años perder peso. / **Estuve** dos años para perder peso.  
to me CL-DAT took two years lose weight / I was two years for lose weight  
'It took me two years to lose weight.'

This optionality in the performance of native speakers will have to be taken into account in the performance of advanced L2 learners. The analysis of their performance needs to contemplate the possibility that optionality may play a role in their use of

language. Having said this, the fact that there is lexical optionality in Spanish regarding the verbs under consideration is also the element that may make the analysis of performance results quite a complex process<sup>31</sup>. This is due to the fact that when the learners' L1 is a language that disallows NNSubs, what might appear to be optionality may in fact be avoidance, i.e. learners may use accusative or ergative verbs because they do not know how to use unaccusative ones or may not know the lexical item (and its properties) that they would need to express a particular idea.

(4.3) A ese chico le **sangra** la nariz. / ??Ese chico **tiene** sangre en la nariz.  
to that boy CL-DAT bleeds the nose / that boy has blood on the nose  
'That boy has a nose-bleed.'

(4.4) A la mesa le **falta** una pata. / ??La mesa **no tiene** una pata.  
to the table CL-DAT misses a leg. / the table no has a leg  
'The table is missing a leg.'

In some cases, grammatical sentences with accusative or ergative verbs that could be used to replace a sentence with a NNSub, might sound unusual to native speakers, who would use the equivalent unaccusative construction instead (see 4.3 and 4.4 above).

In cases where there is a choice, it is difficult both to elicit the unaccusative structure and to demonstrate to learners that the unaccusative construction is normally the one that sounds more 'Spanish'.

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<sup>31</sup> The three groups of L2 learners in this study had used textbooks and materials which presented the verbs used in the data collection tasks.



(4.5) Emilio **tiene** dolor de dientes./ A Emilio le **duelen** los dientes.

Emilio has ache of teeth / to Emilio CL hurt-PL the teeth

'Emilio has toothache.' / 'Emilio has toothache.'

(4.6) El helado **ha caído** del cono de Tito./ A Tito se le cayó el helado.

the ice-cream has fallen from the cone of Tito/ to Tito SE CL fell the ice-cream

'The ice-cream has fallen from Tito's cone.'

As pointed out before, intonation and word order may also have implications for the use of NNSubs. Datives, accusatives or locatives may remain in the default position, i.e. postverbally, if they are the focus of the sentence.

(4.7) No le gusta eso a 'Claudia.

no CL-DAT like that to Claudia

'Claudia does not like that.'

(4.8) El 132 pasa por la puerta de 'casa.

the 132 passes by the door of home

'Number 132 passes by our house.'

If a Spanish L2 learner leaves the dative, accusative or locative phrase after the verb, it is possible that this is not an error but that they are emphasizing that part of the sentence.

The methodological choices for this study revolve around the fact that NNSubs are sometimes optional and that, depending on the intonation contour of the sentence, they may appear in post-verbal position. One of the aims of this study is to dissociate the L2 language's lexical optionality accompanying high, or near-native, competence, from the opposite scenario, lexical optionality due to the lack of sufficient L2 linguistic competence. Section 4.2 will discuss the rationale behind the tasks designed to achieve this.

The chapter will be organised as follows. Section 4.2 will describe the tasks used for data collection and will provide samples of the materials (Appendices 1, 2 and 3 provide complete lists of sentences). This section will also include a subsection for each task as well as an account of methodological observations and related research. Section 4.2.2 will describe the groups of participants and section 4.2.3 will discuss the data collection procedure.

## **4.2 Methodology**

### **4.2.1 The test battery**

Three tasks were used to collect data for this study. They ranged from more to less constrained: an aural preference (AP) task, an elicited imitation (EI) task and a picture description (PD) task. This selection corresponds to at least three issues. One of them is the need to provide different contexts and modalities in view of the optionality of NNSubs. Related to this is the necessity to ensure various degrees of difficulty in the study to provide sufficient opportunities for the participants to use NNSubs. And lastly,

given the concerns expressed in the literature about the validity of metalinguistic tests (see Birdsong, 1989), it was essential to use a variety of tasks in order not to rely solely on one set of data. I will first describe each of the tasks and then will discuss the methodological issues behind them.

Both the grammatical and ungrammatical sentences in the AP and EI tasks contained verbs that allow NNSubs, i.e. psych verbs, raising predicates, ergative verbs marked by the clitic *se*, and verbs of involuntary bodily activities. The non-nominative elements in the sentences were dative, accusative, and locative. In addition to this, some sentences were included that contained errors associated with NNSubs, the kind that learners make in and out of the classroom: lack of raising of the dative, accusative, or locative; raising of the nominative theme instead; and dropping of (case-marking or dummy) preposition *a* and/or the dative clitic.

#### *4.2.1.1 Methodological considerations regarding AP tasks*

The AP task is a close relative of the grammaticality judgement (GJ) test in the family of metalinguistic tasks. The difference between them is that instead of asking for a correct-incorrect or grammatical-ungrammatical judgement, the AP task asks for a preference, appealing not only to the grammar of the sentence but also to its discourse/semantic content. In the case of the structure under investigation, a preference task is probably quite useful as the dichotomy right-wrong or correct-incorrect cannot be applied to all instances of NNSubs or lack thereof. Moreover, the study seeks to determine not just knowledge of ungrammaticality but also the contextual conditions when L2 speakers of Spanish may prefer NNSubs or the alternative constructions.

Metalinguistic tests like the AP or the GJ tasks have been widely used in the field of L2 acquisition as one way of 'tapping' linguistic competence. One of the advantages of performing a GJ task is that it allows the researcher to manipulate, though subtly, the attention of test subjects regarding a particular structure, while the researcher introduces violations of that structure. This is done by forcing subjects to consider sentences which are impossible from the point of view of UG and impossible in learners' Interlanguage (White, 1989: 58). This manipulation is not possible in other, more spontaneous, kinds of tasks, as subjects are free to avoid or ignore the structure being investigated. This is why the manipulation of language in metalinguistic tests, including the introduction of ungrammatical sentences in a task, is important because the subjects' reactions can give an insight into the role of UG in L2 learning. If UG does have a role in SLA then learners should generally reject both violations of UG principles and non-UG constrained parameter settings.

As mentioned briefly in the previous section, metalinguistic tests like the AP and GJ tasks have been the subject of considerable discussion in the literature (see Birdsong, 1989; Sorace, 1996; Cook, 1997; Hawkins, 2001 and White, 2003) for merely showing performance data and reflecting explicit metalinguistic knowledge. The fact is that in L2 experimental research, all data collected are performance data. Researchers working in the area of adult L2 acquisition also know that it is difficult (virtually impossible in the case of instructed learners) to elicit unmonitored, non-metalinguistically influenced data. As White (2003) points out, no experimental method (*particularly* metalinguistic, emphasis mine) can provide direct access to an individual's linguistic competence; at best, what it is possible to achieve is an indirect approximation based on results from a

combination of tasks. GJ exercises ask learners to label sentences as good or bad (or possible/impossible), AP tasks ask for judgements based on preference, and the learners taking part in experiments will generally be monitoring their language performance. There are no definitive methods of data collection that can ensure direct access to the language faculty of the learners, so the best that can be done is to use a combination of tasks whose results can later be compared. This may provide us with some information regarding the developmental stage in the learner's Interlanguage.

Some L2 acquisition researchers would disagree with the view that data from metalinguistic tasks can provide insights into the L2 learner's competence. Birdsong (1989) is one of the main detractors of metalinguistic tasks and has extensively pointed out their unreliability, 'the data of metalinguistic performance are so unstable that competing theories can be supported' (Birdsong, 1989: 82). There are a number of issues that he highlights in his discussion of metalinguistic tasks and the resulting performance data. One of the most central concerns is perhaps that correct or incorrect judgements cannot be taken as a sign of access or lack of access to UG as learners might be paying attention to other aspects of the sentence in their judgements, e.g. its meaning.

The existence of a response bias in metalinguistic tasks is another one of Birdsong's criticisms of metalinguistic tests, as, in his view, this underlines the limited informativeness of judgement data (Birdsong, 1989: 101). The response bias can take the form of e.g. participants giving yes or no answers everywhere in the task. But because it is not always possible to identify the source of the response bias, Birdsong's concern is that researchers can ignore it to their benefit, and that data can be interpreted in a subjective way, favouring a particular theoretical idea.

Another aspect of metalinguistic tasks that is criticised is their dependence on native speakers' intuitions. This constant comparison with native proficiency, or what Bley-Vroman (1983) calls the 'comparative fallacy', is not the way forward to understand how acquisition takes place (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994; Cook, 1997; Schwartz, 1997), 'any L2 grammar might well be a possible language according to UG though different from the native's' (Cook, 1997: 40). Cook calls this proposal the 'independent grammars assumption', which is in essence what Bley-Vroman refers to in his own proposal: 'the learner's system is worthy of study in its own right, not just as a degenerate form of the target system'<sup>32</sup>. The claim is that L2 learners' systems are independent from those of other learners'; non-native judgements may indicate a system that is not that of the target language but still allowed by UG. Cook believes that the results of a task based exclusively on native speakers' judgement does not let the researcher see at what stage in the acquisition process the learner is. So, according to Cook, data collection tasks should aim at analysing the L2 grammar irrespectively of what native intuitions are like<sup>33</sup>.

Although the usefulness of GJT has been the subject of debate for a long time, researchers keep using the GJT because it allows them to discover what the learner

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<sup>32</sup> Bley-Vroman's later Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (1990) was criticised by White (1998b), however, for representing a case of comparative fallacy, 'Bley-Vroman argues that L2 learning is fundamentally different from L1 acquisition in part on the basis of differences in the outcomes (i.e. properties of the grammars of L2 learners versus the grammars of native speakers)' (White, 1998b: 4).

<sup>33</sup> The consideration of interlanguages in their own right has been the subject of discussion for a long time (see also; Finer and Broselow, 1986; du Plessis, Solin, Travis, and White, 1987; Selinker, 1972; White, 1992; Martohardjono and Gair, 1993). The central notion is to consider interlanguage grammars as being UG grammars, irrespective of whether they are equivalent to the target grammar.

considers possible or impossible. This is also the reason why that kind of task is one of the three used in this study.

One of the decisions to be made was whether a grammatical/ungrammatical judgement would be appropriate to test knowledge of unaccusativity and NNSubs considering that knowledge of these constructions does not rely solely on syntax and word order but also on discourse and even arbitrary preference (see sentences (4.1) and (4.2)). A preference task would then be better suited for these constructions.

The modality of a GJ/AP task also has an important role in achieving reliable results, especially in constructions involving a NNSub, as sentence word order can be flexible and subject to different intonation patterns. It is because of this that the preference task was designed to be aural, in an attempt to make the meaning less ambiguous and rule out confusion. Sentences (4.9a) and (4.9b) illustrate the difference in meaning that intonation may bring about. (4.9a) is the unmarked form whereas (4.9b) is a grammatical option due to the fact that the intonation peak of the sentences falls on the dative NP *a ella* 'to her':

(4.9) a. A ella le            **dieron**    el        cargo. (neutral intonation, stating a fact)  
          to her CL-DAT gave-PL the        position  
          'They gave the position to her.'

b. Le **dieron**            el        cargo a `ella. (not to anybody else)  
          CL gave-PL        the        job        `to her  
          'They gave the position to her.'

If L2 learners do not hear the sentence's intonation and only see it written down, they might get confused about which of the two word orders is the 'unmarked', grammatical one. To sum up so far, it is expected that the aural modality of this task will make both the task itself and the analysis of the results more reliable.

The ways in which stimulus modality can affect subjects' behaviour and L2 processing was examined by Murphy (1997), who set up a study to provide empirical evidence regarding the issue of modality of presentation of a GJ task for adult L2 learners. Her aim was to determine whether L2 subjects would respond differently on a GJ task presented aurally as compared to visually. Reaction time also was analysed as a measure of online processing. Taking into account previous research (Danks, 1980 and Haig, 1991 on L1 processing; Johnson, 1992; Kirsner, 1994; and Leow, 1995 on L2 acquisition), she hypothesised that subjects would be less accurate in an aural situation than a visual one and that the effects of the aural task would lead subjects to make their judgements more slowly in the aural task than the visual one (Murphy, 1997: 42-43).

Wh-questions were used to test these hypotheses, in particular Subjacency violations regarding long distance movements, something that had already been tested with GJ tasks. Murphy, however, stresses that the task was not designed to test knowledge of UG principles but rather to determine whether factors, such as modality, could influence subjects' performance (Murphy, 1997).

Her results showed that accuracy at judging the grammatical sentences was not affected by modality but that subjects tended to be less accurate at judging the

ungrammatical sentences when the modality was aural rather than visual. The ungrammatical target sentences were judged significantly less accurately than the grammatical targets. In general, native speakers and L2 learners did not differ in their accuracy of judging grammatical sentences; however, they were different on accuracy on ungrammatical sentences. The subjects' responses to the grammaticality of the sentences were *not* independent of the modality of stimulus presentation (Murphy, 1998: 50). Native speakers were more accurate than L2 learners in judging the ungrammatical sentences, but there was no difference between native speakers and L2 learners' judgements of grammatical sentences (see also Bley-Vroman and Masterson, 1989 for similar findings).

To conclude, this section has described the aural preference task used in the present study of acquisition of NNSubs and has given an overview of the claims and proposals regarding the use of grammaticality judgement and preference tasks in L2 research. The next section will deal with the second metalinguistic task in this study, the elicited imitation task.

#### *4.2.1.2 Methodological considerations regarding EI tasks*

Together with the GJ tasks, EI tasks have been used in the field of L2 acquisition with the aim of accessing specific aspects of linguistic competence. And like GJ tasks, they also allow the experimenter to manipulate sentences, introducing violations and making participants focus on a particular structure.

Also like GJ tasks, EI tasks have been criticised for being based on native speakers' intuitions (Cook, 1997). As mentioned earlier with regards to GJ tasks, Cook is critical of this idea of analysing L2 linguistic development in terms of native standards, 'the sentences for repetition are chosen because of their relevance to the native speaker; the deficiencies of the L2 user are measured in terms of what native speakers are supposed to do in the same circumstances (Cook, 1997: 40). Birdsong (1989) precedes Cook in this respect as he point out how misleading L1/L2 comparisons can be (Birdsong, 1989: 119).

In their discussion of the nature of EI tasks, Bley-Vroman and Chaudron (1994) follow Lust, Chien and Flynn's (1987) proposal to define EI tasks as using a process of reconstruction in which the subject hears a sentence and reconstructs its meaning using their grammar (Bley-Vroman and Chaudron, 1994: 246). Bley-Vroman and Chaudron express their concerns over the validity of EI tasks as a reliable method for inferring learners' competence given the limited information available about the processes of comprehension and reconstruction.

More recently, there have been strong claims regarding the efficacy of EI tasks for providing evidence of learners' internalised knowledge. As mentioned before, in their experiment, Van Boxtel, Bongaerts and Coppens (2003) tested the assumption that native proficiency in a L2 cannot be attained if the acquisition process starts after the onset of puberty. They tested French and German late learners of Dutch on their knowledge of dummy subject constructions, which are known to be difficult for L2 learners of Dutch. The test involved two tasks: an EI task and a GJ task. The motivation for choosing an EI task for this test is Van Boxtel et al.'s claim that in this kind of task,

participants apply their grammar rules subconsciously, 'if a sentence containing a (phonologically) non-salient target is too long or complex for participants' linguistic processing and storage capacity, the target will unconsciously be changed in such a way that the sentence fits the participant's own grammar' (Van Boxtel et al., 2003: 163). In spite of this fairly straightforward contention, Boxtel et al. mention a couple of disadvantages of EI tasks. The first is the fact that EI tests cannot contain too many items so that participants cannot be tested at length on their knowledge of a particular structure. And second, there is the problem that perfect imitations pose for data analysis, as they could be the product of reconstruction but also the direct result of memory retrieval. Van Boxtel et al. acknowledge that this is a problem that GJ tasks do not have, though as discussed in the previous section, they suffer from other ailments.

Van Boxtel et al.'s results seem to show that native-like attainment is possible in learners who started acquiring the L2 later in life. However, towards the end of the discussion of the combined GJ and EI results, Van Boxtel et al. (2003) concede that, in spite of the initial claim that learners use subconscious rules on EI tasks, the fact that the participants in this study were highly educated learners brings back the concern about the role of education and metalinguistic data in reaching native-like attainment.

EI tasks pose a heavy load on subjects' short-term memory, especially in those learners whose language competence is of a low level. The memory capacity of these learners will be almost fully occupied by the linear string to be repeated, and in this effort to cope with the task, the learner concentrates on remembering what is stored in his/her working memory. The L2 knowledge put to use will be limited and so this will produce non-target forms reflecting the IL representation. Imitations produced by

learners with high competence in the L2 will be closer to the sentences to be imitated because their Interlanguage competence will be closer to native.

So how can some learners imitate longer strings? Bley-Vroman and Chaudron (1994: 248) speculate that longer sentences are chunked into smaller units thanks to a grammar-based sentence processor. This processor reduces the number of units so that they can fit into short-term memory and so the sentence can be reproduced accurately. As they point out, the implication of this hypothesis is that grammatical sentences will be imitated more accurately than ungrammatical ones, 'chunking represents the interaction of the grammar with the input side of EI' (Bley-Vroman and Chaudron, 1994: 248). They believe that the language processor of native speakers, which according to generative linguistics is encapsulated in the language module, automatically produces a representation of the input that is heard and that such a processor does not need the help of short-term memory. Non-natives, however, who do not possess an encapsulated language processing system for the L2, need short-term memory to sort out the input. And it is because of this load on short-term memory that the learners' performance is lowered. As proficiency increases and input processing becomes more completely automatised in the L2, imitation accuracy will improve (Bley-Vroman and Chaudron, 1994: 248).

It should be borne in mind, however, that there are individual differences in working memory capacity and that in some cases, perfect imitations of sentences may not actually come from the (subconscious) reconstruction of a sentence but from the individual's working memory (Van Boxtel et al., 2003). This variability echoes some of

the concerns reported earlier in this chapter about the reliability of metalinguistic tasks in providing accurate information about learners' linguistic competence.

Based on the premise that GJ tasks and EI tasks are 'fundamentally different' because they elicit different facets of a learner's linguistic knowledge (beliefs about the L2 vs. production of the L2) Munnich et al. (1994: 230) set out to find out if and how the findings from each task related. Twelve speakers of Japanese were evaluated on two types of GJ (one read and one taped) and EI tasks (one oral and one taped). Regarding the comparison of the tasks, Munnich et al. observed that the GJ tasks were not as informative as the EI tasks in the sense that the latter were more spontaneous and provided instances of unconscious use of language. The GJ tasks, on the other hand, were seen as providing an indication of learners' beliefs about grammaticality (Munnich et al., 1994: 239). The study's main results were summarised with the contention that EI tasks 'can be used as an adequate measure of a learner's knowledge of linguistic principles' that both license grammatical strings and disallow ungrammatical ones...' (Munnich et al., 1994: 236). Munnich et al. claim that the participants in their study converted ungrammatical sentences into grammatical ones, suggesting that EI is a valid way to examine knowledge of UG constraints on the L2 grammar.

#### 4.2.1.3 *Methodological considerations regarding PD tasks*

Production tasks are different from metalinguistic tasks in that, in the former, the experimenter has less control of the language used by the learners and is not able to 'force' them to consider grammatical and ungrammatical forms. From the point of view of the reliability of metalinguistic tasks, production tasks seem an attractive way of

collecting L2 data as many of the problems associated with metalinguistic tasks will not be present: response bias, memory limitations or heavy reliance on 'learnt' rules, just to mention a few. It is also easier to isolate learners' production from what native speakers might say or might consider grammatical or ungrammatical, which in turns facilitates an analysis of the learner's Interlanguage in its own right. Production tasks let us look into learners' linguistic competence in a different manner, through the language they are actually using and not just by comparison with native standards.

However, some disadvantages of production tasks have also been identified. Learners are free to choose the language structures they are more comfortable with, which might mean, in certain cases, avoiding the L2 structures tested in the experiment. As a result, large amounts of data may have to be collected in search of instances of a particular element or structure. What is most important in all this is, though, that the absence of data providing evidence for or against cannot be taken as evidence for or against the presence of UG in the acquisition of the L2. This is an important reason why production tasks like this one, where there is less control of learners' performance, should not be used exclusively; metalinguistic tasks should also be used to evaluate both the methodologies involved and how the results correlate across tasks.

The production task in this study is not completely unrestricted, though, as it makes use of pictures describing specific actions or situations to stimulate oral production. The PD task offers very specific, contextualised pictures that provide the participant with a fairly unambiguous idea of what the event is about. The participant may overlook some of the details in the image accidentally or on purpose, but normally, if the images are well selected, the participants should react to them with a relevant

description. If the language provides different ways of describing the pictures, the expectation is that, at some point, the participant will use the structure that is being investigated. If they do not, then that tells something about the structure itself and the learner's grammar.

#### 4.2.1.4 *The Aural Preference task*

The AP task contained 26 pairs of sentences (plus 13 distractors) and learners were asked to choose the one that would be more likely/possible in a conversation, regardless of its grammaticality as in some cases both sentences in the pair could be grammatical. A short context preceded each set of sentences both to help the participants in their decisions and to distract learners from focusing on the grammatical structures in the sentences. The sentences were recorded on tape and read with a neutral intonation:

(4.10) Volvieron                   ayer           de las vacaciones, pero:

came-PL back           yesterday from the holidays, but

'They came back from their holidays yesterday, but.'

a. A nadie                   le           **compraron**           regalos. ◀<sup>34</sup>  
to nobody-ACC   CL-ACC bought-PL           presents-NOM

'They didn't buy presents for anybody.'

b. Le                   **compraron**   regalos           a nadie<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> The arrow represents the 'more likely/possible' option.

CL-ACC bought-PL presents-NOM to nobody-ACC

'Nobody got presents.'

Sentence a. is an example of a dethematized sentence with raising of the accusative element to Spec, IP. This one should be the selected option. Sentence b. shows no raising of the non-nominative element, an option which is dispreferred because of discourse structure.

(4.11) La anécdota la escuchó todo el mundo. Mientras bailaba:

the anecdote CL heard all the world. while dancing

'Everybody heard the anecdote. While dancing.'

a. El pantalón se le había **descosido** a Pedro.

the trousers-NOM CL-REFL CL-DAT had come unstitched to Pedro-DAT

'Pedro's trousers had come unstitched.'

b. A Pedro se le había **descosido** el pantalón. ◀

to Pedro-DAT CL-REFL CL-DAT had come unstitched the trousers-NOM

'Pedro's trousers had come unstitched.'

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<sup>35</sup> This sentence would be fine with double negation:

*No le compraron regalos a nadie* '

no CL-DAT bought presents to nobody-ACC

'They didn't buy presents for anybody.'

However, if the accusative element moved to a NNSub position, the sentence would be ungrammatical.

This is because, *a nadie* 'to nobody' would have to move to Spec, NegP, and in terms of a doubly filled COMP filter, either the specifier or the head of NegP can be overt. So the accusative has to remain in its postverbal position in these sentences.

Sentence a. provides an example of theme raising. Sentence b., however, should be the preferred option, showing correct use of a NNSub, Personal *a* 'to' and use of the clitic *le*.

(4.12) El policía condujo a la mujer hasta el camino y le dijo:  
the policeman led to the woman to the road and CL said:  
'The policeman led the woman to the road and said to her:'

a. El accidente **ocurrió** aquí.  
the accident-NOM occurred here-LOC  
'This is where the accident took place.'

b. Aquí **ocurrió** el accidente. ◀  
here-LOC took place the accident-NOM  
'This is where the accident took place.'

Sentence b. shows the preferred option, with the locative moving to Spec, IP.

(4.13) Al finalizar la clase de karate:  
as finish the class of karate:  
'As the karate class finished:'

a. Marcela dijo que a ella le **dolían** todos los músculos. ◀  
Marcela said that to her-DAT CL-DAT hurt-PL all the muscles-NOM  
'Marcela said that all her muscles were aching.'

- b. Marcela dijo que ella **tenía** dolor en todos los músculos.  
 Marcela said that she-NOM had pain-ACC in all the muscles  
 'Marcela said that all her muscles were aching.'

Sentence a. shows an example of an unaccusative verb and a NNSub in Spec, IP. Sentence b., however, is a grammatical sentence with a non-unaccusative verb and a 'normal' nominative subject. Although the latter is a grammatical sentence, it is less likely for it to appear in natural language use as it is less idiomatic.

#### 4.2.1.5 *The Elicited Imitation task*

The Elicited Imitation (EI) test contained 14 taped sentences, 4 grammatical and 10 ungrammatical. At the beginning of this task, learners were instructed not to imitate *verbatim*; instead, they were asked to listen to each of the sentences and repeat them either as they appeared on the recording or, if they thought the sentences were ungrammatical, by introducing corrections before repeating them. The aim of this was to rule out simple imitation or repetition of the strings of words.

Sentences (4.14) to (4.17) are examples of the sentences used:

- (4.14) En España se come muy bien.  
 in Spain-LOC CL-IMP eats very well  
 'Food is very good in Spain.'

This is a grammatical sentence, with a locative NNSub in Spec, IP.

- (4.15) \*Este cuadro le falta la firma del pintor.  
this picture-DAT CL-DAT misses the signature of the painter-NOM  
'The painter's signature is missing on this picture.'

This is an ungrammatical sentence because Personal *a* 'to' is missing.

- (4.16) \*Diez años le llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.  
ten years-NOM CL-DAT took recover to my mum-DAT  
'It took my mum ten years to recover.'

This is an ungrammatical sentence, which shows raising of the nominative theme to Spec, IP.

- (4.17) ??Se lo considera el mejor futbolista a Pelé.  
SE CL-ACC consider the best footballer-NOM to Pelé-ACC  
'Pelé is considered the best footballer.'

This sentence provides an example of lack of raising of the dative. This word order could be acceptable in the appropriate context.

The sentences in this task illustrated grammatical and ungrammatical instances of NNSub usage. To ensure good comprehension of the sentences, the vocabulary was carefully chosen and the contexts were clear for the learners in each of the groups. The

length of the sentences ranged from 8 to 16 syllables per sentence exceeding the limit for short-term memory capacity - seven words or chunks (Miller, 1956) (see also McLaughlin and Heredia, 1996) - so that the processing of the information did not leave time for the learner to think too much about the grammar.

Although the EI task is metalinguistic by nature, and one which still includes an element of grammatical judgement of sentences, the version used in this study is not as controlled as the AP task described earlier. Once the participant has decided upon acceptability, they still have the option to turn the sentences into a form that is grammatical/acceptable to them. The only limitation that the participant experiences when considering changes is the sentence's meaning, and to a lesser degree, its lexical items and word order.

#### 4.2.1.6 *The Picture Description task*

The third and last test the participants carried out was the Picture Description (PD) task. This consisted of 14 pictures, each of them illustrating the actions more commonly associated with NNSubs. The images were designed to elicit structures containing a verb requiring a NNSub: psych verbs (*gustar* 'like', *sorprender* 'surprise', etc.), raising predicates (*parecer* 'seem', *empezar* 'begin', etc.), ergative verbs marked by the clitic *se* (*salirse* 'come off', *descoserse* 'come unstitched', etc.), and verbs of involuntary bodily activities (*temblar* 'shake', *latir* 'beat', etc.). The pictures had to be clear and unambiguous so as to encourage the use of these verbs and not others. Each participant was interviewed individually and was instructed at the beginning of the activity that they would be asked to describe a set of pictures and the situations

prompted by them. If a character was involved, the name of the character would be provided on the picture so that the L2 learners would use a sentence with an overt subject.

In some of the cases, the learners would not express an immediate reaction to the picture so a question would be necessary to encourage them to speak. In such a case, it was important to make sure that the learner was not misled or told what to say. The questions asked in the interviews had to be neutral enough so as not to elicit a specific verb or favour a particular structure (e.g. accusative, unaccusative, etc.). The following is an example of the kind of picture that was included in the PD task:

(4.18) ¡Buaaaaa!



Tito

(4.18) portrays a fortuitous action in which Tito drops his ice-cream. If the L2 learner is asked a question such as (4.19a), the question's structure would suggest an answer with an unaccusative verb and a NNSub and should therefore be avoided. (4.19b) is an example of a potential answer:

(4.19) a. ¿Qué le pasó a Tito?

what CL-DAT happened to Tito

'What happened to Tito?'

b. (A Tito) se le cayó el helado.  
to Tito CL-REFL CL-DAT fell the ice-cream  
'Tito dropped his ice-cream.'

On the other hand, a question such as (4.20a), which is one that is typically asked in picture description activities, suggests a description of an action, when in fact the action itself is not purposely done by the character. (4.20b) is an example of a potential answer:

(4.20) a. ¿Qué está haciendo Tito?  
what is doing Tito?  
'What is Tito doing?'

b. Está mirando el helado.  
is looking the ice-cream  
'Tito is looking at his ice-cream.'

And if a question like (4.21a) is asked, the emphasis is on the character's feelings rather than on the accidental action involving Tito. (4.21b) is an example of an answer:

(4.21) a. ¿Cómo se siente Tito?  
how CL-REFL feels Tito  
'How is Tito feeling?'

b. Tito se siente muy triste.

Tito CL-REFL feels very sad

'Tito is very upset.'

To avoid these problems, questions (4.22a) and (4.23a) were the ones used to elicit a response to the picture. The verb *pasar* 'happen' is used in both questions but not in an unaccusative structure like the ones elicited<sup>36</sup> (but see (4.19) above)). In the context of a PD activity, *pasar* 'happen' can be a neutral verb to ask about an action. The advantage of using questions like (4.22a) or (4.23a) is that the answer should contain the verb expressing the action that is described in the picture. (4.22b) and (4.23b) are examples of potential answers:

(4.22) a. ¿Qué pasa en este dibujo?

what happens in this drawing

'What is happening in this picture?'

b. (A Tito) se le cayó el helado.

to Tito-DAT SE CL-DAT fell the ice-cream-NOM

'Tito dropped his ice-cream.'

(4.23) a. ¿Qué pasa con Tito?

what happens with Tito

'What is going on with Tito?'

b. (A Tito) se le cayó el helado.

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<sup>36</sup> As in *¿Qué le pasa a Tito?* 'what happens to Tito?'

to Tito-DAT SE CL-DAT fell the ice-cream-NOM  
'Tito dropped his ice-cream.'

The following are examples of some of the pictures used in the PD task and of the expected responses (see Appendix 3 for a complete list of pictures):

(4.24) *La camisa*

'The shirt'



b. (A la camisa) se le salió un botón.  
to the shirt-DAT SE CL-DAT came off a button-NOM  
'The shirt has lost a button' / 'A button has come off the shirt.'

(4.25) a. *Claudia*



b. (A Claudia) le entregaron un premio.  
to Claudia-DAT CL-DAT gave-PL a prize-NOM  
'Claudia was awarded a prize.'

(4.26) a. *La Sra. Ramírez*

'Mrs Ramírez'



- b. (A la Sra. Ramírez) le duele la cabeza.  
to the Mrs. Ramírez-DAT CL-DAT hurts the head-NOM  
'Mrs Ramirez has a headache.'

(4.27) a. *¡Pobre Ángel!*

'Poor old Ángel!'



- b. (A Ángel) se le estiró el saco.  
to Ángel SE CL-DAT stretched the jacket  
'Ángel's jacket has stretched.'

#### 4.2.2 Test subjects

The non-native participants in this study were learners of Spanish doing a 4-year degree in modern languages at a university in England. Students doing this degree are expected to spend a minimum of six months in any of the countries where the target

language is spoken, in this case a Spanish-speaking one. The participants in this study came from three different level groups: level 2 students, who were doing the last term of their second year, level 3 students, who had just come back from their time abroad and were about to start of their fourth year, and level 4 students, who were doing the last term of their fourth and last year of their degree. The reason why no level 1 (beginners) students were involved in the study is that due to their limited L2 exposure and instruction in NNSubs, parameter resetting is not likely to have taken place yet.

The following table summarises the amount of time the L2 learners were exposed to Spanish:

**Table 4.1: Time and type of exposure for each experimental group.**

| Groups and cumulative input                                       | <u>Classroom input</u><br>(21 weeks in academic year) | <u>Naturalistic input</u> |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| Level 2<br>(2 years of instruction)                               | Year 1: 4 hours a week<br>Year 2: 3 hours a week      |                           |
| Level 3<br>(2 years of instruction<br>+ at least 6 months abroad) |   | Year 3: 6 months or more  |
| Level 4<br>(3 years of instruction<br>+ at least 6 months abroad) | Year 4: 2 hours a week                                |                           |

The contact hours are with a Spanish-speaking tutor who only speaks Spanish in the classroom. To ensure homogeneity within each of the groups of participants, all students had been false beginners when they first started their university course and had learnt Spanish up to GCSE level<sup>37</sup>. There were 20 test subjects in each of the three

<sup>37</sup> General Certificate of Secondary Education, a public examination in specified subjects for 16 year old secondary school students in the United Kingdom.

levels and their ages ranged from 19 to 23 years. The level 2 group is termed *Intermediate*, the level 3 group *Advanced*, and the level 4 group *Advanced+*. Learners were selected to take part in this study according to their level of oral and written performance. All three groups contained learners who had achieved at least 60% in their final oral and written exams the year before they were interviewed. In the case of the *Advanced* and *Advanced+* groups, learners were selected according to the amount of exposure to the L2 during their year abroad, i.e. six months abroad and regular contact with native speakers throughout that time. L2 learners were asked to give details about their year abroad experience in an informal interview before the tests took place.

At the time of the experiments, this author was their language instructor and their only source of Spanish input on the course, as all their other lectures were in English<sup>38</sup>. Their Spanish language lessons for *Intermediate* learners took place three times a week - one hour each class - and the *Advanced+* lessons were twice a week also - one hour per class - both for 21 weeks during the academic year. These lessons were conducted exclusively in Spanish and focused on grammar discussions and the practice of oral and written skills.

The control group consisted of 10 Argentinian Spanish speakers living in Buenos Aires whose ages ranged from 16 to 18 years. These participants were attending their last year of secondary school and although they were receiving instruction in English (one to two 45 minutes' lessons a week) this was normally done through the medium of Spanish. They were not immersed in an English-speaking environment and were not taught exclusively in English.

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<sup>38</sup> On the Spanish BA, only the language modules are taught in the target language. Literary, historical and cultural modules are taught in English.

The importance given to this lack of regular contact with English comes from the analysis of native speakers' data in two pilot tests, with 5 native speakers each time, previous to this study. The tasks used then included an aural grammaticality judgement task and a sentence completion exercise. During the pilot study, it became fairly evident that when native speakers of Spanish are immersed in an English environment, their Spanish grammatical intuitions may try to accommodate the knowledge of the two languages (Sorace, 2000). As regards the use of NNSubs, this meant that when judging and producing sentences in Spanish, these speakers preferred structures used by both languages rather than those which are used typically by monolingual Spanish speakers. The consequence of this was that native speakers of Spanish did not use NNSubs as often as had been expected, as they produced (grammatical) sentences with nominative subjects expressing the same meaning as their counterparts with NNSubs. This is illustrated by (4.28a) and (4.28b) below:

(4.28) a. A Clara le duele la cabeza.

to Clara CL-DAT hurts the head

'Clara has a headache.'

vs.

b. Clara tiene dolor de cabeza.

Clara has ache of head

'Clara has a headache.'

The native speakers in these pilot experiments were UK residents who at the time of data collection were using English at work or to study and who had English speaking

partners and friends. Their L2 had clear interfering effects on their native intuitions and the conclusions drawn from their experimental data were misleading. It was obvious that to ensure reliable native speakers' data in the main study, the Spanish speakers in the control group would have to have no close contact with English.

One last point concerns the ages of the participants. It is important to note that the age of the subjects can bring qualitative and quantitative implications to the task. In the two pilot tests previous to the main study, the ages of the native speakers in the control group were varied, from adolescents to a 75-year old grandfather. This difference in age revealed variation in the attitude towards the task, the register and the vocabulary used, and sometimes even the intuitions. In the EI and PD tasks, in particular, adolescents were, as a general rule, more clear, relevant and concise, though sometimes careless in the use of grammatical rules. The older subjects, however, engaged in lengthy descriptions, packed with details, and would discuss ideas more formally, using vocabulary not normally employed in informal, everyday conversations. The experimental tasks were perceived by them as formal tests of their own knowledge and they felt they had to 'impress' the interviewer by shifting to a higher register and a more elaborate discourse. (4.29b) illustrates this, the reaction to picture (4.29a) by a pilot study participant aged 66. (4.29c) shows a reaction to the same picture by a participant aged 15:

(4.29) a. ¡Puaj!

‘Yuck!’

Elsa

¡Nuevo sabor!

‘New flavour!’

*Helado de salvado a la ciruela*

‘Bran and plum ice-cream’



- b. Ante el sabor, Elsa le saca la lengua al heladero.  
to the taste, Elsa CL-DAT take out the tongue to the ice-cream man  
‘On tasting the ice-cream, Elsa sticks out her tongue at the ice-cream man.’

- c. A Elsa no le gustó el helado.  
to Elsa no CL-DAT liked the ice-cream  
‘Elsa did not like the ice-cream.’

(4.30b) below is another example of an utterance by a 75-year old pilot test participant.

(4.30c) is the answer from a 13-year old participant:

(4.30) a. *La torta*

‘The cake’



Guillermito



Pablo

b. Pablo, para mí, comió en exceso por angurria, Guillermito está gustoso de haber comido la cantidad que comió.

Pablo, for me, ate in excess for greed, Guillermito is glad for having eaten the amount that ate.

'In my opinion, Pablo has eaten in excess due to greed, Guillermito is glad that he only ate the amount that he ate.'

c. A Pablo le duele la panza pero a Guillermito no.

to Pablo CL-DAT hurts the tummy but to Guillermito not

'Pablo has a tummy ache but Guillermito hasn't.'

The older speakers were more conscientious than the younger speakers about how they were expressing their ideas. They seemed to possess very rigid 'right or wrong' grammatical judgements and did not like to make performance errors. The adolescents, on the other hand, were more relaxed in their use of language and in a few cases made speech errors (which included 'forgetting' about case markers or clitics) and used incomplete sentences. With this difference in performance in mind and to avoid a disparity between the performance of L2 participants and that of the L1 participants, this study used post-adolescents as the control group, whose circumstances and attitudes may be closer to the ones in the L2 groups of participants.

#### 4.2.3 Data collection procedure

In order to examine the hypotheses discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the four groups of participants – *Intermediate*, *Advanced*, *Advanced+* and *Native*

*speakers* – carried out the three tasks discussed in the previous sections. In the case of the L2 learners, each of the groups did the Aural Preference task together as a group. This took place in a large teaching room and with a good quality tape player. The participants listened to a tape in which a female native speaker of Spanish read 29 pairs of sentences. The pairs were separated by a silent gap of 5 seconds during which time the participants were expected to make their selection on an answer sheet. They were asked to base their selection on the sentence that would be more likely/possible in a conversation, regardless of its grammaticality.

The Elicited Imitation (EI) and the Picture Description (PD) tasks were administered in individual sessions. Each of the participants met with the interviewer and was presented with the EI exercise first and with the PD task immediately afterwards. For the EI task, the participants listened to a tape which contained 18 sentences read by a female native speaker of Spanish. The sentences were separated by a gap of 10 seconds during which time the participants were expected to repeat the sentences, either as they appeared on the recording or with corrections. Their repetitions were recorded on a different tape. Then, for the PD task, the subjects were shown a series of 14 pictures, each of them illustrating actions commonly associated with NNSubs, and were asked to explain the situation that was depicted and to talk about the character in it while being taped.

The data collection procedure for the native speakers was the same as for the L2 learners. They took the AP task together as a group and listened to the same tape that was used for the L2 learners. They were asked to select the sentence that would be more likely/possible in a conversation, regardless of its grammaticality. The EI and the PD

tasks were also carried out in individual sessions, one immediately after the other. For the EI task, the participants were to repeat the sentences, either as they appeared on the recording or with corrections. Their performance was recorded on a different tape. Then, for the PD task, the subjects were shown a series of 14 pictures, each prompting a verb requiring NNSubs, and were asked to talk about the pictures. This activity was also taped.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the methodology used in the study of Spanish L2 acquisition of NNSubs by adult speakers of English. It has described the three tasks used for the collection of data - an aural preference, an elicited imitation and a picture description task - and has provided a brief review of research on L2 methodology. Another central aspect of the study discussed in this chapter was the participants' background and the amount of contact with the language in terms of time abroad and hours of instruction. Finally, the last section explained the procedure used in the actual data collection.

# Chapter 5

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the data collection tasks described in Chapter 4 will be presented and analysed. The following is a reminder of the research questions and hypotheses set out in Section 3.4 of Chapter 3.

This study aims to find evidence that can answer the following questions:

1. Does the evidence show that L2 knowledge of NNSubs develops independently from the L1 or is this working via L1 knowledge? Is there evidence for direct access to UG?
2. Are learners able to reset the NNSub Parameter? Do they show knowledge of dative or accusative case (through the use of case-marking preposition *a* 'to' and obligatory clitics) with subject experiencers?
3. Do the data show that there is a learnability problem regarding the verbs that require NNSubs?

Following Masullo's (1992, 1993) proposal of a NNSub Parameter and Cazzoli-Goeta et al.'s (2004) proposal that [+NNSubs] is the default value of the parameter, L2

learners should eventually develop knowledge of NNSubs and should be able to reset the parameter. On the basis of this, the following specific hypotheses can be formulated:

Hypothesis A: Intermediate L2 learners will show some knowledge of NNSubs but there will be clear L1 effects in their data as the parameter will not have shown to be reset yet. Their Interlanguage will manifest this by showing evidence of a lack of features associated to NNSubs (and related to the absence in English of NNSubs and dative case):

- a. Dropping of case-marking preposition *a* 'to' when the NNSub appears (or is moved) to initial position in a sentence, and/or
- b. Dropping of the dative/accusative clitic
- c. Raising of the nominative theme to Spec, IP
- d. Non-raising of the dative/accusative/locative, i.e. learners will leave the non-nominative constituent in its base position, after the verb
- e. 'Nominativisation' of the NNSub, which will show agreement with the verb

Hypothesis B: If the influence of the L1 is mostly characteristic of the early stages of the L2 grammar, and having had naturalistic input and instruction in NNSubs constructions, the more advanced L2 learners will show signs of parameter resetting. This will be seen in their ability to accept and produce sentences with NNSubs.

## 5.2 Validity of the testing instrument

The results are analysed on the basis of the most common non-target forms produced by the learners when using or avoiding a NNSub verb. There is evidence in the data that confirms the native speaker's intuitions and the use of the following non-target forms by the L2 learners (examples taken from the actual data). The numbers represent the amount of learners using the non-target form over a total of 20, which is the number of participants in each group.

- a. Personal preposition *a* 'to' introducing the NNSub is dropped, as in sentence (5.1),

(5.1) \*Elsa no le entusiasma la bebida.

Elsa no CL-DAT excites the drink

'Elsa is not keen on drinking.'

(Source: AP task. 4/20 *Intermediate* learners and 2/20 *Advanced* learners)

or the dative clitic is absent as in (5.2):

(5.2) A la vecina se había quemado la comida.

to the neighbour SE had burnt the food

'The neighbour's food got burnt.'

(Source: AP task 9/20 *Intermediate* learners, 11/20 *Advanced* learners, and 12/20 *Advanced+* learners)

Sometimes, both *a* 'to' and the clitic are left out, as in (5.3):

(5.3) \*La chaqueta se ha roto el cierre.  
 the jacket-DAT REFL has broken the zip  
 'The jacket's zip is broken.'

(Source: AP task. 7/20 *Intermediate* learners, 8/20 *Advanced* learners, and 8/20 *Advanced+* learners)

Evidence for this non-target form was found in the three tasks and amongst the three L2 groups.

b. The theme appears in initial position in sentences with neutral intonation with unaccusative verbs like in (5.4):

(5.4) ¡El pantalón se le rompió a Pedro!  
 the trousers SE CL-DAT broke to Pedro  
 'Pedro's trousers got broken!'

(Source: AP task. 9/20 *Intermediate* learners, 11/20 *Advanced* learners, and 7/20 *Advanced+* learners)

There is evidence for this non-target form in the three tasks and by the three L2 groups.

c. The dative/accusative/locative is sometimes left in post-verbal position when it is not the focus of the sentence:

(5.5) Lo llamaron a Miguel por el apellido  
 CL-DAT call-UNACC-PL to Miguel by the surname

'They call him by his surname.'

(Source: AP task. 10/20 *Intermediate* learners, 6/20 *Advanced* learners, and 4/20 *Advanced+* learners)

- d. Nominativisation of NNSubs appears frequently in the L2 data. L2 learners try a number of different strategies to make the subject a nominative one like the ones allowed by English:

- (i) There is no personal preposition *a* 'to' before the NNSub and/or no dative clitic:

(5.6) \*Él se duele la cabeza.  
he-NOM REFL hurts-UNACC the head

'He has a headache.'

(Source: PD task. 2/20 *Intermediate* learners and 2/20 *Advanced* learners)

- (ii) Sentences show agreement between the verb and the NNSub:

(5.7) \*A Emilio le duele sus dientes.

to Emilio CL hurts his teeth

'Emilio has toothache.'

(Source: PD task. 2/20 *Intermediate* learners, 2/20 *Advanced* learners, and 2/20 *Advanced +* learners)

- (iii) L2 learners turn the unaccusative verb into an accusative one by joining the theme and the dative into a possessive NP where the dative or accusative is an argument of the theme (an inalienable possessor<sup>39</sup>):

(5.8) El botón de la camisa se ha caído.

the button of the shirt SE has fallen

'The button has come off the shirt.'

(Source PD task: 3/20 *Intermediate* learners, 2/30 *Advanced* learners, and 4/20 *Advanced+* learners)

The L2 learners' inability to raise the possessor is another sign that dative case is problematic for these learners.

- (iv) When there is the option that an unaccusative verb can be replaced by an accusative one, even when this sounds odd to native speakers, L2 learners prefer the accusative option. So, instead of a sentence with an unaccusative verb and a NNSub like (5.10),

(5.10) A él se le cayó el té.

to him-DAT REFL CL-DAT fell-UNACC the tea

'He dropped his cup of tea.'

L2 Learners would use an accusative verb requiring a nominative subject, like in (5.11), (5.12) and (5.13):

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<sup>39</sup> The possessor and possessee are combined into a compound phrase.

(5.11) \*La camisa ha caído un botón.

the shirt has fallen a button

‘A button has fallen off the shirt.’

(Source: EI task . 3/20 *Intermediate* learners, 4/20 *Advanced* learners, and 2/20 *Advanced+* learners)

(5.12) Anselmo ha dejado caer el té.

Anselmo has let fall the tea

‘Anselmo has spilt his tea.’

(Source: PD task. 2/20 *Advanced* learners and 2/20 *Advanced+* learners)

The following sentence shows the L2 learner’s uncertainty about the argument structure of *caer* ‘fall’:

(5.13) \*El hombre el té le cayó.

the man the tea CL fell

‘The man dropped his tea.’

(Source: PD task. 1/20 *Intermediate* learners)

The results also confirm the validity of this test in terms of native speakers’ intuitions. These will be discussed in the next section. The hypothesis that the non-target forms would be used by the *Intermediate* L2 participants in this study has been fully confirmed. There is also confirmation, however, that advanced L2 learners have problems with NNSub constructions and this goes against the predictions for that level.

### 5.3 Test results

As discussed in Chapter 4, three tasks were used to collect data for this study, an Aural Preference (AP), an Elicited Imitation (EI), and a Picture Description (PD) task. The AP and EI tasks contained grammatical and ungrammatical sentences with verbs that allow NNSubs. The grammatical non-nominative elements in the sentences were dative, accusative, and locative NPs. In addition to this, the ungrammatical sentences included non-target forms associated with NNSubs, such as lack of raising of the dative, accusative, or locative; raising of the nominative theme instead; dropping of Personal *a* 'to' and/or dative clitics like *le* 'him/it/her', and the nominativisation of what should have been a NNSub. The data obtained from the AP and EI tasks were classified according to the non-target forms described above and the percentages given show frequency of accurate use of NNSubs. The PD task consisted of pictures illustrating the actions more commonly associated with NNSubs. The images were designed to elicit use of verbs requiring a NNSub. The PD data were analysed in two ways. As the speakers were not 'forced' to consider structures with NNSubs as in the previous two tasks, the data were classified not only in terms of the categories used in the AP and EI tasks analysis but also with respect to the verbs that the participants used.

The figures that will be used in the analysis of the AP and EI results represent the amount of learners using the target forms over a total of 20, the number of participants in each group. The PD task results will be analysed in terms of the number of L2 participants who produced target and non-target forms. Number of learners are counted instead of number of utterances because that allows comparisons of performance of individual learners across the three tasks, which can confirm their

proficiency in the use of NNSubs. Counting learners is also useful from the point of view of the effectiveness of instruction because it can be determined how many learners from a particular group can actually use NNSubs.

Chapter 3 (Table 3.1) presented the list of verbs that were either used in the AP and EI materials or elicited by the PD task. They were ordered in terms of frequency of use by native speakers according to the CREA database and it was pointed out that, although the first nine verbs on the table are very common in native speakers' production (*gustar* 'like', *faltar* 'lack', *parecer* 'seem', *interesarse* 'be interested', *considerar* 'consider', *ocurrirse* 'occur', *salirse* 'come off', *caerse* 'fall accidentally', and *doler* 'hurt') L2 materials do not seem to reflect well this frequency in the target input. The unaccusative verbs used in the data collection tasks are commonly used by native speakers, either in a variety of contexts or in the range of situations where they would typically appear. No infrequent unaccusative verbs were used in the tasks.

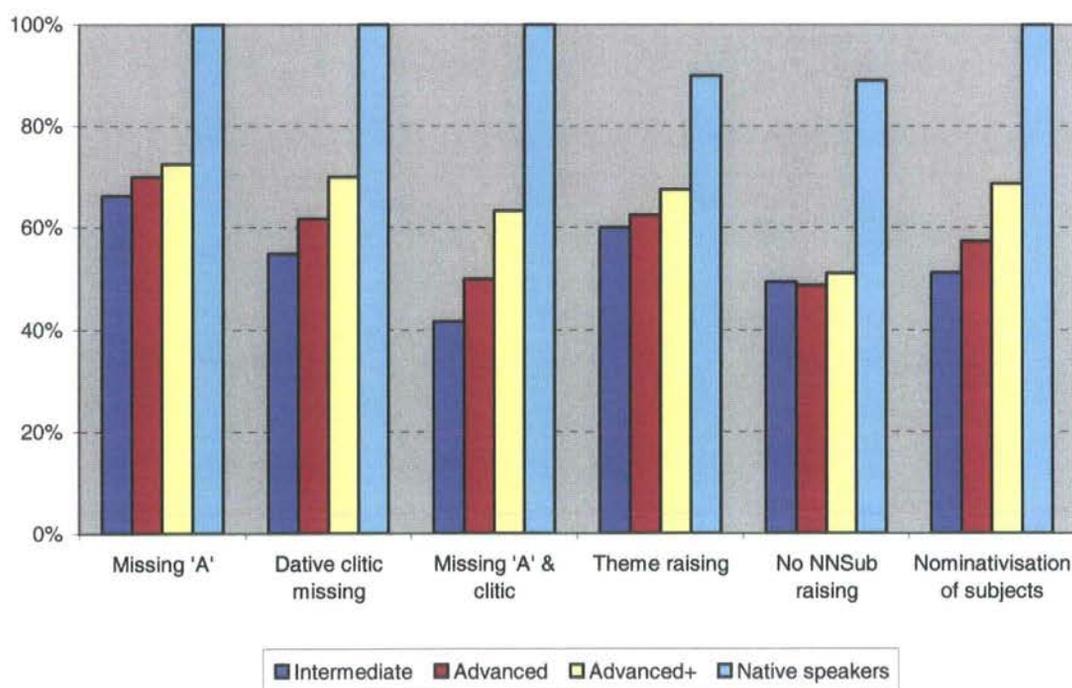
One additional category in the analysis of the PD task data is lexical optionality, i.e. the lexical choices offered by Spanish involved in grammatical constructions<sup>40</sup> as an alternative to NNSub unaccusative verb constructions. This kind of optionality is seen in the L1 and L2 and its analysis will show the frequency with which the native speakers and the L2 learners opted for verbs not requiring NNSubs to express ideas commonly conveyed by NNSubs and unaccusative verbs. Lexical optionality in the L1 is a clear manifestation of the flexibility allowed by a native competence but for the L2 the situation may not be all that clear. L2 optionality of the kind analysed here may be the result of the lack of competence in a particular area of the L2, i.e. poor knowledge of

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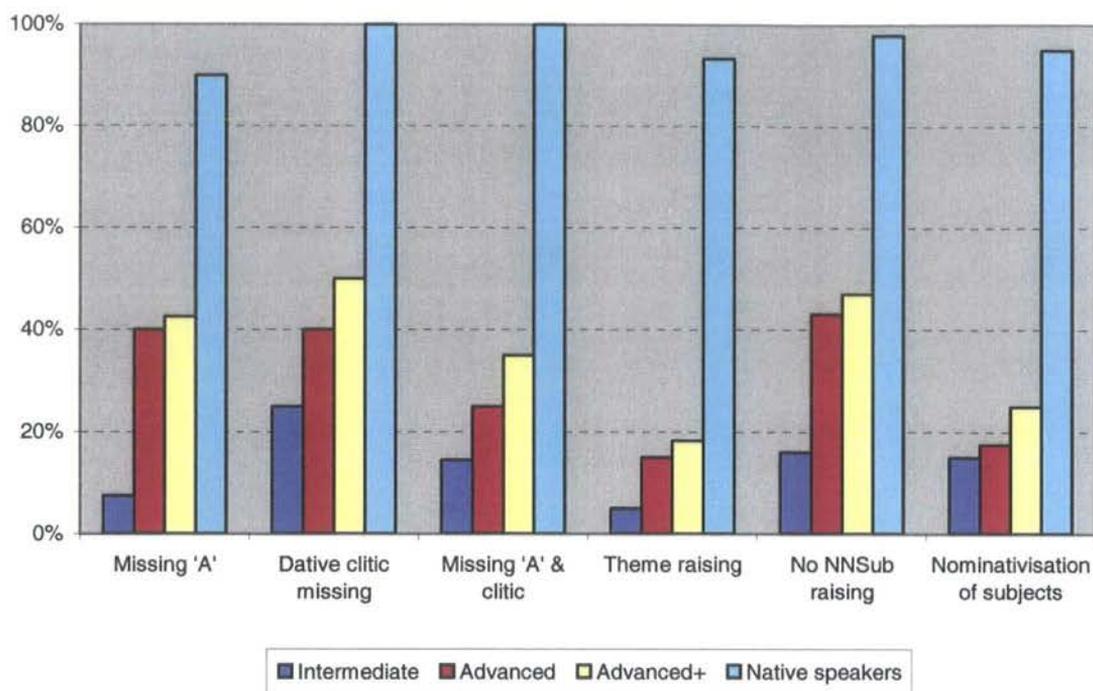
<sup>40</sup> As opposed to the non-target options discussed by Sorace (1999, 2000).

NNSubs verbs and the constructions they require. In this study, frequency in the use of optional constructions in the PD data will be measured to establish how the non-native and native percentages compare. This will provide useful information for the analysis of the overall results.

To compare the trends of the results from each task, the following, Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 show the results from the AP and EI tasks respectively. The categories tested are presented in the x-axis twice while the y-axis shows the frequency of use of NNSubs.



**Figure 5.1: AP task results showing grammatical use of NNSubs.**



**Figure 5.2: EI task results showing grammatical use of NNSubs.**

The results from the PD task are not included at this stage because their analysis is based on the non-target forms produced by the L2 participants, rather than on the actual frequency of use of NNSubs. If Figures 5.1 and 5.2 are compared, it is possible to see a correspondence between the performance of each of the L2 groups in each of the categories in both tasks in spite of the AP task's higher percentages. It also demonstrates that in both tasks, knowledge of unaccusativity and NNSubs develops steadily up to the *Advanced* level when it experiences a decline. Hence, use of NNSubs by the *Advanced+* learners is less frequent and less accurate.

These results also confirm the validity of this test in terms of native speakers' intuitions. As it is clear from the tables and the graphs, the intuitions of the control group are noticeably uniform, with the exception of the *Missing A*, *Theme raising* and

*No NNSub raising categories*, where judgements fall slightly below the 100% observed in the other categories.

The following section will present the results per task in tables and graphs. The graphs will show use of NNSubs by the three groups of learners and the control group.

### **5.3.1 The Aural Preference task results**

Chapter 4 examined grammaticality judgement (GJ)/preference tasks in detail and highlighted the concerns about their reliability as discussed in the literature. In terms of measuring knowledge of NNSubs in the L2, the AP task obtained the highest percentages for grammatical use of NNSubs. This fact can be accounted for by considering the following four points. First, data coming from an GJ/AP task are perhaps the hardest to measure due to the methodological concerns already discussed in Chapter 4 (response bias, reliance on metalinguistic knowledge, contextual simplicity and modality choices, etc). From the point of view of the researcher, these concerns constitute one of the main arguments for not using just a judgement/preference task in an empirical study. Next, in terms of the L2 participants' performance, on the other hand, of the three tasks in this study, the AP is the one that most restricts choice, as there are only two sentences to choose from in each item. In addition, this AP task (like GJ/AP tasks in general) does not ask participants to 'produce' any language, either written or oral as it only requires the learners to tick option (a) or (b) on a form. This has the advantage, though, that the data comes free from the influence of variables which are typical of production tasks (and which will be discussed in connection with the next two tasks in this experiment). Last but not least, it might be the case that in this particular study it was less cognitively

challenging for the L2 learners to express preference on the AP sentences than it was to describe the pictures on the PD task. This also has an impact on the percentages that are obtained, both for grammatical and ungrammatical responses.

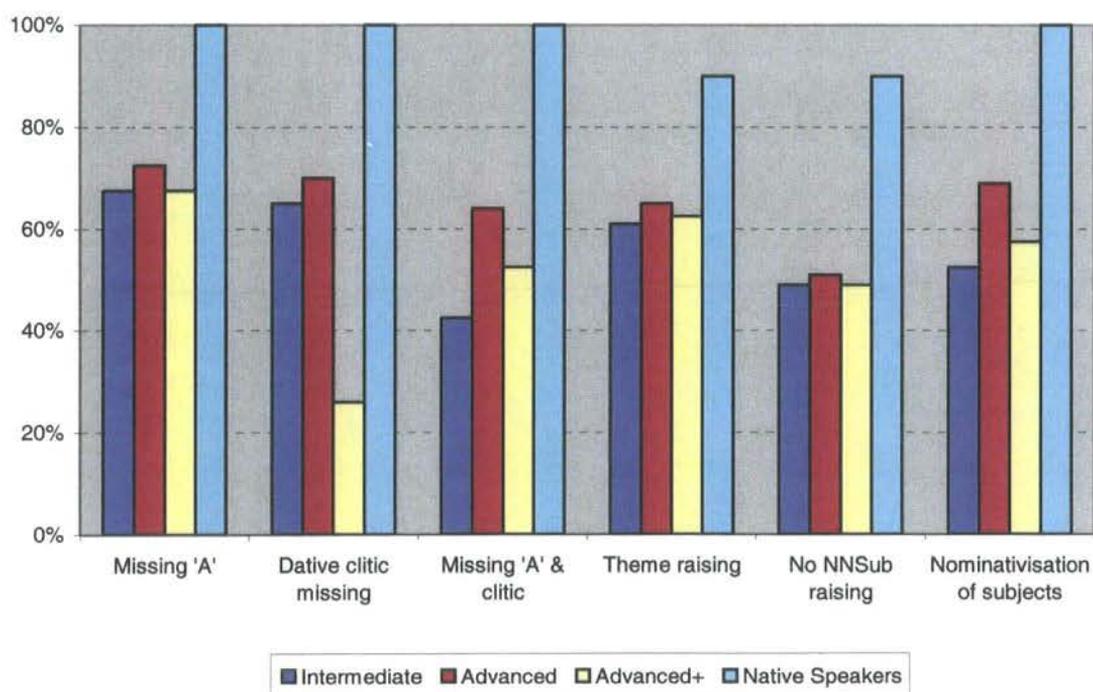
Table 5.1 shows the percentages of preference regarding grammatical sentences with NNSubs. This information is based on the number of learners and native speakers who expressed a particular preference. The results are also presented in Figure 5.3. The categories tested are presented in the x-axis while the y-axis shows the frequency of acceptance.

**Table 5.1: Preference on grammatical sentences with NNSubs.**

| <i>Categories<sup>41</sup></i>                    | <i>Intermediate</i> | <i>Advanced</i>    | <i>Advanced +</i>  | <i>Native speakers</i> |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| (1) Missing 'A'                                   | 67.5%<br>(13.5/20)  | 72.5%<br>(14.5/20) | 67.5%<br>(13.5/20) | 100%<br>(10/10)        |
| (2) Missing Clitic                                | 65%<br>(13/20)      | 70%<br>(14/20)     | 62%<br>(12.4/20)   | 100%<br>(10/10)        |
| (3) Missing 'A' and clitic                        | 42%<br>(8.4/20)     | 64%<br>(12.8/20)   | 52.5%<br>(10.5/20) | 100%<br>(10/10)        |
| (4) Theme raising                                 | 61%<br>(12.2/20)    | 65%<br>(13/20)     | 62.5%<br>(12.5/20) | 90%<br>(9/10)          |
| (5) No NNSub raising                              | 49%<br>(9.8/20)     | 51%<br>(10.2/20)   | 49%<br>(9.8/20)    | 90%<br>(9/10)          |
| (6) Nominativisation of subjects<br>(% of NNSubs) | 51.5%<br>(10.3/20)  | 69%<br>(13.8/20)   | 57.5%<br>(11.5/20) | 100%<br>(10/10)        |

<sup>41</sup> These categories are based on the kinds of errors present in the ungrammatical counterparts of the grammatical sentences in the task.

The sentences used in this task (see Appendix 1) illustrate grammatical and ungrammatical use of a wide range of unaccusative verbs. As discussed earlier, verbs like *gustar* 'to like' and *doler* 'hurt' are very frequently used in the Spanish discourse and are introduced very early on in language courses. Some other verbs which appear regularly in naturalistic data (like the first nine in Table 3.1) are not dealt with in class sufficiently, or are not formally introduced at all. Because these are classroom learners, they are exposed to a kind of input which mainly consists of explanations and corrections and primary linguistic data concerning NNSub constructions are not enough. The L2 Spanish syllabus gives perhaps insufficient attention to verbs taking NNSubs, an approach that does not match the frequency with which those verbs are used by native speakers. This lack of exposure to these unaccusative verbs, either through input or instruction, results in L2 learners' avoidance of them and/or in the categories of non-target forms used in this study to analyse the data.



**Figure 5.3: AP task results**

The results presented in the table and the graph above clearly confirm that Spanish native speakers prefer the grammatical sentences containing NNSubs, whereas the preferences of the three non-native groups are not that clear-cut. It is interesting to note that knowledge of NNSubs shows development from the *Intermediate* to the *Advanced* level but then it declines across all categories for the *Advanced+* level.

Also to be noted is the control group's slightly lower percentages in the *Theme raising* and *No NNSub raising* categories. This requires an explanation since those are the only two categories where there is either movement or lack of it. As explained in Section 2.1.4, *Theme raising* and *No NNSub raising* are grammatical options if the intonational peak of the sentence falls on the theme or the dative/accusative/locative respectively. It is possible, therefore, for native speakers to consider word orders other than 'NNSub + verb + theme' if the intonation contour of the sentence allows these options. Spanish allows the theme to be raised, with the NNSub remaining post-verbal if it represents the asserted information in the sentence with the intonational peak falling on it.

A plausible explanation for native speakers' slightly lower percentages in this task is the possibility that they might have 'heard' a different intonation pattern in some of the sentences. The fact that this might have happened in spite of the sentences being on tape may be the result of extralinguistic factors (tiredness, background noise, etc.).

### **5.3.2 The Elicited Imitation task results**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the EI task is also a metalinguistic task though not as restricted as the AP task described above. In terms of the restrictions imposed, the EI is a

step in between the highly structured AP and the less constrained PD task; participants decide not only upon acceptability but have the option to turn an ungrammatical sentence into a form that is grammatical/acceptable for them.

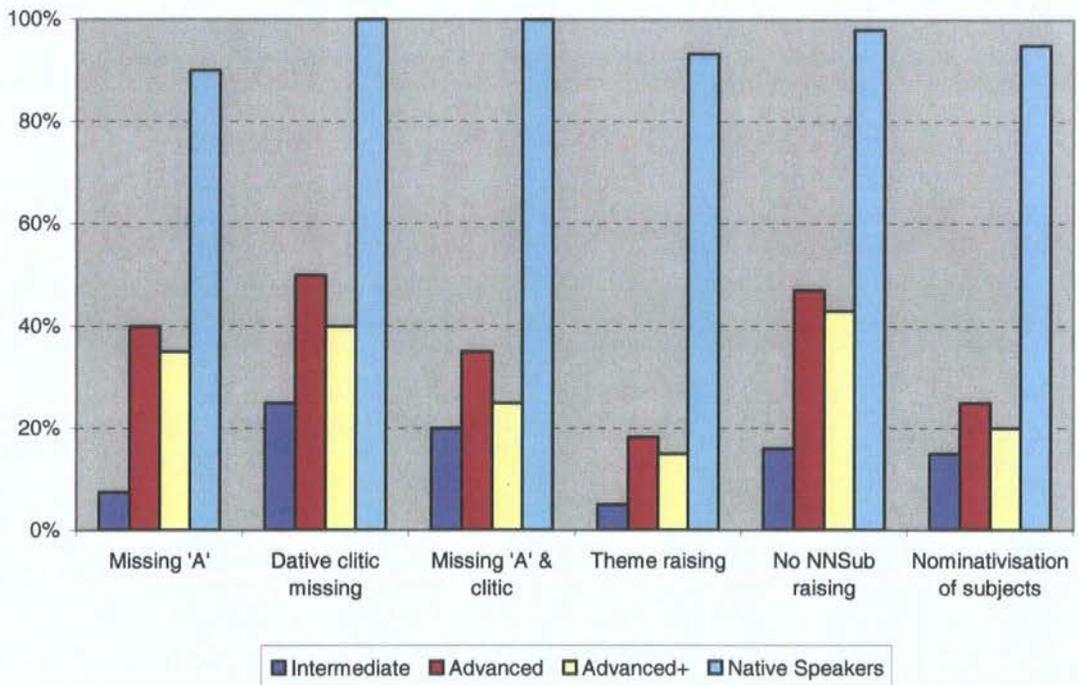
As in the AP task, the sentences were recorded on tape to prevent ambiguity. Table 5.2 shows percentages based on the number of learners and native speakers who used NNSubs accurately in the task. The results are presented again in Figure 5.4. The categories tested are presented in the x-axis while the y-axis shows the frequency of acceptance.

**Table 5.2: Grammatical correction of sentences using NNSubs.**

| <i>Categories</i>               | <i>Intermediate</i> | <i>Advanced</i>   | <i>Advanced+</i> | <i>Native speakers</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Missing 'A'                  | 7.5%<br>(1.5/20)    | 42.5%<br>(8.5/20) | 35%<br>(7/20)    | 90%<br>(10/10)         |
| 2. Missing Clitic               | 25%<br>(5/20)       | 50%<br>(10/20)    | 40%<br>(8/20)    | 100%<br>(10/10)        |
| 3. Missing 'A' and clitic       | 20%<br>(4/20)       | 35%<br>(7/20)     | 25%<br>(5/20)    | 100%<br>(10/10)        |
| 4. Theme raising                | 5%<br>(1/20)        | 18.5%<br>(3.7/20) | 15%<br>(3/20)    | 94%<br>(9.4/10)        |
| 5. No NNSub raising             | 16%<br>(3.2/20)     | 47%<br>(9.4/20)   | 43%<br>(8.6/20)  | 98%<br>(9.8/10)        |
| 6. Nominativisation of subjects | 15%<br>(3/20)       | 25%<br>(5/20)     | 20%<br>(4/20)    | 95%<br>(9.5/10)        |

In comparison with the data collected in the AP task, the EI data are more revealing in that the participants are actually producing language, even if this production is restricted by having to imitate or correct model sentences. The fact that

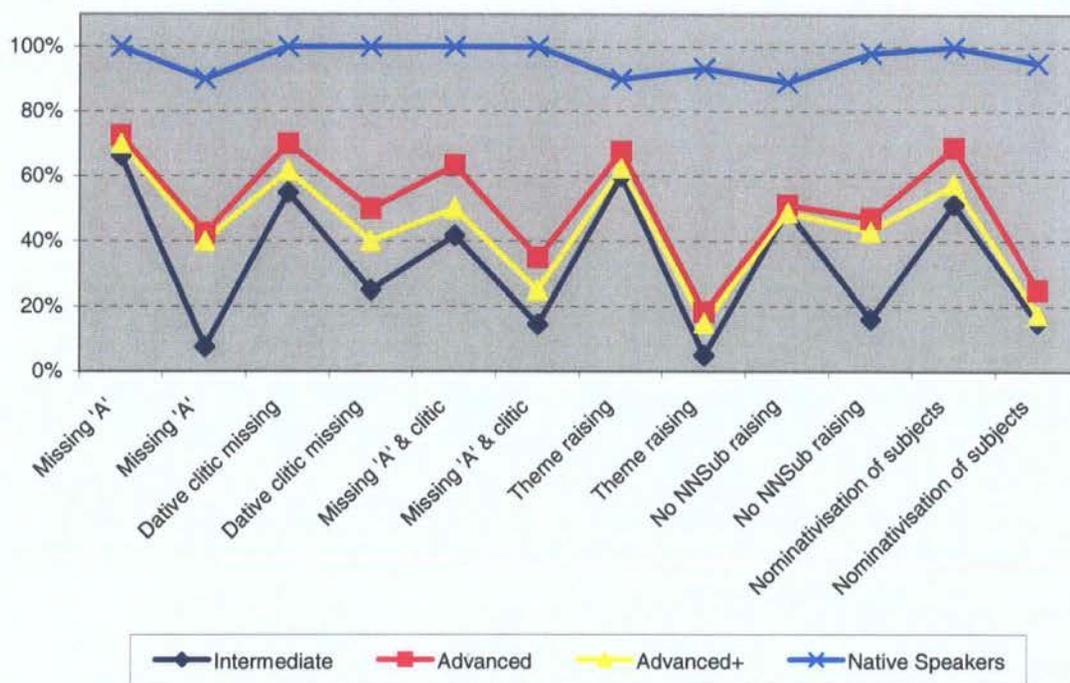
this task involves oral performance has implications for the percentages showing use of NNSubs. As can be seen in Table 5.3 and in Figure 5.4, the percentages describing non-native use of NNSubs are lower than those in the AP task. This disparity is not surprising, however, as oral performance is more challenging than expressing a preference for a particular form. In comparison with the AP task, learners have, overall, made more errors and have used fewer structures with NNSubs, which highlights the breach in competence between the native and the L2 grammar. The results highlight once again that knowledge of NNSubs shows development from the *Intermediate* to the *Advanced* level but then it declines across all categories for the *Advanced+* group.



**Figure 5.4: EI task results**

There are also slightly lower percentages in the native speakers' data regarding *Theme raising* and *No NNSub raising*. As with the AP data, this may be the result of a different interpretation of the intonational pattern of some of the sentences due to extra linguistic factors.

The results from the AP and EI tasks can be seen in Figure 5.1 and 5.2, repeated here together in Figure 5.5. As mentioned earlier, there is correspondence between the performance of each of the L2 groups across all categories in both tasks in spite of the AP task's higher percentages. These results prove that, in both tasks, knowledge of unaccusativity and NNSubs develops steadily up to the *Advanced* level before experiencing a decline at the *Advanced+* level: use of NNSubs by the *Advanced+* learners is less frequent and less accurate.



**Figure 5.5: AP and EI tasks results showing grammatical use of NNSubs.**

There seems to be a discrepancy, then, between knowledge of NNSubs and level of instruction in the two advanced groups. The *Advanced* group shows higher proficiency in the use of NNSubs than the *Advanced+* learners, even though they are behind with respect of the *Advanced+* group in terms of time spent at university. It

seems to be the case that the fact that the *Advanced* learners had just been to a Spanish-speaking country for more than six months when they were tested, while the *Advanced+* group was tested after they had been back in England for a whole academic year, had a determining influence in their language production. The results from these two groups give significant evidence of the role of naturalistic input in L2 learning and proves what the lack of sustained naturalistic input can cause on learners' Interlanguage. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. It can be also be seen that there is quite a large gap in the use of NNSubs between the advanced groups and the native speakers. This divergence seems to indicate that even the most proficient learners are still in the developmental stages of the acquisition of unaccusativity and NNSubs and have still not fully acquired this construction. Two-tailed *t*-tests confirm that the difference in performance between the native speakers and each of the L2 groups is statistically significant.  $T_C$  is the *t* value that needs to be exceeded in order for the difference between the means to be significant, which in this case is 2.23. The significance level used in the statistical tests carried out in this thesis is in all cases  $p = 0.05$ , i.e. if *t* exceeds  $T_C$  there is a 95% confidence that the means differ significantly.

**Table 5.3: Statistical analysis of performance between L2 groups and native speakers**

| Groups                                    | AP Task        | EI Task        |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Intermediate -<br/>Native speakers</i> | $t = 10.27202$ | $t = 24.80398$ |
| <i>Advanced -<br/>Native speakers</i>     | $t = 9.586855$ | $t = 12.3532$  |
| <i>Advanced+ -<br/>Native speakers</i>    | $t = 8.058213$ | $t = 11.06814$ |

### 5.3.3 The Picture Description task results

The PD task aimed to elicit structures with unaccusative verbs and NNSubs through carefully designed pictures (see Appendix 3). Production tasks like this one, generate data which are diverse and which involve a substantial amount of lexical optionality. This is because production cannot be manipulated and participants cannot be 'forced' to consider a particular structure. This is the reason why the results from this task are organised into two different categories:

1. In terms of the non-target forms produced in the categories outlined for the AP and EI task (missing *a*, missing clitic, etc.). Table 5.4 shows percentages based on the number of learners and native speakers who used non-target forms in the task. The results are presented again in Figure 5.6. The categories tested are presented in the x-axis while the y-axis shows the frequency of acceptance
2. In terms of the language that was actually used, so performance is analysed looking at the constructions that the participants used. This information is presented in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.7.

Table 5.4 shows the frequency of non-target forms associated with NNSubs using the categories which have already been used in the previous tasks. Overall, lower percentages are expected in this task because of the limited restriction that the task imposes on the participants' production. In the first four categories, the percentages of non-target forms follow a natural decline as competence increases in the levels *Intermediate* to *Advanced*. This changes, however, with respect to the *Advanced+*

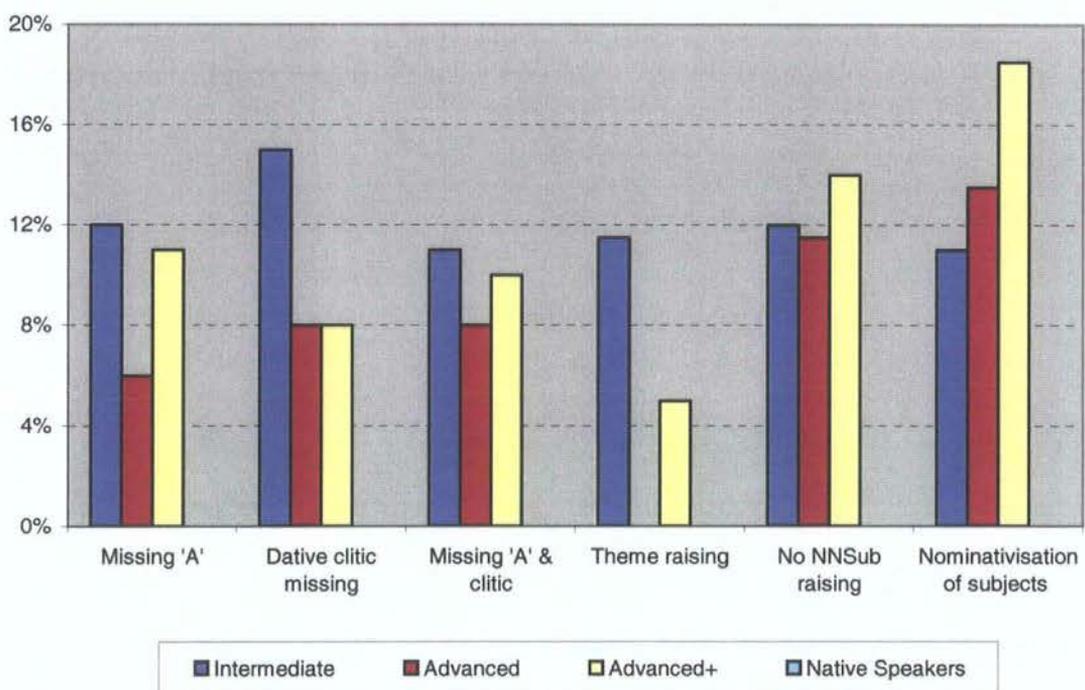
group, as the percentage of non-target forms either stays at the same level or increases. This regression has also been noted in the AP and EI results and might be explained by the advanced learners' recent exposure to naturalistic input. In the *Subject nominativisation* category, the *Advanced* and *Advanced+* groups evidence a higher frequency of non-target forms than the *Intermediate* group. This is a strong indicator that acquisition of NNSubs and accusativity has not taken place yet.

**Table 5.4: PD task results – percentages of inaccurate use of NNSubs.**

| <i>Categories</i>               | <i>Intermediate</i>                 | <i>Advanced</i>                     | <i>Advanced+</i>                  | <i>Native speakers</i> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Missing 'A'                  | 12%<br>(2.4/20)                     | 6%<br>(1.2/20)                      | 11%<br>(2.2/20)                   | 0%<br>(0/10)           |
| 2. Missing Clitic               | 15%<br>(3/20)                       | 8%<br>(1.6/20)                      | 8%<br>(1.4/20)                    | 0%<br>(0/10)           |
| 3. Missing 'A' and clitic       | 11%<br>(2.2/20)                     | 8%<br>(1.6/20)                      | 10%<br>(2/20)                     | 0%<br>(0/10)           |
| 4. Theme raising                | 11.5%<br>(neutral int.)<br>(2.3/20) | 0%<br>(0/20)                        | 5%<br>(neutral int.)<br>(1/20)    | 0%<br>(0/10)           |
| 5. No NNSub raising             | 12%<br>(neutral int.)<br>(2.4/20)   | 11.5%<br>(neutral int.)<br>(2.3/20) | 14%<br>(neutral int.)<br>(2.8/20) | 0%<br>(10/10)          |
| 6. Nominativisation of subjects | 11%<br>(2.2/20)                     | 13.5%<br>(2.6/20)                   | 18.5%<br>(3.9/20)                 | 0%<br>(0/10)           |

According to these results, the unaccusative verbs used more frequently by the L2 groups are *gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt'. *Faltar* 'lack' comes next, leaving *caerse* 'fall accidentally', *estirarse* 'stretch' and the accusative verbs with NNSubs as the ones presenting more difficulty. It is not hard to understand why *gustar* 'like' and *doler*

'hurt' are the ones used more often and grammatically. They are introduced very early on in Spanish language courses and they commonly appear in Spanish teaching textbooks. Native speakers use these two verbs very regularly even when their competence also allows them to use a spectrum of other verbs equally capable of expressing the same meaning. The lexical optionality allowed by the language is also responsible for the lower percentages in native speakers' results in the PD task.



**Figure 5.6: PD task results showing ungrammatical use of NNSubs**

Table 5.5 shows the percentages representing the grammatical 😊 and ungrammatical 😞 use of NNSubs in terms of the verbs used by the learners and native speakers. These percentages are based on the number of participants who used each verb in the task. The data are classified according to the unaccusative verbs and the grammatical optional constructions used to express the same or closely related idea.

Figure 5.7 presents the verbs used by the L2 learners in the x-axis while the y-axis shows percentages of grammatical use and non-target forms.

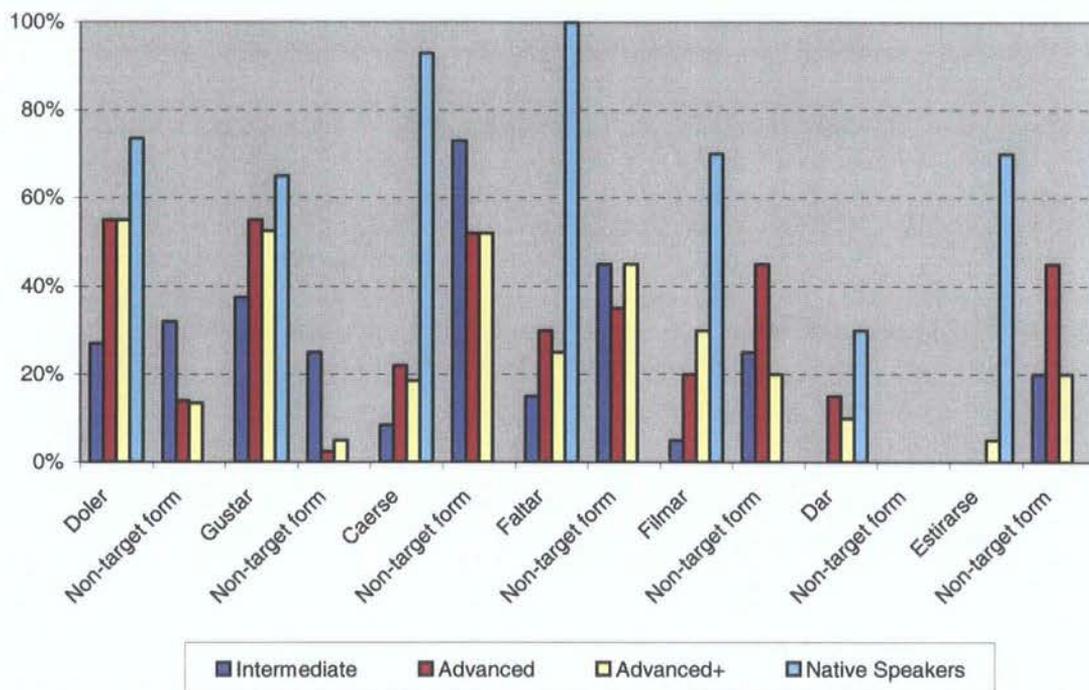


Figure 5.7: PD task production verb-by-verb.

Figure 5.7 presents percentages of grammatical and ungrammatical use of the verbs prompted by this task. The verbs *gustar* ‘like’ and *doler* ‘hurt’ are the ones which show a smaller gap in terms of use between the L2 learners and the native speakers. In the case of the other verbs, the frequency of use between native speakers and learners is perceptibly bigger, with some L2 groups not using some of the verbs at all. In terms of the non-target forms, the verbs *gustar* ‘like’ and *doler* ‘hurt’ show that the learners in the *Intermediate* group still have doubts about their use, while the advanced groups use them more confidently. All the other verbs, however, show smaller percentages of use and higher percentages of non-target performance, in some cases, by the advanced

Table 5.5: PD task language production verb-by-verb.

| Verb  | <i>Intermediate</i><br>NNSubs<br> | <i>Intermediate</i><br>NNSubs<br> | Lexical Opt.<br>(grammatical sentences) | <i>Advanced</i><br>NNSubs<br> | <i>Advanced</i><br>NNSubs<br> | Lexical Opt.<br>(grammatical sentences) | <i>Advanced+</i><br>NNSubs<br> | <i>Advanced+</i><br>NNSubs<br> | Lexical Opt<br>(grammatical sentences) | <i>Native speakers</i><br>NNSubs | Lexical Opt<br>(grammatical sentences) |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Doler</i><br>'hurt'                              | 27%<br>(5.4/20)  | 32%<br>(6.4/20)  | <b>14%</b><br><b>(2.8/20)</b>           | 55%<br>(11/20)  | 13.4%<br>(2.7/20)  | <b>27%</b><br><b>(5.4/20)</b>           | 55%<br>(11/20)  | 13.4%<br>(2.7/20)   | <b>27%</b><br><b>(5.4/20)</b>          | 74%<br>(7.4/10)                  | <b>27%</b><br><b>(2.7/10)</b>          |
| <i>Gustar</i><br>'like'                             | 38%<br>(7.6/20)  | 25%<br>(9/20)  | <b>10%</b><br><b>(2/20)</b>             | 55%<br>(11/20)  | 2.5%<br>(0.5/20)   | <b>18%</b><br><b>(4-5/20)</b>           | 53%<br>(10.6/20)  | 5%<br>(1/20)  | <b>20%</b><br><b>(4/20)</b>            | 65%<br>(6.5/10)                  | <b>35%</b><br><b>(3.5/10)</b>          |
| <i>Caerse</i><br>'fall'                             | 9%<br>(1.8/20)   | 73%<br>(14.6/20)   | <b>0%</b>                               | 22%<br>(4.4/20)   | 52%<br>(10.4/20)   | <b>5%</b><br><b>(1/20)</b>              | 19%<br>(3.8/20)   | 52%<br>(10.4/20)  | <b>0%</b>                              | 93%<br>(9.3/10)                  | <b>7%</b><br><b>(0.7/10)</b>           |
| <i>Faltar</i><br>'lack'                             | 15%<br>(3/20)  | 45%<br>(9/20)  | <b>0%</b>                               | 30%<br>(6/20)   | 35%<br>(7/20)  | <b>1%</b><br><b>(0.2/20)</b>            | 25%<br>(9/20)   | 45%<br>(9/20)   | <b>0%</b>                              | 100%<br>(10/10)                  | <b>0%</b>                              |
| <i>Estirarse/</i><br><i>Agrandarse</i><br>'stretch' | 0%   | 20%<br>(4/20)  | <b>50%</b><br><b>(10/20)</b>            | 0%  | 45%<br>(9/20)  | <b>65%</b><br><b>(13/20)</b>            | 5%<br>(1/20)  | 20%<br>(4/20)   | <b>45%</b><br><b>(9/20)</b>            | 70%<br>(7/10)                    | <b>30%</b><br><b>(3/10)</b>            |
| <i>Filmar</i><br>'film'                             | 5%<br>(1/20)   | 25%<br>(5/20)  | <b>70%</b><br><b>(14/20)</b>            | 20%<br>(4/20)   | 45%<br>(9/20)  | <b>50%</b><br><b>(10/20)</b>            | 30%<br>(6/20)   | 20%<br>(4/20)   | <b>25%</b><br><b>(9/20)</b>            | 70%<br>(7/10)                    | <b>30%</b><br><b>(3/10)</b>            |
| <i>Dar/</i><br><i>Otorgar</i><br>'give'             | 0%   | 0%   | <b>65%</b><br><b>(13/20)</b>            | 15%<br>(3/20)   | 0%   | <b>80%</b><br><b>(16/20)</b>            | 10%<br>(2/20)   | 0%  | <b>85%</b><br><b>(17/20)</b>           | 50%<br>(5/10)                    | <b>50%</b><br><b>(5/10)</b>            |



'She has a headache.'

b. Ella tiene dolor de cabeza  
she has-ACC pain of head

'She has a headache and an earache.'

### 5.3.3.2 *Caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack'

*Caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack', in particular, are common verbs in the Spanish discourse and would apply to a variety of contexts and situations, not just the physical act of falling or lacking something. Interestingly however, the language does not offer a wide variety of lexical replacements to express the meanings of those two verbs. The verb *caerse* 'fall accidentally', in particular, is a challenging one for L2 learners because not only does it require a NNSub and a dative clitic but it also involves the pronoun SE<sup>42</sup>, as shown in examples (5.16) and (5.17):

(5.16) A María se le cayeron todos los dientes.  
to María-DAT SE CL-DAT fell-PL all the teeth  
'Maria's teeth have fallen.'

(5.17) ¡Se me cayó el anillo en la basura!  
SE CL-DAT fell the ring in the bin  
'My ring has fallen in the bin! / I have dropped my ring in the bin!'

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<sup>42</sup> As mentioned previously, *se* adds meaning to the verb it is attached to. In *caerse* 'fall accidentally' *se* adds the meaning of 'by accident' to the verb *caer* 'fall' (Butt and Benjamin, 2000: 358).

The argument structure of a sentence with *caerse* 'fall accidentally' can be unclear or complex to L2 learners, so they sometimes have a tendency to use the non-pronominal counterpart *caer* 'fall' whose meaning is not 'fall accidentally' but 'fall', stressing the point of departure or arrival of the action itself. Other verbs are also used but this is likely to result in sentences that express a different meaning. Sentences (5.18b) and (5.18c) are examples taken from the PD task data which illustrate how meaning changes when other verbs are used. (5.18b) uses *caer* 'fall' and the resulting sentence does not have exactly the same meaning as (5.18a), as it has lost the meaning of accident of the original sentence (5.18c) has a meaning which is different from the one in (5.18a):

(5.18) a. A la camisa            se        le            cayó un        botón.  
           to the shirt-DAT    SE        CL-DAT fall one        button  
           'A button has come off the shirt.'

vs.

b. (??)Un botón                    cayó de        la        camisa.  
           one button-ACC        fell        from        the        shirt  
           'The button has come off the shirt.'

or

c. (??) La camisa                    perdió un        botón  
           the shirt-ACC lost        a        button  
           'The shirt is missing a button.'

The Spanish word order in (5.18b) closely resembles the word order of the English version of the sentence. (5.18c) uses an accusative verb instead of the unaccusative one and the word order again resembles the English version.

*Faltar* 'lack' is another verb whose use is difficult for English L2 learners. In this case, the pronoun SE is not involved so the difficulty in learning to use this verb relies solely on the fact that this is an unaccusative verb. In the PD data, some learners chose options that generated sentences like (5.19b), (5.19c) and (5.19d). Sentences (5.19b) and (5.19c) would be odd in a context where (5.19a) is perfectly normal. (5.19d) uses *faltar* 'lack' as an accusative verb:

(5.19) a. A la mesa le falta una pata.  
to the table-DAT CL-DAT lacks a leg  
'The table is missing a leg.'

vs.

b. (??) La mesa sólo tiene tres patas.  
the table-ACC only has three legs  
'The table has only three legs.'

or

c. (??) La mesa no tiene una pata.  
the table-ACC no has a leg  
'The table doesn't have one leg.'

or

d. \*La mesa falta una pata.  
the table-ACC lacks a leg

'The table is missing a leg.'

Sentences (5.19b) and (5.19c) have replaced the verb *faltar* 'lack' with the accusative verb *tener* 'have' and in sentence (5.19d) *faltar* 'lack' as an accusative verb makes the sentence ungrammatical. The word order in the three sentences is again a close resemblance of the English word order in the corresponding versions, something which may provide evidence for the lack of acquisition of Spanish NNSubs.

### 5.3.3.3 Other unaccusative verbs

Table 5.6 also provides information about two related unaccusative verbs: *estirarse* 'stretch' and *agrandarse* 'make bigger'. These verbs are common in Spanish but not typical of classroom discourse because the contexts where they would occur are not typical of formal instruction. Sentences (5.20) and (5.21) illustrate how they are used:

(5.20) Se me estiró el pulóver en el lavarropas.

SE CL-DAT stretched the jumper in the washing machine

'The jumper has stretched in the washing.'

(5.21) A Paula se le agrandaron los pantalones por usarlos tanto.

to Paula-DAT SE CL-DAT made bigger the trousers for wear them so

'Paula's trousers have stretched with so much use.'

The last two verbs in Table 5.6 are accusative verbs which are used with NNSubs: *filmar* 'film' and *dar / otorgar* 'give'. As explained in Chapter 2, the external argument of these verbs has been dethematized without absorption of case. This means that the Spec, IP position is empty and that case assignment is possible, allowing dative and locative phrases to move to Spec, IP, and becoming NNSubs. From the percentages in Table 5.6, it is clear that L2 learners had difficulty using these verbs with a NNSub, as the frequency of accurate sentences is low in the three L2 levels and the frequency of inaccurate use of these verbs and of lexical optionality is high in comparison. Examples of avoidance and non-target forms regarding these verbs can be found in sentences (5.22b) and (5.22c), (5.23b), and (5.24b):

(5.22) a. A Ángel se le estiró / agrandó la chaqueta.  
 to Ángel-DAT SE CL-DAT stretched / made bigger the jacket  
 'Ángel's jacket has stretched.'

b. \*La chaqueta de Ángel se le agrandó.  
 the jacket of Ángel SE CL stretched  
 'Ángel's jacket has stretched.'

c. (??) La ropa de Ángel está mucho más grande.  
 the clothes of Ángel is a lot more big  
 'Ángel's clothes have stretched.'

(5.23) a. A Dorotea la/le filmaron espionando unos documentos.  
 to Dorotea-DAT CL-DAT filmed-ACC spying some documents

'The camera caught Dorotea spying on some documents.'

b. (??) La cámara la vio a Dorotea mirando unos documentos.

the camera-ACC CL-DAT saw to Dorotea looking at some documents

'The camera caught Dorotea spying on some documents.'

(5.24) a. A Ricardo Vemes le dieron / otorgaron el premio.

to Ricardo Vemes-DAT CL-DAT gave-PL the prize

'Ricardo Vemes has been given / has won the prize.'

b. Ricardo Vemes ha ganado / recibido el premio.

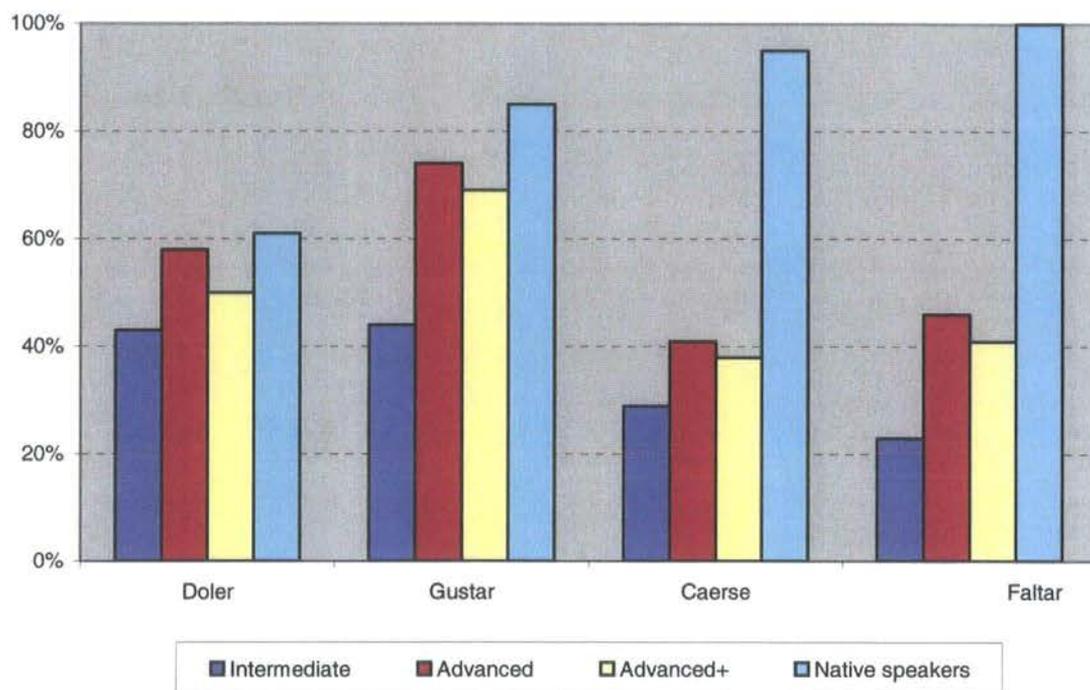
Ricardo Vemes has won / received the prize

'Ricardo Vemes has been given / has won the prize.'

#### 5.3.3.4 Learners' ungrammatical forms

According to Table 5.6, the highest percentages of non-target forms in the use of the verbs that have been discussed involve the unaccusative verbs *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack' in the three L2 levels. *Estirarse / agrandarse* 'stretch' and *filmar* 'film' have the highest percentages of non-target forms in the *Advanced* group. This is interesting because in comparison with the *Intermediate* and *Advanced+* levels, the *Advanced+* group *estirarse / agrandarse* 'stretch' and *filmar* 'film' have the lowest percentages of lexical optionality, what shows that the most competent L2 learners were trying to use the unaccusative verbs rather than find an alternative option. Finally, *dar / otorgar* 'give' was not used very frequently by any of the groups of participants, including the *Native speakers*.

Figure 5.8 puts together the percentages of the use of *doler* ‘hurt’, *gustar* ‘like’, *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’ in the AP, EI and PD tasks.



**Figure 5.8: Performance with *doler* ‘hurt’, *gustar* ‘like’, *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’ in the three tasks**

The percentages for *gustar* ‘like’ and *doler* ‘hurt’ in Figure 5.8 show that these verbs are used by the three non-native levels, the verb *gustar* ‘like’ having more instances than *doler* ‘hurt’, especially at the advanced levels. Looking closely at the data, it is clear that this difference in rate and accuracy can be explained by two factors:

1. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are more vocabulary resources available in Spanish to express having an ache or a pain than to convey a liking for something or somebody. The use of *tener dolor de* ‘have an ache of’ is as common in

the native speakers' data as *doler* 'hurt'. Due to this optionality, the percentages for the unaccusative *doler* 'hurt' are not as high as the percentages for *gustar* 'like'.

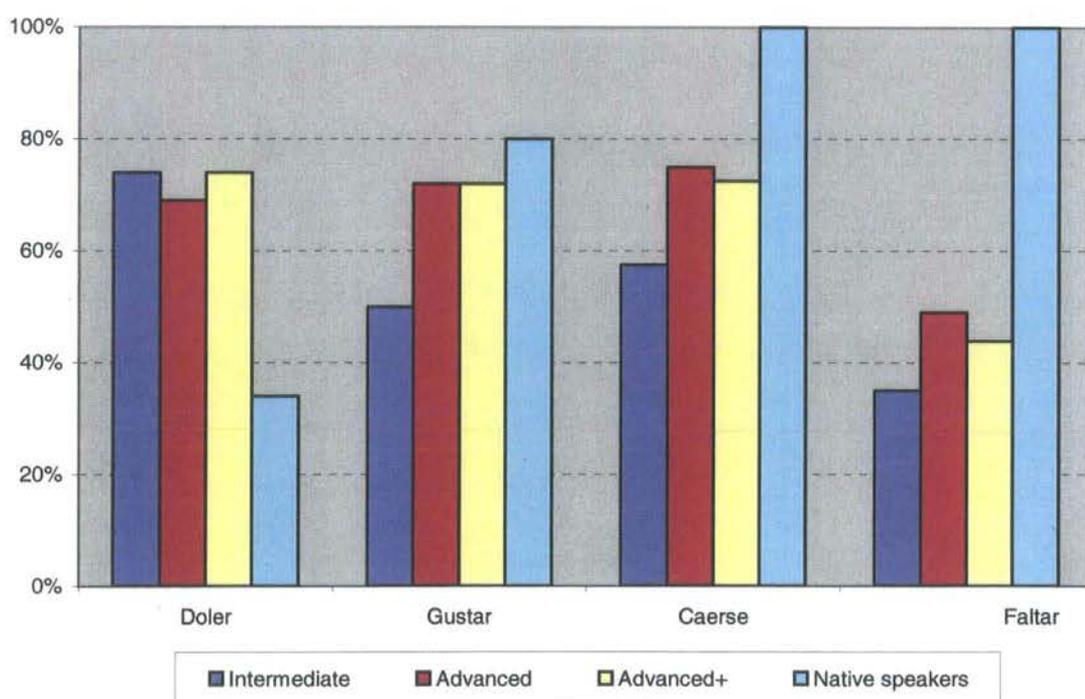
2. The data from the *Intermediate* and advanced levels, in particular, show some instances of agreement between the verb *doler* 'hurt' and the NNSub, something that is clearly ungrammatical. In some cases, this could be a grammatical error and in some others a slip, but this certainly lowers the overall percentages.

The percentages for *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack', however, start lower down on the graph with the *Intermediate* level and reach very high points with the native speakers. As mentioned earlier, the productivity of *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack' in Spanish discourse does not match the frequency with which it is used in classroom instruction and in textbooks. This can explain the very low percentages in each of the three L2 groups.

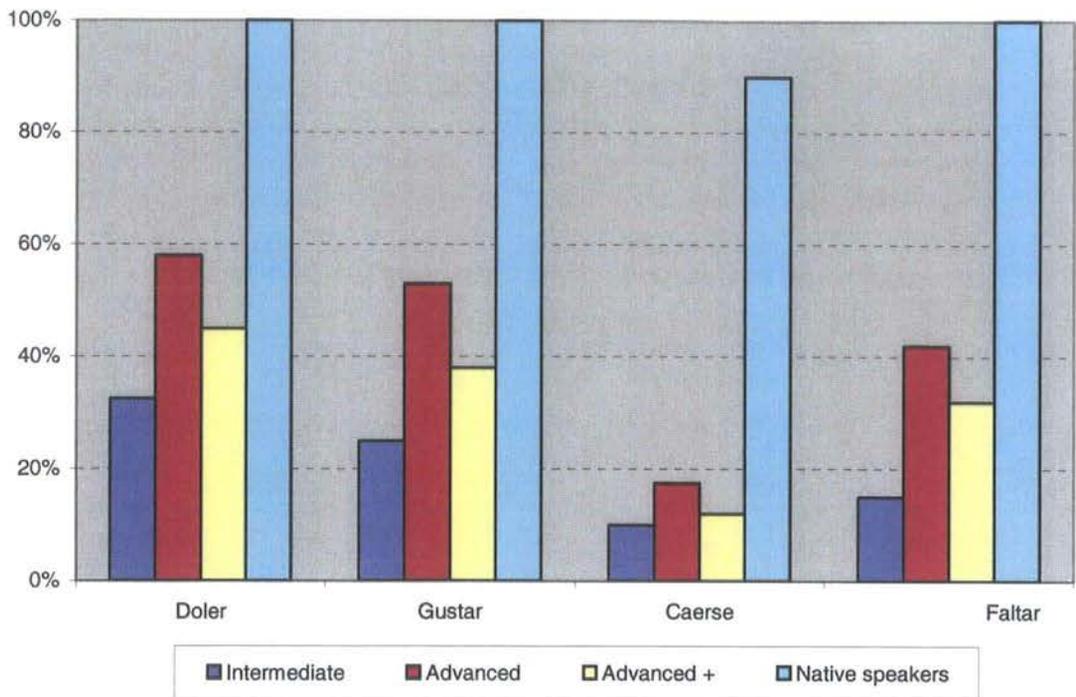
The following charts (Figures 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11) show the production rates of the native and non-native groups in each of the three tasks regarding the four most productive and common verbs used in the three tasks: *gustar* 'like', *doler* 'hurt', *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack' to see how formal instruction can have an effect on the acquisition of unaccusativity and NNSubs.

Due to the nature of this task, percentages are quite high for all levels regarding the use of *doler* 'hurt', *gustar* 'like', *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack'. Two-tailed *t*-tests ( $T_C = 2.78$ ) show that L2 learners use the verb *doler* 'hurt' significantly more than the native speakers:  $t = 23.00$ . On the other hand, the difference between the

performance of L1 and L2 speakers regarding the verb *gustar* ‘like’ is not significant:  $t = 2.09$ . Looking at the data, in the case of *doler* ‘hurt’, this is the consequence of both the L2 groups’ confidence in the use of the verb and the native speakers’ readiness to accept and use alternative verbs. In the case of *gustar* ‘like’, the L2 groups are undoubtedly familiar with the verb, as it is very much present in the target language input and instruction materials. Regarding *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’ the situation is different as there is significant difference between the performance of the L2 groups and that of the native speakers:  $t = 5.79$  and  $t = 14.00$ , respectively. This, again, points to the fact that these two verbs are effectively absent in the input and the materials used in the classroom.

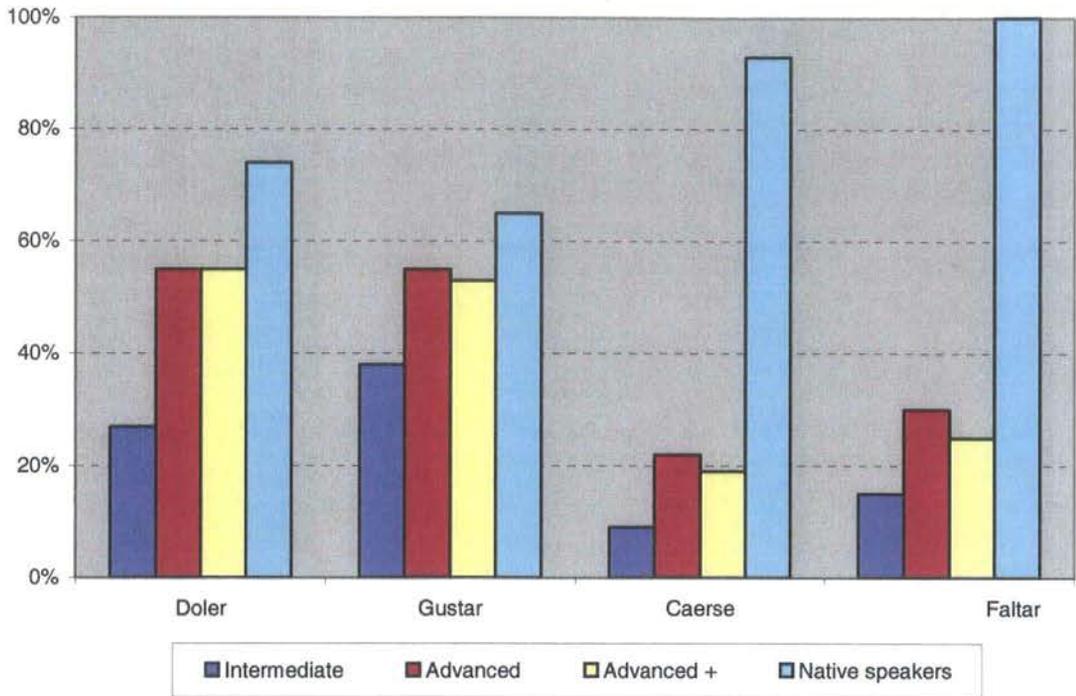


**Figure 5.9: AP task frequency of use of *doler* ‘hurt’, *gustar* ‘like’, *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’.**



**Figure 5.10: EI task frequency of use of *doler* ‘hurt’, *gustar* ‘like’, *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’**

The EI task percentages regarding the four verbs under discussion show a clearer gap between the performance of L2 learners and that of native speakers. This is expected since in this task participants are asked to produce language. *Caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ is the verb whose frequency of use is lowest of all in the L2 groups, confirming that it is a complex verb for L2 learners. Two-tailed *t*-tests ( $T_C = 2.78$ ) show that there is a significant difference between the performance of the L2 groups and that of the native speakers in the use of the four verbs: *doler* ‘hurt’,  $t = 7.45$ ; *gustar* ‘like’,  $t = 7.58$ ; *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’,  $t = 34.27$ ; and *faltar* ‘lack’,  $t = 8.92$ . The *t*-value for *faltar* ‘lack’ is smaller than the one for *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ probably due to the fact that *faltar* ‘lack’ has a simpler form, i.e. the pronoun *SE* is not involved.



**Figure 5.11: PD task frequency of use of *doler* ‘hurt’, *gustar* ‘like’, *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’.**

The PD task shows a clear picture in terms of what the L2 learners and the native speakers feel at ease with when producing language in a relatively freer task. *Doler* ‘hurt’ and *gustar* ‘like’ are clearly used with more confidence by L2 learners. The native speakers use these verbs too, but they also make use of other options, like the ones discussed in Sections 5.3.3.1, 5.3.3.2, and 5.3.3.3. This lexical optionality accounts for the control group’s lower percentages compared to *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’ and *faltar* ‘lack’, verbs which are not easy to replace. Two-tailed *t*-tests ( $T_C = 2.78$ ) show that, like in the EI task, there is a significant difference between the performance of the L2 groups and that of the native speakers in the use of the four verbs: *doler* ‘hurt’,  $t = 3.04$ ; *gustar* ‘like’,  $t = 3.04$ ; *caerse* ‘fall accidentally’  $t = 19.42$ ; and *faltar* ‘lack’  $t = 17.39$ .

## 5.4 Lexical optionality

Data from the PD task were also used to measure lexical optionality in the performance of non-native and native speakers. As explained earlier, optionality in this study refers to the grammatical non-unaccusative forms used by native speakers and L2 learners to replace their unaccusative counterparts. By comparing the use of lexical optionality with the *non-target* and *accurate* use of unaccusative verbs and accusative verbs used unaccusatively, it is possible to see whether lexical optionality is the result of consistent performance or of variable performance when L2 competence is not so strong. Even in cases where the level of optionality is comparable to that of the native speakers', this cannot be used as a basis to claim that the levels of competence are similar.

With this in mind, Figures 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, and 5.15 will show frequency of the accurate use of alternatives to replace the unaccusative verbs, accurate use of the unaccusative verb and non-target forms in the use of the unaccusative construction. The percentages in the graphs represent the mean value of the performance of each group in the AP, EI and PD tasks. Each verb is presented in a separate graph to compare the results.

Figure 5.12 shows that there is development in the use of *doler* 'hurt' and in the optional forms used to replace it, especially between the *Intermediate* and *Advanced* learners. The *Advanced+* learners seem to use more non-target forms than the *Advanced* level, though, something that has also been observed in the analyses of the AP and EI tasks. The fact that there is development, however, seems to show that L2 learners receive the input (both formal and naturalistic) that they need to learn to use the verb.

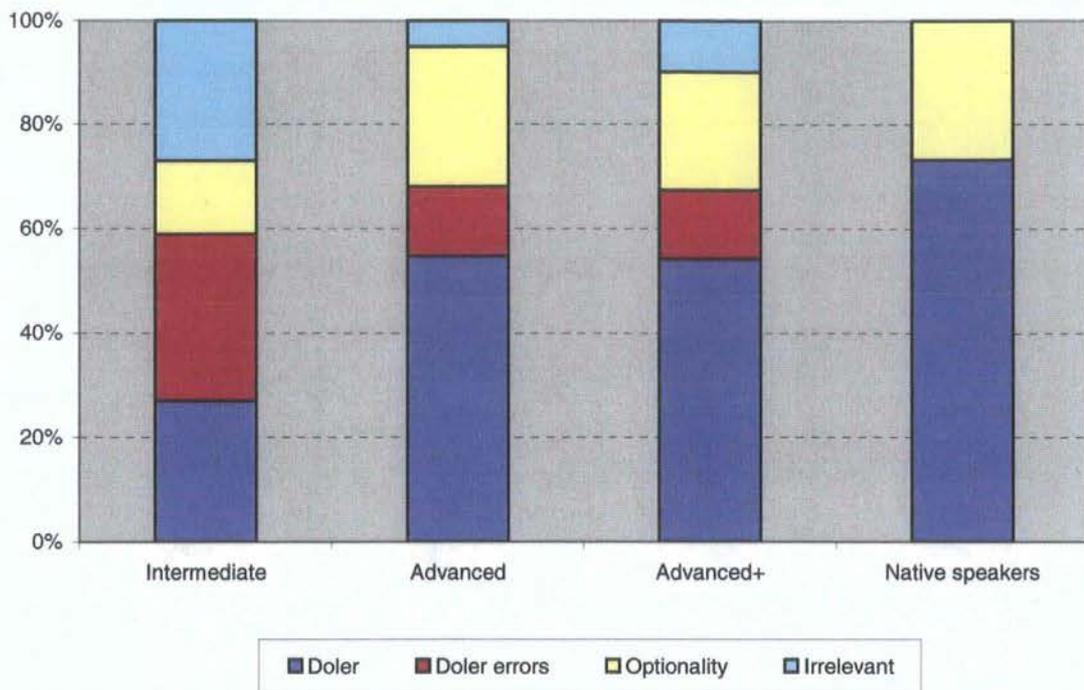


Figure 5.12: Participants' performance involving *doler* 'hurt'

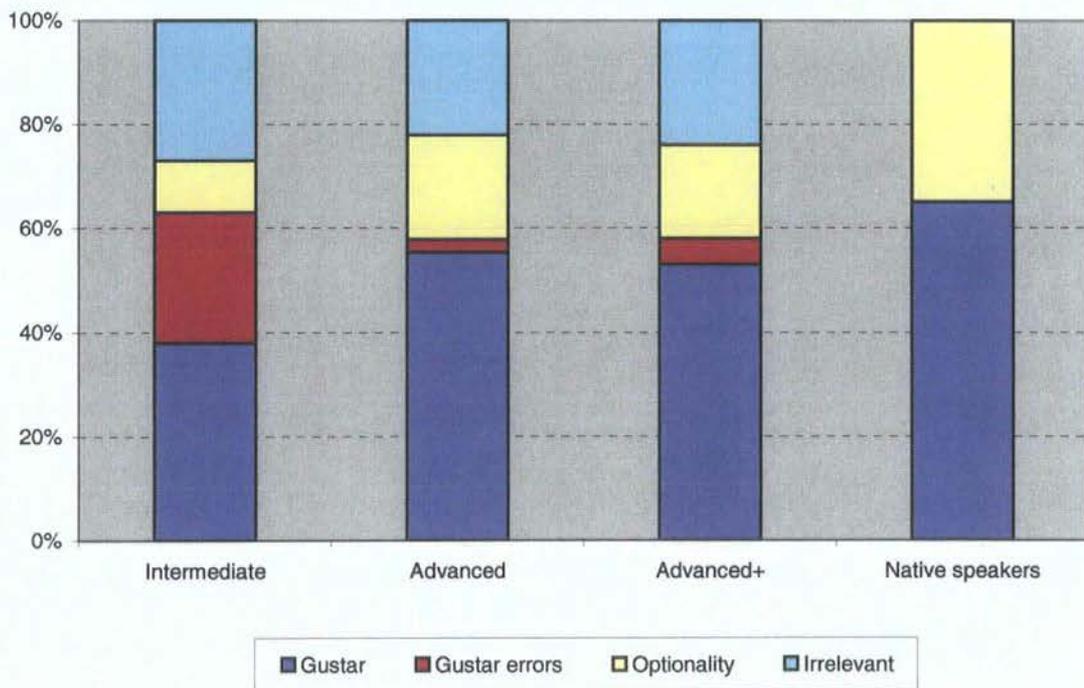
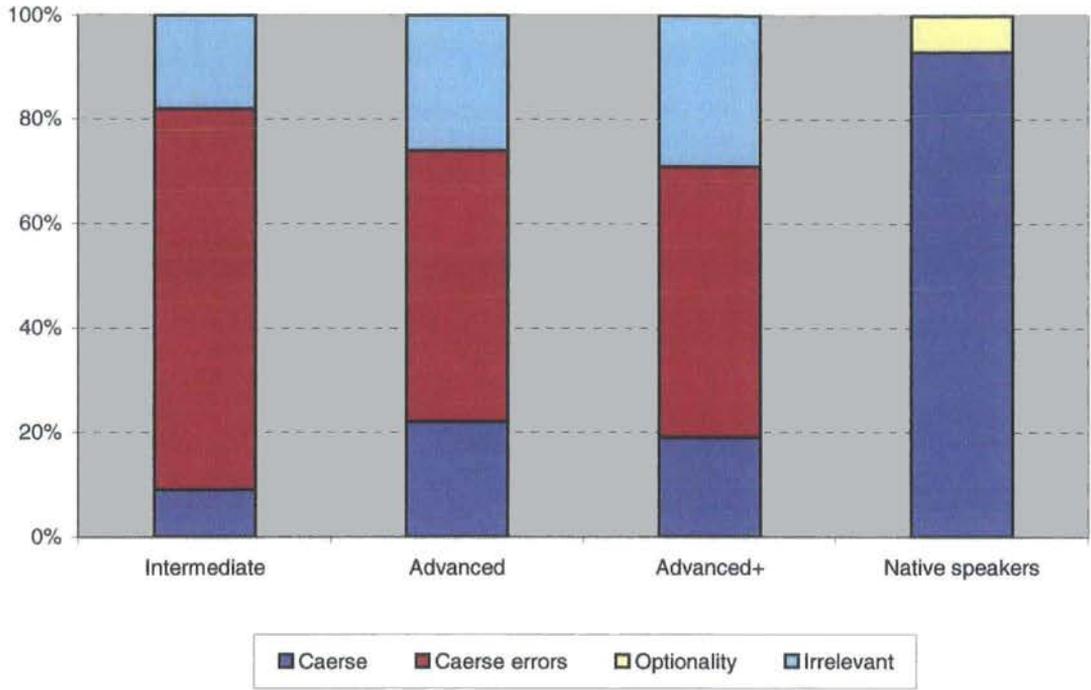


Figure 5.13: Participants performance involving *gustar* 'like'

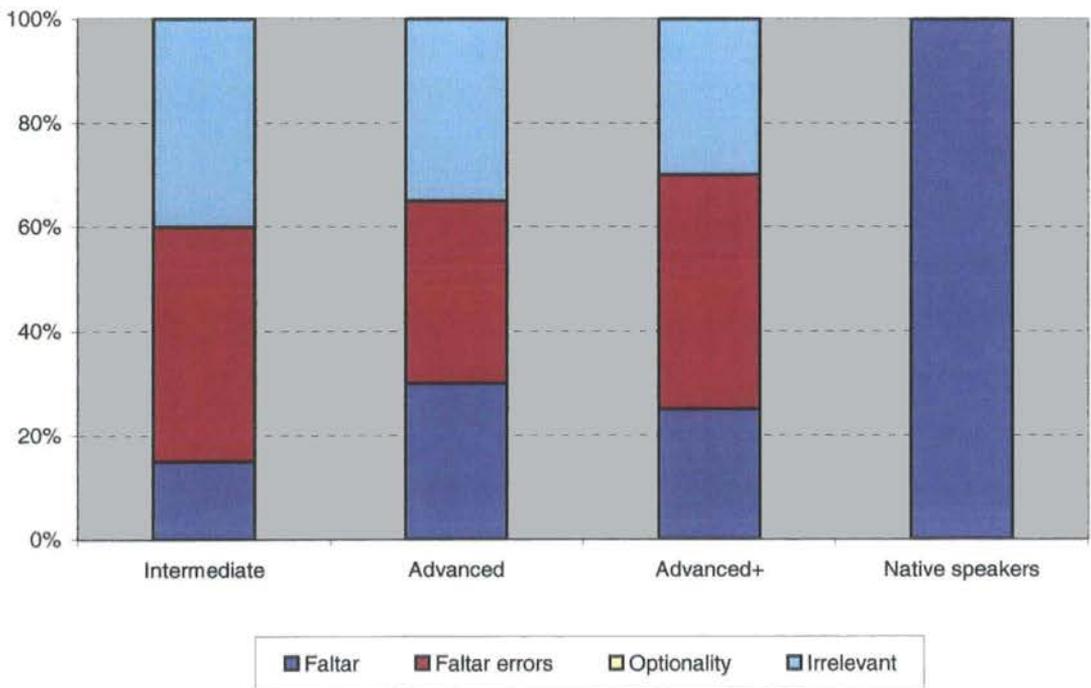
This is also seen in Figure 5.13 as regards the verb *gustar* 'like'. There is again clear progression in the frequency of use of the verb and in the optionality that develops from the *Intermediate* to the *Advanced* level. There is also a marked decline in the frequency of non-target forms used by the *Advanced* group. The *Advanced+* group, makes more non-target forms and uses fewer optional structures. In terms of the development shown between the *Intermediate* and *Advanced* levels, it could be claimed that lexical optionality and learning go hand in hand, causing a decrease in the occurrence of non-target forms.

However, Figures 5.14 and 5.15 show a different situation. The L2 performance regarding the verbs *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack' show that development of the knowledge regarding these two verbs is slow and leaves a wide breach between the performance of the *Advanced* learners and the native speakers. The level of lexical optionality is low in the native speakers due to the limited number of possibilities in the language to express exactly the same ideas as *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack'. However, the lack of lexical optionality in the L2 groups cannot be attributed to competent knowledge, as the number of non-target forms and the low percentages of accurate use suggest that knowledge of these two verbs is weak.

The higher the L2 level, the higher the lexical optionality when the language does offer options, e.g. *doler* 'ache' and *gustar* 'like'. However, when lexical optionality is not an option, like with *caerse* 'fall accidentally' or *faltar* 'lack', L2 learners make a higher percentage of non-target forms as they do not find ways to avoid using these verbs. It is these non-target forms that make it clear that the verbs have not



**Figure 5.14: Participants' performance involving *caerse* 'fall accidentally'**



**Figure 5.15: Participants' performance involving *faltar* 'lack'**

been learnt, as the lack of lexical optionality does not let them disguise the lack of knowledge of these particular structures. With the verbs *doler* 'hurt' and *gustar* 'like', the availability of lexical alternatives makes the analysis of competence much more difficult.

## 5.5 L2 knowledge of NNSubs

Hypothesis A predicted that *Intermediate* L2 learners would show clear L1 effects in their data and that the parameter would not show resetting. This being the case, it was expected that their Interlanguage would lack the features associated with NNSubs: absence of dative case markers (clitics and Personal *a* 'to'), raising of the theme, non-raising of the dative/accusative/locative NP and 'nominativisation' of the NNSub.

The results indicate that the L2 learners are able to use some unaccusative verbs like *gustar* 'hurt' and *doler* 'hurt' in some cases, although they still show many difficulties with getting the structure right with unaccusative verbs like *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack', among others. It is clear from their production in the three tasks that they have not reset the parameter yet. The non-target forms used have an L1-based effect and show that learners have difficulty with accepting aspects of the L2 grammar not available in their L1, namely NNSubs and dative case.

Hypothesis B predicted that advanced L2 learners would be able to reset the NNSub parameter to accommodate NNSubs and dative case in their Interlanguage. The data analysis shows development in the knowledge of NNSubs and dative case in the L2

grammar but not to the point that it is possible to claim that the parameter has been reset. For example, the percentages for *gustar* 'like' and *doler* 'hurt' show that these verbs are used confidently in the three tasks by the advanced L2 levels. Nevertheless, the percentages for grammatical use of *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack' start on a low level on the graphs for the *Intermediate* level and also stay rather low with the *Advanced* and *Advanced+* levels. Performance involving these two verbs reach very high percentages with the *Native speakers*. The low percentages in the grammatical use of NNSubs and the kind of non-target forms involved in the advanced L2 performance demonstrates that L1 transfer is still undeniably part of the L2 learners' grammar.

The results also show that the pattern of non-target forms with verbs requiring NNSubs is uniform; the non-target forms that were hypothesised as part of the *Intermediate* learners' Interlanguage appear with regularity in the *Advanced* and *Advanced+* data, even when the occurrence of verbs requiring NNSubs is frequent in the input. Section 5.2 presented data of the three L2 groups which show evidence of error associated with the lack of resetting of the NNSub parameter: absence of Personal *a* 'to' and/or the clitic, theme raising, lack of raising of the dative/accusative/locative NP and subject 'nominativisation'.

# Chapter 6

## 6 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first will discuss the implications of the study described in Chapters 4 and 5, while the second section will provide a brief summary of the main findings of this thesis and the significance of the evidence found. A conclusion will offer suggestions for further research.

### 6.1 Discussion

The aim of this study was to answer the questions set out at the beginning of Chapter 5, whose answers will be discussed one by one:

1. Does the evidence show that L2 knowledge of NNSubs develops independently from the L1 or is this working via L1 knowledge? Is there evidence for direct access to UG?

This study has presented evidence to show that the Interlanguage of the L2 learners demonstrates UG-constrained divergence (White, 2003: 243). This refers to a type of grammar which is not that of the target language but which is nevertheless a possible grammar subject to UG constraints, in this case through the learners' L1. It cannot be claimed that the Interlanguage of the learners in this study shows evidence of

direct access to UG; even if the *Advanced* learners seem to have made the most progress while being exposed to naturalistic input in their year abroad, their performance with NNSub verbs is significantly far from targetlike. The Elicited Imitation and Picture Description tasks, in particular, point out that these students still have problems with the verbs *gustar* 'to like' and *doler* 'to hurt' even after sustained immersion in the target input. The situation described here appears to be in line with the 'indirect access' to UG hypothesis supported by Bley-Vroman (1989) Clahsen and Muysken (1989) and Meisel (1991, 2000). This approach does not eliminate UG from the L2 learning process - as this would imply that Interlanguages would be free to exhibit 'wild' properties not present in natural language. Rather, it suggests that UG shapes L2 knowledge via the linguistic competence acquired in the course of L1 development.

Looking at the *Intermediate* group's data, it could also be speculated that the L2 learners are acquiring the NNSub constructions as formulaic units or 'chunks'. Myles, Mitchell, and Hooper (1999) and Myles (2004) propose that L2 learners can store structures which go beyond their grammatical proficiency as "chunks", 'which they keep working on until they can make their current generative grammar compatible with them' (Myles, 2004: 153). *Gustar* 'to like' and *doler* 'to hurt' are taught as chunks to L2 beginners because of their grammatical complexity (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1 for details). Typical sentences in textbooks' drills and exercises would be e.g. *me gusta la paella* 'I like paella', *me duele la cabeza* 'I have a headache', etc. and the aim of the activities would be to make the learner memorise the word order of the sentence without paying attention to the grammar. *Gustar* 'to like' and *doler* 'to hurt' tend to be the first unaccusative verb chunks to be taught because of their frequent use in the target language and their productivity in communication.

According to Myles (2004: 152), the process by which the learner's grammar gets adjusted to the grammatical complexity of the chunks is what motivates the learning process. In terms of the acquisition of verb chunks, Myles (2004) presents evidence from her post-beginners L2 learners of French which confirms the development of the learners' grammar and results in the addition of new verb chunks to their repertoire. As regards the acquisition of NNSub constructions in Spanish, it does not seem possible to consider this approach in the light of the data of the present study. While the L2 data show that the *Advanced* and *Advanced +* learners use *gustar* 'to like' and *doler* 'to hurt' more confidently than the *Intermediate* learners, the data cannot confirm development in the L2 learners' grammar in the way shown by Myles. In spite of the fact that the *Advanced* and *Advanced +* groups had more exposure to naturalistic and classroom input, the chunks that they use in a targetlike fashion still involve the verbs *gustar* 'to like' and *doler* 'to hurt'. The learners of all three levels seem to be unable to substitute *gustar* 'to like' and *doler* in the formulas by other lexical items or to add new verb chunks to the repertoire.

2. Are learners able to reset the NNSub Parameter? Do they show knowledge of dative or accusative case (through the use of case-marking preposition *a* 'to' and obligatory clitics) with subject experiencers?

The analysis of the production data shows that L2 learners at all three levels (*Intermediate*, *Advanced* and *Advanced+*) make L1-based errors but that there are also plenty of grammatical examples of sentences with the verbs *doler* 'hurt' and *gustar* 'like'. This shows that in spite of the non-target forms described in Chapter 5, L2

learners are not relying exclusively on L1 knowledge; L2 learners appear to be using knowledge of their native language together with knowledge of the verbs that they have learnt through instruction. This means that, although there are frequent occurrences of sentences like (6.1) and (6.2):

(6.1) \*La camisa falta el botón.  
the shirt misses the button  
'The shirt is missing a button.'

(6.2) (??) La camisa perdió un botón.  
the shirt-ACC lost a button  
'The shirt is missing a button.'

there are also grammatical sentences such as (6.3) and (6.4):

(6.3) Al bebé le duelen los dientes  
the baby-DAT CL-DAT hurt-PL the teeth  
'The baby has toothache.'

(6.4) A Elsa no le gustó lo que comió.  
to Elsa not CL liked PR what ate.  
'Elsa didn't like what she ate.'

The data show that the L2 participants have learnt how to use *doler* 'hurt' and *gustar* 'like' more successfully than the other verbs in the study. As discussed in

Section 3.2.1, these are the two unaccusative verbs which receive the most attention in language teaching and grammar texts, apart from being two very frequent verbs in normal, every day speech. The data regarding the other NNSub verbs used in the study, *caerse* 'fall accidentally' and *faltar* 'lack', in particular, are not that persuasive. The frequency of grammatical use of these verbs by all three L2 groups is lower, though percentages also show that there is a gradual development in the grammatical use of these verbs from the *Intermediate* to the *Advanced* level. This seems to indicate that with more input learners 'get better' at using NNSub structures.

Does this 'getting better' mean that the parameter will eventually get reset? Will the L2 learners at some point restructure lexical entries in the light of the L2 data? Data from the *Advanced+* group do not confirm that they do. In fact, the results from the three tasks show that these learners seem to be going backwards in their L2, producing more non-target forms than the *Advanced* group. It cannot be claimed that these L2 learners have reset the NNSub parameter as there is no clear evidence that they are actually going from their L1 value, [-NNSub], to the option that allows both nominative and non-nominative subjects.

One of the following reasons may explain why development seems to have stopped:

1. L2 learners' failure to 'lose' the L1 setting of the parameter could be due to the fact that the L1 does not represent the superset of the values of the parameter for the L2 as Cazzoli-Goeta, Masullo, and Young-Scholten (2004) propose. (See also Hawkins and Chan, 1997; Hawkins, 1998;

Inagaki, 2001, 2002). This means that the L2 grammar of the learners will fossilise with respect to NNSubs but that learners will be able to learn from instruction the NNSub constructions for the most common verbs.

2. The lack of frequent contact with naturalistic input may be preventing the grammar from undergoing complete restructuring. The group of *Advanced* learners, who had just returned from more than six months of contact with Spanish, performed noticeably better than the *Advanced+* learners, who had spent a whole academic year back in England. Sustained and abundant contact with native speakers of the L2 is necessary for the L2 grammar to respond to the properties of the L2 input.

L2 learners' inability to move the dative argument to subject position has been reported by Montrul (1998) in her longitudinal study of dative experiencer subjects with psych verbs. As discussed in Chapter 3, her subjects were university students taking intermediate Spanish lessons. She claims that the main reason why English-speaking subjects may not recognise experiencers as the higher argument is the lack of familiarity with how dative case operates in Spanish. She attributes this to either L1 influence or the fact that L2 learners may still be getting to grips with the Spanish dative case system. Although Montrul did not find conclusive evidence, she also hypothesises that the fact that experiencers are introduced as indirect objects in L2 classroom instruction (See Appendices 4, 5 and 6 for examples) may account for them incorrectly appearing after the verb in the learners' data (Montrul, 1998: 53). However, in her study, Montrul

found that with time (her subjects were tested three times over a period of eight months), L2 learners overcome their L1 influence 'by restructuring their grammars and acquiring structures that are not part of their L1' (Montrul, 1998: 55).

One other way of explaining why L2 learners move the theme to subject position like in (6.5) or leave the experiencer post-verbally, as in (6.6) is that they might be overgeneralising unaccusativity in Spanish. As discussed in Chapter 2, unaccusative verbs are those which select an non-agentive internal argument but which do not assign Case to it. Therefore, this argument either gets case through the null pronoun in subject position (Burzio, 1986) as in (6.5) or moves to Spec, IP to receive nominative case, as in (6.6):

(6.5) ¡Ha llegado mi mamá!  
has arrived my mum  
'My Mum has arrived!'

(6.6) ¡Mi mamá ha llegado!  
my mum has arrived  
'My Mum has arrived!'

So the Interlanguage of the L2 learners might be based on knowledge of unaccusativity in building sentences like (6.7) and (6.8) below. The fact that Spanish allows empty and post-verbal subjects would confirm the learners' hypothesis that these word orders are grammatical:

(6.7) \*Me duelen los dientes a mí. (neutral intonation)

CL hurt-PL the teeth to me

'My teeth are hurting.'

(6.8) \*Los dientes me duelen a mí. (neutral intonation)

the teeth CL hurt-PL to me.

'My teeth are hurting.'

If this were the case, this would be evidence that the L2 learners are not just making use of L1 knowledge, as unaccusativity in English is only realised with the theme in subject position in the sentence. There is, however, not enough data to prove that this is actually what is happening so a separate study would need to be set up.

Summing up, L2 learners produce NNSubs structures confidently only with verbs which are part of the curriculum. Those which have not been introduced and practised in class have either not been used at all or, if they have, the resulting forms are non-targetlike. In other words, the data show that the L2 learners' knowledge comes from classroom instruction or from the instantiation of the parameter setting of their L1, i.e. [-NNSub].

The 'indirect access' to UG hypothesis (Bley-Vroman, 1989; Clahsen and Muysken, 1989; and Meisel, 1991, 2000) was mentioned earlier to account for the nature of the Interlanguage grammar of the L2 learners in this study – constrained by UG through the learners' L1. In terms of parameter-resetting, the 'indirect access'

approach applies to the data from the present study as it proposes that parameter values cannot be reset in the course of adult L2 acquisition. The approach also predicts that the process will not be fully successful, something that this study supports. Instruction plays an important role for the L2 learners in this study as it helps them learn NNSubs verbs but seems to do so in a piecemeal fashion, verb by verb, which makes the process of L2 acquisition not complete even in the most advanced levels.

The learners' inability to reset the L1 NNSub parameter and the learning of constructions 'one-by-one' challenges Montrul's (1998) findings. According to Montrul, classroom input over a period of eight months helped the learners overcome their L1 influence by restructuring their grammars and acquiring structures that are not part of their L1. In the present study, in spite of the fact that the *Advanced* and *Advanced +* learners are able to use two of the most commonly taught NNSubs verbs in a targetlike fashion most of the time, they do not seem to be able to do this consistently. More crucially, the data show that the [-NNSub] value of the parameter is the one preferred for other common verbs which are less frequent in the classroom.

3. Do the data show that there is a learnability problem regarding the verbs that require NNSubs?

The data from this study demonstrate that there is indeed a learnability problem caused by a combination of issues. The L2 input does not make it clear when NNSubs are needed, as very often there will not be obvious signals for the learner of when the verb requires a NNSub, a nominative theme or a nominative agent. In addition to this, classroom input involving these constructions is clearly insufficient. As mentioned in

Chapter 3, Spanish L2 learners use textbooks and grammar books which do not give much importance to verbs taking NNSubs and where the structure is not taught or practised consistently. These verbs are normally introduced one by one and the construction is described as taking a direct object, ‘the ‘real’ subject of the sentence’, as it is called by textbooks, and an indirect object which then moves to become the subject of the sentence. To learn this construction, L2 learners rely on limited grammatical description and the classroom input provided by the teacher.

Chapter 2 referred to the learnability problem regarding NNSub verbs identified by Montrul (1998). In connection with psych verbs, Montrul points out that some of these verbs can belong to more than one of the categories identified by Belletti and Rizzi (1988). So for instance, the verb *molestar* ‘bother’ can belong both to the *preoccupare* ‘worry’ class and the *piacere* ‘like’ class (Montrul, 1998: 30):

(6.9) Juan siempre molesta a Pedro (con la música fuerte).  
 Juan always bothers to Pedro-ACC (with the music loud)  
 ‘Juan always bothers Pedro with the loud music.’

(6.10) A Pedro le molesta la música/Juan.  
 to Pedro CL-DAT bothers the music/Juan  
 ‘The music/Juan bothers Pedro.’

Although for native speakers there is an obvious semantic difference between (6.9) and (6.10) – (6.9) expresses an intentional action whereas (6.10) is non-intentional

– this may not be that evident for Spanish L2 learners who see that *a Pedro* ‘to Pedro’ can be both subject and object with the same verb.

More elementary L2 learners may also find it confusing that *gustar* ‘like’ can be used in two different ways with exactly the same meaning:

(6.11) Yo sé que a él le gusté yo.

I know that to him CL-DAT like me

‘I know he likes me.’

(6.12) Yo sé que él gustó de mí.

I know that he liked of me

‘I know he liked me.’

The confusion that L2 learners may experience in this case does not just arise from the use of the preposition *de* ‘of’ but also from the fact that *gustar* ‘like’ takes a non-agentive, dative experiencer as subject in sentence (6.11) and a nominative, agentive subject in sentence (6.12). It may also be confusing for perhaps the more elementary L2 learners that some verbs, though expressing different meanings, can require a NNSub or a nominative subject depending on the context in which they are used:

(6.13) Ella faltó a clase ayer.

she missed to class yesterday

‘She did not turn up for class yesterday.’

(6.14) A ella le faltó una clase ayer.

to her CL-DAT        lacked one class yesterday

'She had all but one class yesterday.'

In sentence (6.13), *faltar* means 'to be absent' and takes an agentive, nominative subject, and an *a* 'to' prepositional phrase expressing goal as complement while in (6.14), *faltar* 'lack' takes a non-agentive NNSub and a post-verbal theme.

A further learnability problem regarding psych verbs has also been reported by White, Brown, Bruhn de Garavito, Chen, Hirakawa and Montrul (1999) in their study of the argument structure of these verbs in learners' Interlanguage. This study involved Japanese and French learners of English and it tried to establish whether the learners would have difficulties with the argument structures of psych verbs when the L2 input provides instances of experiencers in both subject (6.15) or object (6.16) position (White, 2003: 224):

(6.15) The children-EXP fear ghosts-THEME.

(6.16) Ghosts-THEME frighten the children-EXP.

Example (6.15) shows the argument structure of a *temere* 'fear' (Belletti and Rizzi, 1988) kind of psych verb, with an experiencer subject and a theme object. Sentence (6.16) is an example of a *preoccupare* 'worry' psych verb, with a theme subject and an experiencer object. White et al.'s prediction was that if learners had difficulties with psych verbs they would make use of the Thematic Hierarchy to map thematic roles to syntactic positions. If they did not have knowledge of the Thematic Hierarchy they would make mapping errors with both kinds of verbs. Their experiment tested 11 Japanese and 15 French L2 learners of English by using a picture identification task.

The learners were presented with pairs of pictures accompanied by one sentence; their task was to select the picture that matched the sentence. The results showed that 7 of the 11 Japanese speakers had difficulty with experiencer object psych verbs as they would choose the pictures that would have an experiencer - subject interpretation, and, experiencer-subject verbs were not as problematic.

Intonation can also generate different word orders and confuse the L2 learner even more. Sentence (6.17) is an example of intonation changing the unmarked word order of a structure involving a verb of involuntary bodily activities. The emphasis in that sentence is on the theme, *la cabeza* 'the head'.

(6.17) La cabeza            le            sangraba            muchísimo            a esa chica.  
the head-THEME      CL            was bleeding    very much            to that girl  
'Her head was bleeding a great amount.'

(6.18) A esa chica      le                            sangraba            la cabeza muchísimo.  
to that girl      CL-DAT            was bleeding    the head    very much  
'The girl's head was bleeding a great amount.'

There is almost no semantic difference in the above sentences. (6.17) has the unaccusative verb *sangrar* 'bleed' and the subject is the theme *la cabeza* 'the head'. In (6.18) though, the verb is still *sangrar* 'bleed' but the subject of the sentence is the dative experiencer *a esa chica* 'to that girl' while the theme remains post-verbal.

The results from this study also confirm that the learnability problem can be aggravated by lexical optionality. Lexical optionality in native speakers' grammars has been discussed in Chapter 5 in connection with the analysis of the study's results. Because native speakers have a range of lexical items to express a same idea, e.g. having an ache or pain, liking something, etc, they might use different verbs with different argument structures that would make the amount of the relevant input for the restructuring of the L2 grammar (and subsequent acquisition of NNSubs) even more insufficient.

This study has paid particular attention to the role of lexical optionality in the use and acquisition of NNSubs because of the potential part it plays in avoidance techniques by L2 learners. This is why, regarding the lexical optionality found in the L2 learners' Interlanguage, the results discussed in Chapter 5 should be interpreted with care. The fact that, for instance, in the case of the use of *doler* 'hurt' and *caerse* 'fall accidentally' the optionality percentages for *Native speakers* are close to the ones for the *Advanced* and *Advanced+* values is not necessarily evidence of development. Looking at the data and the percentage of non-target forms by these two groups, it is clear that *tener dolor de* 'have an ache of' is a very well known alternative to *doler* 'hurt' for English L2 learners, a form equivalent to the English expression which may also disguise the learners' doubts in the use of the NNSub verb. However, in the case of *caerse* 'fall accidentally', which does not have many lexical replacements, the frequency of non-target forms is higher in comparison with the ones in the use of *doler* 'hurt'. This study has shown that lack of competence and/or confidence is seen particularly in cases of NNSub verbs that do not allow for many semantic replacements because they are absent in instruction and classroom input.

To sum up the answer to question 3: this study has found sufficient evidence to confirm that learnability is an issue in the acquisition of NNSubs as the input underdetermines the knowledge that the learners must arrive at to attain L2 Spanish competence. As mentioned earlier, not only does the L2 input not make it clear when NNSubs are needed but also it offers an array of options to substitute the NNSubs verbs, something which can clearly accentuate the learnability problem.

On the basis of Masullo's (1992, 1993) proposal of a NNSub Parameter and Cazzoli-Goeta et al.'s (2004) proposal that [+NNSub] is the default value of the parameter, this study speculated that L2 learners should eventually develop knowledge of NNSubs and be able to reset the parameter. Two hypotheses were formulated at the beginning of Chapter 5. Hypothesis A proposed that *Intermediate* L2 learners would show some knowledge of NNSubs but that there would be clear L1 effects in their data as the parameter would not have shown to be reset yet. Hypothesis B suggested that the influence of the L1 would be characteristic of the early stages of the L2 grammar but that, after receiving naturalistic input and instruction, the more advanced L2 learners would show signs of parameter resetting.

The data in this study have confirmed Hypothesis A regarding the performance of the *Intermediate* group, as the learners show clear L1-related effects. Hypothesis B, however, could not be confirmed as the study suggests that the *Advanced* and *Advanced+* learners have not reset the parameter. Their performance shows L1 effects together with knowledge of some unaccusative verbs, with the *Advanced+* group performing more poorly than the *Advanced* learners.

Two reasons have been proposed to account for the difference in performance between the advanced groups. Either Cazzoli-Goeta et al.'s (2004) proposal is not correct and the L1 does not represent the superset of the values of the parameter for the L2 or the lack of frequent contact with naturalistic input after the learners come back from their year abroad may be preventing the grammar from undergoing complete restructuring. Because of this difference in performance between the *Advanced* and the *Advanced+* group, it is difficult to predict target-like development as even advanced learners seem unable to lose the NNSub settings of the L1.

## 6.2 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the implications of the study described in Chapters 4 and 5 in terms of the knowledge that the L2 learners have shown concerning NNSub constructions. The data in this study suggest that rather than resetting the parameter from [-NNSub] to the Spanish setting, [+NNSub], the L2 learners are learning about unaccusativity with NNSubs on a verb-by-verb basis. This explains why performance is good with certain verbs and poor with others, even at the most advanced levels.

The data in this study have confirmed Hypothesis A regarding the performance of the *Intermediate* group, as the learners show L1-related effects. Concerning Hypothesis B, the study suggests that rather than resetting the parameter, the performance of the more advanced L2 learners still shows L1 effects together with knowledge of some unaccusative verbs, with the *Advanced+* group performing more poorly than the *Advanced* one. Two reasons have been proposed for this difference in

performance: the L1 does not represent the superset of the values of the parameter for the L2 or the lack of frequent contact with naturalistic input may prevent the grammar from undergoing complete restructuring.

The situation described here is in line with the 'indirect access' to UG hypothesis, an approach that does not eliminate UG from the L2 learning process but that limits its function to just the shaping of the L2 knowledge via the linguistic competence of the L1. Further research would need to look at the development of NNSub knowledge with near native L2 learners, to see if problems with the acquisition of NNSubs still persist. From the point of view of the role of instruction in L2 acquisition, it would be interesting to examine the reasons behind the decline of L2 proficiency in learners coming back to classroom instruction after a period of target language immersion.

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# Appendix 1

## Aural Preference task sentences

(Missing 'A')

1. Al/El coche se le salió una rueda.

(Dative clitic missing)

2. Se (me) cayeron libros en la cabeza.

(Missing 'A' + Clitic)

3. (A) la chaqueta se (le) ha roto el cierre.

(Theme raising)

4. que a la gente le molestó el ruido / que el ruido le molestó a la gente.

(Theme raising)

5. ¡El pantalón se le rompió a Pedro! / ¡A Pedro se le rompió el pantalón!

(No NNSub raising)

6. A Miguel lo llamaron / Lo llamaron a Miguel.

(Optionality (use of doler))

7. Su mamá tenía dolor de cabeza / A su mamá le dolía la cabeza.

(Missing 'A' + se + le)

8. Parece que (a) Alicia (se) (le) cayó su té.

(Theme raising)

9. A mí me interesa la arqueología. / La arqueología me interesa a mí.

(Theme raising)

10. Me llevó cuatro días hacer el trabajo. / Cuatro días me llevó hacer el trabajo.

(No NNSub raising (locative))

11. Muchos camiones pasan por aquí. / Por aquí pasan muchos camiones

(Nominativisation of subjects)

12. Yo me parece que está bien. / A mí me parece que está bien.

(Dative clitic missing)

13. ¡Al mueble (le) falta(n) dos patas!

(Missing 'A' + Clitic)

14. que (a) ella (le) encanta ir de compras.

(No NNSub raising)

15. Le faltaban las tapas al libro. / Al libro le faltaban las tapas.

(No NNSub raising)

16. Le sorprende a ella tu buena memoria. / A ella le sorprende tu buena memoria.

(No NNSub raising)

17. Nos han dicho que el accidente ocurrió aquí. / Nos han dicho que aquí ocurrió el accidente.

(Missing 'A')

18. Elsa no le gusta la bebida. / A Elsa no le gusta la bebida.

(Optionality (use of salirse))

19. A la mesa se le salió una pata. / La mesa no tiene una pata.

(Theme raising)

20. Al conductor aún le tiembla la voz. / La voz aún le tiembla al conductor.

(No NNSub raising)

21. A nadie le compraron regalos. / Le compraron regalos a nadie.

(Optionality (use of inflamarse))

22. Tiene una inflamación en la boca. / Se le inflamó la boca.

(Dative clitic missing)

23. A la vecina se (le) había quemado la comida.

(No NNSub raising)

24. Todavía le sangra a Ernesto la herida. / Todavía a Ernesto le sangra la herida.

(Theme raising)

25. Nos suena rara esa palabra. / Esa palabra nos suena rara.

(No NNSub raising)

26. Las flores crecen en esta región. / En esta región crecen las flores.

## Appendix 2

Elicited Imitation task comparative table: sentences and data samples of learners' performance.

| Intermediate Level<br>20 students   | Advanced level<br>20 students   | Advanced level +<br>20 students   | Native speakers<br>10 people |
|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| <b>No NNSub raising:</b><br>1. Le aburren las tiendas a Juan.   |   |   |                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Le aburren las tiendas a Juan.</i></li> <li>. <i>A Juan las aburren las tiendas.</i></li> <li>. <i>A Juan les aburren las tiendas.</i></li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>A Juan les aburren las tiendas.</i></li> <li>. <i>Le aburren las tiendas a Juan.</i></li> <li>. <i>Las tiendas aburren a Juan.</i></li> <li>. <i>A Juan aburren las tiendas.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Les aburren las tiendas a Juan.</i></li> <li>. <i>A Juan les aburren las tiendas.</i></li> <li>. <i>Le aburren las tiendas a Juan.</i></li> </ul> |                              |
| <b>Gramatical sentence:</b><br>2. A nadie le sobra el dinero hoy día.   |   |   |                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Le sobra dinero a nadie.</i></li> <li>. <i>Le sobran dinero a nadie.</i></li> <li>. <i>A nadie falta dinero.</i></li> <li>. <i>A nadie sobre dinero.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Nadie sobra dinero hoy día.</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Hoy día le sobra dinero a nadie.</i></li> <li>. <i>Hoy día no le sobra a nadie dinero.</i></li> </ul>   |                              |

**No NNSub raising:**

**3. Se le ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.**

*. Se ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*  
*. Se le ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*  
*. A él lo se ocurrió llamar a Margarita.*  
*. Se le ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*  
*. Le ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*

*. Se le ocurrió a mí llamar a Margarita.*  
*. Se le ocurrió a él a llamar a Margarita, no a mí.*  
*. Se le ocurrió llamar a Margarita a él.*

*. Se le ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*  
*. A él se ocurrió llamar a Margarita.*  
*. Se ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*  
*. Se ocurrió a él llamar a Margarita.*

**Missing A:**

4. Este cuadro le falta la firma del pintor.

*. Le falta este cuadro la firma del pintor.*  
*. Este cuadro le falta la firma del pintor.*  
*. Este cuadro la falta la firma del pintor.*  
*. Le falta la firma del pintor a este cuadro.*  
*. Este cuadro falta la firma del pintor.*

*. Este cuadro se falta la firma del pintor.*  
*. La firma de la pintor le falta a este cuadro*  
*. Este cuadro falta la firma del pintor*  
*. Este cuadro le falta la firma del pintor.*

*. Este cuadro le falta la firma del pintor.*  
*. Este cuadro falta la firma del pintor.*

**Theme raising:**

**5. Diez años le llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.**

*. Diez años se llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.*  
*. Diez años le llevó recuperarse a mi mamá*  
*. Les llevó diez años recuperarse a mi mamá*  
*. Le llevó recuperarse a mi mamá 10 años..*  
*. Hace diez años que llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.*  
*. Diez años ha llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.*

*. A mi mamá llevó 10 años en recuperarse.*  
*. Diez años llevó recuperarse mi mamá.*  
*. Diez años le llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.*  
*. Mi madre llevó 10 años para recuperarse.*  
*. Mi mamá llevó 10 años a recuperarse*  
*. Le llevó 10 años a recuperarse a mi mamá.*  
*. A mi mamá llevó 10 años recuperarse.*

*. Diez años le llevó recuperarse a mi mamá.*  
*. A mi mamá llevó 10 años recuperarse.*  
*. Mi mamá llevó 10 años recuperándose.*  
*. Le llevó 10 años recuperar a mi mamá.*  
*. Mi madre llevó 10 años a recuperarse.*  
*. Mi mamá lleva 10 años recuperarse.*

**Grammatical sentence:**

6. Al bebé se le llenaron los ojos de lágrimas / A los chicos se les llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. El bebé se llenó de lágrimas los ojos.

. El bebé se le llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. El bebé llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. Al bebé se llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. Se les llenaron los ojos de lágrimas al bebé.

. Al bebé les llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. Los ojos de los chicos están llenos de lágrimas.

. A las chicas le llevaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. A los chicos se los llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. A los chicos se llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. A los chicos se le llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

. Se les llenaron los ojos de lágrimas a los chicos.

. A los chicos se llenaron los ojos de lágrimas.

**No NNSub raising:**

7. En la escuela lo llaman a Juan por el apellido.

- . *Juan se llama por el apellido en la escuela.*
- . *En la escuela, lo llaman por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *A Juan los llaman por el apellido en la escuela.*
- . *Le llama en la escuela por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *En la escuela los llaman por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *A Juan les llaman por el apellido.*
- . *A Juan les llaman por el apellido.*

- . *En la escuela los llamaron a Juan por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela lo llaman a Juan por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela les llaman Juan por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela lo llaman Juan por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela los llamaron a Juan por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela los llaman a Juan por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela les llaman a Juan por el apellido.*

- . *En la escuela le llaman por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *En la escuela le llaman por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *Por el apellido llamó a Juan en la escuela.*
- . *En la escuela les llaman por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *En la escuela a Juan les llaman por el apellido.*
- . *En la escuela le llama por el apellido a Juan.*
- . *En la escuela a Juan le llaman por el apellido.*

**Missing A:**

8. La camisa se le cayó un botón.

- . *La camisa se cayó un botón.*
- . *Se cayó un botón a la camisa.*
- . *La camisa le cayó un botón.*
- . *A la camisa le cayó un botón.*
- . *Se cayó un botón de la camisa.*
- . *La camisa cayó un botón.*
- . *A la camisa se cayó un botón.*

- . *A la camisa se la ha caído un botón.*
- . *La camisa se ha caído un botón.*
- . *La camisa ha caído un botón.*
- . *A la camisa se ha caído un botón.*
- . *La camisa se le ha caído un botón.*
- . *Se ha caído un botón de la camisa.*
- . *Se ha caído un botón a la camisa.*
- . *La camisa se cayó un botón.*
- . *A la camisa se cayó un botón.*

- . *A la camisa se la ha caído un botón.*
- . *La camisa se ha caído un botón.*
- . *La camisa ha caído un botón.*
- . *A la camisa se ha caído un botón.*
- . *La camisa se le ha caído un botón.*
- . *Se ha caído un botón de la camisa.*
- . *Se ha caído un botón a la camisa.*

**(Optional forms)**

- . *El botón de la camisa se salió.*
- . *Se salió el botón de la camisa.*

**Gramatical sentence:**

9. Me temblaban las manos.

- . *Mis manos temblaban.*
- . *Las manos me temblaban.*
- . *Me temblaba a las manos.*

- . *Por el miedo y el frío temblaban mis manos.*
- . *Me temblaba las manos del frío.*

| <b>Theme raising:</b>   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| 10. La carta la sorprendió a ella.  |   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. La carta sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. La carta la sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. A ella la sorprendió la carta.</li> <li>. La carta le sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. A ella la carta sorprendió.</li> <li>. A ella sorprendió la carta.</li> <li>. La carta lo sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. A ella la carta le sorprendió.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. A ella la sorprendió la carta.</li> <li>. A ella la carta le sorprendió.</li> <li>. Se le sorprendió la carta.</li> <li>. La carta la sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. La carta sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. La carta le sorprendió a ella.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. La carta se le sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. La carta le sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. A ella la carta se sorprendió.</li> <li>. Le sorprendió la carta a ella.</li> <li>. A ella la sorprendió la carta.</li> <li>. Le sorprendió a ella la carta.</li> <li>. La carta la sorprendió a ella.</li> <li>. Ella se ha sorprendido por la carta.</li> <li>. A ella se le sorprendió la carta.</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>Missing A and Clitic:</b>  |   |  |  |
| 11. Ellos no interesa el arte en absoluto.  |   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Ellos no interesa el arte en absoluto.</li> <li>. El arte ellos no interesa.</li> <li>. Ellos no interesan al arte.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Ellos no interesa el arte en absoluto.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Ellos no interesa el arte en absoluto.</li> <li>. Ellos no interesan al arte.</li> <li>. El arte no interesan a ellos.</li> </ul>   |  |

**Grammatical sentence:**

12. A Marcos le gusta la música.

*Marcos gusta la música.*  
*. A Marcos se gusta la música.*  
*. Le gusta la música a Marcos.*

*. A Marcos se gusta mucho la música.*

*A Marcos se gusta la música.*  
*. A Marcos se le gusta la música.*

**Subject nominalisation:**

13. El té de Clara se le ha caído.

*. El té de Clara se le ha caído.*  
*. El té de Clara se le cayó.*  
*. El té de Clara se ha caído.*  
*. Se ha caído la té de Clara.*  
*. Haya caído la té de Clara.*  
*. Se le ha caído el té de Clara.*  
*. El té de Clara se cayó.*

*. El té de Clara se le ha caído encima.*  
*. El té de Clara ha caído encima.*  
*. Se le ha caído encima el té de Clara.*  
*. El té de Clara se ha caído encima de ella.*  
*. Se ha caído encima el té de Clara.*

*. El té de Clara se le ha caído encima.*  
*. El té de Clara ha caído encima.*  
*. Se le ha caído encima el té de Clara.*  
*. El té de Clara se ha caído encima de ella.*  
*. Se ha caído encima el té de Clara.*

**Theme raising:**

14. Un broche se cayó de mi blusa./Un broche se ha saltado de mi pulóver.

. *Un broche se cayó de mi blusa.*  
 . *Se cayó de mi blusa un broche.*  
 . *Un broche le cayó de mi blusa.*  
 . *Un broche se ha caído de mi blusa.*  
 . *Un broche se cayó a mi blusa.*  
 . *De mi blusa se cayó un broche.*  
 . *A mí me se cayó un broche de mi blusa.*

. *A mi pulóver le ha saltado un broche.*  
 . *Un broche ha saltado de mi pulóver.*  
 . *Un broche se ha saltado de mi pulóver.*  
 . *Un broche me ha saltado de mi pulóver.*  
 . *Un broche se le saltó de mi pulóver.*

. *Un broche me ha saltado de mi pulóver.*  
 . *Un broche se le saltó de mi pulóver.*  
 . *A mi pulóver le ha saltado un broche.*  
 . *Un broche se ha saltado de mi pulóver.*  
 . *Un broche ha saltado de mi pulóver.*  
 . *Se ha saltado un broche de mi pulóver.*

**No NNSub raising:**

15. Le duelen los dientes al bebé.

. *Al bebé le duele los dientes.*  
 . *Le duele los dientes.*  
 . *Le duele los dientes al bebé.*  
 . *Le duelen los dientes al bebé.*

. *Al bebé le duele los dientes.*  
 . *A lo bebé les duele los dientes.*  
 . *Le duele los dientes al bebé.*  
 . *El bebé le duelen unos dientes.*  
 . *Un bebé le duelen los dientes.*

. *Al bebé le duele los dientes.*  
 . *Le duele los dientes al bebé.*  
 . *El bebé le duelen unos dientes.*

| <b>Subject nominalisation:</b>  |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| 16. ¡Me falta tres horas y termino!   |   |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Me falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>Me las falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>A mí me falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>3 horas me faltan para terminar.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Me falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>Me falta tres horas y terminaré.</i></li> <li>. <i>Faltan tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>Me falta tres horas y habré terminado.</i></li> <li>. <i>A mí me falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>A mí falta tres horas al termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>Me falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Me falta tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>Faltan tres horas y termino.</i></li> <li>. <i>A mí falta tres horas para terminar.</i></li> </ul> |  |
| <b>Missing A and Clitic:</b>  |   |   |  |
| 17. Andrea molesta la música fuerte de los vecinos.   |   |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Andrea molesta la música fuerte de los vecinos.</i></li> <li>. <i>La música fuerte molesta Andrea.</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Andrea molesta la música fuerte de los vecinos.</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <i>Andrea molesta la música fuerte de los vecinos.</i></li> </ul>  |  |

**Missing Clitic:**

18. A ella dijeron que no importaba el precio.

*. A ella dijeron que no importaba el precio.*  
*. Ella dijo que no importaba el precio.*  
*A ella dijeron que el precio no importaba.*

*. A ella dijeron que no importaba el precio.*

*. A ella dijeron que no importaba el precio.*

## Appendix 3

### Picture Description task comparative table: sentences and data samples of learners' performance.

| Intermediate level<br>20 students  | Advanced level<br>20 students  | Advanced level +<br>20 students                        | Native speakers<br>10 people  |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>1. (Model answer with NNSub) A Ricardo Vemes le dieron /otorgaron el premio al mejor futbolista.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="1240 694 1380 728" style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>El premio</b></p> </div> <div data-bbox="1588 654 1995 1055" style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <div data-bbox="1234 851 1358 931" style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Ricardo<br/>Vemes</i></p> </div> </div> |  |  |   |
| <p>. Es/Hay un hombre que ha ganado/tiene un premio.</p>   | <p>. <i>RV ha ganado/le otorgaron/ha recibido el premio al ...</i></p> | <p>. <i>RV ha ganado/recibido el premio al....</i></p> | <p><b>(Optional structures)</b><br/>. <i>RV recibió/(se) ganó el premio al...</i></p> |

2. (Model answer with NNSub) A Tito se le ha caído el helado.

¡¡Buaaa!!

Tito



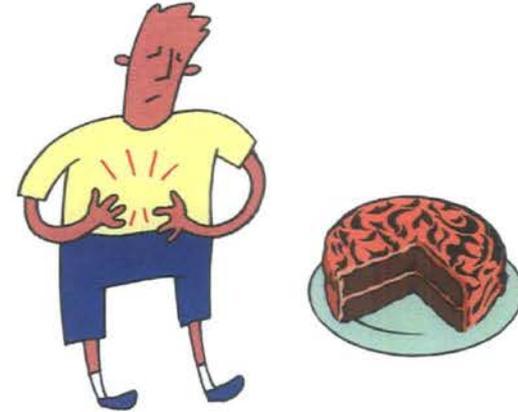
. Tito tiene un helado y se cayó.  
 . Un niño el helado le cayó del mano.  
 . Aquí se cayó el helado.  
 . A Tito le cae un helado.  
 . Tito, que se le cayó el helado.  
 . El se cayó su helado.  
 . A él se cayó su helado.

. El helado ha caído del cono.  
 . Tito el helado a caído del cono.  
 . El helado ha caído del cono de Tito.  
 . Es un hombre que se llama Tito que . se le cayó el helado.  
 . Tito ha caído su helado.  
 . Se le ha caído su helado en el suelo a Tito.  
 . De esta figura se ha caído el helado.  
 . Tito se le cayó el helado.

A Tito se cayó el helado.  
 . Tito ha... su helado ha caído del cono.  
 . A Tito le ha caído el helado.  
 . Que se cayó al suelo.

3. (Model answer with NNSub) A Ramiro le duele el estómago.

*Ramiro*



¡Uy!

- . *Se siente enfermo.*
- . *Está lleno.*
- . *Se duele el estómago.*
- . *Comió demasiado.*
- . *Tiene dolor, etc.*

- . *Tiene dolor de estómago*
- . *Se siente lleno, etc.*

- . *Ha comido demasiado.*
- . *Está con dolor de estómago.*
- . *Tiene dolor de barriga.*
- . *Tiene dolor de estómago.*
- . *Se siente muy gordo, etc.*

4. (Model answer with NNSub) A Anselmo se le ha caído el café/té.

**¡Pobre Anselmo!**



*Este pobre ha caído su té en el pantalón.*

*. Anselmo cayó el tazó de té.*

*. El hombre el té le cayó.*

*Al pobre Anselmo se ha caído su café, etc.*

*. Se le ha caído su taza de té por su falda.*

*. El té ha caído.*

*. Ha tirado su café en sus piernas.*

*. Anselmo ha caído su taza de té.*

*. Anselmo se le cayó el té.*

*. Anselmo le ha caído el té encima*

*. Se ha manchado con el té.*

*. Que no le gusta el sabor del té*

*. El té de Anselmo se cayó por su falda, etc.*

*. El té se cayó sobre él.*

*. Ha tirado el café encima de él.*

*. Se ha manchado de café.*

*. Se ha vertido el café y quema.*

*. Un accidente con el café de Anselmo. Creo que está en dolor.*

*. A él hizo caer la taza de té.*

*. Anselmo ha dejado caer el té.*

*. Que le ha perdido el té sobre su vestido, etc.*

5. (Model answer with NNSub) A Elsa no le gustó algo que comió.

¡Puaj!



Elsa

. No se gusta algo. .  
 . Elsa comió algunas cosas que no le gusta.  
 . Elsa no le gusta el chocolate, etc.

. . Elsa tiene un sabor mal en su boca.  
 . A Elsa no le gusta algo que se le tomó.  
 . Ha probado alguna comida fea, etc.

No se gusta algo  
 . Elsa comió algunas cosas que no le gusta.  
 . Elsa no le gusta el chocolate, etc.

. Elsa comió algo feo.  
 . Está asqueada.

6. (Model answer with NNSub) A Marisa le molesta el ruido.

*Marisa*



. *Marisa le duele la cabeza.*  
 . *A ella se duele la cabeza.*  
 . *La ruid a Marisa le duele la cabeza.*  
 . *A Marisa canta o piensa algo.*  
 . *Marisa tiene dolor de cabeza.*  
 . *A Marisa se duele la cabeza, etc.*

. *Está con dolores de cabeza.*  
 . *Marisa tiene dolor de cabeza.*  
 . *Le duele las orejas, etc.*

. *Marisa tiene dolor de cabeza.*  
 . *Se le da fastidia.*

. *Marisa está pensando /aturdida/ meditando/ tiene dolor, etc.*

7. (Model answer with NNSub.) A Ángel se le estiró/agrandó la ropa en la lavadora.

**El saco**

*Ángel*



. La chaqueta de Ángel es muy grande.  
 . La chaqueta se ha agrandado.  
 . Su chaqueta está ahora mas grande.  
 . La chaqueta de Ángel se le agrandó.  
 . A Ángel su chaqueta se ha agrandado.  
 . Ángel ha agrandado sus ropas.  
 . La ropa de Ángel está mas grande, etc.

. Ahora su ropa está demasiado grande.  
 . Ángel ha lavado su chaqueta pero en la lavadora se ha estirado.  
 . El traje de Ángel se estiró.  
 . La ropa de Ángel estiró al lavarla.  
 . A Ángel la lavadora se ha estropeado la ropa.  
 . El abrigo de Ángel ahora es demasiado grande.  
 . La chaqueta ahora está más grande.  
 . Se agrandó su traje.  
 . La camisa de Ángel se ha agrandado.  
 . El traje de Ángel se ha agrandado.

Ángel ...la ropa la agrandó.  
 . La ropa de Ángel está mucho más grande.  
 . La ropa, se ha modificado en tamaño.  
 . Ángel ha lavado la ropa y se ha quedado más grande.  
 . La ropa de Angel se ha estirado.  
 . Su ropa ha crecido.  
 . Hay un problema con su lavadora, que agrandó su chaqueta.

. A Ángel se le arruinó el saco.

8. (Model answer with NNSub) A Emilio le duele la muela.

*Emilio*



- . *Emilio le duelen los dientes.*
- . *El se duele la cabeza.*
- . *El hombre tiene el dolor de los dientes.*
- . *A Emilio le duele sus dientes.*
- . *A Emilio le duele los dientes.*
- . *Emilio se ha golpeado la cabeza.*
- . *A Emilio se duele los dientes.*

- . . *Emilio tiene dolor.*
- . *Emilio tiene dolor de dientes.*
- . *Emilio duelen los dientes.*
- . *A Emilio le duele los dientes.*
- . *A Emilio les duelen las dientes.*
- . *Le duele los dientes.*
- . *Emilio tiene dolor en las mandíbulas.*

- A Emilio le duele los dientes.*
- . *Emilio tiene mal en la oreja.*
- . *A Emilio le ha hinchado la cara.*
- . *Le ha ocurrido un accidente.*
- . *Emilio le duele el diente.*
- . *Tiene dolor de dientes.*

9. (Model answer with NNSub) A la camisa se le cayó el botón.



- . El botón se cayó al camisa.
- . La camisa le falta un botón.
- . Al camisa le cayó el botón.
- . La camisa se cayó un botón.
- . Un botón se ha caído de la camisa.
- . El botón de la camisa ha caído.
- . La camisa falta el botón.
- . Un botón se cayó de la camisa.
- . A la camisa perdió un botón.
- . A esta camisa se falta un botón.

- . Un botón ha caído de la camisa.
- . El botón se ha caído de la camiseta.
- . La camisa le falta un botón.
- . El botón se cayó de la camiseta.
- . El botón de la camisa se partió.
- . Se le ha caído un botón a la camisa.
- . Ha caído un botón de la camisa.
- . El botón se ha caído de la camisa.

- Que el botón se descosió.
- . El botón salio de la camisa.
- . El botón ha descosido de la camisa.
- . Ha caído un botón.
- . Se le cayó el botón de la camisa.
- . Un botón ha saltado de la camisa.
- . Se descosió el botón de la camisa.

10. (Model answer with NNSub) A Clara le duele la cabeza.

Clara



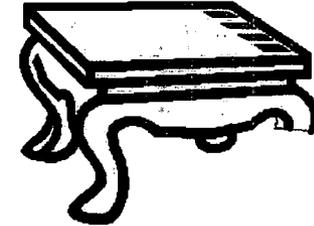
- . Clara le duele la cabeza.
- . A ella se duele la cabeza.
- . Clara tiene el dolor de la cabeza.
- . Clara tiene dolor de cabeza.
- . A Clara duele la cabeza.
- . Clara le duele la cabeza.

- . Clara tiene dolor de la cabeza.
- . A Clara duele la cabeza.
- . Clara está pensando en algo.
- . Clara tiene un dolor de la cabeza.
- . Le duele la cabeza a Clara.

- . Tiene dolor de cabeza.
- . Clara tiene dolor.
- . Clara está pensando.

11. (Model answer with NNSub.) A la mesa le falta una pata.

La mesa



- . La mesa le faltan dos patas.
- . La mesa se falta una pata.
- . El mesa le falta dos patas.
- . Le falta una pata a la mesa.
- . A la mesa falta una pata.
- . A la mesa se falta una pata.
- . La mesa falta una pata.
- . Le falta al mesa una pata.
- . A la mesa le falta dos patas.

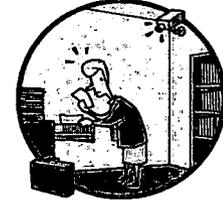
- . A la mesa le ha caído una pata.
- . La mesa falta un pié.
- . Falta una pata de la mesa.
- . No hay una pata en la mesa.
- . La mesa falta una pata.
- . La mesa falta una pata.
- . Le falta una pata la mesa.
- . A la mesa le ha caído una pata.
- . Se ha roto una pata de la tabla.

- . No hay tres patas.
- . Hay una mesa que tiene solamente tres patas.
- . La mesa no tiene una pata.
- . La mesa, porque no hay una pata.
- . Le falta una pata la mesa.
- . Falta una pata a la mesa.
- . La mesa le falta una pata.
- . Le falta una pata a la mesa.
- . Que no hay una pata en la mesa chiquita.

12.(Model answer with NNSub.) A Dorotea la filmaron mirando unos documentos.

**In fraganti**

*Dorotea*



- . Dorotea ve a una copia que no debe ver.
- . Ella está robando algún documento.
- . El cámara le vio Dorotea.
- . Dorotea lee un papel y la cámara puede ver lo que ve.
- . Han filmado Dorotea in fraganti.
- . Se ha visto que Dorotea ha tomado los documentos.
- . Dorotea roba algo de la oficina. y hay una cámara que la filma.
- . La cámara muestra que Dorotea estaba robando una nota.
- . La cámara ha filmado Dorotea.

- . Dorotea está, ha sido grabado por cámara buscando documentos privados.
- . Dorotea está leyendo algo que no tiene que ver con ella y la cámara de video la filma.
- . La televisión ha visto a Dorotea que está buscando algo en...
- . Dorotea ha buscado algo ilegal y entonces la cinta ha recordado sus acciones.
- . La cámara ha atrapado a la mujer esa buscando en el fichero.
- . Dorotea la cámara vio a Dorotea robar unos documentos.
- . Dorotea está leyendo documentos no se debería ver, lo están grabando por cámara.
- . Dorotea ha sido grabada por cámara buscando documentos privados.

- . Dorotea está mirando algo y la cámara la captó.
- . Le han visto a Dorotea por la cámara de seguridad robando.
- . La cámara la ha filmado in fraganti a Dorotea.
- . El video, la cámara, le ha sorprendido y le ha capturado en la película.
- . Dorotea está in fraganti por el cámara.
- . Que Dorotea está mirando algo que no debe mirar, hay una cámara que la está grabando.
- . Alguien está vigilando.

- . A Dorotea la pescaron/agarraron leyendo documentos.
- . Dorotea está buscando un documento.
- . Dorotea no encuentra un archivo.

## Appendix 4

Extract from 'Camino al español' dealing with *gustar* 'like':

UNIT 5

### 2. Personal pronouns: the indirect object Los pronombres personales: el complemento indirecto

An indirect object is a noun or a pronoun which receives the action expressed by the verb. We may identify indirect objects by asking 'to whom?' or 'to what?'

*La dependienta da el cambio a Luis.* The shop-assistant gives the change **to Luis**.  
*La dependienta le da el cambio.* The shop-assistant gives **him** the change.

**To whom** does the shop-assistant give the change? **To Luis, to him.**

In the English sentences above, the indirect object ('to Luis') has been replaced by the appropriate pronoun ('to him'). A similar change occurs in the Spanish sentences (*a Luis = le*).

The preposition 'to' usually precedes the indirect object in English (noun or pronoun) but not always. In the sentence 'The shop-assistant gives Luis the change', **Luis (him)** is the indirect object which can be seen if the sentence is recast as: 'The shop-assistant gives the change **to him**'.

The indirect object pronoun in Spanish goes in front of the finite verb, as in the above example. See Unit 13 for more information on object pronouns.

#### Forms of the indirect object pronoun

- There are indirect object pronouns for all persons and things:

|           |                           |            |                                    |
|-----------|---------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>me</i> | to me                     | <i>nos</i> | to us                              |
| <i>te</i> | to you ( <i>tú</i> form)  | <i>os</i>  | to you ( <i>vosotros/as</i> form)* |
| <i>le</i> | to him, to her, to it     | <i>les</i> | to them                            |
| <i>le</i> | to you ( <i>Vd.</i> form) | <i>les</i> | to you ( <i>Vds.</i> )             |

\*Note that in Latin America *les* may be used instead of *os*. See Units 2 and 10 for more information.

### 3. Expressing likes and dislikes: *gustar/parecer*

- A number of common Spanish verbs need the indirect object pronoun, notably *gustar* and *parecer* which are used to translate 'to like' and 'to seem':
- All persons of these verbs exist, but the most important – and the only ones we are concerned with at this stage – are the third person singular and the third person plural.

**GUSTAR PARECER**  
**GUSTA PARECE**  
**GUSTAN PARECEN**

- *Gustar*, which literally means 'to be pleasing', is the verb that is used to say 'to like'.

## CAMINO AL ESPAÑOL

- If you're starting from English you may need to reorganize your thoughts/words before you use this verb to express yourself in Spanish:

'I LIKE FRUIT' should be thought of as 'FRUIT IS PLEASING TO ME'

*La fruta me gusta* becomes usually: *Me gusta la fruta.*

If the thing that is pleasing is plural, then the verb is in the plural:

*Me gustan las fresas.* I like strawberries.

(Literally: Strawberries are pleasing to me.)

Different pronouns can be substituted as necessary. Here is the full range:

*Me gusta / me gustan . . .* I like fruit. / I like strawberries.

*Te gusta / te gustan . . .* You like fruit. / You like strawberries . . .

*Le gusta / le gustan . . .* He, she likes . . . / or you (polite form) like . . .

*Nos gusta / nos gustan . . .* We like . . .

*Os gusta / os gustan . . .* You (fam. plural) like . . .

*Les gusta / les gustan . . .* They or you (polite plural) like . . .

- To say what you like doing, use the third person singular *gusta* followed by the appropriate infinitive:

*Me gusta ir de compras.* I like going shopping.

(Literally: Going shopping is pleasing to me.)

*Nos gusta ir de compras.* We like going shopping.

- Negative form: to say that you don't like something you need to add 'no' before the indirect object pronoun.

*No me gusta el queso.* I do not like cheese.

- *Parecer*, which literally means 'to seem', is commonly used to translate 'I/you/she, etc., think/s':

*Me parece muy barato.*

I think that is very cheap. (Literally: it seems very cheap to me . . .)

*Nos parecen muy antipáticos.*

We think that they are very unpleasant. (Literally: they seem to us very . . .)

#### 4. Personal pronouns after a preposition Los pronombres personales después de una preposición

In sentences of the kind:

*A María no le gusta el pescado. / A Juan le encantan los melocotones.*

the proper nouns (María/Juan) can be replaced by prepositional pronouns:

*A ella no le gusta el pescado. / A él le encantan los melocotones.*

# Appendix 5

Extract from ¡Claro que sí! dealing with *gustar* 'like':

60 Capítulo 2

## Hacia la comunicación II

### I. Expressing Likes and Dislikes: *Gustar*

The verb *gustar* may be followed by *article + noun* or by another verb in the infinitive form. An infinitive is the base form of a verb and it ends in *-ar* (*bailar - to dance*), *-er* (*comer - to eat*), or *-ir* (*salir - to leave*).

|   |   |
|---|---|
| A Jesús y a Ramón no les gusta el jazz.     | <i>Jesús and Ramón don't like jazz.</i> |
| Al Sr. Moreno le gustan las cintas de jazz. | <i>Mr. Moreno likes jazz tapes.</i>     |
| ¿Qué te gusta hacer?                        | <i>What do you like to do?</i>          |
| A Juan le gusta esquiar.                    | <i>Juan likes to ski.</i>               |
| Nos gusta bailar y cantar.*                 | <i>We like to dance and sing.</i>       |

**\*NOTE:** Use the singular *gusta* with one or more infinitives.

### II. Expressing Obligation: *Tener que*

To express obligation, use a form of the verb *tener + que + infinitive*.

|                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tengo que estudiar mañana.     | <i>I have to study tomorrow.</i>  |
| Tenemos que comprar vino.      | <i>We have to buy wine.</i>       |
| ¿Qué tienes que hacer?         | <i>What do you have to do?</i>    |
| ¿Cuándo tiene que trabajar él? | <i>When does he have to work?</i> |

### III. Making Plans: *Ir a*

In the conversation on page 58, when Álvaro says, "¿Quién va a comprar los ingredientes para mañana?", is he referring to a past, present, or future action?

If you said future, you were correct. To express future plans, use a form of the verb *ir + a + infinitive*.

#### *ir (to go)*

|     |       |   |       |            |
|-----|-------|---|-------|------------|
| voy | vamos | } | + a + | infinitive |
| vas | vais  |   |       |            |
| va  | van   |   |       |            |

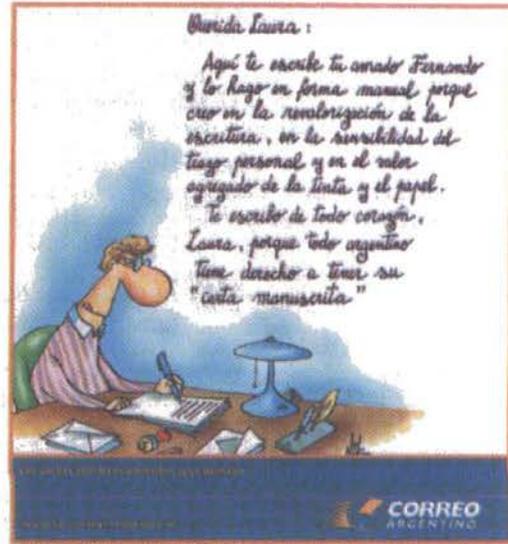
Voy a esquiar mañana.  
Juan va a estudiar hoy.  
Ellos van a nadar el sábado.  
¿Qué van a hacer Uds.?

*I'm going to ski tomorrow.  
Juan is going to study today.  
They're going to swim on Saturday.  
What are you going to do?*

Do Workbook  
Práctica mecánica  
II, CD-ROM, Web ACE Tests, and  
lab activities.

**ACTIVIDAD 6 El toque personal**

Mira este anuncio de una oficina de correos. Luego, di si hay ocasiones cuando uno debe mandar una carta o una tarjeta en vez de un email o una tarjeta virtual.



## Hacia la comunicación I

### I Expressing Likes, Dislikes, and Opinions: Using Verbs Like *Gustar*

In Chapter 2, you learned how to use the verb *gustar*.

¿Te gusta el festival?  
Nos gustan las carretas de Sarchí.

Here are some other verbs that function like *gustar*.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>encantar</b> to like a lot, to love | <b>fascinar</b> to like a lot, to find fascinating  |
| <b>faltar</b> to lack, to be missing   | <b>molestar</b> to be bothered by, to find annoying |

A Vicente **le encanta** visitar a su familia.

*Vicente loves to visit his family. (literally, Visiting his family is really pleasing to him.)*

**Le fascina** hablar y salir con sus amigos,\* pero **le molestan** las personas que fuman en los bares.

*He likes to talk to and go out with his friends, but he is bothered by people who smoke in bars. (literally, . . . people that smoke in bars bother him.)*

**\*NOTE:** Use the singular verb form when one or more infinitives follow.

The verb agrees with what is loved, what bothers you, etc.  
Indirect-object pronoun tells who is affected. See Ch. 2 and *gustar* if needed.

2 ♦ The verb **parecer** (*to seem*) follows the same pattern as **gustar**, except that it is normally followed by an adjective or a clause introduced by **que**.

**Me parecen bonitas** esas estampillas. *Those stamps seem pretty to me.*  
**A él le parece que** el correo está cerrado. *It seems to him that the post office is closed.*

Notice the meaning of **parecer** when it is used in a question with the word **qué**.  
**¿Qué te pareció** el regalo? *How did you like (What did you think of) the present?*

## II. Avoiding Redundancies: Combining Direct- and Indirect-Object Pronouns

In the conversation, you heard Vicente say to his mother, “Era una tarjeta **mal**. **Te la mandé** hace un mes por correo.” In the last sentence, *to whom* and *what* do you think the words **te** and **la** refer?

If you said *to his mother* and *to the card*, you were correct.

In Chapters 6 and 7 you learned how to use the indirect- and the direct-object pronouns separately. Remember that the indirect object tells *for whom* or *to whom* the action is done, and the direct object is the person or thing that directly receives the action of the verb and answers the question *what* or *whom*.

| Indirect-Object Pronouns |     | Direct-Object Pronouns |          |
|--------------------------|-----|------------------------|----------|
| me                       | nos | me                     | nos      |
| te                       | os  | te                     | os       |
| le                       | les | lo, la                 | los, las |

**Le mandé** un regalo a mi amiga. *I sent a gift to my friend.*  
 —¿Mandaste el regalo? *Did you send the gift?*  
 —Sí, **lo mandé**. *Yes, I sent it.*

1 ♦ When you use both an indirect- and a direct-object pronoun in the same sentence, the indirect-object pronoun immediately precedes the direct-object pronoun.

Remember: indirect before direct (I.D.).

|                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Mi amigo <b>me</b> dio un libro. | ¿Quién <b>te</b> mandó la carta? |
| Mi amigo <b>me lo</b> dio.       | ¿Quién <b>te la</b> mandó?       |
| <i>My friend gave it to me.</i>  | <i>Who sent it to you?</i>       |

2 ♦ The indirect-object pronouns **le** and **les** become **se** when combined with direct-object pronouns **lo**, **la**, **los**, and **las**.

Note: Never use **me lo**, **me la**, etc., with verbs like **gustar** since the noun following the verb is not a direct object, but rather the subject of the verb.

**le/les** → **se + lo/la/los/las**

**Le voy a pedir** un café (a Inés). → **Se lo voy a pedir** (a Inés/a ella).  
**Les escribí** las instrucciones (a ellos). → **Se las escribí** (a ellos).

### Otras palabras útiles

doler\* (ue) to hurt  
la enfermedad sickness, illness  
estar mareado/a to be dizzy  
estar resfriado/a to have a cold  
estornudar to sneeze  
la herida injury, wound  
la infección infection  
romperse (una pierna) to break (a leg)  
sangrar to bleed

tener  
buena salud to be in good health  
catarro/resfrió to have a cold  
diarrea to have diarrhea  
fiebre to have a fever  
gripe to have the flu  
náuseas to feel nauseous  
tos to have a cough  
toset to cough  
vomitar/devolver (ue) to vomit

Remember: in Spanish, the possessive adjectives (mi, tu, su, etc.) are seldom used with parts of the body: *Me duele la cabeza.*

**\*NOTE:** The verb *doler*, like *gustar*, agrees with the subject that follows: *Me duele la cabeza. Me duelen los pies.*

**ACTIVIDAD 4 Los síntomas** Di qué síntomas puede tener una persona que:

1. tiene gripe
2. tuvo un accidente automovilístico
3. está embarazada
4. tiene mononucleosis

embarazada = pregnant

**ACTIVIDAD 5 Los dolores** Después de jugar un partido de fútbol, los deportistas profesionales siempre tienen problemas. Mira el dibujo de estos futbolistas. ¿qué les duele.

♦ Al número 10 le duele el codo.



## Appendix 6

Extract from 'Noticias' dealing with *gustar* 'like' and similar verbs:

### 2.3 Using *gustar* and similar verbs

The structure for *gustar* and similar verbs\* differs greatly from the English structure for *to like*. The subject of the verb in English becomes the indirect object of the verb in Spanish, while the object of the verb in English becomes the subject of the verb in Spanish.

---

\**agradar* (to please), *doler* (to hurt), *encantar* (to delight), *disgustar* (to displease), *importar* (to be important), *interesar* (to be interesting), *molestar* (to be bothered), *parecer* (to seem), *quedar* (to have left), *faltar* (to be lacking), *sobrar* (to have left over)

### 1. To be pleasing and word order

Substituting *to please* or *to be pleasing* for *to like* can be useful for understanding the **gustar** pattern. The word order in Spanish is also different: the subject follows the verb.

| INDIRECT OBJECT | VERB            | SUBJECT                |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| (A él) Le       | <b>gustaban</b> | los toros pamploneses. |

*He liked the Pamplona bulls. →*

*The Pamplona bulls were pleasing to him. →*

*To him were pleasing the Pamplona bulls.*

### 2. Indirect object pronouns

The indirect object pronoun will always be used in the **gustar** structure, even when the proper noun is expressed. It corresponds to the subject of the English sentence, therefore *I* → **me**, *you (familiar singular)* → **te**, *he/she* → **le**, and so on. Often, the indirect object is also expressed in a prepositional phrase: **A mí me gusta...**, **A ti te gusta...**, **A Uds. les gusta...**, and so on.

**A mis padres, les** interesa la tradición de la corrida de toros.

*My parents find the tradition of the running of the bulls interesting. → To my parents the tradition of the running of the bulls is interesting.*

### 3. Verb agreement

Remember that **gustar** and similar verbs must agree with the person, object, or activity that is liked, interesting, important, and so on. In most cases, the verb will be in third-person singular or plural.

A mi amigo norteamericano le **molestan** la crueldad y el maltrato sufridos por los animales.

*My American friend is annoyed by the cruelty and bad treatment suffered by the animals.*

### GRAMÁTICA EN VIVO

¿Qué piensa de la fiesta de San Fermín? Apunte cinco impresiones sobre cualquier aspecto de la fiesta de San Fermín. Use **gustar** y otros verbos como **gustar**. Después hable con un compañero (una compañera) sobre qué piensan de los sanfermines. Hagan comparaciones basadas en sus opiniones. Compartan la información con la clase.

**Modelo:** A mí me fascina la idea de estar entre tanta gente, pero a Lucy le molesta tener a tanta gente a su alrededor.



El Manual de trabajo contiene más ejercicios de gramática.

