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Crosslinguistic Influence differences in the oral production of young and adult EFL learners

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Abstract

Recent findings regarding CLI use among students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) seem to agree with a correlation between proficiency and a lesser use of cross linguistic influence (CLI). However, the body of research specifically comparing children and adult learners' CLI within the same study is extremely scant. This study aims to shed light on the different types of CLI in the oral production of children and adult learners of English. Participants were 12 children (ages 11-12) beginner learners of English in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program, as well as 12 adult learners of the EOIP of A2 level, all of them L1-Spanish speakers. They carried out a spot-the-difference oral task in pairs. The results reveal a slightly higher rate of CLI produced by the young learners group, as well as differences in the types of CLI produced by both populations.

Keywords: *Children, Adults, CLI, EFL, Oral Production*

Los resultados recientes sobre el uso de las influencias interlingüísticas (CLI) entre los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) parecen coincidir con una correlación entre el dominio y un menor uso de las influencias interlingüísticas (CLI). Sin embargo, el conjunto de investigaciones que comparan específicamente las influencias interlingüísticas de niños y adultos dentro del mismo estudio es extremadamente escaso. Este estudio pretende arrojar luz sobre los diferentes tipos de CLI en la producción oral de niños y adultos que están aprendiendo inglés. Los participantes fueron 12 estudiantes (de 11 a 12 años) con nivel básico de inglés en un programa de Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas (AICLE), así como 12 estudiantes adultos del EOIP de nivel A2, todos ellos hablantes de español como lengua materna. Los sujetos llevaron a cabo una tarea oral en parejas basada en la identificación de diferencias en imágenes. Los resultados muestran una tasa ligeramente superior de CLI producida por el grupo de alumnos jóvenes y diferentes tipos de CLI producidos por ambos grupos.

Palabras clave: *Niños, Adultos, CLI, EFL, Producción Oral*

1. Introduction

The use of the first language (L1) in oral production in a foreign language has been studied since the late 70s (Andersen, 1983; Celaya & Torras, 2001; Dechert & Raupach, 1989; Gass & Selinker, 1992; Jarvis, 2000). Originally referred to as “transfer” at the beginning of this field of research, Crosslinguistic Influence (CLI) appears to be related to the proficiency level in the target language (TL), with studies supporting the notion that the amount of transfer produced is inversely proportional to the speakers’ proficiency levels (Navés et al., 2005; Poulisse & Bongaerts, 1994; among others).

CLI may be categorised in multiple ways, such as in terms of the lexicon displayed (e.g., Jarvis, 2009), its morphosyntactic elements (e.g., Rothman, 2010), or a merge of lexical and syntactic elements (e.g., Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2019). Other categorisations have focussed on other aspects of language, including the previously mentioned plus additional ones, such as phonetics and phonology (e.g., De Angelis, 2007).

However, not only is the amount of CLI influenced by the proficiency in the TL. Age also seems to play an important role, as CLI has been shown to decrease as learners get older (Celaya & Torras, 2001; Cenoz, 2003; García Mayo, 2003; Navés et al., 2005). In fact, younger learners produced more CLI than older subjects when both populations received the same number of hours of instruction in the L2, (Navés et al., 2005), a finding which dovetails with a study by Ortega (2016), which supported the notion that the exposure to the L2 reduces CLI instances in her analysis of students before and after taking part in an international program.

Subjects who transfer L1 onto their production in the TL do so with different purposes: metacognition, metatalk or translation requests (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Kim & Yoon, 2014), yet, again, authors often follow different categorisations (Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2019; Celaya & Torras, 2001; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998).

This fact puts forward the importance of categorizing and understanding the different manners L1 may surface during production of the TL, either written or oral (Celaya & Torras, 2001; De Angelis, 2007; Forsyth, 2014; Jarvis, 2009; Ortega, 2016).

Despite the body of research on CLI, the number of studies specifically comparing adult and children populations performing the same interactive oral tasks remains extremely scant. Therefore, further research may need to focus on the influence of the L1 on the production of adults and children learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Bearing this

in mind, this study aims to shed light on the transfers produced by subjects of different age groups yet at a similar level of proficiency in the TL over the same oral task in peer-peer interaction.

2. Literature review

2.1. CLI in EFL. Previous research and categorisations.

In the present subsection we will outline the concept of CLI along with what prior studies stated about the verbal evidence of the L1 in EFL learners. We will also approach the relationship between CLI and the proficiency level in the L2.

Jarvis (2009) defines CLI as “the influence that a person’s knowledge of one language has on that person’s recognition, interpretation, processing, storage and production of words in another language” (p. 99). According to Brooks and Donato (1994), L1 use constitutes a “normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 (Second or Foreign Language) production”. The use of the L1 constitutes a useful tool even if learners do not use it, as was reported in the interviews after the study carried by Storch and Wigglesworth (2012).

Several authors have investigated how the L1 impinges on the production of an additional language. We will focus on the influence on production in an L2, although some references to production in the L3 will also be reviewed. A substantial body of research has delved into the connection of CLI has with a myriad of elements such as: (a) language dominance (Cenoz, 2001, 2003; Lasagabaster, 2003a; Müller & Hulk, 2001; Navés et al., 2004); (b) age (Celaya et al., 2001; Harley et al., 1986, 1990; Navés et al., 2003a; Singleton, 1989, 1999; Singleton & Lengye, 1995); and (c) level of proficiency in the TL (Möhle, 1989; Navés, 2004; Poulisse, 1990; Poulisse & Bongaerts, 1994; Ringbom, 1987, 2001; Wang, 2004), to name but some.

Different authors have followed inventories on the type of transfers that may be found when analysing production in the L2. Some scholars (e.g. De Angelis, 2007; Forsyth, 2014; Goldstein & Bunta, 2012) have focussed on broad areas of language production where both positive and negative L2 transfer may be possible, that is, the lexis, phonetics and phonology, morphology and syntax.

Other researchers, by contrast, have categorised more specific language traits within CLI. For example, regarding lexicon, Jarvis (2009) distinguishes between two major types

of lexical transfer, namely a) Lexemic transfer, which corresponds to transfer of form, and b) Lemmatic transfer, which includes the types of semantic transfer. According to Ortega (2016) the former includes cases of false cognates, unintentional language switches or borrowings, and coinages or blends. The latter comprises the types of semantic transfer described by Ringbom (1987, 2001), that is, semantic extensions, calques and collocational transfers.

A number of researchers have focussed on the morphosyntactic elements to CLI. Some of the grammatical features examined in transfer studies, include word order (e.g. Rothman, 2010; Sanz et al., 2015), relative clauses (e.g.; Rothman, 2010), verbal negation (e.g. Bardel & Falk, 2007), focus fronting (e.g. Slabakova & García Mayo, 2015), use of articles (e.g. Calvo, 2005; Jarvis, 2002), null subjects (e.g. Martínez Adrián et al., 2013; Pladevall, 2013), and null objects (e.g. Martínez Adrián et al., 2013; Orfitelli & Grüter, 2014).

More recent studies on CLI with EFL learners have followed a rather eclectic approach by merging lexical and syntactic elements. In this sense, Azpilicueta-Martínez (2019) investigated the use of L1 with twenty (20) CLIL students aged 8-9. He followed Celaya and Torras's categorisation (2001), adapted, in turn from Williams and Hammarberg (1998) and James (1998). It comprised a) 'Edit' (terms which are used to introduce a self-repair, e.g., *sorry, I mean, etc.*) and b) 'Insert: explicit elicit' (translation requests, e.g., 'how do you say...?'). However, after the transcriptions of the data were collected, the following items were added to the categories: elision, L1 plural forms, overgeneralisations, as well as some additional types of transfers, including subject-adjective inversion, transfer of L1 prepositions and syntax at phrase level, subject-verb inversion in questions, circumlocution and calques. This practice is commonplace among CLI researchers, since different L1s might trigger different CLI instances in English emerging in the data, for which previous studies might have not established a categorisation yet.

Other researchers have shifted their focus to the purpose CLI or L1 use are given by EFL learners. Alegría de la Colina and García Mayo (2009) investigated the use of Spanish L1 in the oral production of 24 EFL undergraduate students, with an elementary level, across three different tasks. Results reveal the use of the L1 for two main purposes: for metacognition, or talk about the task, and for metatalk, that is, talk about the talk itself. The purpose of the use of L1 was also studied by Kim and Yoon (2014) with 9 Korean students. In their analysis over written production, the subjects produced the following strategies with

differences in the frequency: Idea generation (writer's thoughts), direct-and back translation, metacomments (self-evaluation about the text production), and lexical searching (verbalization for finding an appropriate lexical item). Similarly, in a study on CLI functions, Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2015) examined the use of L1 by 155 advanced learners of English and their results suggested that the L1 was used to ask and answer questions, scaffold, self-correct and seek clarification.

On the whole, the aforementioned has put forward the fact that, contrary to other fields within linguistics (e.g., inventories of Negotiation of meaning strategies within the Interactionist framework) categorisations of CLI are more variable and are often shaped according to the *raison d'être* of the study at hand.

2.2. CLI proficiency and age

The relationship between CLI, proficiency in the TL and age has been widely discussed over the last decades. In this subsection we will now present some of the most significant findings relevant to the present study. There is general consensus that low proficiency learners tend to transfer more elements from their first language than more advanced learners (Möhle, 1989; Woodall, 2002). Navés et al.(2005) state that “learners at higher grades rely less heavily on the use of borrowings and lexical inventions than learners at lower grades” (p. 113). In the same line, Ortega (2016) states that “the higher the proficiency level, the less the learners transfer from their L1” (p. 198). Linked to that, some researches state that less proficient learners have been found to use more communication strategies, such as borrowings, calques and foreignising than more proficient learners due to their limited command of the TL (Fernández Dobao, 2002; Hyde, 1982; Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Paribakht, 1985; Poulisse et al., 1990).

In the same line, Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) compared the instances of unintentional LI use in three age and level groups. Results put forward that “the unintentional use of LI words during L2 production is frequent and proficiency-related” (p. 46). That is, L1 uses decrease as the level of proficiency in L2 increases. They also claim that, in higher levels of proficiency, “function words are much more often involved in unintentional non-adapted language switches than content words” (p. 44).

A study by Lázaro-Ibarrola and García Mayo (2012) analysed L1 use along two years of instruction, from 13 to 15 years old, as participants performed oral narratives. The

researchers explained how, limited by their non-native command of the TL, learners tended to transfer elements from the L1, a fact which gradually disappeared as their proficiency increased.

Taking into consideration the relationship between CLI and exposure to L2, Ortega (2016) investigated subjects who had been studying abroad in international programs. The participants who had spent a longer period of time living abroad were the ones that presented a lower amount of CLI. On the same paper, Ortega and Celaya state that “there exists an inverse relationship between hours abroad and amount of lexical CLI; in other words, a higher number of hours spent in a Studying Abroad Program implies a decrease in language switches and in lemmatic transfer”(p. 5).

The specific role of age in CLI has also been addressed by scholars. CLI is a phenomenon which has been claimed to appear “across a wide range of ages, from beginning readers in early elementary school to advanced learners in high school” (Genesee et al., 2006) p. 14).

Celaya and Torras (2001) compared the L1 influence between 10-11-year-old children and adults in written production, having received the same instructional period (200 hours). Results show how young learners resort to the L1 lexicon more often than adults. However, they reported a higher percentage of errors in coinages (i.e., the invention of a new word) among the adult learners.

Since age is often associated with a higher proficiency level, some studies interrelate both variables. In this sense, Navés et al. (2005) found out that “the total percentage of words transferred (both content and function) decreased as learners’ ages increase and/or as learners have more hours of instruction.” Therefore “older and more proficient learners rely less heavily on their L1s as measured by the use of borrowings and lexical inventions than younger and less proficient learners” (p. 130).

In analysing writing Celaya and Navés (2009) concluded that the age of the learners can be relevant because of the level of cognitive maturity which may lead to more proficient learners. Hence, the different types of learners can produce L1 instances differently.

Against the general consensus reviewed in this subsection, however, a study by Cenoz (2001) with 90 learners from Grades 2, 6 and 9 claimed that CLI increased with proficiency and age. Her results indicate that older learners presented more CLI than younger learners; in

her study, the total number of transferred terms and the number of participants transferring from Basque and/or Spanish was higher in grade 9 than in the younger students.

Similarly, a more recent study with 8-9 years-old EFL learners by Azpilicueta-Martínez (2019) revealed that “explicit use of L1 was nearly inexistent” (p. 132), although a high rate of structural transfer from Spanish into English was made evident, that is, the children in his study did not use explicit L1 words, yet their Spanish morphosyntax appeared to permeate their production in English. It is worth mentioning how subjects in this study did not know that the examiner spoke their mother tongue, suggesting they might have thought the researcher would not understand them if they resorted to the L1, thus highlighting the importance of the interlocutor factor’s proficiency or monolingual-bilingual status.

Another interaction-based research by Azpilicueta-Martínez (2020) analysed the similarities and differences in the task-related strategies of twenty (20) 8-9 year-old and fourteen (14) adult L1-Spanish learners with low levels of proficiency in paired interaction. In this study, several factors were taken into account as conditioning factors of task effectiveness, such as average number of words and average duration. The results provided evidence of clear age-related differences, with adults being more consistent and approaching the task in a more predictable and efficient manner.

The literature review in the present study has reviewed the most relevant findings in CLI research regarding different ages and levels in L2, along with the different types of CLI subjects may produce. However, as stated above, while the studies reviewed help understand the differences between adult and child CLI production, to the best of the author’s knowledge, no studies have examined CLI in the oral production of children and adult EFL learners with similar levels of proficiency in English performing the same task. Therefore, more research is needed to shed light on the amount and types of transfers produced in adult-adult and child-child interactions while performing the same task. The present study will isolate the age variable by analyzing the peer-peer interactions of children and adult EFL learners at the same proficiency level while performing the same task.

3. Research questions

Based on the literature review above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How does the CLI (L1 use and forms of structural transfer) in young CLIL learners of English compare to adult learners?
2. What types of CLI can be observed in young CLIL learners of English?
3. What types of CLI can be observed in adult A2 learners of English?

4. The Study

4.1. Participants

4.1.1. *Children*

Twelve (12) children (i.e., age range 11-12) participated in the present study. They were studying their Year Six course at a state school located in Estella, a small city in Northern Spain. They all shared Spanish as their L1 and had limited access to English-speaking interaction outside their classes. The materials (i. e. textbooks, audiovisual) and the curriculum correspond to an A2 level (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR). They were enrolled in a CLIL program, that is, they had been taught approximately 50% of the school hours through the medium of English for the last 9 years, since they were three years old. All their English teachers had a minimum certified B2 (CEFR) level of English.

These children had a low level of oral English. Neither high nor low- performing students were included in order to guarantee maximum homogeneity in their proficiency levels. Children pairing was random and, as the researcher was the regular teacher of those children at the time of the study, he knew whether some students ought (or not) to be paired in any precise way, but no students were deemed particular consideration in this respect.

4.1.2. *Adults*

Twelve (12) adult EFL learners participated in the present study. They were studying A2 Level in the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (EOIP) in Pamplona, a city in Northern Spain. The age of the students ranged from 22 to 66, and they were professional workers with the exception of a retired person.

Due to the pandemic, each day half of the students attended school whereas the other half followed the class online. All students have Spanish as their L1. Being the A2 a basic level, these students did not need to take an exam at the end of the school year, they were evaluated by their regular teacher following a continuous assessment. The teacher had a degree in English philology and the use of English during the lessons was encouraged.

These students had a low level of oral English. As in the young learners group, neither high nor low- performing students were included in order to guarantee maximum homogeneity in their proficiency levels. Subject pairing was random, although the teacher was asked whether some students should be paired in any particular way, but no students were required to be placed in any particular dyad.

Table 1. Participants’ profile.

	Children	Adults
Average Age (Mean):	11.5	33.4
English Proficiency	Pre A2/A2	Pre A2/A2
School Year	Year 6 Primary education	-
TL hours of exposure/Week	10	5

4.2. The task

The tasks in the present study aimed to elicit the production of oral output. It consisted of a spot-the-difference activity (see Appendix ‘xx’), with the aim of promoting interaction (Pica et al., 1993). The picture was taken from the A2 Flyers Cambridge exam and included the following layout: each one of the participants was provided with a picture, similar to their partner’s, but with a few differences which they had to spot.

Both participants had to describe their pictures and try to find the differences following their partner’s narration. Participants were allowed to ask questions and state sentences about their own picture. An opaque screen was placed between students in order to minimize non-verbal communication. A detailed description of the task may be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Task description.

	Comparison of two versions of the same picture	
Student	Student 1	Student 2
Description	Without showing their partner their pictures, participants had to interact in order to find what the differences between their pictures were	
Type	Spot-the-difference task	
Flow of information	Two-way	
Exchange of information	Required	
Outcome	Closed (Students had to end up agreeing with the differences between their pictures)	
Use of language	Open (The language used is unpredictable and might vary significantly)	

4.3. Procedure

Data collection took place between May 3rd and May 14th. All families were informed that their children’s interactions would remain anonymous and limited for research purposes. Due permission was granted by both parents and the school itself. Correspondingly, all adult participants granted permission to use their performances for the present study.

Prior to the task, they were assured that the interaction would not be used to test their English proficiency and that no assessment or grading would take place, in order for them to feel relaxed and lower anxiety levels. Students knew the researcher could speak Spanish, but they were encouraged to use English in their interactions.

Data collection took place outside the regular classroom. Students were seated in front of each other but they could not see the other subject, so non-verbal language was minimized. All subjects had carried out a similar task before with a different set of pictures in order for them to be acquainted with it. That task was carried out in the previous class and the pairs were the same, so they were familiar with the procedure. The tasks were performed in a class in which there was nobody else but the subjects and the researcher.

4.4. Data coding

In order to analyse the data, the participants were divided into two groups as shown in table 3. On the one hand, the transcripts of the adult learners were analysed, followed by those of the young learners.

Table 3. Task participants.

Participants											
Young learners						Adult learners					
YL1	YL2	YL3	YL4	YL5	YL6	AL1	AL2	AL3	AL4	AL5	AL6

All of the participants' interactions were coded independently by the author of the paper and 25 % of the interactions were revised by the supervisor of this paper, and subsequently compared. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using simple percentage agreement, which reached 98%.

The transcripts were then analysed following the classification used by Celaya and Torras's categorisation (2001) in the case of L1 use, and the one by Azpilicueta-Martínez (2019) for L1 structural transfer, since they were considered the most appropriate for coding this type of interactions, given the participants' L1 and the target language (i.e., English).

Celaya and Torras's comprises **L1 use**, that is, inserting lexical elements from the source language, as can be seen in the first example (1) taken from our own transcriptions. The second category found is labelled **insert-elicít** (2), in which speakers explicitly request a translation.

(1) *Bueno, one person with two lemonades* (YL4) [L1 USE]

(2) *Cómo se decía, eh...* (YL4) [INSERT-ELICIT]

As for L1 structural transfer, we have followed the following classification, comprising **elision**, in which we find dummy subject elision (3), preposition elision (4), and subject elision (5). The three functions are based on the omission of a lexical item. These functions are illustrated in the following examples from our participants:

(3) *In the picture are...* (YL3) (Spanish: "En la imagen hay...")

[DUMMY SUBJECT ELISION]

(4) *In front a camera* (AL6) (Spanish: “*Frente a la cámara...*”)

[PREPOSITION ELISION]

(5) *In the picture, eh... is at five o'clock* (AL4) (Spanish: “*En la imagen, eh... son las cinco*”)

[SUBJECT ELISION]

Overgeneralisations refer to “the ungrammatical use of terms or structures whose meaning or usage is more limited or less general than stated” (Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2019 p. 131). In the present study it includes the overgeneralisation of negation particle ‘no’ as substitute for contracted forms (6):

(6) *No, is the green jacket.* (AL1) (Spanish: “*No, la chaqueta es verde*”)

[OVERGENERALISATION]

Different types of **transfer** were also identified, and here are included subject-adjective inversion (7), transfer of L1 prepositions (8), syntax at phrase level (9) and lexical creations (10).

(7) *The boy with the t-shirt yellow* (YL1) (Spanish: “*El chico con la camiseta amarilla*”)

[SUBJECT-ADJECTIVE INVERSION]

(8) *In the sofa* (AL7) (Spanish: “*En el sofá*”)

[TRANSFER OF L1 PREPOSITION]

(9) *Is there in your picture a poster* (AL4) (Spanish: “*¿Hay en tu foto un póster?*”)[SYNTAX AT PHRASE LEVEL]

(10) *A woman presenteising* (YL5) (Spanish: “*Una mujer presentando*”)

[LEXICAL CREATION]

5. Results and discussion

In the present section the findings of this research will be presented regarding the three research questions formulated earlier in this paper, that is, firstly we will analyse how the CLI (i.e., L1 use and forms of structural transfer) compare between young CLIL learners of English and adult learners. Later, we will specifically analyse what types of CLI have been

observed in the young CLIL learners in the study, and finally we will look into CLI in relation to the adult EFL learners.

In the following table (4) we can observe the results regarding L1 use and insert-elicit in relation to the total number of words produced by each group. Given the fact that the young learners produced more words (2548) during their interactions than the adult learners group (2266), results will be presented in percentages (%).

Table 4. L1 use in the young and adult groups.

		Adult learners	Young CLIL learners
Total number of words		2266	2548
L1 use in relation to total number of words	%	0.97 %	1.02 %
	Raw	22 instances	26 instances
Instances of insert-elicit in relation to total CLI instances	%	4.1 %	7.27 %
	Raw	8 instances	11 instances

As the table above illustrates, the young learners used the L1 explicitly at 1.02 %, while the adult learners resorted to it 0.97 % of their overall production. In the case of the Insert-Elicit category, the tendency was similar, as adults drew upon it at 4.1 %, though young learners showed 7.27 %.

Contrary to the findings of Ortega (2016) our results do not confirm her hypothesis, since percentages regarding L1 use were strikingly similar in spite of the fact that young learners have 10 hours per week of exposure to English, whereas adult learners have five hours per week. We speculate that this might be due to the fact that young learners are more used to expressing themselves in English, since they are enrolled in a CLIL programme, and they have to use English in a wide range of contexts. Alternatively, it could simply mean that they are acquainted with their teacher and he usually motivated them to explain themselves in English and avoid Spanish terms.

We will now present a comparison of the forms of structural transfer between both groups. The following table aims to illustrate the instances of the different structural transfers produced by each group.

Table 5. Total number of structural transfers (FST) in the young and adult groups.

Form of structural transfer (FST)	Adult learners	Young CLIL learners
	Total number of forms of FST	Total number of forms of FST
Overgeneralisation of negation particle 'no' as substitute for contracted forms	7	6
Subject elision	4	1
Syntax level	5	15
Dummy subject elision	1	12
Preposition elision	2	0
Subject-adjective inversion	2	6
Transfer of L1 preposition	23	13
Lexical creation	4	23
TOTAL NUMBER OF INSTANCES	48	76

As may be noted, the adult group produced more instances of *transfer of L1 prepositions* (23 vs 13), and *preposition elision* (2 against none) in the young learners group. We also found a higher number of *subject elision* (4 vs 1) and *overgeneralisation of negation particle 'no' as substitute for contracted forms* (7 vs 6).

The young learners group, conversely, outnumbered the adult group in the rest of the categories. A substantial difference was found in *lexical creations* (23 vs 4) and *dummy subject elision* (12 vs 1). The *transfer of L1 syntax* tripled the result in the adult group (15 vs 5). *Subject-adjective inversion* (6 vs 2) were also higher in the young learners group.

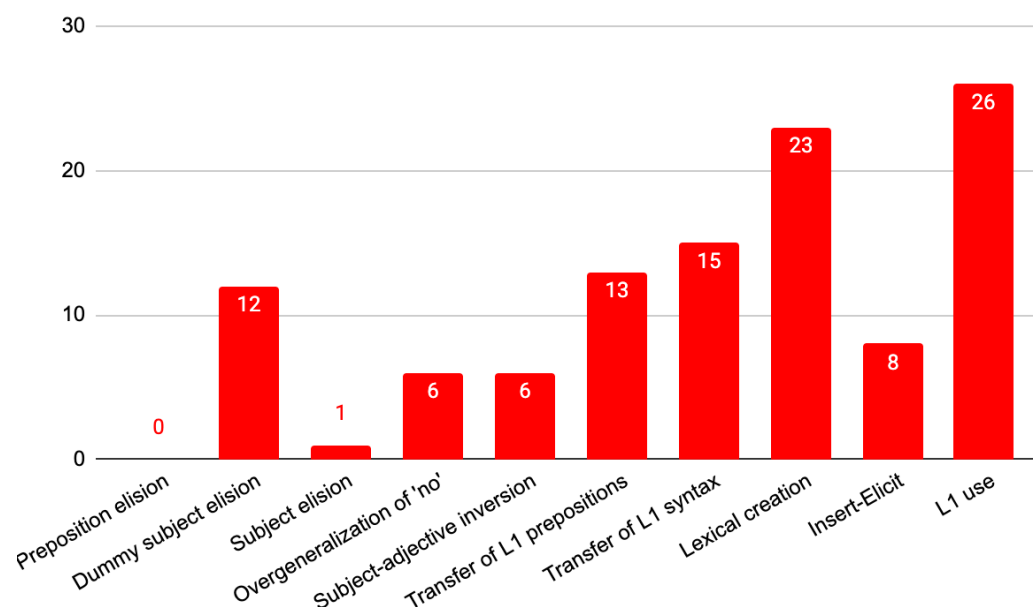
When comparing our results to those of previous studies, it must be pointed out that there is no substantial difference between the two groups in terms of total CLI (including L1 use and structural transfers), as in the adult group we found 73 examples of CLI, accounting

for 3.22 % of the total production, while in the children's group we found 110 examples, accounting for 4.32 % of the total production, measured as number of words. From this standpoint, this type of CLI might be inherent to this low level in the target language. This result may be particularly striking if we take into account that, in their study, Navés et al. (2005) found that the overall percentage of words transferred from L1 decreased as learners' ages increased and/or as learners have more hours of instruction. We should bear in mind that in our study both groups had a similar level of English, but age was the determining factor that varied between the groups. This may be one of the reasons for the lack of large variations in the results obtained in our study. In view of these results, and in contrast to the findings of Celaya and Torras (2001) it was not found that young learners tend to resort to the L1 lexicon more often than adults. That is, even though we did not replicate the previously reported, our results were in line with Genesee et al., (2006) who found that CLI is a phenomenon which has been claimed to appear across a wide range of ages. However, although the results were similar in terms of total amount, we can highlight small differences between the typology used in both groups.

The fact that young learners produced more instances of *lexical creation* as well as *transfer of L1* syntax might be due to the fact that they were more encouraged to use English on a regular basis and they tried to produce English even if they did not know the words they were thinking of. In spite of the CLI produced during the interaction, the communicative efficiency was not compromised, as all the pairs were able to spot the differences in their different pictures and they managed to reach the main objective of the task.

We will now delve into our second research question, which intended to analyse the CLI in the young CLIL learners in our study more closely. In the following graph we can see the CLI instances produced by the young learners group during their interactions as well as the percentage of the total amount of CLI produced.

Graph 1. CLI instances in the young group.



As we can observe in the graph above, by analysing the CLI instances produced by the young learners' group, *L1* was used 26 times (23.64%), closely followed by *Lexical creations* (11), with 23 instances (20.91%). In a lower scale, *Transfer of L1 syntax* appeared 15 times (13.64%). *L1 prepositions* (12) were transferred on 13 occasions (11.82%). *Dummy subject elision* (13) was found on 12 occasions (10.91 %). We will now provide some actual examples from our data in order to provide a more qualitative picture of our participants' production:

(11) *In her **mands*** (YL10) (Spanish: “*En sus manos*”)

[LEXICAL CREATION]

As we can see in (11), the child has merged the word ‘hand’ with ‘mano’, creating the term ‘mand’. As mentioned before, this fact did not seem to affect communication, since that dyad managed to keep doing the task without a problem. Apart from the context, probably the fact that both learners shared the L1 made it evident that ‘mand’ meant ‘mano’, a fact which might have led to a communication breakdown if the learners' L1 were different.

(12) *In a chair* (YL12) (Spanish: “*En una silla*”)

[TRANSFER OF L1 PREPOSITION]

In (12) we may see how the student used the preposition *in* instead of *on*. This was a recurrent pattern in our transcriptions and it could be explained on the grounds that the preposition *en* in Spanish may be *in*, *on*, *at* or even *inside*. To use the preposition *in* may be the most usual strategy due to the similarity to the Spanish preposition.

In a lower range, *Insert-Elicit* appeared 8 times (7.27%). Less common were *Overgeneralisation of negation particle 'no' as substitute for contracted forms* and *Subject-adjective inversion* (14), with 6 instances (5.46%). *Subject elision* appeared only once (0.91%).

(13) *In the **picture are** a desk* (YL5) (Spanish: “*En la foto hay...*”)
[DUMMY SUBJECT ELISION]

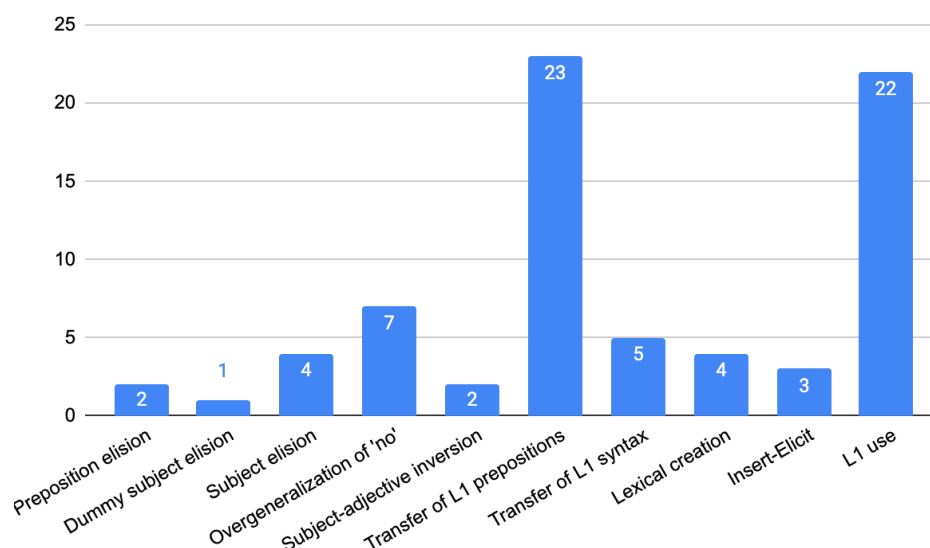
(14) *The **trousers blue*** (AL3) (Spanish: “*Pantalones azules*”)
[TRANSFER OF L1 PREPOSITION]

The large use of L1 might be explained by the fact that young learners communicated in Spanish and, as the teacher did not take part in the interaction, they switched to the language they felt more comfortable with. However, it is worth mentioning that the L1 use was quickly amended and they went back to English. This might be a result of learners' willingness to express themselves in English. The use of *lexical creations* could be explained as a communication strategy for them to use English in their conversations.

If we analyse the results from the perspective of the CLI typology, we can confirm that these findings are in accordance with the ones reported by Azpilicueta-Martínez (2019), as we observed the same types of CLI described in the results of his findings.

We will now delve into our third research question, which intended to analyse the CLI in the adult learners in our study. In the following graph we can see the CLI instances produced by the adult learners group during their interactions as well as the percentage of the total amount of CLI produced.

Graph 2. CLI instances in the adult group.



In regard to our third research question, which refers to the CLI instances produced by the adult learners group, *Transfer of L1 preposition* (15) was the most produced type of CLI, with 23 instances (31.51% of the total), closely followed by *L1 use* (16), 22 instances (30.14%). In third place, with far fewer elements, the *Overgeneralisation of negation particle 'no' as substitute for contracted forms*, 7 times (9.59%). We found 5 elements (6.85%) of *Transfer of L1 syntax at phrase level* (17).

As adult learners started learning English at an advanced age, the high production of *Transfer of L1 prepositions* might be explained by the difference of prepositions between their L1 and L2 and they might have fossilised the incorrect use of some prepositions. It is important to highlight the fact that adult learners had five hours per week of exposure to English (half of them from home). This might explain why their production of L1 words was rather common. This is important because there is a relationship between the exposure to L2 and CLI (Ortega, 2016).

(15) *Calling **for** her phone* (AL3) (Spanish: “*Por teléfono*”)
[TRANSFER OF L1 PREPOSITION]

(16) *Con un **peine*** (AL5) [L1 USE]

(17) *How many books **there are** in your picture?* (AL9)
[TRANSFER OF L1 SYNTAX]

With fewer than 5 instances we found the following elements: both *Lexical creations* and *Subject elision* appeared 4 times (5.48%). Even less common was *Insert-Elicit* (18), with just 3 items (4.1%), and just 2 examples (2.74) of *Preposition elision* and *Subject-Adjective inversion* were found. A single, one-off appearance was the *Dummy subject elision* (19), 1 instance (1.34%).

(18) *No sé cómo se dice* (AL9)

[INSERT-ELICIT]

(19) *I think is a strawberry cake* (AL9)

[DUMMY SUBJECT ELISION]

As we can see in (18), the *insert-elicited* in Spanish might be explained by the stress the students may be experiencing during the interaction and they just produced in their mother tongue a sentence which they obviously knew and had used before. We observe in (19) the *dummy subject elision*, which might have the explanation by the fact that subjects are normally elided in Spanish and in this low level of English subjects has not internalised this grammatical form.

Following previous interaction-based studies (e.g., Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2020) in our data analysis we are also going to include and describe the average number of words and average duration of each group as additional features of the interaction in order to better understand the subjects' ability to perform the task successfully. That is, in table 6 we can compare the total and the average number and duration of the two groups, accounting for the total of each group.

Table '6'. Total and average number of words and duration in each group.

	Adult learners	Young learners
Total words	2266	2548
Average words	377.6	424
Total Time	29:14	28:37
Average time	4:52	4:44

As shown in the table above, young learners produced more words than the adult learners group (2548 vs 2266). However, adult learners interactions took slightly longer (29:14) on average than young learners interactions (28:37).

In spite of their qualitative differences in terms of the type of CLI they use, it took both groups a very similar amount of time, with younger learners producing slightly more words in slightly less time. This might reveal that students at this level, irrespective of their age, are very similar in terms of duration and overall oral production with this particular type of task.

6. Conclusions and pedagogical implications

Despite the numerous studies on CLI, the vast majority investigated either age or level proficiency, but none of them interrelated these two factors. This study aims to fill a research gap: Differences on CLI production in two different age groups with a similar level in the target language.

The types of CLI produced notably diverge within our two groups: Young learners seem to tend to use the L1 explicitly slightly more regularly than adult learners. These findings are not in accordance with findings reported by Ortega (2016). She stated that L2 exposure reduces the CLI production. An explanation for this could be the close relationship young learners have, as they had been in the same class for the last nine years and they tended to meet outside school, whereas adult learners relationship occurred in the English class, as the current situation did not allow them to meet each other outside school in a more relaxed environment.

Conversely, young learners seem to ask for more translation requests, probably because they tended to do that in their regular English or Science lessons, in which they were asked to produce just English, not only to communicate with their teacher but also with their classmates.

Regarding the CLI in young learners, they seem to have a preference for CLIL elements such as *lexical creations*, while they seem to use *subject* and *preposition elision* much less. This might be so because of the need to communicate their ideas in their L2 from a very early age, so they had developed the ability to create new lexicon without affecting their communicative intention. It is worth noting that L1 use was quickly rectified and they went back to English, which may explain the motivation and good attitude they have towards English. The fact that no *preposition elision* was produced may reveal a good understanding of the necessity to use prepositions in English, yet not always they used the correct preposition. The use of *Insert-licit* may be explained by the familiarity of the use of English

in class and they seemed to be accustomed to ask for translation when they did not know a word. This is a sign of confidence and willingness to produce English.

If we examine the CLI in the adult group, participants displayed a tendency to use *transfer of L1 prepositions* with a much lower rate of *dummy subject elision* and *preposition elision*, which might be down to their cognitive maturity and the ability to understand grammatical structures. The *transfer of L1 prepositions* may be explained forasmuch as their late beginning with English, which might have led them to fossilize the use of the prepositions in English. The *transfer of L1 syntax* was also a common instance within the adult learners group, presumably due to the fact that they think in Spanish before producing English, as they were in a beginners level and therefore they were not used to thinking in English. The low rate of *insert-elicited* might have the explanation as they did not know the researcher and they tended to prefer to produce English by themselves, though *calques* and *lexical creations* were produced at a slightly higher rate.

All in all, CLI is an inherent feature of the interlanguage of this learners, in a context in which all speakers share the same L1 and know that it will be a resource that facilitates comprehension, but it is also worth mentioning that these CLI examples found in our transcriptions did not impede or obstruct communication at any time. Therefore, based on these results, this paper encourages EFL teachers to promote the use of peer-to-peer interaction at all levels of English language teaching, but especially at basic levels, and to set aside the negative view of CLI examples detected in students' interactions, as they are common to the level, regardless of age and they can be very beneficial in articulating oral communication between learners, as they are only linguistic resources that help the transmission of the discourse and the message.

7. Limitations and lines for further research

This study is not exempt from limitations which are to be taken into consideration as they could affect the generalisability of the results. One limitation is the fact that we did not use placement tests to make sure the level of the learners was the same, and we presumed the young learners level was pre-A2 following the Navarre curriculum as well as the books and materials used in class. Nonetheless, some of the students took a KET Cambridge exam (A2, CEFR) just as this research was being carried out.

Another limitation is that, as the task carried out was a peer-to-peer interaction, the fact that the subjects knew the researcher could speak their mother tongue does not seem to be decisive in the use of L1 during the interactions. However, as the regular communication within the students takes place in Spanish, this could definitely be a key factor for the vast amount of L1 use, especially in the adult group. It is also important to mention that, in the adult group, instructions in class happen both, in Spanish and English. Thus, although the use of English was encouraged in the classroom, in the case of adults, slightly less use was made of L1, despite the fact that they had fewer hours of English language instruction. Even so, it should be noted that in the case of both groups the switch to L1 was recorded, but in neither case was it decisive, as the learners automatically switched to English discourse. In relation to the language used in the classroom, as the regular teachers are not native speakers of English, it would not be rare if they produced any kind of CLI during the instruction time in class, which could undoubtedly influence the language produced by the learners.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that a major limitation has also been the lack of prior research. Although CLI and age are two elements that have been very present in the literature, there is little research that creates a direct link and serves as a basis with which to contrast the results obtained in my work. That is why in the future, and as research in this field continues, it would be very interesting to take up the results obtained in this study and compare them to see them from another perspective that coincides (or not) with the results obtained from our data and therefore to be able to place our results and our study in a broader context that sheds more light on what we have found in our sample.

Taking into account the above limitations, further research could also be carried out with groups of more advanced levels and of different ages to see if the trend of the level and age variable still holds true even when proficiency is higher.

Further research on CLI and age might extend the recording hours and the sample of subjects participating in the study, in order to get a broader understanding of the transfers produced by both groups. In addition, it might also be interesting to continue the study (longitudinally) with the same participants as their proficiency increases in order to obtain results that test whether age and proficiency in the same subjects are related, i.e. whether as subjects get older and attain higher proficiency in a language, the examples of CLI obtained decrease or increase

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Appendix 1: Task

