



Subject Expression Variation In Spanish Second Language Learners: A Corpus Study

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Recent Work

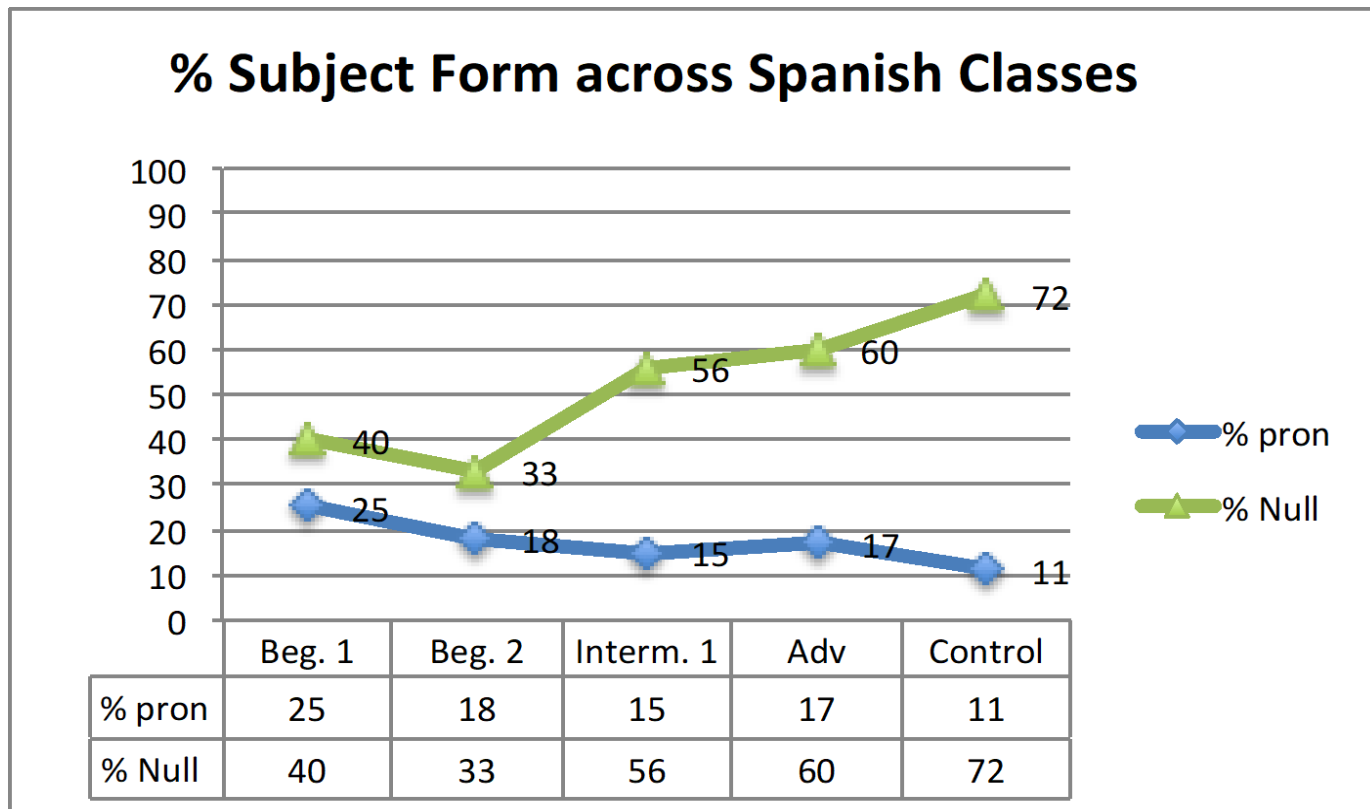
- a. In heritage speakers (Montrul, 2004; Otheguy and Stern, 2011)
- b. Monolingual children (Ballester, 2010; Montrul et al., 2015, Shin et al., 2015).
- c. Monolingual adults (Travis, 2007; Shin & Otheguy, 2009; Torres-Cacoullos & Travis, 2010; de Prada, 2010; Silva-Corvalan, 2015).
- d. L2 subject expression (SE) variation (Geeslin et al., 2008; Geeslin et al., 2015, Geeslin et al., 2016; Linford and Shin, 2012) and bilingual children (Silva Corvalan, 2015).

Pilot Study

In a pilot study I looked for:

- The linguistic factors influencing the variable use of SE in our Spanish L2 learners across various levels of Spanish classes (Restrepo-Ramos, WSS 2016).
- 57 native English speakers from the US learning Spanish as their L2 and enrolled in 3 different levels of Spanish courses at UF. Five native speakers served as the control group.
- I analyzed the written compositions of English-Speaking L2 learners of Spanish at the college level.

Results: Overall Selection Rates: 1661 tokens



1st Year 2nd Year 3rd Year

Results: Multivariate Analysis (1661 tokens)

Factors' Direction of Effect in Pronouns by class level

	<i>Beginners 1</i>	<i>Beginners 2</i>	<i>Intermediate 1</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>Native</i>
Switch Reference				First* > Switch > Same	First** > Switch > Same
TMA			Past*	Past**	Present*
Person	1pl > 3sg	1sg* > 3pl		3*	1** > 3
TMA Continuity			No TMAC		
Clause Type					
Verb Class					
Gender of Participants			M	M*	

* > .70 weight

** > .84 Weight

Summary of previous findings

1. Selection rates differ on the type of subject (Nulls > NPs > Pronouns).
2. No u-shaped pattern found (Geeslin et al, 2015).
3. The linguistic variables predicting subject pronouns and referential NPs in:
Pronouns: Person > TMA > Switch Reference > Gender

The current study

Given the highly predictive factor of person and number of the verb form in this previous study (Restrepo-Ramos, WSS 2016) and in others (Geeslin et al, 2015; Geeslin & Gumestad, 2016; Torres-Cacoullos & Travis, 2010; Quesada & Blackwell, 2009).

Then, it is worthwhile to study one grammatical person at a time.

As a result, we focus on first person subject forms.

In order to find rate patterns of usage and **to** help construct a predictive model for first-person forms across levels of proficiency of Spanish L2 learners.

The goal of this study

What?

Linguistic factors influencing the variable use of first-person subject forms in Spanish L2 learners across proficiency levels.

Why?

To go further into the SE developmental path of L2 learners one grammatical person at a time.

How?

Variationist approach; by analyzing the written compositions of English-Speaking L2 learners of Spanish at the college level

Research Questions

1. How different is the frequency of use of first-person forms across L2 learners and natives?

H_a : we expect a gradual development of SE as seen in the pilot study

2. Which linguistic variables predict the production of first-person forms in L2 learners and how do they differ according to verbal number?

H_a : we expect to see the same linguistic variables as the pilot study and the ones found favoring L2 first-person SE.

Linguistic Variables

Dependent Variable: first-person form produced

Null subject and first-person pronoun (*yo, nosotros*)

This time we included:

1. Independent linguistic variables that were significant in the previous study:
 - **Switch reference:** Is the referent of the preceding tensed verb the same or not?
 - **TMA:** What is the TMA of the verb form?
 - **TMA Continuity:** Is the TMA of the preceding tensed verb the same or not?
2. Independent linguistic variables found significant in previous studies (Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2016):
 - **Perseveration:** What is the form of the previous mention of the referent?
 - **Object Pronoun:** Is there a pre-posed object pronoun?

Materials

- Participants completed a survey on Qualtrics® and typed a script of min 200 words.

Topic: Te vas a casar este año y quieres planear los detalles de: ¡tu boda y tu luna de miel! Describe qué van a hacer tú y tu pareja en su boda y luna de miel. (250 words on average)

- This allowed participants to write from a first-person perspective
- The survey included:
 - Language Background Questionnaire
 - The prompt for the composition
 - DELE Proficiency Test

Participants and Materials

Thirty-one English-Speaking L2 Learners of Spanish at the college level

Dele Test	N	31
Max = 41/50	Median	30
Min = 15	Average	29.1
	SD	8.4

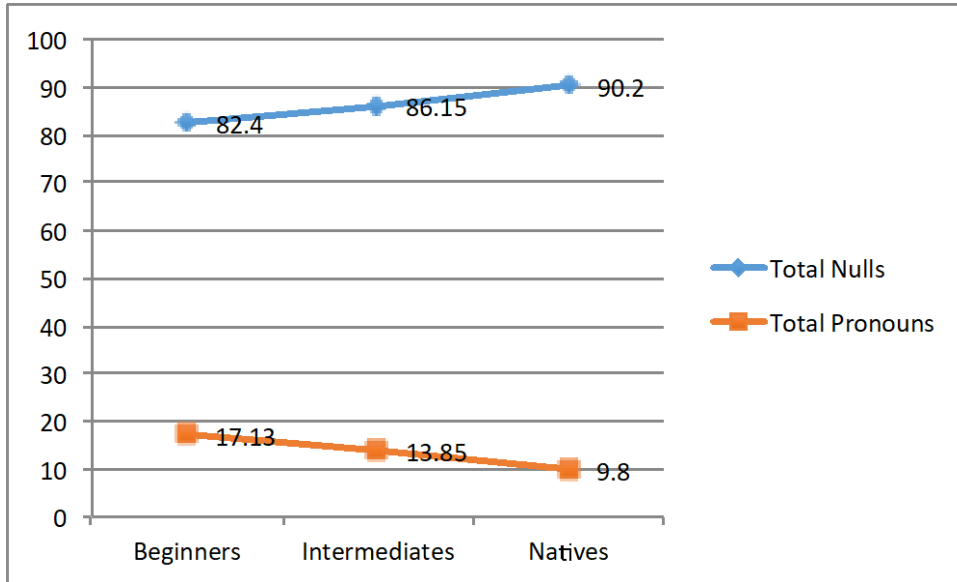
Beginner	N = 15
Average	21.4
SD	4.2

Intermediate	N = 16
Average	36.2
SD	3.2

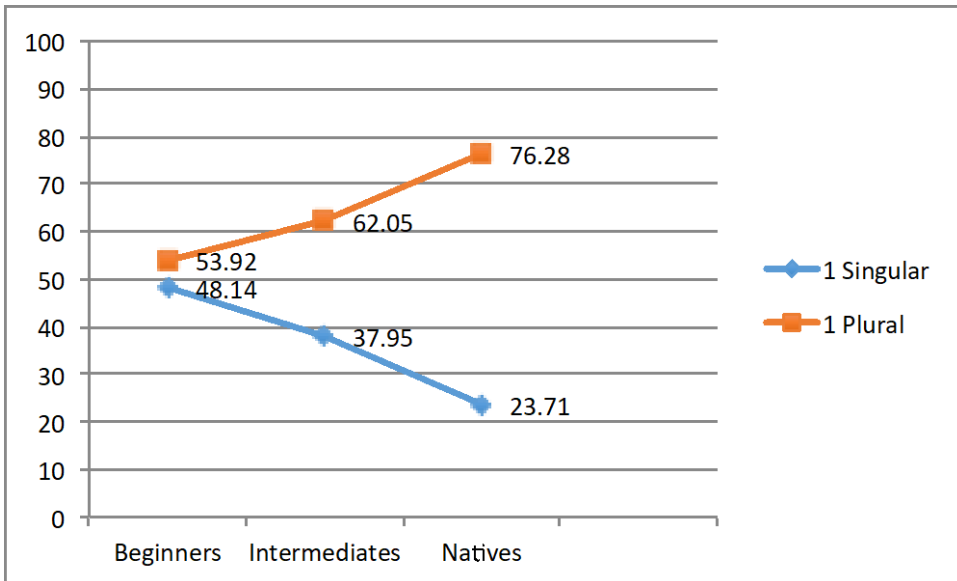
Control Group

Nationalities	Age	Years in birth Country	Years in USA	Age begin learning English
Spain (4)	Average	Average	Average	Average
Colombia (2)	27.5	20.7	7.3	10.1
Ecuador (1)	SD	SD	SD	SD
Cuba (1)	6.1	6.2	4.7	5.4
Perú (1)	Range	Range	Range	Range
N= 9	16	14	14	19

Results for Rates of usage



	% of Total Nulls	% of Total Pronouns
Beginners	82.4	17.13
Intermediates	86.15	13.85
Natives	90.2	9.8



	% of 1 Singular	% OF 1 Plural
Beginners	48.14	53.92
Intermediates	37.95	62.05
Natives	23.71	76.28

Overall Results

Varbrul Analysis using Goldvarb X (Tokens = 771; Application Value= pn)

1. *First-person forms in all speaker groups*

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Pronoun	48	38	.83	16
First Mention	21	34	.74	8
Lexical NP	2	29	.72	1
Null	36	6	.38	75
Range			.45	

<i>Switch Reference</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Switch Reference	64	19	.62	44
Same Reference	28	7	.40	56
Range			.22	

Log likelihood = -253.905 Significance = 0.000

First-Person Singular Results in L2ers and Natives

Varbrul Analysis using Goldvarb X (Tokens = 771; Application Value= pn)

2. First-person singular forms in beginners, intermediates, and natives

Factors conditioning 1p singular pronouns in beginners' compositions

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Pronoun	9	40	.77	22
First Mention	3	25	.61	12
Null	9	13	.38	67
Range			.39	

<i>TMA</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Present	19	25	.56	82
Past	2	12	.24	18
Range			.32	

Log likelihood = -46.697 Significance = 0.048

Factors conditioning 1p singular pronouns in intermediates' compositions

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Pronoun	16	44	.75	27
First Mention	2	18	.45	8
Null	13	15	.39	65
Range			.36	

Log likelihood = -67.309 Significance = 0.005

Factors conditioning 1p singular pronouns in natives' compositions

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
First Mention	4	67	.87	13
Pronoun	9	53	.79	37
Lexical NP	1	50	.77	4
Null	1	5	.15	46
Range			.72	

Log likelihood = -20.980 Significance = 0.001

First-Person Plural Results in L2ers and Natives

Varbrul Analysis using Goldvarb X (Tokens = 771; Application Value= pn)

2. First-person plural forms in beginners, intermediates, and natives

Factors conditioning 1p plural pronouns in beginners' compositions

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Pronoun	11	61	.95	16
First Mention	4	36	.86	10
Null	2	2	.30	74
Range			.65	

Factors conditioning 1p plural pronouns in intermediates' compositions

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
First Mention	7	41	.72	8
Pronoun	2	8	.58	10
Null	10	5	.47	82
Range			.25	

<i>Switch Reference</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
Switch Reference	13	28	.73	43
Same Reference	2	3	.32	57
Range			.41	

Log likelihood = -52.046 Significance = 0.002

Log likelihood = -25.320 Significance = 0.010

Factors conditioning 1p plural pronouns in natives' compositions

<i>Perseveration</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
First Mention	1	20	.93	3
Pronoun	1	10	.86	7
Null	1	1	.44	90
Range			.49	

<i>Preposed Object</i>	N	%	Weight	% of Data
<u>Preposed</u>	3	10	.79	20
<u>Non-Preposed</u>	1	1	.42	80
Range			.37	

Log likelihood = -11.793 Significance = 0.029

Factors' Direction of Effect in First-Person Pronouns by Speaker Groups

	<i>Beginners</i>	<i>Intermediates</i>	<i>Natives</i>
Switch Reference	Switch R > Same R	Switch R > Same R	Switch R > Same R
TMA			
TMA Continuity			
Preposed Object			
Perseveration	Pron*>Fmention>LexNP>Null	Pron*>Fmention>LexNP>Null	Pron*>Fmention>LexNP>Null

* ≥ .65 weight

** ≥ .80 Weight

Factors' Direction of Effect in First-Person Singular Pronouns by Speaker Groups

	<i>Beginners</i>	<i>Intermediates</i>	<i>Natives</i>
Switch Reference			
TMA	Present>Past		
TMA Continuity			
Preposed Object			
Perseveration	Pron*>Fmention>Null	Pron*>Fmention>Null	Fmention*>Pron*>LexNP*>Null

* ≥ .65 weight

** ≥ .80 Weight

Factors' Direction of Effect in First-Person Plural Pronouns by Speaker Groups

	<i>Beginners</i>	<i>Intermediates</i>	<i>Natives</i>
Switch Reference	Switch R*>Same R		
TMA			
TMA Continuity			
Preposed Object			Preposed*>Non-Preposed
Perseveration	Pron*>Fmention*>Null	Fmention*>Pron>Null	Fmention*>Pron*>Null

* ≥ .65 weight

** ≥ .80 Weight

Discussion

- **In overall, pronouns are favored by preceding pronouns in switch referent contexts and with present and past tensed verbs**

Para la Luna de miel, *nosotros* vamos a París para un mes. *Mi amiga mejor* es dueño de una compañía de la moda y *ella* ofrecó pagar para el viaje. *Nosotros* vamos a volar en el día después la boda. *Yo* quiero una boda muy feliz. Es más importante que *nosotros* somos juntos, y (L2/N2/P8)

- **In overall, nulls are favored by preceding nulls in same reference contexts and with future tensed verbs.**

_____ Nos vamos a quedar en una hotel a la playa. _____ Vamos a hacer muchos actividades en Punta Cana. Un día _____ pasaremos la playa por caballo. Otra día _____ caminaremos en la bosque de la isla. También _____ vamos a cenar un noche en un barco. Pero la mayoría del tiempo, _____ pasaremos nuestras días a la playa. (L2/N2/P22)

- **Consistent linguistic variables favor the presence of first-person subject forms among group of speakers and groups of learners**

Same linguistic variables (Perseveration and switch reference) across all participant groups: beginners, intermediates, and natives

Conclusions

For L2 subject expression studies:

- Fine-tuned analysis taking a grammatical subject at a time. First-Person trend in SE research (Travis, 2005; Torres-Cacoullos & Travis, 2010; Geeslin and Gudmestad, 2016).

Research questions revisited:

- The rates of usage follow a gradual developmental path to reach similar native-like rates in L2 learners (RQ1).
- Intermediate learners start acquiring linguistic variables for first-person subjects that resembles those of native speakers (RQ2).
- Switch reference and perseveration highly predict first person subjects. The role of TMA is not to be underestimated (RQ2). This is consistent to Geeslin and Gudmestad, 2016.

For the type of task employed:

- It seems that written patterns are similar to speech patterns in natural elicitation.

For the field:

- Importance of the fields of SLA and Sociolinguistics.



iGracias!



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