

**Editorial**

Scientific studies require a strong commitment and sacrifice from those who committed themselves to find out what lies underneath the observable world. The task of scientists does not come to an end by making the unknown known; they have to make their findings and their own conceptualization of the findings in a comparative discourse with the previous literature accessible to other scientists and to those who are in the position to apply the findings. This process is sometimes more frustrating than the research itself. Today, we are happy to contribute to the world of science by publishing the second issue of Journal of Second and Multiple Language Acquisition - JSMULA for the scientists to disseminate their findings in the field of second language acquisition. We would like to thank the authors, reviewers and readers for their interest in and contribution to our journal.

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## **EFL Learners' Vocabulary Knowledge and its Role in their reading Comprehension Performance**

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### **Abstract**

The current study is an attempt to explore the role of size and depth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners. To this aim, 50 EFL students studying at Islamic Azad University of Kerman, Iran participated in the study. A two-tailed Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were run in order to analyze the scores obtained from three tests, VLA, WAT and RCT. The results revealed that a) size, depth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are positively and significantly correlated to each other, b) both size and depth are of equal importance in Iranian EFL learners' success in reading comprehension performance and c) comparatively, size correlated more strongly to the success of Iranian EFL learners' in reading comprehension performance than depth of vocabulary knowledge.

**Keywords:** size of vocabulary knowledge, depth of vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, EFL learners.

### **1. Introduction**

In the area of language learning, vocabulary knowledge has been equated with success in second language (SL) or foreign language (FL) learning with respect to different language skills in a large number of studies (Laufer& Goldstein, 2004; Saville-Troike, 1984; Nation &Meara, 2002). Accordingly, the significant importance of vocabulary knowledge has been emphasized and vocabulary has been considered as one of the most essential components of language learning.

As Lightbown and Spada (2006) state, "the challenge of acquiring a large enough vocabulary for successful communication in a variety of settings has been the focus of much recent research" (p. 96). Research on coverage rate and the number of lexical items needed for effective reading has given rise to a number of studies in which size (breadth) and depth have been regarded as two different dimensions of vocabulary knowledge (Milton, 2009; Wesche&Paribakht, 1996; Nassaji, 2004; Akbarian, 2010; Qian, 1999). Based on this differentiation, size and depth of vocabulary knowledge are referred respectively to the number of the lexical items one knows and how

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well one knows the related words (Nergis, 2013; Qian, 2002). In other words, vocabulary size and depth are matters of quantity and quality of the lexical proficiency.

In the context of vocabulary knowledge, different tests for assessing SL and FL learners' lexical proficiency has been designed. These tests are mainly constructed on the basis of the designers' interpretation of the vocabulary knowledge. As Laufer and Goldstein (2004) argue, vocabulary knowledge can be defined as the total of interrelated subknowleges or components such as, morphological, spoken and written form, social, connotative and associational knowledge which are related to the lexical use. Vocabulary size tests are constructed based on such a definition of vocabulary knowledge since they test an item on a single component of knowledge. Unlike vocabulary size tests, depth tests are believed to measure an item on several components of knowledge.

In order to assess size and depth of vocabulary knowledge different types of assessment tools have been introduced with different formats. These tests as Nassaji (2004) states, "require the learner to identify a synonym for a word in a multiple-choice test, match words with definitions, translate a word into L1, or use checklists" (p. 389). One of the frequently used tests to assess the vocabulary size is Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) with a word-meaning matching format. The VLT consists of five sections; each section represents a different vocabulary level in English ranging from high-frequency to low-frequency words. Although vocabulary size tests have been criticized for treating items in a superficial way, their application in a large number of studies have proved their effectiveness in predicting general language proficiency and academic success (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Qian, 2002; Alavi & Akbarian, 2012).

On the other hand, depth of vocabulary knowledge is frequently measured by Word Associates Test (WAT) which was originally developed by Read (1993, 2000). As Nassaji (2004) contends, vocabulary knowledge is in association with the knowledge of word with regard to its pronunciation, spelling, register, and stylistic and morphological features as well as the word's syntactic and semantic relationships with other words in the language, including collocational meanings and knowledge of antonymy, synonymy, and hyponymy.

The target word and associates on WAT as Read (2004) states are "paradigmatic (superordinates, synonyms), syntagmatic (collocates) and analytic (words representing a key element of the meaning of the target word)" (p. 221). It should be pointed out that like any other language learning measures, there is not an agreed upon opinion about the efficiency and applicability of the depth of vocabulary measures. As Milton (2009) asserts, regarding depth of vocabulary measures, there is "no clear, comprehensive and unambiguous definitions to work with" (p. 150).

It is noteworthy that most criticism concerning discrete point vocabulary measures are due to their decontextualized design. Opponents of discrete point vocabulary measures argue that knowing a long list of isolated lexical

items does not guarantee the productive competence. They further argue, words should not be treated as units or elements appearing just in a sentence isolated from the text and discourse.

Acknowledging the usefulness of incorporation of lexical communicative competence as well as the knowledge of discrete lexical items with lexical models, Read (2000) states that vocabulary knowledge should not be equated with one's ability to make use of lexical items in context since discrete point measures' job is to assess vocabulary with respect to the particular objectives. In Read's opinion context can just disturb the set objectives.

Reading as a form of language input has been considered as one of the most important skills in the area of language learning and teaching (Negari & Rouhi, 2012). As a result, in L2 research a number of studies have investigated the relationship among vocabulary size, depth and academic reading comprehension.

Qian (1999) in his study investigated the relationship among vocabulary breadth, depth of vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension of Korean and Chinese participants. The obtained scores on vocabulary breadth, depth of vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension tests indicated a high correlation. Compared to the breadth, depth of vocabulary knowledge contributed more to the prediction of learners' reading comprehension performance. Qian's (2002) later study obtained the same results confirming the importance of the role of both depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension.

Mehrpoor, Razmjoo, and Kian (2011) in order to investigate the relationship between depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners administered VLT, WAT, and a standardized multiple-choice reading comprehension test taken from one version of a TOEFL test consisting of 6 passages. The results obtained from the analysis of the data indicated that while both depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge play an important role in EFL learners' reading comprehension performance, depth of vocabulary knowledge makes a more important contribution. The results further revealed that depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge are positively correlated, that is, those learners who had large vocabulary size had deeper knowledge of the words.

In the same line of research, Farvardin and Koosha (2011) aimed to investigate the role of vocabulary knowledge in Iranian EFL university students' reading performance. In their study, the relationship between vocabulary breadth, depth of vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension of 78 freshmen majoring in TEFL was assessed by administering VLT and WAT and a multiple-choice test of reading. The results of the two-tailed Pearson Correlations and multiple regression analyses revealed that test scores on vocabulary breadth, depth of vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension were positively

correlated, vocabulary breadth was a stronger predictor of reading comprehension than depth of vocabulary knowledge and breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge were closely interrelated ( $r = .85$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The obtained results further suggested that both breadth and depth are useful predictors of reading comprehension performance and even a combination of the two associates better with reading comprehension than either one alone.

As Vermeer (2001) states, too little is known about the relationship between breadth and depth of word knowledge and there might not be a conceptual distinction between the two dimensions. Moreover, Milton (2009) calls for more research on vocabulary acquisition to produce more data and shed more light on the area so that a clear, comprehensive, and unambiguous definition of the concept of vocabulary knowledge is structured. Therefore further research is needed to investigate the related area.

The aim of the present paper is to investigate the possible role of two dimensions of vocabulary knowledge, which are size and depth of vocabulary knowledge, in reading comprehension success of Iranian EFL learners. Hence, the following research questions will be addressed in the present study:

1. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary size, depth and reading comprehension?
2. Which one of the two aspects of vocabulary knowledge, i.e. size or depth, contributes more to the reading comprehension performance?

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1 Participants*

In order to gather data, 50 students having reached the lexical threshold level for reading comprehension were selected from an initial pool of 90 students majoring in TEFL at Islamic Azad University of Kerman, Iran. Their age ranged from 18 to 25.

### *2.2 Instruments*

The instruments used in the study included three tests; Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), Word Associate Test (WAT), and a Reading Comprehension Test (RCT).

#### *2.2.1 VLT*

In order to assess the size of participants' vocabulary knowledge, Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) with a word-meaning matching format was used. The VLT consists of five different sections (2000 words, 3000 words, 5000 words, university vocabulary level, and 10000 words); each section represents a different vocabulary level in English ranging from high-frequency to low-frequency words. Below, a VLT item is illustrated.

- 1 business  
2 clock \_\_\_\_\_ part of a house  
3 horse \_\_\_\_\_ animal with four legs  
4 pencil \_\_\_\_\_ something used for writing  
5 show  
6 wall

As it is shown, test takers matched each meaning to the appropriate number of the correct word.

### 2.2.2 WAT

Depth of vocabulary knowledge was measured by Word Associates Test (WAT) which was originally developed by Read (1993, 2000). WAT consists of 40 items. In each item there is a stimulus word at the top with four synonyms in the right box and four associates or collocation in the left box. Test takers were supposed to select just four of the options as correct answers. The following is a sample item of the related test.

|      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| Peak | (A)initial (B)top (C)crooked (D)punctual | (E)time (F)performance (G)beginning (H)speed |
|------|--|--|

It should be noted that the reliability index for VLT and WAT was respectively 0.91 and 0.93 using KR-21 method.

### 2.2.3 RCT

In order to investigate the learners' comprehension ability, a reading comprehension test (RCT) taken from Longman TOEFL (Philips, 2006) was employed. The related test consisted of three passages with 30 multiple choice questions. The reliability index for this test was 0.84 using KR-21 method.

## 3. Data Collection and processing

To answer the proposed research questions, a two-tailed Pearson correlation was performed on the scores obtained from the participants' performance on VLT, WAT and RCT. When determining the more powerful predictor of reading comprehension, multiple regression analyses were run in the environment of the software SPSS 17.0 for Windows to determine the relationship among the RCT, VLT, and WAT and to predict the reading comprehension performance by the two independent variables (size and depth).

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

After data collection procedure, the scores obtained from the participants' performance on the three instruments were analyzed statistically. As it is provided in the descriptive statistics table, mean scores of the participants' performance on VLT, WAT and RCT are respectively 38.54, 79.01 and 23.01.

| <b>variable</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>mean</b> | <b>Standard deviation</b> |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|---------------------------|
| size            | 50       | 38.54       | 7.62                      |
| depth           | 50       | 79.01       | 6.02                      |
| reading         | 50       | 23.01       | 2.98                      |

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of vocabulary size, depth and reading comprehension tests

#### 4.2 Correlations

In order to answer the first research question, a two-tailed Pearson correlation was conducted on the scores gathered from VLT, WAT and RCT. As it is illustrated in table 2, all variables are positively and significantly correlated to each other. It should be noted that size and depth are highly correlated (0.84) while the correlations between reading and size, reading and depth are respectively, 0.74 and 0.72.

| <b>Variable</b> | <b>size</b> | <b>depth</b> | <b>reading</b> |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| size            | 1           | 0.84         | 0.76           |
| depth           | 0.84        | 1            | 0.72           |
| reading         | 0.76        | 0.72         | 1              |

P< 0.01

**Table 2.** Two-tailed Pearson Correlations

#### 4.3 Multiple Regression Analyses

To answer the second research question, multiple regression analyses were performed. To this aim, scores obtained from VLT and WAT were taken as the predictor, independent variables, and scores on the RCT as the dependent variable. With regard to the fact that one of the independent variables, size, correlated higher than the other independent variable to the dependent variable, reading, ( $r = .76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), as it is shown in Table 3 section A, size was entered into the regression equation first, followed by depth of vocabulary knowledge displayed in section B.

| <b>Predictor</b> | <b>R<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>R<sup>2</sup> Change</b> |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A:               |                      |                               |                             |
| 1- size          | 0.612*               | 0.519*                        |                             |
| 2- size, depth   | 0.640                | .530                          | 0.035                       |
| B:               |                      |                               |                             |
| 1- depth         | 0.479*               | 0.443*                        |                             |
| 2- depth, size   | 0.640                | 0.530                         | 0.166                       |

\*P< 0.05

**Table 3.** Multiple Regression Analyses

Before size was entered into the equation first the  $R^2$  value was 0.612 and adjusted  $R^2$  value was 0.519 then size was kept and depth was added. The  $R^2$  value changed to 0.640 and the adjusted  $R^2$  value altered to 0.530. Depth contributed an additional 3.5% ( $R^2$  change= 0.035) of the variance in RC. The entry of depth at the second step contributed only an additional 3.5%

( $R^2$  change = 0.035) of the variance in RC. Subsequently, another regression analysis was run with a different entry order. This time depth was entered first. As it is shown in Table 3 when depth was entered, the  $R^2$  value was 0.479, 47.9% of the variance in RC. When size was added to the equation at the second step, the  $R^2$  value increased by 16.6% (0.166) to 0.640.

As it is shown in Table 3, the contribution of both vocabulary size and depth to the success in reading comprehension is statistically significant. As it is apparent, size of vocabulary knowledge accounted for 61.2% ( $R^2= 0.612$ ) and depth of vocabulary knowledge accounted for 47.9% ( $R^2= 0.479$ ) of the variance in reading comprehension performance of the participants of the study. The results further suggest that among the two independent variables, learners' size of vocabulary knowledge is a stronger predictor of reading comprehension success than depth of vocabulary knowledge. In other words; size of vocabulary knowledge contributed more to the success in reading comprehension.

Summarizing the findings of the present study, it was found that the scores obtained from three tests, VLT, WAT and RCT were highly and positively correlated to each other. It should be noted that the correlation between size and reading comprehension was higher than that of depth and reading comprehension. Such findings imply that the better the performance of participants on VLT, the higher their success on reading comprehension test. In other words, the wider EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, the better they can deal with reading comprehension. Besides, like previous research conducted in the same area (Nurweni& Read, 1999; Qian, 2002; Akbarian, 2010; Farvardin&Koosha, 2011) the strongest correlation was found between size and depth of vocabulary knowledge.

Further results based on the multiple regression analyses revealed that not only size of vocabulary knowledge can be regarded as a predictor of EFL learners' reading comprehension success, but also depth of vocabulary knowledge can predict the reading comprehension success as well since both size and depth contributed significantly and positively to the prediction of reading comprehension. In other words, it can be stated that vocabulary depth is as important as vocabulary size. In spite of the fact that both size and depth contribute to the success in reading comprehension, in this study it was revealed that size of vocabulary knowledge contributed more to such success. It is in line with studies of Akbarian, (2010), Farvardin and Koosha (2011) and against those of Qian (2002) who reported that although the two dimensions of word knowledge had significant overlapping variance that contributed to the prediction of reading comprehension, depth had a stronger relationship to reading comprehension than size did.

## **5. Conclusions**

The present study was an attempt to investigate the possible role of two dimensions of vocabulary knowledge, i.e., size and depth, in reading comprehension performance of EFL learners. To this aim, scores obtained from three measures namely, VLT, WAT and RCT were analyzed statistically.

The results suggested that a) size, depth and reading comprehension are positively and significantly correlated to each other, b) both size and depth are of equal importance in Iranian EFL learners' success in reading comprehension performance and c) comparatively, size correlated more strongly to the success of Iranian EFL learners' in reading comprehension performance than depth of vocabulary knowledge.

The obtained results may have some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers as well as learners, and also material designers. Language teachers might find the results of this study useful in that it provides them with information about the importance of vocabulary size as well as depth in different language skills especially reading comprehension. Owing to the significant importance of vocabulary knowledge, language teachers should put more emphasis on their students attempt to make their vocabulary knowledge wider and deeper. On the other hand, they can make their language learner aware of the fact that success in learning a language in part can be attained by mastering the vocabulary. As Schmitt (1990) suggested what language learners become conscious of, what they pay attention to, and what they notice, influence and in some ways determine the outcome of their learning. Moreover, it is hoped that material and syllabus designers develop appropriate materials with respect to the importance of different aspects of vocabulary knowledge and incorporate these aspects and dimensions of vocabulary knowledge in EFL materials to equip EFL language learners with sufficient reservoir of vocabulary.

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## **“¿Cómo dijo a quién decidió elegir?” Second Language Learners’ interpretation of medial *wh*-questions**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the interpretation of questions containing *wh*- islands by non-native speakers of Spanish using a situation interpretation task. Participants were asked to read a series of situations and respond as accurately as possible to a question containing a *wh*-island with two *wh*- phrases; one fronted, [+direct] and one embedded, [+indirect]. The results show that where NSs only allow for a short-distance reading of the fronted *wh*- word, NNS also allow for the fronted *wh*- question to have a long-distance reading, disallowed for native speakers in all stages of acquisition, and to respond to the medial *wh*- question, disallowed for adult NSs but allowed in Spanish child L1.

**Keywords** Second Language Acquisition, *wh*- movement, *wh*- islands, long-distance movement, Spanish

### **1. Introduction**

The syntactic phenomenon of *wh*-questions and movement has inspired much work in the fields of both First and Second Language Acquisition (Chomsky 1977, 1986, 2004; de Villiers 1991, 1997, 2005; de Villiers, de Villiers & Roeper 2005, de Villiers, Roeper & Vainikka 1990; Gutiérrez 2006; McDaniel 1989; Pérez-Leroux 1993; Schulz 2004, 2006; Thornton 1991). The phenomenon has some important implications for acquisition studies, since it gives an insight on other phenomena such as the functioning of barriers, co-referentiality, or the differentiation between finite and non-finite embedded clauses, to mention a few; and it also helps account for factors such as long-distance movement (from hereafter, LD).

Children acquiring *wh*- questions in their native language often show uses that differ from that of the adult grammar (de Villiers, de Villiers & Roeper 2005, de Villiers, Roeper & Vainikka 1990; Gutiérrez 2006; McDaniel 1989; Pérez-Leroux 1993). It has been argued that this is due to the path of acquisition, as these non-native-like structures are lost over time in favor of the adult L1 structures.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition, many studies have focused on the differences between languages that have *wh*-in situ and languages that have *wh*- movement, and also in different aspects of movement amongst the languages that do have it (Dussias 2007; Gutiérrez 2005; Schulz 2006; Yamane 2003). Not many comparative studies have been carried out that studied the similarities and differences in path of acquisition of *wh*-movement cross-linguistically (García Mayo & Gutiérrez 2008; Liceras & Pérez-Leroux 2002)

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The purpose of this study is to focus on one specific phenomenon regarding *wh*- movement that has been more extensively studied in the field of First Language Acquisition, but that has not received as much attention in the field of SLA: that of *wh*- islands, where two *wh*- words co-exist in a question but only the fronted one is [+direct], and the one in the lower CP, which is [+indirect], blocks certain readings of the fronted *wh*- word:

- (1). [<sub>CP1</sub>Where did the boy say [<sub>CP2</sub>how he hurt himself?]]

In the case of simple *wh*- questions, there is an ambiguity in the interpretation of the fronted *wh*- word, that can refer either to a LD reading or to a short distance reading (SD).

The LD reading would be available if the *wh*- word was interpreted to be extracted from CP2, whereas the SD would imply the extraction of the *wh*- from CP1. In the following example, (2A) would account for the LD reading and (2B) would reflect the SD reading:

- (2) A. *¿Cuándo<sub>i</sub> dijiste que iba a haber una fiesta t<sub>i</sub>?*  
*When<sub>i</sub> said<sub>2nd sg</sub> that was going to be a party t<sub>i</sub>?*  
*When<sub>i</sub> did you say that there was going to be a party t<sub>i</sub>?*

- B. *¿Cuándo<sub>i</sub> dijiste t<sub>i</sub> que iba a haber una fiesta?*  
*When<sub>i</sub> said<sub>2nd sg</sub> t<sub>i</sub> that was going to be a party?*  
*When<sub>i</sub> did you say t<sub>i</sub> that there was going to be a party?*

However, this ambiguity does not exist in examples with a sentence containing a *wh*- island:

- (3) *¿Cuándo dijiste cómo iba a venir a la fiesta?*  
*When said<sub>2nd sg</sub> how was going to come to the party?*  
*When did you say how (I/s/he) was going to come to the party?*

This sentence can only have one reading in Spanish (and in English), the SD one where the fronted *wh*- question is extracted from CP1: “dijiste cuándo (que) iba a venir a la fiesta cómo” (“you said when (that) [s/he] was going to come to the party how”). Studies on L1 have shown that children are capable of blocking the LD reading: \*dijiste (que) cómo<sub>i</sub> iba a venir a la fiesta cuándo” (“you said (that) how [s/he] was going to come to the party when); but they have also shown that children have a tendency to answer the medial *wh*- “cómo” (“how”) instead of the fronted one, “cuándo” (“when”) (de Villiers *et al*, 2008). According to these authors, one possible explanation for this is that children mark the lower CP as [+Question] instead of [+Indirect Question] and in that case, their grammar requires that the question be answered. This phenomenon has been attested for Spanish L1 by Pérez Lerroux (1993) and Gutiérrez (2005). The question remains, then, whether adult non-native speakers (NNS) would also undergo this process when they are acquiring Spanish as a second language.

### 1.1. Medial wh- crosslinguistically

As de Villiers *et al.* (2008) note, English does not allow for direct questions to happen in the medial position (it must be always fronted or in *in situ* position). The same applies to Spanish, where a sentence such as (3) can only be answered with reference to the fronted *wh*- question “cuándo” (when), and not to the medial “quién” (who). Other languages, however, do allow for this response to the medial question instead of the fronted one. Frisian or German would be languages of that type, where Partial Movement (PM) is allowed:

- (4) Example from Frisian (from Hiemstra 1986)

**Wat** tinke ja **wa't** ik sjoen haw?  
What think you who-CL I seen have  
'Who do you think I have seen?'

- (5) Example from German (from Brandner 2000)

**Was** glaubst du **wen** Maria zur Party einladen wird?  
What believe you whom Maria to-the party invite will?  
'Who do you think Maria will invite to the party?'

It has been widely observed in the field of First Language Acquisition that children undergo a stage in which they produce non-adult medial *wh*-questions, involving two related *wh*-phrases that can be explained either by copying or by scope marking, as can be seen in the examples on (6-9).

- (6) L1 English (examples from Thornton 1990)  
a. **What** do you think **who** jumped over the can? (scope marking)  
b. **Who** do you think **who** is in the box? (copying)

- (7) L1 Dutch (examples from van Kampen 1997)  
a. **Wat** denk je **bij de hoeveelste** ik ben?  
What think you at which number I am?  
TARGET: At which number do you think I am? (scope marking)

- b. **Warom** denk je **waarom** ik op swemles zit?  
Why think you why I on swimming lesson am?  
TARGET: Why do you think I take swimming lessons? (copying)

- (8) L1 French (examples from Oiry and Demirdache 2006)  
a. Tu crois **quoi qui** est caché dans le sac?  
You think what who is hidden in the bag?  
TARGET: What do you think is hidden in the bag? (scope marking)

- (9) L1 Spanish (examples from Gutiérrez 2006)

a. *¿Tú qué crees cómo ha hecho el castillo?*  
*You what think-2sg how has made the castle?*

TARGET: How do you think he made the castle? (scope marking)

There are different explanations for these types of sentences:

### 1. 1.1 Scope marker

The first *wh-*, under the Indirect Dependency (ID) account (McDaniel 1989), is a scope marker not semantically empty. This would imply that the first *wh-* phrase would be indicating the presence of a medial *wh-* phrase that must be responded. This is grammatical in adult Hindi:

- (10). Example from Hindi (Lutz et al. 2000)

Raam-ne **kyaa** kahaa tha **kis-ne kis-ko** maaraa?  
 Raam-erg WH said who whom hit  
 'Who did Ram say hit whom?'

but it has also been shown to happen in child language in a number of languages, as seen in the previous examples.

### 1.1.2. Wh- copying

Thornton (1990) terms wh- copying ‘medial wh-questions’. Examples of wh-copying would be those in sentences (5b) and (6b), and they would be, according to Thornton, a reflection of the Spec-head agreement. She adopts Rizzi’s proposal (1990) that says that subject traces must be properly governed; and states that as the *wh*-phrase passes through the intermediate CP ( $CP_2$ ), it establishes an agreement relationship with the complementizer, which is realized as a complementizer identical to the fronted *wh*- phrase. According to Thornton, then, the production of *wh*-copying in child language is an attempt to fulfill the ECP<sup>2</sup>.

The ungrammatical cases of scope marking and wh- copying above mentioned do not account for the fact that children respond to the medial *wh*- phrase in grammatical sentences that target a response to the fronted one. They do, however, as de Villiers et al. (2008) point out, suggest that “direct questions are not possible in the medial position, but it is not unreasonable that children should entertain the possibility for them to exist”. Under the light of the production of medial *wh*- phrases, the interpretation data suggest a coexistence of the stage where they respond to medial *wh*- questions and the stage where they produce the ungrammatical medial *wh*-. Both the use and interpretation of the medial *wh*- as a real

<sup>2</sup> ECP= Empty Category Principle. This concept was introduced in the field of syntax by Chomsky in 1981 and it states that “A nonpronominal empty category must be properly governed” (extracted from Johnson 1988)

question alternative allows children to handle the *wh*- movement “one phase at a time” (de Villiers et al. 2008), that is, within the lower phase, hence fulfilling the idealization of locality that children are supposed to be driven by during the early stages of acquisition.

### **1.2 Medial *wh*- in L1 Spanish child acquisition**

Pérez-Leroux (1993) finds examples of this phenomenon in children acquiring Spanish as an L1:

- (11). A. *¿A quiénes les contó cómo los había agarrado?*  
To whom them-CL told how them-CL had caught  
'To whom did she tell how she had caught them?'
- B. *Al grande con un sombrero y al chiquito con la tapa de una olla*  
To-the big with a hat and to-the small with the lid of a pot  
'The little one with a hat and the small one with the lid of a pot'

Her results show a very high tendency for children to interpret the medial *wh*- word as the one that has to be responded to: the children in her experiment give medial responses that ranged from 19% to 54% medial responses in average.

In her analysis of these answers, she discards the possibility of these responses being caused by processing problems. She presents two experiments in which non-syntactic accounts for the medial responses are rejected for two main reasons:

- Medial responses obey barrier conditions
- Medial responses do not happen with yes/no questions where there is a medial *wh*-

These facts would suggest that there is a strictly syntactic account for medial *wh*- responses in L1. According to McDaniel (1989), there is a possibility that medial answers are the result of a Partial Movement grammar. Children would be taking one *wh*- word to act as the scope marker for the other, as in the partial and copying *wh*- movement constructions described for German.

### **1.3 Wh- movement in SLA**

Many authors have focused on different aspects of *wh*- movement in the field of Second Language Acquisition, ranging from the acquisition of a *wh*-movement language by a native speaker of a *wh-in-situ* language (Bley-Vroman et al. 1989, Martohardjono and Gair 1993, White 1992) to the differences in how *wh*- movement works in two *wh*- movement languages and how L2 speakers tackle these differences with respect to their L1; i.e. whether there is transfer or not (Montrul et al 2008 for Spanish, Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou 2007 for Greek, Liceras et al. 2011 for Spanish and German).

Different studies lead to different conclusions, even in studies that use speakers of the same L1 background acquiring the same L2: Bley-Vroman et al. (1989), studying post-pubescent speakers of Korean acquiring English as an L2, concludes that UG is available to these speakers at least to some extent, since in their Grammaticality Judgment Task, speakers seem to perform accurately on the questions tested, although at a less accurate level than native speakers. Schachter (1989), however, arrives at the opposite conclusion when studying transfer effects on Subjacency in English as an L2 by native speakers of Korean. She finds that most L2 speakers have knowledge of syntactic constructions relevant to Subjacency without showing corresponding knowledge of Subjacency, which she takes as evidence against the availability of UG.

In a study with native speakers of Indonesian (another non-movement language) acquiring English, Martohardjono and Gair (1993) find a difference related to level: intermediate speakers perform significantly worse than advanced speakers in terms of Subjacency violation. According to the authors, this is due to the fact that more advanced speakers treat gaps as *wh*-traces, whereas at prior stages of acquisition of English, gaps are treated as *pro*. White (1992) finds similar results in her work, and both studies thus conclude that UG is available to L2 speakers, at least with respect to Subjacency.

When it comes to medial *wh*- in Second Language Acquisition studies, most work has focused on the problems faced by native speakers of a non-movement language when acquiring a language that does have overt *wh*-movement, and not so many have analyzed patterns of acquisition in speakers of a movement L1 acquiring another movement L2.

Yusa (1998) proposes an analysis of long-distance dependencies for native speakers of Japanese acquiring English as an L2 that posits the existence of a multiple-specifier in their interlanguage. He suggests that these learners analyze English as a CP-absorption language (like Japanese), hence explaining their errors with regards to island constraints as transfer. Although his study does not focus specifically on the medial *wh*- word in these constructions, his proposal that L2 speakers may posit a [+multiple] specifier for multiple categories has implications for *wh*- movement in general. It is unclear, however, how this proposal would account for the data found in the acquisition of *wh*- movement languages by native speakers of another *wh*- movement language that has no option for multiple specifiers, as is the case of this study, which analyzes the data of native speakers of English acquiring Spanish.

Most of the studies on L2 that have tackled the question of *wh*-dependencies focus on production data, rather than interpretation. A number of studies have focused on the presence of scope-marking and *wh*-copying strategies in the interlanguages of different profiles of speakers, such as Yamane (2003), who notes the occurrence of *wh*- scope marking in English interlanguages in native speakers of Japanese; and Gutiérrez (2005), who finds the same in Spanish- Basque bilinguals acquiring English in a school context.

The current study focuses on Spanish and English, two typologically similar languages. Both are *wh*- movement languages with island effects, and they

both respect the *wh*- island constraint (Ross 1967, Torrego 1984), hence ensuring that in a question like the one presented on this work, the only possible adult-like target response would be the SD response to the fronted *wh*- word. The aim of this study is, therefore, to investigate the acquisition of a structure that is parallel in the subjects' L1 and L2.

#### **1.4 Research questions and hypotheses**

As stated in the introduction, this study wants, as a broad purpose, to address the question of whether non-native speakers of Spanish follow a path of acquisition of *wh*- questions that is similar to that of children acquiring Spanish as an L1 or whether other factors are at play that will make L2 speakers' interpretation of islands differ from that of native speakers in non-developmental ways.

In order to do that, the focus of this study will be the behavior of non-native speakers of Spanish in the interpretation of questions that contain an adjunct *wh*- island, in which for adult native speakers of Spanish it is only possible to answer the fronted *wh*- questions with a short distance scope (extraction, therefore, is only possible from within the higher CP), while the medial one would be an embedded indirect question, not targeted by the [+qu] feature of the sentence.

This study addresses the following questions:

1. Do non-native speakers of Spanish start their interpretation of *wh*-islands assigning the role of scope marker to the first *wh*- phrase, and thus answer the medial *wh*- phrase instead, as native speakers of Spanish do at the initial stages of acquisition?
2. Is there some kind of facilitative effect for L2 speakers of Spanish coming from their L1 (English) in the acquisition of these constructions?

##### *1.4.1 Hypothesis*

- a. Non-native speakers of Spanish will start answering to medial *wh*-questions instead of answering the fronted *wh*- phrases in sentences with adjunct *wh*-islands like the ones presented in example (3).

The aim of this study is to verify whether or not non-native speakers interpret the initial *wh*- word in an adjunct island as some kind of scope marker, as has been shown for other languages. If this were the case, the prediction is that, in the structures studied, NNSs would behave in a similar manner to children: they would take the first *wh*- phrase to be a scope marker, hence answering the medial *wh*- phrase as if it were the [+QU] question.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1 Participants*

The subjects for this experiment were 15 students enrolled in a course of intermediate-advanced grammar of Spanish in an American university. All of them are undergraduate students whose native language is English. None of

them speak any language other than English and Spanish. They have all studied Spanish for a minimum of 300 hours at the university level.

The results of the experimental group are compared to those of a control group consisting of 10 adult native speakers of Spanish. Those native speakers of Spanish speak English as a second language but all of them have acquired their second language during their adult lives.

## 2.2 Situations and the experiment

To test how the NNSs of Spanish behave when faced with the type of constructions explained above, a situation interpretation task was carried out. In a pre-experimental stage, the subjects were presented with a situation, followed by an ambiguous *wh*- question related to the story that can have either a long-distance or a short-distance reading, to ensure that long distance readings are available to them at this stage of their interlanguage.

(12) ¿Cuándo dijo que se había lastimado la rodilla?

When said that <sub>REFL</sub> had hurt the knee?

When did she say she hurt her knee?

Nine situations were created specifically for this experiment, based on the situations developed by Roeper et al. (1991, 1994) for their previous research on the acquisition of *wh*- movement. The situations follow a similar structure: they are stories about different events in the past. The questions to be asked after each situation fall under one of three possible categories: one set consists of 3 ambiguous questions, another set consists of 3 questions containing adjunct *wh*- islands (target of the study), and 3 are fillers (one of each type of the situations used for the experiment are included in Appendix 1, with English translations on Appendix 2). An example of a situation with one of the target questions can be found below:

(13). Contextual situation:

Pedro estaba muy enfermo, le dolía mucho la cabeza y no sabía por qué, así que fue al hospital. Le hicieron unos análisis y le dijeron que volviera al día siguiente a por los resultados. Al día siguiente en el hospital, Pedro le dijo al médico que el dolor se había extendido [spread] al pecho la noche anterior.

*Peter was very sick, he had a strong headache and he did not know why, so he went to the hospital. They ran some analyses and they told him to return the following day to get the results. The following day in the hospital, Peter told the doctor that the pain had spread to the chest the night before.*

¿Dónde le dijo Pedro al médico cuándo se había extendido el dolor?  
 ,Where cl<sub>10</sub> said Pedro to-the doctor when cl<sub>ref</sub> had spread the pain?  
 Where did Pedro tell the doctor that the pain had spread?

### 2.3 Procedure

The first step was to provide the instructions to the subjects and a brief questionnaire to gather information about their experience with language learning (view Appendix 3). The situations were shown via computer, after which the experimenter read the question aloud. This means that the subjects could read the situation as many times as necessary, but the question stimulus was only auditory. The subjects were asked to write their answers on a piece of paper.

### 2.4 Coding

To code for the data for NNS's responses, the possible responses to the target question were categorized as follows:

| Type of response | What it is                             | Example from the data  |
|------------------|--|--|
| Grammatical      | SD response to the fronted <i>wh</i> - | "En el hospital" [at the hospital](sit. 1-view Annex)              |
| Long-distance    | LD response to the fronted <i>wh</i> - | "Se había extendido al pecho" [it had spread to the chest](sit. 1) |
| Medial           | Response to the medial <i>wh</i> -     | "Al día siguiente" [the following day] (sit. 1)                    |
| Other            | Responses unrelated to the question    | "La gente de Brasil" [the people of Brazil] (sit. 3)               |

Table 1: Coding

### 3. Findings

The results from the experimental group were compared to those of the control group and a statistically significant difference was found among these groups ( $p= .000$ ). The control native speakers of Spanish responded with the grammatical SD response in 90% of all cases whereas the experimental group produced 46.3% of correct responses and 53.7% of incorrect responses.

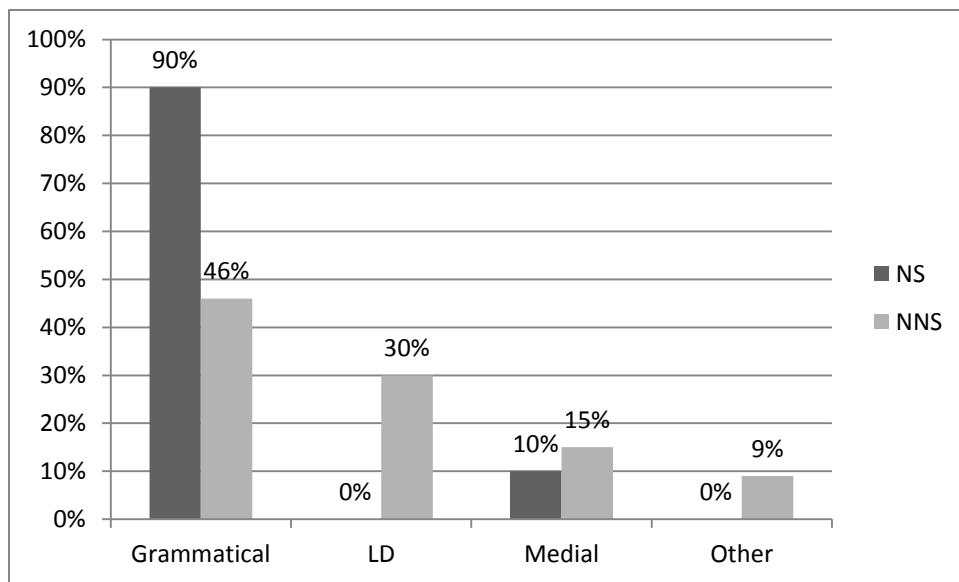


Figure 1: NS vs. NNS responses

The only ungrammatical response found amongst native speakers of Spanish was the medial response, produced by the same speaker in all three target questions. All other speakers gave grammatical SD responses to the fronted *wh*- word in all target items.

| Type of response | Percentage | Example  |
|------------------|------------|--|
| Grammatical      | 90%        | “En el hospital” (Control speaker 2)                 |
| Medial           | 10%        | “En la consulta/el día anterior” (Control speaker 1) |

Table 2: Native speaker responses

Within the ungrammatical responses among the NNSs, the largest number of responses was obtained for the LD reading of the fronted *wh*- word (29.6% of total responses). The medial responses happened in a 14.8% of occasions and there was a 9.25% occurrence of “other” responses.

| Type of response | Percentage | Example   |
|------------------|------------|---|
| Grammatical      | 46.3%      | “En el hospital” (Speaker 13)   |
| Medial           | 14.8%      | “Le dijo durante el día siguiente” (Speaker 04)                       |
| Long-distance    | 29.9%      | “El dolor se había extendido al pecho la noche anterior” (Speaker 01) |
| Other            | 9.25%      | “Él fue al hospital porque su cabeza dolía” (speaker 05)              |

Table 3: Non-native speaker responses

A paired T-test was run to determine the significance of these results and the outcome was the following: T-Statistics (Pooled) = 4,087, One-Sided P-Value (Pooled) = ,000; hence showing a statistically significant difference between the groups.

This data shows a tendency for NNSs of Spanish to answer to the structure presented in this study with a LD reading that is unavailable for NSs of Spanish and also for the grammar of their native language, English, at any stage of acquisition. This implies a type of mistake that cannot be justified from the perspective of transfer, since the L1 does not allow for this LD reading of the fronted *wh*- word in this cases; but it is also not a developmental error neither in the L1 or in the L2, since neither English- nor Spanish- speaking children make that mistake during the course of acquisition of their L1. The answering of the medial *wh*- word is also unavailable both for their adult L1 and for the grammar of adult Spanish, but it is a typical developmental error both in Spanish and English L1 acquisition, so it could be claimed to be a UG-constrained error typical in the acquisition of these languages, be it as a first or as a second language.

#### **4. Discussion**

As observed by Perez-Leroux (1993) and Gutierrez (2006), children have a tendency to respond to the medial *wh*- questions in the structures presented in this work. This study has shown that non-native speakers also allow for this interpretation of islands, but their patterns of response also differ greatly from the Spanish child grammar with respect to the answering of the fronted *wh*- word, disallowed at any stage of acquisition of Spanish as an L1. Both facts should be addressed in further research.

First, how can researchers explain the similarity between child L1 and adult L2 speakers of Spanish in the interpretation of medial *wh*- words as the [+direct] question? It could be suggested that this is an instance of the availability of Universal Grammar for L2 learners, but I will argue later that this does not seem to be the case when we look into the data for the responses to the fronted *wh*- phrase. For the medial responses, however, it can be proposed that UG principles are playing a role in the similarities between child L1 and adult L2: the interpretation of the medial *wh*- word as [+direct] appears to be an option in the developmental path of both children and adults acquiring Spanish.

A transfer account, on the light of these data, would be discarded: NNSs are following patterns of response that differ from those of their adult L1 (the adult grammar of English also disallows the answering of the medial *wh*-, as the Spanish grammar does). Hence L2 learners are not transferring response patterns from their L1 to their L2, which means a different explanation for the data is necessary.

The question of whether a UG account, a transfer account or other factors are playing a role remains unanswered for now and further experimentation should address this issue, as previously mentioned, but the data from the fronted *wh*- responses shows a pattern that would go against UG accounts of *wh*- patterns. Children typically respect the blocking of LD extraction in *wh*- island constraints from a very early age and they do not produce or interpret the fronted *wh*- as being extracted from the lower CP

(Roeper 2007). The data from NNSs, however, shows a tendency to give a LD reading to the fronted *wh*- phrase, diverging not only from the learner's L1 patterns and from the adult TL (target language) grammar, but also from child L1 Spanish (therefore it cannot be considered a developmental error). This would make a UG account for long-distance dependencies problematic, as adults are behaving in a completely non-target-like way not entertained by the TL's grammar at any stage of acquisition.

### **5. Directions for future studies**

This study has looked into *wh*- questions and how they are interpreted by non-native speakers of Spanish, in comparison to native speakers. Future studies should address what happens to the same structures in production and whether there is a co-relation, as there is for child L1 acquisition of Spanish, between production of ungrammatical *wh*- questions (scope marking and *wh*- copying strategies) and incorrect interpretation of *wh*-islands.

For a broader picture of what long-distance dependencies look like for non-native speakers and what can account for their interpretation and production of these linguistic forms and their syntactic constraints, other contexts of LD dependencies should be studied as well, such as relative clauses, or focus constructions.

A processing account to explain why NNSs of Spanish struggle with the interpretation of islands is an open possibility for these cases, as many authors have proposed processing-based accounts of island constraints (Hofmeister et al 2007, Hofmeister and Sag 2010, Omaki and Schulz 2011). However, further research designed specifically to test processing (such as eye-tracking or self-paced reading experiments) in L2 speakers of Spanish should be developed.

### **6. Conclusion**

This study sheds some light on the question of how L2 speakers of Spanish interpret *wh*- questions that contain two *wh*- words, one of them fronted (the targeted one for L1 speakers) and one of them embedded ([+indirect] for L1 speakers). This work indicates that L2 speakers have a pattern of response that relates to that of child L1 in one aspect (the answering of the medial *wh*- word, which adult native speakers of Spanish disallow but children acquiring Spanish as their L1 accept and produce). On the other hand, adult non-native speakers also show a pattern of response that differs from that of both adult and child native speakers of Spanish, who do not allow the long-distance scope of the fronted *wh*- word in these structures. L2 speakers, however, show a high percentage of ungrammatical, LD responses to the fronted *wh*- questions.

These results would be in conflict both with transfer and with UG accounts of L2 acquisition for this particular phenomenon. Therefore, an alternative explanation is necessary to account for the interpretation of *wh*- islands that these speakers are showing.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: situations used for the current experiment**

Ambiguous questions:

1. Elena robó unas joyas [jewels] anteayer [the day before yesterday] y las enterró [buried] en su jardín. Después se sintió culpable y fue a la iglesia a confesar que había escondido las joyas robadas en el jardín.

¿Dónde confesó que había escondido las joyas?

2. Sara llegaba tarde a la escuela y decidió saltar la verja [fence] en lugar de caminar a la puerta principal, pero cuando saltó, rompió su vestido favorito. Cuando llegó a casa esa tarde, estaba llorando desesperadamente, y cuando su madre le preguntó por qué, ella dijo llorando que había roto su vestido saltando la verja de la escuela

¿Cómo dijo que había roto su vestido?

3. Ana llevaba dos meses saliendo con un hombre y pensaba que todo iba muy bien entre ellos. Pero el viernes por la noche, salió con sus amigas y lo vio besando a otra chica en un bar. El sábado por la mañana lo llamó para decirle que los había descubierto la noche anterior y que quería romper [break up].

¿Cuándo dijo que los había descubierto?

#### Unambiguous double *wh*- questions

1. Pedro estaba muy enfermo, le dolía mucho la cabeza y no sabía por qué, así que fue al hospital. Le hicieron unos análisis y le dijeron que volviera al día siguiente a por los resultados. Al día siguiente en el hospital, Pedro le dijo al médico que el dolor se había extendido [spread] al pecho la noche anterior.

¿Dónde le dijo Pedro al médico cuándo se había extendido el dolor?

2. Juan tiene un problema con el juego [gambling], y siempre se lo había ocultado a su esposa. Ayer, su esposa le dio un dinero para ingresar [deposit] en el banco, pero Juan fue al casino y perdió todo el dinero jugando a la ruleta [roulette]. Hoy, cuando volvió a casa del trabajo, tuvo que confesar a su esposa que había perdido todo el dinero ayer en el casino

¿Cuándo confesó Juan dónde había perdido el dinero?

3. La nueva presidenta de Brasil tenía que escoger un nuevo Secretario de Defensa. Dudaba entre dos nombres y decidió preguntar a los miembros del Congreso, que inmediatamente escogieron al candidato con más experiencia. Después de esto, la presidenta dio una rueda de prensa [press conference] para anunciar el nombre del nuevo Secretario de Defensa

¿Cómo dijo a quién decidió elegir?

#### Filler situations:

1. Paulina fue a la tienda un día y compró comida para toda la semana. Lo pagó todo y se fue, y fue a ver a una amiga a una cafetería. Cuando iba a pagar su café, se dio cuenta de que había olvidado su billetera [wallet] en la tienda, y le preguntó a su amiga si ella podía pagar el café de Paulina, porque había perdido su billetera.

¿Qué dijo Paulina que había perdido?

2. Pablo llegaba tarde a una cita, así que decidió tomar el autobús en lugar de caminar. El autobús tuvo problemas por el camino, y el conductor tuvo que arreglarlo [fix it], así que Pablo acabó llegando 30 minutos tarde. Su cita estaba muy enojada cuando llegó, así que

Pablo tuvo que explicarle que había llegado tarde porque el autobús había tenido problemas.

¿Por qué dijo Pablo que había llegado tarde a la cita?

3. En el banco local hubo un atraco [robbery] y había tres sospechosos: Juan, Pablo y José. El banco local presentó cargos [pressed charges] contra Juan, pero la policía encontró algo durante la investigación. En el juicio, el oficial de policía dijo que Pablo era el atracador [robber].

¿Quién dijo el oficial de policía que era el atracador?

## **Appendix 2: English translation of the situations used for the experiment**

Ambiguous questions:

1. Hellen stole some jewels the day before yesterday and buried them in her backyard. Then she felt guilty and went to church to confess that she had hidden the stolen jewels in her backyard.

Where did she confess she hid the jewels?

2. Sarah was late for school and she decided to jump the fence instead of walking to the main door, but in doing so, she ripped her favorite dress. When she got home after school, she was crying desperately, and when her mom asked why, she said sobbing that she had ripped her dress jumping the school fence

How did she say she ripped her dress?

3. Anna had been dating a man for two months and she thought everything was going very well between them. But on Friday night, she went out with her friends and she saw him kissing another girl in a bar. On Saturday morning she called him to tell him that she had discovered them the night before and that she wanted to break up.

When did she say she had discovered them?

Unambiguous double *wh*- questions:

1. Peter was very sick, he had a strong headache and he did not know why, so he went to the hospital. They ran some analyses and they told him to return the following day to get the results. The following day in the hospital, Peter told the doctor that the pain had spread to the chest the night before.

Where did Peter say when the pain had spread?

2. John has a gambling problem and he had always hidden it from his wife. Yesterday, his wife gave him some money to deposit in the bank, but John went to the Casino and lost all the money gambling in the roulette. Today, when he returned home from work, he had to confess to his wife that he lost all the money yesterday, in the Casino.

When did John confess where he had lost the money?

3. The new female president of Brazil had to choose a new Secretary of Defense. She was in doubt about two names and decided to ask the members of the Congress, who immediately selected the most senior candidate. The president then held a press conference to announce the name of the new Secretary of Defense.

How did she say who she decided to choose?

Filler situations:

1. Pauline went to the grocery store one day and bought food for the week. She paid everything and left, and she went to meet a friend in a coffee shop. When she tried to pay for her coffee, she realized that she had forgotten her wallet at the grocery store, and she asked her friend if she could pay for Pauline's coffee because she had lost her wallet.

What did Pauline say she had lost?

2. Paul was running late for a date, so he decided to take the bus instead of walking. The bus had some problems on the way, and the driver had to fix it, so he ended up arriving 30 minutes late. His date was very angry when he arrived, so he had to explain that he was delayed because the bus had some problems.

Why did Paul say he was late to the date?

3. A robbery happened in the local bank and there were three suspects: John, Paul, and Joe. The local bank pressed charges against John, but the police found something during the investigation. In court, the police officer said that Paul was the robber.

Who did the police officer say was the robber?

### **Appendix 3: Instructions for experimental subjects and questionnaire Instructions**

The goal of this research is to explore ways in which language learners answer Wh- questions. You are going to see a sequence of stories on the screen, and I will read them to you. Then, you will hear a question, and you have to provide the answer (in Spanish) using the answer sheet provided. You can read the story again to find the answer to the questions, if you need to. You will have 90 seconds to give the answer before we move to the next story. The entire experiment should take between 15-20 minutes.

#### **Example:**

*“Nico intentó estudiar mucho para su examen, pero su compañero de cuarto estaba haciendo mucho ruido y no se podía concentrar. El día del examen hizo todo lo que pudo, pero acabó suspendiendo. Fue a hablar con su profesor y le explicó que no había podido estudiar bien porque su compañero de cuarto no le había dejado concentrarse.”*

Pregunta - **¿Por qué dijo Nico que había suspendido el examen?**

Possible answers: - *Porque no podía concentrarse.*

- *Porque su compañero de cuarto estaba haciendo mucho ruido.*

Before we get started, I would appreciate it if you could answer a few questions about your own experience with learning languages:

1. What language(s) did you speak at home as a child? What language(s) were spoken to you?

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2. How long have you been studying Spanish for? Do you speak any other language apart from English and Spanish?

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3. Have you ever lived in a Spanish-speaking country? And if yes, for how long?

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Thank you very much for your help!