Parallèles 36(1) Avril 2024

Audio description and pronominal verb production in students of Spanish: An analysis of unexpected linguistic outputs

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Abstract

In audio description (AD), images are turned into words to facilitate access to audiovisual products for blind and partially sighted people. Over the last two decades, AD has been incorporated into foreign language education to promote active learning. This article presents an experiment on the potential of AD to promote pronominal verb (PNV) production in English-speaking students of Spanish (B2 level), focusing on participants' PNV uses beyond the expected ones. Experimental groups completed two translation tasks: an AD (images into words), and an interlingual translation (English into Spanish), in reverse order. Production differences were explored quantitatively and qualitatively by task type, task order, and PNV type. Results suggest that interlingual translation is more effective for PNV production. However, certain trends reveal that completing the AD first may enhance PNV frequency and correctness in a later task. More importantly, the presence of 'unexpected' PNVs—many of types considered difficult—challenges previous findings regarding students' tendency towards pronominal omission or overgeneralisation, raising questions about what generates students' awareness of pronominality requirements, and about whether establishing a visual-linguistic connection promotes such awareness.

Keywords

Audio description, Spanish pronominal verbs, didactic audiovisual translation, Spanish as a foreign language, integrated form-focus approach

 DOI:10.17462/para.2024.01.07

1. Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed a steady transition from a passive (Vanderplank, 1988) to an active use of audiovisual material in foreign language education (FLE), mirroring the conception of the language learner as an active user introduced by the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001). This evolution has been facilitated by learner-centred methodologies like the task-based approach (Littlewood, 2004), increasingly more available and user-friendly technological tools, the revitalisation of translation within FLE (Cook, 2010) as the "fifth skill" (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017a) and as a form of mediation (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020, 2022), and a raising interest in the pedagogical potential of the active use of audiovisual translation (AVT) (Ávila Cabrera, 2022; González Vera, 2022; Lertola, 2018, 2019a; Talaván, 2013). These studies, alongside many others, belong to the field of didactic audiovisual translation (DAT) (Talaván, 2020). In DAT, learners are actively engaged (Talaván *et al.,* 2022) undertaking the AVT task—be it subtitling or revoicing[1]. Projects like ClipFlair (Baños & Sokoli, 2015) or TRADILEX[2] (Fernández-Costales *et al.,* 2023; Navarrete & Bolaños, 2022) have helped establish DAT as a recognised research field.

This paper contributes to this field with a descriptive, exploratory analysis of results from an experiment investigating the value of didactic audio description (AD), as opposed to interlingual translation[3], to promote pronominal verb (PNV) production in learners of Spanish as a foreign language (SFL). Specifically, it analyses PNVs used by students in unexpected places (see section 4). It first establishes the theoretical framework, covering didactic AD in FLE and key Spanish PNV features, including a tailor-made pedagogical taxonomy. It then presents the experiment (aims, methodology, context, participants, instruments, and procedures), followed by a description of the corpus and the quantitative and qualitative analyses. Lastly, the discussion examines results vis-à-vis research questions, while the conclusion addresses some limitations and provides considerations for further studies.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Didactic AD in FLE

Audio description is a mode of accessible AVT aimed at blind or partially sighted people which translates images into words (Walczak & Fryer, 2017). While translation in other AVT modes occurs across languages (interlingual) or within languages (intralingual), in AD it occurs from a visual to a verbal system (intersemiotic), activating different mental processes in the translator or audio describer (Holsanova, 2016). AD relies on visual perception and image-content processing, both heavily guided by attention to visual aspects, which varies across individuals, and by "mental schemas built from past experiences" (p. 52). Past experiences of sighted audio describers usually differ from those of blind or partially sighted audiences, largely because information processing is cognitively different for each. While sighted people can absorb large pieces of information through sight and hearing simultaneously, blind or partially sighted people rely mainly on the aural stream of information, which is "sequential" (p. 63). In AD creation, unlike in other translation modes, considering these perception and information-processing distances is essential.

AD's intersemioticity and cognitive singularity nourish pedagogical innovation (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017a). Experiments on didactic AD have investigated its potential

[1] *Revoicing* includes dubbing, audio description, and free commentary.

[2] See the TRADILEX website for a comprehensive DAT publications list: https://tradit.uned.es/en/new-publications/ [last accessed: 07/10/2023].

[3] Following Jakobson's terminology (1959).

for the development of phraseological competence (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017b), lexical accuracy or stylistic richness (Calduch & Talaván, 2018), oral skills (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2016; Talaván & Lertola, 2016), intercultural and mediation skills (Navarrete, 2022; Plaza-Lara & Gonzalo Llera, 2022; Vermeulen & Ibáñez Moreno, 2017) or communicative and linguistic awareness from accessibility and inclusion perspectives (Ogea Pozo, 2022; Pintado Gutiérrez & Torralba, 2022). Results suggest that active AD tasks enhance learning in multiple ways (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017a; Lertola, 2019b; Talaván *et al.,* 2022).

Translating images into words requires matching image-coded information with linguistic forms, so that the resulting verbal representations semantically and pragmatically evoke in the receiver a mental image as similar as possible to that shown in the audiovisual product. Therefore, audio describing requires careful thinking about language along a syntactic-semantic continuum within a communicative situation. Because idiomaticity and accuracy are essential in AD to convey both content and experience, AD-based FLE could prove useful to present specific grammatical structures in an innovative, motivating manner, and to help uncover factors and patterns in learners' acquisition/production. Previous studies conducted with Dutch-speaking SFL learners compared AD's and interlingual translation's potential to promote grammatical competence, idiomaticity, and metalinguistic awareness regarding clitic pronouns (Escobar-Álvarez & Vermeulen, 2022) and pronominal verbs (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2023). Results suggest that interlingual translation is more advantageous. However, benefits of didactic AD are also identified, especially for creativity, learning awareness, communicative competence, idiomaticity, and accessibility awareness. To contribute to this research, the experiment described here provides data from English-speaking learners and proposes a different methodological approach.

2.2. Spanish pronominal verbs

Pronominal verbs (PNVs) are among "the most controversial topics in Spanish grammar, and in Romance languages" (Mendikoetxea, 1999, p. 1635). They are characterised by the presence in the infinitive of the clitic *se*—as in the reflexive *lavarse* (1a)—which in conjugation precedes the verb and agrees with the subject (1b, 1c):

(1) (a) lavar*se* = to wash *oneself*

(b) Yo *me* lavo = I wash *myself*

(c) Nosotros *nos* lavamos = We wash *ourselves*

Reflexives are one PNV type. Many Spanish verbs can be pronominalised in varied configurations to express an array of semantic or pragmatic connotations, forming a complex syntactic-semantic network (see Delbecque *et al.,* 2014; Escobar-Álvarez, 2017; Escobar & Teomiro, 2016; Teomiro García, 2017; Teomiro García & Escobar-Álvarez, 2013). Butt and Benjamin, for example, consider the ability to discriminate between forms in certain pairs—e.g., *bajar/bajarse*, *salir/salirse*—"the mark of the true master of idiomatic Spanish" (2011, p. 369). For SFL students, acquisition can be hampered by the polyfunctionality of *se*, which contradicts basic principles of language processing such as that of one-to-one form-function correspondence or that of semantic transparency (Escutia López, 2010). Studies by Escobar and Teomiro (2016) and Gómez Soler (2015) identify two further hurdles: the lack of or partial equivalence in many languages (such as English), and the insufficient capacity of exposure to structure-rich input to promote nuance-noticing, exposure often limited in formal FLE contexts. This mainly results in *se* omission or overgeneralisation (Gómez Soler, 2015), affecting correctness or idiomaticity. Research also shows a relationship between PNV complexity and acquisition (Escobar &

Teomiro, 2016): easier configurations—such as reflexives—are acquired before more complex ones—such as accidentality markers (see Figure 1)—which are challenging even at advanced stages.

Furthermore, reflexives and verbs of change (e.g., *convertirse,* 'to become') are the only pronominals explicitly taught as such, with others generally presented on a verb-by-verb basis, requiring learners to rely on prototypicality or familiarity (Zyzik, 2006). For instance, the Instituto Cervantes' curriculum[4] (the standard for SFL competence levels) lacks a dedicated PNV section. Instead, PNVs are scattered across *se* uses and levels: reflexives at A1[5], reciprocals or passive structures at B1, and complex uses such as accidentality markers—*se me cayó*, 'I accidentally dropped it'—from B2 upwards. Thus, having a fairly thorough, clear-cut mapping of PNVs became essential. Following pre-existing classifications, the researcher created an *ad-hoc* pedagogical taxonomy based on morphosyntactic and semantic features. It does not aim to provide a definitive PNV[6] grouping, but to intuitively "[encapsulate] important processes and relationships" (Whitley, 2002: xiii) and meet research-specific needs.

This taxonomy is informed by the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE, 2009) and Teomiro's mixed approach (2017). Whitley's (2002) and Butt and Benjamin's (2011) didactic approaches inspire a student-friendly terminology use. Only the most transparent, commonly used names (*reflexives* and *reciprocal*) are kept. Potentially obscure ones for learners (*ergative/anticausative* or *sympathetic dative*) are replaced by others which facilitate cross-type comparison (*pseudo-reflexive*) or are more descriptive (*subject involvement*). Names used are adapted from established ones or based on typically described features**.** Following Teomiro's (2017) intralingual classification, three major *categories* are established based on the (non-) obligatoriness of *se*, in order of increasing difficulty for learners: (1) obligatorily pronominal—*se* maintains the essential semantic-syntactic value; (2) occasionally pronominal—*se* adds nuances or connotations; (3) doubly pronominal—*se* plus another object pronoun are required (see Figure 1). *Sub-categories* are based on the main factor determining the use of the pronominal variant (formal, semantic, or both); *types* group more specific traits. The nomenclature used in this article follows this taxonomy.

[4] Cervantes Virtual Centre (CVC), *Gramática:* https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/plan_curricular/niveles/02_gramatica_introduccion.htm

[5] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001).

[6] For in-depth PNV examinations, see works cited in section 2.2. Ample dialectal variation exists, but this taxonomy draws on Peninsular Spanish for simplification. A cross-dialectal analysis lies beyond the scope of the study.

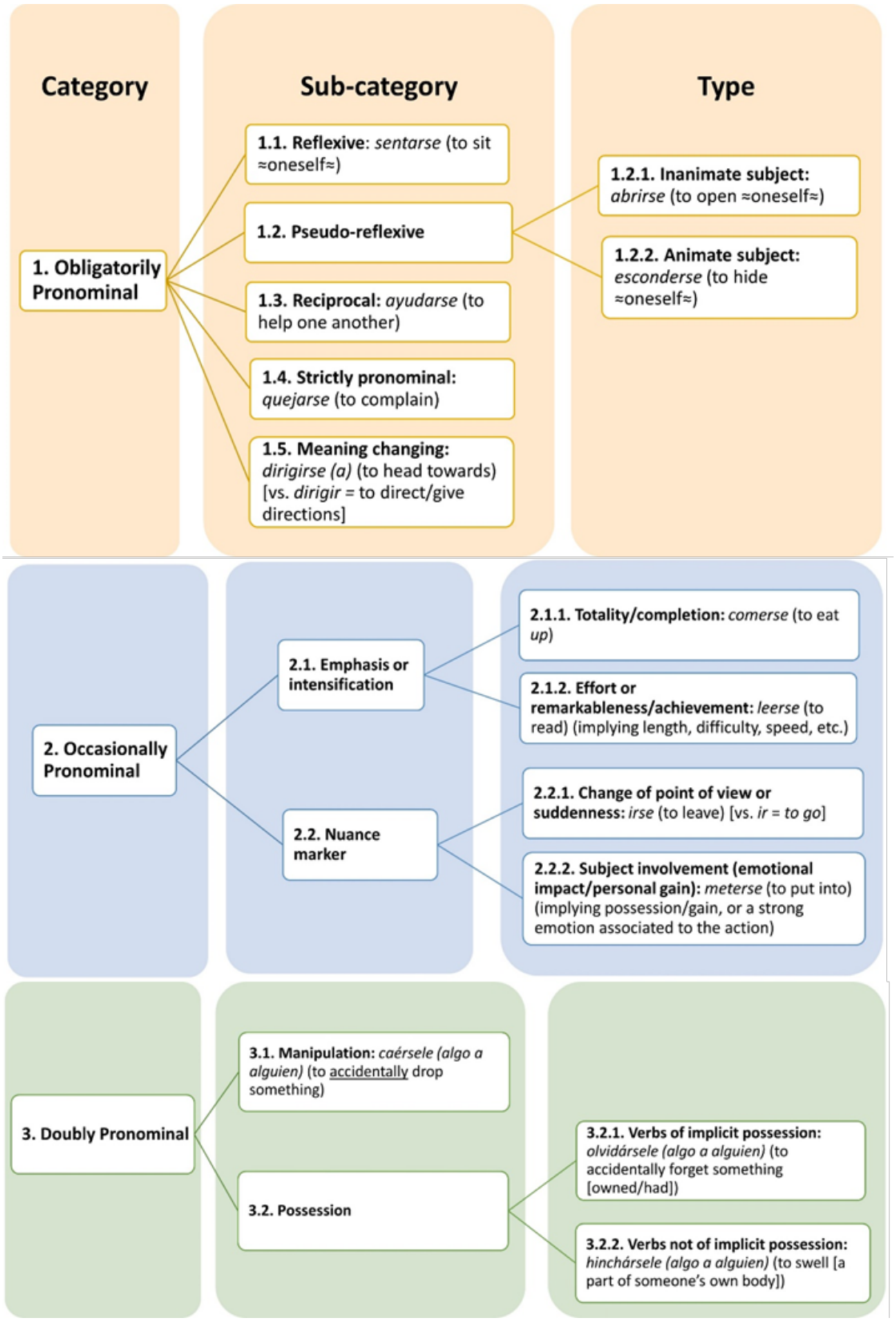

Figure 1. Pedagogical PNV taxonomy (source: author)

Given the complexity of Spanish PNVs and the benchmark status of idiomaticity in FL teaching, two challenges arise: understanding intersections between PNV features and learner acquisition, and finding effective strategies to present PNVs within meaningful communication. This article explores the potential of didactic AD to meet both.

3. The experiment

The experiment presented here replicated a study on AD and PNV production conducted with Dutch-speaking students by Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen (2023)[7]. They adopted Cohen and Brooks-Carson's (2001) premise that the absence of explicit first-language (L1) content in writing tasks would reduce negative transfer[8], increasing idiomaticity in FL expression more than translation tasks, and extended this hypothesis to AD tasks (where the source is not verbally coded). They also hypothesised that AD's communicative nature could further promote idiomaticity awareness.

3.1. Aims

In 2018–2019, a didactic AD Pilot Experiment was undertaken with English-speaking students of Spanish at the University of Manchester, with two-fold aims: (i) as a classroom project, to promote integrated-skills development; (ii) as a research experiment, to compare PNV production in intersemiotic translation (AD) and interlingual translation. This article focuses on (ii). The research questions (RQs) were:

1. RQ1: Is there a difference in PNV production between intersemiotic and interlingual translation tasks?
2. RQ2: Does prior exposure to forms in context and indirect instruction promote PNV production?
3. RQ3: Does production vary across PNV types?

For RQ1, an affirmative answer was hypothesised (H_1) in favour of intersemiotic translation. For RQ2, an affirmative answer was also hypothesised (H_2), anticipating a production increase in tasks completed second, regardless of type. For RQ3, another affirmative answer was hypothesised (H_3), anticipating an inverse relationship between PNV complexity and production frequency, correctness, and idiomaticity.

3.2. Methodology

To explore the value of indirect instruction as a methodological complement to structure-focused didactic AD tasks (RQ2), integrated form-focus instruction (IFFI) was adopted[9]. IFFI examines syntactic-semantic relations within communicative instruction (Spada *et al.,* 2014), focusing on relationships between intersections in the syntactic-semantic interface and mental representations, and their communicative implications. IFFI involves "different kinds of *instructional procedures* [or] *techniques* designed to attract learners' *attention* to form" while communicating in the L2 (Ellis, 2016, p. 409, my emphasis). One technique is "unfocused" design, an "analytical approach" aimed at generating attention through "the efforts to comprehend and *produce meaningful texts* in the L2" (p. 409, my emphasis). Didactic AD tasks provide a suitable framework for implementing this approach, since creating an AD requires attention to constantly shift from image-coded *meanings* to linguistic *forms*, simultaneously focusing on structural accuracy and semantic-pragmatic idiomaticity to generate precise mental representations.

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[7] Data collected during the ARDELE Project, launched in 2010 to explore the potential of didactic AD in multiple SFL areas (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017b). Its researchers kindly shared the PNV-focused aspect of their study with the author at an earlier stage and consented to its replication.

[8] 'Negative transfer', though a problematic label, is used to describe L1 interference in FL acquisition-production (Zhao, 2019). A detailed analysis of language transfer lies beyond the scope of this article.

[9] See Ellis (2016) for an evolution of the focus-on-form methodology and differences with focus-on-forms.

3.3. Context and participants

The experiment was embedded in a compulsory second-year language module of the Degree in Spanish (B2 level, CEFR) with three weekly components: (i) *Grammar Skills,* (ii) *Translation and Writing Skills*—in a double slot—and (iii) *Oral Skills*—in its own slot. Project sessions took place during slots for components (ii) and (iii) and were delivered by the two module teachers[10].

Participants (*n*=95) were 18–20 years old, they had studied Spanish for 5–10 years, and were proficient English speakers (the L1 for 93, i.e., 98%). Most had heard about AD, but none had attempted audio describing before[11]. Of the 95 enrolled students, 75 (79%) participated in project tasks. Thus, *participants* refers to students who completed either one or the two tasks. Attendance and project tasks were not part of the module's formal assessment[12], hence the difference between number of enrolled students and project participants.

3.4. Instruments

For the tasks, clips of two consecutive scenes from Woody Allen's *Match Point* (2005) were used[13]. The professional Spanish AD script (PADS) presented a varied, high incidence of PNVs in similar configurations in both scenes. The scenes were suitable for first-time audio describers given the little dialogue and few characters involved (Calduch & Talaván, 2018; Talaván & Lertola, 2016). The first (MP1) was used for Task 1, and the second (MP2) for Task 2 (see Figure 3). For the interlingual translation, an English version of the PADS done by the researcher and proofread by L1 English-speaking colleagues[14] was provided.

3.5. Procedures

Following a pre-experimental design[15], students were divided into two experimental groups (EGs) based on their *Oral Skills* component class group, chosen for the division because the two core project sessions (*Writing Session 1* and *Feedback and Reflection Session*, see Figure 3) took place in its slots. Four *Oral Skills* groups composed experimental group 1 (EG1), while the other three composed experimental group 2 (EG2), allowing a semi-random student allocation to EGs, since distribution across *Oral Skills* groups preceded the experiment[16]. The final 75 participants were distributed as follows: EG1 = 46, EG2 = 29.

To answer RQ1 (Is there a difference in PNV production between intersemiotic and interlingual translation tasks?) and RQ2 (Does prior exposure to forms in context and indirect instruction promote PNV production?), EG1 and EG2 completed both an intersemiotic translation task (AD) and an interlingual translation task (ITR, English into Spanish), one for each Match Point

[10] None of the teachers were the researcher. However, both teachers attended a researcher-led workshop and received lesson plans, detailed instructions, and full support.

[11] Information from pre-project questionnaires.

[12] This was because the project had not been tested by the time assessment changes were to be submitted for approval.

[13] Time codes: 1:25:44-1:29:49 (MP1), 1:29:51-1:33:45 (MP2). Source: Spanish *Match Point* DVD edition (Voilà DVD Art Studio, 2006) (also for the PADS).

[14] To the researcher's knowledge, no professional English AD exists on commercial DVDs/BDs or streaming services.

[15] A pre-experimental design may include one or more experimental groups and no control group. This is common in educational research (Salas-Blas, 2013) when experiments are embedded into classroom practice, making exclusion of some students from the intervention impossible (as was the case here). *Pre-experimental* is not a synonym of *pilot*, but a valid design both for preliminary and full studies (2013), if with limitations. Discussing them lies beyond the scope of this article.

[16] Students selected their *Oral Skills* group upon course enrolment depending on their individual schedule (i.e., this distribution occurred outside project procedures).

clip (MP1 and MP2) in reverse order (Figure 2). Reversing task order also sought to answer RQ3 (Does production vary across PNV types?), as it enabled production tracking by verb type across tasks.

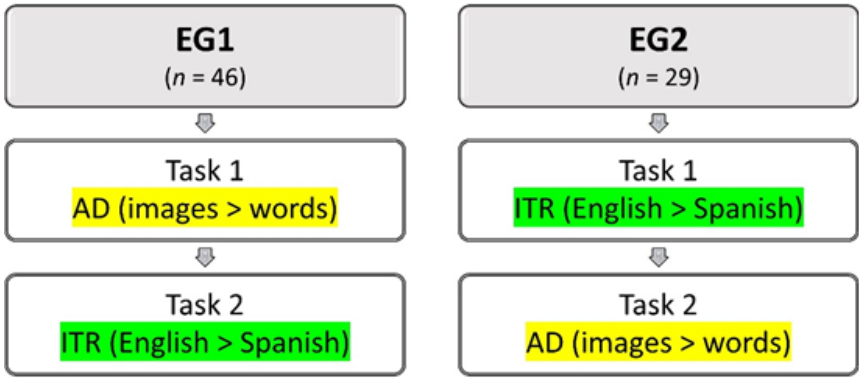


Figure 2. Task order by EGs (source: author)

The project ran over seven weeks and included four non-consecutive in-class sessions across *Translation & Writing Skills* and *Oral Skills* slots[17], plus out-of-class work (Figure 3). In session 1 (stage 1 in Figure 3), basic AD guidelines were provided regarding what, how, and when to audio describe. In session 2 (stage 2), Task 1 was completed: EG1 created the AD for clip 1 (MP1) departing from the clip, while EG2 departed from the English version of the PADS. In the editing phase (stage 3), participants recorded their script and integrated their voiced AD into the video file. In session 3 (stage 4), they discussed challenges and learning outcomes, comparing their scripts to the PADS and reflecting on content and language-related choices.

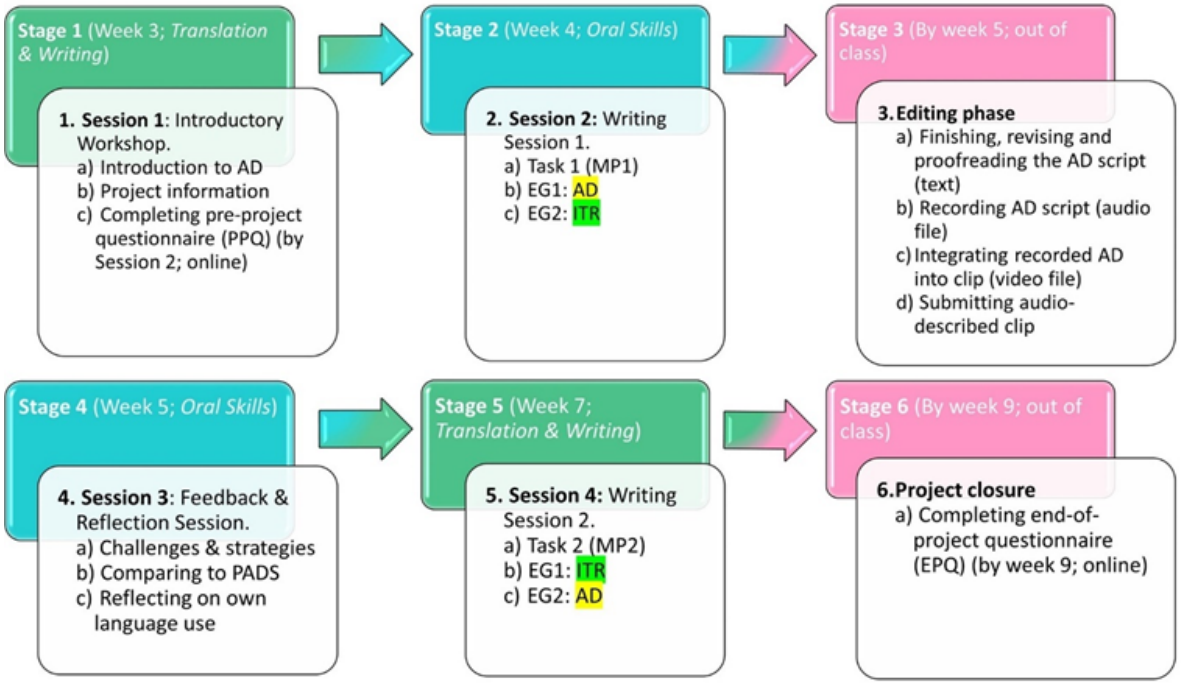


Figure 3. Experiment chronology (source: author)

Following IFFI (see section 3.2.), there was no explicit PNV teaching: participants were *exposed* to pronominals in context through the PADS and encouraged to reflect on relationships

[17] Session distribution was conditioned by module schedule/syllabus.

between linguistic choices and conveyed meanings, to foster awareness of links between linguistic form(s), semantic meaning(s), and mental representation(s). PNVs were only explicitly addressed upon request. In session 4 (stage 5), Task 2 was completed: this time, EG1 created the AD for clip 2 (MP2) translating from English into Spanish, while EG2 departed from the clip.

Participants completed both tasks collaboratively (groups of 3–4), hence the lower number of samples collected (see section 4.1.). This proved problematic because members' engagement varied widely, and because it reduced sample numbers. Teachers acted as facilitators, encouraging metalinguistic and critical thinking without leading participants towards specific linguistic choices. Participants were allowed to use dictionaries, since assessing pre-acquired lexical knowledge was not the goal.

4. Linguistic analysis

To answer RQs (see section 3.1.), participants' productions matching actions expressed with a PNV in the PADS were tracked, recording whether they also used a PNV in their tasks (ADs and ITRs). These are the *expected* or *target* productions[18]. The tracking process revealed that participants also produced abundant pronominals to describe actions either *omitted* or *not* expressed with a PNV in the PADS. These are the *un*expected or '*non*-target' items (NTIs) analysed in this paper. This exploratory analysis follows a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data (sections 4.2. and 4.3., respectively). For the descriptive quantitative analysis, NTI frequency and correctness rates are considered. To quantify NTIs by correctness, the set of labels created for the qualitative analysis was used. These labels result from a multi-stage process of inductive exploration[19] of participant-produced PNVs (see Figure 4). The qualitative analysis focuses on error typology and its impact upon idiomaticity.

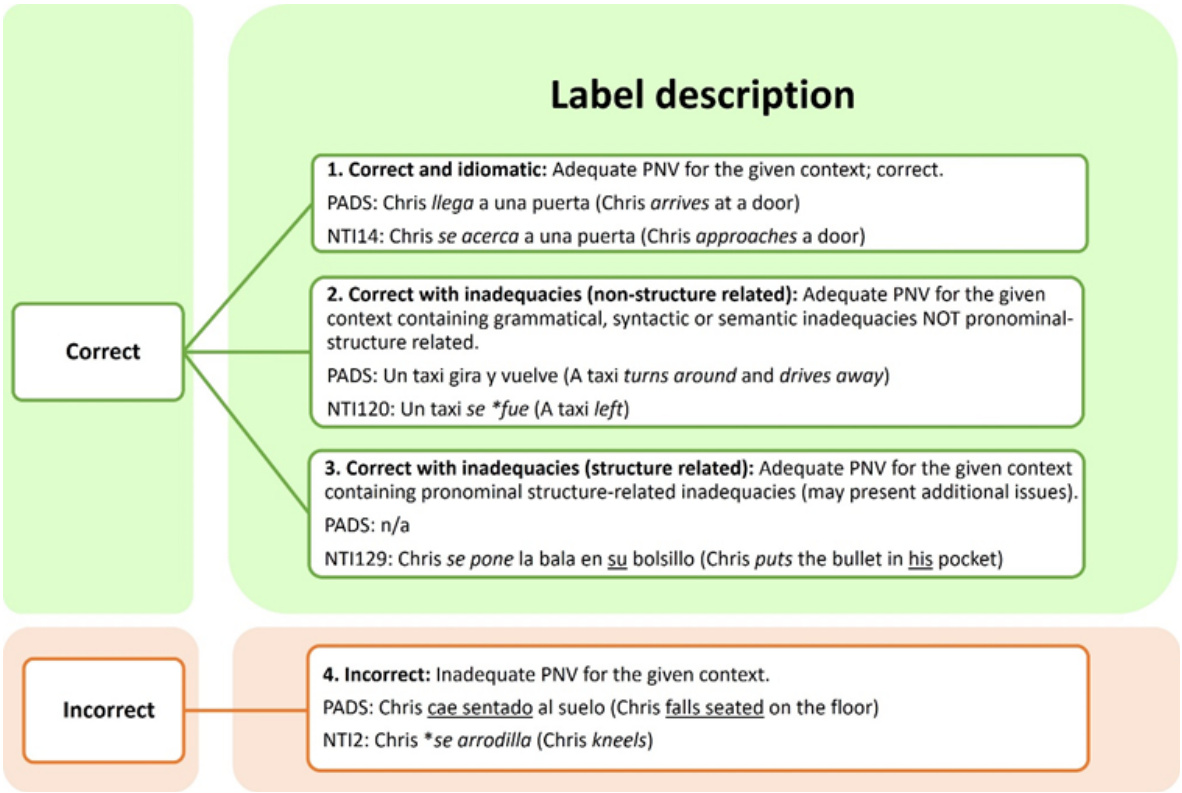


Figure 4. PNV correctness labels (source: author)

[18] See Bausells-Espín (2023) for a preliminary analysis.

[19] "Analytical induction": see Cohen *et al.* (2007, pp. 472-473). This process involved: data scanning and analysis, label creation, item coding, and inter-coder reliability assessment. A detailed discussion lies beyond the scope of this article.

Figure 4 summarises the labels, providing descriptions and examples. Labels 1–3 designate cases of context-adequate PNV choices; label 4 designates context-inadequate choices resulting from the impossibility to pronominalise a given verb, or from semantic inadequacy. *Correct* in labels 2 and 3 means that the pronominal is context-acceptable. However, the verb form or phrase contains errors. Label 2 tracks non-pronominality-related errors: in NTI120 (label 2, Figure 4), the verb *irse* ('to leave') is context-adequate but the tense (*se fue*, preterite) is not (the present tense is normally used in AD). Label 3 tracks pronominality-related inadequacies, such as pronoun-choice issues or the use of possessive determiners (*su*, in NTI129, label 3, Figure 4)—common among English-speaking SFL learners—where a definite article (*el*) is preferred.

4.1. Samples and corpora

Participants (*n*) submitted 68 scripts (i.e., samples), distributed by EG and task as shown on Figure 5: EG1 = 46, EG2 = 22; Task 1 (T1) = 25, Task 2 (T2) = 43. In total, 33 ADs and 35 interlingual translations (ITRs) were submitted.

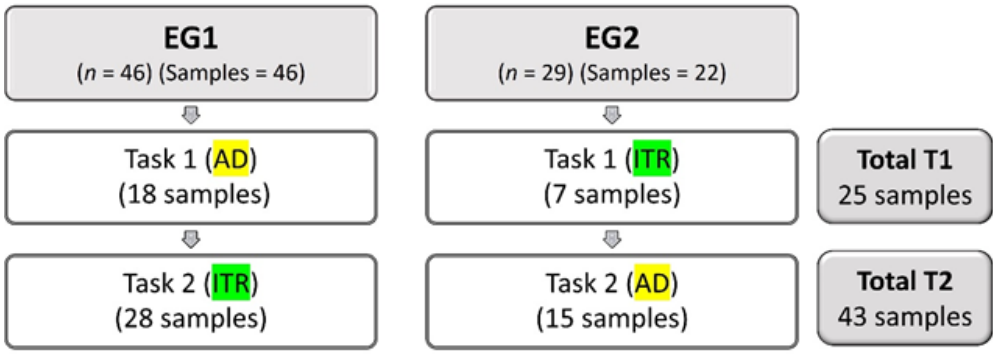
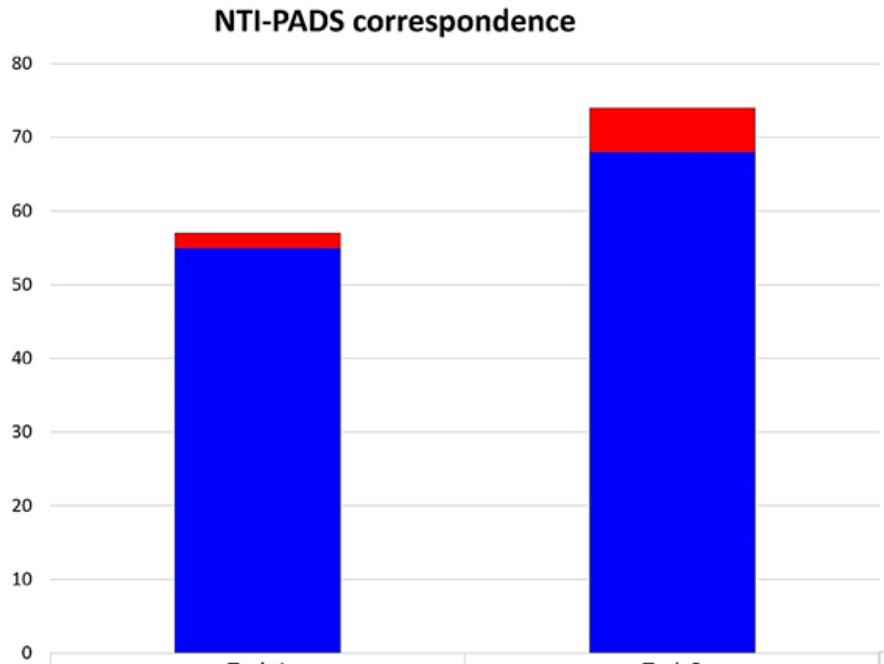


Figure 5. Sample distribution (source: author)

As explained, T1 and T2 were completed in different module slots (*Translation and Writing Skills* and *Oral Skills*, respectively). This means that participants working together for T1 may not have worked together for T2. Furthermore, since tasks were non-compulsory, some participants only collaborated in one. However, all T2 samples included the contribution of at least one T1 participant, so their experience completing one task type for T1 (AD or ITR) was transferred to the other type for T2. Therefore, no submissions were excluded from the sample.



	Task 1	Task 2	TOTAL
Omitted in PADS	2 (1%)	6 (5%)	8 (6%)
Non-PNV in PADS	55 (42%)	68 (52%)	123 (94%)
TOTAL	57 (43%)	74 (57%)	131

Figure 6. NTI-PADS correspondence (source: author)

Samples contained 131 NTIs: 94% (123) described actions expressed with a *non*-pronominal in the PADS, while only 6% (8; all in ADs) described actions *omitted* in the PADS (see Figure 6). The corpus of NTIs compiles all participant-produced PNVs matching actions *omitted* (example (2) below) or expressed with a *non*-pronominal in the PADS (3). Both fully correct instances (2a) and error-containing instances (3a) were compiled. In examples, numbered NTIs (e.g., NTI61) show participants' productions. Corresponding PADS items are provided if applicable, with English translations taken from the researcher-created English script whenever possible. When NTIs refer to actions omitted in the PADS (and therefore absent from the English translation used in the experiment), translations are provided *ad-hoc* and marked (A). PNV nomenclature follows the researcher-created taxonomy (see Figure 1).

(2) (a) NTI61 (AD) (reflexive): Ian está poniéndose su chaqueta y *arreglándose* = Ian is putting on his jacket and *primping* (A)

(b) PADS: Un hombre... baja poniéndose la chaqueta = A man... walks down the stairs putting on his jacket

(3) (a) NTI13 (AD) (pseudo-reflexive): Chris *se asegura* * que no le siguen = Chris *makes sure* he isn't being followed (A)

(b) PADS: Chris *mira* a uno y otro lado = Chris *looks* both ways

Finally, NTIs included 53 different verbs, some appearing once, some more than once within or across tasks. All verb appearances were analysed, as contexts, uses, or errors varied.

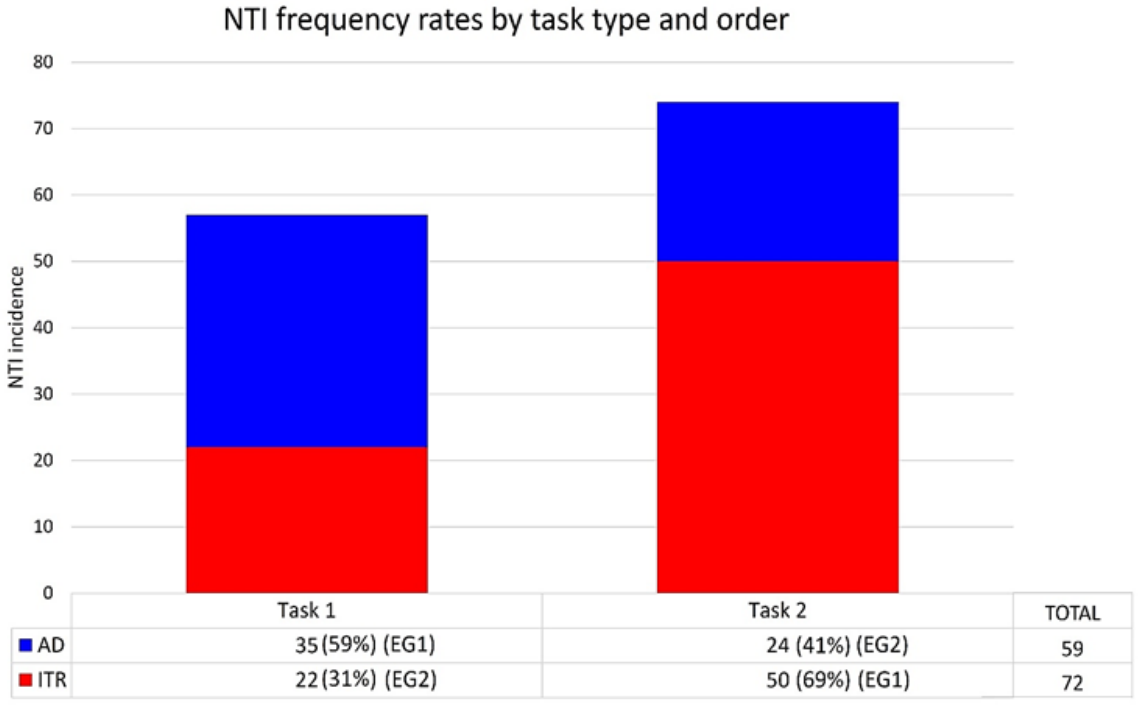
4.2. Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis of *non*-target items (NTIs) compares both total and group production rates in relation to RQs by task type, task order, and PNV type, focusing on frequency (4.2.1.) and correctness (4.2.2.) rates (%). For reference, figures show absolute numbers and relative percentages.

4.2.1. Frequency

Of the 131 NTIs, 45% (59) appear in ADs and 55% (72) in ITRs. Production by task order (T1 vs T2, Figure 7) shows that T1–T2 production decreases for ADs (-18%) while increasing for ITRs (+38%). That is, more *unexpected* PNVs appear in ADs when done first, but in ITRs when done second. This also means that the T1–T2 increase is higher when proceeding from AD to ITR, the task order for EG1. Therefore, EG1 both produced more NTIs (85, 65%) than EG2 (46, 35%) and showed a greater T1–T2 increase: +18% vs. +4% (Figure 8).

NTIs were also compiled by PNV type (see PNV taxonomy, Figure 1), classified based on grammatical and syntactic features, rather than on students' potential intentions. Two of the three main categories were represented: obligatorily and occasionally pronominals. Obligatorily pronominals were more numerous (75%), distributed across the following sub-categories: reflexives (18%), pseudo-reflexives (31%; 3% with inanimate subjects, 28% with animate), and meaning changing (26%). The remaining 25% were occasionally pronominal, specifically nuance markers of the two types: suddenness/change of point of view (PoV; 21%), and subject involvement (4%) (see Figure 9).



	Task 1	Task 2	TOTAL
AD	35 (59%) (EG1)	24 (41%) (EG2)	59
ITR	22 (31%) (EG2)	50 (69%) (EG1)	72

Figure 7. NTI frequency rates by task type and order (source: author)

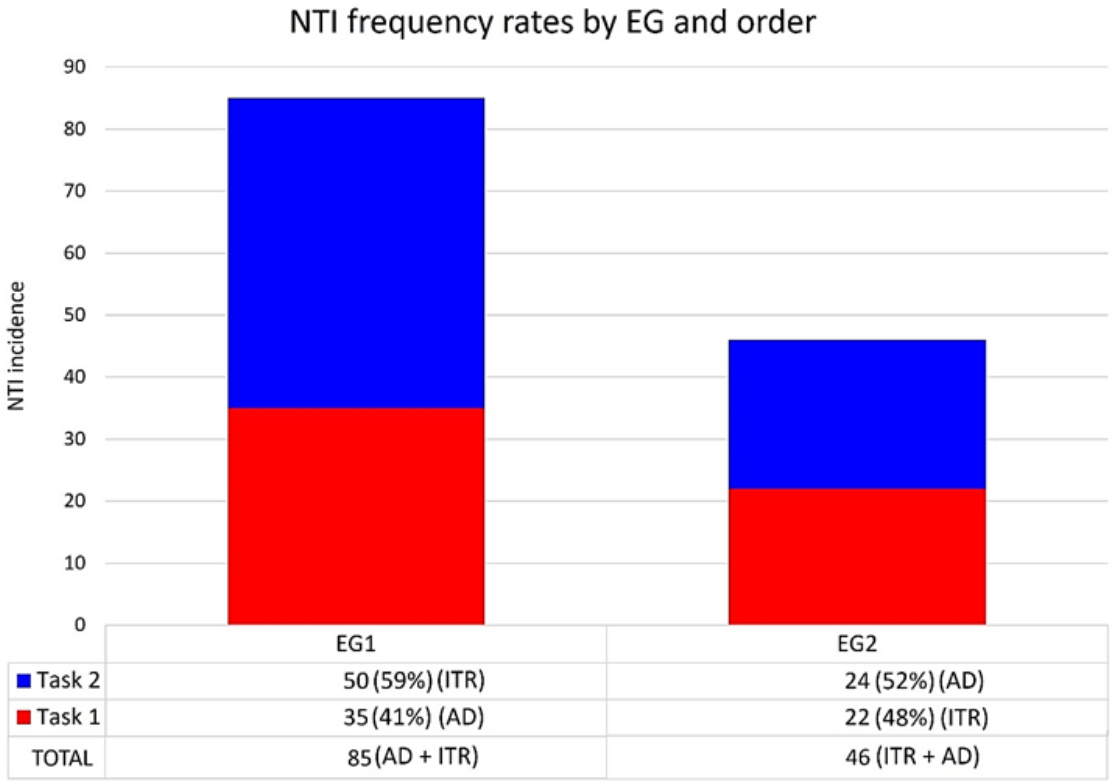


Figure 8. NTI frequency rates by EG and order (source: author)

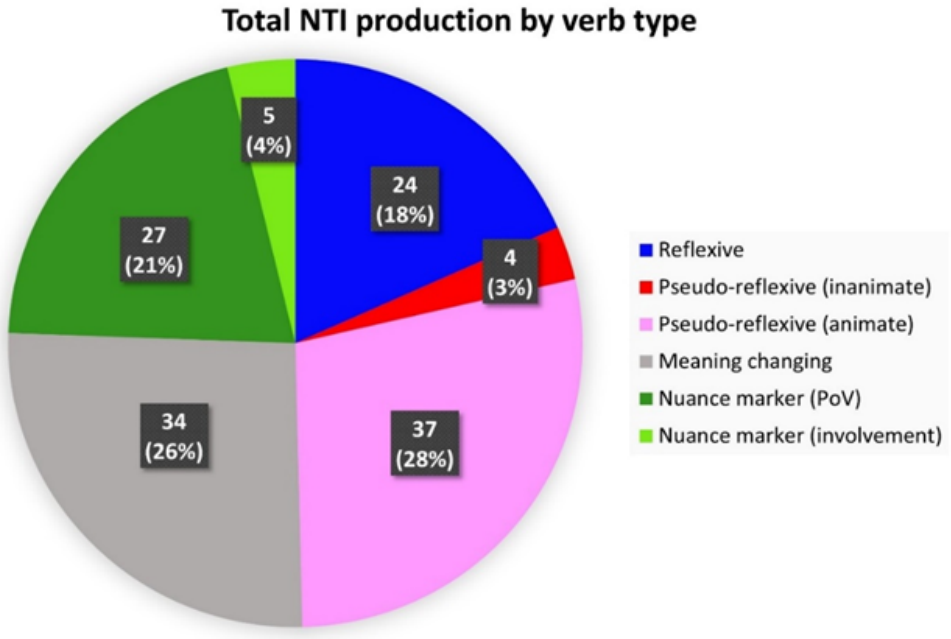
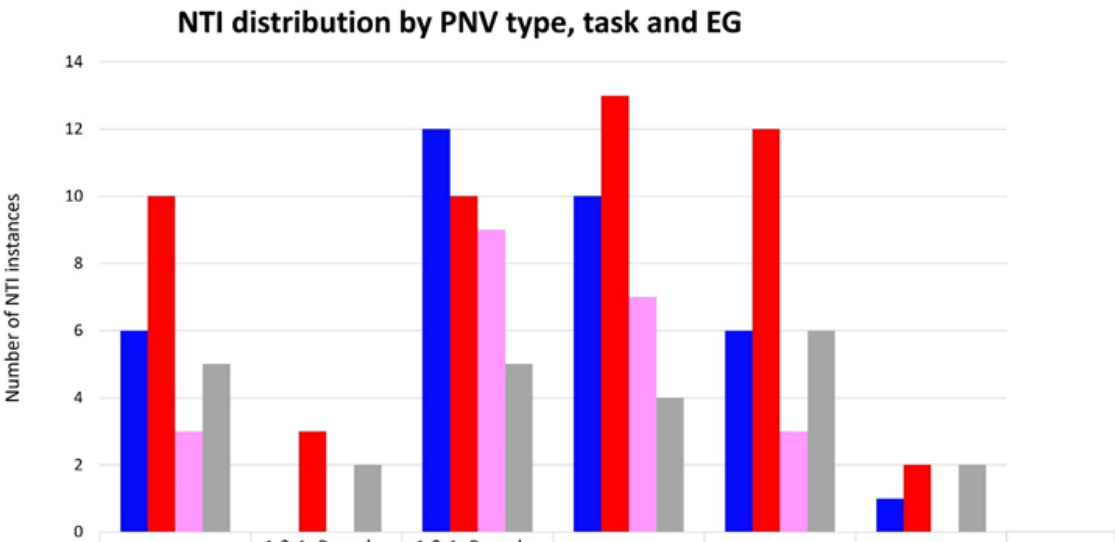


Figure 9. NTI production by PNV type (source: author)

Figure 10 shows distribution of PNV types by group (EG1 vs EG2) and task (T1 vs T2). This is generally consistent within overall production: more PNVs of all types are produced by EG1, if with minimal differences in inanimate-subject pseudo-reflexives and subject-involvement nuance markers. Similarly, most types show a T1–T2 increase across groups, except animate-subject pseudo-reflexives (decreasing for both) and meaning changing (decreasing for EG2).



	1.1. Reflexive	1.2.1. Pseudo-reflexive (inanimate)	1.2.1. Pseudo-reflexive (animate)	1.5. Meaning changing	2.2.1. PoV	2.2.2. Subject involvement	TOTAL
EG1 T1 (AD)	6 (17%)	0	12 (34%)	10 (29%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)	35
EG1 T2 (ITR)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)	10 (20%)	13 (26%)	12 (24%)	2 (4%)	50
EG2 T1 (ITR)	3 (13%)	0	9 (41%)	7 (32%)	3 (14%)	0	22
EG2 T2 (AD)	5 (21%)	2 (8%)	5 (21%)	4 (17%)	6 (25%)	2 (8%)	24

Figure 10. NTI production by PNV type, task and EG (source: author)

Production by verb type and task type is also consistent within overall production: more PNVs of most types appear in ITRs than in ADs, although with mostly minimal differences (see Figure 10). In EG1, this matches the T1-T2 increase except for animate-subject pseudo-reflexives (decreasing in T2). In EG2, however, production only increases in T2 for three types: reflexives, animate-subject pseudo-reflexives, and PoV nuance markers. This represents an increase when proceeding from ITR to AD.

4.2.2. Correctness

Tracing NTI correctness provides a fuller picture of PNV production patterns. Figure 11 shows total rates by correctness (see Figure 4 for correctness labels):

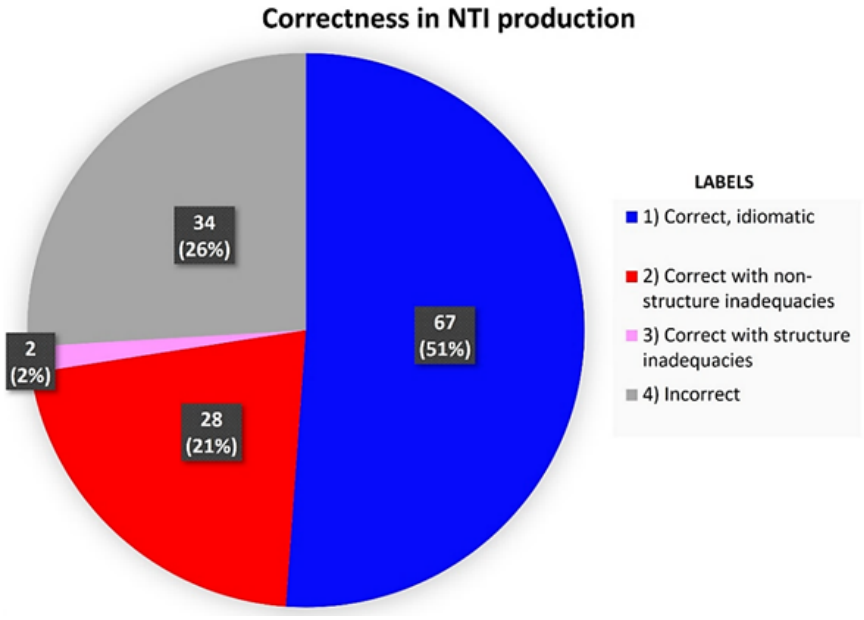
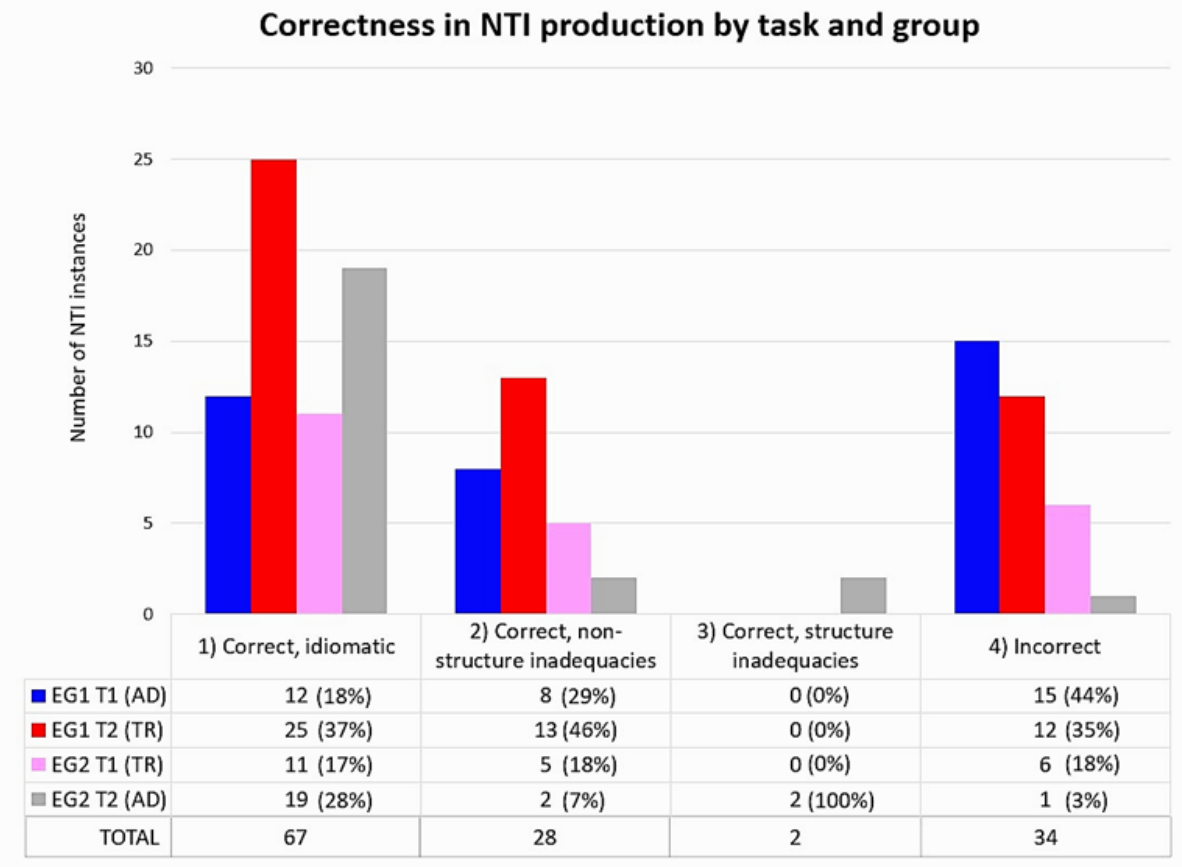


Figure 11. NTI correctness (source: author)

Over half of NTIs (51%) were both correct and idiomatic (label 1). Aggregating all NTIs with a correct pronominal choice despite the verb phrase containing inadequacies (labels 2 and 3) reveals that 74% were context-acceptable PNVs, while 26% were unacceptable.

Figure 12 shows correctness by task and EG. Overall, correctness rates were higher in ITRs (54%) than in ADs (46%). Aggregating fully correct and inadequacy-containing instances enlarges this difference to 57% in ITRs vs 43% in ADs (see Figure 13).



	1) Correct, idiomatic	2) Correct, non-structure inadequacies	3) Correct, structure inadequacies	4) Incorrect
EG1 T1 (AD)	12 (18%)	8 (29%)	0 (0%)	15 (44%)
EG1 T2 (TR)	25 (37%)	13 (46%)	0 (0%)	12 (35%)
EG2 T1 (TR)	11 (17%)	5 (18%)	0 (0%)	6 (18%)
EG2 T2 (AD)	19 (28%)	2 (7%)	2 (100%)	1 (3%)
TOTAL	67	28	2	34

Figure 12. Correctness by task and EG (source: author)

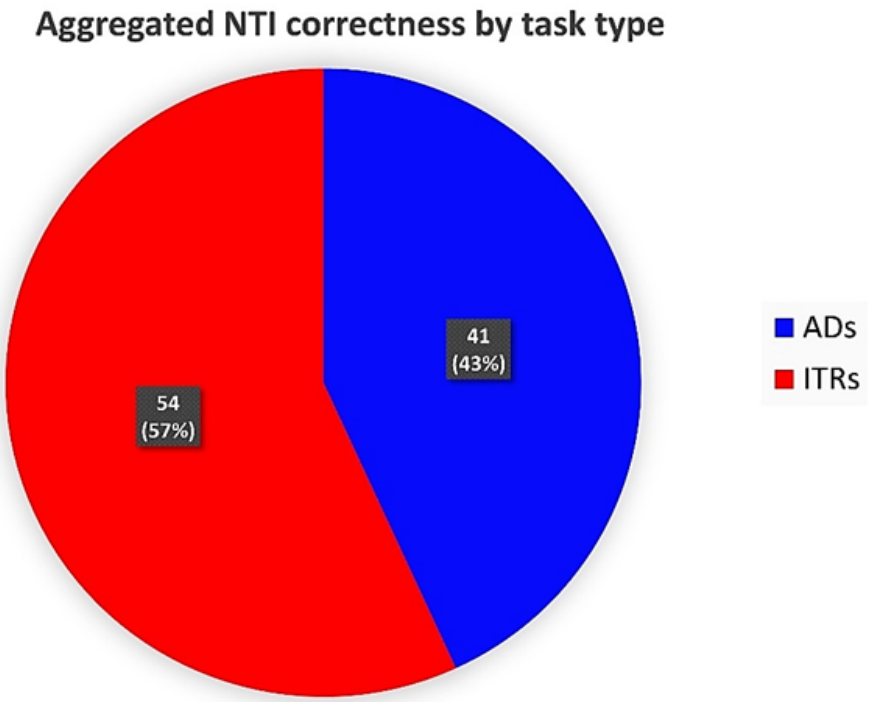


Figure 13. Aggregated correctness (labels 1 to 3 together) by task type (source: author)

Fully correct NTI rates are higher in T2: 18% vs 28% in ADs, 17% vs 37% in ITRs (see Figure 12). Aggregating all *correct* labels increases this difference in favour of T2 translations to 64%, vs 36% in ADs (see Figure 14). That is, adequate PNV production increases from T1 to T2, particularly for EG1—i.e., when proceeding from AD to ITR.

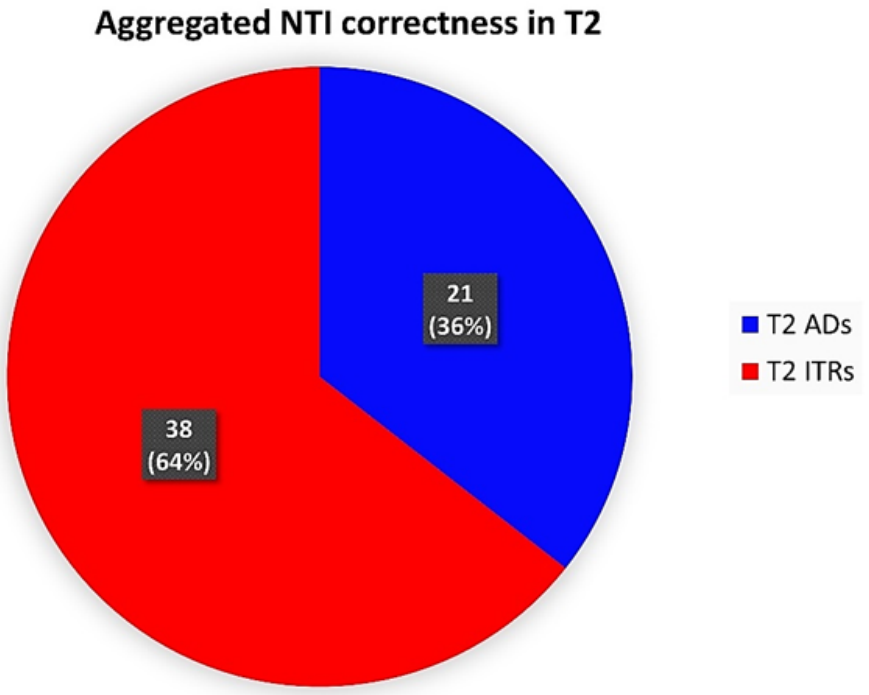
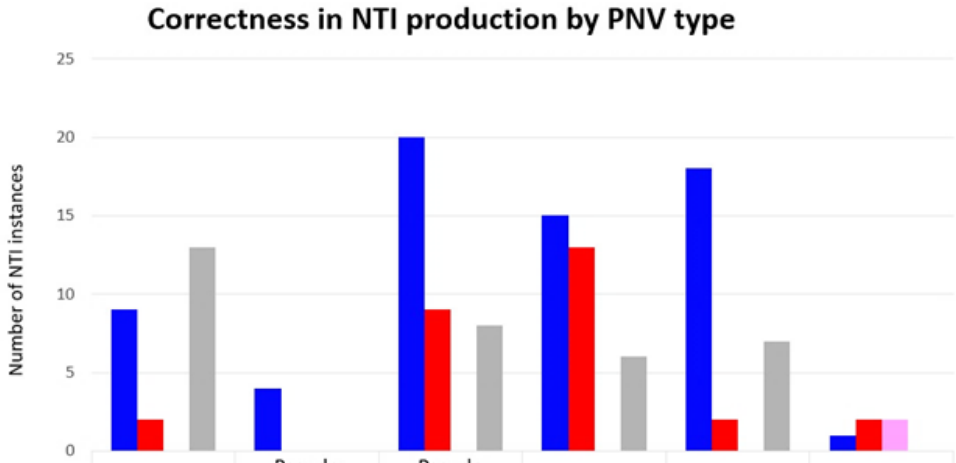


Figure 14. Aggregated correctness (labels 1 to 3) in T2 (source: author)

Correspondingly, overall *incorrect* NTI production decreases from T1 to T2 (62% vs 38%; see Figure 12). This drop is higher in T2 ADs—i.e., for EG2. Incorrectness rates are considerably

lower for EG2 (21%, vs 79% for EG1), although, as mentioned before, EG2 produced fewer NTIs in total.

By PNV type, only reflexives show more *incorrect* (54%) than correct (46%) cases (see Figure 15). Two types show no incorrect cases: inanimate-subject pseudo-reflexives, and subject-involvement nuance markers (inv.), although the latter only show one fully correct instance. Animate-subject pseudo-reflexives, meaning changing, and PoV nuance markers are mostly fully correct, with the difference over incorrect cases increasing if aggregating all *correct* labels.



	Reflexive	Pseudo reflexive (Inanimate)	Pseudo reflexive (Animate)	Meaning changing	Nuance marker (PoV)	Nuance marker (Inv.)
1) Correct	9 (38%)	4 (100%)	20 (54%)	15 (44%)	18 (67%)	1 (20%)
2) Correct, non-structure errors	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	9 (24%)	13 (38%)	2 (7%)	2 (40%)
3) Correct, structure errors	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)
4) Incorrect	13 (54%)	0 (0%)	8 (22%)	6 (18%)	7 (26%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	24	4	37	34	27	5

Figure 15. NTI correctness by PNV type (source: author)

The implications of (in)correctness and error types are discussed in section 4.3. below.

4.3. Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis of NTIs explores correctness considering verb choice adequacy and error type, and their impact upon idiomaticity, comparing with how those actions were described (if so) in the professional AD script (PADS). In the analysis, shared NTI features are grouped, and representative examples provided as needed.

All NTIs with no PADS correspondence provide supplementary details (see example (2) in section 4.1.) representing valid additions, except NTI60 (in example (4)), unnecessary because the character had been previously introduced:

(4) NTI60 (AD) (reflexive): el vecino *se llama* Ian = the neighbour *is called* Ian (A)

NTIs with non-pronominal PADS correspondence represent either fully interchangeable alternatives, or different but acceptable interpretations. Both occur across ADs and ITRs. *Alternatives* designate NTIs that could replace the PADS wording with no nuance or idiomaticity loss (5, 6). Furthermore, many cases represent more succinct, even more idiomatic choices (7). This is so for all inanimate-subject pseudo-reflexives (8).

(5) (a) NTI46 (ITR) (pseudo-reflexive): Chris *se pone* a recoger = Chris *starts* picking up

(b) PADS: Chris *empieza* a recoger

(6) (a) NTI89 (ITR) (nuance marker): Nola *se sube* a un taxi = Nola *gets into* a taxi

(b) PADS: Nola *entra* en un taxi

(7) (a) NTI62 (AD) (reflexive): Chris *se estremece* = Chris *shudders* (A)

(b) PADS: Chris *estremece* la cara = Chris *makes* his face *shudder*

(8) (a) NTI73 (AD) or NTI76 (TR) (pseudo-reflexive): el taxi *se aleja* = the taxi *drives away* (A)

(b) PADS: el taxi *gira* y *vuelve* por donde ha venido = the taxi *turns around* and *drives away* in the direction it came from[20]

Different interpretations designate partially equivalent yet acceptable descriptions. The difference regarding the PADS may reside in: (i) a focus shift (9); (ii) a PoV shift—e.g., different spatial/movement references—without critical impact upon the intended mental representation (10); (iii) an unidiomatic lexical choice elsewhere with a still-acceptable PNV (11); or (iv) an overexplicitation (12). Instances belonging to (i) and (ii) often appear in ADs, where greater creativity is possible. Instances belonging to (iii) mostly appear in ITRs, where a source linguistic structure is given. Instances belonging to (iv) appear in both.

(9) (a) NTI36 (AD) (meaning changing): Chris *se pone* nervioso = Chris *gets* nervous (A)

(b) PADS: Chris *golpea* la puerta *con nerviosismo* = Chris *pounds* at the door impatiently

(10) (a) NTI16 (AD) (pseudo-reflexive): Chris *se acerca* a la mujer = Chris *approaches* the woman (A)

(b) PADS: Chris *anda* por el pasillo = Chris *strides* along de corridor [towards the woman]

(11) (a) NTI92 (ITR) (pseudo-reflexive): Chris *se para* *sin accionar = Chris stands without actioning (A)

(b) PADS: Chris permanece inmóvil = Chris stands motionless

(12) (a) NTI45 (ITR) (meaning changing): la señora *se da cuenta* = the woman notices (A)

(b) PADS: la señora Eastby *levanta* la vista y *aguza* el oído = Mrs Eastby looks up and pricks up her ears

Inadequacies in context-acceptable PNVs affect conjugation or tense (see NTI120 in label 2, Figure 4, section 4), or elements in the accompanying structure (13), including: missing articles or prepositions (13a); wrong/unnecessary prepositions (13b); or inadequate lexical choices in complements which alter semantic nuance or idiomaticity, potentially hindering communication (13c; corrections in square brackets). Only NTI129 (see label 3, Figure 4) and another case show pronominal structure-related errors. Acceptable pseudo-reflexive and meaning changing PNVs contain more inadequacies, without clear error type prevalence.

[20] Directional specificity was not plot essential.

(13) (a) NTI31 (AD) (meaning changing): Chris *se da* [la] *vuelta* para mirar = Chris *turns around* to look (A)

(b) NTI24 (ITR) (pseudo-reflexive): Chris *se desliza* *en [hacia] el piso = Chris slides down *on [towards] the floor (A)

(c) NTI97 (ITR) (meaning changing): Chris *se queda* *sin moción [quieto] = Chris *stands motionless*

Finally, incorrect NTIs (14) show either an overgeneralisation of *se* where pronominality is unacceptable (14a) or another object pronoun should be used (14b); or an inadequate verb choice (14c)—i.e., the verb admits pronominality but, semantically, it is not context adequate (corrections in square brackets):

(14) (a) NTI6 (AD): Chris **se mira* a ambos lados = Chris *looks *at himself* both ways (A)

(b) NTI8 (ITR): Chris **se* [le] *quita* su reloj = Chris *takes off *his own* [her] watch (A)

(c) NTI2 (AD): Chris **se arrodilla* [cae de rodillas] = Chris **kneels* [falls to his knees] (A)

No difference is observed in incorrect NTI features between ADs and ITRs.

5. Discussion: lessons from the 'unexpected'

This section compares the results from the analysis of target items[21] (TIs, student-produced PNVs for actions expressed with a pronominal in the PADS) with those presented in this article from the analysis of *non*-target items (NTIs, student-produced PNVs for actions *omitted* or expressed with a *non*-pronominal in the PADS). Departing from the main trends observed in TIs regarding the research questions (RQs), Table 1 provides a side-by-side comparison against NTIs, alongside brief explanations (*Meaning*):

Compared production trends			
Trend	TIs	Non-TIs	Meaning
(1) More PNVs in ITRs	✓	✓	RQ1 affirmative H1 *not* supported
(2) More PNVs in T1 AD than in T1 ITR	×	✓	H1 supported (?)
(3) Increase from T1 to T2	×	✓	RQ2 affirmative & H2 supported (quantity) (?)
(4) Errors decrease from T1 to T2	?	✓	RQ2 affirmative & H2 supported (quality) (?)
(5) As PNV difficulty increases, production decreases	✓	×	RQ3 affirmative H3 unclear → reconsider difficulty?
(6) As PNV difficulty increases, errors increase	✓	✓×	
(7) Tendency towards PNV omission	✓	×	PNV-worthy features?

Table 1. Target vs non-target production trends (source: author)

As Trend 1 shows, TI and NTI productions confirmed a difference between interlingual and intersemiotic translation tasks (RQ1) but contradicted the hypothesis that it would be in favour of AD (H_1). This is consistent with Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen's findings (2023). To test H_1, EG1 and EG2 productions in T1—before exposure to or use of PNVs in similar contexts—were compared. As Trend 2 shows, T1 target PNV production was higher in ITRs, in line with Trend 1. However, *non*-target PNV production was higher in ADs. This leads to questioning whether AD may promote PNV production to some extent, preventing complete rejection of H_1.

[21] See Bausells-Espín (2023).

As Trend 3 shows, the T1-T2 PNV increase predicted by RQ2 and H_2 was only partially confirmed for TIs, as PNV incidence *decreased* for EG2 (who proceeded from ITR to AD). For NTIs, H_2 was fully confirmed, as PNV incidence *increased* for both groups, regardless of T2 type. The increase was high for EG1, who did AD first and ITR second, and very low for EG2, who did the opposite. This higher rise when proceeding from intersemiotic to interlingual translation further points at potential benefits of first departing from an image-based source text to promote structure recall and usage in a later task. Furthermore, NTIs showed a T1-T2 decrease in *unacceptable* productions (Trend 4). That is, prior exposure to and use of forms in context also improves correctness and idiomaticity. Because this was not measured for TIs, comparison is impossible and the answer to RQ2 regarding quality remains unclear.

Trends 5 and 6 provide an affirmative answer to RQ3, as incidence differs across PNV types. However, confirmation of H_3 remains unclear. Following previous studies (Escobar-Álvarez, 2017; Escobar & Teomiro, 2016), H_3 proposed that the more challenging the PNV was, the lower their incidence (Trend 5) and the more frequent the errors (Trend 6) would be. While TI production confirmed this, NTI did not: firstly, NTI production increased for almost all types including the most challenging ones; secondly, an easier type (reflexives) showed more unacceptable cases than more challenging ones, and the presence of unacceptable PNV choices was not always consistent with type-presumed difficulty. This raises questions about: (i) assessment of PNV difficulty, (ii) links between PNV-internal features and production, and (iii) learner perception of PNV difficulty.

Finally, Trend 7 provides the most interesting observation. TI production showed that participants mostly used *non*-pronominals where the PADS used pronominals. This behaviour is consistent with learners' tendency towards PNV omission (Gómez Soler, 2015). However, the existence of NTIs means that participants frequently used pronominals (both in ADs and ITRs) where the PADS *did not*, despite not having been explicitly instructed to do so. Additionally, many of these unpredicted pronominals offered a more concise, even more idiomatic alternative to the PADS. Two questions arise: (i) could action-related features be more determining in triggering pronominal uses than verb complexity or translation mode? and (ii) what makes certain actions more *PNV worthy* than others to learners' eyes?

6. Conclusions

Before presenting considerations for further research, certain limitations must be identified. First, statistical analysis may determine the significance of the observed trends. Second, results are yet to be contrasted with data from the following academic year (2019-2020), when the experiment was repeated, to see if trends continue across different student cohorts and if production patterns and the impact of the different variables could be extrapolated.

While results from *unexpected* productions also seem to initially reject the main hypothesis that AD would promote PNV usage, they provide sufficient deviations from trends within *expected* productions to confirm the potential of didactic AD for PNV acquisition. The use of integrated form-focus instruction (IFFI) seems to partially contribute when combined with tasks where learners must produce structure-rich, communicatively meaningful texts. A deeper examination may reveal whether IFFI nurtured the T1-T2 improvement or whether it resulted from learners having established prototypicality and developed familiarity. The evidence of improvement in correctness—especially when T1 was AD—further supports the hypothesis of the positive effect of intersemiotic translation. Although target-PNV omission rates were high in ADs, the numerous *non*-target, *unexpected* pronominals used contradicts the known tendency towards omission as well as previous observations regarding acquisition patterns, since many represented types considered difficult for B2-level learners.

Therefore, it seems worth investigating why participants deemed certain actions PNV-worthy, perhaps through an in-depth qualitative exploration of those deemed *non*-PNV-worthy, and vis-à-vis Spanish L1 speakers' productions—as Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen did (2023). Investigating whether relying on image-conveyed material helps the recognition of pronominality-related, action-internal characteristics, may uncover links between pronominality-triggering features, visual noticing, and patterns in structure acquisition and production. In other words, advancing towards *microlevel*[22] research studies, focusing on narrowed-down applications of DAT (Talaván *et al.,* 2023), could help students to increase their perception-production awareness, and teachers to discover links between noticing and production patterns. Incorporating AD research techniques could also be beneficial. Combining reception studies and eye-tracking technology or using think-aloud protocols may help unveil learners' perceptions regarding action pronominality, or connections between attention, looking, thought, and language use as well as whether those processes are simultaneous or sequential, or for how long students focus on certain visual elements or words and whether such engagement leads to learning (Szarkowska, 2023).

Finally, given the prominence of cognitive processes permeating AD creation, it might be worth exploring the potential of pairing didactic AD with cognitive load theory (CLT; Plass et al., 2010) and with cognitive approaches to language learning. First, CLT could provide tools to analyse "intrinsic load" (difficulty of materials used) and "extraneous cognitive load" (task difficulty and possible learner-based adaptations; Szarkowska, 2023) to enhance the effectiveness of didactic AD tasks. Second, cognitive approaches such as construction grammar (Goldberg, 1995; Gonzálvez-García, 2012) offer a usage-based framework capturing grammatical patterning where language dimensions (syntax, semantics, pragmatics, etc.) equally contribute to shaping linguistic expression (Fried, n.d.). This approach explores grammatical structures through a hierarchical family-based system to identify underlying meanings and syntactic-semantic relationships across constructions (as the pedagogical taxonomy proposed here does), and it has been successfully applied to researching learners' acquisition of one PNV family, verbs of change (Cheikh-Khamis Cases, 2022). Incorporating these approaches to didactic AD may help understand the relationships between image(s), mental representation(s), and linguistic description(s). In sum, maximising both the cognitive and the communicative dimensions of didactic AD could help stimulate FL learners' metalinguistic and pragmalinguistic awareness, thus providing meaningful communication-based tasks that could facilitate the acquisition and production of grammatical structures as complex, challenging, and rich as Spanish pronominal verbs.

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[22] As opposed to *macrolevel* studies, which focus on methodological design or DAT implementation frameworks (Talaván *et al.,* 2023).

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