The Role of First Language in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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Introduction

This paper aims to investigate the role of the mother tongue in learning English. It focuses on the acquisition of the English article system by Hungarian and Croatian learners of English. Over the last half decade different views have developed on the role of the students' L1 in SLA. Some theorists claimed that the mother tongue to some extent affects SLA therefore it cannot be disregarded. Other linguists, however, claimed that the L1 has no influence on SLA.

The first chapter of this paper gives an overview of the different attitudes towards the relationship between L1 and SLA and how the attitudes have changed over time until the present belief of the existence of cross-linguistic influence was reached.

The first section of the second chapter tries to define the very complex phenomenon of transfer or cross-linguistic influence giving the description of the term by different linguists. After the survey of the history of cross-linguistic influence a probably not exhaustive list of factors affecting CLI is provided. Finally, the last section in short deals with CLI research methods.

The third chapter summarizes the main findings in the acquisition of the English article system in ESL while the fourth chapter examines the different ways of expressing definiteness and indefiniteness in Croatian which does not possess articles.

The first section of the fifth chapter describes the cross-linguistic research which served as a base for this paper. The second section analyses the results of the two tests sentence by sentence, comparing the answers given by the Hungarian and Croatian learners of English. Sentences which contain similar NPs are compared also in graphs, as well as the results of NPs where there is a considerable or unexpected difference between the results of the two groups of students tested, or where the difference is due to strong CLI. Finally, in the conclusion the overall results from the two tests are compared, which clearly show that the students' L1 does influence second language acquisition.

1. Definitions

According to Dulay et al. (1982:10) *second language acquisition* (SLA) can be defined as "the process of learning another language after the basics of the first have been acquired", they also add that this acquisition starts after the age of five. This is important to point out in order to differentiate between simultaneous or bilingual and sequential language acquisition.

The term *first language* (L1) will be used to refer to the language that the speaker acquired first chronologically while *second language* (L2) will refer to any language that is acquired after L1, regardless of the context of acquisition or proficiency.

Interlanguage is the linguistic system that is created by learners while acquiring a foreign language. It is different both from their L1 and L2. It reflects different processes such as first language transfer, contrastive interference from L2 and overgeneralization of newly encountered rules (Crystal 2008).

2. The Role of the Mother Tongue in SLA

Acquiring a language is a creative process in which learners are trying to produce an internalized representation of the regularities they discover in the language to which they are exposed, i.e. they are producing their interlingual competence while interacting with their environment (Corder 1992). As far as they are learning the language their internal representation is changing. To date the most common view on its development in SLA is that in the early stages the developmental sequence of acquisition is largely independent of outside influence and is essentially the same for both adults and children. In other words, there seems to be an internal program which creates the same sequence of development of the internal representation for all learners. Neither the external nor the internal factors, such as motivation, attitude, knowledge of other languages, etc. do not affect the developmental sequence, however, the internal factors may influence the rate of development (Corder 1992). Mother tongue is a cognitive element in the process of second language acquisition which is unlike the other internal factors expected to affect decisively the order of the developmental process. Lado's view was that "the relative ease or difficulty in acquiring some feature of the target language crucially depended upon the similarity or difference it bore to the mother tongue" (Corder 1992:21). Similarity meant easy, fast and earlier acquisition while difference meant difficulty, slower and later acquisition. Yet,

research has not supported this view. It shows that in the early stages the mother tongue does not have a vital role in determining the order of development in L2. In the later stages, though, it plays a decisive role. There is also a clear relation between the speed of the acquisition and language distance. Languages which are linguistically nearer to the L1 are easier to learn. Corder (1992) points out that the failure to facilitate L2 acquisition does not equal with interference or inhibition, there is simply little facilitation.

Second language acquisition has been seen as a movement along a continuum where the starting point is the mother tongue and the ideal end point is the knowledge of the target language. What is between is the interlanguage. This would, however, mean that what learners of foreign languages do is nothing more than restructuring their L1 until they reach the L2 system. In fact, in the early stages of L2 learning their errors resemble their L1 a lot. Corder (1992) argues that this view of L2 learning as a continuum is applicable to the acquisition of the phonological system of the target language. If one observes the development of the L2 syntax, he/she will realize that it is neither influenced by the mother tongue, nor by the L2 in most cases. It is a more complex developmental continuum which can be found in other aspects of language as well, for instance first language acquisition. The starting point in the case of SLA is certainly not as complex as the grammar of the mother tongue, otherwise the early stages of the interlanguage would not be pidgin-like (Corder 1992).

Dulay and Burt (1973) suggested that SLA was very much similar to first language development, at least for children. They based their belief on the similarity of the errors made by children while acquiring an L2 to those errors produced by children learning their L1. They later discovered the developmental sequence to be different. Also, they did not take into consideration the functional aspect of language when they made their proposal. The fact that L2 learners already possess a language and know the function of language should not be disregarded (Corder 1992).

When a person starts learning a new language it is very simple. It often does not have articles, copula, its word order is quite stable. It is in many features very similar to a pidgin and to the language of children in the early stages of acquisition. It is as if the learner "regressed to an earlier stage of his own linguistic development" (Corder 1992:24). Corder suggests that learners can access a basic, possibly universal, grammar, which could be the "mother tongue stripped of all its specific features" (Corder 1992:24). This basic grammar is accessible to everybody because everybody has created one while learning L1. Going back to the developmental

continuum of SLA, its starting point is this basic grammar which was created in childhood and is accessible in the process of SLA from the learner's own linguistic development. Evidence to this is that language learners in the early stages often make errors which are clearly not because of their L1 influence, neither are they related to the L2 (Corder 1992).

Corder (1992) questions the existence of transfer and states that "it is from the mental structure which is the implicit knowledge of the mother tongue to the separate and independently developing knowledge of the target language" (Corder, 1992:25). He also criticizes the term itself arguing that nothing is transferred from anywhere to anywhere. In his opinion the phenomenon should be described as the speakers use certain aspects of their mother tongue to express their thoughts because their interlanguage lacks the means to do it. Corder (1992) states that the mother tongue is not the only source of transfer, or as he calls it, borrowing. Other languages known to the speaker, especially ones that are linguistically not distant from the L2 can cause transfer as well. Anecdotal evidence suggests that L2 learners assign some kind of a unique status to their L1, they claim it to be more different from the L2 while other languages known to them are perceived as more similar to the target language.

The mother tongue definitely has a role in second language acquisition. It has a role at the start of learning, in the process of learning, and in the use of the target language. If the L1 and L2 are linguistically closer, facilitation will be maximal, although the degree of transfer depends mostly on learners' perception of the linguistic distance between the languages.

2.1. Transfer and Related Terms

There have been different terms referring to the same phenomenon, but they may carry different connotations. In this paper *transfer* and *cross-linguistic influence* (CLI) are used interchangeably as they are rather neutral, even though *transfer* is often associated with the behaviourist notion of skill transfer. Also, there are phenomena which can hardly be called transfer, such as the avoidance of the use of some structures of the target language by speakers of certain languages (Corder 1992). Another term is *interference* which was introduced by Weinreich and adopted by Haugen and which is also connected to the behaviourist view and is very often identified only by the negative results of cross-linguistic influence. The term *cross-linguistic influence* was proposed by Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (1986) as a neutral umbrella term for all types of influences of a person's knowledge of one language on the knowledge and use of another language (Jarvis-Pavlenko 2008).

According to Oxford English Dictionary the word *transfer* originates from the French *transférer* or Latin *transferre.* Both are compounds consisting of *trans-* meaning 'across' and *ferre* 'to bear, carry'. Its first use was as a legal term in the sense 'conveyance of property'. In terms of linguistics according to the same dictionary it stands for "the phenomenon whereby acquisition of a new language is influenced by the grammar, pronunciation, orthography, or other aspects of an individual's first language (or another previously learned language), which may either inhibit or facilitate learning".

The first definition of linguistic transfer was given by the behaviourists (Lado 1957). Transfer was used to refer to processes that are:

> automatic, uncontrolled, and subconscious use of the past learned behaviors in the attempt to produce new responses. In this sense, transfer may be of two types: "negative" and "positive".
>
> "Negative transfer" refers to those instances of transfer which result in error because old, habitual behaviour is different from the new behaviour that is being learned. For example, if one has regularly driven a car where gear shift is on the floor, one will inevitably reach for the floor when first attempting to drive a new car whose gear stick is on the steering column.
>
> "Positive transfer" results in correct performance because the new behavior is the same as the old. In our gear shift example above, positive transfer would operate if the new car also had its gear shift on the floor – the old and new gear shifting would be the same. Both types of transfer refer to the automatic and subconscious use of the old behavior in new learning situations. (Lado 1957, as cited in Dulay et al., 1982:101).

Transfer helps learners use the target language (TL). Transfer that facilitates learning is most often overlooked and not examined enough. Negative transfer or interferance is easier to notice as it causes errors in the learner's language use. According to Dulay et al. (1982) there are two types of interference: psycholinguistic which is the use of old habits when new ones are being learned; and sociolinguistic interference which refers to language interactions such as linguistic borrowing and language switching. Great deal of confusion was caused by Haugen's (1953) definition of linguistic borrowing and Weinreich's (1953) definition of interference which at a closer look turn out to refer to the same phenomenon. Both definitions state that the phenomenon they are describing is the result of the speaker's familiarity with more than one language, i.e. the speaker attempts to reproduce patterns from one language in another language (Dulay et al., 1982:99). On the contrary, Contrastive Analysis says that interference is the result of the unfamiliarity with the TL, in other words, the learner not having learned the TL patterns.

Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953) described the interference occurring in bilinguals' speech, therefore, their definitions are rather irrelevant for second language acquisition. Still, many authors misused them in SLA.

Lado in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures* described this phenomenon saying that "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture – both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives" (Lado, 1957:2, as cited in Arabski, 2006: 15).

Crystal (2008) on the other hand gives the definitions of transfer in the context of foreign language learning and claims that it is the "influence of a person's first language on the language being acquired". Concerning negative transfer he says that interference is the errors that "a speaker introduces into one language as a result of contact with another language" (Crystal, 2008: 517)". As this definition shows, negative transfer may occur not only because of the influence of the mother tongue but also because of other languages the speaker is familiar with, such as in multilingual context or in dialect contact (Arabski 2006). Crystal, however, does not give the description of positive transfer.

Odlin (1989) similarly claims that "[t]ransfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired" (Odlin, 1989:27).

2.2. History and (R)evolution of Transfer

Cross-linguistic influence has been a popular topic both for linguists and non-linguists. Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) refer to Homer's Odyssey where the main character tells Penelope about the "mixed languages" of Crete. Janse (2002) argues that the term *barbarians* did not only refer to speakers of other languages than Greek but also to foreigners who spoke "bad Greek", in other words, foreigners speaking Greek with first language transfer (Jarvis-Pavlenko, 2008). Non-linguists also often complain about the macaronic language of bi- and multilingual people who mix two or more languages within one conversation, sentence or even structure. For instance, bilingual Hungarians who live outside the borders of Hungary and whose L1 (Hungarian) is influenced by the official language of the state in which they live are often stigmatized by

Hungarians from Hungary as they do not speak Hungarian "properly", "correctly", "they do not even know Hungarian" or speak "bad Hungarian" (Lanstyák, 1998, Kontra, 2005). In this sense they usually refer to the negative influence or transfer as it is easily observed and noticed unlike the positive transfer. Unfortunately, non-linguists', ordinary people's views have not really changed. They still very often associate CLI with "sloppiness, narrow-mindedness and lack of mental clarity and sound thinking" (Jarvis-Pavlenko, 2008:2). Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) created the term *linguicism* which refers to such linguistic discrimination. In addition, some linguists and psychologists made this general negative view of transfer even worse by claiming that transfer in pronunciation, for example, is due to the learner's laziness or lack of interest in changing his pronunciation.

This bad attitude towards cross-linguistic influence remained until the mid twentieth century when finally linguists like Weinreich, Haugen and Lado challenged this view scientifically proving that transfer is an unavoidable phenomenon in foreign language learning. There are some linguists like Newmark and Reibel, Krashen and some others who suggest that transfer is just "falling back on a language that one already knows when lacking knowledge in the language that one is presently learning" (Javris-Pavlenko, 2008:8). This view is called *ignorance hypothesis* and was introduced in 1966 by Newmark. According to this hypothesis L2 learners make up for what they have not acquired yet in the L2 by substituting it with their L1 habits. There are however, numerous pieces of evidence showing that the ignorance hypothesis itself has ignored some facts about the process of L2 learning which would prove that CLI does exist. Just one such fact is that CLI appears not just from L1 to L2 but also from L2 to L1. For instance, in balanced bilinguals' speech their L2 may also influence their L1, and it is not due to ignorance. Linguists who claim that L2 acquisition is the same as L1 acquisition deny the existence of transfer errors and classify them under developmental errors. Dulay and Burt accepted the existence of transfer errors but restricted them to two situations. According to them these errors will occur only if learners are forced to perform either before they are ready for it or in poor L2 environments and in certain elicitation tasks (Dulay and Burt 1982). In their later work (1983) they explained possible transfer errors as overgeneralization of the L2 itself (Villanueva 1990).

Language transfer affects all linguistic subsystems such as orthography, phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, rhetoric and pragmatics. The first linguist who took a closer look at CLI was Uriel Weinreich. In 1953 he published *Languages in Contact* in which he focused only on negative transfer of interference. Later some scholars, such as Ringbom (1987, 1992)

argued that positive transfer would have more effect on L2 acquisition than interference. This was proved by the study of English teaching in Finland to speakers of Finnish and Swedish. As Swedish is an Indo-European language just like English for learners whose L1 was Swedish it was much easier to learn English. On the contrary, due to the fact that Finnish is a Uralic language, for learners whose L1 was Finnish it was more difficult to learn English (Odlin 2012).

CLI is a very complex cognitive phenomenon that depends on many factors, such as conceptualizations, mental associations, individual choices, etc. The following are eight findings about CLI from the period between 1960s and 1980s which also underpin its complexity (Jarvis-Pavlenko, 2008):

1. The outcome of CLI is not only errors but also positive effects such as accelerated language acquisition. Similarities and differences between the L2 (recipient language) and L1 (source language) often lead to either overproduction or underproduction of structures. CLI also often occurs as preferences for using one structure over the other, e.g. the use of one word verbs instead of phrasal verbs.
2. CLI can also affect the route (stages and sequences) of language acquisition.
3. On the one hand, easily perceivable differences between the recipient and source language may lead to faster acquisition, not only to errors. On the other hand, similarities may cause mental associations between structures in the source and recipient language.
4. CLI does not necessarily decrease linearly as competence and proficiency in L2 (recipient language) increases. Some CLI appears only at a later stage of L2 learning when learners have acquired enough to detect similarities between the two languages.
5. There are different types of CLI: forward transfer (from L1 to L2), reverse transfer (from L2 to L1), and lateral transfer (from L2 to L3).
6. CLI is affected by different factors that determine the transferability of a structure.
7. CLI affects not only language forms but also meanings and functions.
8. Learners' individual differences also cause differences in CLI, different types of CLI may appear, and also to different extent (Jarvis-Pavlenko, 2008).

2.3. Transferability

Research of CLI took a different turn when the focus shifted from transfer to transferability. CLI mostly depends on interlingual identifications, that is, whether learners perceive something as similar in L1 and L2 or not. Linguists claim that there are different constraints which influence

interlingual identifications. A "constraint could be anything that prevents a learner either from noticing a similarity in the first place or from deciding that similarity is a real and helpful one" (Odlin, 2012:454). Memory, perception and other general cognitive capacities may also function as constrains.

Kellerman (1983) synthesized previous studies on transferability and developed two general constrains that influence transfer: psychotypology and transferability. On the one hand, psychotypology refers to the type of transfer which is more likely to occur when the L2 user notices the similarities between L1 and L2. On the other hand, transferability stands for the idea that structures that are identified by the L2 speaker as marked or language-specific are less likely to transfer (Jarvis-Pavlenko, 2008). Andersen (1983) proposed the *transfer to somewhere* principle according to which a structure is likely to be transferred only if there is a similar counterpart in L2 or if it fits into the natural acquisition principles, that is, there is "a place" where it can be transferred. Kellerman's and Andersen's ideas are similar in that both take into consideration the similarities between languages and the universal language acquisition principles. Most of the CLI studies support Kellerman's constraints and Andersen's transfer to somewhere principle (Jarvis-Pavlenko, 2008). Kellerman has also developed his *transfer to nowhere* principle according to which transfer may occur also when "there might seem to be no basis for an interlingual identification" (Odlin, 2012:455). He proposed this principle because he doubted the acceptability of the transfer to somewhere principle in all cases. The transfer to nowhere principle suggests that "there can be transfer which is not licensed by similarity to L2, and where the way the L2 works may very largely go unheeded" (Kellerman, 1995:137 as cited in Odlin, 2012).

Nowadays the focus of CLI studies is no longer on whether L1 plays a role in L2 acquisition but on how, where, why and what is transferred (Villanueva, 1990). Arabski (2006) argues that language transfer in foreign language learning depends on a series of factors. These are:

- kind of language contact,
- the stage of interlanguage development
- structures
- age of learners
- learner's focus

CLI depends on the kind of language contact, its intensity and type depend on the languages that are in contact, eg. how far they are genetically. If the two languages are closer to each other

genetically there are more reference points for transfer to occur, both positive and negative. However, some may claim that, for example, English speakers will learn French more easily not because the two languages are linguistically not distant but because the two cultures are more similar, than, for e.g., English and Chinese. Ringbom's (1987) research on Finnish and Swedish speakers learning English proved nevertheless that even though the Finnish and Swedish cultures are very similar their speakers still show very different degree of success in learning English due to the linguistic distance between them (Odlin, 2012). Also, cross-linguistic similarity does not mean that all the learners of the particular L1 will identify and take advantage of the similarities.

Another factor which effects transfer is the stage of interlanguage development. Arabski (2006) gives the example of Poles learning Russian. As the two languages are similar, Poles rely on their mother tongue in acquiring the new language, however, they also make many errors due to the same strategy. In case of Poles learning English negative transfer will not occur at the beginning of language learning because at that stage students only imitate. Later transfer errors become more frequent until students arrive at advanced level, when these errors start to decrease, that is, "L2 structures become well established and have become resistant to L1 influence" (Arabski, 2006:14). There are also some structures which are more likely to be transferred than others, however, and they depend on the languages concerned. In the case of the earlier mentioned example of the Polish learners word order, tense system and lexis would be transferred, as well as pronunciation which is very commonly transferred from any language. Also, the most common feature of negative transfer is simplification. For example, in the case of pronunciation, if there is no L1 phoneme which could be the counterpart of an L2 phoneme, it will simply be substituted by the closest L1 phoneme.

Yet another factor affecting transfer is age. Young L2 learners experience less transfer, especially if they have not reached puberty when their L1 system is not strong enough to influence their L2. It is important to mention here the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which suggests that there is a "cut-off point in a person's life beyond which it becomes impossible to achieve nativelike proficiency in another language" (Odlin, 2012:468). This hypothesis proved to be not completely true in all cases. Pronunciation is most frequently mentioned as a strong proof for CPH. Some studies (see Bongaerts, 1999), however, proved that there is no difference between the pronunciation of learners who acquired L2 at a later point in their life and those who acquired it earlier, as children. On the other hand, there are studies that found age differences in pronunciation of immigrants (see Flege 1999, Murray and MacKay, 1995). All in all, some studies support the CPH, while some also suggest that there is no clear-cut point in a person's

life at any age after which achieving nativelike proficiency becomes difficult or even impossible (Odlin, 2012**)**. The relation between age and CLI is likely to be more complex and needs further examination.

Also, structures which are deeply rooted in L1 are more likely to be transferred. Arabski (2006) refers to Kellerman (1983) who claims that marked L1 structures are less likely to be transferred than unmarked, therefore idiomatic expressions for example are more rarely transferred to L2, though they are not completely uncommon. For example, Sridhar and Sridhar (1986) found that speakers in India and Nigeria often create idioms in English based on their L1 (Odlin, 2012). Hungarian-Croatian bilinguals also tend to translate Croatian idiomatic expressions and proverbs into Hungarian and vice-versa. Finally, if students concentrate on the meaning rather than on applying the grammatical rules it is more likely for transfer to occur.

Predictions about possible instances of transfer should be made very cautiously. Similarities between the L1 and L2 do not necessarily lead to more successful L2 acquisition, while differences between the languages do not necessarily mean difficulties in L2 learning. Followers of Contrastive Analyses often predicted instances of CLI based on the differences and similarities of the recipient and source language which later did not materialize. Another problem in making predictions is that individuals may choose from different options. Odlin (2012) gives the example of a study of spatial reference by Jarvis and Odlin (2000) who found that Finnish learners of English used four possibilities for the same structure. In writing a summary of the movie Modern Times for the structure *sit on/in the grass* they used *sit the grass, sit to the grass, sit on the grass* or *sit in the grass.* Based on cross-linguistic analysis linguists may predict that Finnish learners of English will have difficulties with prepositions due to the fact that there are no prepositions in Finnish (instead there is a wide range of inflectional morphemes like in Hungarian) but they are not able to predict exactly which option learners of English will choose. Their choice may also depend on what they personally identify as similar between their L1 and L2 (Odlin, 2012).

2.4. Cross-linguistic Influence Research Methods

In the last thirty years two methods have been proven to be efficient in cross-linguistic influence research. The first one was originally used by Selinker (1969). It ”relies on comparisons of the use of a particular structure in the native language, the target language, and the interlanguage” (Odlin, 2012:445). Selinker investigated the placement of adverbs with learners of English

whose mother tongue was Hebrew. In his interviews with schoolchildren he found that Hebrew learners of English often put the adverb where it would stand in Hebrew. He also interviewed native speakers in Hebrew and English and found that the interlanguage data frequently resembled the word order of Hebrew more than the word order of English. The second method relies on "a comparison of how learners with two (or more) native languages do with regard to a target language structure present in one L1 but absent in the other" (Odlin, 2012:445).

3. The Acquisition of Articles in ESL

The article system in English is one of the most difficult structural elements for non-native speakers of English to acquire, especially if their mother tongue does not possess articles. Learners also pay less attention to function words than to content words. The English articles are mostly divided into three categories: indefinite article *a, an*, the definite article *the* and the zero article. Zero article is further divided into two types: zero and null. The former occurs with nonspecific or generic uncountable and plural nouns, e.g. cats, water. The null article can be found with certain singular count and proper nouns, e.g. Madrid, lunch (Ekiert, 2005). In this paper, however, they will be analyzed together. Master (2002) lists three factors why the article system is difficult for ESL learners to acquire (Ekiert, 2005:1):

- "articles are among the most frequently occurring function words in English, making continuous rule application difficult over an extended stretch of discourse;
- function words are normally unstressed and consequently are very difficult, if not impossible, for a non-native speakers to discern, thus affecting the availability of input in the spoken mode;
- the article system stacks multiple functions onto a single morpheme, a considerable burden for the learner, who generally looks for a one-form-one-function correspondence in navigating the language until the advanced stages of acquisition".

Huebner (1983) classified the context in which articles appear into four categories (Table 1). He devided NPs into four different categories according to discourse features – whether a noun is a specific referent (+/- SR) and referentiality – whether it is assumed as known to the hearer (+/- HK). In Type 1 (-SR, +HK) there are generics which are marked with *a*, *the* or *zero.* In Type 2 (+SR, +HK) are referential definite and are marked with *the.* In Type 3 (+SR, -HK) are nouns which are mentioned for the first time, whose referent is identifiable to the speaker but not for the listener. In such cases *a* and *zero* are used. In Type 4 (-SK, -HK) are nonreferentials, i.e.

nouns that are nonspecific for both the speaker and the listener. In this type of NPs also *a* and *zero* are used. Finally, Type 5 includes idiomatic expressions, proper names and conventional uses (Ekiert 2005) and it is not part of Huebner's classification. As Marthynchuk (2010) points out, some of the categories are quite ambiguous. For example, *foreigners* in Type 4 may also be understood as foreigners in general under Type 1.

Table 1: Environments for the appearance of a, the and zero article (Adopted from Ekiert, 2005)

Features	Environment	Articles	Examples
Type 1 (-SR, +HK)	Generic nouns	*a, the, zero*	*(Zero) Fruit* flourishes in the valley. *The Grenomian* is an excitable person. *A paper clip* comes handy.
Type 2 (+SR, +HK)	Referential definites Previous mention Specified by entailment Specified by definition Unique in al contexts Unique in a given context	*the*	Pass me *the pen.* *The idea* of coming to the US was… I found a book. *The book was*… *The first person* to walk on the moon…
Type 3 (+SR, -HK)	Referential indefinites First-mention nouns	*a, zero*	Chris approached me carrying *a dog.* I keep sending *(zero) messages* to him.
Type 4 (-SR, - HK)	Nonreferential nouns Attributive indefinites Nonspecific indefinites	*a, zero*	Alice is *an accountant.* I guess I should buy *a new car*. *(Zero) Foreigners* would come up with a better solution.
Type 5	Idioms Proper nouns Other conventional uses	*a, the, zero*	*All of a sudden*, he woke up. *In the 1950s*, there weren't many cars. His family is now living *(zero) hand to mouth.*

Some linguists believe that there is very little positive transfer from the L1s which possess the article system in acquiring a new language that also has this structure. For example, Spanish learners of English tend to omit the article in sentences where it is present in their L1 as well (see Schumann 1978). Based on such errors it was suggested that the Spanish acquire the English article system due to sufficient exposure and not to the facilitating effect of their L1. Many other studies, however, prove that there is positive transfer between L1 and L2 if both have articles (Odlin 1989). In his study Master (1987) also stated that articles are acquired differently depending on whether the learner's mother tongue also has them. He found that *the* emerges early while *a* appears later in L2 acquisition. There is a phenomenon which Master calls *the*-flooding when learners overgeneralize the use of the definite article. Thomas (1989) found that

learners also overgeneralize the use of the *zero* article in all proficiency levels. Master also found that learners whose L1 does not have articles overuse the *zero* article. Some also proposed that they acquire the *zero* article first, however, it is difficult to tell whether learners use this article or simply avoid the use of any article. Research done by Master also showed that learners used the *zero* article almost always correctly both in low and high proficiency levels. Liu and Gleason (2002) suggest that the overuse of *zero* article and underuse of *the* is due to the late acquisition of these two articles (Ekiert, 2005).

4. Indefiniteness and Definiteness in Croatian

Even though Croatian does not have articles just like other Slavic languages, it can also mark definiteness and indefinites by other means such as word order, verbal aspect, demonstratives, lexical marking and different forms of adjectives. Concerning word order, new information is positioned toward the end of the sentence (+SR, -HK):

U trgovinu ušao je čovjek.

To store entered man

A man entered the store.

Though, this sentence can be ambiguous and it would be more unequivocal if lexical marking (jedan) were added.

On the other hand, if the NP is at the beginning of the sentence, it expresses definiteness (+SR, +HK):

Čovjek je ušao u trgovinu.

Man entered to store

The man entered the store.

In Croatian if speakers use imperfective they will refer to an indefinite noun (-SR) while using perfective verb they will refer to a definite noun (+SR):

Čitao sam knjigu.

Imperfective I read book

I read a book.

Pročitao sam knjigu.

Perfective I read book

I read the book.

Croatian also uses demonstrative pronouns *ovaj/ovi, taj/ti, onaj/oni* to express definiteness. Finally, using the numeral *jedan* meaning 'one' speakers of Slavic languages can also express indefiniteness (Ekiert 2005, Martynchuk 2010, Zergollern-Miletić 2014).

Concerning the use of adjectives, if adjectives which describe permanent characteristics are used and they answer the question *kakav* 'which', they express indefiniteness (Zergollern-Miletić 2014):

Kupio sam jedan šešir *smeđ* i jedan *siv*.

I bougth one hat brown and one grey.

I bought a brown and a grey hat.

If the adjective describes a changing, temporary characteristic and answers the question *koji* 'which', it expresses definiteness.

Smeđi sam ubrzo izgubio, a *sivi* nosim i danas.

The brown I lost fast but the grey I wear still today.

The brown one I lost fast but the grey one I still wear today.

Unlike Slavic languages, Hungarian being an Ugro-Finnic language does have articles. It also has definite and indefinite articles. There is one indefinite article, *egy* 'a', and two varieties of the definite article: *a, az.* Since they function similarly to the English articles they will not be described in detail.

5. The Study

5.1. Method

Participants: The participants of this cross-linguistic research are 140 seventh grader elementary school students from a Croatian school from Osijek and a Hungarian school from Budapest[1]. They are the same age, 13 years old. 71 students' mother tongue is Hungarian while 69 students' is Croatian. It is important to mention that in most of the Hungarian schools foreign language learning starts in fourth grade, however, by the time they finish the eighth grade they are supposed to reach A1-A2 level, depending on the intensity of foreign language learning (Nemzeti Alaptanterv). Croatian students reach the same level, A2 in eight years (Nacionalni okvirni kurukulum) starting learning English in first grade. In this school in Budapest students from all classes of the particular generation are divided into five groups according to their level of knowledge. Therefore, there might be a big difference between the knowledge of the lowest and highest level groups (Local curriculum). This school runs classes from seventh till twelfth grade, i.e. students are between 13 and 18 years. By the time they finish school at the age of 18 they should reach B1-B2 level.

Test 1 included two question about the learners, namely, whether they learn English outside the school and what their grade was in sixth grade. The answers to the first question show that only 10% of the students learn English outside the school, all of them Hungarians. They make up 20% of all the Hungarian students. On the one hand, this may also explain their better performance on the test. Concerning the distribution of the grades, 91.2% of the students in sixth grade had either 4 or 5. Thus, the difference in grades most probably did not influence the overall results of the research.

Methodology: Many methods have been developed in the last thirty years in CLI research. However, many of them lack complete reliability. There is a methodological problem concerning the use of articles as well. Speakers of languages which use articles may or may not have an advantage in using articles in learning a new language. Researchers may take any correct article use in L2 as positive transfer from L2, however, sceptics may argue that the learners success is only the result of similar acquisition strategies in L1 and L2. This methodological problem is easily solved by comparing learners whose L1 uses articles to those whose does not have this

[1]I would like to express my deepest gratitude to teachers Doroteja Vojedilov and Katalin Elekes for their invaluable support and help in recruiting and testing study participants.

structure (Odlin, 2012). This study therefore compares the use of articles by Hungarian and Croatian learners of English.

Instruments: Two types of tests were used. Test 1 (see Appendix 1 and 2) is a productive test consisting of ten sentences in which students were asked to translate the missing parts of the sentences, either the whole NP or its premodification, usually an article with an adjective from their mother tongue into English. Students were not asked to translate the whole sentence in order to save teachers' time and also to prevent students from focusing on aspects that are not part of the present study. Also, they were asked to translate parts of sentences (either from Croatian or Hungarian), not just fill in the text with the missing article so that they would not focus on articles. For instance:

Grad je predivan navečer.

_____ is beautiful in the evening.

Gyönyörű a város este.

_____ is beautiful in the evening.

Test 2 (see Appendix 3) intended to test comprehension and was identical for both groups of students. It consisted of sixteen multiple choice sentences where all four articles were offered as solutions and students were asked to circle the correct article. For instance:

2. What is the longest river in … world?

   a) a b) an c) the d) –

Thus, the two tests included altogether 26 sentences for testing students' knowledge about articles, plus two questions about their foreign language learning process. In order to examine whether transfer, either positive or negative occurs with Hungarian learners of English in half of the sentences the use of articles in English equalled the Hungarian use, while in the other half of the sentences it differed, or completely different structures were used. There was nearly an equal number of sentences for each article: 8 sentences *a/an*, 10 sentences *the*, 9 sentences *zero* article. There is one sentence (sentence 8 in Test 2: Do you like … music?) for which both *the* and *zero* article could be correct.

Procedure: Testing was carried out by six teachers, four teachers from the school in Budapest and two from the school in Osijek. First, Test 1 was administered. Before filling in the task

students' attention was not drawn to the articles. After students solved Test 1 and teachers collected them, Test 2 was administered.

In order to know which two tests were solved by the same student they were asked to use codes consisting of numbers and/or letters. The data was entered and analyzed in the statistical software SPSS 22.0.

Aims: This study aims to research whether there is any relevant relationship between languages that possess the article system and those languages that do not possess it in terms of language acquisition and from the L2 learners point of view.

Hypothesis:

1. The article system is acquired more successfully by Hungarian learners of English than Croatian learners of English because their L1 also possesses articles.
2. Positive transfer will occur in NPs where Hungarian and English use the same article, therefore Hungarians will have more accurate answers than Croatians.
3. Negative transfer will occur in NPs where Hungarian and English do not use the same article, or where Hungarian uses a completely different structure, therefore they will have more incorrect answers than Croatians.

5.2. Results and Discussion

The sentences used in the two tests can be classified into five categories (see Table 2). Sentence 8 in Test 2 may have two correct answers, therefore it is classified into two categories. The distribution of articles in the two tests are summarized in Table 3.

Table 2: Classification of NPs according to Huebner's (1983) categories

	Type 1 **-SR, +HK**	Type 2 **+SR, +HK**	Type 3 **+SR, -HK**	Type 4 **-SR, -HK**	Type 5
Test 1	3, 5, 10	1, 2, 6, 9	8	7	4
Test 2	3, 4,7, 8, 9, 11, 14	2, 8, 12, 16	6, 10, 15	13	1, 5

Table 3: Distribution of NPs according to the articles

	a/an	**the**	***zero* article**
Test 1	3, 8	1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10	5, 7
Test 2	3, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15	2, 8, 12, 16	1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13

5.2.1. Test 1

Test 1 investigates whether there is any CLI involving production. There is an enormous difference between Hungarians and Croatians using the *zero* article in this test. Out of the total 1370 answers in the first test Croatians used it 428 times, while Hungarians used it only 175 times. There were individual tests in which Croatian students did not use a single article, that is, at the productive level their performance was very low or even zero, while in Test 2 at the comprehension level they were able to choose correct answers. In order to test whether the difference was statistically significant a chi-square test was used. The chi-square test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (N=1370, chi-square p=0,00, $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$). The phenomenon of the overuse of the *zero* article could be called *zero-flooding* compared to the *the-flooding.* The reason for this variation may be that on one hand, Croatian students were focused on the content words in translation and due to the fact that there are no articles in Croatian they simply ignored the English article system. Zergollern-Miletić (2014) also suggests the same adding that this is a clear evidence of the fact that Croatian learners of English are not aware of the semantic connection between the noun and the article. Hungarians, on the other hand, had articles in the Hungarian sentences as well, that is, they usually had to translate two words from Hungarian. This made them aware of the need of articles in English also.

Table 4: Percentage of correct answers by NPs and L1

	The city	**The key**	**A shark**	**The USA**	**0 flowers**
Type	+SR, +HK	+SR, +HK	-SR, +HK	Proper noun	-SR, +HK
HUN	98.6%	95.5%	61.4%	87.3%	85.9%
CRO	18%	62.7%	41.8%	36.2%	98.5%
Total	58.3%	79.1%	51.6%	61.75%	92.2%

	The correct answer	**0 gold**	**A terrible**	**The radio**	**The piano**
Type	+SR, +HK	-SR, -HK	+SR, -HK	+SR, +HK	-SR, + HK
HUN	65.7%	19.7%	67.6%	90.1%	64.3%
CRO	15.2%	82.1%	40.6%	50%	54.7%
Total	40.45%	50.9%	54.1%	70.05%	59.5%

As can be seen in Table 4, Hungarians performed best (over 90% correct answer) in Type 2 (+SR, +HK) sentences (the city, the key and the radio) They are very similar to each other and they all use the same article in Hungarian. The only sentence of this type in which Hungarian learners of English performed unexpectedly badly is NP 6 (the correct answer). This may be due to the adjective in front of the noun. Croatians, on the other hand, had the most correct answers where *zero* article was needed, 98.5% in the NP 5 (0 Flowers) and 82.1% in Gold. Due to the *zero-flooding* phenomenon observed for the Croatian students in the first test, their good performance should probably not be assigned to their good command of the *zero* article, but should rather be attributed to the omission of articles in general, at least at the productive level.

There were five NPs (the city, the key, the USA, the correct answer, the radio) in which the use of articles in Hungarian and English was the same (HUN=ENG), therefore positive CLI was expected to occur there. The positive transfer in these NPs is evident in the high average of the

correct answers by Hungarians: 87.44%. In case of the highlighted NPs where the use of the articles was different, the average of correct answers was only 59.78%, i.e., negative transfer occurred. These results prove that the second and third hypotheses of this paper are valid, i.e., positive transfer does occur in sentences where Hungarian and English use the same article, therefore Hungarians have more accurate answers than Croatians; negative transfer does occur in sentences where Hungarian and English do not use the same article, or where Hungarian uses a completely different structure. In these sentences Croatians have more correct answers than Hungarians, 63.54%. Also, the total percentage of correct answers by Hungarians in Test 1 is much higher than the Croatians': students from Budapest had 73.51% correct answers while Croatians had only 50%. These results underpin the first hypothesis at the level of production, namely that the Hungarian learners of English acquire the English article system more successfully than Croatians due to their L1 article system.

Table 5 summarizes the correct answers by each article according to the L1. It also proves that Croatian learners of English were more successful in sentences where *zero* article was necessary. They had twice as many correct answers in those sentences than Hungarians. Students from Budapest, on the contrary, had twice as many correct answers where the definite article was correct. In total, Hungarian and Croatian learners of English seem to have the most difficulties with the indefinite article, while they performed the best with the *zero* article.

Table 5: Percentage of correct answers by articles

	a(n)	**the**	**zero**	***Total***
HUN	64.5%	71.65%	52.8%	*62.98%*
CRO	41.2%	39.63%	90.3%	*57.04%*
Total	*52.85%*	*55.64%*	*71.55%*	*60.01%*

5.2.2. Analysis of the NPs from Test 1

1. **The city is beautiful in the evening.**

For this sentence (+SR, +HK) there are 139 answers, out of which 62.2% is the definite article *the.* 79.3% of the correct answers were given by Hungarian learners of English, which is not

surprising since Hungarian also uses the definite article in this sentence. Croatians, on the other hand, used the *zero* article in 73.9%, and only they used this article. All Hungarian students used the correct, definite article *the.* Only one Hungarian students used the indefinite article. According to chi-square test this difference between Hungarian and Croatian students is significant (N=139, chi-square p=0.000, p<0.05, p<0.01).

2. **Please, put the key on the table.**

This sentence is very similar to the previous one (+SR, +HK), therefore similar results were expected. Somewhat more students, 79.1% gave the correct answer. However, a considerably bigger percentage of Croatian learners of English, 62.7% used the definite article *the.* Only 34.3% omitted the article. Only 4.5% of the Hungarians used the incorrect indefinite or *zero* article. The use of articles in this sentence is the same in Hungarian and English. This difference between the two groups of students is also statistically significant (N=134, chi-square p=0.000, p<0.05, p<0.01).

3. **Have you ever seen a shark?**

This is the first sentence (-SR, +HK) in which the use of the article does not agree in Hungarian and English, therefore CLI is expected here in the answers of the Hungarian learners. The Hungarian equivalent of this sentence does not use any article. It is not surprising, though, that 37.1% of the Hungarians used *zero* article. Croatians, nevertheless, used the correct indefinite article still less often than Hungarians. Only 41.8% used the appropriate determiner, while 52.2% used the *zero* article. There were altogether five students who used the definite article. Even though there is a slight equalization in the use of the determiners, the difference is still significant (N=137; chi-square p=0.044; p<0.05).

4. **Sara is going to the USA this summer.**

This sentence is grouped under Type 5 in Huebner's (1983) table because it involves a proper noun. Both Hungarian and English use the definite article before *USA.* This is visible from the Hungarians' answers: 62 students answered correctly while 9 used the *zero* article. As was the case with the previous sentences, Croatians used the *zero* article here also more often than students from Budapest. They used it 44 times, that is, in 63.8% of the cases and used the appropriate determiner 25 times, that

is, in 36.2% of the cases. Altogether 62.1% of the answers were correct, again, most of the correct answers were given by the Hungarians. The difference in this sentence is also significant (N=140; chi-square p=0.000; p<0.05; p<0.01).

5. **I don't like flowers. What about you?**

This sentence (-SR, +HK) also differs in Hungarian and English, though, this is not obvious from the results (N=139; chi-square p=0.009; p<0.05; p<0.01). 85.9% of the Hungarian learners of English used *zero* article. This may be due to the type of the construction which is probably acquired as a chunk. Still, there were 10 students from Budapest who probably translated literally the L1 sentence and therefore used the definite article. Croatians performed extremely well in this translation: 98.5% of the answers were correct. It is visible from the previous sentences, this may be attributed to Croatians' overuse of the *zero* article.

6. **Congratulations, that's the correct answer!**

This sentence was intended to test the use of the definite article (+SR, +HK). However, it turned out that some may interpret it differently and use the indefinite article: *a* correct answer. This may be true only for the Croatian learners of English because the Hungarian sentence contains the definite article. Only 5 Croatians students interpreted the sentence that way and used *a*. Only 41.2% of the total given answers were correct (N=136; chi-square p=0.000; p<0.05; p<0.01). 46.3% is *zero* article, again, mostly given by the Croatians. 65.7% of the Hungarian students answered correctly, which may be due to literal translation.

7. **Gold is yellow.**

This sentence (-SR, -HK) is different in article use in Hungarian and English. Hungarian uses the Hungarian definite article *a* in front of the noun. This is the explanation of the overproduction of the determiner *the* by the Hungarians (78.9%). On the other hand, Croatians overused the *zero* article and only 16.4% gave the correct answer. Altogether, only 48.6% of the answers were correct. There is statistically significant difference between the answers given by Hungarian learners of English and Croatian learners of English (N=138; chi-square p=0.000; p<0.05; p<0.01).

8. **I have a terrible headache.**

The Hungarian counterpart of this sentence (+SR, -HK) does not use any article. Therefore, negative transfer is expected from the Hungarian learners of English. Possible negative transfer

could be identified in case of 30.9% of the Hungarian answers, while the rest of the answers involved the indefinite article. Croatians performed relatively well: 40.6% of the students used *a* and 59.4% still overused the *zero* article. Nevertheless, this difference between the Hungarians' and Croatians' answers is also statistically significant (N=132; chi-square p=0.003; p<0.05; p<0.01).

9. Could you turn on the radio, please?

In the second to the last sentence (+SR, +HK) 70.8% of the answers were correct. The definite article was used in exactly half of the Croatians' answers, whereas the *zero* article was found in 48.5% cases. Since the Hungarian sentence uses also the definite article, it is not surprising that students from Budapest translated correctly the missing part of the sentence, in 90.1% cases. These results prove positive CLI. There is statistically significant difference between the answers given by Hungarians and Croatians (N=137; chi-square p=0.000; p<0.05; p<0.01).

10. My brother plays the piano.

The last sentence (-SR, +HK) uses a completely different structure in Hungarian, which in addition does not include any article. 34.3% of the Hungarian answers therefore used the *zero* article, which is still less than in the case of the Croatians (47.8%). 64.3% of the Hungarians used the definite article. It is important to note that there is a different construction in Hungarian which means the same: *A bátyám játszik a zongorán*., literally 'My brother plays on the piano'. There were 8 students out of 70 who translated the sentence this way, even though the sentence in the task did not include the article. Nevertheless, the awareness of the other way of expressing the same meaning might have helped them give the correct answer. Croatian students, on the other hand, answered correctly in 44.8% of the cases. The difference between the answers of the two nationalities is not statistically significant (N=137; chi-square p=0.076; p<0.05).

5.3. Test 2

This multiple-choice test intended to examine students' performance at the receptive level. It consists of 16 sentences out of which 8 use the same article in English and Hungarian and 8 which use a different one.

Table 6 summarizes the correct answers from all the 16 NPs of Test 2. The highlighted cells show the four NPs in which Croatians performed better than Hungarians. Two of these NPs (0 winter and a mouse) show very strong CLI on the Hungarian learners of English. The other two

(an hour and the online store) NPs, even though equal in the use of the articles in English and Hungarian, caused difficulties for the students from Budapest. Still, the presence of the article system in Hungarians undoubtedly facilitates the acquisition of the same system for Hungarian learners of English. The total percentage of correct answers, however, does not differ a lot. 73.34% of the answers given by Hungarians and 70.27% of the answers given by Croatians were correct. CLI gets lost in total statistics, but it can be detected at the level of individual NPs.

Negative CLI can be observed in all the NPs which differ in the use of articles in Hungarian and English (0 tea, a job, 0 music, 0 winter, 0 cats, 0 snakes, a mouse), except NP 15 (a storm), for which it was already stated above that the *there is* structure is successfully acquired due to its frequency. The average of the correct answers in the NPs with negative CLI by Hungarians is 61.71% while by Croatians it is 62.03%. The third hypothesis of this paper, i.e., negative transfer will occur in NPs where Hungarian and English do not use the same article, or where Hungarian uses a completely different structure, therefore they will have more incorrect answers than Croatians therefore proves to be true, though there is not a significant difference between the two groups of students. The low difference between the two nationalities may be due to the different level of difficulty of the sentences as well.

In almost all the sentences where the two languages equal (HUN=ENG) in the use of the determiners Hungarians had over 90% correct answers. Croatians performed under 80% in most of these sentences. The average of the correct answers in these sentences by Hungarians is 84.96%, while by Croatians it is 78.5%. The second hypothesis of this paper is thus valid, i.e., positive transfer occurred in the sentences where the article system functions the same way which results in the Hungarians having more correct answers than the Croatians.

To sum up, students from Budapest had 84.96% correct answers where the articles were the same in their L1 and English and only 61.71% correct answers where the articles were different. In other words, they performed 23.25% better in the HUN=ENG sentences. Croatians had 78.5% of correct answers in the sentences where the Hungarian and English sentences were equal and 62.03% where they were different, i.e., they had 16.47% more correct answers in the HUN=ENG sentences. The fact that both groups performed better in the HUN=ENG sentences suggests that those sentences were easier and contained more frequent structures than the rest of the sentences.

Table 6: The percentage of correct answers by NPs and L1

	Canada	world	Hour	Tea	London	Dog	Job	Music	Winter
HUN	97.2%	98.6%	71.4%	74.6%	97.2%	94.3%	88.7%	78.9%	28.2%
CRO	89.9%	97.1%	73.5%	58.8%	79.7%	78.3%	85.1%	61.8%	50%
Total	*93.6*	*97.9%*	*72.5%*	*66.7%*	*88.5%*	*86.3%*	*86.9%*	*70.4%*	*39.1%*

	Island	Cats	Online store	Snakes	Mouse	Storm	Gun	***Total***
HUN	95.7%	45.7%	40.8%	73.2%	8.6%	95.8%	84.5%	*73.34%*
CRO	78.3%	45.5%	51.5%	63.2%	49.3%	82.6%	79.7%	*70.27%*
Total	*87.1%*	*45.6%*	*46%*	*68.3%*	*28.5%*	*89.3%*	*82.1%*	

Table 7 summarizes the percentage of the correct answers by L1 and the type of the article. Students gave the less correct answers in sentences where the *zero* article was required. The Croatian students performance (64.13% correct answers) proves that their excellent performance in the first test (90.3%) is not due to their good command of the *zero* article but rather indicates the omission of the articles in general at the productive level. Balenović found that Croatian students often omit the indefinite article while describing a picture. She claimed that the reason for this is that students focus on the name of the objects they want to use in the sentence and therefore forget about the articles. Zergollern-Miletić, however, says that this only proves that Croatian students are not aware of the semantic connection between nouns and articles (Zergollern-Miletić 2014).

Table 7: The percentage of correct answers by L1 and articles

	a(n)	the	Zero	***Total***
HUN	75.75%	74.63%	70.71%	*73.7%*
CRO	74.52%	76.1%	64.13%	*71.58%*
Total	*75.14%*	*75.37%*	*67.42%*	*72.64%*

There were two similar sentences in Test 1 and Test 2 in the use of the *zero* article after *like:* Flowers and Tea. Their comparison tests whether the Croatians used the *zero* article because they

were aware of its correct usage or they just avoided the use of any article at the productive level. In Test 1 they chose the correct article in 98,5% of their answers, while at the level of comprehension in Test 2 they circled the *zero* article in 58,8% of the cases. This huge difference in results proves the existence of *zero-flooding* at the productive level.

5.3.1. Analysis of the Sentences from Test 2

1. **Montreal is a large city in … Canada.**

There is little difference in the performance of Hungarian and Croatian students in the first sentence (Type 5: NP with a proper noun). 97.2% of the Hungarians and 89.9% of the Croatians answered it correctly. The Hungarian translation of the sentence does not contain an article, therefore, the Hungarians correct answers could be assigned to positive CLI. However, since Croatians solved the sentence as successfully as Hungarians did, it is obvious that the results are not connected to CLI. They are probably the result of the general acquisition process of the articles by learners of English. Six out of 69 students from Osijek chose the definite article, while only 2 students out of 71 chose the same answer from Budapest. There is no significant difference between the Hungarian and the Croatian results ($N=140$; chi-square $p=0.188$; $p<0.05$; $p<0.01$).

2. **What is the longest river in … world?**

Similarly to the previous sentence, students with different L1 performed fairly equally. 98.6% of Hungarians and 97.1% of Croatians chose the correct answer. This sentence (+SR, +HK) contains also the definite article in Hungarian. Since there is practically no difference between the two groups of students it is clear that the presence or absence of the article system in the students' L1 did not play any role in choosing the answer.

3. **How much time do we have? Just … hour.**

The percentage of the correct answers in this sentence (-SR, -HK) is 71.4% by the Hungarians and 73.5% by the Croatians. This sentence also proves that CLI is not present in the acquisition of the articles. *Zero* article was selected by four Croatians students while none of the Hungarian students chose it. Katica Balenović in her study about the use of articles in English by Croatian

elementary school students found that students often omit *an* and use only the indefinite article *a* (Zergollern-Miletić 2014). In the present research, however, only a few studets omitted *an.*

4. English people like ... tea.

The Hungarian equivalent of this sentence (-SR, +HK) contains the definite article and this may be why 21.1% of Hungarians chose the definite article. Only 11.8% of the students from Osijek chose the same answer. Despite of the difference between English and Hungarian, more Hungarians chose correctly the *zero* article (74.6%). Only 58.8% of the Croatians chose the *zero* article. It is rather interesting that 29.44% of the Croatian learners of English chose the indefinite article and only 4.2% of the Hungarians chose the same article. The difference between the Croatian and Hungarian learners' answers is statistically significant (N=139; chi-square p=0.001; p<0.05; p<0.01).

5. Do you still live in … London?

This sentence (Type 5: NP with a proper noun) is very similar to the first one, as both contain a geographical name in front of which the *zero* article is appropriate. In this sentence 97.2% of the Hungarians and 79.7% of the Croatians answered correctly. Surprisingly, 17.4% of the Croatians circled the definite article. The same answer was given by only one student from Budapest. The difference between the answers of the two groups is statistically significant (N=140; chi-square p=0.004; p<0.05; p<0.01). Figure 1 visually compares students' answers in sentence 1 and 5 according to their L1.

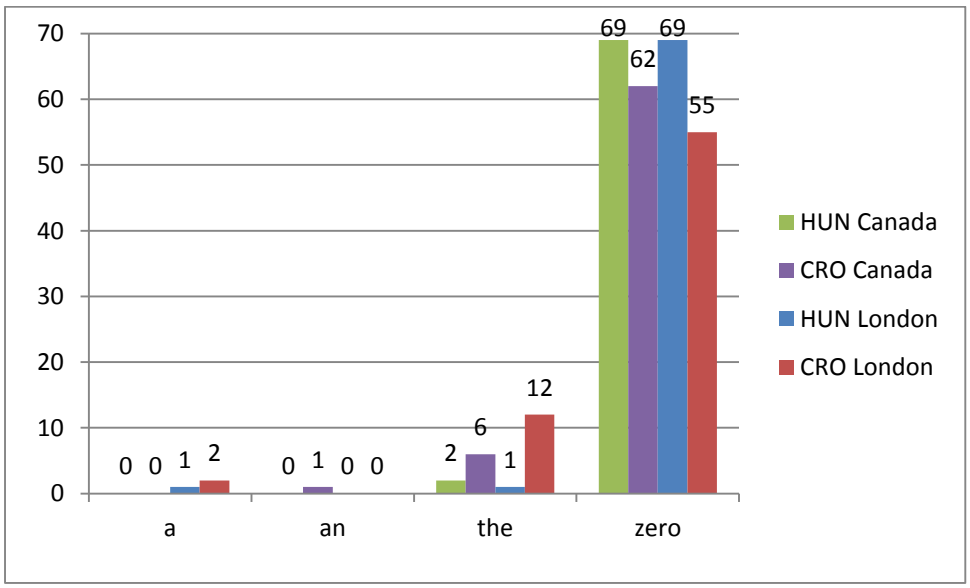

Figure 1: The number of articles chosen in NP 1 (Canada) and NP 5(London) by L1

6. John saw ... dog outside. Is it yours?

94.3% of the Hungarians students chose the correct answer in this sentence (+SR, -HK). They chose the definite article in 5.7% of the cases. Croatians, on the other hand, chose the indefinite article in 85.5% of the cases, however, they chose also *an*, not only *a.* They used the correct indefinite article in 78.3% of the cases. For Hungarians choosing the correct form of the indefinite article should not cause difficulties since there is a similar phenomenon in Hungarian involving the definite article. However, lack of attention can also result the use of the inappropriate indefinite article. In total, 86.3% of the answers were correct. Balenović found that Croatian students often use the *zero* article in front of NPs which are mentioned for the first time in the conversation (Zergollern-Miletić 2014). The present study shows different results. In this NP only one Croatian student used the *zero* article. The difference between the Hungarian and Croatian students' answers is significant (N=139; chi-square $p=0.028$; $p<0.05$).

7. You did … good job.

The Hungarian translation of this sentence (-SR, +HK) 'Szép munkát végeztél.' does not use an article. Therefore, it would not be a surprise if Hungarians used the *zero* article more often. However, they chose it in only 5.6% of the cases and used the indefinite article in 88.7% of their answers. Croatians used *a* in 85.1% of their answers, but they used the indefinite article *an* in this sentence also, in 4.5% of their answers. The difference between the results if very small, therefore it is statistically not significant. (N=138; chi-square $p=0.265$; $p<0.05$; $p<0.01$).

8. Do you like … music?

This sentence may have two solutions (-SR, +HK; +SR, +HK). Originally it was meant to test the use of *zero* article, however, the definite article may also be correct, depending on the interpretation. Most of the students interpreted it in the former way. 78.9% of the Hungarian and 61.8% of the Croatian learners of English chose the *zero* article. The Hungarian translation of the sentence 'Szereted a zenét?'/'Tetszik a zene?' contains the definite article. Thus, 16.9% of the Hungarians used the definite article, which may be the result of CLI. Croatians, on the other hand, used this determiner in 13.2% of their answers. 25% of the students from Osijek used one form of the indefinite article. Only 4.2% of the Hungarians chose the indefinite article, but they chose only *a.* The difference between the Hungarian and Croatian answers is statistically significant (N=139; chi-square $p=0.007$; $p<0.05$; $p<0.01$).

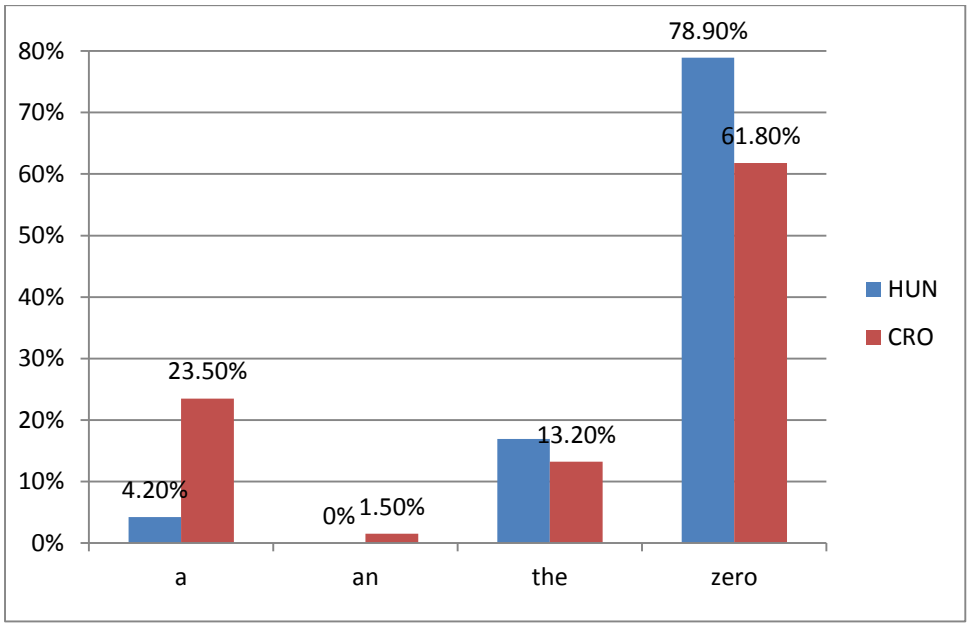

Figure 2: The percentage of articles chosen by L1 in the sentence Do you like … music?

9. … winter begins in December.

This sentence (-SR, +HK) was also intended to test CLI between Hungarian and English because Hungarian uses a definite article before the noun 'A tél decemberben kezdődik'. CLI proves to be very strong in this sentence. 69% of the Hungarians chose *the* while only 36,8% of the Croatians opted for the same answer. The most correct answers were given by students from Osijek, 50% of them chose the *zero* article whereas only 28.2% of the Hungarian students chose it. 13.3% of the Croatian students opted for the indefinite article and 2.8% of the Hungarians chose the indefinite article *a*. The L1 influence prevents Hungarian learners of English from using the correct article in this sentence. The difference between the two nationalities is significant (N=139; chi-square $p=0.001$; $p<0.05$; $p<0.01$).

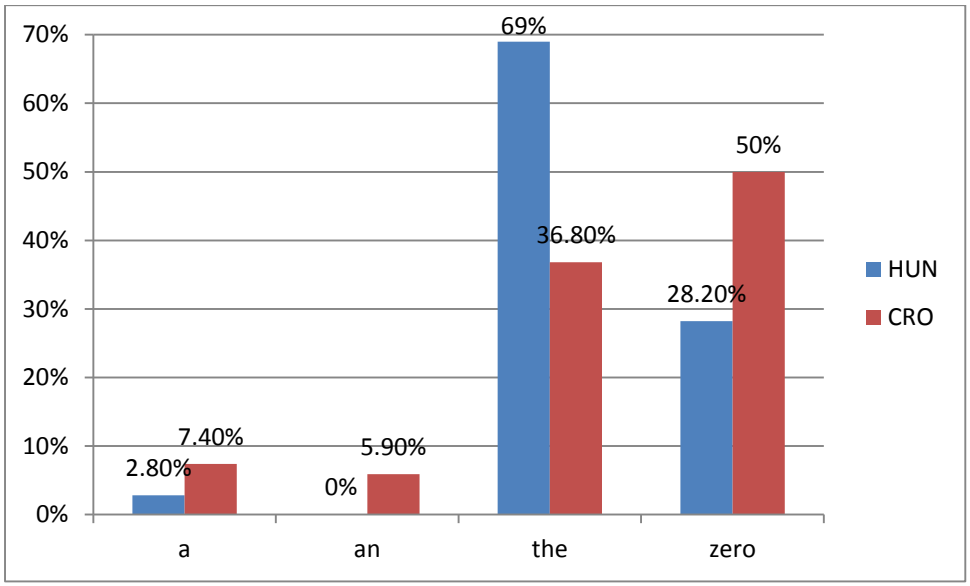

Figure 3: The percentage of articles chosen by L1 in the sentence … winter begins in December.

10. Britain is … island.

In this sentence (-SR, +HK) 87.1% of all the answers were correct. Hungarians chose the correct answers in 95.7% of the cases, and Croatians in 78.3% cases. Students from Osijek decided on the definite article in 14.5% of the cases, whereas the students from Budapest chose it only once, which is 1.4% of all their answers. In this sentence both groups of students chose both forms of the indefinite article. They chose the inappropriate *a* approximately in the same number of sentences. The number of students who used *a* is still very low, thus, Balenović's finding that Croatian students ommit *an* is not applicable for the present study (Zergollern-Miletić 2014). The difference between the Croatian and Hungarian students' answers, however, is statistically significant (N=139; chi-square $p=0.012$; $p<0.05$; $p<0.01$).

11. … cats like milk.

The Hungarian translation of this sentence (-SR, +HK) includes the definite article 'A macskák szeretik a tejet.'. Thus, 51.4% of the students whose L1 is Hungarian chose the definite article. Croatians chose the same answer in 34.8% cases. The two nationalities selected the correct answer in almost equal percentage of the cases, Hungarians 45.7%, Croatians 45.5%. However, Croatians opted for the indefinite article in 19.7% of the cases, which is a very high score compared to the Hungarians, who chose *a/an* in only 2.8%. If only the proportion of the correct and incorrect answers of the two nationalities is compared (45.7% of the Hungarian answers 45.5% of the Croatian answers were correct), there is no difference at all. Nonetheless, if the

distribution of the incorrect answers is also taken into account, there is a significant difference between the Hungarian and Croatian answers (N=136; chi-square p=0.007; p<0.05; p<0.01).

12. I buy my music from ... online store I told you about.

Only 46% of all the answers were correct in this sentence (+SR, +HK). Even though Hungarian also uses the definite article in such a sentence, there does not seem to occur positive transfer from the L1 of the Hungarian students. Only 40.8% chose the correct answer, which is considerably less than the Croatian students' proportion of correct answers. They used *the* in 51.5% of the cases. Both groups of students chose the indefinite article as well. 53.5% of the students from Budapest and half as many students from Osijek, 27.3% chose *an.* Like in the previous sentences where it appeared, Croatian students used the inappropriate indefinite article here as well, while this cannot be said about the Hungarians. Croatians chose *a* in 7.6% of their answers, while Hungarians did not chose this answer at all. The reason why both Croatian and Hungarian learners of English chose the indefinite article in such a big proportion might be lack of attention, i.e., they probably did not read the sentence until the end. There is a similarly big difference between the use of the *zero* article. 5.6% of the Hungarians and 13.5% of the Croatians chose this article. All in all, the difference in the use of articles by Croatian and Hungarian learners of English is statistically significant (N=136; chi-square p=0.003; p<0.05; p<0.01).

13. I hate … snakes.

This sentence (-SR, -HK) also tests whether CLI occurs in the use of English by Hungarian students. The Hungarian structure for expressing dislike uses the definite article 'Utálom a kígyókat'. Therefore, the overuse of the article *the* was expected. Hungarian students, however, chose the correct answer in 73.2% while Croatians chose it only in 63.2% of the cases. CLI is present in 25.4% of the Hungarian answers. Croatians circled the definite article in 14.7% of the cases. They chose the indefinite article *a* in 14.7% and *an* in 7.4% of their answers, while Hungarians used it only once, that is, in 1.4% of their answers. The difference between the Croatians and Hungarians choice of the article in this sentence is significant (N=139; chi-square p=0.001; p<0.05; p<0.01).

14. ... mouse is a small animal.

There is a significant difference between the use of articles by Croatian and Hungarian learners of English (N=137; chi-square p=0.000; p<0.05; p<0.01). Only 28.5% of all the answers were

correct. Most correct answers were given by Croatians, which proves that they answered based on what they have learned during their studies, unlike the Hungarians, who relied on their L1. Croatians chose the correct indefinite article in 49.3% of their answers, whilst Hungarians chose it in only 8.6% of their answers. Hungarians relied on their L1 in 70% of their answers. The Hungarian translation of this sentence (-SR, +HK) uses the definite article 'Az egér egy kicsi állat'. Both groups circled the *zero* article in approximately the same percentage of cases: Hungarians in 21.4% and Croatians in 23.9%. Croatians chose the incorrect indefinite article twice, while Hungarians did not choose it at all.

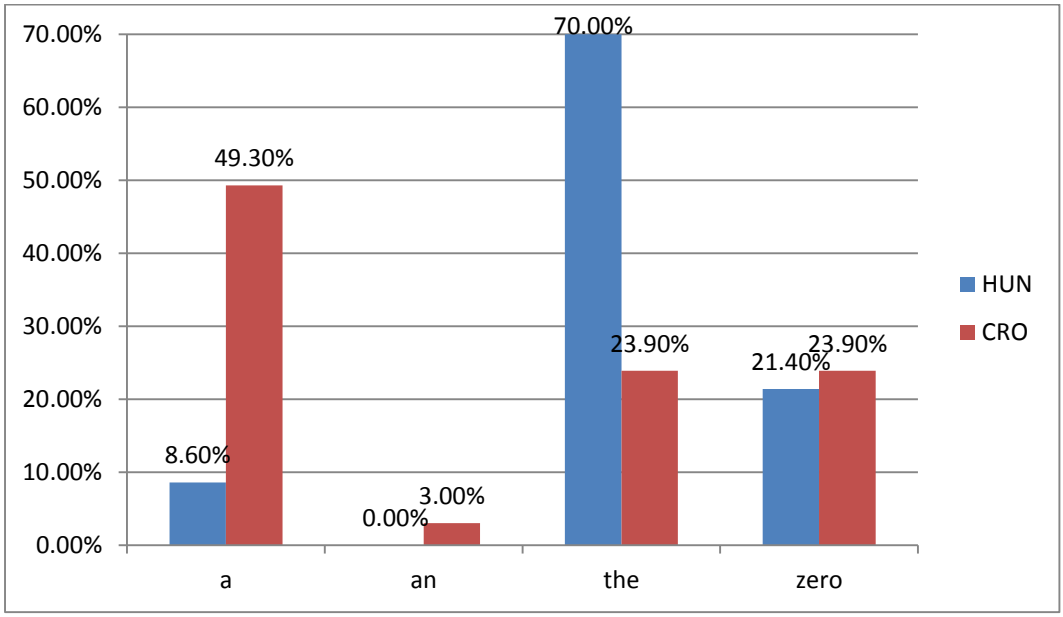

Figure 4: The percentage of articles by L1 in the sentence … mouse is a small animal.

15. There was ... huge storm last night.

The Hungarian translation of this sentence (+SR, -HK) uses a completely different structure which does not include any article: 'Óriási vihar volt tegnap este.'. Therefore, on the one hand, the overuse of the *zero* article was expected. The English structure *there is* is, however, very frequent and seventh graders should be familiar with it. This may be the reason why CLI did not occur in this sentence. 95.8% of the Hungarian students and 82.6% of the Croatian students chose the correct answer. Hungarians circled the definite article only once, and Croatians chose it four times out of 69. Croatians chose *an* in 7.2% of their answers, while Hungarians did not choose it at all. As mentioned above, Balenović found that Croatian students often use the *zero* article in front of NPs which are mentioned for the first time in the conversation (Zergollern-Miletić 2014). In the case of this NP, however, only 3 Coratian students used the *zero* article.

The difference between the two nationalities is statistically significant (N=140; chi-square p=0.047; p<0.05; p<0.01).

16. Please, put ... gun down.

82.1% of all the answers for this sentence (+SR, +HK) were correct. Hungarians used the appropriate article in 84.5% of their answers, while Croatians had 79.7% correct answers. The indefinite article was chosen in 15,7% of the cases. Croatians chose *a* 12 times and *an* once, while the Hungarians circled *a* 10 times but not once *an.* There is no significant difference between the answers. (N=136; chi-square p=0.712; p<0.05; p<0.01).

The comparison of the total number of answers by articles from sentence 9 and 11 clearly show the CLI by Hungarian learners of English in the use of the articles. Hungarians circled the definite article almost twice as many times as Croatians, which consequently resulted in less correct answers. Croatians could not be influenced by their L1 in answering; therefore they could rely exclusively on their L2 knowledge.

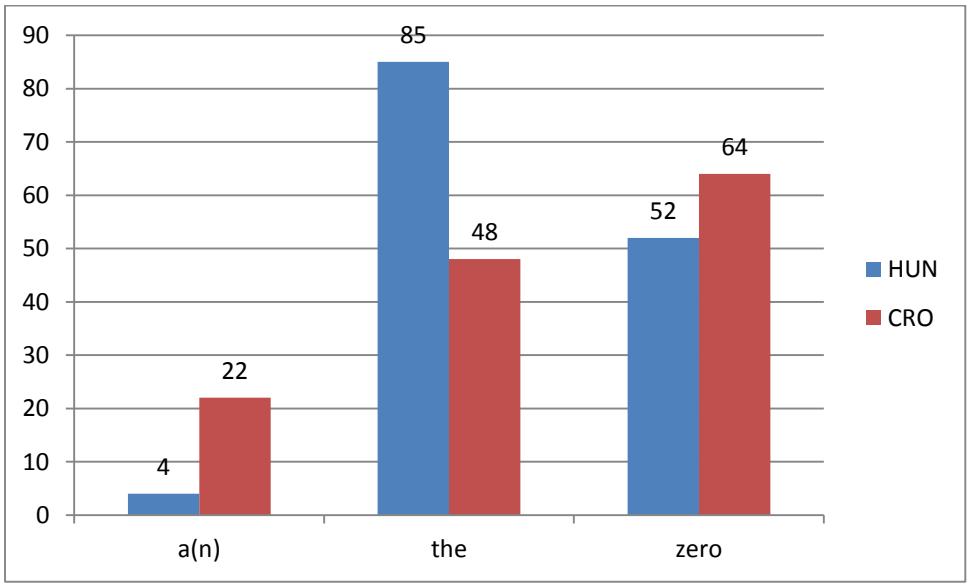

Figure 5: The comparison of the total number of answers for NP 9 (Winter) and NP 11 (Cats) by L1

Conclusion

The role of the mother tongue in foreign language learning has been a popular topic in applied linguistics for a long time. Today most L2 researchers agree that the L1 has some affect on SLA. Concerning the article system, some linguists suggest that for learners whose L1 does not possess the article system it is almost impossible to acquire them completely (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982). The present study investigated whether Hungarians have any advantages in acquiring the English article system compared to Croatians whose mother tongue does not possess the article system.

As Table 8 summarizes, Hungarians had more correct answers in total, 73.51% in Test 1 and 73.34% in Test 2, that is, 73.43% in the two tests. In Test 1 Croatians chose the correct answer in 50% of the NPs and in 59.78% of the NPs in Test 2, that is, in total 54.89% of their answers were correct.

Table 8: Total percentage of correct answers by L1

	TEST 1	**TEST 2**	***TOTAL***
HUN	73.51%	73.34%	73.43%
CRO	50%	59.78%	54.89%

The difference of nearly 20% between Hungarians and Croatians is a clear evidence of the facilitating effect of the L1 article system in acquiring the English article system. The first hypothesis, namely that the article system is acquired more successfully by Hungarian learners of English than Croatian learners of English because their L1 also possesses articles is therefore valid for both tests.

Table 9 shows that in total there is no considerable difference between the percentages of the correct answers according to articles. The most correct answers were given when the *zero* article was necessary, while the use of the indefinite article caused the most problems for students. If the nationalities are considered separately, Hungarians' performance in the use of the *zero* article was very low compared to the other to articles, around 10% less correct answers were given in this category (61.76%). Croatians, on the contrary,performed in this category the best. They had 20% more correct answers where the *zero* article was the appropriate determiner (77.22%), not

the indefinite or the definite article due to the *zero-flooding* phenomenon. In the use of the indefinite and definite article they performed approximately 15% worse than Hungarian students of English.

Table 9: The percentage of correct answers by articles

	a(n)	**the**	**zero**
HUN	70.13%	73.14%	61.76%
CRO	57.86%	57.87%	77.22%
Total	64%	65.51%	69.49%

Table 10 summarizes the percentage of correct answers from the two tests given by Hungarians according to whether the NP in Hungarian and English contained the same article. There is an approximately 30% difference between the HUN=ENG and HUN≠ENG NPs. Transfer, either positive or negative occurred in both tests as it was anticipated in the second and third hypotheses.

Table 10: Percentage of correct answers by Hungarians

	HUN=ENG	**HUN≠ENG**
Test 1	87.44%	59.78%
Test 2	84.96%	51.71%
Total	*86.2%*	*55.75%*

Table 11 sums up the percentage of correct answers given by Croatians. They performed worse than Hungarians, which was expected. They, however, had more correct answers in the HUN≠ENG NPs than Hungarians, which was anticipated in the third hypothesis.

Table 11: Percentage of correct answers by Croatians

	HUN=ENG	**HUN≠ENG**
Test 1	36.42%	59.78%
Test 2	78.5%	62.03%
Total	*57.46%*	*60.91%*

To sum up, all three hypotheses proved to be valid in this research, as the tables above show. The presence of the article system in Hungarian does facilitate the acquisition of the English article system; therefore Hungarians acquire it more successfully than Croatians. Positive transfer occurs if the NP in English and Hungarian contains the same article. If it differs, negative transfer occurs.

Hungarians therefore require less amount of time and less effort to acquire the structure in question, while Croatians, presumably need more time, first of all to be aware of the articles and learn them, then to learn the rules which govern their use. This paper focused only on articles, however, it proved that the L1 does have an important role in SLA.

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Appendix 1

KOD _____

Učiš li engleski izvan škole?

a. DA b. NE

Koju ocjenu imaš iz Engleskog jezika? _____

Translate the missing parts of the sentences!

1. Grad je predivan navečer.
   _____ is beautiful in the evening.
2. Molim te, stavi ključ na stol.
   Please, put _____ on the table.
3. Jesi vidio ikad morskog psa?
   Have you ever seen _____?
4. Sara ide u SAD ovo ljeto.
   Sara is going to _____ this summer.
5. Ne volim cvijeće. A ti?
   I don't like _____. What about you?
6. Čestitam, ovo je točan odgovor!
   Congratulations, that's _____ answer!
7. Zlato je žuto.
   _____ is yellow.
8. Imam strašnu glavobolju.
   I have _____ headache.
9. Hoćeš li, molim te, uključiti radio?
   Could you turn on _____, please?
10. Moj brat svira klavir.
    My brother plays _____.

Appendix 2

KÓD _____

Tanulsz angolul az iskolán kívül?

b. IGEN b. NEM

Hányasod volt Angol nyelvből 6. osztályban? _____

Translate the missing parts of the sentences!

11. Gyönyörű a város este.
    _____ is beautiful in the evening.
12. Kérlek, tedd a kulcsot az asztalra.
    Please, put _____ on the table.
13. Láttál valaha cápát?
    Have you ever seen _____?
14. Sara a nyáron megy az USA-ba.
    Sara is going to _____ this summer.
15. Nem szeretem a virágokat. És te?
    I don't like _____. What about you?
16. Gratulálok, ez a helyes válasz!
    Congratulations, that's _____ answer!
17. Az arany sárga.
    _____ is yellow.
18. Szörnyű fejfájásom van.
    I have _____ headache.
19. Bekapcsolnád, kérlek, a rádiót?
    Could you turn on _____, please?
20. A bátyám zongorázik.
    My brother plays _____.

Appendix 3

KOD _____

Choose the correct article!

1. Montreal is a large city in … Canada.
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
2. What is the longest river in … world?
   a) a b) an c) the d) -
3. How much time do we have? Just … hour.
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
4. English people like ... tea.
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
5. Do you still live in … London?
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
6. John saw ... dog outside. Is it yours?
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
7. You did … good job.
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
8. Do you like … music?
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
9. … winter begins in December.
   a) a b) an c) the d) –
10. Britain is … island.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –
11. … cats like milk.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –
12. I buy my music from ... online store I told you about.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –
13. I hate … snakes.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –
14. ... mouse is a small animal.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –
15. There was ... huge storm last night.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –
16. Please, put ... gun down.
    a) a b) an c) the d) –

Thank You!

Appendix 4

Crosstabulation

L1 * the_city Crosstabulation

			the_city			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	69	0	70
		% within L1	1,4%	98,6%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within the_city	100,0%	79,3%	0,0%	50,4%
	Cro	Count	0	18	51	69
		% within L1	0,0%	26,1%	73,9%	100,0%
		% within the_city	0,0%	20,7%	100,0%	49,6%
Total		Count	1	87	51	139
		% within L1	0,7%	62,6%	36,7%	100,0%
		% within the_city	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_key Crosstabulation

			the_key			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	2	64	1	67
		% within L1	3,0%	95,5%	1,5%	100,0%
		% within the_key	50,0%	60,4%	4,2%	50,0%
	Cro	Count	2	42	23	67
		% within L1	3,0%	62,7%	34,3%	100,0%
		% within the_key	50,0%	39,6%	95,8%	50,0%
Total		Count	4	106	24	134
		% within L1	3,0%	79,1%	17,9%	100,0%
		% within the_key	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * a_shark Crosstabulation

			a_shark			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	43	1	26	70
		% within L1	61,4%	1,4%	37,1%	100,0%
		% within a_shark	60,6%	20,0%	42,6%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	28	4	35	67
		% within L1	41,8%	6,0%	52,2%	100,0%
		% within a_shark	39,4%	80,0%	57,4%	48,9%
Total		Count	71	5	61	137

	% within L1	51,8%	3,6%	44,5%	100,0%
	% within a_shark	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_USA Crosstabulation

			the_USA		
			the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	62	9	71
		% within L1	87,3%	12,7%	100,0%
		% within the_USA	71,3%	17,0%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	25	44	69
		% within L1	36,2%	63,8%	100,0%
		% within the_USA	28,7%	83,0%	49,3%
Total		Count	87	53	140
		% within L1	62,1%	37,9%	100,0%
		% within the_USA	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Flowers Crosstabulation

			Flowers		
			the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	10	61	71
		% within L1	14,1%	85,9%	100,0%
		% within Flowers	90,9%	47,7%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	1	67	68
		% within L1	1,5%	98,5%	100,0%
		% within Flowers	9,1%	52,3%	48,9%
Total		Count	11	128	139
		% within L1	7,9%	92,1%	100,0%
		% within Flowers	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_answer Crosstabulation

			the_answer			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	12	46	12	70
		% within L1	17,1%	65,7%	17,1%	100,0%
		% within the_answer	70,6%	82,1%	19,0%	51,5%
	Cro	Count	5	10	51	66
		% within L1	7,6%	15,2%	77,3%	100,0%
		% within the_answer	29,4%	17,9%	81,0%	48,5%

Total		Count	17	56	63	136
		% within L1	12,5%	41,2%	46,3%	100,0%
		% within the_answer	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Gold Crosstabulation

			Gold			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	56	14	71
		% within L1	1,4%	78,9%	19,7%	100,0%
		% within Gold	50,0%	83,6%	20,3%	51,4%
	Cro	Count	1	11	55	67
		% within L1	1,5%	16,4%	82,1%	100,0%
		% within Gold	50,0%	16,4%	79,7%	48,6%
Total		Count	2	67	69	138
		% within L1	1,4%	48,6%	50,0%	100,0%
		% within Gold	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * a_headache Crosstabulation

			a_headache			
			a	an	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	46	1	21	68
		% within L1	67,6%	1,5%	30,9%	100,0%
		% within a_headache	63,9%	100,0%	35,6%	51,5%
	Cro	Count	26	0	38	64
		% within L1	40,6%	0,0%	59,4%	100,0%
		% within a_headache	36,1%	0,0%	64,4%	48,5%
Total		Count	72	1	59	132
		% within L1	54,5%	0,8%	44,7%	100,0%
		% within a_headache	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_radio Crosstabulation

			the_radio			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	64	6	71
		% within L1	1,4%	90,1%	8,5%	100,0%
		% within the_radio	50,0%	66,0%	15,8%	51,8%
	Cro	Count	1	33	32	66
		% within L1	1,5%	50,0%	48,5%	100,0%
		% within the_radio	50,0%	34,0%	84,2%	48,2%

Total		Count	2	97	38	137
		% within L1	1,5%	70,8%	27,7%	100,0%
		% within the_radio	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_piano Crosstabulation

			the_piano				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	0	45	24	70
		% within L1	1,4%	0,0%	64,3%	34,3%	100,0%
		% within the_piano	20,0%	0,0%	60,0%	42,9%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	4	1	30	32	67
		% within L1	6,0%	1,5%	44,8%	47,8%	100,0%
		% within the_piano	80,0%	100,0%	40,0%	57,1%	48,9%
Total		Count	5	1	75	56	137
		% within L1	3,6%	0,7%	54,7%	40,9%	100,0%
		% within the_piano	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Canada Crosstabulation

			Canada			
			an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	0	2	69	71
		% within L1	0,0%	2,8%	97,2%	100,0%
		% within Canada	0,0%	25,0%	52,7%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	1	6	62	69
		% within L1	1,4%	8,7%	89,9%	100,0%
		% within Canada	100,0%	75,0%	47,3%	49,3%
Total		Count	1	8	131	140
		% within L1	0,7%	5,7%	93,6%	100,0%
		% within Canada	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_world Crosstabulation

			the_world				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	0	0	70	1	71
		% within L1	0,0%	0,0%	98,6%	1,4%	100,0%
		% within the_world	0,0%	0,0%	51,1%	100,0%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	1	1	67	0	69
		% within L1	1,4%	1,4%	97,1%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within the_world	100,0%	100,0%	48,9%	0,0%	49,3%

Total		Count	1	1	137	1	140
		% within L1	0,7%	0,7%	97,9%	0,7%	100,0%
		% within the_world	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * an_hour Crosstabulation

			an_hour				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	19	50	1	0	70
		% within L1	27,1%	71,4%	1,4%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within an_hour	61,3%	50,0%	33,3%	0,0%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	12	50	2	4	68
		% within L1	17,6%	73,5%	2,9%	5,9%	100,0%
		% within an_hour	38,7%	50,0%	66,7%	100,0%	49,3%
Total		Count	31	100	3	4	138
		% within L1	22,5%	72,5%	2,2%	2,9%	100,0%
		% within an_hour	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Tea Crosstabulation

			Tea				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	3	0	15	53	71
		% within L1	4,2%	0,0%	21,1%	74,6%	100,0%
		% within Tea	13,6%	0,0%	65,2%	57,0%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	19	1	8	40	68
		% within L1	27,9%	1,5%	11,8%	58,8%	100,0%
		% within Tea	86,4%	100,0%	34,8%	43,0%	48,9%
Total		Count	22	1	23	93	139
		% within L1	15,8%	0,7%	16,5%	66,9%	100,0%
		% within Tea	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * London Crosstabulation

			London			
			a	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	1	69	71
		% within L1	1,4%	1,4%	97,2%	100,0%
		% within London	33,3%	7,7%	55,6%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	2	12	55	69
		% within L1	2,9%	17,4%	79,7%	100,0%
		% within London	66,7%	92,3%	44,4%	49,3%

Total		Count	3	13	124	140
		% within L1	2,1%	9,3%	88,6%	100,0%
		% within London	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * a_dog Crosstabulation

			a_dog				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	66	0	4	0	70
		% within L1	94,3%	0,0%	5,7%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within a_dog	55,0%	0,0%	30,8%	0,0%	50,4%
	Cro	Count	54	5	9	1	69
		% within L1	78,3%	7,2%	13,0%	1,4%	100,0%
		% within a_dog	45,0%	100,0%	69,2%	100,0%	49,6%
Total		Count	120	5	13	1	139
		% within L1	86,3%	3,6%	9,4%	0,7%	100,0%
		% within a_dog	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * a_job Crosstabulation

			a_job				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	63	0	4	4	71
		% within L1	88,7%	0,0%	5,6%	5,6%	100,0%
		% within a_job	52,5%	0,0%	66,7%	44,4%	51,4%
	Cro	Count	57	3	2	5	67
		% within L1	85,1%	4,5%	3,0%	7,5%	100,0%
		% within a_job	47,5%	100,0%	33,3%	55,6%	48,6%
Total		Count	120	3	6	9	138
		% within L1	87,0%	2,2%	4,3%	6,5%	100,0%
		% within a_job	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Music Crosstabulation

			Music				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	3	0	12	56	71
		% within L1	4,2%	0,0%	16,9%	78,9%	100,0%
		% within Music	15,8%	0,0%	57,1%	57,1%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	16	1	9	42	68
		% within L1	23,5%	1,5%	13,2%	61,8%	100,0%
		% within Music	84,2%	100,0%	42,9%	42,9%	48,9%

Total		Count	19	1	21	98	139
		% within L1	13,7%	0,7%	15,1%	70,5%	100,0%
		% within Music	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Winter Crosstabulation

			Winter				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	2	0	49	20	71
		% within L1	2,8%	0,0%	69,0%	28,2%	100,0%
		% within Winter	28,6%	0,0%	66,2%	37,0%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	5	4	25	34	68
		% within L1	7,4%	5,9%	36,8%	50,0%	100,0%
		% within Winter	71,4%	100,0%	33,8%	63,0%	48,9%
Total		Count	7	4	74	54	139
		% within L1	5,0%	2,9%	53,2%	38,8%	100,0%
		% within Winter	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * an_island Crosstabulation

			an_island				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	2	67	1	0	70
		% within L1	2,9%	95,7%	1,4%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within an_island	40,0%	55,4%	9,1%	0,0%	50,4%
	Cro	Count	3	54	10	2	69
		% within L1	4,3%	78,3%	14,5%	2,9%	100,0%
		% within an_island	60,0%	44,6%	90,9%	100,0%	49,6%
Total		Count	5	121	11	2	139
		% within L1	3,6%	87,1%	7,9%	1,4%	100,0%
		% within an_island	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Cats Crosstabulation

			Cats				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	1	36	32	70
		% within L1	1,4%	1,4%	51,4%	45,7%	100,0%
		% within Cats	7,7%	50,0%	61,0%	51,6%	51,5%
	Cro	Count	12	1	23	30	66
		% within L1	18,2%	1,5%	34,8%	45,5%	100,0%
		% within Cats	92,3%	50,0%	39,0%	48,4%	48,5%

Total		Count	13	2	59	62	136
		% within L1	9,6%	1,5%	43,4%	45,6%	100,0%
		% within Cats	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_OnlineStore Crosstabulation

			the_OnlineStore				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	0	38	29	4	71
		% within L1	0,0%	53,5%	40,8%	5,6%	100,0%
		% within the_OnlineStore	0,0%	67,9%	46,0%	30,8%	51,8%
	Cro	Count	5	18	34	9	66
		% within L1	7,6%	27,3%	51,5%	13,6%	100,0%
		% within the_OnlineStore	100,0%	32,1%	54,0%	69,2%	48,2%
Total		Count	5	56	63	13	137
		% within L1	3,6%	40,9%	46,0%	9,5%	100,0%
		% within the_OnlineStore	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * Snakes Crosstabulation

			Snakes				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	1	0	18	52	71
		% within L1	1,4%	0,0%	25,4%	73,2%	100,0%
		% within Snakes	9,1%	0,0%	64,3%	54,7%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	10	5	10	43	68
		% within L1	14,7%	7,4%	14,7%	63,2%	100,0%
		% within Snakes	90,9%	100,0%	35,7%	45,3%	48,9%
Total		Count	11	5	28	95	139
		% within L1	7,9%	3,6%	20,1%	68,3%	100,0%
		% within Snakes	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * a_mouse Crosstabulation

			a_mouse				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	6	0	49	15	70
		% within L1	8,6%	0,0%	70,0%	21,4%	100,0%
		% within a_mouse	15,4%	0,0%	75,4%	48,4%	51,1%
	Cro	Count	33	2	16	16	67
		% within L1	49,3%	3,0%	23,9%	23,9%	100,0%
		% within a_mouse	84,6%	100,0%	24,6%	51,6%	48,9%

Total		Count	39	2	65	31	137
		% within L1	28,5%	1,5%	47,4%	22,6%	100,0%
		% within a_mouse	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * a_storm Crosstabulation

			a_storm				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	68	0	1	2	71
		% within L1	95,8%	0,0%	1,4%	2,8%	100,0%
		% within a_storm	54,4%	0,0%	20,0%	40,0%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	57	5	4	3	69
		% within L1	82,6%	7,2%	5,8%	4,3%	100,0%
		% within a_storm	45,6%	100,0%	80,0%	60,0%	49,3%
Total		Count	125	5	5	5	140
		% within L1	89,3%	3,6%	3,6%	3,6%	100,0%
		% within a_storm	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

L1 * the_gun Crosstabulation

			the_gun				
			a	an	the	zero	Total
L1	Hun	Count	10	0	60	1	71
		% within L1	14,1%	0,0%	84,5%	1,4%	100,0%
		% within the_gun	45,5%	0,0%	52,2%	50,0%	50,7%
	Cro	Count	12	1	55	1	69
		% within L1	17,4%	1,4%	79,7%	1,4%	100,0%
		% within the_gun	54,5%	100,0%	47,8%	50,0%	49,3%
Total		Count	22	1	115	2	140
		% within L1	15,7%	0,7%	82,1%	1,4%	100,0%
		% within the_gun	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Summary

The present paper examines the role of the mother tongue in learning English, more precisely, in acquiring the English article system. Comparing the results of two types of tests completed by Hungarian and Croatian learners of English some conclusions were made on whether the presence or absence of the article system in the students' L1 has any effect on their success in acquiring the English articles. The role of the mother tongue was tested both at the receptive and the productive level.

Key words: second language acquisition, article system, Hungarian, Croatian, cross-linguistic influence

Sažetak

Ovaj rad istražuje ulogu materinskog jezika u učenju engleskog jezika, točnije, u usvajanju engleskog sustava članova. Uspoređujući rezultate dvije vrste testova riješenih od strane mađarskih i hrvatskih učenika Engleskog jezika doneseno je nekoliko zaključaka o tome ima li prisutnost ili odsutnost sustava članova u materinskom jeziku učenika bilo kakav utjecaj na njihov uspjeh u usvajanju engleskih članova. Uloga materinskog jezika ispitana je na receptivnoj i produktivnoj razini.

Ključne riječi: usvajanje stranog jezika, sustav članova, hrvatski, mađarski, međujezični utjecaj