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False Cognates by Spanish and Russian Speaking EFL Students from the Perspective of Cross- Linguistic Similarity in Second Language Acquisition

Valentina Trishina

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Paraules clau del treball: False cognates, L2 learners, L1 transfers, L2 comprehension, accuracy

Abstract

False cognates are one of the main challenges Second Language speakers (L2 speakers, henceforth) need to face when acquiring new vocabulary. False cognates are defined as some words in second language that may sound or appear similar to those of the first language but actually be different in meaning.¹ In order to perform better and benefit from their linguistic competence, L2 learners should be aware of semantic similarities and differences that exist between their native language (NL) and target language (TL) while learning a new foreign language. Since misuse of false cognates is a catalyst of inaccurate translations, misunderstandings, incomplete teaching strategies, or unprofessional performances, it might not contribute to cross-linguistic communication successfully (Janke; Kolokonte 2015, 4). Therefore, it is important to learn how to deal with false friends' unreliability to avoid a state of confusion caused by a range of vocabulary mistakes and, instead, use the linguistic features of a TL accurately. By matter of fact, to produce a good quality output, L2 learners are supposed to receive a high quality input, so that to be able to express themselves explicitly. This study examines the use of false cognates by English second language (L2) learners of Spanish and Russian native languages. It is indeed aimed at finding out whether L2 speakers are capable of accurate semantic interpretation of created sentences in English where false-cognate pairs are inserted from either Spanish L2 or Russian L2 and English L1 transfers by evaluating them as plausible or implausible expressions. 83 participants, divided into three groups (English L1, Spanish L1 and Russian L1) have been tested on false cognates lexical items by means of two English language accuracy-based surveys.

Key words: False cognates, L2 learners, L1 transfers, L2 comprehension, accuracy.

¹ *Macmillian Dictionary*, s.v. "false cognate," accessed April 28, 2021, <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/american/false-cognate>

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Theoretical framework.....	6
○ 2.1 False friends: two types correlated with homonymy and polysemy.....	6
3. Methodology.....	8
○ 3.1 Variables.....	8
▪ 3.1.1 Table 1.....	8
▪ 3.1.2 Table 2.....	9
○ 3.2 Materials.....	11
○ 3.3 Participants.....	12
○ 3.4 Procedure.....	13
4. Data analysis.....	14
5. General discussion.....	23
6. Conclusion.....	25
7. Works Cited.....	26
Annexes.....	27

1. Introduction

False friends is the metaphorical phrase frequent to the field of linguistics and standing for designation of lexical units from two different languages which pertain similar phonetic characteristics and graphic representations, though imply different semantic meanings (Hill 1982; Gass 2008). To put it another way, English *lecture* (a formal talk) and Spanish *lectura* (reading), or English *data* (information) and Russian *data* (date) are clear examples of two pairs of false friends, or false cognates in two different languages which can affect L2 learners comprehension. These lexical items might seem to be easily grasped by non-native speakers, although they can be easily misunderstood instead due to the phonetic similarity in native language, and result confusing to reveal the truth meaning of a foreign language word.

The present paper deals with the use of false friends by Spanish and Russian native speakers who have been studying English as a second language or have already got a good command of English language. The aim of this study is to analyse false cognates in relation to different linguistic factors, reveal whether L2 learners are familiar with false friends by means of testing and then discuss possible influential factors on the reached outcomes. The research consists in finding out whether there is a significant level of misinterpretation of false cognates by L2 learners and responding to the following question: do false friends have an impact on L2 learners in terms of foreign language comprehension? Hence, the following paper is aimed at investigating the above claims about the confusion produced by false cognates with the aid of practical research based on two L2 false friends-oriented surveys created in *Google Forms*, which will examine Spanish L1 and Russian L1 learners' competence of English. In this relation, their L2 comprehension will be examined while observing the tests' scores and additionally by comparing them to those of the English native speakers' reference group.

A hypothesis propose that English L1 speakers are unlikely to make mistakes and choose the ungrammatical option. Neither English natives, nor Russian L1 are willing to doubt in the correct usage of selected words in the sentences where the Spanish semantically false cognates are encountered. Similarly, neither English natives, nor Spanish L1 are supposed to be mistaken with the choice of an appropriate meaning in the sentences where the Russian false friends are inserted. However, there does exist a high probability for Russian L1 to get in trap there, likewise there is a chance for Spanish L1 to be hooked in the situation with the Spanish false cognates, though depending on the level of English by both groups. There exist higher probability for beginners and intermediates to be easily entangled rather than for advanced and

proficient English L2 speakers. In other words, this research expects to reveal the cases of either Russian L1, or Spanish L1 learners being confused in accordance with their L1 transfers in L1-oriented sentences, and suggests to discuss a degree and possible source of made mistakes afterwards. The level of English language acquired by all of the participants for the moment of testing will be taken into account, since it is believed that the target language accuracy depends on the language level in the frame of present study.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 False friends: two types correlated with homonymy and polysemy

In the article "False friends: their origin and semantics in some selected languages" P.J. Chamizo Domínguez and B. Nerlich defined two opposite types of false cognates: chance false friends which might be better understood as homonymic words of one and the same language, and semantic false friends different in meaning but sharing the same etymological origin (2002, 1833). The English word *embarrassed* (ashamed) and the Spanish one *embarazada* (pregnant) are graphically and phonetically but not etymologically related, thus offering a possibility of being considered as chance false friends. Another example of chance false friends would be English *list* (record) and Russian *list* (leaf) which are sharing the same phonetic and graphic shape, although being not etymologically related at all. These examples illustrate that chance false friends tend to be full false friends as they neither share etymological origin, nor have common meanings in different languages but similar written or phonetic shape. Whereas semantic false friends are subdivided into two groups: full semantic false friends which are of the same etymological origin but do not coincide in meaning and partial semantic false friends which are similar to the full ones in terms of their origin excepting the fact that they may account for at least one mutual meaning or have various meanings in common (Chamizo Domínguez 2007).

While chance false friends, or equivalents retain similar spelling or pronunciation but possess completely distinct meanings and origins, semantic false friends are of the same etymological origin but having different meanings which, however, can be semantically related to each other (Chamizo Domínguez; Nerlich 2002, 1836). In other words, semantic false friends of the same origin may as differ as overlap in meaning: if the meanings of those polysemous words are related, they can fully or partially coincide in different languages. "For that reason semantic false friends could be considered the equivalents, in two or more given languages, of polysemous words in a given single

natural language” (1836). English *marmalade* (jam, or a soft substance cooked of fruits and sugar) and Russian *marmelad* (fruit jelly, or a soft elastic fruit product made with gelatin by boiling sugar and the juice of fruit) are a pair of cognates sharing Latin and Greek origin.² As Michael Quinion has pointed out, the word *marmalade* came from “the Latin *melimelum*, a sweet variety of apple, in turn from the Greek, usually translated as *summer-apple* (an early-ripening type), which seems to have been the name for a type of apple grafted on to a quince rootstock” (2011). Originally, this kind of dessert was made in fifteenth-century Portugal from quinces: “These were cooked with honey and in the process the unpromising bitter green fruit was transformed into a sweet pink paste, which was stiff enough to be cut with a knife and be served in slices as a kind of dessert” (Quinion 2011). Then, this sweet product was exported to Britain where the concept had shifted because English cooks learned to make their own marmalade from oranges and other citrus fruits in order not to pay the customs duty slapped on the foreign product (Quinion 2011). For this reason, the notion of original marmalade has been consequently changed, as the end result of this sweet product depended on the use of whole or cut up pieces of fruit or only the fruit juice among the other factors in cooking process, which led the cooks to different outcomes like jam, jelly and marmalade. Despite the fact that at present the final food product in English has different meaning from that one of the Russian language transfer, these affected and explained above cognates are semantically linked, as far as *jam* and *fruit jelly* share their origins and both are cooked of fruits and sugar. Therefore, such pair of semantically related cognates should be regarded as full semantic false friends of English and Russian languages.

Following the same definition, the English verb *to record* (meaning that information is captured and stored for the future electronically or by writing it down) and Spanish *recordar* (to remember or remind something) are also semantic false friends.³ Since both verbs directly come from “Latin *recordari* 'remember, call to mind, think over, be mindful of,' from *re-*, here probably with a sense of 'restore' (see *re-*), + *cor* (genitive *cordis*) 'heart' (the metaphoric seat of memory, as in *learn by heart*), from PIE root *kerd- 'heart.'”, they share etymological origin, although differ in current meanings

²*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “marmalade,” accessed May 4, 2021,
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/marmalade>

³*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “record,” accessed June 20, 2021,
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/record>

which were related to each other but have been evolved over time.⁴ Unlike in the case of the English verb *to assist* (to help) and Spanish *asistir* (to attend) which form a pair of partial semantic false friends, because English *to assist* still retains its secondary meaning 'to attend' with the use of preposition 'at'.⁵ *To assist* (giving assistance or support) derives from Latin *assistere* (stand by, take a stand near, attend).⁶ However, the semantic change arose by giving the main meaning of 'help' and now the words *to assist* and *asistir* have become partial semantic false friends of English and Spanish languages and therefore, a cause of cross-linguistic misunderstanding by foreign language learners. When Durán Escribano argues about L2 vocabulary learning, he believes that “one of the most important strategies for meaning deduction is being able to identify polysemy and to distinguish 'homographs' and 'homophones' and their different meanings in one or more languages, in general and in special contexts” (2004, 95).

3. Methodology

3.1 Variables

The selected variables from *Table 1* corresponding to the pairs of false cognates in English and Spanish languages and *Table 2* including false cognates of English and Russian languages served at the creation of semantically possible and inaccurate sentences in conducting the two different in content but similar in form surveys so as to meet the research objectives.

3.1.1 Table 1

ENGLISH L1 TRANSFER	SPANISH L2 COMPREHENSION
Parade – a large number of people walking and moving in the same direction to celebrate some event in public (Sp. <i>desfile</i>)	Parada – a short period of time to stay at a place, an act of pausing or a place where vehicles are allowed to stop (Eng. <i>stop</i>)
Constipated – “unable to empty your bowels as often as you should” (Sp. <i>estreñido</i>)	Constipado – to get sick (Eng. <i>have a cold</i>)
Embarrassed - “feeling ashamed or shy” (Sp.	Embarazada – a woman who is

⁴*Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “record,” accessed June 20, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=record>

⁵*WordSense Online Dictionary*, s.v. “assist,” accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.wordsense.eu/assist/>

⁶*Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “assist,” accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=assist>

<i>avergonzado</i>)	going to have a baby (Eng. <i>pregnant</i>)
Record – “to keep information for the future, by writing it down or storing it on a computer” (Sp. <i>grabar</i>)	Recordar – remember or remind something (Eng. <i>remember</i>)
Library – a stored collection of books to read, use or borrow (Sp. <i>biblioteca</i>)	Librería – a bookshop to get books for payment (Eng. <i>bookstore</i>)
Rope – “a length of thick strong cord made by twisting together strands of hemp, sisal, nylon, or similar material” (Sp. <i>cuerda</i>)	Ropa – things that people wear to cover their bodies and protect them from cold (Eng. <i>clothes</i>)
Assist – to help someone (Sp. <i>ayudar</i>)	Asistir – to be present (Eng. <i>attend</i>)
Carpet – a floor covering made of thick material (Sp. <i>alfombra</i>)	Carpeta – “a folded piece of thin cardboard for holding loose papers” (Eng. <i>folder</i>)
Contest – to argue or compete for something (Sp. <i>contender</i>)	Contestar – to respond fluently the question asked (Eng. <i>answer</i>)
Code - “a system of words, letters or signs used to represent a message” (Sp. <i>código</i>)	Codo – the part in the middle of the arm (Eng. <i>elbow</i>)
Realize – to understand something suddenly (Sp. <i>darse cuenta</i>)	Realizar – to carry out, perform or achieve (Eng. <i>come true</i>)
Vase – a container for holding flowers (Sp. <i>florero/ jarrón</i>)	Vaso – a container for drinking (Eng. <i>glass</i>)
Large – of a big size (Sp. <i>grande</i>)	Largo – something prolonged or for a long period of time (Eng. <i>long</i>)
Grocery – “a store that sells food and small things for the home” (Sp. <i>supermercado</i>)	Grosería - “the quality of being offensive or not polite” (Eng. <i>rudeness</i>)
Support - “to help someone emotionally or in a practical way” or encourage (Sp. <i>apoyar</i>)	Soportar – “to keep going despite difficulties” (Eng. <i>put up with/ tolerate</i>)
Lecture – a formal talk given to students on an educational purpose (Sp. <i>conferencia/charla</i>)	Lectura – a process of obtaining meaning from written words (Eng. <i>reading</i>)

3.1.2 Table 2

ENGLISH L1 TRANSFER	RUSSIAN L2
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	COMPREHENSION
Accurate – exact and reliable (Rus. <i>tochnyy</i>)	Akkuratnyy — neat and careful person (Eng. <i>tidy</i>)
Data – information to be considered and used on a specific purpose (Rus. <i>dannyye</i>)	Data – a particular date, month or year, or a combination of all (Eng. <i>date</i>)
List – an organized record including some pieces of information or a short enumeration (Rus. <i>spisok</i>)	List – a leaf of a plant or a sheet of paper (Eng. <i>leaf</i>)
Magazine – “a periodical publication containing articles and illustrations, often on a particular subject or aimed at a particular readership” (Rus. <i>zhurnal</i>)	Magazin – any type of store to shop or obtain things for established payment (Eng. <i>store</i>)
Family – a group of people, animals or plants normally blood related to each other (Rus. <i>sem'ya</i>)	Familiya – “the name that you share with other members of your family” (Eng. <i>surname</i>)
Insult – an offensive comment or the result of an offensive action (Rus. <i>oskorblenie</i>)	Insul't – “a sudden change in the blood supply to a part of the brain, sometimes causing a loss of the ability to move particular parts of the body” (Eng. <i>stroke</i>)
Marmalade – a soft substance cooked of fruits and sugar and usually served as a dessert or accompanies a breakfast (Rus. <i>varen'ye</i>)	Marmelad - “a soft somewhat elastic food product made usually with gelatin or pectin especially: a fruit product made by boiling sugar and the juice of fruit ” (Eng. <i>fruit jelly</i>)
Patron – a material support given to a person or organization by a regular customer (Rus. <i>klient/pokrovitel'</i>)	Patron - “a small, metal object that is shot from a gun” (Eng. <i>bullet</i>)
Prospect – the possibility of future success, improvement or change (Rus. <i>perspektiva</i>)	Prospekt – a large, wide and straight street (Eng. <i>avenue</i>)
Virtuous – a chaste person having good moral qualities (Rus. <i>dobrodetel'nyy</i>)	Virtuoznyy – possessing exceptional technical skills close to perfection, especially in music (Eng. <i>virtuoso</i>)

Douche – “to put a liquid, usually water, into the vagina in order to wash it or treat it medically” (Rus. <i>orosheniye</i>)	Dush – an act of washing the whole body with the use of device that sprays water (Eng. <i>shower</i>)
Cabinet – a piece of furniture to store things, a cupboard. (Rus. <i>shkaf</i>)	Kabinet – a special small room to work or study in (Eng. <i>office</i>)
Lunatic – a madman or insane and mentally ill person (Rus. <i>bezumnyy</i>)	Lunatik – a person who tends to walk around at night while the others are sleeping (Eng. <i>sleepwalker</i>)
Angina - “a condition that causes strong chest pains because blood containing oxygen is prevented from reaching the heart muscle by blocked arteries” (Rus. <i>stenokardiya</i>)	Angina - “a painful infection of the tonsils” (Eng. <i>tonsillitis</i>)
Stole – a long piece of cloth that is worn over the shoulders, usually by women or some priests (Rus. <i>nakidka</i>)	Stol – a surface supported by legs, used for dining, working or putting things on it. (Eng. <i>table</i>)
Fabric - “cloth or material for making clothes” (Rus. <i>tkan'</i>)	Fabrika - “a building or set of buildings in which machines are used to produce large amounts of manufactured goods” (Eng. <i>factory</i>)

3.2 Materials

The present research has been conducted through two surveys created in Google Forms. The participants were recruited through Facebook, via WhatsApp messages and phone calls, and were provided by the links to one out of two or both tests, since some of them have been acquaintances of the conductor of the study who were encouraged to share those links with the other suitable for present testing candidates. The unique condition for successful participation was the stable internet connection, as the access to conducting surveys was completely free to gain from any electronic device.

Furthermore, it was decided to employ a kind of cross-linguistic testing as a measure of language proficiency which works well with studies or experiments on a moderate scale. Grammatical and ungrammatical crossed sentences created for the conducting research were used as the main tool in false friends-oriented tests based on the level of grammaticality and provided no right and wrong answers. The L2 English speakers were instructed on the scale's use for their personal evaluation of the sentences given

below and advised to use their own feelings and intuition in order to decide whether these sentences seemed plausible to them.

Thus, using the following scale for grading each sentence was initially implemented as a means of further analysis of the collected data by the researcher:

1=sounds bad;

2=sounds bad, but not so much;

3=it is a borderline (awkward but possible);

4=sounds relatively good;

5=sounds good.

The data collection, which were participants' assessments of the sentences, were produced in a spontaneous manner and with no previous knowledge about selected variables and the actual aim of the surveys on behalf of the participants, which is believed to add an element of reliability to the study in question and provide a true cross-study of the authenticity of their results.

3.3 Participants

In order to conduct this study which will demonstrate whether false cognates correlate with L2 learners' comprehension of a true nature of sentences where false friends are intentionally inserted it was decided to divide the participants into three population groups: Spanish L1 and Russian L1 target groups with previous knowledge of English language, and English L1 control group for higher efficiency of interpretation and judgement of testing results. It was supposed to recruit 20 English language speakers per group approximately and try to consider all the linguistic conditions and personal data of each participant in the test.

A brief questionnaire was created beforehand: it included a few appropriate questions concerning such issues as the participants' mother tongue, their occupation, an academic degree and studies and most importantly, their level of English language according to CEFR six-point scale (A1-C2). These questions were considered essential for conducting the present research and valuable for further analysis and evaluation. Thus, each examined person was politely asked to answer these short questions related to the research before testing and consequently provide both, data-based and linguistically oriented answers in response to the survey. Last but not least, the participants were asked to indicate whether they are bilinguals and specify their second native language if applicable in order to be able to examine some extra influential factors while analysing the obtained results and comparing them with those of non-native English learners.

All the participants were informed about their data protection, since all the necessary data was collected on account of this research exclusively and had no intention to be used for any other purposes. It should be remarked that nobody could neither recognize their answers, nor figure out their personal data because the only person who was meant to have access to the surveys was the graduate student conducting this research as a means of Final Degree Project. Anyway, the participants were asked for their consent, while both surveys were helded anonymously.

3.4 Procedure

The procedure consisted in the selection of 16 English-Spanish and 16 English-Russian pairs of false cognates which might have sounded tricky to both Spanish L1 and Russian L1 groups and subsequent creation of 64 sentences with them in total, so that 32 sentences for each pair, 16 of which appeared as plausible, while the other 16 inaccurate. It was decided to cross 16 sentences that included English-Spanish false friends with another 16 sentences containing English-Russian false friends for both L1 groups of speakers and finally create 2 different surveys implying the same method to each test.

The two following sentences should be provided for explanatory purposes: *She felt embarrassed after having been rude to her father* (grammatical); *She has no doubts anymore because the test has shown that she is embarrassed* (ungrammatical). Both tests were launched in English, thus offering the opportunity of being crossed, since for example, Russian L1 speakers were expected to understand the word *embarrassed* correctly. Although, Spanish L1 speakers would have probably struggled for the real meaning of the English word *embarrassed* in the sentence provided above. This assumption is of a high probability because *embarrassed* do not correspond to the group of English-Russian false cognates, while it has a similar L1 transfer in Spanish language which may result confusing to Spanish L1 speakers, as the real meaning of English *embarrassed* (ashamed) is completely different to that of Spanish *embarazada* (pregnant). Such a possible confusion may clearly affect the quality of translation and even change the whole meaning of a transmitted message by Spanish native speakers. In this case, inaccurate use of the English word *embarrassed* by Spanish L1 could definitely lead Spanish speakers who acquire English as a foreign language to linguistic ambiguity at the end. Whereas Russian native speakers must not be confused by the impossible sentence form because there is no phonetically or graphically similar to *embarrassed* or *embarazada* transfer in Russian language, and vice versa for Spanish

native speakers in case of English-Russian false cognates. Therefore, the crossing of two target language oriented tests for both groups of different nativity, Russian L1 and Spanish L1 English speakers is a good way to demonstrate the existence of false friends in both, English-Russian and English-Spanish contexts and examine how that L1 groups are determined and influenced by false cognates in their native and foreign languages.

Finally, providing the participants with semantically plausible and implausible sentences and requesting them to evaluate each of those sentences according to the scale of five distinctive options was intended to reveal the obstacles that non-native English speakers might have had with an interpretation of implausible sentences and obtain an accurate data within this procedure accordingly. Once the surveys were launched, the number of recruited participants exceeded initial expectations and the data was successfully collected and received, the most responsible part of the research was coming further: data analysis and decoding.

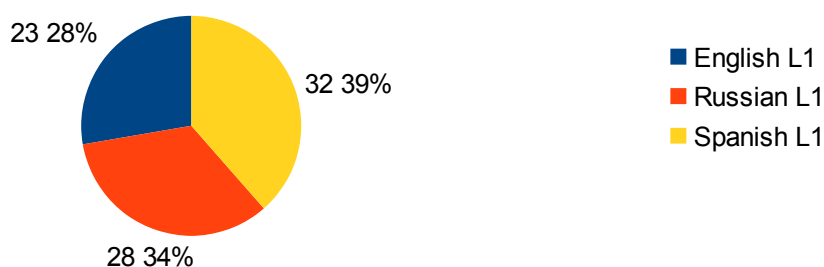
4. Data analysis

As the data collection gathered from two tests has shown, 83 English speakers have participated in both conducted surveys. All participants are L1 users of Russian, Spanish or English and some of them are bilingual in different languages such as Catalan and English.

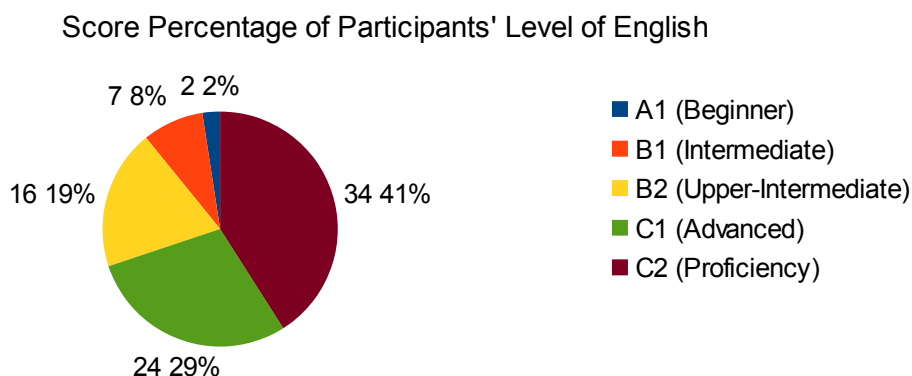
In the following section, the data related to the number of L1 participants in % and their level of English language will be provided.

NL	Number of L1	% of L1	Total Participants
English	23	27.71	83
Russian	28	33.73	83
Spanish	32	38.55	83

Score Percentage of Participants' L1



Concerning the level of English language in regard with CEFR standards, the vast majority of participants indicated that they were competent at higher levels of English, as seen in the chart below: 34.41% of proficient and 24.29% of advanced English learners have participated in two tests. It is also reflected in the diagram that 16.19% of participants estimated their English language abilities at Upper-Intermediate, 7.8% at Intermediate and only 2.2% at Beginner levels.



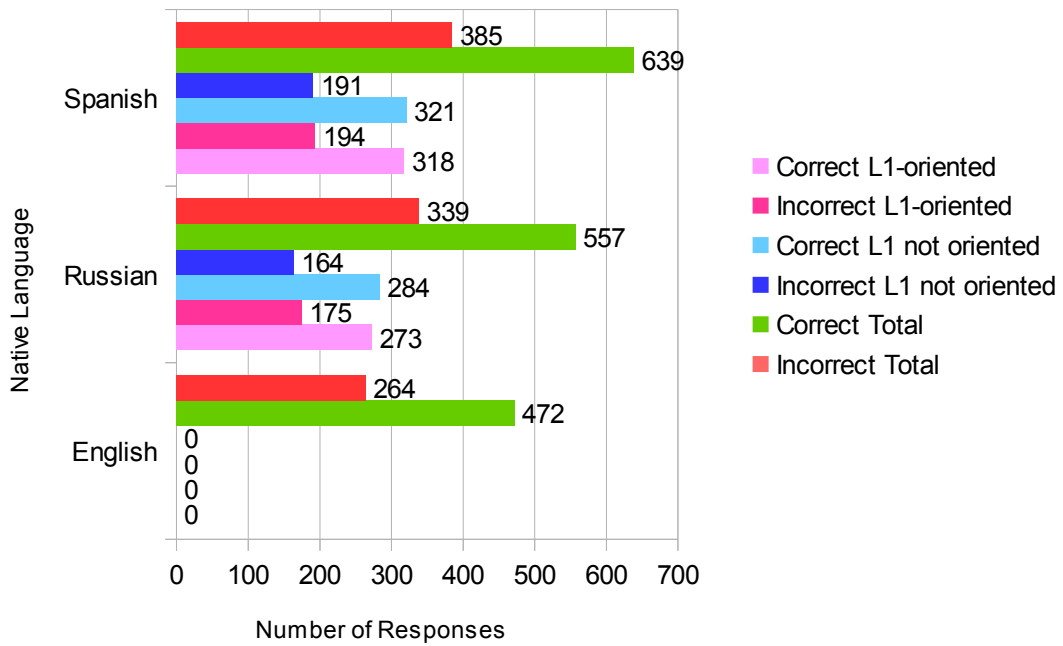
The next table indicates the whole number of responses for each L1 group of participants:

NL	Participants	Total Responses
English	23	736
Russian	28	896
Spanish	32	1024

Turning back to the scale created for each sentence evaluation, options 1 (=sounds bad) and 2 (sounds bad, but not so much) have been taken as incorrect or false answers, while 3 (=awkward but possible), 4 (=sounds relatively good) and 5 (=sounds good) are considered as possible or true in the frame of current research. To interpret responses and understand whether participants evaluated each of the sentences as plausible or implausible, there is a need of such a division into correct and incorrect options henceforth.

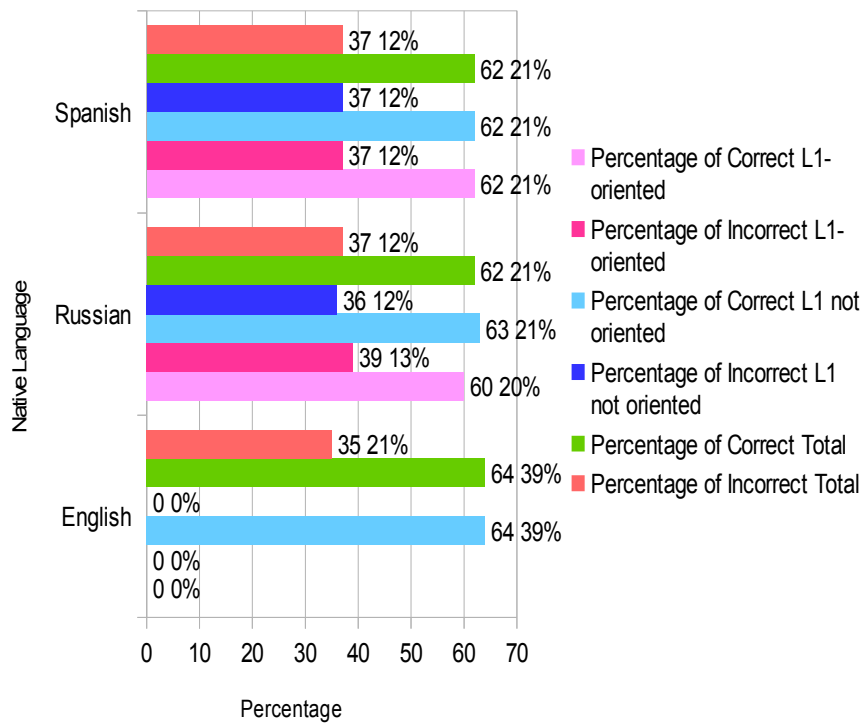
A number of responses followed by its percentage for all English native speakers, in addition to those for each Russian L1 and Spanish L1 groups, is provided in the diagram below for various conditions, namely the number of correct and incorrect L1-oriented or not sentences and their total for both correct and incorrect answers revealed for each L1 group of participants.

Number of Correct and Incorrect Responses grouped by NL in relation to L1-oriented sentences



A percentage of the same data is calculated in the chart below:

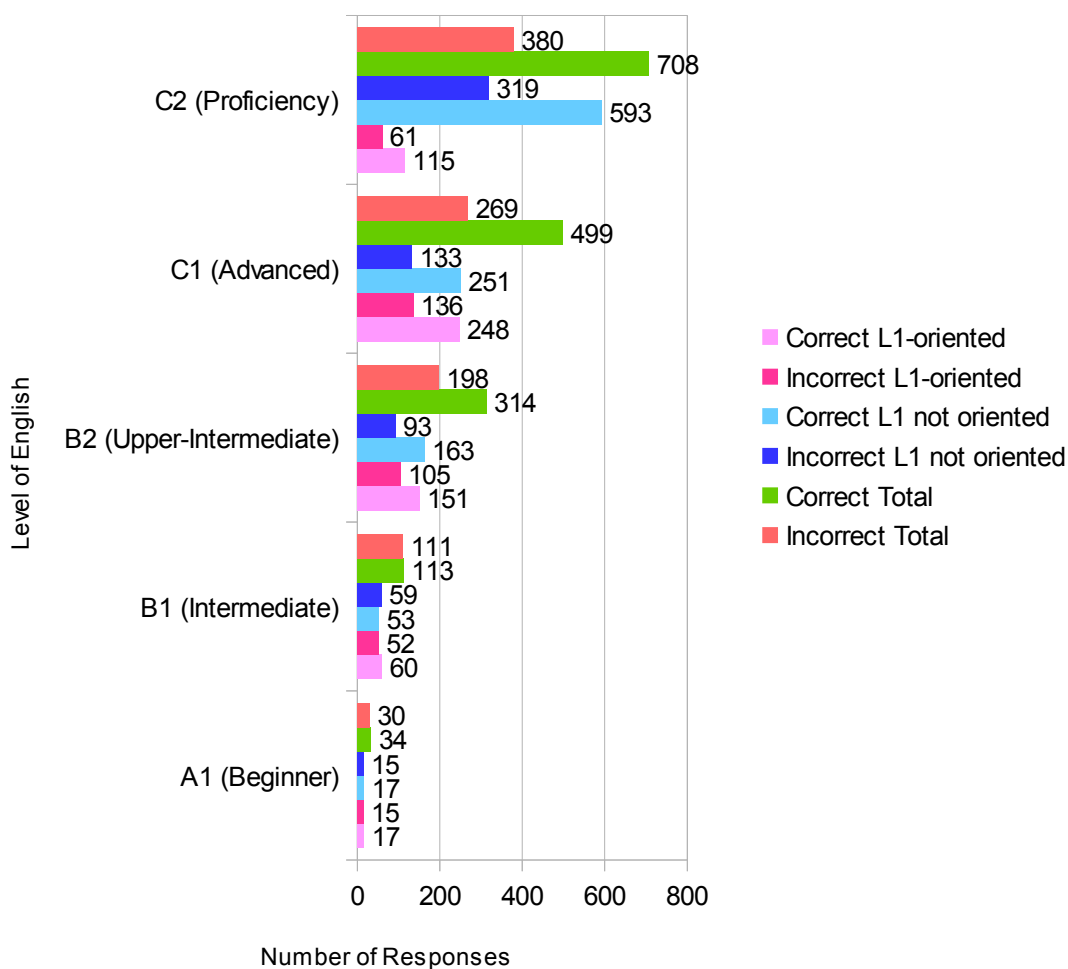
Score Percentage of Correct and Incorrect Responses grouped by NL in relation to L1-oriented sentences



The number of correct and incorrect responses for all participants in relation to their level of English and L1 orientation along with the number of participants pertaining to each level group and total responses are reflected in the following table and diagram:

Level of English	Participants	Total Responses
A1 (Beginner)	2	64
B1 (Intermediate)	7	224
B2 (Upper-Intermediate)	16	512
C1 (Advanced)	24	768
C2 (Proficiency)	34	1088

Number of Responses grouped by Level of English

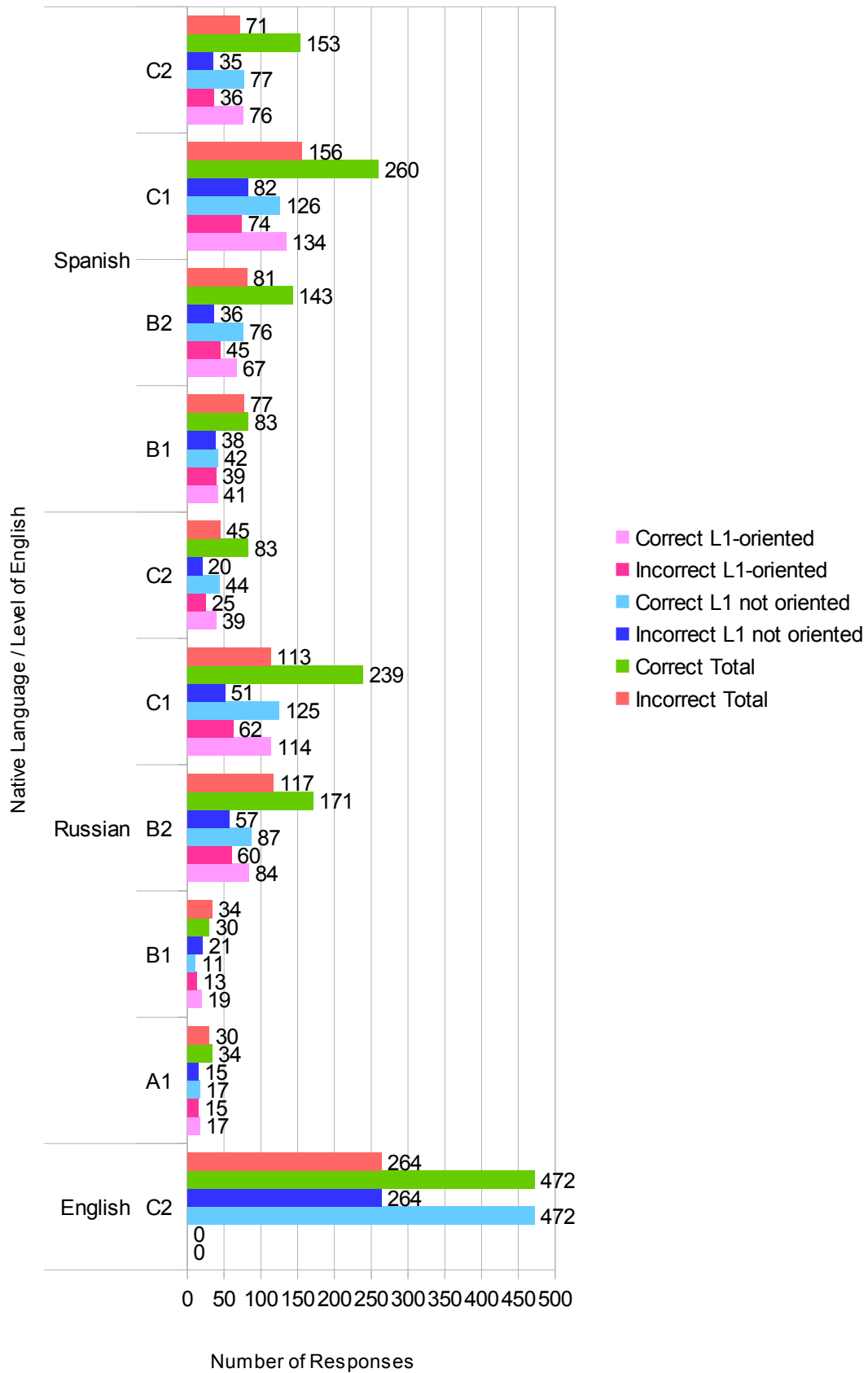


Then, the number of correct and incorrect responses with its percentage for each L1 group of participants in relation to their level of English and L1 sentence orientation are determined:

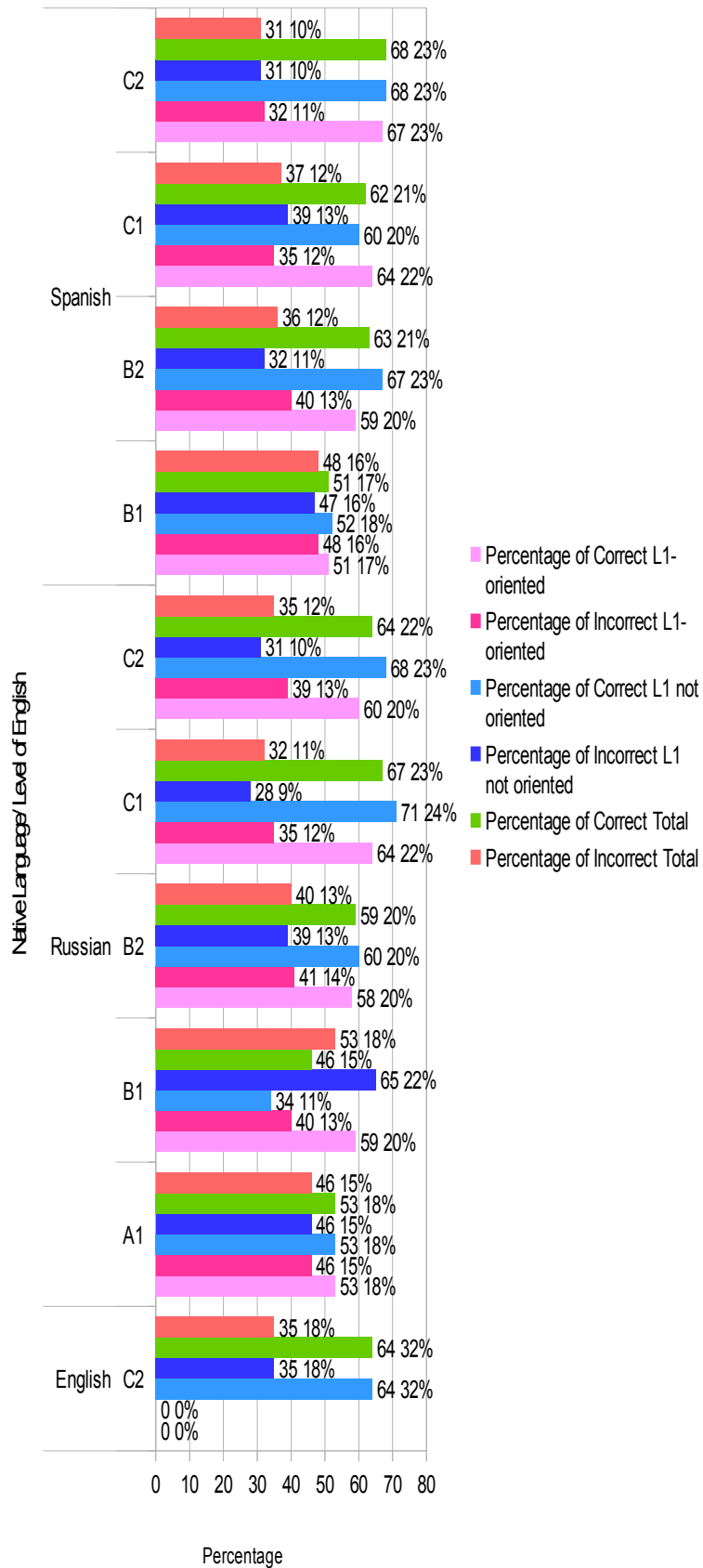
NL	Level of English	Participants	TotalResp
English	C2	23	736
Russian	A1	2	64
Russian	B1	2	64
Russian	B2	9	288
Russian	C1	11	352
Russian	C2	4	128
Spanish	B1	5	160
Spanish	B2	7	224
Spanish	C1	13	416
Spanish	C2	7	224

One can see that the level of English native speakers is reasonably indicated as C2 (Proficiency) since English L1 group was invited for participation as a means of control. Spanish L1 participants reached a higher number of C1 and C2 levels of English in comparison to Russian L1 group, starting from B1 (Intermediate) and B2 (Upper-Intermediate) levels. Meanwhile, Russian L1 group has been the only one including two participants of A1 (Beginner) level, the results of which are priori unequal to be compared to those of Spanish L1 as beginners are likely to be confused by the influence of false cognates, even observed within the context.

Responses grouped by NL and Level of English



Score Percentage of Correct and Incorrect Responses grouped by NL and Level of English in relation to L1-oriented sentences

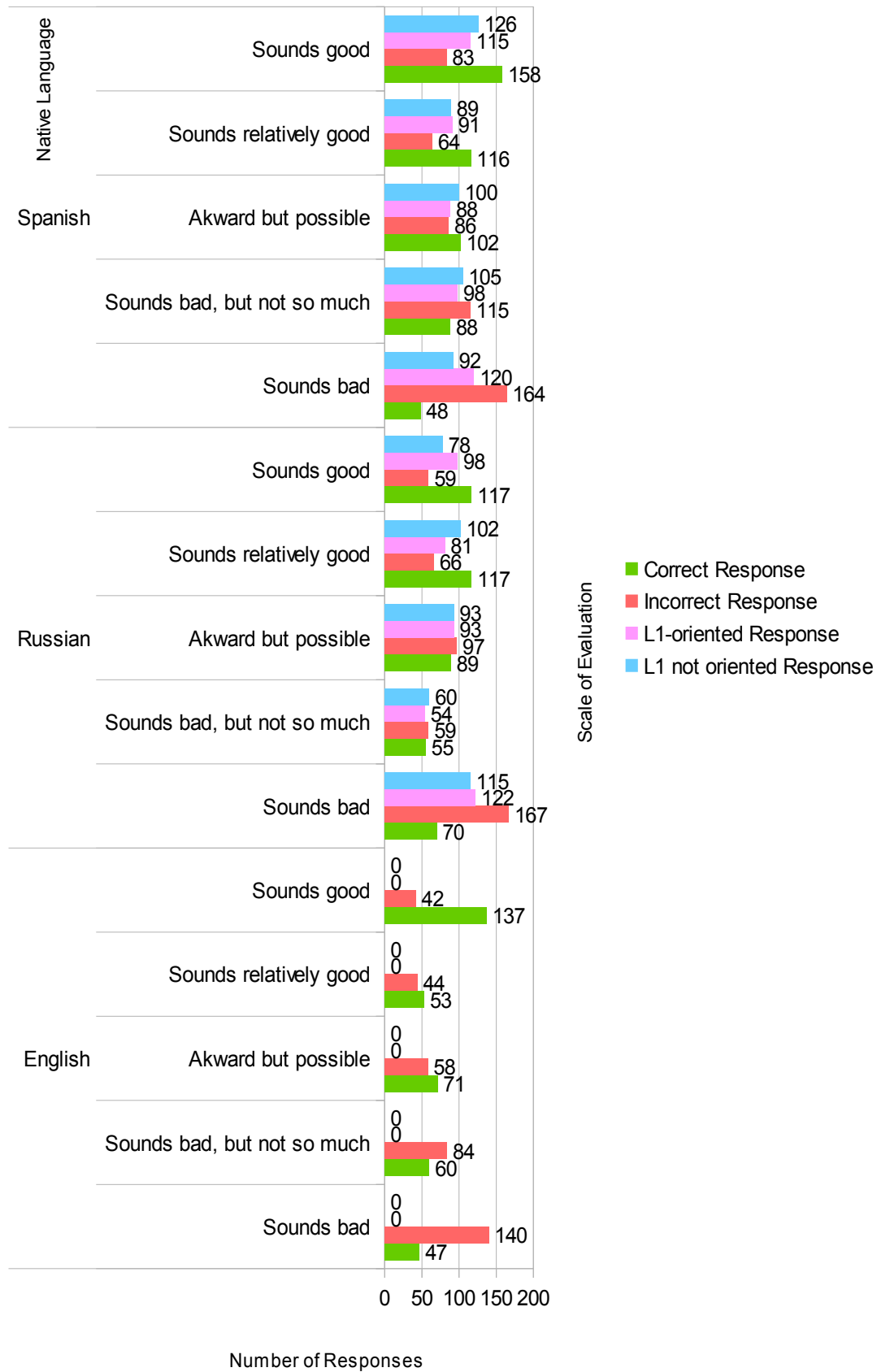


In the last diagram and table, the number of responses by each L1 group is considered according to the scale of evaluation, the options of which have been consequently categorised as correct and incorrect ones:

NL	Scale of Evaluation	N.Responses
English	Sounds bad	187
English	Sounds bad, but not so much	144
English	It is borderline (akward but possible)	129
English	Sounds relatively good	97
English	Sounds good	179
Russian	Sounds bad	237
Russian	Sounds bad, but not so much	114
Russian	It is borderline (akward but possible)	186
Russian	Sounds relatively good	183
Russian	Sounds good	176
Spanish	Sounds bad	212
Spanish	Sounds bad, but not so much	203
Spanish	It is borderline (akward but possible)	188
Spanish	Sounds relatively good	180
Spanish	Sounds good	241

This diagram was created to see how responses varied within the scale and whether participants doubted while evaluating the level of each sentence possibility, or grammaticality by choosing a borderline option (akward but possible) or grading some utterances as sounding bad, but not so much, thus leaving space for another factors which could have influenced participants' choice, such as the general sense of each particular sentence or appropriate use of articles among the others.

Number of Responses grouped by NL according to the Scale of each sentence Evaluation



5. General discussion

The data collection was extracted from both surveys created in *Google Forms* on the basis of *Exel document* and served as a means of statistics in the conducted research. The visual representation of obtained data has been illustrated through diagrams, charts and tables and served as a core of data interpretation and further analysis of results. According to O'Neill and Casanovas, "it is not sufficient, when studying false friends and lexical interference, to examine the lexical items in isolation. The possible meanings of a word are highly dependent on the structure in which it occurs" (1997, 113). That is why in this study, 16 pairs of lexical items have been put into context of created utterances where false cognates appear.

It should be taken into account that it was decided to divide the present research in two surveys due to several reasons: firstly, in attempt not to overload the participants with 64 sentences for evaluation and secondly, to create the task more challenging by crossing different L1-oriented sentences. The pairs of false Spanish and Russian L1-oriented cognates were divided, meaning that the sentences with English L1 transfers were separated from the sentences including Spanish and Russian L2 comprehension by two different surveys. The version of a possible sentence was included in one of the surveys, while the version of semantically inaccurate sentence due to the false cognate in there belonged to the other survey, thus not giving the participants a possibility to decide which one of the two provided sentences sounded more likely as possible. The results have shown that the task was in fact tricky for EFL speakers.

Due to the personal data collected from two surveys, a few bilinguals and even trilinguals have participated in testing, although this data has not been paid proper attention, as it required very detailed examination of each additional language which was not a major objective of the present study. The actual employment of the participants varied from being students to occupying more technical and far from linguistic positions, although some EFL teachers and language majors have participated in the conducting study as well. The number of Spanish L1 participants has been higher than of Russian and English L1 speakers, yet it was not disturbing data analysis because each L1 group was considered separately.

In order to investigate the role of English language level of Spanish and Russian L1 participants, there was included a condition with level differentiation, to come to terms whether advanced and proficient learners commit less errors on false friends than those pertaining to beginner and intermediate levels. The prediction was that English L2 speakers at all levels were supposed to misinterpret the meaning of at least some of the

utterances. However, the exposure of beginners and intermediate learners to semantic confusion caused by false cognates was higher than in the case with advanced and proficient L2 speakers. This expectation was borne out, as it was found that all the participants did interpret some sentences inaccurately, though A1, B1 and B2 English speakers provided more incorrect responses than C1 and C2 groups of language learners. Moreover, Spanish L1 produced more false-cognate responses in Spanish L1-oriented sentences than in Russian L1-oriented ones and vice versa with Russian L1 group. The difference was not significant which is believed to be due to high level of English of participants in general.

In terms of proficiency, English L1 achieved the highest number of correct responses, followed by Spanish L1 and then Russian L1 group of speakers. Durán Escribano argues that “the visual stimulus reaching the brain may become a misleading clue for the L2 learner lacking the required background knowledge, or the cognitive ability to discriminate stimuli. In these cases, the learning strategies related to meaning deduction of new words may turn into a foul for intermediate students who do not master other contextual clues” (2004, 94-95). The results have proved that the level of English as a foreign language and L2 learners' output are closely interconnected and dependent on each other. Still, it has been demonstrated that even C2 Spanish L1 and Russian L1 English speakers are at risk of being trapped by false cognates lexical items. One of the main issues could be L2 processing related to learning transfer: “overgeneralisation of mother tongue rules applied to target language material and to semantic features may result in the wrong interpretation of word meaning” (Durán Escribano 2004, 93). It must be also noted the relationship of similarity of the L1 language of participants and the target language, which would definitely influence the task with a certain degree of L1 interference, as the majority of English-Spanish and English-Russian false cognates share the same Latin origins.

When all is said and done, the obtained results have been complied with proposed expectations of the present study. The initial hypothesis can be defined as plausible since inserting of false cognates in context has caused a state of English L2 speakers' confusion and misinterpretation not only by A1-B2, but also C1-C2 learners, thereby verifying the hypothesis. Finally, it is important to make a note on supposedly incorrect evaluation of some sentences by English L1 speakers: this finding can be explained either by level of responsibility and personal attitude of recruited participants or any other extra linguistic factors on the level of native soundness, since all the created sentences have been supervised in the frame of conducted research.

6. Conclusion

The present research has reaffirmed the claims of previous studies on the issue about false friends having impact on L2 learners' comprehension when studying foreign languages. The two conducted surveys on semantic plausibility interrupted by false friends have shown in practice that even advanced and proficient Spanish and Russian L1 speakers of English as a foreign language have been misled by treating false cognates as the true ones. The erroneous interpretation which false cognates cause in SLA should be taken into consideration at all levels. Although, English L2 speakers of lower levels have been much more exposed to classical interpretation of false friends, most of the time leading to semantic changes of the whole utterance, followed by cross communicational confusion. So that they should form a compulsory group of participants in further research. The type of test based on sentence evaluation has resulted practically feasible for testing second language learners' relationship with false friends, however it was limited by participants' reliability. Additionally, a combination of different tasks and the section with translation would be suggestion for future application which could also provide an insightful analysis of English L2 learners' responses.

Furthermore, the conducted research suggests to pay more attention to false friends by EFL learners and likewise advocates for inclusion of the false cognates study in the educational language system. It seems to be necessary to teach L1 and L2 transfers of different meanings between NL and TL not only in linguistically oriented fields, but also at lower levels of educational institutions where English as a foreign L2 is being imparted. Raising language awareness should be provided for students in order to diminish or avoid their errors by inaccurate interpretation of cognates and falling into the trap of false friends while translating (Durán Escribano 2004, 95-96). Teachers should stimulate students to perform some tasks related to the use of false friends and provide them with false cognates-oriented texts for translation in order to raise their awareness about the importance of appropriate usage of such pairs of lexical items which may cause a serious distortion when being misinterpreted (Otwińska et al. 2020, 690). Wagner's web-based false friend exercise (CALL) where “the learner is asked to mark words in a text that are similar in form to a word in his or her native language and then to classify these words according to three levels of meaning correspondence” could be a grate example of raising awareness among L2 learners by implementing such type of activities to SLA teaching (2004).

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Annexes

L1-oriented sentences for two crossed surveys:

Group 1: Spanish L1

1. The military parade is annually held on May 9.
2. The Prime Minister had to contest a couple of questions by email.
3. When I don't drink enough water, I am easily constipated.
4. There is a need to cure my code because I can't bend my arm properly.
5. She felt embarrassed after having been rude to her father.
6. My team has just realized this mission together.
7. I'm used to record lectures to revise every detail afterwards.
8. If you're thirsty, take this vase of water and help yourself, please.
9. Borrowing books from the public library helps me to save money.
10. I want to get rid of the pain that I have for a large time in my back.
11. Mary has thrown the rope to climb up the catwalk and her hands started shaking.
12. The clerk has told us a grocery at the store this morning.
13. My advisor has assisted me at the conference last Friday.
14. I never support my sister's behavior because she constantly argues.
15. While walking the red carpet, it started to rain heavily.
16. Students have to read the lecture and submit their critical reflections afterwards.

Group 2: Spanish L1

1. Our Prime Minister had to contest the US attempts to take a power over the country.
2. We had to make a long parade on our way to Moscow.
3. There is a need to verify a new code as a means of safety measures.
4. Usually I feel constipated after having been wandering in cold water.

5. My team has just realized how to carry out this mission together.
6. She has no doubts anymore because the test has shown that she is embarrassed.
7. Just let me clean a vase and these flowers will be shimmering in there.
8. I don't record my remote classes because I don't pay much attention to them.
9. I've got rid of the pain in my back thanks to the large orthopedic mattress.
10. She loves getting new editions, so she prefers to buy her books in a library.
11. The clerk wasn't very polite to us at the grocery store this morning.
12. Mary has put her rope off and her body started shaking from the cold wind.
13. I try to support my sister when she has a point.
14. My advisor has assisted the conference with me last Friday.
15. Students have to submit their critical reflections after having attended the lecture.
16. Having the documents in the red carpet has protected them from a heavy rain.

Group 1: Russian L1

1. You need to be accurate with personal data in your research.
2. Nevsky prospect has a very expanded territory.
3. What data are you going to collect today?
4. Virtuous candidates will show their mastery in the music competition.
5. Have you created your list of irregular verbs?
6. I did a lot of exercise, so I need to take a douche just to refresh myself.
7. Let's enter this thrift shop, I want to buy new vintage magazine.
8. I'd love to have my personal cabinet for quiet working there.
9. You have a wonderful family, your parents always support you.
10. The heroine is lunatic: she gets out of her bed and walks around at night.
11. My grandmother takes any insult related to our family very close to heart.
12. I feel a sharp pain in my throat, I might have caught angina.
13. In our pantry you can always find a couple of jars of fresh marmalade.
14. Take this warm bread, please, and we'll have a dinner at the stole.
15. This enterprise has been a loyal patron of good quality bullets.
16. This fabric uses cotton textile that is easy-to-care-for.

Group 2: Russian L1

1. Nevsky avenue has no prospect of expanding its territory.
2. You need to look accurate when you run a formal meeting.
3. This academy is looking for virtuous candidates for studying religion.

4. What data have you planned the meeting?
5. The doctor prescribed me douching for medical and hygienic reasons.
6. I need more paper to finish my essay, so pass me a new list, please.
7. Do you know what type of things does she store in this cabinet?
8. Let's enter this magazine, I have to buy new vintage jacket.
9. The heroine has been put into a lunatic asylum for an extremely queer behavior.
10. You have a peculiar family, it sounds to be of foreign roots.
11. Some days I feel a sharp pain in my chest, that's because I suffer from angina.
12. My grandmother has a fear of insult, she is aged enough for that.
13. Put on this extra stole and you'll get warmer, it's made of wool.
14. In our pantry you can always find a box of strawberry marmalade.
15. This factory uses cotton fabrics that are easy-to-care-for.
16. This enterprise provides its clients with good quality patrons.

Survey 1:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSckxOdk5iUCdT6n_6N-CSg9_zXPM0dkkVF7fjsB658hB9nDA/viewform

Survey 2:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScuu_i4XILrnBrGpgPZEULYbjL3XnqNB4XcOcONOWchhGR4TQ/viewform?embedded=true