

How Learners' Native Language Affects Them When Learning a New Language Online

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Introduction

Learners' L1 affects their performance during L2 acquisition. This is primarily due to L1 interference, which is caused by the transfer of structures from the L1 to the L2.

This is pedagogically significant, as increased awareness of interference facilitates learning and aids in the design of educational tools.

Previous studies used limited samples, necessitating a large-scale study of the subject.

Methodology

The EFCAMDAT

- ESL learner corpus.
- Based on texts graded and marked for a variety of errors (grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.)

Sample

- 7 native languages
- 55,631 learners
- 358,751 texts
- Proficiency range (CEFR): A1-C1

Errors

- Articles
- Plurality
- Prepositions
- Capitalization

Feature values were derived using the World Atlas of Language Structures.

Data Analysis

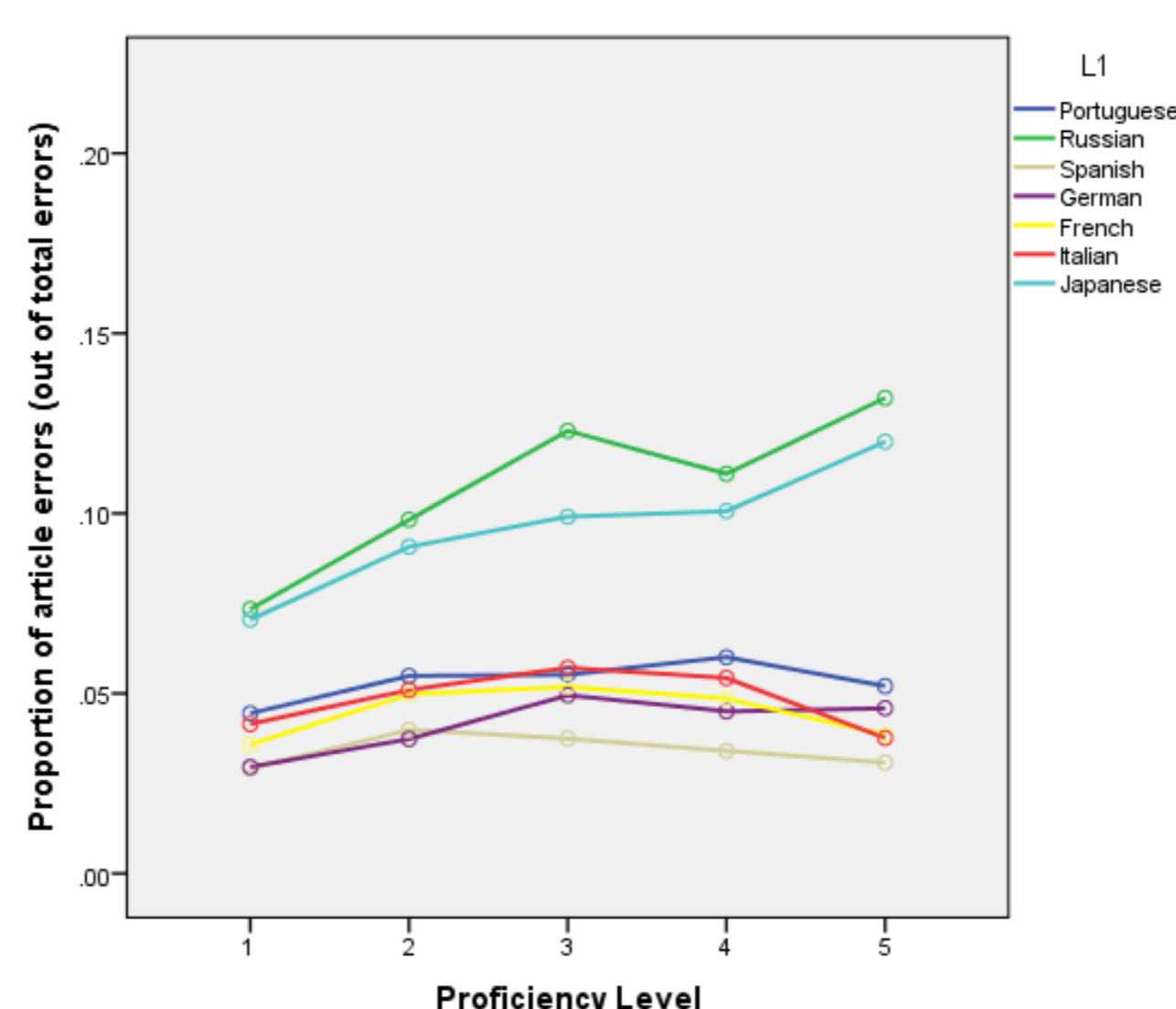
Difference in error proportion (out of all errors) per L1 and across proficiency levels.

Correlation between L2 proficiency and error proportion.

The results were contrasted with each L1s values for the features relevant to that error.

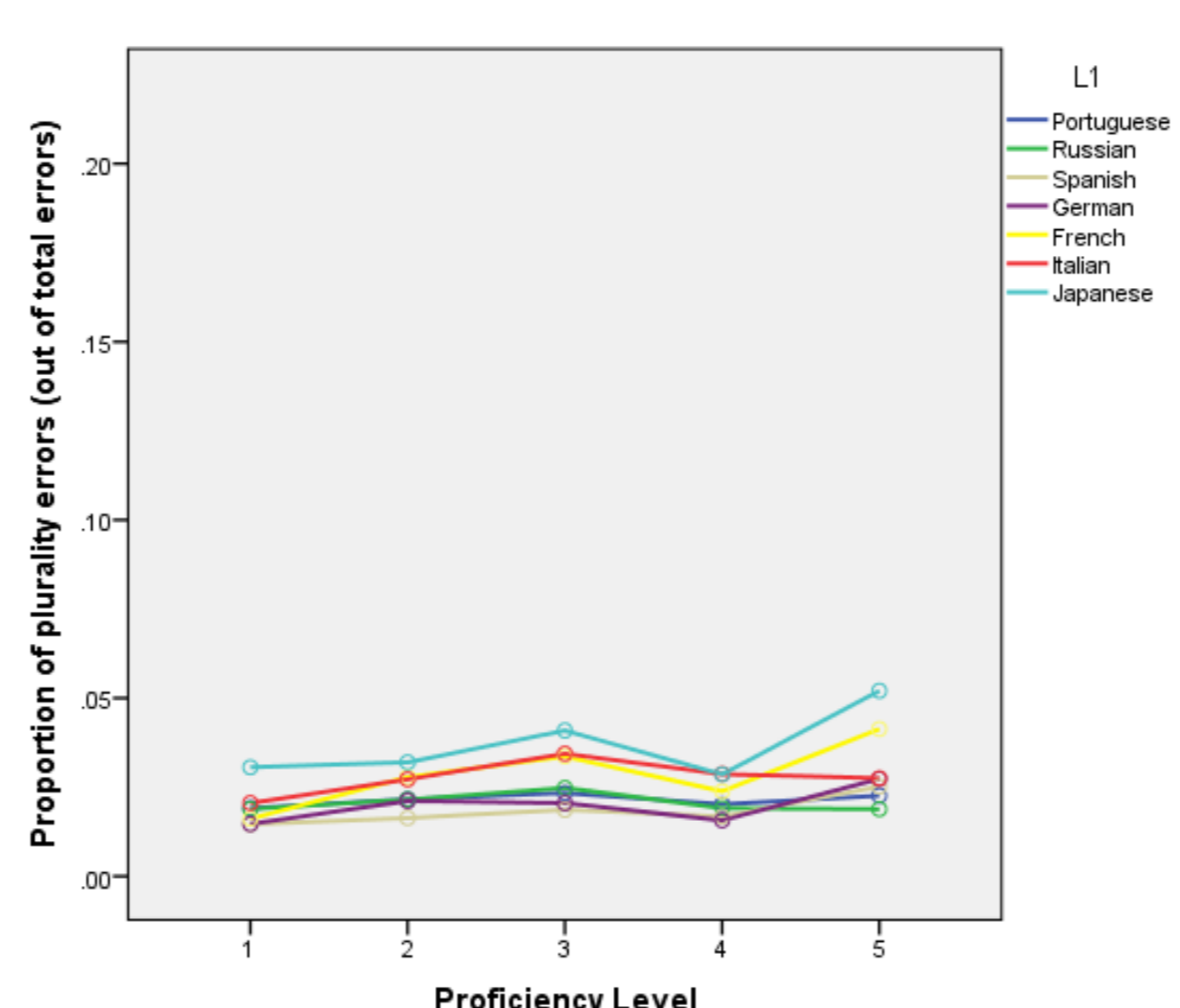
Results

Article Errors



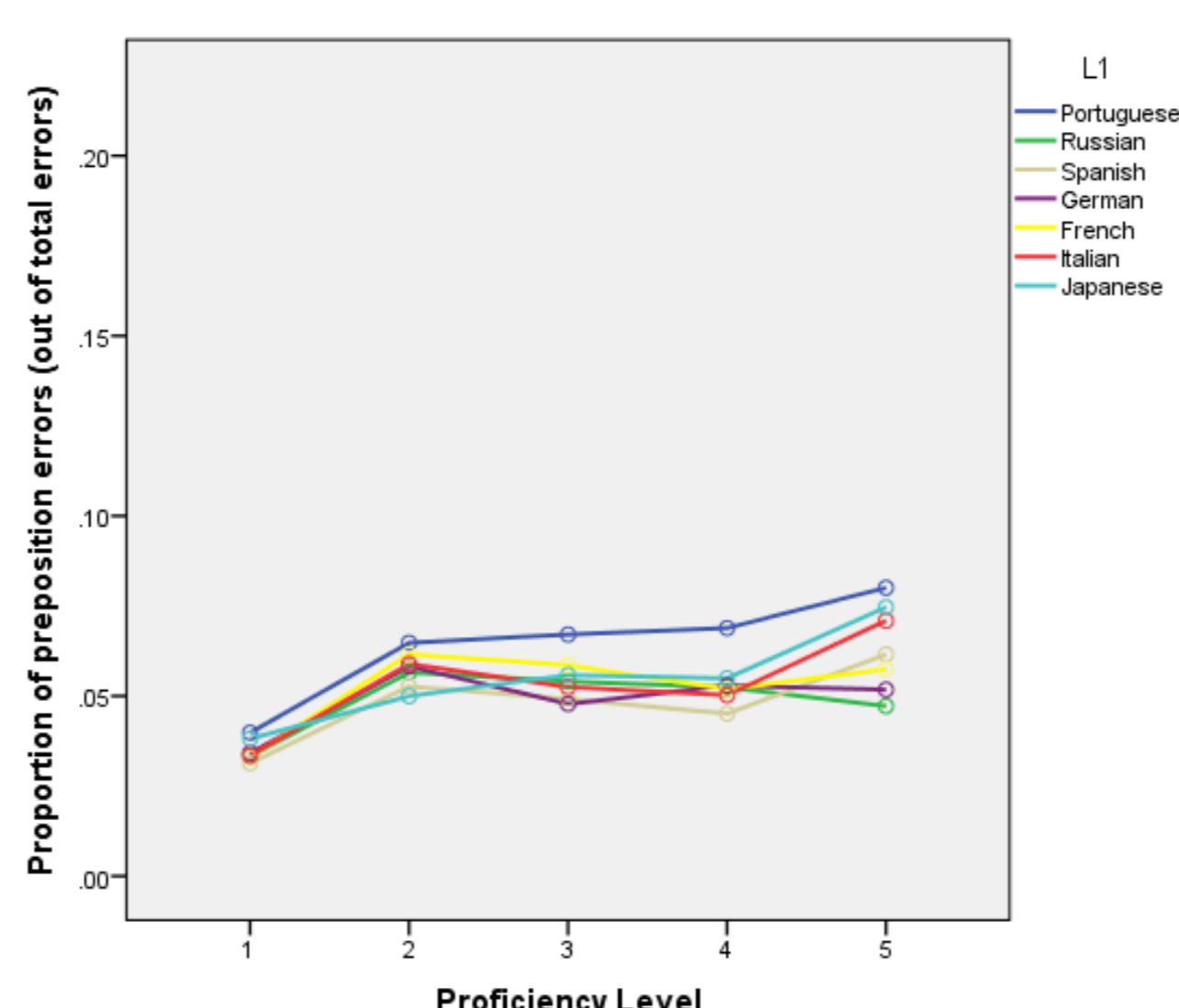
Feature	English	Portuguese, Spanish, German, French, Italian	Russian	Japanese
Definite articles	Distinct from demonstrative		None	None
Indefinite articles	Distinct from 'one'	Same as 'one'	None	

Plurality Errors



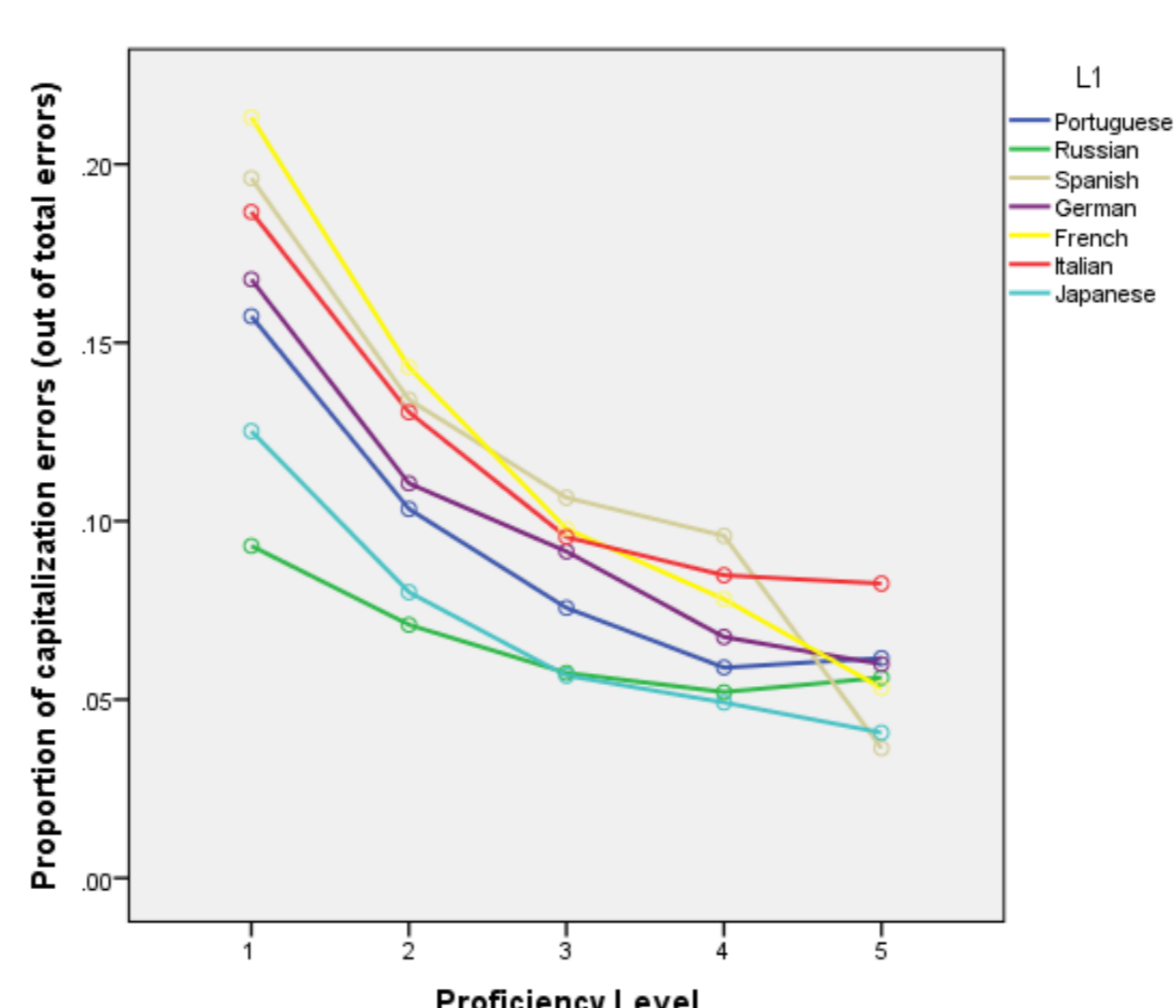
Feature	English	Portuguese, Italian	Russian, French	Spanish	German	Japanese
Coding of nominal plurality	Plural suffix					
Occurrence of nominal plurality	All nouns, always obligatory					Only human nouns, optional
Plurality in independent personal pronouns	Person-number stem	Missing value in WALS	Person-number stem + nominal plural affix	Person-number stem + pronominal plural affix		Person stem + nominal plural affix
The associative plural	No associative plural				Unique periphrastic associative plural	Associative same as additive plural

Preposition Errors



Feature	English	Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, French, Italian	German	Japanese
Order of adposition and noun phrase	Prepositions			Postpositions
Relationship between the order of object and verb and the order of adposition and noun phrase	VO and prepositions		Lacks a dominant order	OV and postpositions

Capitalization Errors



Feature	English	Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian	German	Russian	Japanese
Script	Latin	Latin	Latin	Cyrillic	Mixed
Capitalization	Large number of word classes	To a smaller degree	All nouns	To a smaller degree	Appears in Romanized versions

Conclusions

Structural dissimilarity increases interference when relevant features in the L2 are absent from the L1. When this occurs, learners struggle with the subject even as their L2 proficiency improves.

However, structural similarity may also increase interference. When this occurs, learners cope well with the subject as their L2 proficiency improves.

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