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Translanguaging pedagogies in an ESP context: Exploring trilingual students' metalinguistic awareness

María Orcasitas-Vicandi ^{1*} & Oihana Leonet ²

¹University of the Basque Country, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

²University of the Basque Country, Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain

Abstract: As a pedagogical practice, translanguaging develops the languages that are part of the learners' linguistic repertoire in a horizontal continuum rather than as separate compartments. This approach to language pedagogy affirms the dynamic language practices of multilingual learners, and thus many educators working on bilingual programs have embraced it in compulsory education with positive results, even when minoritized languages are involved. However, its potential in tertiary education has been less investigated. The goal of this study is to explore the effect of a translanguaging intervention on the metalinguistic awareness of 31 trilingual undergraduate students in a Business English course in the Basque Autonomous Community. Results showed significant improvement in morphological awareness and cognate awareness as well as an increase in the perception of cross-linguistic similarities across English, Spanish, and Basque. In this way, we suggest that pedagogical translanguaging can be a valid approach in ESP courses and in tertiary education.

Keywords: *translanguaging, metalinguistic awareness, morphological awareness, cognate awareness, english for specific purposes (esp).*

Pedagogías del translenguaje en un contexto de inglés para fines específicos: Explorando la conciencia metalingüística de estudiantes trilingües

Resumen: Como práctica pedagógica, el translanguaging desarrolla las lenguas que forman parte del repertorio lingüístico del alumnado en un continuo horizontal en lugar de en compartimentos separados. Este enfoque de la pedagogía del lenguaje afirma las prácticas lingüísticas dinámicas de los estudiantes multilingües y, por lo tanto, muchos educadores que trabajan en programas bilingües lo han adoptado en la educación obligatoria con resultados positivos, incluso cuando se trata de lenguas minoritarias. Sin embargo, su potencial en la educación terciaria ha sido menos investigado. El objetivo de este estudio es explorar el efecto de una intervención basada en el translanguaging en la conciencia metalingüística de 31 estudiantes universitarios trilingües de un curso de inglés comercial en la Comunidad Autónoma Vasca. Los resultados mostraron una mejora significativa en la conciencia morfológica así como un aumento en la percepción de similitudes interlingüísticas entre el inglés, el español y el euskera. De esta manera, sugerimos que el translanguaging pedagógico puede ser un enfoque válido en los cursos de ESP y en la educación superior.

Palabras clave: *translanguaging, conciencia metalingüística, conciencia morfológica, conciencia de cognados, inglés para fines específicos (esp).*

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*Corresponding author: maria.orcasitas@ehu.eus

1. Introduction

The knowledge of academic vocabulary is crucial for educational and professional success. Moreover, it has been shown that good lexical knowledge favors literacy and overall academic performance (Nation, 2008), and that both morphological awareness (Nation, 2001) and cognate awareness (Ottwinowska, 2016) play a crucial role in learning vocabulary.

In multilingual educational contexts, morphological and cognate awareness may be enhanced using students' consciousness of their multilingual repertoire and creating learning environments in which other languages besides the target language are used (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). Yet, in language teaching, the assumption that teachers should avoid using languages other than the target one is still very present, and languages are taught in a compartmentalized manner (Cummins, 2007).

In recent years, several researchers are looking for new pedagogical practices that break with this language isolation (Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Li Wei, 2014), and translanguaging has become the most widely used term to refer to this type of pedagogies. The translanguaging intervention presented in this article focuses on increasing students' cross-linguistic awareness and specifically morphological and cognate awareness by creating opportunities to use the students' entire linguistic repertoire in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom. In order to do so, students were exposed to sequences of activities that explicitly teach cognate and morphological awareness strategies they could use in learning business English. The concept of translanguaging and its pedagogical use will be reviewed in the following section.

1.1 Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy

Translanguaging may be understood as both the flexible use of the languages of bilingual students inside and outside the classroom (spontaneous translanguaging) or as the planned action of the teacher in the classroom (pedagogical translanguaging; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Leung and Valdes (2019) point out that translanguaging is a polysemic term involving several layers and interpretations, and that it is in constant development. With the aim of clarifying the current debate on translanguaging, Vogel and García (2017, p.4) propose some fundamental premises for translanguaging theories according to which bi- and multilingual perspectives should answer individuals' linguistic and semiotic practices above the named languages of nations and states. According to these researchers, individuals have a unitary linguistic repertoire comprising elements from different 'named languages' and they choose and deploy these elements according to their communicative needs. However, these researchers still recognize the importance of socially constructed named language categories, particularly for minoritized language speakers.

In this way, Leung and Valdes (2019, p. 359) distinguish two main analytic perspectives among the epistemic diversity that focuses on educational and pedagogic practices. The first perspective sees languages as 'distinct and separate semiotic entities', which is associated

with the original concept of translanguaging developed in Wales (Lewis et al., 2012). The second perspective views languages as 'configurations of temporal lexical and syntactic features' that express human meaning, which is linked to the concept of translanguaging proposed by Otheguy et al. (2015).

The social reality of languages is reflected in education policies and language curricula (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021), as it is exemplified by the Business English course in which the present study has been carried out. Cenoz and Gorter (2021) explain that students develop abilities in specific languages to use them according to rules and regulations that have been socially constructed. In this case, Business Management students enrolled in a Business English course in the Basque Country aim at developing linguistic competence in English so that they can have access to the business world at the international level, where the use of English is essential. In this way, even if translanguaging has been mainly studied as a natural or spontaneous practice, researchers such as Canagarajah (2011) and Poza (2017) point to the need to go beyond pure intuitive practice and suggest explicitly teaching translanguaging strategies in classrooms, while claiming the need of conducting more research regarding the effect of translanguaging on academic development.

Most of the pedagogical interventions that encourage the use of the entire linguistic repertoire of students have been conducted in the school setting (e.g. Cenoz et al., 2022; Leonet et al., 2020; Charamba & Zano, 2019; Makalela, 2017, 2015; Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016). This approach offers the opportunity to raise awareness of how the language itself works (i.e., metalinguistic awareness) by linking the features shared by languages and transferring them from the languages that students already master to the target language (Cenoz et al., 2022; Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021; Leonet et al., 2020; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Soltero-González et al., 2012).

1.2 Translanguaging strategies in the development of metalinguistic awareness

1.2.1 Morphological and Cognate Awareness

Researchers in the fields of Second Language Acquisition and Multilingualism have demonstrated that focusing on the similarities between students' languages and raising their awareness of them may help students in the learning of an additional language (Cummins, 2017). When students use their entire linguistic repertoire, linguistic knowledge and strategies are transferred from the source languages (the languages known by students) to the target language and, as a result, their metalinguistic awareness is strengthened (Arteagoitia & Howard, 2015; Dressler et al., 2011). This, in turn, enhances students' perception of their multilingual resources and facilitates the identification of cross-linguistic similarities such as cognates or morphological strategies for word formation (Cenoz et al., 2022; Leonet et al., 2020).

1.2.1.1 Morphological awareness

Morphological awareness entails a 'conscious awareness of the morphemic structure of words and ability to reflect on and manipulate that structure' (Carlisle, 1995, p.194). Many researchers suggest that the teaching of the skills associated with this type of awareness is a worthwhile classroom endeavour (Bowers & Kirby, 2010; Freyd & Baron, 1982; White et al., 1989), and there is evidence that morphological awareness improves reading comprehension (Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Carlisle, 2000) and develops vocabulary beyond the words targeted (Bowers & Kirby, 2010).

According to Nation (2001), strategies to decompose words in their units, or 'word part analysis', is one of the major vocabulary learning strategies. This strategy is shared across languages, and it requires awareness to recognize meaningful units in a word, to be able to link meaning to those units, and to see how the meanings of the units relate to the meaning of the word. The word part analysis can also contribute to making cross-linguistic identification of cognates among languages that share vocabulary of Latin origin, as is the case of English, Spanish, and Basque. In fact, several studies have shown a relation between word structure knowledge and cognate identification (Hancin-Bhatt & Nagy, 1994; Dressler et al., 2011).

In addition to the strategy to decompose words, the strategy to create new words by deriving or compounding has also been analyzed. The essence of these strategies is to create derivative or compound words by adding affixes or other units to the base of the words in order to create new meanings. Creating new words by adding new morphemes entails far more complex processes than decomposing words because it requires knowing the grammatical function and meaning of these morphemes. Exposition to the reading language might be enough to acquire the ability to decompose words (Carlisle, 2000). Yet, in order to derive words, students might need explicit instruction on the affixes and their grammatical functions.

Some intervention studies in the school context have explored the potential of the translanguaging approach for morphology instruction (Cenoz et al., 2022; Leonet et al., 2020; Lyster et al. 2013). For example, Ossa Parra and Proctor (2021) examined the discourse and interactions during morphology and syntax instruction lessons to understand how students engaged with the language structures taught as well as how translanguaging manifested in their talk about language. They found that translanguaging practices supported students' metalinguistic awareness and cognitive engagement by establishing connections between English and Spanish morphemes, comparing English and Spanish morphology and syntax, and exploring alternative syntactic structures.

1.2.1.2 Cognate awareness

Cognate words are representative of the linguistic knowledge students may transfer and use in the learning of an additional language. Nash (1997) reported that Spanish and English share between 10.000 and 15.000 cognate words, some of which may be found also in

Basque due to the historical contact between Basque and Latin, and more recently between Basque, Spanish, and French. However, from a psycholinguistic perspective, cognates do not need to share the same etymological origin necessarily, and thus may be defined as ‘words similar in their form and meaning, which have descended from a common parent word, have been borrowed from Lx language to Ly language, or are internationalisms borrowed independently by languages Lx, Ly and Lz’ (Otwinowska, 2016, p.46). If we understand that these words may be represented in a continuum between form and meaning relationship, we could represent on one side of the continuum cognate words with similar form and meaning (e.g., *arte* in Spanish / *art* in English / *artea* in Basque) and, on the other side of the continuum, false friends. A false friend refers to a linguistic phenomenon where two or more words from different languages appear similar or identical in terms of their spelling or pronunciation, but have different meanings. These deceptive words may lead language learners or speakers to assume that they have the same or similar meanings in both languages, often resulting in misunderstandings or errors in communication (e.g. to introduce ≠ *introducir* [to insert in Spanish]).

According to Otwinowska (2016), language learners transfer their cognate knowledge from one language to another if, first, they perceive the target language and their first (L1) and second (L2) languages as typologically close and, second, if they make accurate semantic identification. Language typology defines how relatively far or near languages are from each other based on their similarities and differences, and research shows that this is a key factor in native (i.e., L1>L3) and non-native cross-linguistic associations (i.e., L2s>L3) (e.g., Orcasitas-Vicandi, 2019, 2020, 2022; De Angelis, 2005; Cenoz, 2001; Ecke, 2015; Fouser, 2001).

Similarly, various studies have shown that students identify cognate words easier if they are orthographically similar, and also that even the smallest orthographic alteration may influence this identification (Cenoz et al., 2022; Bowers et al., 2000; Nagy et al., 1993). In this way, besides the linguistic distance between cognates, orthographic transparency has been considered a determinant factor in the identification of cognate words (Vanhove & Berthele, 2015).

In addition to orthographic transparency, semantic transparency also plays a decisive role in the identification of cognates. Despite the fact that many Spanish and English words have a Latin origin, lexical elements have differed in development in each language, and do not necessarily share much meaning today (Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011). A factor to consider when analyzing semantic word transparency is polysemy. Polysemous words have more than one meaning (e.g., *importar* in Spanish corresponds to both “to care” and “to import” in English). These different meanings may lead to confusion when identifying cognate words, since certain cognate words may take a different place in the continuum of the semantic relation depending on their meaning (see, Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011).

Some researchers consider that cognates have not been properly investigated as they have been analyzed in isolation (e.g., Singleton, 2003). These conditions are especially beneficial to identify cognate words. However, they have a scarce ecologic value because

they do not represent the real conditions in which cognates are usually presented. Some studies have found that the advantage of cognate words disappears once a semantic context is offered (Van Hell & De Groot, 2008; Schwartz & Kroll, 2006). Other studies have shown that students use this semantic context to identify cognate words that are not orthographically similar (Möller & Zeevaert, 2015).

Bravo et al. (2007) argued that cognates offered an additional advantage to L1 Spanish speakers compared to L1 English speakers when reading English science texts. According to these researchers, many cognate words with a Latin origin are high frequency words in Spanish while, in English, they are low frequency words and therefore far more sophisticated and used mainly in written language, as the high-frequency words in English tend to be of Germanic origin. For instance, 'signify' (English) and *significar* (Spanish). Considering this, L1 Spanish speakers could have an advantage when reading English academic texts, as they are able to draw the connection between their L1 and English vocabulary.

English academic texts usually contain many cognate words with a Latin origin, and these words tend to share orthographic and semantic similarities between English and Spanish (Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011). Thus, some researchers have investigated the relationship between reading comprehension and the capacity to identify cognate words in Spanish and English speakers (Proctor & Mo, 2009; Nagy et al., 1993). Proctor and Mo (2009), for instance, found a relationship between reading comprehension in English and cognate identification in Spanish L1 speakers, and not in English L1 speakers. These results showed that students who scored higher in reading comprehension also obtained higher grades in cognate identification. Intervention studies focused on the development of schoolchildren's cognate awareness have also found a positive effect of explicit instruction (Arteagoitia & Howard, 2015; White & Horst, 2012; Dressler et al., 2011).

Intervention studies in this field in tertiary education are scarce. However, several studies report positive relationships between adult learners' metalinguistic awareness and vocabulary learning across languages. For example, Candry et al. (2017) analysed form-meaning elaboration categories L2 learners make during a form-meaning-fit motivation task. They found five types of associations: cross-lexical associations, sound-symbolic associations, word-form comparisons, morphological associations, and idiosyncratic associations, being cross-lexical associations the most frequent type of elaborations.

In turn, Woll (2018) studied the role of metalinguistic awareness in positive lexical transfer from L2 English to L3 German by a group of French native speakers. Based on introspective verbal data, she found that a higher level of metalinguistic awareness is associated with positive transfer from an L2 to a typologically related L3. That is, participants successfully translated unknown words in the target language German (L3) into the French (L1) based on the positive influence of English (L2).

2. The present study

In tertiary education, spontaneous translanguaging is avoided (Gallego-Balsà & Cots, 2019) and both lecturers (Breeze and Roothoof, 2021) and students (Fang and Liu, 2020) are reluctant to admit that they use their L1s in their L2/Foreign Language (FL) classes, even if it is with a pedagogical purpose. Yet, pedagogical translanguaging intervention studies in tertiary education have shown positive results when leveraging students' bilingual resources to create affordances for students to develop their understanding of the academic subject matter (Makalela, 2017; Mazak et al., 2017). That is why, in this study, we wanted to add to this conversation by focusing specifically on the impact of pedagogical translanguaging on students' development of metalinguistic awareness.

With this in mind, our aim was to explore whether a translanguaging-based intervention could enhance students' ability to make cross-linguistic associations, which would in turn increase their cross-linguistic awareness. Therefore, we formulated our research questions as follows:

- Research Question 1: Does the intervention based on translanguaging influence the use of morphological strategies?
- Research Question 2: Does the intervention based on translanguaging influence students' cognate awareness?
- Research Question 3: What factors influence the identification of cognate words?

2.1 Participants

Participants were 31 trilingual undergraduate students (mean age~22.16) from the public University of the Basque Autonomous Community, where the main language of instruction is Basque, Spanish is the majority language, and English is taught as a FL. As part of the degree in Business Management, participants took a course in Business English as a minor subject.

All students were bilingual in Basque and Spanish. They reported having Spanish (46%), Basque (43%), or both (11%) as their native language, and English as their third language. The Business English course was aimed at students with an upper-intermediate level (B2) in the target language. Regarding proficiency level, 37% of the participants could certify a B2 level or above, according the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), 21 % of the students had a B1 certificate or lower, and the rest did not have any certificate.

2.2 Participants

The present study involved a 12-week intervention implemented at the Faculty of Economics in Donostia, located at the University of the Basque Country. The study followed a pre-test - post-test design, with the pre-test administered in the week preceding the intervention's implementation, and the post-test conducted in the week immediately following the completion of the 12-week intervention. This approach ensured that the pre-

test measured participants' initial metalinguistic awareness prior to any intervention, while the post-test gauged their metalinguistic awareness after the 12-week intervention period. The intervention sessions were conducted for a duration of 2 hours per week in total.

Pedagogical translanguaging was implemented in order to allow students to take advantage of all their linguistic resources in the process of language learning. Activities were designed and planned according to this translanguaging idea, but they went beyond the original translanguaging developed in Wales, where two languages were used in the input and output (Lewis et al., 2012), as it involved at least three languages (Basque, Spanish and English), and it encouraged making connections with other additional languages that could be part of the students' linguistic repertoires (e.g., their home languages). Yet, pertaining to our study, the participants explicitly indicated their proficiency in Basque, Spanish, and English, and thus no other languages were incorporated into the intervention's design.

The didactic materials designed for the intervention took into account the degree's curriculum guidelines, and the vocabulary to be learnt during that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course was included (see examples in the Appendix A). A series of tasks were designed in order to integrate metalinguistic strategies related to morphological structure knowledge and cognate awareness in the three languages. Adapting to tertiary education the activities designed by Leonet et al. (2020), the activities developed in this study focused on oral and written language, and mainly on vocabulary and discourse. Some of the exercises proposed focused on derivatives and compounds in Spanish, Basque, and English in order to enhance students' awareness of the similar word formation processes they could use in the three languages. Explicit instruction on the English prefixes and suffixes was provided together with exercises that aimed at developing the students' metalinguistic awareness to improve their production and comprehension both in oral and written discourse. In some cases, for instance, students were asked to compare the same item in the three languages (e.g., *liburudenda*, *librería*, bookstore) in order to discuss the differences between these words' formation. In the case of “*liburudenda*, *librería*, bookstore” students talked about the inclusion of two compounds in the same order (Basque “*liburudenda*” and English “bookstore”) and a derivative word in Spanish, “*librería*”. In these exercises, students were asked to use these strategies and to think of more examples in which they were used. Students were also asked to use these strategies to come across more vocabulary they could later use in their academic writing. In other cases, students were asked to read scientific or academic texts in English and identify cognates, compounds, and derivative words, and to relate them with the languages they knew.

2.3 Measures

Three complementary measures were designed for this study.

2.3.1 Morphological Awareness Test

An ad hoc designed test was used to assess morphological awareness based on previous instruments designed for other contexts (Lyster et al., 2013; McBride-Chang et al., 2005;

Carlisle, 2000). Sixty English words that were to be learnt in the ESP course were included in the test. These words were selected considering their appropriateness for the task (i.e., considering the number of affixes) and were divided into two parts (morpheme identification task and base derivation task).

2.3.1.1 Morpheme identification task

In this task, participants were asked to identify parts of derived forms in a set of 30 multi-morphemic words in English (e.g., dis/place/ment). Half of the words in the task (n=15) were constituted by two affixes plus the base and the remaining 15 words, by a base and an affix. Moreover, 15 words of the task had an equivalent cognate in Spanish or Basque. The items were analyzed on a scale from 0 to 3 according to the following criteria:

- 0 points if participants divided the word in the wrong way (e.g., coverage = cove/rage).
- 1 point if participants only identified one of the two affixes (e.g., disapproval = dis/approval).
- 2 points if participants identified the two parts in a word composed of a stem and an affix (e.g., coverage = cover/age).
- 3 points if participants identified the three parts in a word composed of a stem and two affixes (e.g., disapproval = dis/approv/al).

The analysis of the internal consistency of the morpheme identification task using pre-test scores had a good internal consistency with a Cronbach coefficient of .82.

2.3.1.2 Base derivation task

This task required responses involving morpheme compounding in English in order to assess the ability of the participants to produce new words from their base. The task consisted of 30 scenarios in English. Each one provided the base of each target word at the end of the sentence. Participants were asked to come up with new derived forms from the given base. Oral and written guidelines were provided at the beginning of the task and students were also given the following example:

Population growth in the third world has drastically increased [GLOBAL] food demand. (globe)

In 18 of the items, participants were asked to derivate the base adding a suffix, while another 6 items required to add an affix and, finally, the last 6 items required a base plus two affixes. The items were analyzed on a two-point scale according to the following criteria:

- 0 points for incorrect word formations (e.g., endors-ing instead of endorse-ment).
- 1 point when the word was appropriate but misspelled (e.g., endorsment).
- 2 points if students linked the given base to the appropriate affix without any spelling mistake (e.g., endorse-ment).

The maximum score for this task was 60. In the Base derivation pre-test, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .82 showing good internal consistency as well.

2.3.2 Cognate Awareness Test

An ad hoc designed test was used to assess cognate awareness based on previous instruments designed for other contexts (Lyster et al., 2013; McBride-Chang et al., 2005; Carlisle, 2000).

2.3.2.1 Reading comprehension task

Four different expository passages related to Business Studies in English were adapted to the students' proficiency level. The length of texts administered in the pre-test was 346 words containing 103 cognates for passage 1, and 485 words containing 115 cognates for passage 2. Regarding post-test reading passages, passage 3 had 412 words of which 157 were cognates, and passage 4 had 382 words of which 120 were cognates. The texts were chosen considering the topics to be covered in the course from copyright-free content webpages (e.g., NewUSA) and were adapted considering that the total amount of cognates in each text needed to be balanced from the pre- to the post-test. The number of cognates was calculated considering cognates across at least two languages (Spanish and English). The reason for this choice was the idea that being bilingual students, the minimum number of connections they could make between cognates would occur in at least one of their two languages. Moreover, we also took into account the fact that almost any cognate word in Basque would also have its equivalent cognate word in Spanish, as there is no option to be cognates in Basque-English, without going through Spanish, the other Indo-European language.

Once students had read the text, they had to answer four questions regarding the content of each passage in which cognate words were involved. All the items were multiple-choice with four different possible answers.

2.3.2.2 Cognate Identification Task

In the cognate identification task, students were asked to underline all the words that, in their view, had an identical or similar spelling and meaning to other words they already knew in Basque and/or Spanish. The concept of cognate was introduced to participants and the following examples were provided:

1. Illustration (Eng.) – Ilustración (Sp.) – Ilustrazioa (Bas.)
2. Navigate (Eng.) – Navegar (Sp.) – Nabigatu (Bas.)
3. Surf (Eng.) – Surf (Sp.) – Surf (Bas.)

RESLA_TXT_Body_After_Example

All instructions were administered in English both written and orally before the task.

2.3.2.3 Cognates in Context task

A total of 28 cognates were selected from the reading passages of which 14 belonged to the pre-test, and the other 14 to the post-test. Students were asked to deduce the meaning of the cognates taking into account the context of the passage. All the items were multiple-choice with four different possible answers, and one point was given for each correct answer. These words had an equivalent cognate pair in Spanish and/or Basque and were selected by the two authors as being the most ambiguous cognate pairs in the texts after measuring for their semantic and orthographic transparency (see Appendix A). The set of words also included false friends. The target cognate set was small to make it possible to administer the whole task within a single class period.

Orthographical transparency was measured by the Levenshtein Distance (LD) and the Normalised LD (NLD), which has been satisfactorily used in other studies to determine the degree of transparency between cognate pairs (Schepens et al., 2012). LD consists of counting the minimum number of insertions, deletions, or substitutions of single characters needed to transform one string into the other. NLD measures the relationship between the LD and the length of the longest word in a cognate pair (see, Figure 1). NLD establishes a range between 0 and 1, where score 0 means full orthographic overlap, while score 1 means the greatest difference. As the language of the text was English, the NLD analysis was conducted between both English-Spanish and English-Basque.

$$\text{Normalised LD (NLD)} = \frac{\text{LD}}{\text{a maximum length of the longer word}}$$

Figure 1. Algorithm to calculate the Normalised Levenshtein Distance.

Additionally, semantic transparency or “the extent to which the meaning or a multimorphemic word can be determined from the meaning of its constituents” (Auch et al., 2020, p. 1) was considered an influential factor in cognate recognition, and it was taken into account in order to determine the grade of difficulty of each cognate. Semantic transparency was measured considering the number of different meanings each target word had in Basque and/or Spanish. These words were classified in a continuum from only one meaning (providers) to 14 different meanings (receive). The Real Academia Española (RAE) online dictionary was used to determine the number of meanings of each word in Spanish. For the equivalents in Basque, Elhuyar and Arluxet online dictionaries were consulted.

2.3.3 Cognate Awareness Questionnaire

Participants completed a short questionnaire before and after the intervention. The questionnaire was adapted from Otwinowska-Kasztelanic (2011) to the design and the context of our study, and it was provided both in Basque and Spanish. It contained four questions concerning cross-linguistic similarities among English, Spanish, and Basque (see Appendix B). More concretely, it looked at students' awareness of the number of cognates

between Basque and English, and Spanish and English (Questions 1 and 2) and participants' self-reported knowledge of cognate pairs in these language pairs (Questions 3). The pre-test version also had a section designed to gather background information related to gender, age, and participants' previous experience with English.

2.2 Procedure

The tests were group-administered by one of the authors before and after a four-month intervention. During that period, participants were trained on morphological and cognate strategies, which were transferable among English, Spanish, and Basque. Testing time was distributed over two days. On the first day, participants completed the Morphological Awareness Test (i.e., Morpheme identification task and Base derivation task) and Cognate Awareness Test (i.e., Reading comprehension task, Cognate Identification task and Cognates in Context task). These tests involved a Basque or Spanish version of the questionnaire within the limit of 15 minutes. Then, each participant had an average time of 30 minutes to individually complete each task of the morphological awareness test, including a brief verbal instruction, and a collection of task sheets. On the second day, participants completed the Cognate Awareness Test within the limit of 50 minutes. The participants completed the three tasks that make up the test, beginning with the Reading comprehension task, following the Cognate Identification task and the Cognates in Context task. Verbal and written instructions for each task were provided in English, as it was the main language of instruction in the subject. Participants were allowed to ask further questions about the completion of the tests during the assessment sessions in the language of their choice.

Once all the data were gathered, the authors of this article corrected the tests considering the guidelines provided in the previous section. The data were later processed and analyzed using the SPSS program version 26.

3. Results

In this section, the results obtained by each research instrument will be analyzed. Therefore, the section is made up of various subsections corresponding to the instruments described above. In order to address the way the intervention influenced the students' use of morphological strategies paired t-test analyses were conducted with both the morpheme identification (2.3.1.1) and base derivation tasks (2.3.1.2).

3.1 Morpheme identification

The paired-samples t-test for the morpheme identification task (see subsection 2.3.1.1) revealed that there was a statistically significant increase from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 35.85$, $SD = 10.61$) to ($M = 45.25$, $SD = 8.25$), $t(27) = -6.12$, $p < .00$. The mean increase in post-test score was -9.40 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -12.54 to -6.24 , $d = 1.15$. In order to get more information about the way in which students divided the words, a paired t-test was run with each of the items of the Morpheme identification task. Participants obtained higher scores in the post-test in 26 of the 30 items but the increase was only

significant for 15 of these items. “advise” $t(27) = -3.00, p < .00, d = 0.46$, “quotation” $t(27) = -1.98, p < .05, d = 0.25$, “export” $t(27) = -3.23, p < .00, d = 0.60$, “importer” $t(27) = -2.49, p < .01, d = 0.53$, “subsidiary” $t(27) = -2.26, p < .03, d = .36$, “advertisement” $t(27) = -2.07, p < .04, d = 0.38$, “loyalty” $t(27) = -2.71, p < .01, d = 0.74$, “awareness” $t(27) = -3.15, p < .00, d = 0.57$, “acquire” $t(27) = -2.29, p < .03, d = 0.47$, “revenue” $t(27) = -3.10, p < .00, d = 0.65$, “coverage” $t(27) = -2.27, p < .03, d = 0.47$, “acknowledge” $t(27) = -2.92, p < .00, d = .70$, “updating” $t(27) = -2.19, p < .03, d = 0.58$, “unskilled” $t(27) = -2.68, p < .01, d = 0.62$, and for the item “depth” $t(27) = -3.00, p < .00, d = 0.58$. The results of the Morpheme identification task are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences between pre-test and post-test in the Morpheme identification task.

	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST		T	S
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)		
Advise*	.50	.88	1.00	1.01	-3.00	.00
Equipment	1.71	.71	1.94	.37	-1.36	.18
Quotation	.86	1.00	1.10	.99	-1.98	.05
Export*	1.36	.95	1.87	.37	-3.28	.00
Importer*	1.82	.98	2.32	1.06	-2.49	.01
Subsidiary*	.71	.65	1.03	1.10	-2.26	.03
Advertisement	1.14	.97	1.58	1.00	-2.07	.04
Loyalty*	1.79	.41	2.00	.00	-2.71	.01
Edgewise	1.57	.83	1.61	.83	.00	1.00
Awareness	1.36	.91	1.84	.52	-3.15	.00
Endorsement	1.00	.66	1.32	1.05	-1.56	.13
Acquire*	.32	.72	.77	.99	-2.29	.03
Controversial*	.36	.48	.42	.55	.00	1.00
Announcement*	.82	.39	.90	.26	-1.36	.18
Volatility*	.96	.96	1.39	.95	-1.83	.07
Entrepreneur*	.43	.50	.52	.50	-1.00	.32
Assemble*	.04	.18	.16	.39	-1.68	.10
Configure*	.89	.99	1.10	1.01	-.86	.39
Supplier	1.43	.92	1.52	.83	-.48	.63
Revenue	1.00	1.01	1.68	.78	-3.10	.00
Reassess	1.14	1.00	1.19	.94	-.16	.86
Coverage	1.21	.99	1.65	.78	-2.27	.03
Acknowledge	1.32	1.24	2.06	1.06	-2.92	.00
Unparalleled*	1.93	1.12	1.90	1.04	.38	.70
Updating*	1.71	.97	2.23	.96	-2.19	.03
Displacement	2.57	.83	2.81	.63	-1.14	.26
Unskilled	1.71	1.18	2.39	1.05	-2.68	.01
Researcher	2.32	1.02	2.45	.83	-1.23	.22
Depth	.36	.78	.84	1.00	-3.00	.00
Budgetary	1.50	.88	1.48	.88	.00	1.00

* Word with a cognate pair in Spanish and/or Basque

If we look at the number of affixes in each item, participants improved in 9/15 items composed of a base plus an affix. Among the items composed of a base plus two affixes, the improvement occurred in 6/15 items. Ten of these items had a prefix or a prefix and a suffix. Students improved significantly in the two items with the prefix “ad” as well as in the two items with the prefix “ac”.

Moreover, half of the items in the Morpheme identification task had a cognate equivalent in Spanish or Basque. Participants improved significantly in 7/15 items with a cognate equivalent while they improved significantly in 8/15 items that did not have a cognate in Spanish or Basque.

3.2 Base derivation

The paired-samples t-test conducted for the base derivation task (see subsection 2.3.1.2) yielded a significant group effect from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 18.82$, $SD = 9.02$) to ($M = 23.57$, $SD = 7.92$), $t(27) = -4.19$, $p < .00$, $d = .79$. The mean increase in post-test score was -4.75 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -7.07 to -2.19 .

For a more detailed understanding of the way in which students created words from the given base considering the information provided in the context, a paired t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference in the 30 items of the Base derivation task. Participants obtained higher scores in the post-test in 24 of the 30 items, but the increase was only significant for 6 of these items. “Competitive” $t(27) = -1.98$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.47$, “co-author” $t(27) = -2.58$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.54$, “unsolved” $t(27) = -2.93$, $p < .00$, $d = 0.45$, “endorsement” $t(27) = -2.17$, $p < .03$, $d = 0.29$, “agricultural” $t(27) = -2.73$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.57$, and for the item “historically” $t(27) = -3.50$, $p < .00$, $d = 0.54$. Considering these results, participants improved significantly in 4/18 items that required to derivate the base by adding a suffix. The other two items required to add an affix and, finally an affix and a suffix were necessary to derivate the sixth item (see Table 2).

In order to analyze the way in which the intervention influenced students' Cognate Awareness, data from the Reading Comprehension (2.1), Cognate Identification (2.2) and Cognates in Context tasks (2.3) were analyzed. The results of these tasks are shown in Table 3. Then, the results from the Cognate Awareness questionnaire (3) were considered to gain a deeper understanding.

3. Base derivation

A paired-samples t-test revealed that there was a statistically significant increase in the Reading Comprehension task (see subsection 2.3.2.1) score from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.09$) to ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(27) = -2.84$, $p < .00$. The mean increase in the post-test score was $-.71$ with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -1.22 to $-.19$, $d = .53$.

Table 2. T Differences between pre-test and post-test in the base derivation task.

	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST		T	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
Placement (2)	1.46	.88	1.50	.88	-.17	.86
Competitive (2)	1.36	.95	1.71	.71	-1.98	.05
Loyalty (2)	1.75	.75	1.93	.37	-1.41	.17
Mismanage (1)	.14	.52	.25	.51	-1.36	.18
Unofficial (1)	.36	.78	.21	.63	1.44	.16
Challenger (2)	1.21	.99	1.36	.95	-.70	.49
Stretching (2)	.93	.97	.93	1.01	.00	1.00
Co-author (1)	.21	.56	.57	.79	-2.58	.01
Representative (3)	.07	.37	.00	.00	1.00	.32
Pressure (2)	.68	.94	.64	.95	.19	.84
Billionaire (2)	.71	.93	.86	.97	-1.00	.32
Gigantic (2)	.25	.58	.18	.47	.81	.42
Unresolved (3)	.36	.78	.82	.98	-2.93	.00
Endorsement (2)	1.04	.74	1.43	.69	-2.17	.03
Updating (3)	.29	.71	.29	.65	.00	1.00
Overcome (1)	.21	.63	.43	.83	-1.36	.18
Subset (1)	.14	.52	.29	.71	-1.44	.16
Dependence (2)	.96	.96	1.18	.98	-.90	.37
Leader (2)	1.75	.64	1.79	.63	-.32	.74
Improved (3)	.57	.87	.75	.96	-.92	.36
Differential (2)	.07	.37	.14	.52	-1.00	.32
Underemployment	.00	.00	.07	.37	-1.00	.32
Dependent (2)	.32	.72	.54	.83	-1.29	.20
Agricultural (2)	.89	.99	1.43	.92	-2.73	.01
Predictable (2)	.54	.88	.79	.99	-1.04	.30
Closely (2)	.32	.72	.36	.78	-.19	.84
Reopened (3)	.00	.00	.21	.63	-1.80	.08
Historically (2)	.89	.91	1.50	.79	-3.50	.00
Dramatically (2)	1.25	.84	1.43	.83	-1.30	.20
Displaced (3)	.07	.37	.00	.00	1.00	.32

(1) Word formed by a prefix. (2) Word formed by a suffix. (3) Word formed by both prefix and suffix.

Table 3. Differences between pre-test and post-test in the Reading Comprehension task, Cognate Identification task and Cognates in Context task.

TASKS	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST		T	S
	M	SD	M	SD		
Reading Comprehension	4.82	1.09	5.53	1.34	-2.84	.00
Cognate Identification	44.89	24.72	105.40	61.08	-6.50	.00
Cognates in Context	8.42	2.99	10.42	2.86	-3.15	.00

3.4 Base derivation

The paired-samples t-test conducted for the total cognate recognition score (see subsection 2.3.2.2) yielded a significant group effect from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 44.89$, $SD = 24.72$) to ($M = 105.40$, $SD = 61.08$), $t(27) = -6.50$, $p < .00$. The mean increase in post-test score was -60.67 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -79.82 to -41.52, $d = 1.22$.

3.5 Cognates in Context

Again, the paired-samples t-test conducted for the Cognates in Context Task (see subsection 2.3.2.1) revealed a statistically significant increase from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 8.42$, $SD = 2.99$) to ($M = 10.42$, $SD = 2.86$), $t(27) = -3.15$, $p < .00$. The mean increase in the post-test score was -2.00 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -3.30 to -.69, $d = .59$.

As shown in Table 4, the item-by-item analysis of the cognates of the test also showed that participants obtained more correct answers after the intervention.

Table 4. Item-by-item analysis of Cognates in Context task.

CORRECT ANSWERS	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
< 50%	provide (35.5%) expertise (38.7%) derivatives (45.2%) equities (45.2%) record (48.4%)	consultation (38.7%)
50%-75%	combat (61.3%) focused (64.5%) legitimate (64.5%) horizons (67.7%) solid (71%) competing (74.2%)	navigate (64.5%) efficiently (64.5%) receive (67.7%) prescription (67.7%) portable (67.7%) providers (71%) resources (74.2%)
%75 >	neophyte (77.4%) consisted (87.1%) flourish (96.8%)	reputation (77.4%) trained (87.1%) records (87.1%) transition (90.3%) continent (93.5%) digitize (93.5%)

3.6 C Cognate Awareness Questionnaire

Additionally, the effect on the perception of crosslinguistic similarity across the language systems was measured by the Cognate Awareness Questionnaire (3). In order to measure the overall cognate awareness of students' scores from the four questions of the questionnaire, these scores were summed. A paired-sample t-test revealed that there was a statistically significant increase in the overall cognate awareness score from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 10.54$, $SD = 3.57$) to ($M = 11.87$, $SD = 3.24$), $t(23) = -2.63$, $p < .01$. The mean increase in the post-test score was -1.33 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -2.38 to -.28, $d = .53$.

Following Otwinowska-Kasztelanica (2011), participants were categorized in low, medium, and high cognate awareness taking into account the scores from the first measure in the Cognate Awareness Auestionnaire. Questions 1 and 2 were categorized and labeled as follows: below 150 (low awareness), between 150-500 (medium awareness), and above 500 (high awareness) of the existing cognates in Basque-English and Spanish-English. Questions 3 and 4 were categorized and labeled as follows: 10 or 50, low awareness; 100, medium awareness; and 500 or 10000, high awareness (see Appendix B). Figure 2 shows the development of the overall cognate awareness for each category.

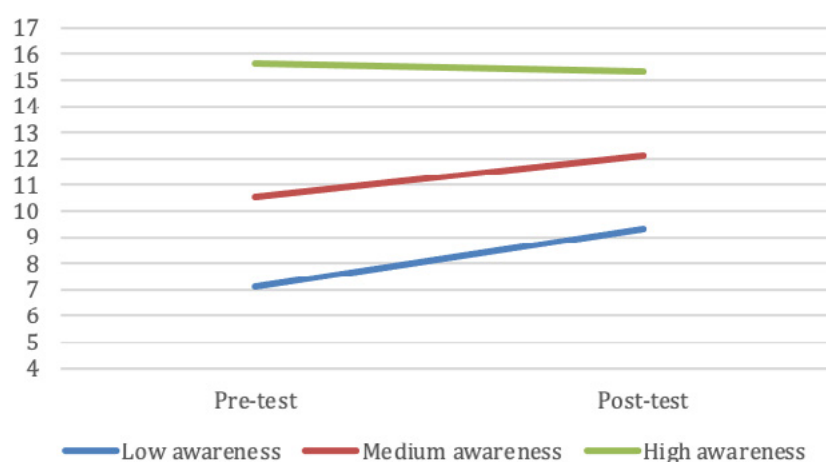


Figure 2. Development of the overall cognate awareness for each category.

Separate paired-samples t-tests were conducted considering the three categories. The paired-sample t-test with participants with low cognate awareness revealed that there was a statistically significant increase in the overall cognate awareness score from the pre-test to post-test ($M = 7.11$, $SD = 1.36$) to ($M = 9.33$, $SD = 1.73$), $t(8) = -3.25$, $p < .01$. The mean increase in the post-test score was -2.22 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -3.79 to $-.64$, $d = 1.08$.

The paired-samples t-test with participants with medium cognate awareness revealed that there was a marginally significant increase in the overall cognate awareness score from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 10.55$, $SD = 1.23$) to ($M = 12.11$, $SD = 2.36$), $t(8) = -1.03$, $p < .07$. The mean increase in post-test score was -1.55 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -3.32 to $-.21$, $d = .67$.

Finally, the paired-samples t-test with participants with high cognate awareness revealed that there was a small decrease in the overall cognate awareness score from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 15.66$, $SD = .81$) to ($M = 15.33$, $SD = 2.94$), $t(5) = .28$, $p < .78$. The mean decrease in post-test score was $.33$ with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -2.68 to 3.35 , $d = 1.15$.

Additional analyses were conducted for Basque cognate awareness and Spanish cognate awareness. Scores from Questions 1 and 3 were summed for the cognate awareness in Basque and the scores from Questions 2 and 4 for the cognate awareness in Spanish.

The paired-samples t-test showed an increase in the overall cognate awareness in Basque from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.92$) to ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 2.15$), $t(23) = -1.12$, $p < .27$, $d = .23$. The mean increase in the post-test score was $-.29$ with a 95% confidence interval ranging from $-.82$ to $.24$. In contrast, the paired-samples t-test for Spanish cognate awareness revealed that there was a statistically significant increase in from the pre-test to the post-test ($M = 6.58$, $SD = 1.92$) to ($M = 7.62$, $SD = 1.55$), $t(23) = -2.79$, $p < .01$. The mean increase in the post-test score was -1.04 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -1.81 to $-.26$, $d = .56$.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The main goal of this research study consisted of exploring the ways in which a translanguaging-based intervention could affect L3 learners' morphological and cognate awareness. For that purpose, we used a variety of instruments including the Morphological Awareness Test, the Cognate Awareness Test, and the Cognate Awareness Questionnaire.

We found that the intervention influenced the use of morphological strategies, as students obtained significantly better results in both the overall score of the morpheme identification task and the word derivation task. To the best of our knowledge, no other study has developed a similar intervention to examine students' morphological and cognate awareness in tertiary education. Most of the existing research in this field has focused on interventions in compulsory education, which have demonstrated positive results (Cenoz et al., 2022; Leonet et al., 2020; Lyster et al., 2013). However, there remains a noticeable gap in research regarding interventions specifically designed for tertiary education contexts. This highlights the importance of further investigation in this area to address the research gap.

Additionally, our results showed that students identified most marked items -words with a prefix, or a prefix and a suffix- more easily, and that this was particularly striking in the case of the prefixes "ad" and "ac". According to Bowers and Kirby (2010), the explicit instruction of word structure knowledge facilitates the recognition of the base in multi-morphemic words. Given that these prefixes were not common in Spanish and Basque, our results led us to think that students could have acquired them during the intervention.

Yet, we found that students did not improve significantly when it came to deriving words. As Carlisle (2000) explained, creating new meaning by adding affixes to a base requires knowledge of grammatical rules and the meanings of the suffixes, while relational knowledge is enough to complete the decomposing tasks. According to our results, students showed to have difficulties when inflectional knowledge of morphology was required in

the task. This led us to think that although students were capable of using both strategies properly, markedness and the grammatical specification required by the word formation task might have influenced our results (RQ1).

In addition, we found that students did not find it easier to decompose morphemes in the case of cognate words just because they were cognate words. This is probably because students of this age have enough metalinguistic awareness and cognitive ability to identify morphemes regardless of whether they are cognates or not.

As for the second research question, we found that our intervention led to an overall increase in the students' cognate awareness. As the results of the test showed, the effect of the intervention was more prominent on students with a lower cognate awareness before the intervention. These results are interesting because the perception of language distance is considered a relevant factor in cross-linguistic influence (Cenoz et al., 2001; Orcasitas-Vicandi, 2019, 2020, 2022). Thus, the cross-linguistic identifications explained in the intervention may have decreased the perception of language distance between the language pairs, and students may have developed a more solid awareness of their own resources as multilinguals (RQ2).

Concerning the results obtained in the Cognate Awareness Questionnaire, students perceived more lexical similarities between English and Spanish than between English and Basque, and the intervention boosted this perception between the first language pair. Moreover, we found that our intervention also positively influenced students' cognate identification and meaning deduction. Our results showed that students improved significantly in both tasks, which agrees with the results obtained in previous studies conducted with adults in other contexts and typologically distant languages such as English and Polish (Otwinowska, 2016).

In order to identify the factors affecting cognate awareness (RQ3), we considered the items within the Cognates in Context task (3.3). We found some slight evidence in favour of orthographic and semantic transparency, as some opaque and ambiguous words were the items the least guessed by the participants. However, we also found that participants guessed some orthographically and semantically opaque words. Thus, in contrast to Vanhove and Berthele (2015), we cannot conclude that orthographic transparency is a determinant factor in recognizing cognate words in L3 writing. These findings may be explained as related to the linguistic trajectory of our participants. In this sense, our participants -university students with a long language learning experience- were able to use other cognitive and metacognitive strategies together with their linguistic knowledge in the L1 or L2 to guess the meaning of these orthographically and semantically opaque cognate words.

This intervention led us to draw some implications for the use of pedagogical translanguaging in ESP contexts. In this way, our results indicated that pedagogical translanguaging boosts students' awareness of their linguistic resources as multilinguals, and that this might be beneficial for the learning of English. Yet, in order to take advantage

of this potential role of translanguaging (Fang & Liu, 2020), lecturers should reflect upon the fact that translanguaging helps to improve students' content comprehension while increasing classroom interaction and awareness on language (Wei, 2021; Marshall, 2020; Van Viegen & Zappa-Hollman, 2020; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). In this sense, training courses could make university teachers overcome monolingual ideologies while considering the benefits of translanguaging (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; García & Wei, 2014).

Yet, the study reported here has some limitations because the intervention was carried out in a specific context and with a limited time and number of students. We were limited to administering the test only in an experimental group and were unable to compare the results with a control group. Additionally, we were also unable to conduct a delayed post-test due to the pre-established length of the course. In spite of these limitations, the findings from this study support those obtained in other research studies in multilingual school contexts (Leonet et al., 2020; Arteagoitia & Howard, 2015; Lyster et al., 2013; Dressler et al., 2011), and they show that vocabulary instruction adopting a translanguaging perspective can be positive also in university settings.

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“El léxico son las piernas que permiten que todo funcione”. Cognición docente en torno a la enseñanza del léxico en ELE

Mercedes Pérez-Serrano ^{1*}, Pablo Robles-García ² y
Claudia H. Sánchez-Gutiérrez ³

¹Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España

²University of Toronto, Toronto, Mississauga, Canada

³University of California Davis, United States

Resumen: La mayoría de los estudios en torno a la cognición docente se ha llevado a cabo con profesores de inglés y ha versado sobre la gramática. En este estudio se pretende indagar en las creencias y conocimientos de los profesores de ELE en torno a la enseñanza-aprendizaje del vocabulario. Más concretamente, nos preguntamos qué importancia le conceden al vocabulario en sus clases, cómo realizan la selección de palabras meta y cómo evalúan el conocimiento léxico. Para ello, se entrevistó a quince profesores de ELE en distintas instituciones españolas y se analizaron las entrevistas siguiendo el Muestreo Teórico. Varios profesores reconocen la centralidad del léxico por cuestiones de supervivencia comunicativa y los que declararon priorizar la gramática, achacaron esta decisión a imposiciones externas. En cuanto a la selección léxica, los elementos que tienen más peso son las intuiciones sobre las necesidades comunicativas de los alumnos y los libros de texto, y la evaluación se realiza principalmente de manera informal, aunque se reconocen distintas vías para obtener información sobre el conocimiento léxico.

Palabras clave: enseñanza del léxico, ELE, cognición docente, creencias de profesores, selección léxica.

“The lexicon is the legs that allow everything to function.” Teacher cognition regarding vocabulary teaching in Spanish as a foreign language (ELE)

Abstract: Most studies on teacher cognition have been conducted with English teachers and have focused on grammar. This study aims to investigate the beliefs and knowledge of ELE teachers regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. More specifically, we ask what importance they attach to vocabulary in their classes, how they select target words, and how they assess lexical knowledge. To this end, fifteen ELE teachers from different Spanish institutions were interviewed, and the interviews were analyzed using Theoretical Sampling. Several teachers recognize the centrality of vocabulary for communicative survival, and those who stated that they prioritize grammar attributed this decision to external impositions. In terms of lexical selection, the most important factors are intuition about the communicative needs of students and textbooks, and assessment is mainly carried out informally, although different ways of obtaining information about lexical knowledge are recognized.

Keywords: vocabulary teaching, Spanish as a foreign language (ELE), teacher cognition, teacher beliefs, lexical selection.

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Corresponding author: mperezserrano@ucm.es

1. Introducción

Es innegable que el español como segunda lengua o lengua extranjera (ELE) está en auge y que el sector ha experimentado un gran crecimiento en las últimas décadas (Carrera Troyano, 2014). De acuerdo con el último informe del Instituto Cervantes (2021, 16), unos 24 millones de personas estudian esta lengua como segunda lengua (L2) o lengua extranjera (LE). Este auge conlleva, sin duda, un aumento en la demanda de profesionales que se dedican a enseñar la lengua y una consiguiente profesionalización del sector.

La oferta formativa es, sin duda, más amplia ahora que hace unas décadas. En el contexto académico español, con la integración de las universidades en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior, las competencias profesionales quedan vinculadas a los posgrados, lo que conlleva la aparición de numerosos másteres universitarios que habilitan a los profesores de ELE (Muñoz-Basols *et al.*, 2017; Méndez Santos, 2021).

En lo que se refiere a la formación específica en enseñanza del léxico en LE, estamos en posición de afirmar que esta área de estudio se ha desarrollado enormemente desde aquel abandono que señalaba Paul Meara en 1980. Hoy se trata de una disciplina prolífica y consolidada, lo que se ve reflejado en las formaciones docentes disponibles en España. De los 25 planes de estudios de másteres universitarios oficiales cotejados por los autores, solo cinco carecen de una asignatura específica de léxico. El resto incorpora una asignatura, en su mayoría de carácter obligatorio, dedicada al desarrollo de la competencia léxica y su enseñanza. Además, este campo de estudio no está ausente de otros programas formativos: de los más de 150 talleres y comunicaciones presentados en el 31 Congreso anual de la Asociación para la Enseñanza de Español como Lengua Extranjera (ASELE), 13 versaban sobre alguna cuestión relacionada con la adquisición, enseñanza o aprendizaje del léxico.

No obstante, nos quedan muchas preguntas en torno a cómo incorporan los profesores a su propia cognición las competencias contempladas en los programas formativos. Como afirman Muñoz-Basols *et al.* (2017, p. 2): "cuando intentamos analizar [...] qué tipo de formación poseen [los profesionales del español], y cómo y de qué manera [...] están en contacto con la investigación aplicada, los datos son prácticamente inexistentes".

El presente estudio, que contribuye a llenar este vacío, se enmarca en una línea de investigación que ha sido particularmente fructífera en el ámbito de la enseñanza del inglés en los últimos 20 años, el de la cognición docente y, particularmente, el de las creencias de los profesores. Borg (2003) define la cognición docente como "aquello que los profesores piensan, saben y creen y la relación de estos constructos mentales con lo que hacen en su clase de lengua" (p. 81). El creciente interés en el estudio de las creencias de los profesores viene motivado, entre otras razones, porque se espera que estas influyan significativamente en la forma en que el profesorado interpreta y se enfrenta a los problemas de la práctica docente (Skott, 2014). Además, como explica Korthagen (2017), "cuando se quiere tratar de influir en el comportamiento de los profesores, se debería aprender más sobre lo que realmente guía el comportamiento y el aprendizaje de los profesores, y tomar más en serio las dimensiones afectivas y motivacionales" (p. 391).

El objetivo de este estudio es explorar, a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, lo que los profesores de ELE en España piensan, saben y creen acerca de la enseñanza del vocabulario. Todo ello con el fin último de seguir mejorando los programas de formación de profesores y ofrecer cursos sobre la enseñanza del léxico que respondan directamente a las necesidades expresadas por los profesores. Más específicamente, exploramos las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

1. ¿Qué importancia le dan al componente léxico los profesores de ELE en contexto de inmersión?
2. ¿Cómo conceptualizan los profesores la utilidad del vocabulario meta? ¿Cómo afecta esta conceptualización en sus decisiones sobre qué palabras enseñar?
3. ¿Cómo determinan los profesores que sus alumnos conocen una palabra?

2. Revisión de la literatura

2.1 La importancia del vocabulario en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de L2

A pesar de que en los últimos años se viene reclamando el papel crucial del léxico en el desarrollo lingüístico y comunicativo (Horst, 2013; Qian y Lin, 2020; Stæhr, 2008), la enseñanza de la gramática ha ocupado un lugar central en los cursos de lenguas extranjeras, dejando a otros componentes en la periferia. Tal y como señalaba Horst (2013), muchos aprendientes y profesores de LE, así como investigadores en lingüística aplicada, cifran la adquisición "real" de la lengua en la adquisición del sistema gramatical.

Si nos fijamos en las creencias de los profesores en torno a la importancia de la enseñanza del vocabulario en una LE (principalmente de los profesores de inglés), contamos con estudios realizados en Suecia (Bergström *et al.*, 2021), Camboya (Lim, 2016), Malasia (Macalister, 2012) o EE. UU. (Sánchez-Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2022), que demuestran que no es habitual priorizar la enseñanza explícita del vocabulario y que el desarrollo léxico suele concebirse como la consecuencia de la realización de otras actividades. Sin embargo, Gao y Ma (2011) demuestran que esta realidad varía según las tradiciones y estructuras educativas de los lugares donde enseñan los profesores, al comparar las preferencias de los profesores de inglés en Hong Kong y en China continental. Estas diferencias ponen de manifiesto que las creencias de los profesores están claramente influidas por el contexto de enseñanza (Borg, 2006). En el presente estudio se pretende analizar esas creencias en un contexto particular, a saber, el de enseñanza de ELE en distintas instituciones educativas en España.

2.2 La selección del léxico meta

En su planificación, los docentes de LE han de tomar decisiones sobre a qué unidades léxicas dan prioridad, dado que el léxico de una lengua es un conjunto abierto y no todas las unidades léxicas pueden enseñarse de forma explícita (Webb, 2020). Esta tarea requiere, sin duda, una reflexión previa sobre qué hace que una palabra merezca atención explícita en un momento determinado. La bibliografía especializada ha privilegiado el criterio

de frecuencia de uso, dando preferencia a la enseñanza de las palabras más frecuentes (Horst, 2013; Vilkaitė-Lozdienė y Schmitt, 2020). La razón, tal y como apuntan Vilkaitė-Lozdienė y Schmitt (2020, p. 81), es sencilla: "podemos centrarnos en un número limitado de palabras de alta frecuencia y alcanzar la comprensión de la mayoría de las palabras de cualquier texto".

Si bien los argumentos en defensa de la frecuencia como criterio privilegiado son, en teoría, convincentes, la selección basada en la frecuencia no se hace efectiva en el aula, y los profesores acuden más a la selección propuesta en los manuales o a sus propias intuiciones, tal y como atestiguan Dang y Webb (2020) y Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. (2022) en sus respectivos estudios. Sin embargo, estas dos fuentes de información (manuales e intuiciones) parecen presentar ciertas disonancias con el criterio de la frecuencia de uso. En cuanto a los materiales de enseñanza, algunas investigaciones nos informan de que los manuales suelen incluir numerosas palabras de baja frecuencia en niveles iniciales y no presentan de forma sistemática las altamente frecuentes (López Bastidas y Sánchez-Gutiérrez, 2020; Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al., 2019). En lo que respecta a las intuiciones de los profesores sobre la frecuencia de las palabras, el estudio realizado por McCrostie (2007) muestra que los docentes no tienen problemas a la hora de estimar la frecuencia de las palabras que pertenecen a niveles de frecuencia muy altos (palabras entre las 2.000 más frecuentes) o bajos (palabras entre las 8.000 y 10.000 más frecuentes), pero tienen mayores dificultades a la hora de ubicar las palabras que se encuentran en frecuencias intermedias (palabras entre las 4.000 y 8.000 más frecuentes). Tomados en conjunto estos hallazgos sugieren que la selección léxica basada en los materiales de enseñanza y/o en las intuiciones de los profesores no está necesariamente alineada con los criterios de frecuencia que son, por otro lado, los que gozan de mayor estatus en la literatura científica.

No obstante, recientemente se ha observado que los profesores pueden ser clave en el desarrollo de los criterios para la selección del léxico que se trabaja en el aula. De hecho, algunos autores han argumentado que, aunque la frecuencia es un indicador importante a la hora de determinar la utilidad de las palabras, no debería ser el único (Dang et al., 2020; He y Godfroid, 2019). Por ejemplo, un profesor puede encontrar útil enseñar los primeros días el vocabulario básico para el funcionamiento del aula, con palabras poco frecuentes como *pizarra* o *parejas*. En efecto, a la hora de establecer las palabras que se han de enseñar en cada nivel de competencia, es necesario tener en cuenta las valoraciones que hacen los profesores de la utilidad de las palabras. Sin embargo, estos estudios se limitan a pedir a los profesores que valoren la utilidad de las palabras en una escala dada, sin hacer alusión al porqué de esas valoraciones.

Otra manera de tener en cuenta los conocimientos y experiencias de los profesores es determinar la utilidad de las palabras basándose en los conocimientos previos de los estudiantes. En efecto, resulta más útil dedicarle tiempo al tratamiento explícito de las palabras que no conocen los estudiantes y dejar de lado las palabras que ya conocen. En este contexto, Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. (2023) demuestran que los profesores suelen tener intuiciones bastante acertadas de los conocimientos léxicos de sus estudiantes, sobre todo

en el caso de las palabras de alta frecuencia. En otro estudio reciente, Robles-García et al. (2023) también demuestran que las intuiciones combinadas de varios profesores son un excelente predictor del conocimiento real de los estudiantes en un nivel determinado.

Además del criterio del profesor, el propio aprendiente también podría determinar la utilidad del léxico y decidir así qué unidades quiere aprender. En este sentido, se habla del léxico personalizado bajo la premisa de que el interés personal es un elemento altamente motivador y potenciador del aprendizaje (Barker, 2007). Por ejemplo, un aprendiente puede considerar muy útil aprender la palabra *nuez* si es alérgico a ellas, o la palabra *fontanero* si esa es su dedicación. Ninguna de estas dos palabras pertenece a una banda de frecuencia alta.

2.3 El conocimiento cualitativo de las palabras

Dentro de las labores de planificación de la enseñanza del léxico, no solo se contempla la selección, sino que los profesores han de tomar también decisiones sobre a qué aspectos de cada palabra seleccionada quieren dedicar más atención y cuáles son los indicadores de que se ha producido dicho aprendizaje. Es decir, se debe pensar con qué profundidad se enseñan y se aprenden las palabras. En su conocida tabla *¿Qué implica conocer una palabra?*, Nation (2001) propone que el conocimiento léxico abarca nueve aspectos diferentes y cada uno de ellos implica un conocimiento receptivo y uno productivo: la forma oral, la forma escrita, las partes de la palabra, la conexión forma-significado, el concepto y la referencia, las asociaciones, las funciones gramaticales, las colocaciones y restricciones de uso. Tal y como defiende este autor (Nation, 2020), los aprendientes van descubriendo cada aspecto de forma gradual a medida que van siendo expuestos a las palabras y recibiendo instrucción sobre ellas.

En lo que respecta a la cognición docente sobre lo que significa conocer una palabra, los profesores entrevistados por Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. (2022) identificaron el conocimiento léxico, en su mayoría, con la capacidad para utilizar palabras en producción libre, preferentemente oral, sin necesidad de tener un conocimiento desarrollado de otros aspectos. Por su parte, los profesores de inglés LE en Suecia que participaron en el estudio realizado por Bergström et al. (2021) consideraron que conocer una palabra consistía en conocer su significado, si bien muchos de ellos incidieron en la importancia de desarrollar un conocimiento profundo de ese significado a través del aprendizaje de sinónimos y la identificación de casos de polisemia. Esta atención prioritaria a las asociaciones forma-significado que se aprecia en la cognición docente, también se deja ver en los libros de texto, tal y como demuestra el análisis de actividades de manuales de español de Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. (2021).

En definitiva, a pesar de los beneficios que reporta aproximarse, desde una perspectiva científica, a la cognición docente, aún sabemos muy poco sobre el papel que los profesores de ELE conceden al vocabulario, qué criterios emplean para la selección léxica y qué aspectos del conocimiento léxico privilegian y emplean para evaluar el conocimiento de sus estudiantes. Además, las diferencias que se observan en las creencias de los

profesores sobre estas cuestiones demuestran la importancia del contexto de enseñanza en el desarrollo de la cognición docente (Borg, 2003, 2006). Por lo tanto, en este estudio se explora la cognición docente en torno a la enseñanza y aprendizaje del vocabulario en un contexto particular que no se ha abordado anteriormente, a saber, los profesores de ELE en distintas instituciones en España. Con ello pretendemos establecer un diálogo entre investigación y docencia para, en última instancia, contribuir al diseño de formaciones docentes directamente vinculadas con las necesidades e inquietudes de los profesores.

3. Metodología del estudio

3.1 Participantes en las entrevistas

Quince profesores de ELE participaron en este estudio. Todos ellos son de nacionalidad española y desempeñaban su labor profesional en distintos centros en España en el momento en el que se realizó la entrevista. Como puede observarse en la [Tabla 1](#), la edad media de los participantes es de 36,9, variando desde los 25 hasta los 48 años. Del total de participantes, cinco se identificaron como hombres y diez como mujeres.

En cuanto a los datos profesionales y de formación, el lugar de trabajo mayoritario era, en ese momento, un centro de idiomas universitario (5) o una Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (EOI) (3). Además, se cuenta con profesores que enseñan en Aulas de enlace (1), en ONG (1) y clases particulares (1). Repasamos brevemente las principales características de las instituciones más representadas en nuestra muestra y del alumnado que reciben.

En primer lugar, las EOI son centros de titularidad pública dedicados exclusivamente a la enseñanza de idiomas y dependientes de las administraciones educativas españolas. Para acceder al cuerpo de profesores de las EOI se ha de superar un concurso-oposición en el que es necesario estudiar un temario de cuestiones lingüísticas y metodológicas, así como presentar una programación y una unidad didáctica. El perfil del alumnado de este tipo de centros es heterogéneo y está compuesto por adultos en su mayoría trabajadores. Los centros de idiomas universitarios son entidades educativas que surgen en el seno de las universidades con la finalidad de servirles de apoyo instrumental en la enseñanza de ELE. Es habitual que su docencia vaya unida a la preparación de exámenes oficiales externos como el DELE o el SIELE. Normalmente se nutren de profesores formados (grado, máster y/o doctorado) en la universidad a la que están adscritos los centros. Los alumnos de estos centros son estudiantes universitarios que se encuentran de estancia internacional en España por un período breve, un semestre o un año.

Es necesario puntualizar que los profesores que enseñan en contextos de enseñanza reglada como las EOI han de ceñirse a unos objetivos y contenidos regulados por decreto autonómico, mientras que los que enseñan en centros de idiomas universitarios, academias de idiomas u ONG, si bien pueden remitirse a documentos curriculares oficiales como el *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC en adelante) (Instituto Cervantes, 2006), gozan de mayor libertad a la hora de establecer los objetivos y contenidos.

Tabla 1. Información sociodemográfica y profesional de los participantes

Seudónimo	Edad	Años de experiencia	Lugar de trabajo en el momento	Formación en Lingüística aplicada a ELE/EL2
Chanfalla	33	4	Centro de idiomas universitario	Máster universitario
Marta	38	5	ONG	Doctorado en curso
Mireia	25	1	Centro de idiomas universitario	Máster universitario en curso
Isabel	41	16	Instituto de Enseñanza Secundaria Clases particulares	Máster universitario
Arancha	40	20	Centro de idiomas universitario	Licenciatura. Formación no reglada.
Laura	40	11	Academia de idiomas	Máster universitario. Doctorado en curso
Loreto	48	19	Escuela oficial de idiomas	Licenciatura
Edu	36	11	Centro de idiomas universitario	Doctorado
Jorge	39	16	Aulas de enlace	Máster universitario
Estela	32	8	Centro de idiomas universitario	Doctorado
Banana	33	7	Centro de idiomas universitario	Máster universitario
Mini	30	9	Academia de idiomas	Máster universitario
Elena	47	13	Escuela oficial de idiomas	Máster universitario
Julián	38	13	Escuela oficial de idiomas	Doctorado
Andrea	33	7	Centro de idiomas universitario y academias de idiomas	Doctorado

Por último, las aulas de enlace suponen un recurso de la enseñanza pública y concertada encaminado a posibilitar una atención específica a aquellos alumnos menores extranjeros recién incorporados en situación de migración o refugio y que presentan graves carencias lingüísticas, a través de programas específicos. Asimismo, estas aulas sirven para acortar el tiempo de integración y la incorporación a su curso correspondiente. Los profesores que imparten español en este contexto suelen ser profesores de Lengua Castellana y Literatura. En este caso, los objetivos didácticos vienen dictados por las necesidades escolares más inmediatas.

En lo que se refiere a la formación específica del total de profesores de la muestra en adquisición y didáctica de ELE, seis de ellos tenían o estaban realizando el doctorado, siete tenían o estaban realizando un máster universitario en enseñanza de ELE y dos una licenciatura o grado en el campo de las lenguas o la traducción, además de formación puntual no reglada como cursos, seminarios o jornadas formativas. Solamente dos participantes contaban con menos de 5 años de experiencia, cinco de ellos tenían entre 5 y 10 años de experiencia y había ocho participantes con más de diez años dando clases de español.

Los participantes en este estudio comparten, como vemos, el hecho de estar formados específicamente como docentes de español como lengua adicional, desde cursos y seminarios más puntuales hasta oposiciones o doctorados en lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza de lenguas.

3.2 Procedimientos de recogida de datos

Los instructores fueron reclutados por contacto de los propios investigadores y a través de correo electrónico o redes sociales. Las entrevistas tuvieron lugar entre 2018 y 2020 en formato presencial o a través de plataformas digitales como Google Meet debido a la situación de pandemia provocada por la COVID-19. Antes de la realización de la entrevista, todos los participantes dieron su consentimiento informado para participar en la investigación, en consonancia con los protocolos establecidos por el *Institutional Review Board* (IRB) de la Universidad de California Davis y el *Comité de Ética en la Investigación* de la Universidad Nebrija. Siguiendo la metodología de [Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. \(2022\)](#), las entrevistas semiestructuradas (ver apéndice) incluían preguntas en torno al lugar que ocupa el vocabulario en sus cursos y clases, la dificultad relativa de aprendizaje de vocabulario respecto de la gramática, cómo las teorías de adquisición del vocabulario guiaban su docencia, los aspectos del conocimiento léxico a los que daban más importancia en sus clases, las prácticas docentes para enseñar vocabulario y los criterios empleados para determinar que sus estudiantes conocen una palabra. Al final de la entrevista se incluyeron algunas preguntas acerca del perfil demográfico y profesional de los participantes: el objetivo era conocer su bagaje profesional como profesores de ELE y sus experiencias formativas en torno a la enseñanza de la lengua en general y del vocabulario en particular. Las entrevistas duraron 33 minutos de media, con un total de 504 minutos de grabaciones. Dada la cantidad de temas tratados en las entrevistas y las limitaciones de espacio, decidimos concentrarnos en tres temas que tienen que ver con los aspectos relativos a la enseñanza del vocabulario fuera del aula y con la evaluación: (1) la importancia general del léxico frente a otros componentes lingüísticos; (2) la selección del vocabulario que se va a enseñar de forma explícita; (3) la conceptualización de lo que es conocer una palabra y cómo evaluar dicho conocimiento.

3.3 Análisis de los datos

En primer lugar se llevó a cabo una transcripción ortográfica de las entrevistas realizadas, que posteriormente se analizaron siguiendo la metodología del Muestreo Teórico ([Corbin y Strauss, 2014](#)). Los tres investigadores leyeron detenidamente las transcripciones de forma individual y cada uno de ellos propuso una lista de temas surgidos de la lectura. Después de ponerse de acuerdo en los temas principales, se agendó una sesión para discutir los subtemas de cada uno de los temas principales, basados en la lectura empírica e individual de los datos. Al final de dicha sesión, los tres investigadores se pusieron de acuerdo en la estructura de códigos que se puede observar en las Tablas 2, 3 y 4, siguiendo así un proceso de codificación inductiva de los datos.

Una vez que se establecieron dichos códigos, cada uno de los miembros del equipo investigador analizó de forma independiente tres entrevistas. Para recoger este análisis individual de un subconjunto de las entrevistas, se creó una pestaña en un archivo de Excel para cada uno de los temas principales previamente establecidos. En cada una de esas pestañas se iban añadiendo los subtemas en columnas contiguas y se añadían los extractos

Tabla 2. El papel del vocabulario en el aula, comparado con otros componentes lingüísticos

Primera capa de códigos Componente lingüístico privilegiado	Segunda capa de códigos Argumento empleado
Gramática	Utilidad
	Características del programa
	Formación y experiencia del profesor
Vocabulario	Utilidad
	Características del programa
	Formación y experiencia del profesor
Otros	Utilidad
	Características del programa
	Formación y experiencia del profesor

Tabla 3. Tema 2. Criterios utilizados para decidir a qué palabras dar prioridad.

Primera capa de códigos Criterios de selección	Segunda capa de códigos Uso
Programa e institución	Lo usa actualmente
	Lo quiere usar
Relevancia para el curso	Lo usa actualmente
	Lo quiere usar
Utilidad	Lo usa actualmente
	Lo quiere usar
Preferencias y necesidades de los estudiantes	Lo usa actualmente
	Lo quiere usar
Características de las palabras	Lo usa actualmente
	Lo quiere usar
Frecuencia basada en corpus	Lo usa actualmente
	Lo quiere usar

Tabla 4. Tema 3. Criterios utilizados para determinar si los estudiantes han aprendido una palabra

Primera capa de códigos Tipo de conocimiento léxico	Segunda capa de códigos Tipo de evaluación
Producción oral/escrita de la palabra	Formal (exámenes, proyectos, juegos)
	Informal (producción libre en clase)
Reconocimiento oral/escrito de la palabra	Formal (exámenes, proyectos, juegos)
	Informal (reconocimiento libre en clase)

de cada entrevista correspondientes a cada subtema. En cada paso de esta codificación se iba llevando a cabo un análisis del grado de acuerdo entre los tres evaluadores. Se alcanzó una media del 91% de acuerdo en todos los códigos, con un máximo del 95% para el Tema 1 y un mínimo del 88% para el Tema 3. Cualquier código que no alcanzara el 90% se discutía minuciosamente y cada investigador tenía que volver a codificar los extractos de entrevista correspondientes a ese código hasta alcanzar el 100% de acuerdo entre los evaluadores implicados. Una vez finalizado este proceso de fiabilidad entre evaluadores, cada investigador se encargó de codificar uno de los temas en todas las entrevistas.

4. Resultados

Tema 1. Importancia del componente léxico en el aula

Con respecto a la importancia dada a diferentes aspectos lingüísticos (gramática, léxico, pragmática, pronunciación) en sus aulas, las respuestas de los profesores varían según sus contextos de enseñanza. Por ejemplo, los profesores (n=5) que dan más importancia a la gramática (Laura, Estela, Chanfalla, Julián y Banana), explican que esa preferencia no se debe a creencias personales sino a imposiciones del programa académico o de los manuales utilizados en las clases. Por ejemplo, Julián centra su explicación en los libros utilizados para enseñar español, diciendo que "los manuales normalmente... las programaciones que traen los manuales, digan lo que digan, son gramaticales. Es decir, al final lo que importa es decir ahora el presente, ahora el verbo *gustar*." Chanfalla va más allá de los libros y achaca la preeminencia de la gramática en la enseñanza a los descriptores de niveles del *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia* (Consejo de Europa, 2002) y del PCIC (Instituto Cervantes, 2006) al decir que "lo que se te exige también como profesor es, bueno, en un nivel A1 hay determinados contenidos que dar, pero sobre todo, los baremos son gramáticos yo diría." Estela añade otro componente importante a esta visión de la gramática como eje estructurador de los cursos y de los materiales de enseñanza, recordando que las mismas instituciones en las que trabajan los profesores pueden imponer currículos estrictos con el fin de asegurar una formación homogénea para todos los estudiantes, independientemente del profesor que tengan. Concretamente, Estela aduce que "entonces no, no era por gusto [darle prioridad a la gramática], era por intentar mantenerme... sobre todo pensando que mis alumnos en el semestre siguiente iban a tener a otro profesor que daba por hecho... daba por sentado que ellos habían visto estos contenidos [gramaticales]." En resumen, los profesores que enseñan en instituciones con currículos organizados por niveles que se suceden unos a otros, como escuelas de idiomas o institutos, se ven obligados a seguir los contenidos de dichos currículos y de los libros que los acompañan para asegurar una experiencia unificada de todos los estudiantes. Dado el papel central de la gramática en estos documentos, entienden que no pueden dedicarle tanto tiempo a otros componentes lingüísticos y discursivos.

Los profesores que declaran dar prioridad al léxico en lugar de a la gramática en su respuesta (n=4) (Arancha, Isabel, Andrea y Elena) justifican esta elección basándose en las necesidades inmediatas de los estudiantes en inmersión. Es decir, ven el vocabulario

como un recurso de supervivencia cuando se tiene que utilizar la lengua en el entorno inmediato, dentro y fuera del aula. En el caso de Elena, explica que sus estudiantes en programas de inmersión intensivos necesitan vocabulario de forma inmediata para desenvolverse: "Claro, bueno, y sobre todo al programa que doy que es un intensivo muy inicial, de un nivel muy inicial, en el que sí... pues... que está por lo menos, tal y como lo enfocamos allí en la escuela bastante enfocado al léxico, al léxico cotidiano." Algunos profesores que habían declarado que le dedicaban más tiempo a la gramática que al léxico sin embargo también reconocían que el vocabulario es lo que permite la comunicación inicial y que, por eso, no debe dejarse de lado. Por ejemplo, Julián explica que "el léxico son las piernas que permiten que todo lo demás funcione. A la hora de comunicarnos, utilizamos palabras, ¿no?." Arancha se une a esta afirmación, añadiendo que enfocarse en el léxico es particularmente importante para aprendices cuyas L1s están más alejadas tipológicamente del español y no tienen tantos cognados, como sus estudiantes sinohablantes. En sus propias palabras: "Creo que es muy importante para mis alumnos porque creo que es la herramienta que te da el primer escalón para comunicar...y como ellos tienen una barrera lingüística...hay una distancia interlingüística tan grande, creo que pueden empezar a caminar antes con el léxico que con otros aspectos. Entonces, hay que darle muchísima importancia."

Varios profesores (n=3) se refirieron a la utilidad del vocabulario como recurso de supervivencia para explicar que su práctica docente varía según el nivel de los estudiantes, con un énfasis mayor en el vocabulario en los niveles elementales y una introducción progresiva de la gramática explícita a medida que los estudiantes ya se sienten más cómodos desenvolviéndose en español en situaciones comunicativas básicas. Como expresa Edu, "primero vamos a sobrevivir con el léxico y luego con la gramática vamos a ordenar ese léxico, vamos a intentar ver qué orden puede tener, si el orden puede cambiar, etc.." Mireia comparte esta observación acerca de la estructura de los cursos y materiales de español según los niveles de los estudiantes:

Tal vez en los niveles más bajos, como que se le da más importancia [al vocabulario] porque la gramática es como más básica, entonces nos centramos más en que aprendan más vocabulario, más palabras nuevas y tal vez sí que es cierto que en B2 nos centramos... Como el léxico pensamos más o menos que ya lo saben usar -que tal vez deberían conocer más, pero bueno- pues nos centramos más en las estructuras gramaticales.

Jorge explica esta perspectiva en dos etapas, en las que el léxico proporciona la base para luego introducir la gramática y la pragmática con el siguiente ejemplo de su clase en una aula de enlace:

en clase también se lo digo a veces que puedo decir "me harías un gran favor, si me dieras un vaso de agua" y está muy bien, pero si sabes decir...si no sabes decir todo eso y quieres agua lo que haces es así. Entonces quieres beber, pues entonces el vocabulario que necesitas es *beber* y *agua*, y a partir de ahí le vas dando colorido y le vas dando forma.

Además de los profesores que afirman dar más importancia al léxico en ciertos niveles y la gramática en otros, otros simplemente explican que les resulta difícil establecer una distinción clara entre léxico y gramática (n=2). En efecto, como resume Laura "es que la gramática, si está unida a un significado, no le queda otro remedio que estar unida al léxico." En este sentido, Jorge da un ejemplo de su experiencia personal para explicar cómo la gramática y el vocabulario resultan ser inseparables y cómo la adquisición de ambos se ve relacionada con la frecuencia de uso:

Yo fui a Polonia, tuve que aprender polaco y como tiene declinaciones y todo yo aprendí de oído, yo no aprendí a declinar, pero yo sabía las declinaciones de algunos casos y de algunas palabras...entonces me decían: ¿"pero si sabes decir esto porque no sabes decir esto"? Y digo pues porque *patatas* lo uso con frecuencia y *enciclopedia* no. Y entonces yo sé el genitivo de *patatas* porque lo he oído, y no he usado el genitivo de *enciclopedia*. [...] la gramática no era un sistema, sino palabras para mí.

Aunque son varios los profesores que declaran enseñar prioritariamente temas de gramática (n=5), la mayoría (n=4) achaca esta elección a imposiciones externas y, ofrecen explicaciones detalladas y matizadas de su tratamiento del vocabulario. Solo una profesora, Banana, declaró no darle apenas importancia a la enseñanza explícita de vocabulario. Todos los demás, bien explican que le dan más importancia al léxico en niveles elementales que en niveles intermedios y avanzados, bien ven la gramática y el léxico como dos componentes complementarios que no se pueden distinguir tan fácilmente y que son intrínsecamente complementarios. Como resume Jorge: "el vocabulario les va a permitir decir más cosas, la gramática les va a permitir decirlas mejor."

Tema 2. Selección del léxico meta

Cuando se les preguntó acerca de los criterios empleados para la selección léxica, los docentes ofrecieron una gran variedad de respuestas. Uno de los dos criterios más mencionados (n=10) es el de las necesidades e intereses de los alumnos, necesidades principalmente de cara a desenvolverse en las situaciones que se les van a plantear en la vida cotidiana ya que, como explica Elena, "son alumnos que necesitan la lengua en cuanto salen de casa para cumplir las funciones cotidianas." Esta conexión entre el aula y la vida real la plantea Edu, en términos de "supervivencia", visión compartida por Arancha, quien afirma que "es mucho más importante saber decir qué no te gusta comer que qué te gusta comer, ¿no?".

Las necesidades también pueden contemplarse desde el punto de vista de la resolución de las tareas planteadas en el aula. Así lo manifiesta Andrea:

estamos hablando, por ejemplo, de comida...pero si no necesitamos [...] la palabra "kiwi" es inútil que te enseñe la palabra "kiwi." [...] aunque si salen, porque yo que sé, hay que hacer una receta y un estudiante quiere usar kiwi, pues en ese caso, como sale de la necesidad del estudiante...yo sí que presento esa palabra porque sé que el estudiante, siendo que la necesita, es más probable que la vaya a memorizar.

El otro criterio más mencionado es el de los manuales, textos o actividades como elementos que dictan la selección léxica (n=10). Algunos hacen este seguimiento de manera más incondicional, como Laura, quien afirma "Entonces pues allí ya tienes. Como ya tienes la temática de la unidad, ya tienes el vocabulario", aunque esto puede deberse, como en el caso de la misma Laura o de Chanfalla, a exigencias del programa o la institución "Y luego además que tampoco te puedes desviar demasiado de una programación, ¿no? porque tú tienes que ver x unidades [...] porque al final te exigen esto" (Chanfalla). En los casos en los que se hace referencia a la enseñanza en contextos menos pautados, como las clases particulares a las que alude Isabel, la cosa cambia y los manuales se perciben más como un punto de partida en los que hay "lagunas" que completar (Isabel), dependiendo del contexto y las necesidades de los estudiantes para llegar ahí donde los manuales no lo hacen.

Unidos a los manuales están los documentos oficiales, como el currículo de la EOI, que mencionan dos profesoras en este contexto, Elena y Loreto. A propósito de este documento, Loreto señala que el "léxico es siempre como subsidiario que depende de las actividades de la lengua" y que aporta indicaciones demasiado ambiguas como "temas familiares o generales." Otros participantes mencionan los inventarios del PCIC (Instituto Cervantes, 2006). Dos aluden a este documento simplemente como documento guía en la elaboración de los manuales y que les da validez, y tres declaran consultarlo directamente en ocasiones puntuales: Banana "en clases de preparación del DELE" y Andrea "cuando de verdad el léxico en la clase tiene una importancia pues muy alta." Jorge, por su parte, lamenta la falta de documentos de referencia específicos para su contexto de enseñanza, las Aulas de Enlace: "tengo problemas en el sentido de que tampoco hay materiales específicos de este tipo, o sea, el español académico como tal existe como concepto, pero no tienes un...este es el glosario de A1 de Biología, este es el glosario de un A2 en tal, ¿no?, porque claro, son materias que no están graduadas por nivel lengua."

En cuanto a los criterios relacionados con las propias palabras meta, otros profesores (n=4) como Mini, Arancha, Loreto y Julián declaran privilegiar lo neutro, lo estándar, lo fundamental o lo rentable, "ese léxico en el que estamos de acuerdo todos los hispanohablantes" (Julián) frente a lo más marcado o local porque, tal y como admite Arancha, "creo que mi alumno está en inmersión un tiempo en su vida pero mi alumno es un hablante que se va a desarrollar en muchos contextos, entonces intento tirar hacia un español un poco...no neutral, es imposible, no existe...pero...aquí, llamarles continuamente la atención sobre "esto se usa aquí." No obstante, tres de estos cuatro profesores matizan que, al tratarse de alumnos en contexto de inmersión, la variedad privilegiada es, en muchos casos, la del entorno inmediato porque, en palabras de Julián, "si siguiéramos estrictamente el criterio de frecuencia, nos decantaríamos por *auto* y dejaríamos *carro* y *coche* pero bueno, en algunos caso es más conveniente escorarse por la variedad dialectal."

Esto nos lleva al último criterio, el de frecuencia, mencionado por un tercio de la muestra (n=5). Es conveniente apuntar que ninguno de ellos declara acudir a fuentes externas como listas de frecuencia o corpus. Mini, por ejemplo, afirma que se basa en su

intuición para determinar la frecuencia de una palabra; en sus propias palabras "intentas utilizar la intuición lo mejor posible para discernir cuáles son palabras más frecuentes y menos y que eso en una gran proporción no funciona pero a lo mejor la mitad de las veces pues sabes más o menos cuando una palabra es frecuente o no." Otros tres profesores argumentan cómo la frecuencia entra en conflicto con otros criterios que, en un momento dado, pueden ser más relevantes como las necesidades o la variedad dialectal preferida (ver párrafo anterior). Loreto, por ejemplo, cuestiona el criterio de frecuencia: "en un determinado tema la frecuencia de la palabra X es altísima y en realidad esa palabra luego en el contexto más dilatado de...de muchos temas...entonces no es válido el concepto de frecuencia, ¿no?". Ella aboga por otros criterios objetivos como el de disponibilidad léxica¹, que "se aproxima mucho más al desiderátum de lo que debería ser el hablante no nativo."

Tema 3. Criterios empleados para evaluar el conocimiento léxico

En lo que se refiere a la evaluación del conocimiento léxico, los profesores entrevistados respondieron a la pregunta *¿Cómo sabes que tus alumnos han aprendido una palabra?* Examinando las respuestas obtenidas podemos ver que casi dos tercios de los participantes (n=8) asocian conocimiento a producción e identifican saber una palabra con tener la capacidad de usarla, sin mencionar el conocimiento receptivo. Por ejemplo, Andrea identifica comprensión y memorización con uso espontáneo cuando dice: "yo veo que...entiendo que lo han entendido, que lo han memorizado cuando veo que luego espontáneamente usan esa palabra." Julián, por su parte, asocia conocimiento con uso en un contexto adecuado, afirmando: "Que sepa utilizarla. Con independencia de que esté mejor escrita, mejor pronunciada, o lo demás, que aparezca en un contexto en que tiene que aparecer". Es más, Mini añade que si no se da producción no se da asimilación "si ellos no son capaces al final de producirlo o imaginarlo en un ejemplo no creo que lo vayan a asimilar."

Resulta significativo que la mitad de los profesores entrevistados (n=7) relacionen el conocimiento productivo con un uso adecuado en un contexto determinado: "ves que en un juego de rol aparece bien insertada esa unidad dices, ya está, o sea, prueba conseguida", afirma Loreto. En este sentido, se hace patente que los profesores privilegian, a la hora de determinar el conocimiento léxico, los aspectos productivos relacionados con el uso, tales como los patrones gramaticales o las colocaciones léxicas. De hecho, Arancha hace una alusión explícita a las colocaciones cuando, al responder a la pregunta de cuándo sabe que sus alumnos han aprendido una palabra, afirma: "Exactamente, preguntarse cosas, preguntarme "¿en este contexto estaría bien usar esta palabra o esta expresión o..?" [...] en ese momento yo me voy con la sensación de que han adquirido perfectamente la unidad, no la palabra *adulterio* que es lo que había ocurrido al principio sino la unidad *cometer adulterio*."

¹ El léxico disponible es el caudal léxico que se activa y es susceptible de ser utilizado en una situación comunicativa determinada, es decir, [...] que solo se actualizan si lo permite el tema del discurso, que acuden a la memoria en primer lugar, que son las más frecuentes e inmediatas al hablar de un tema determinado (López Morales, 1984, p. 62).

Como vemos, son varios (n=8) los que acuden a la adecuación, la naturalidad o la espontaneidad como requisitos para que se dé tal conocimiento productivo. Tal y como lo explica Banana "que [el estudiante] la use diciéndolo exactamente como debe ser, no como una especie de imitación o sucedáneo de lo que debería ser."

En cuanto a la alusión a la actividad comunicativa de la lengua (por ejemplo, expresión o interacción escritas; expresión o interacción orales), solo dos participantes hacen una diferenciación entre las producciones orales y las escritas. Edu explica que para él el uso de una palabra en una actividad de interacción oral tiene más valor como indicador de conocimiento que el uso en una de producción escrita: "Pues casi siempre a través de la interacción. Incluso más que a través de las muestras escritas que también. En el sentido de cuando les pido pues algún, sí, alguna muestra escrita y veo si están utilizándolo o no, pero sobre todo en la interacción [oral]." Loreto correlaciona la oposición oral-escrito con los niveles de dominio, aduciendo que "en los A1 y en los A2 es fácil porque preparas un vocabulario para desenvolverse en situaciones de la vida diaria. Entonces claro, cuando tú ves que en un juego de rol aparece bien insertada esa unidad dices, ya está, o sea, prueba conseguida, en ese sentido. En los niveles altos es a través de las producciones escritas donde veo el alcance de la palabra, o sea si realmente la están aprendiendo."

Encontramos, asimismo, que más de un tercio (n=5) de los profesores entrevistados hacen una diferenciación entre el conocimiento productivo y el conocimiento receptivo de las palabras, y todos ellos consideran la producción más exigente para el aprendiente. Arancha, por ejemplo, menciona y va graduando varias pistas que pueden indicar algún tipo de conocimiento léxico, reconociendo el carácter complejo y multidimensional de este tipo de conocimiento: "que lo sepan reconocer en un texto aunque no sean capaces de producirlo de forma...Toda la producción es algo que conlleva mucho más tiempo y que se aposenten mucho más los conocimientos pero que lo sepan reconocer...eh...que sepan jugar, que sepan...o sea que intenten combinarlo con otras palabras y buscar la aprobación de si esto funciona o no funciona, entonces creo que están en el camino de adquirir ese léxico." Laura, por su parte, no diferencia entre conocimiento receptivo y productivo pero tampoco identifica el conocimiento exclusivamente con la producción, afirmando que lo que ella valoraría es "si han podido resolver las actividades comunicativas, porque el léxico sirve para algo, ¿no?". Dentro de esas actividades comunicativas, efectivamente, cabrían tanto las de producción como las de recepción.

Para terminar, es ciertamente llamativo que, aunque muchos de los entrevistados enseñan en contextos de enseñanza formales como es la EOI o los centros universitarios, solo dos participantes mencionen siquiera instrumentos de evaluación formal como el examen para documentar el conocimiento de las palabras. Banana, en su caso, sí lo valora cuando afirma que "hay un examen que es solo de léxico y ahí sí que tienen que demostrar que se lo han aprendido en casa." Edu, sin embargo, lo califica como "una de las formas más residuales" para evaluar el conocimiento léxico porque "el examen puede ser el día malo, el día de nervios...."

5. Discusión

La literatura sobre adquisición, enseñanza y aprendizaje del léxico en LE ha avanzado enormemente en las últimas décadas. Sin embargo, aún se sabe poco sobre cómo se filtran estos avances en el sistema de creencias y conocimientos de los profesores de lenguas extranjeras. En este estudio, exploramos la cognición docente en torno al aprendizaje y la enseñanza del vocabulario en ELE de profesores en contexto de inmersión en distintas instituciones en España. De este modo podremos poner en contacto los hallazgos encontrados en el marco de la lingüística aplicada con lo que saben, creen y piensan los profesores que están en el aula para averiguar si esos hallazgos permean y, si no lo hacen, tomar decisiones informadas de cara a mejorar las formaciones docentes.

La primera pregunta de investigación versaba sobre la importancia que estos profesores dan al componente léxico. Nuestros resultados muestran que para casi un tercio de los participantes el léxico es el componente más importante, ya que se liga a la resolución de las necesidades comunicativas inmediatas y a la "supervivencia" en ese contexto de inmersión, y, sobre todo, en el caso de los que se encuentran en estadios iniciales de aprendizaje. Para otro tercio es la gramática la que ocupa el lugar central, pero esta decisión no se asume como propia, sino condicionada por las características de los programas y los manuales impuestos. Así, por coherencia con el programa, con el resto de sus profesores y con los documentos curriculares y los manuales, varios profesores afirman que el desarrollo de la competencia gramatical es el objetivo central de sus cursos, dejando relegados a un segundo plano otros componentes de la competencia comunicativa. Estas apreciaciones indican que la enseñanza-aprendizaje de vocabulario en lengua extranjera, si bien ha generado atención en los últimos años, sigue sin ocupar un lugar central en las clases de lenguas (Horst, 2013).

Nuestros datos revelan también que los profesores entrevistados son plenamente conscientes del poder comunicativo del léxico y que, los que gozan de libertad para ello, le confieren un rol principal, en consonancia con la literatura especializada que recalca la necesidad de una instrucción explícita del léxico (Barcroft, 2020; Laufer, 2005). Estos resultados difieren, no obstante, de los de estudios previos en torno a las creencias de profesores de lenguas extranjeras en contextos diferentes, en los que se recoge que la gramática suele percibirse como más útil de cara al desarrollo de las destrezas (Bergström *et al.*, 2021; Lim, 2016; Sánchez-Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2022). A diferencia de los estudios previos, en este caso se trata de profesores de alumnos en inmersión y, en su mayoría, con niveles de lengua iniciales. En un contexto donde al salir del aula los aprendientes tienen que actuar como agentes sociales, el empoderamiento que da el conocimiento de las primeras palabras (Stæhr, 2008) se hace más evidente para los profesores, desde luego más que en otros contextos de instrucción donde el objetivo más inmediato puede ser pasar de curso o aprobar un examen.

Esta circunstancia de aprendizaje en inmersión parece condicionar también los criterios empleados para la selección léxica. Al igual que en estudios previos (Dang y Webb, 2020; Sánchez-Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2022), en su mayoría, los profesores reconocen que

acuden a dos fuentes de información para la selección de contenidos léxicos, a saber, sus intuiciones sobre lo que necesitan saber los alumnos y los libros de texto. Como en [Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. \(2022\)](#), esas intuiciones de los profesores para determinar la prioridad de una palabra frente a otra se basan en la percepción sobre la necesidad de utilizarla en actos comunicativos dentro y fuera del aula. En varios casos, se presentan estas dos fuentes de información (intuiciones y libros de texto) como complementarias, ya que algunos de los entrevistados cuestionan la selección propuesta por manuales y afirman completarlos teniendo en cuenta sus intuiciones sobre las necesidades reales de sus estudiantes.

La preeminencia que se da al criterio de frecuencia en la literatura especializada (ver [Vilkaitė-Lozdienė y Schmitt, 2020](#)) parece afectar de manera evidente al sistema de creencias de nuestros participantes, puesto que un tercio de ellos lo menciona. A pesar de ello, ninguno declara acudir a recursos externos como listas de frecuencia o corpus. Es interesante comparar este dato con los resultados de otros estudios, como el de [Dang y Webb \(2020\)](#), que recoge que los profesores vietnamitas de inglés valoraron las listas de frecuencia como el recurso menos útil en la selección léxica o el de [Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. \(2022\)](#), cuyos participantes (profesores de español en EE.UU.) reconocen no saber dónde acceder a estos recursos.

Es curioso que algunos participantes de nuestro estudio no solo son conscientes del criterio de frecuencia sino que lo abordan de manera crítica, llegando a cuestionarlo como única guía. En este sentido, se admite que puede entrar en conflicto con otros también relevantes –como la variedad dialectal preferida– o que existen otros criterios, también objetivos y fiables, como la disponibilidad léxica de la comunidad de habla meta, lo que está en consonancia con propuestas de selección léxica de autores como [Santos \(2017\)](#) o [Hidalgo-Gallardo y Rufat \(2022\)](#).

Tomados en conjunto, estos resultados están en línea con la tendencia emergente en la literatura en la que se debate sobre la frecuencia como criterio único e indiscutible para la selección léxica. Ciertamente, la frecuencia no puede ser el único criterio de selección y ha de combinarse con otros criterios (tanto objetivos o basados en la léxico-estadística, como la disponibilidad léxica, como subjetivos, como las necesidades de los alumnos o las percepciones de utilidad por parte de los profesores), en lo que se ha llamado los criterios objetivos corregidos ([Grève y Van Passel, 1971](#)). Si estamos de acuerdo en que la palabra *significar* es extremadamente útil desde el primer día de clase a pesar de no estar entre las 1000 palabras más frecuentes, entonces no resulta sorprendente que las valoraciones de los profesores en torno a la utilidad de las palabras empiecen a tenerse en cuenta ([Dang et al., 2020](#); [He y Godfroid, 2019](#)). Aunque en nuestro estudio se atisban algunas motivaciones, quedan muchas preguntas acerca de las causas que llevan a los profesores a considerar más útil una palabra que otra. Nuestros participantes, más que las palabras más frecuentes, declaran priorizar lo que ellos consideran neutro, estándar o fundamental.

El hecho de que la gramática sea el eje estructurador de los documentos curriculares, los programas y muchos libros de texto, como reconocen varios de nuestros participantes y como atestiguan estudios previos (por ejemplo, [Baleghizadeh et al., 2016](#)), lleva a un establecimiento poco claro de criterios de evaluación del vocabulario. Esto hace que los instrumentos formales de evaluación sean casi el último recurso en el que nuestros profesores se apoyan para determinar si se conoce o no una unidad léxica. Nuestros datos revelan que se privilegia el uso productivo frente a otros tipos de conocimiento léxico y que los profesores son conscientes de que, conocer una palabra va más allá de poner una etiqueta o asociarla con un significado. Así, se repite la percepción de que conocer una palabra es saber utilizarla en contexto y se alude a conceptos, relevantes también en la literatura, como el de las colocaciones ([Higueras, 2017](#)). El hecho de que no se acuda, como medida de diagnóstico o evaluación, a instrumentos más formales puede deberse, en este caso, al hecho de que los profesores aquí entrevistados –la mayoría con amplia formación y experiencia– son conscientes de este complejo y multifacético constructo que supone el conocimiento de una palabra y de la inviabilidad de un único instrumento o medida para atestiguarlo.

6. Conclusiones, líneas futuras y limitaciones

Esta investigación contribuye a profundizar en nuestro conocimiento de las creencias, actitudes y conocimiento de los profesores de lenguas extranjeras ([Borg, 2006](#)), una tendencia investigadora que, si bien ha experimentado un gran crecimiento en los últimos años, se ha centrado casi exclusivamente en el componente gramatical y en la enseñanza de inglés como LE. Siguiendo la tendencia iniciada por [Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al. \(2022\)](#), donde se entrevistó a profesores de ELE en Estados Unidos, pretendemos aquí poner el foco en otro colectivo de profesores que enseñan en un contexto de inmersión, para conocer en mayor profundidad sus creencias y conceptualizaciones alrededor del aprendizaje y la enseñanza del léxico. A la luz de los resultados, podemos afirmar que el desarrollo de la disciplina ha calado, en mayor o menor medida, en los programas de formación docente y en este sentido nuestra muestra de profesores ampliamente formados cuestiona mayoritariamente esa centralidad de la gramática tan presente en décadas anteriores. No obstante, en la selección léxica se observa cierta dependencia de intuiciones personales y de los manuales. En este sentido, se debería trabajar en una formación docente que empuje al profesorado a tomar una posición activa en la selección del léxico meta, triangulando distintas fuentes a su alcance, tanto objetivas como subjetivas (PCIC, disponibilidad léxica, listas de frecuencia, necesidades de los estudiantes...) y valorando la pertinencia de complementar unos criterios con otros. Todo ello de cara a un incremento de la autoconfianza a la hora de encontrar la combinación de criterios que mejor se adapte a las características de su contexto de enseñanza. Este camino debería conducir también al desarrollo e implementación de instrumentos formales de evaluación, válidos y fiables, que dieran cuenta de las distintas facetas del conocimiento léxico y que estuvieran al alcance de los profesores con el fin de lograr una evaluación más sistemática y fiable del léxico.

Por otro lado, algunos de los profesores aquí entrevistados reconocen la centralidad del léxico en los niveles iniciales pero admiten que esa importancia se va diluyendo a medida que los estudiantes avanzan. Este resultado puede alertarnos sobre una posible tendencia al descuido del componente léxico en los niveles intermedios y avanzados y un consiguiente estancamiento del desarrollo léxico de los estudiantes. En este sentido, sería conveniente encaminar la formación al trabajo explícito con el vocabulario a lo largo de todo el currículo, ya que este desarrollo progresivo permitirá a los aprendientes acceder a un mayor número de textos (Nation, 2001) y redundará en la calidad de sus producciones lingüísticas (Qian y Lin, 2020). En el ámbito de la investigación y siguiendo la estela de Dang y Webb (2020) o He y Godfroid (2019), sería conveniente poner en valor las intuiciones de los profesores formados y con experiencia de cara a determinar la utilidad de una palabra frente a otras en un contexto y un nivel concreto y poner a disposición de los profesores listas de vocabulario meta que resulten de la combinación de los juicios de los profesores, el conocimiento léxico actual de los alumnos y la frecuencia léxica (Robles-García et al., 2023).

Por último, cabe mencionar que aunque este estudio contribuye a mejorar nuestra comprensión sobre cómo los profesores de ELE en España abordan la enseñanza-aprendizaje del léxico, los datos se limitan a creencias, conocimientos y percepciones sobre la propia práctica docente. Para complementar estos hallazgos, sería conveniente recabar más información sobre lo que ocurre en las aulas y poder así indagar en esa relación entre cognición y práctica docente.

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Semiotic Resources and Issue Framing: Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Theresa May's Inaugural and Resignation Speeches

Huiyu Zhang¹, Jinru Xiong¹ & Yuanhong Wei^{2*}

¹Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

²Chengdu Lianzhou International Technology Co., Ltd, Chengdu, China

Abstract: Theresa May's inaugural and resignation speeches respectively mark the beginning and end of her premiership. When making her inaugural speech May was well supported by the general public, but her resignation speech was made as she stepped down from the position of Prime Minister under great political and public pressure. This paper applies multimodal discourse analysis to both her inaugural and resignation speeches, exploring how semiotic resources are used to frame issues to achieve multiple communicative effects. It is found that: (i) multiple modes, including verbal, visual, and vocal, are manipulated to frame the issue of social justice—in relation to May's commitments in the inaugural speech, and concerning achievements in the resignation speech; (ii) regarding Brexit, multiple modes are employed to express confidence and sadness in failure in the two speeches; and (iii) both speeches frame the issue of national unity, emphasizing the significance of this issue. The same issues, but with different frames, produce different effects. We further find that the verbal mode plays a dominant role in issue framing, while other modes assume different supportive functions. They are interwoven and integrated to maximize the effect of such speeches.

Keywords: Theresa May, inaugural speech, resignation speech, multimodal discourse analysis, issue framing.

Recursos semióticos y encuadre de temas: análisis del discurso multimodal de los discursos de investidura y de dimisión de Theresa May

Resumen: Los discursos de investidura y de dimisión de Theresa May marcan, respectivamente, el inicio y el final de su mandato como primera ministra. Cuando pronunció su discurso de investidura, May contaba con un amplio respaldo de la opinión pública, mientras que su discurso de dimisión se produjo al abandonar el cargo de primera ministra bajo una gran presión política y social. Este artículo aplica el análisis del discurso multimodal a ambos discursos, explorando cómo se emplean los recursos semióticos para encuadrar temas y lograr múltiples efectos comunicativos. Se constata que: (i) se manipulan múltiples modos —incluidos el verbal, el visual y el vocal— para encuadrar el tema de la justicia social: en relación con los compromisos de May en el discurso de investidura y respecto de los logros en el discurso de dimisión; (ii) en lo relativo al Brexit, se utilizan diversos modos para expresar confianza y tristeza ante el fracaso en los dos discursos; y (iii) ambos discursos encuadran la cuestión de la unidad nacional, subrayando la importancia de este asunto. Los mismos temas, pero con encuadres distintos, producen efectos diferentes. Además, se observa que el modo verbal desempeña un papel dominante en el encuadre de temas, mientras que los demás modos cumplen funciones de apoyo diversas. Estos modos se entrelazan e integran para maximizar el efecto de este tipo de discursos.

Palabras clave: Theresa May, discurso de investidura, discurso de dimisión, análisis del discurso multimodal, encuadre de temas.

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*Corresponding author: weiyuanhongvivi@163.com

1. Introduction

On July 13th, 2016 Theresa May, the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, delivered her inaugural speech. In this address May expressed her determination to lead the British people to leave the European Union, and presented Britain with a more prosperous future. However, although some major achievements were made during her tenure, there were also significant problems such as terrorist attacks, financial problems, defeat in the general election, and failure in Brexit. These seemed to persist and led to a gradual loss of national support for the Prime Minister. Nearly three years later, on May 24th, 2019 she delivered a resignation speech, announcing that she would step down as leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party on June 7th. In this address she highlighted the achievements of her tenure, and also expressed regret for her failure during the Brexit process. These two speeches were delivered by the same speaker, and were aimed at a similar audience group with common topics of social justice, Brexit, and national unity. However, our comparative analysis of their audience reception, according to nearly 10,000 YouTube comments (as will be detailed in the Results section), shows that the two speeches achieved quite different communicative effects in the two different contexts. Viewers of the inaugural speech generally expressed a hopeful attitude towards Theresa May as the new Prime Minister, while those watching the resignation speech showed recognition for her efforts in relation to Brexit and sympathy about the circumstances of her resignation. Thus, a question arises: How were semiotic resources employed in these two speeches, in order to frame similar issues but achieve multiple communicative effects in these two different contexts?

This question is obviously linked to linguistics. To the best of our knowledge, however, the two speeches have not received much scholarly attention from linguists, although they are generally viewed as symbols of two important political issues. While a few studies (e.g., Ariesta, 2017) have analyzed the linguistic features of the inaugural speech, little linguistic attention has been given to the resignation speech, and there has been no comparative analysis of both speeches. To fill these gaps, this paper applies multimodal discourse analysis to both speeches to investigate how semiotic resources are used to frame salient issues so as to achieve different communicative effects in the two different contexts. Multimodal discourse analysis provides us with an integrated approach to examine both linguistic and extra-linguistic elements. Specifically, we try to answer the research question by analyzing verbal, visual, and vocal modes and their interface, and exploring how the integration of multiple semiotic resources facilitates communicative interaction, generates persuasive impact, and achieves different communicative effects.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political speeches

Political speeches are used to disseminate politicians' socio-political ideologies. Speakers are often judged by their ability to phrase political information in a persuasive way, which involves numerous interactive features (Rodríguez, 2008). Therefore, the language used in

such speeches is important. Advances in natural language processing are creating a new area for the study of political speech. Laver and Benoit (2002) conducted a computerized analysis of political speech, and proposed that the use of computer coding can potentially generate huge payoffs. Many linguistic analyses have been guided by the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 1993; Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 2013) in investigating political speech (Bahaa, 2007; Wang, 2010; Maalej, 2012; Aydin, 2016; Talib and Fitzgerald, 2016) and its complementary perspective, positive discourse analysis (Nartey and Ernanda, 2020) from different regions and countries—for example, Britain (Blackledge, 2006), Argentina (Gialdino, 2010), and China (Kuo, 2001; Cheng and Chen, 2019). Scholars have also explored political speech from other perspectives, such as rhetoric (Salmon, 1998; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986; Augoustinos, et al., 2002; Finlayson, 2015) and persuasion (Nelson and Garst, 2005; Reyes, 2014). In addition, there are also discussions about different types of political speeches (Sitkoff, 2002; Calfano, 2009), among which inaugural and resignation speeches are highlighted for their importance.

An inaugural speech, the first formal presentation made by a new government leader, involves highly eloquent, persuasive, and ideological functions. It is “a sub-genre of political discourse often presented shortly after swearing in or taking oath of allegiance by elected people into public offices” (Biria & Mohammadi, 2012, p.1291). For speakers, inaugural speeches outline their commitment and their vision for the nation. It is a combination of literacy and orality, a kind of written language expressed orally (Kowal et al., 1997). A successful inaugural speech motivates the audience, and helps the speaker gain support and build public image.

Research on inaugural speeches involves many aspects. Some previous studies have investigated the revolution of political culture through analyses of inaugural speeches (Ericson, 1997; Lim, 2002), while some have conducted analysis in terms of genre (Sigelman, 1996; Liu, 2012) and rhetorical construction, for example, metaphor, pun, parallelism, etc. (Lu and Ahrens, 2008; WAUDAG, 1990; Biria and Mohammadi, 2012). Some scholars have focused on American presidential inaugural speeches and explored the ideologies, values, and linguistic styles of different American presidents (Hahn, 1982; Beasley, 2001). May's inaugural speech has also received attention from a few researchers; Ariesta (2017) points out that she uses three rhetorical proofs in her inaugural speech, i.e. logos, ethos, and pathos. Theresa May and David Cameron constructed different interpersonal meanings in their inaugural speeches.

A resignation speech is a public address made by a figure resigning from their current position. Usually there is competitive leadership, and therefore after the resignation a new leader will be installed. Resignations can produce significant effects on politics, the economy, and relevant social elements, which may be negative, positive, or both at the same time (Chandiok, 1996; Thomas and Laffin, 2001). In its literal presentation, a resignation speech usually reviews the resigning leader's career. Resignation is never a simple matter, and consequently politicians are cautious in constructing their speeches (Boychuk, 1994). Cheng (2016) stresses that resignation speeches have a compositional structure, which

represents a complex but generic kind of political speech. Other perspectives, such as rhetoric (Collins and Clark, 1992) and discourse strategies (Katula, 1975; Wilson, 1976), may also be applied to explore resignation speeches.

However, to the best of our knowledge there has been little scholarly attention paid to May's resignation speech, and there has been no comparison or contrast between her inaugural and resignation speeches. We believe that comparing these two speeches, from the start and end of her premiership respectively, will enrich our understanding of how similar semiotic resources may be employed to frame issues to achieve different communicative effects in different contexts. Therefore, the current study attempts to explore and compare the two speeches by highlighting the usage of verbal, visual, and vocal semiotic resources.

2.2 Multimodal resources and issue framing

Multimodal resources incorporate both verbal and non-verbal resources. Compared with the traditional examination of meaning expression through an analysis of verbal resources, multimodal analysis also takes into consideration the significance of non-verbal resources such as images and gestures. The underlying reason for this kind of comprehensive analysis is that in everyday communications ideas and opinions are expressed through verbal content in combination with visual and vocal behaviors such as facial expressions, head gestures, and voice quality (Mehrabian, 2017). That is to say, multimodality is the normal state of human communication (Tseronis, 2018). Extant literature has recognized the role of non-verbal cues, especially visual ones (Worth, 2016; Smith et al., 2004; Barry, 1997), and has discussed the interplay between verbal and visual modes as two of the most salient multimodal framing devices (Gross, 2009; Anthonissen, 2003). These studies have identified a series of multimodal devices that are used to create and manage communities of shared values, including both pictorial clues (choices of composition, close, medium and distant shots, frontal/rear, high/low/eye-level views, etc.) and textual ones (reported speech and lexical choices, evaluative terms, nominalizations, numerals, mass nouns, part-whole metonymies, etc.) (Belmonte and Porto, 2020). Other communicative resources include modal range, speed, timing, direction of communication, roles of discursive agents, and interrelatedness of messages (Pentzold et al., 2016). In particular, Abuczki (2011) conducted a detailed analysis of gestures used in communication processes, and noted that gestures have pragmatic, modal, performative, and parsing functions in facilitating communication.

Apart from identifying the different modes of communication, the interface between these modes is also worth delving into. As regards to the relative importance and distinct functions of these modes, the conclusions of most studies suggest that visual forms interact with verbal texts and play a complementary part in framing strategies (Pentzold et al., 2016). In other words, such studies highlight the dominance of verbal modes, whereby the verbal mode conveys the standpoint and the visual mode the arguments in support of it. However, Tseronis (2018) dismisses the verbal/visual divide in multimodal discourse

analysis and points out that visual arguments do not constitute a radically different kind of argument from verbal ones. Rather, he suggests that arguers may employ all the communication modalities that are available in a given moment. Therefore, despite the regularity and clarity that characterizes the linguistic code and the ambiguity and context dependency of the nonverbal modes, verbal and visual devices can both play direct and indirect roles in the communication process.

In political speeches, framing is a process of “defining and constructing a political issue or public controversy” (Nelson et al., 1997, p. 567). To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a text, in such a way as to “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Belmonte and Porto, 2020, p. 60). Frames can impact cognition and public opinion formation. Issue framing is used to shape public opinion, and is an important way for speakers to interpret issues and disseminate social-political ideologies (Jerit, 2008). Therefore, how political elites frame issues is of vital significance. Extant theories suggest that speakers can frame issues in various ways, such as by “defining an issue as a problem, blaming a cause, suggesting solutions, and invoking a moral appeal” (Dardis, 2007, p. 247). Framing influences belief content and belief importance (Nelson and Oxley, 1999), and a well-framed issue can produce great persuasive effects.

Multimodal resources, such as verbal and visual resources, can have great significance in terms of framing effects (Nelson and Kinder, 1996). In multimodal analysis, a frame “defines the world to be engaged with; it excludes and it includes; and in doing that it shapes, presents the world according to the interest and the principles of those who frame” (Pentzold et al., 2016, p. 35). Importantly, previous issues can also be interpreted in new ways by reframing (Chong and Druckman, 2007). In fact, studies abound on the framing of social and political issues by news agencies and media through the employment of multimodal devices. Such studies have dealt with such topics as climate change (Dancygier, 2023; Guenther et al., 2022; Wessler et al., 2016), along with other related issues such as environmental justice (Moernaut et al., 2018) and plastic pollution (Hu, 2020), in which multimodal framing proves to be a powerful tool in communication and relevant analyses shed light on how these and similar issues may be framed with multimodal resources.

3. Methodology

In this section we introduce our choice of research method, followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework employed in this study. Finally, we explain how we collected and analyzed our data, and how we assured the credibility of our results.

3.1 Choice of research method

This paper employs multimodal discourse analysis as the research method. “Mode is the semiotic construction of communication technology” (Martin, 1992, p. 510). It functions in communication as the resource for constructing interaction (Martin, 1992). Multimodal

discourse analysis is concerned with the theory and analysis of semiotic resources and semantic expansions, and it extends the study of language to other resources such as images, actions, music, sound, etc. (O'Halloran, 2011).

According to Norris (2004), multimodal discourse analysis allows for the analysis of the larger parts that integrate all the possible communicative modes. In the study of multimodal discourse, inter-semiotic relations play a key role (Jewitt, 2009), and "meanings are created in texts and interactions in a complex interplay of semiosis across multiple modes" (Vijay et al., 2008, p. 129). The presentation of a speech is composed of multiple modes, which contribute to the realization of discourse semantics. Humans are remarkably capable of communicating and conveying messages about their emotions (Harrigan et al., 2004), with information transmitted via verbal, vocal, and visual channels. Nagel et al. (2012) note that audiovisual messages combine the verbal, visual, and vocal channels, each embodied by modes, and in each channel various individual messages are delivered. Therefore, multimodal discourse analysis provides a holistic approach to study the process of speech performance.

This study is underpinned by issue framing, and thus the methodological approach is intricately woven into the fabric of multimodal choices and issue framing. Previous studies on political communication (Nagel et al., 2012; Harrigan et al., 2004) have confirmed that multimodal framing can be effectively applied in the analysis of political discourses. Given that our research seeks to unravel the intricacies of political communication through a nuanced exploration of the multimodal devices employed in political discourse, the methodology of multimodal discourse analysis not only aligns with established practices in the field, but also enhances the depth of understanding that can be achieved in terms of how issue framing is manifested with multimodal resources in the two speeches.

Some social-political issues figure prominently in both of May's speeches. In the inaugural speech she mainly talks about social justice, class, laws, taxes, national unity, and Brexit, while in the resignation speech she speaks about Brexit, deficits, the national debt, job and housing security, environmental problems, social justice, and national unity. It is clear that there are three shared salient issues in both speeches, namely social justice, Brexit, and national unity. While these three issues are addressed in both speeches, if we consider the rather different contexts it is not difficult to infer that they will be framed with different multimodal resources aiming to achieve different communicative effects. Thus, comparing the multimodal framing of these three topics in the two speeches will allow us to explore how multimodal resources are employed to frame issues for different effects in different contexts.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

We downloaded May's inaugural and resignation speeches from the internet¹ and transcribed both for verbal analysis. The inaugural speech lasts for about four minutes, and the resignation speech for six minutes. We conducted a comprehensive analysis and examination of both speeches in order to provide a complete assessment of the multimodal framing in the two contrastive settings.

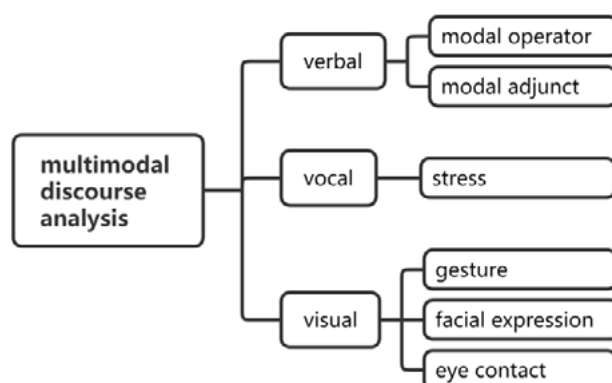


Figure 1. The framework for multimodal discourse analysis in the current study.

Many different multimodal devices may have contributed to the issue framing in the two speeches, and we acknowledge that it would be impossible to cover all of them in the current study. As shown in Figure 1, we chose to focus on particular devices for our verbal, vocal, and visual analysis. In the case of verbal communication, modality serves as a valuable indicator, providing insights into the impact or effectiveness of the communicated message. Modal operators and modal adjuncts play a crucial role in shaping the framing of issues, influencing the perceived certainty, possibility, and emotional tone associated with specific statements and thereby impacting the overall discourse interpretation (Chaiken and Eagly, 1983). With respect to vocal communication, word stress has considerable relevance in achieving the effect of communication; in fact, intonation and other nonverbal cues are key to identifying sarcastic intent in the framing of issues (Couper-Kuhlen, 2015). Finally, regarding visual communication, the three most telling signs of communication effect are gestures, facial expression, and eye contact. Analysis of gesture pragmatics involves a detailed exploration of the interaction between frames and metonymy, motivating not only the formation of gestural signs but also guiding cross-modal processes of pragmatic inferencing (Kendon, 2017). In addition, well-timed facial expressions do not simply mirror the speaker's stance or display understanding of the speaker's talk, but also perform systematic operations on the projected course of the talk (Calder and Young, 2016). Moreover, speakers often shift their gaze away from

¹ The inaugural and the resignation speech video was downloaded from YouTube, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDyZ8trge2E>, and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKt-Z5Yk2Wo>.

their listeners during sarcastic utterances, demonstrated by empirical evidence from comparisons of the gaze direction of speakers in dyadic conversation when uttering sincere and sarcastic statements (Isaacowitz, 2006).

To ensure the objectivity of our data analysis we used ELAN, a tool explicitly developed to analyze multiple modes in discourse and which has been used effectively in previous studies (e.g., Bonacchi and Mela, 2014), to conduct visual and vocal analysis. For the visual modes we used ELAN to extract gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact in the two speeches, and for the vocal modes we used the tool to extract stresses. From this we were able to record the frequency of gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and stresses in the two speeches.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of our analysis, the sample presentation was independently scrutinized by two researchers. Additionally, a third researcher cross-checked the entire data analysis. These scholars, all proficient in multimodal analysis, achieved a robust agreement rate of 92.36 % during the data examination, establishing high interrater reliability and bolstering the credibility and accountability of our study. In instances where the researchers diverged in their perspectives on certain visuals, we conducted comprehensive discussions. Where dissenting views persisted we explored how distinct visual elements could be associated with diverse functions and interpretations.

To show and illustrate the communicative effects of the two speeches, we conducted a sentiment analysis on the comments on both the inaugural and resignation speeches on YouTube. Specifically, we employed WordSmith 5.0 software to generate a word frequency list and subsequently identified adjectives with a positive connotation, taking into account the semantic ratings provided in SentiWordNet 3.0.²

4. Results

4.1 Multimodal resources in May's speeches

4.1.1 Verbal mode

Speakers frame issues and deliver information to audiences directly through verbal communication. This study adopts modality analysis to explore verbal modes in May's two speeches. "Modality is the grammar of explicit comment, the means by which people express their degree of commitment to the truth of propositions they utter and their views on the desirability or otherwise of the state of affairs referred to" (Fowler, 1986, p. 131). According to Halliday (2004), modality can be expressed by modal operators (such as "have to", "must", "will", "can", "would", "could", "might", "able", "willing", etc.) and modal adjuncts (such as "certainly", "probably", "possibly", "sometimes", "usually", etc.). Modality analysis aims to find out how modal operators and modal adjuncts are used to frame issues in the two speeches.

² Baccianella, S., Esuli, A., & Sebastiani, F. Sentiwordnet 3.0: an enhanced lexical resource for sentiment analysis and opinion mining[C]//Lrec. 2010, 10(2010): 2200-2204.

Table 1 summarizes the frequency of different ranks of modal operator in two speeches. In the inaugural speech, median value modal operators account for the biggest proportion, which is reflected by the word “will”. “Will” is used for talking about the future or showing commitment, indicating the speaker’s prospect. In the resignation speech, “can” ranks first among the modal operators, mainly used for describing May’s ability. These two different but high-occurrence modal operators demonstrate the different emphasis in each speech. **Table 2** recapitulates the frequency of different ranks of modal adjuncts in the two speeches. In the resignation speech various modal adjuncts are employed, while in the inaugural speech the use of modal adjuncts is comparatively lower.

Table 1. The frequency of different ranks of modal operator in the two speeches.

Modality ranks	Modal operator	Inaugural speech			Modal operator	Resignation speech		
		Occurrence	Total	%		Occurrence	Total	%
High value	0	0	0	0	have to, must	1	2	10 %
Median value	will	16	16	80 %	should will	1 5	6	32 %
Low value	can	4	4	20 %	can maybe able	8 1 2	11	58 %
Total			20	100 %			19	100 %

Table 2. The frequency of different ranks of modal adjuncts in the two speeches.

Modality ranks	Modal adjunct	Inaugural speech			Modal adjunct	Resignation speech		
		Occurrence	Total	%		Occurrence	Total	%
High value	always much just	1	3	60 %	certain, clear, fully, always, all, almost, only, ever, certainly, still never, just so much	1 2 3	17	94 %
Median value	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Low value	less likely	2	2	40 %	seemed	1	1	6 %
Total			5	100 %			18	100 %

4.1.2 Visual mode

Schill (2012) states that visual symbols are central components in political speeches, especially since television has become the major source of political information. The visibility of news has more than aesthetic effects; it also influences the substance and quality of political information (**Benner and Rothe, 2023**). Visual modes involve extensive components, such as gesture, facial expression, eye contact, movement, color, etc. May presents different visibility in delivering the two speeches. **Table 2** gauges the frequency

and duration of gesture, facial expression, and eye contact in the two speeches. In terms of gestures, in the inaugural speech May opens her arms wide seven times, while in the resignation speech she does this only twice. Opening the arms wide in a speech allows the speaker to involve and connect with the audience, and contributes to the construction of interpersonal meanings and relationships (Hadar, 1991). Thus, it may be inferred that this gesture was used more frequently in the inaugural speech in order to establish connections and maintain her relationship with the audience.

In terms of her facial expression, in both speeches May is serious for most of the time, which is normal in political speeches (Stewart et al., 2009). However, there are some important differences. For instance, in the inaugural speech she smiles five times, especially at the end of the speech, and she keeps smiling for a long time, suggesting a kind and friendly image. In contrast, in the resignation speech she breaks down in tears at the end, revealing her sadness and negative emotions.

Regarding eye contact, as Table 3 suggests, in the four-minute inaugural speech May spends around three minutes making eye contact with the audience, among which the average duration of eye contact is about 2.5 seconds and the longest lasts for about 30 seconds. In the six-minute resignation speech the eye contact time is also about 3 minutes, but both the average duration and the longest duration are shorter, about 1 second and 4 seconds respectively. In speeches, eye contact allows the speaker to interact with the audience and construct interpersonal meanings, which contributes to effective communication (Jongerius et al., 2020). Our results indicate that in her inaugural speech May maintains regular and stable eye contact with the audience, which may help her to establish instant interpersonal relationships between herself and her audience and thus promote communication (Senju & Johnson, 2009). However, in her resignation speech eye contact is less stable, although she does not avoid it altogether, and she spends more time looking at her script.

Table 3. The frequency and duration of gesture, facial expression, and eye contact in the two speeches.

Tier	Inaugural speech			Resignation speech		
	Gesture	Facial expression	Eye contact	Gesture	Facial expression	Eye contact
Occurrence	7	5	70	2	1	158
Minimal duration	0.79s	1.55s	0.183s	0.39s	2.21s	0.16s
Maximal duration	2.89s	5.48s	30.192s	1.32s	2.21s	3.77s
Average duration	1.607143s	2.82s	2.485186s	0.855s	2.21s	0.94s
Total	11.25s	14.1s	173.963s	1.71s	2.21s	167.56s

4.1.3 Vocal mode

Vocal mode comprises elements such as intonation, pitch, speech rate, etc. Intonation is used for expressing a particular feeling, pitch reflects whether a voice is high or low, speech rate calculates speed, and intensity describes a speaker's volume. As communicative actions, acoustic sources carry a lot of information (Feld, 1984).

The style of May's public speech is consistently forceful; the pitch, speech rate, and intensity in both the inaugural and resignation speeches vary only a little. However, intonation foregrounds key information. In particular, stresses are often used to highlight elements in a speech, such as important information, emotions, and values (Cutler and Jesse, 2021; Bänziger and Scherer, 2005), and stressed intonation can attract the audience's attention and thus promote their understanding of the stressed elements (Filippi, 2020; Fónagy and Bérard, 2006). Therefore, in the analysis of vocal modes we focus on May's use of stress in her speeches.

Table 4 shows calculations of the frequency and duration of stressed elements in the two speeches. As shown in Table 4, May uses stress for emphasis 68 times in total and for about 40 seconds in the inaugural speech, compared with 51 times and for about 30 seconds in the resignation speech. This reflects that different information values and emotions are employed in the two speeches. Extracts 1 and 2 are examples from the inaugural speech and the resignation speech respectively, with stressed tones marked with the sign “’”. Extract 1 is delivered right after May describes the life struggles of ordinary working-class families, such as job security, mortgage, the cost of living, and children's education, and in this extract three words are stressed: “just” is stressed to highlight the toughness and struggles of life; and “want” and “directly” are stressed to indicate the speaker's invitation to communicate with the audience, in particular those from an “ordinary working-class family”. In this special context the stressed words jointly contribute to the construction of interpersonal meanings and relationships between May and her target audience, bringing the new Prime Minister closer to her audience. In Extract 2 “security”, “freedom”, and “opportunity” are stressed and highlighted as key values in May's political career, and the word “throughout” is stressed to emphasize that she has adhered to those values for her entire term of office. When she frames issues using stress in this way, the stressed intonation attracts the audience's attention (McGregor, 1982) and thereby promotes their understanding and recognition of the highlighted information and values.

- Extract 1

If you are one of those families, if you are *‘just* managing, I *‘want* to address you *‘directly*.

- Extract 2

‘Security, *‘freedom*, and *‘opportunity*. Those values have guided me *‘throughout* my career.

Table 4. The frequency and duration of stress in two speeches.

	Occurrence	Minimal duration	Maximal duration	Average duration	Total
Inaugural speech	68	0.16s	1.39s	0.587088s	39.922s
Resignation speech	51	0.21s	1.09s	0.62549s	31.9s

4.2 Semiotic resources and issue framing

The semiotic resources analyzed above are used to frame different issues in the communicative process of the two speeches. Among all the issues we have touched on so far, this section highlights the three issues covered by both speeches, namely social justice, Brexit, and national unity. Detailed analysis will illuminate, first, how multiple modes contribute to framing salient issues, and second, how the integration of multiple modes contributes to multiple communicative effects.

4.2.1 Frames of social justice

Social justice has frequently appeared in British governmental reports in recent years, becoming one of the government's major decision-making orientations. As the government leader, in both the inaugural and resignation speeches May gives high priority to the illustration of social justice. In the inaugural speech she enumerates some significant socially unjust phenomena, involving race, gender, education, class, job and housing security:

- Extract 3

That means *fighting against* the burning injustice that, if you are born poor, you *will* die on average 9 years earlier than others. If you are black, you are treated *'more harshly* by the criminal justice system than if you are white. If you are a white, working-class boy, you are *'less likely* than anybody else in Britain to go to university. If you are at a state school, you are *less likely* to reach the top professions than if you are educated privately. If you are a woman, you *will* earn less than a man. If you suffer from mental health problems, there is not enough help to hand. If you are young, you *will* find it *'harder* than ever before to own your home.

When she speaks of “fighting against the burning injustice” in Extract 3, May stresses this clause, and at the same time she opens her arms forcefully for additional emphasis, which demonstrates her great commitment to this battle. May uses seven parallelisms to describe the injustices. The recurrence of “if you are...” produces a sense of identification. She directly addresses the audience with her use of “you”, and discusses situations that are real for them. The repeated use of the modal operator “will” and the modal adjunct “less likely” allows May to describe different scenarios related to the lives of British people, as well as the consequences of social injustice, highlighting the social meaning of “fighting against the burning injustice”. In addition, she stresses all the comparative forms, including “more”, “less likely”, “harder”, and “much harder”, expressing her empathy for people from ordinary working-class families. Throughout this whole process May makes constant and lengthy eye contact with the audience, especially when she says “you”, intensifying the identification in her words. All of those elaborations foreshadow her commitments later on.

- Extract 4

I know you are working around the clock, I know you are doing your best, and I *'know* that sometimes life *can* be a struggle. The government I lead *will* be driven *'not* by the interests of the privileged, but by *'yours*. We *will* do everything we

'can to give you more control over your lives. When we take the big calls, we *will* think 'not of the powerful, but 'you. When we pass new laws, we *will* listen 'not to the mighty but to 'you. When it comes to taxes, we *will* prioritize not the wealthy, but 'you. When it comes to opportunity, we *will* not entrench the advantages of the fortunate few. We *will* do everything we *can* to help 'anybody, whatever your background, to go 'as far as your talents *will* take you.

After describing unjust phenomena, May makes a number of commitments which are accentuated by the choice of the modal operator "will". As Table 1 suggests, she uses the modal operator "will" sixteen times in her inaugural speech. Through this word, May outlines the vision of the Conservative and Unionist Party directly. In Extract 4, by repeatedly using "we will..." May is telling the British people that she will strive to build a more fair and harmonious society. She makes those actions specific rather than just quoting slogans, which conveys a connotation of pragmatism. When she is delivering these commitments, May stresses the words "not", "you", and "anybody". The word "not" appears four times and "you" three times, highlighting the key information. "Not" is used to emphasize her determination to oppose the non-negotiable issue of social injustice. "You" invokes a strong sense of motivation and inspiration.

Apart from her use of language, May also gesticulates to connect with the audience four times. Some gestures and instances of eye contact are used to construct interpersonal meanings (Singer et al., 2008) and promote her communication with the audience. For instance, she opens her arms to engage the audience and tries to involve and connect with them. Also, as shown in Figure 2, she makes eye contact with the audience which lasts for about 30 seconds, allowing her to establish an instant relationship with her audience (Kaiser et al., 2022) and communicate with them directly. These frames contribute to the perceived practicality and effectiveness of the measures she puts forward, facilitating the reliability of her commitments.

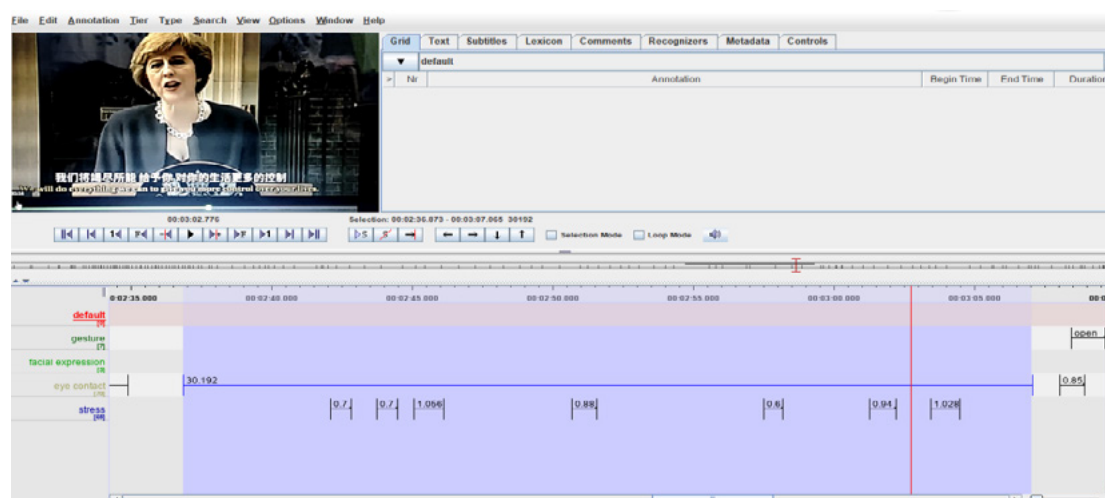


Figure 2. The 30-second eye contact in Theresa May's inaugural speech.

In her resignation speech, the frames of social justice mainly concern May's achievements during her tenure, which serve as the argumentation for her promises. The speech emphasizes the accomplishments the government has achieved.

- Extract 5

My focus has been on ensuring that the good jobs of the future *will* be created in communities across the '*whole* country, '*not* just in London and the South East, through our Modern Industrial Strategy. We have helped more people than ever enjoy the security of a job. We are building more '*homes* and helping first-time buyers onto the housing ladder – so young people *can* enjoy the opportunities their parents did... That is what a '*decent*, '*moderate* and '*patriotic* '*Conservative* government, on the common ground of British politics, '*can* achieve – '*even* as we tackle the biggest peacetime challenge any government has faced.

Social justice contains many aspects, and May mentions job and housing security first, since these are her biggest concerns. Although she was only Prime Minister for three years, she is emphasizing that she has made great contributions to Britain. As Extract 5 shows, the emphasis is that more jobs have been created and more homes have been built, facilitating social justice and people's livelihoods. The stressed words "whole" and "not" are in contrast, reflecting the progress made in job creation. In terms of housing, the modal operator "can" demonstrates the validity of May's efforts. Extract 5 also suggests May's depiction of the government she has led, achieved by the stressed words "decent", "moderate", and "patriotic". The modal operator "can", combined with the stressed word "even", indicates the government's capability, further enhancing the positive impression of May's Conservative government.

- Extract 6

But the '*unique* privilege of this office is to use this platform to give a voice to the voiceless, to fight the burning injustices that still scar our society. *That is why* I put proper funding for mental health at the heart of our NHS long-term plan. *It is why* I am ending the postcode lottery for survivors of domestic abuse. *It is why* the Race Disparity Audit and gender pay reporting are shining a light on inequality, so it has '*nowhere* to hide. *And that is why* I set up the independent public inquiry into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower – to search for the truth, so '*nothing* like it can ever happen again, and so the people who lost their lives that night are '*never* forgotten.

In Extract 6 she lists a number of achievements in other aspects of social justice, including health care, domestic abuse, race, gender, and health and safety. The modal adjuncts "ever" and "never" are powerful illustrations of May's declaration to fight against social injustice. Here she stresses three words, "nowhere", "nothing", and "never", using a slow and sorrowful tone which may arouse emotion in the audience in relation to these issues.

In illustrating her government's efforts, May uses four sentences beginning "That is why...", "It is why...", "It is why...", and "And that is why...". With this cumulative progression the rationality of the listed moves is underlined, producing a persuasive effect. May demonstrates her commitment to fight against social injustice in her inaugural speech, and in her resignation speech she enumerates the achievements she has made on this issue as a way to build a reliable public image.

4.2.2 Frames related to Brexit

Brexit has been a salient issue in Britain since the referendum in 2016. In the inaugural speech, May shows her determination to leave the European Union. Thus, May's inaugural speech mainly expresses her confidence on this issue:

- Extract 7

We are living through an important moment in our country's history. Following the referendum, we face a time of *'great 'national 'change*. And I know, because we are Great Britain, that we *'will 'rise to the challenge*. As we leave the European Union we *will* forge a *'bold new positive* role for ourselves in the world, and we *will* make Britain a country that works not for a privileged few, but for *'every one of us*. *'That will* be the mission of the government I *'lead*, and *'together we 'will* build a *'better Britain*.

In Extract 7, the stressed phrase "great national change" is referring to Brexit. The recurrence of the modal operator "will" depicts May's national vision, showing her confidence on this issue. Her face lights up with pleasure at the end of this speech, directly conveying her positive emotion in that moment. At the same time she makes eye contact with the audience, which allows her to share her pleasure with them. May's confidence comes from the British people; by the description "And I know, because we are Great Britain, that we will rise to the challenge", May projects a national image of strong-willed, persistent, and brave British people to the world. By their collective efforts, the British people will overcome the difficulties and enjoy the victory of Brexit. Here, May opens her arms three times in communication with the audience, generating motivational effects.

Her confidence also stems from her new government as well. As the leader of the new government, she has great confidence in the party she leads. This is accentuated by the repetition of the modal operator "will" and stress on the phrase "bold new positive". Under the new government, supported by thousands of hard-working British people, May firmly believes that after Brexit the country "will forge a bold, new positive role for ourselves in the world". The final two stressed words, "better Britain", reiterate her confidence again.

As the biggest social upheaval, Brexit was the most prominent issue during her tenure. In her inaugural speech May demonstrates her conviction to take Britain out of the European Union. However, she failed to achieve this, and in her resignation speech she admits her failure in this regard. Importantly, however, frames are used to reduce the negative influence of this failure.

- Extract 8

Back in 2016, we gave the British people a choice. Against all predictions, the British people voted to leave the European Union. I feel as ‘*certain* today as I did three years ago that in a ‘*democracy*, if you give people a choice, you have a ‘*duty* to implement what they decide. I have *done my best* to do that. I negotiated the terms of our exit and a new relationship with our closest neighbors that protects jobs, our security, and our Union. *I have done everything I can* to convince MPs to back that deal. ‘*Sadly*, I have not been able to do so. I ‘*tried* ‘*three* ‘*times*.

When May uses the stressed modal adjunct “certain” she looks at the audience with a resolute facial expression, which strengthens her affirmation at that moment. The modal operator “can” illustrates May’s endeavors in relation to Brexit, echoing the statement “I have tried three times”. In this sentence she stresses almost all the words (Figure 3), especially the word “three”, emphasizing her persistence; however, she was still “not ... able to do so”. The stressed word “sadly” is used to convey a sense of regret for having “not been able to do so”, emphasizing the emotional tone of the statement. Also, a falling tone is used to enhance the expression of regret and helplessness.

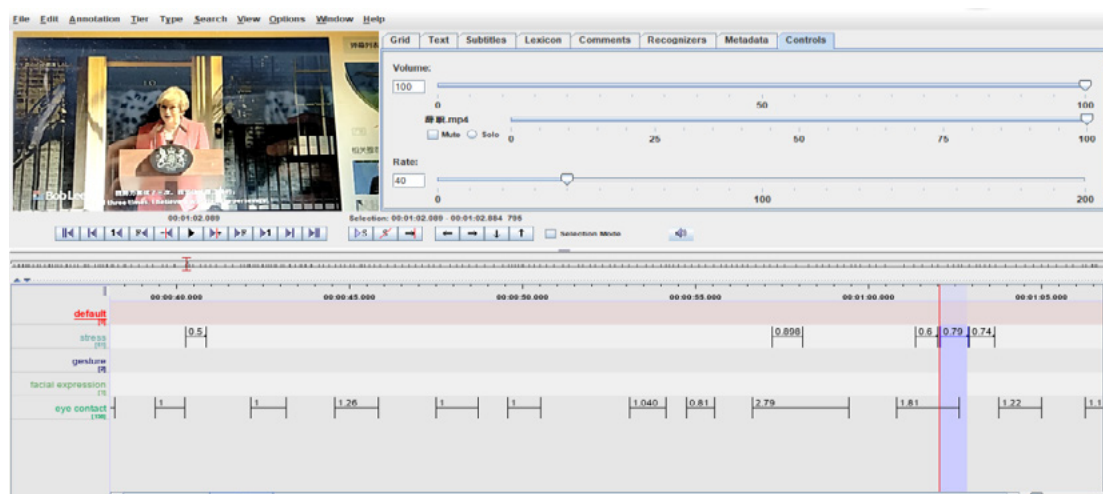


Figure 3. Stress in Theresa May’s resignation speech.

- Extract 9

It is, and *will* ‘*always* remain, a matter of ‘*deep regret* to me that I have *not been able* to deliver Brexit.

After expressing her sadness, May employs some strategies to repair her image after the failure of Brexit. First, she adopts euphemistic words, achieved by using the low-value modal operator “not able to” twice. As Extract 9 shows, when speaking of Brexit May does

not use words like failure, lose, defeated, or modal auxiliaries like cannot, could not, etc. Such words would directly point to the incapability of the speaker. Instead, she selects the low-value modal operator “not able to”, toning down the negative effect of this failure.

- Extract 10

Such a consensus *can* ‘only be reached if those on ‘all sides of the debate are willing to ‘compromise. For many years the great humanitarian Sir Nicholas Winton – who saved the lives of hundreds of children by arranging their evacuation from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia through the Kindertransport – was my constituent in Maidenhead... He said, “Never forget that compromise is not a dirty word. *Life depends on ‘compromise.*’ He was right.

Second, she mentions other parties who share responsibility for the failure to achieve Brexit. In Extract 10 May says that she has done everything she can to deliver Brexit, which means that she has tried her best, but she still failed. This sentence implies that this failure was out of her control, with other objective factors, “those on all sides”, also contributing to it. The modal operator “willing” also indicates this shared responsibility. Moreover, the stressed words “only” and “all” demonstrate that Brexit can only be realized when all sides are willing to compromise, which implies that she feels she should not bear all the blame. Meanwhile, the repeated use of and emphasis on the word “compromise” underscores its significance within the context of the discourse.

- Extract 11

It *will* be for my ‘successor to seek a way forward that honors the result of the referendum. To succeed, he or she *will have to* find consensus in Parliament where I have not.

- Extract 12

I know that the Conservative Party *can* renew itself in the years ahead, that we ‘can deliver Brexit and ‘serve the British people with policies inspired by our values. ‘Security, ‘freedom, and ‘opportunity. Those values have guided me ‘throughout my career.

Last but not least, the speech reveals May’s attempts to make compensation. Although she did not deliver Brexit, the British government still hopes to leave the European Union. In this address, May admits her failure, gives explanations, and also points out the future solution of this issue, namely the efforts of her successor and the Conservative Party. In Extract 11, she makes this request of her successor, represented by the high-value modal operator “will have to”, which implies a significant obligation. Her expectation for the Conservative Party is presented by the modal verbal “can” in Extract 12. The repetition of “can” also shows her optimism about Brexit in the long term. Although she has resigned, May passes the responsibility for Brexit to her successor and

the Party, which suggests compensation for the public. All of those strategies help to minimize the passive impression of failure in Brexit, and represent attempts to repair her public image.

4.2.3 Frames related to national unity

Before May became the Prime Minister, the British people were divided when it came to Brexit. There was significant controversy related to the Brexit negotiations, the referendum and opposition to the government's plans to leave the EU, which were detrimental to national unity and the union between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Thus, in both speeches, frames related to national unity place great emphasis on the importance of the union.

- Extract 13

David Cameron has led a *'one-nation government*, and it is in *'that spirit that I also 'plan to lead. Because not everybody knows this, but the *'full title of my 'party is the *'Conservative and 'Unionist Party, and that word "unionist" is very 'important to me. It means we believe in the *'Union: the 'precious, 'precious bond between 'England, 'Scotland, 'Wales, and 'Northern Ireland. But it means something else that is just as important; it means we believe in a *union 'not just between the nations of the United Kingdom, but between 'all of our citizens, 'every 'one of us, whoever we are and 'wherever we are from.*****

National unity has been a historically problematic issue for Britain, particularly after the Brexit vote when different opinions aggravated social tension. As the new government leader, it was urgent for May to address this problem. As shown in Extract 13, in her inaugural speech May mentions the word "unionist" and "union" four times in total. Repetition is a common rhetorical device used to underscore key concepts and ideas, making them more memorable and emotionally resonant. In this example, the concept of "union" is central to the message May is conveying, and the repeated use of these terms emphasizes their importance.

May approaches the issue of national unity via David Cameron's legacy, and the stressed word "one-nation" expresses her vision directly. For May, the word "union" has two connotations, for nations and for every citizen. The repetition of "precious" and the stresses on "England", "Scotland", "Wales", and "Northern Ireland" underline the importance of the unity between nations. The stressed words "not", "all", and "every" foreground the importance of unity between citizens. When framing this issue, May slows down her speed, making every key word prominent. May smiles slightly when she says "that word 'unionist' is very important to me" (Figure 4), and combines this with a long eye contact, a move of resonating with the audience and achieving interaction.

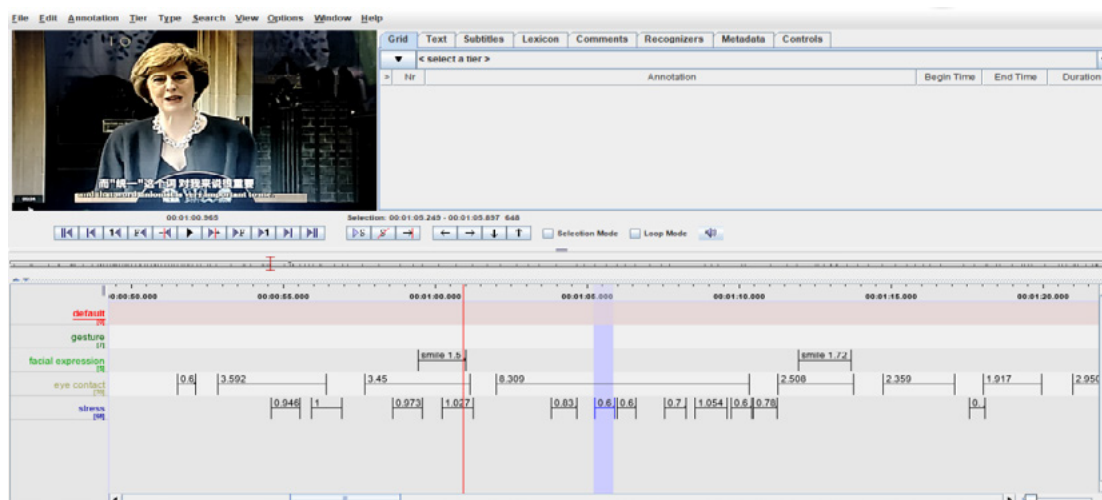


Figure 4. Theresa May smiling at the audience in the inaugural speech.

- Extract 14

Because this country is a *union*. *Not* just a family of four nations. But a *union* of *people* – all of us. Whatever our background, the color of our skin, or who we love. We stand together. And *together* we have a *great future*. Our politics may be under strain, but there is *so much* that is good about this country, *so much* to be proud of, *so much* to be optimistic about... I do so with *no ill-will*, but with *enormous* and *enduring* gratitude to have had the opportunity to *serve the country I love*.

In the resignation speech, special attention is also given to national unity at the end. In Extract 14 May mentions the word “union” twice. For her, the word “union” always has two connotations, manifested by the stressed words “not” and “people”. Different from the

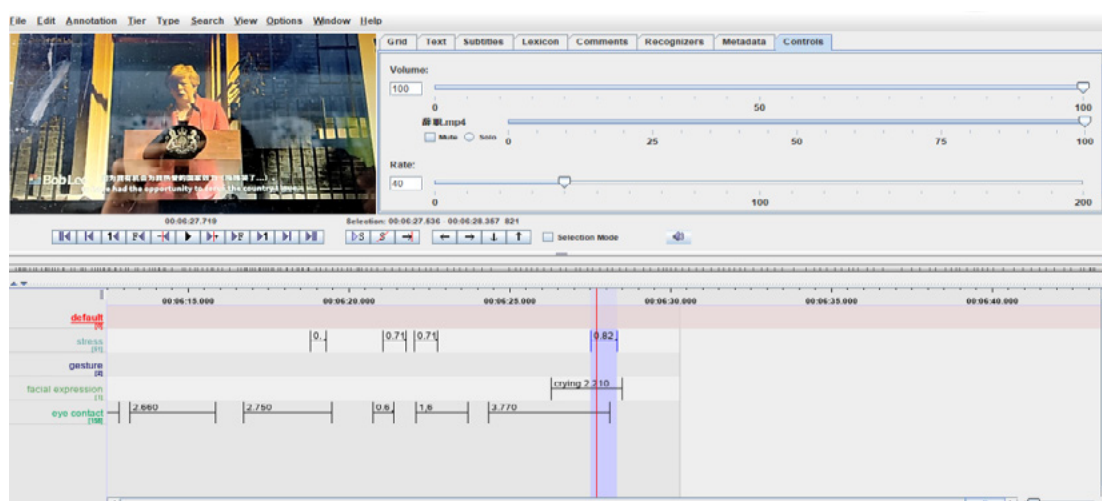


Figure 5. Theresa May breaking down into tears in the resignation speech.

frames in the inaugural speech, in this speech, as well as depicting the precious bond, May also frames a future vision and expresses her feelings. The stressed words “together” and “great” illustrate her outlook. Three years after the inauguration speech progress has been made on this issue, but other problems have appeared, reflected by the statement that “our politics may be under strain”. However, the nation still has great prospects, which is accentuated through the repetition of “so much”. The stressed words “enormous” and “enduring” also reveal her feelings, highlighting May’s gratitude and sincere regard for the country. She breaks down in tears when saying “to serve the country I love” (Figure 5), an emotional expansion at the end of the speech.

4.3 Audience reception

To examine the communicative effects of multimodal framing as well as the use of multimodal resources in the two speeches, we further conducted an audience reception analysis by collecting and analyzing the comments on both speeches left by viewers on YouTube.

The comments on May’s inaugural speech garnered a substantial response, with 1,445 comments containing a total of 11,572 words. These comments span a seven-year period from 2016 to 2023, a long time after her resignation in May 2019. The word frequency list (see Table 5) derived from these online comments revealed that the top five most frequently used adjectives were “good”, “great”, “social”, “same”, and “better”. A closer look at the collocations for these five adjectives shows that the viewers generally hold a positive attitude to Theresa May as the new Prime Minister as framed in her inaugural speech. It is worth mentioning that the phrase “social justice” occurs frequently, indicating a significant topic of this speech. Overall, the data suggests that May’s inaugural speech received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the audience and viewers, clearly achieving its communicative effects.

The comments on her resignation speech were even more extensive, totaling 7,639 comments and 28,172 words. These comments were posted by viewers between 2019 and 2023. Employing the same analytical method, we found that the five most commonly used adjectives in these comments were “best”, “good”, “bad”, “better”, and “great”. After a detailed analysis of the collocations for each adjective, we found that the positive words “good”, “better”, and “best” are usually used in the comments to convey recognition of May’s efforts as Prime Minister, while the negative words “bad” and “sorry” are generally used to express the viewers’ sympathetic attitude towards her stepping down.

It must be noted that although the words “better” and “good” appear in comments for both speeches, their usages are different in the two contexts. While “better” is used to express hope for the future in a general sense in the comments related to the inaugural speech, it is used in a stronger comparative sense in the comments on the resignation speech, to suggest that given the situation, no one could have done better than May. Moreover, the word “good” is still used, indicating that the viewers did not have negative

opinions of May because of her resignation. In contrast, the word “bad” is used to describe the difficult situation of her resignation more often than her failure to deliver Brexit as planned.

Thus, we can safely say that the overall tone of these netizen comments conveys a sense of acknowledgment of May's efforts as Prime Minister, although there was also criticism within the comments. Additionally, words expressing viewers' sympathy for the end of May's term as Prime Minister featured prominently in these comments. Hence, it is evident that the resignation speech successfully elicited the intended emotional response from the public, signifying the effectiveness of the communicative modes employed in this process.

Table 5. The frequency of adjectives in the two speeches.

Ranking	Inaugural Speech	Freq. (‰)	Resignation Speech	Freq. (‰)
1	good	3.3	best	3.6
2	great	2.3	good	2.7
3	social	1.7	bad	1.7
4	same	1.5	better	1.5
5	better	1.0	sorry	1.1

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, a detailed analysis was conducted to demonstrate how Theresa May manipulates multiple modes simultaneously to frame issues and achieve communicative effects. We find that social justice, Brexit, and national unity are prominent issues in both speeches. In terms of social justice, May highlights her commitment to fight against social injustice in her inaugural speech, and the achievements made during her tenure in the resignation speech. Regarding Brexit, she expresses her confidence in Brexit in the first speech, and employs strategies that can minimize the passive impression of failure in the second one. Finally, in terms of national unity, in both speeches May lays great emphasis on its importance. The use of multiple modes frames the issues in a more persuasive way.

The study contributes to the understanding of verbal semiotics by highlighting the dominant role of verbal modes in issue framing in political discourse. Some theories from neuroscience and linguistics, such as Paivio's Dual Coding Theory which explains why visuals are better recognized, have supported the primacy of visual information (Nagel et al., 2012; Schill, 2012). This study demonstrates that strategic use of language plays a primary role in framing. Language functions in two aspects: making sense of human experience, and acting out social relationships (Halliday, 2004). In both speeches, May uses many modal operators and modal adjuncts to construct frames, conveying her ideologies more precisely. Moreover, she applies different strategies while framing the issue of Brexit,

minimizing the negative impact of her failure in this regard. The strategic use of language is conducive to a well-framed issue, which helps the audience to make sense of this issue and disseminates the speaker's ideologies.

This study has found that paralinguistic elements assume different functions in issue framing. To be specific, visual semiotic resources are important in impression formation, while vocal semiotic resources present the current emotion and attitude of the speaker. The advantages of visuals appear to be important in attracting and holding audiences, because the brain can process multiple visual images simultaneously and make judgments accordingly. Thus, when framing issues speakers usually utilize diverse visual materials to interact with the audience, which help to build a good impression and achieve the effects of persuasion. In both of May's speeches, the analysis shows that gesture, facial expression, and eye contact all function well in creating interaction with the audience. As for vocal resources, linguists have suggested that acoustic stress is often used for pragmatic implication, which allows the audience to select the intentional interpretation of the speaker (Cosmides, 1983). We suggest that vocals also have a great effect on emotional expression. May employs many stressed intonations to express her affective state—affirmation, confidence, sadness, helplessness, etc.—which enable the audience to easily and directly sense her emotions. These multiple semiotic resources, with different functions, significantly expand speech effects.

This study has demonstrated that the same issue produces different effects with the application of different frames, which extends the opinion that previous issues can be reinterpreted into new ones through reframing (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Social justice, Brexit, and national unity are three common issues in both of May's speeches. However, because of the use of different frames, the emphasis varies, with commitments versus achievements in the issue of social justice, confidence versus sadness in the issue of Brexit, and future vision and personal feelings added to the issue of national unity, thus shifting the value dimension. Frames are interpretative structures and different perspectives cause different interpretations, generating distinct effects.

In future research, several relevant areas could be further explored. For example, future work could analyze and examine the practical effects of different frames on the audience, i.e., how people react when they are exposed to different frames. Moreover, the focal speeches (as well as other important political speeches) could be further examined and analyzed from other linguistic and multimodal perspectives. For instance, the mood, tenor, and acts in the two speeches could be analyzed and compared. Also, given the relevance and importance of rhetorical analysis, political speeches should be studied using this approach. Political communication is bi-directional, and such interactions can significantly influence the receivers' political conception and awareness. Additional research in this area will improve our understanding of the effects as well as the nature of issue framing in political communication and other contexts alike.

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Conceptualization / *Conceptualización*: Huiyu Zhang and Yuanhong Wei.

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Methodology / *Metodología*: Huiyu Zhang and Yuanhong Wei.

Writing / *Redacción*: Yuanhong Wei and Huiyu Zhang, and revised collaboratively by all authors.

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Learners' Awareness of Hedges and Boosters in Academic Discourse – A Study on Serbian Agriculture Students

Danijela Đorđević ^{1*}, Tijana Vesić Pavlović ² & Zoran Pavlović ³

¹University of Belgrade, Faculty of Agriculture, Cabinet of Foreign Languages, Belgrade, Serbia

²University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Cabinet of Foreign Languages, Belgrade, Serbia

³University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology, Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract: The paper focuses on the extent to which ESP students are able to distinguish the authors' commitment towards a claim on the continuum from uncertainty to certainty in academic writing. Relying on Hyland's extensive research in the field, we seek to explore whether hedges and boosters, being on the very ends of the mentioned continuum, represent items (in)visible to ESP students. Study participants were bachelor's and master's degree students of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade, Serbia (N=91). They filled out the questionnaire, asking them to first assess the author's degree of commitment (certainty, probability, possibility) in 15 sentences modeled on authentic sentences from RAs, and then state the words/expressions in each sentence that led them to make such a choice. The results reveal that students in both groups are better at recognizing certainty markers than those of probability and possibility. Although master's degree students received prior instruction on the concept of hedges and boosters, there are no significant differences between the two groups in terms of achievement. Nevertheless, achievement in both groups is largely affected by the participants' level of proficiency.

Keywords: *Serbian ESP learners, hedges, boosters, certainty/probability/possibility markers, lexical (in)visibility.*

La Conciencia de los Estudiantes sobre los Atenuadores e Intensificadores en el Discurso Académico - Un estudio sobre los Estudiantes de Agricultura

Resumen: El trabajo se centra en la medida en que los estudiantes de inglés con propósitos específicos están capaces de diferenciar la determinación de los autores hacia el continuo desde incertidumbre hasta certidumbre en la escritura académica. Basándose en la extensa investigación de Hyland en el campo, buscamos explorar si los atenuadores e intensificadores, estando en los extremos del continuo mencionado, representan los elementos (in)visibles para estudiantes de inglés con propósitos específicos. Los participantes en el estudio fueron estudiantes de licenciatura y estudiantes de máster de la Facultad de Agricultura, Universidad de Belgrado, Serbia (N=91). Ellos rellenaron el cuestionario, en el que les pedimos que evalúen el nivel de compromiso del autor (certeza, probabilidad, posibilidad) en 15 frases modeladas basándose en frases auténticas del artículo de investigación, y después les pedimos que confirmen las palabras/expresiones en cada frase que les llevaron a tomar esa decisión. Los resultados revelan que los estudiantes en ambos grupos son mejores en reconocer marcadores de certeza que reconocer los marcadores de probabilidad y posibilidad. Aunque los estudiantes de máster recibieron la instrucción previa sobre el concepto sobre los atenuadores e intensificadores, no existe la diferencia significativa entre dos grupos en términos de éxito. No obstante, el éxito de ambos grupos en gran parte fue afectado por el nivel de habilidad de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: *estudiantes serbios de inglés para fines específicos, atenuadores, intensificadores, marcadores de certeza/probabilidad/posibilidad, (in)visibilidad léxica.*

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*Corresponding author: ddj@agrif.bg.ac.rs

1. Introduction

The interest in different features of academic writing has been longstanding and has focused on both the scientific discourse of experienced writers and the production of secondary school and university students writing in their non-native languages. Many features of academic writing have been the focus of different models in the pertinent literature, e.g. metadiscourse and its characteristics, modality, passive voice, tenses, conditional clauses, and academic vocabulary, along with various instructions and conventions required for mastering the skill of writing for academic purposes (e.g., Baratta, 2009; Crosthwaite et al., 2017; Gablasova et al., 2017; Hyland, 1998a, 1998b, 2005a; Vázquez Orta, 2010; Simon-Vandenbergen, 2008).

Bearing in mind the importance of metadiscourse (MD) features in academic writing, a plethora of studies in this field analyzed the use and functions of MD devices, hedges and boosters among them, in ESP student writing (e.g., Crompton, 2012; MacIntyre, 2017; Vesić Pavlović & Dorđević, 2020a). On the other hand, fewer studies explored whether students can recognise MD features in academic texts and the extent to which they were able to do so (e.g., Hyland, 2000; Takimoto, 2015). This is relevant because of the importance of teaching students to correctly interpret the author's intentions when analyzing and using academic sources and to subsequently use hedging and boosting devices adequately in their own academic writing in a foreign language. It is argued that it is frequently difficult for second language learners to understand various authors' methods for making differences between assumptions and facts and to assess the truth value of claims, which is crucial to understanding academic publications (Hyland, 2000, p. 179).

In this paper, inspired by Hyland's study (2000), we aim at analyzing whether Serbian bachelor's and master's degree ESP students are able to recognize the nuances of authors' claims (certainty, probability, possibility) in academic writing, expressed via devices such as hedges and boosters, as well as whether they base their decisions on proper lexical choices. Further, we aim at exploring whether there is a difference in the extent of noticing hedges and boosters, as well as if such factors as previous exposure to the topic of MD use in academic writing and the level of students' proficiency make a difference. Our analysis is conducted in the context of Serbian ESP learner discourse and, as such, may bear additional relevance since very few studies have focused on this linguacultural background.

Research participants were bachelor's and master's degree students of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade, Serbia (N=91), attending university ESP courses. The difference between these two groups was that master's degree students were explicitly instructed during their course on the use of MD markers in the context of academic writing, while bachelor's degree students received no such instruction. Both groups filled out a questionnaire compiled for the purposes of the research (elaborated in detail in Section 4). The results obtained in this way were processed both quantitatively and qualitatively and shown in Section 5, while Section 6 contains concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical and cultural background of the study

Writers can express different degrees of commitment towards the content of their propositions on the continuum from uncertainty to certainty. The notion of hedges is used to “indicate the writer’s decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact” (Hyland, 2005b, p. 178); the traditional examples of hedges would include words such as *possible*, *might* and *perhaps* (ibid). The function of boosters is to “allow writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience” (Hyland, 2005b, p. 179), using, for instance, words such as *clearly*, *obviously* or *demonstrate* (ibid). Through a careful use of these devices, writers decide on the degree of their commitment to the claims (Hyland, 2005b, p. 180). The related notions of certainty, probability and possibility are mentioned within the context of systemic functional linguistics. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), language allows us to convey not just facts, but also our understanding of the likelihood of events or situations, allowing authors to express different shades of meaning and convey their level of confidence in a particular statement. They argue that expressions such as ‘possibly,’ ‘probably,’ and ‘certainly’ indicate different levels of likelihood, implying ‘either yes or no,’ and meaning maybe yes, maybe no, with varying degrees of certainty. In other words, there is nuanced interplay between certainty, probability, and possibility, implying that “in between the certainties of ‘it is’ and ‘it isn’t’ lie the relative probabilities of ‘it must be’, ‘it will be’, ‘it may be’.” (2014, p. 176). Boosters serve as the expression of certainty, while hedges express either possibility or probability. This is of great importance because, when it comes to writing, whether academic or otherwise, these devices may be quite helpful to nuance views and positions.

Since this study is conducted in a specific cultural background, it should be noted that previous research has shown that Serbian authors tend to use fewer hedges compared to their English counterparts in academic writing (Dorđević, 2017a). This distinction can be attributed to several factors rooted in the linguistic and cultural differences between Serbian and English.

In English academic discourse, hedging is commonly used to soften a statement, a practice that differs from Serbian academic discourse where this approach is not as prevalent (Dorđević, 2017a). Several studies point to such a conclusion. In their investigation of the use of epistemic markers in English and Serbian research articles from the fields of psychology, agriculture, and mechanical engineering, Dorđević and Vesić Pavlović (2021) found that markers of high epistemic modality were more frequent in the articles in Serbian compared to those written in English, hence implying that authors of research articles in Serbian were more inclined to strengthen their statements in comparison to the authors writing in English. In addition, while exploring the use of epistemic modality hedges in research articles from the fields of civil engineering, linguistics, agriculture and medicine, Dorđević (2017b) found that English linguistics research articles exhibited the highest frequency of epistemic modality hedges, whereas Serbian agricultural articles showed the lowest frequency of these devices.

Similar findings were observed in the study by Vassileva (2001), who explored the nuances of academic writing in English, Bulgarian, and Bulgarian-English contexts, shedding light on the differences in the use of hedges and boosters across these languages. The findings of this study may be relevant because Bulgarian is another language belonging to the group of Slavic languages, the same as the Serbian language. Vassileva's results indicate that English academic writing often employs hedges to convey cautiousness and detachment, reflecting a preference for objectivity and precision. In contrast, Bulgarian academic writing, along with Bulgarian-English academic writing, tends to use boosters more frequently, emphasizing confidence and assertiveness. The hybrid genre of Bulgarian-English academic writing does not definitely indicate native language transfer, but rather implies deviations from both Bulgarian and English academic writing conventions. These distinctions reflect not only linguistic variances, but also cultural and rhetorical preferences, shaping the way scholars present their ideas and arguments in academic discourse in these languages.

3. Previous research

A plethora of studies have investigated the use of hedges and boosters in academic writing. Holmes (1982) was among the first to focus on the ways of expressing doubt and certainty in English and the difficulties encountered by EFL students when determining the level of the author's certainty expressed in the text. Hyland (1998b) analyzed both boosters and hedges within the academic knowledge mediation context in eight different disciplines belonging to both the sciences and the humanities. The findings showed that hedges outnumbered boosters by almost three to one in all disciplines; additionally, in the group of disciplines Hyland labeled as 'soft', such as philosophy or linguistics, booster and hedge frequencies were much higher than in the fields belonging to the so-called 'hard disciplines', such as physics or engineering. Based on these results, Hyland argues that there are significant disparities in the disciplinary conventions of use of different rhetorical strategies, which may affect the authors' preferred rhetorical devices (Hyland, 1998b, pp. 357–358, 373). The studies by Vázquez and Giner (2008, 2009) further confirmed the existence of differences in hedge and booster use in different knowledge disciplines.

Many studies have pointed out the importance of investigating the language learners' use of MD features, hedges and boosters among them, in their academic writing, as well as working on enhancing learners' proper understanding of the strategies used to communicate authors' intention (e.g., Hyland & Milton, 1997; Ho & Li, 2018; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995; Li & Wharton, 2012; Vesić Pavlović & Đorđević, 2020b). The identified patterns of use of hedges and boosters in students' essays seem to vary depending on a specific study. Some studies determined that, when writing essays, students tended to overuse boosters compared to hedges (e.g., MacIntyre, 2017, on the sample of Japanese university students). On the other hand, in Serbian university students' essays produced during ESP classes, hedges were much more frequent in comparison to boosters (Vesić Pavlović & Đorđević, 2020a).

Research has also shown that the ability to use hedges in writing by non-native speakers may depend on the writers' level of proficiency. Inesa Šeškauskienė's study (2008) on hedges employed in the introduction of graduation papers written by Lithuanian English majors indicated that L2 users who had reached an advanced degree of language competence and been instructed in the use of MD features were able to express themselves clearly and employ the most effective discourse strategies, including hedging to a vast extent. In Hyland and Milton's (1997) research, higher ability non-native students used probability and possibility markers more frequently, whereas less proficient non-native students used a substantially higher percentage of certainty items, implying that more proficient students tended to produce more tentative statements (Hyland & Milton, 1997, p. 195).

Metapragmatic awareness of hedges can be raised in the classroom as well. For instance, Wishnoff's study (2000) has shown that various modes of instruction pertaining to hedges (e.g., discussing the notion of hedges and their use, showing examples of hedges in academic papers, performing tasks related to the identification of hedges) affected the performance of the group of graduate students learning English in that they used more hedges when writing academic texts. Still, it was also found that the effect of instruction in this case again partly depended on the language proficiency of the learners.

There are several studies that bring important insights into the complex problem of awareness of hedges and boosters in academic texts, both when it comes to the EAP students and the authors themselves. The first amongst these was a small-scale study on awareness of intensifiers and hedges conducted with native speakers of English by Low (1996), based on which he formulated his Lexical Invisibility Hypothesis. It states that respondents are not largely aware of intensifiers and even much less of hedges in a text, regarding them as invisible (Low, 1996). Hyland (2000) further tested and confirmed the hypothesis on the sample of L2 English learners.

Participants in Hyland's study were first and final-year BA students, native speakers of Cantonese, and fairly proficient in English. They were first asked to read a short passage on language learning strategies, rife with hedging and boosting devices, and answer questions about the text. After that, they were given a questionnaire that asked them to mark each of the 15 statements from the text regarding the degree of writer's certainty: "completely certain", "fairly sure" or "uncertain". This was followed by a think-aloud protocol where students were supposed to state the words and expressions that helped them make the choice in the task. It was found that students were more aware of boosters than of hedges, as well as that they were more successful in assigning the right degree of author's commitment to the sentences containing certainty items than to those with probability and possibility markers. According to the findings of think-aloud procedures, participants mostly based their choice on lexical words rather than target items, which often led them to make incorrect conclusions (Hyland, 2000, p. 184).

Takimoto (2015) explored the ability of non-English majors from Japan to recognize hedges and boosters in English texts. His participants had a similar task as the one in Hyland's study (2000), namely, to rate each of the 12 statements from the previously

presented passage according to writer's degree of certainty (completely certain, fairly sure, uncertain). The results indicate that participants were able to identify certainty markers, but struggled to understand the pragmatic functions of the possibility and probability items, especially the meanings of and different degrees of tentativeness carried by *could*, *possible(-ly)* and *probable(-ly)* (Takimoto, 2015, p. 95).

Lewin (2005) investigated awareness of hedges through two carefully devised studies; the first asked of authors to identify the expressions used to tone down the statements in their own texts, while the second asked PhD students who attended courses in EAP academic writing to highlight the words, phrases or statements that the authors used to tone down their claims in the same sets of texts. It was shown that authors' awareness of using hedges in their own work was fairly low and that they did not recognize many expressions traditionally considered as hedges in the literature in their own work. Surprisingly, students were the ones who more correctly identified hedges than authors, i.e., "there was more agreement between readers and linguists than between authors and linguists" (Lewin, 2005, p. 170). This study raises important issues such as that, due to a divergence in the author's interpretation of their hedging strategies and the reader's understanding of their intentions, readers may interpret certain claims as more hedged than intended by the author, and at the same time miss some of those that were used by authors to tone down their arguments.

According to the results of previous studies in the field, there are a variety of factors that should be taken into consideration when investigating the ways in which EFL students both employ and identify boosting and hedging devices in academic writing. Students' knowledge of the existence of discursive strategies and of their appropriate use can considerably help their ability to appropriately use or identify these linguistic units, and their level of English command comes next. Also, explicit instructions regarding these linguistic markers should enable their more adequate identification. Having been taught about boosters and hedges in their English language courses, master's degree students should be more knowledgeable of these language devices and, as a consequence, more successful in the tasks of their identification. Cultural and discipline-specific conventions may have an impact on how boosters and hedges are used and recognized, but earlier research showed that boosters were typically easier to identify than hedges, irrespective of explicit instructions.

Hence, bearing all this in mind, we proceed with the following hypotheses:

- H1: Previous input regarding the use and main functions of boosters and hedges should facilitate noticing these markers; hence, master's degree students will be better at identifying boosters and hedges than the bachelor's degree students;
- H2: All students will be able to identify boosters more easily than hedges;
- H3: Students' ability to recognize boosters and hedges will depend on their level of proficiency.

4. Materials and methods

Research background. Research participants were bachelor's and master's degree students of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade, Serbia, all native speakers of Serbian. For master's degree students, the English language is an obligatory course at the university (3 classes per week in the 1st semester) for one semester. Bachelor's students selected the English language course among other offered language courses and they had 4 classes per week for one semester in the 2nd semester of studies. At the beginning of their respective course, both groups of students were asked to take a placement test comprised of 60 multiple-choice questions in order to assess their English proficiency levels (ranging from A1 (the lowest) to C2 (the highest)).

Apart from the level of studies, two groups of participants were different in terms of the received input regarding the use and main functions of MD markers, including hedges and boosters, in academic writing. Namely, master's students were explicitly exposed to the topic of metadiscourse during their ESP course, with a special emphasis on boosters and hedges. Having learned about various MD classifications and functions of MD markers, during their regular university classes, they completed different tasks, such as identifying MD markers in research articles in English, deciding on which MD marker type these belonged to, and, finally, summarizing a part of a chosen research article using the MD markers, especially hedges and boosters. Bachelor's students were not exposed to any explicit lecturing, either on MD markers or hedges and boosters, during the ESP classes they attended at the university.

Sample structure. The sample of master's students included 42 participants in total, with 64.3 % female and 35.7 % male students. The mean age of students in this sample was 25.5 (SD=2.58). According to the placement test, the majority of students were at A2 and B1 levels of English language proficiency (A1–2.4 %, A2–52.4 %, B1–38.1 %, B2–4.8 %, C1–2.4 %). In the bachelor's students' sample (N=49), there were 46.9 % female students and 53.1 % male; their mean age was 19.4 (SD=1.57). The majority of students had level B1 English proficiency, followed by levels A2 and C1 (A1–2 %, A2–26.5 %, B1–46.9 %, B2–4.1 %, C1–20.4 %). The language proficiency levels were significantly different in these two groups of students, $t(89) = 3.09$, $p < .01$, with the bachelor's students having a slightly higher average language proficiency ($M = 3.1$) than the master's students ($M = 2.5$). Although this is quite a small difference, additional efforts were made to control for its statistical effects when comparing the two groups of students.¹

Questionnaire. Respondents were first asked to provide their gender and age. This was followed by an instruction in Serbian, which explained that they were supposed to provide the assessment of the author's commitment to the claim in the given sentences.²

¹ Language proficiency is, nevertheless, one of the most important variables used in the analysis.

² Translation of the instruction: "We would like you to carefully read each of the sentences below and decide whether the authors of each sentence were 'completely certain', 'fairly sure' or 'uncertain' about the claims expressed in each of the sentences. If you cannot decide, you can respond with 'I don't know'."

The respondents were shown 15 sentences³ (in randomized order), each accompanied by four options: 1) *completely certain*, 2) *fairly sure*, 3) *uncertain* and 4) *do not know* and asked to assess how certain the author was in making the claim. The data obtained in this section of the questionnaire were later coded into correct and incorrect answers and processed quantitatively, while additional qualitative analysis was performed on the raw data for each sentence. This part of the questionnaire showed acceptable reliability (raw sentences- $\alpha=.69$, recoded correct/incorrect sentences- $\alpha=.63$; by a statistical rule of thumb, alpha values $>.60$ are considered moderated but acceptable, Pallant, 2001). The validity of this measure proved to be good as well. The mean item-total correlation for all 15 items was .36, and ranging from .55 to .77 for the correlations between the achievement on three subdomains and the overall achievement. All these satisfy the criteria typically set for high validity (Cohen, 1988). In addition, the overall achievement was significantly and moderately related to the language proficiency level, $r=.30$, $p < .001$, further demonstrating the criterion validity of this measure.

Then, the sentences were shown to participants again, one by one, but this time they were asked to state the word(s) or expression(s) from each sentence which helped them decide about the assessment of the author's certainty to the claim in that particular sentence.⁴ The answers were coded as correct or incorrect⁵ and this part of the questionnaire showed high reliability and validity as well. Internal consistency was high ($\alpha=.89$), while the mean item-total correlation was also of a high value, $r_{\text{mean}} = .62$; the significant and moderate correlation with the language proficiency level was registered, $r=.39$, $p < .001$.

Sentence selection. The sentences shown to students were modeled on authentic sentences extracted from research articles published in two eminent, field-relevant journals: *Crop Protection* and *Field Crops Research*. In modeling the sentences, special attention was paid to the fact that they should comprise both familiar technical vocabulary, as well as the targeted markers (hedges and boosters) (Table 1). As such, this procedure was an initial step in securing the face validity of the applied measures used in the questionnaire.

Table 1. The list of target items featured in the sentences in the questionnaire.

	Target items in the questionnaire
Hedges	suggest that; it seems that; it appeared that; may consider; may examine; might extend; potential; possible, may affect; probably, it has been assumed that; it is thought that; presumably; potential
Boosters	showed; demonstrate; clearly; obviously

³ See Appendix 1 (target items in sentences are underlined).

⁴ Translation of the instruction: "Now we would like you to state the word(s) from every sentence which helped you decide earlier how certain the writer was in making these statements."

⁵ In the sentences which contained several possible indicators of the author's degree of commitment, it was sufficient to state one of the correct answers.

Further, target items in sentences were selected so that they expressed different degrees of author's commitment, namely, certainty (expressed by boosters) and probability and possibility (expressed by hedges). Table 2 shows the numbers of sentences in which each of the markers from three categories were featured (see Appendix 1 for sentences' wording).

Table 2. The presence of certainty, probability and possibility markers in individual sentences in the questionnaire.

	Sentence number
Certainty	2, 4, 7, 11
Probability	3, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14
Possibility	1, 6, 8, 9, 15

Research course. Participation in research was voluntary and anonymous, in exchange for course credits. Respondents filled in the questionnaire online, via Google forms, during their regular ESP class⁶—master's degree students at the end of the first semester of academic year 2021/22, bachelor's degree students at the end of the second semester of the same academic year. An equal amount of time, specifically 45 minutes, was allotted to both the master's and bachelor's degree student groups for completing the questionnaire. This careful allocation of time was designed to create a level playing field for all participants, ensuring that the data collected from both groups were comparable and reliable.

Data analysis. Several standard statistical tests were used in the quantitative analysis, in accordance with the types of variables (numerical or categorical) and the number of groups compared. Pearson's coefficients of correlation (r) were utilized to analyze the patterns of covariation between two numerical variables. The significance of differences in the mean values in the numerical variables between two groups was analyzed by means of an independent t -test, and the significance of mean differences in the numerical values between more than two groups of students by means of a one-way (in case of one independent variable) and two-way (in case of two independent variables) analysis of variance (ANOVA). A paired sample t -test was used to test the differences in the means of the same group of respondents on two different numeric variables. The significance of differences in the frequency distribution of categorical variables was analyzed by a chi-square test and Cramer's V coefficient.

⁶ Since the first author of the study also served as the instructor for both the master's and bachelor's degree student groups, to mitigate any potential researcher expectancy effects, several measures were implemented: detailed and standardized instructions were provided to both groups, ensuring consistency in the information given to participants; the data analysis was conducted using predefined protocols to reduce the potential for subjective interpretation of results; the study underwent rigorous peer review within our research team, and their external perspectives helped in identifying and addressing any potential biases or expectancy effects that might have been overlooked.

5. Results

The results will be presented in several subsections. First, we focus on the results of the quantitative analysis of the data obtained via the questionnaire; we present (1) differences in the achievement of master's versus bachelor's degree students' subsamples, (2) differences in the achievement in the sentences containing boosters versus those containing hedges, and (3) the relationship of achievement with students' language proficiency. After that, we briefly report on the results of the qualitative analysis of the students' incorrect answers in the items requiring them to select the proper indicator of the author's commitment.

5.1 Assessment of the degree of author's commitment — Master's versus Bachelor's degree students

Table 3 shows a summary overview of students' assessment of the degree of the author's commitment in 15 sentences, with the percentage of correct answers given in bold. Several pieces of information are deemed relevant here.

Table 3. Assessment of the degree of the author's commitment in both samples (in %).

Sent. No.	Certainty		Probability		Possibility		DK	
	Master	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor
1	21.4	32.7	66.7	55.1	0	10.2	11.9	2
2	81	77.6	9.5	10.2	7.1	10.2	2.4	2
3	11.9	28.6	50	55.1	33.3	16.3	4.8	0
4	71.4	77.6	16.7	16.3	9.5	4.1	2.4	2
5	26.2	18.4	47.6	49	14.3	28.6	11.9	4.1
6	4.8	20.4	28.6	32.7	52.4	46.9	14.3	0
7	69	81.6	4.8	8.2	16.7	10.2	9.5	0
8	16.7	36.7	54.8	51	19	12.2	9.5	0
9	2.4	18.4	23.8	28.6	61.9	51	11.9	2
10	2.4	6.1	54.8	53.1	40.5	38.8	2.4	2
11	69	59.2	16.7	16.3	9.5	24.5	4.8	0
12	4.8	14.3	71.4	49	14.3	32.7	9.5	4.1
13	7.1	22.4	61.9	59.2	16.7	16.3	14.3	2
14	11.9	12.2	42.9	46.9	35.7	38.8	9.5	2
15	54.8	53.1	19	10.2	19	36.7	7.1	0

Overall, in all but two sentences, the absolute or relative majority⁷ of master's degree students provided the correct answer. Master's degree students were by far the most successful in assessing the author's commitment in Sentences 2 (81 % of correct answers), 4 (71 %), 7 (69 %), 11 (69 %) (all containing boosters), and 12 (71 %, containing hedges). In total, in eleven out of thirteen correctly answered sentences, the absolute majority (>50 %)

⁷ The term *absolute* majority denotes more than one half of the respective group of students (>50 %). The term *relative* majority describes the situation when one type of answer is in the majority, i.e. the most frequent, but still below the 50 % of the total group.

of master's degree students provided a correct answer; in two cases, namely, in Sentences 5 and 14, the correct answer was given by a relative majority of students (48 % and 43 %, respectively). On the other hand, none of the participants in this group provided a correct answer regarding the degree of the author's certainty in Sentence 1, which contained a hedge expressing possibility; a very low percentage (19 %) managed to give a correct answer in Sentence 15, which also contained a possibility marker.

Similarly, either the absolute or relative majority of bachelor's degree students managed to provide a correct answer in all but two sentences. They managed to infer the author's degree of commitment more accurately in Sentences 2 (78 %), 4 (78 %) and 7 (82 %), which contained certainty items. In the remainder of the correctly answered sentences, the success rate was between a relative majority of 47 % (sentence 6) and an absolute majority of 59 % (sentence 11). Similar to the master's degree students' sample, the lowest percentage of correct answers was given for Sentence 1 expressing the notion of possibility, with only 10.2 % of students correctly inferring the degree of the author's commitment, as well as Sentence 15, where 36.7 % provided a correct answer.

Yet, the similarity in response patterns in two students' subsamples does not reveal much regarding the possible differences in their mean achievement. In order to test it, we summarized the presented data a bit differently. Taking into account the achievement on this set of questions (assessing the degree of author's commitment) as a whole, students could score from 0 to 15 correct answers. Master's degree students had an average achievement of 7.7 correct answers and bachelor's degree students an almost identical achievement (7.6). This difference in the mean achievement of the two student subsamples was not statistically significant ($t(89)=-.11, p=.91$). These findings suggest that previous explicit exposure during university classes to the topic of the role of hedges and boosters in RAs did not significantly affect students' success in recognizing the correct degree of the author's commitment. This piece of evidence does not support our first expectation (H1). Master's degree students were not more successful at this task.

5.2 Students' achievement in the sentences containing boosters vs. the sentences containing hedges

As already mentioned, the achievement in both subsamples was different in regard to the sentences containing boosters, i.e., certainty markers (more correct answers provided in both samples) versus hedges, i.e., probability and possibility markers (lower achievement). Here, we test these differences more systematically.

Table 4 shows the mean achievement for the groups of sentences containing three types of markers, in two groups of students, and the sample as a whole. The achievement was calculated as a score ranging from 0 (minimum achievement) to 1 (maximum achievement).⁸ It can be noticed that students of both levels of study had the best

⁸ Bearing in mind that an unequal number of sentences belonged to each category (certainty-4, probability-6, possibility-5), the achievement score was corrected for a different number of tasks per group and rescaled, i.e., expressed on a scale from 0 to 1.

achievement when assessing the degree of the author's commitment in the sentences containing the markers that belong to the category of certainty, followed by those with probability markers. Students in both subsamples found it most difficult to detect the degree of the author's commitment when a possibility marker was present, thus corroborating the findings of Takimoto (2015).

Table 4. Average achievement in the sentences containing three types of markers.

	Master's students	Bachelor's students	The whole sample
Certainty	0.73	0.74	0.73
Probability	0.55	0.52	0.53
Possibility	0.30	0.31	0.31

In order to compare the significance of differences in the mean levels of achievement in three types of sentences, a paired-sample test was performed in bachelor's and master's subsamples separately. Put differently, we compared all pairs of mean achievements – certainty vs. probability, certainty vs. possibility and probability vs. possibility – on two students' subsamples. All pairs of comparisons were statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Bachelor's degree students had a significantly better achievement in assessing the degree of commitment in the sentences with certainty markers than in those with probability markers, $t(48) = 5.45$, $p < .01$, or those with possibility markers, $t(48) = 8.27$, $p < .01$, as well as in the sentences containing probability markers compared to those containing possibility markers, $t(48) = 4.52$, $p < .01$. In other words, bachelor's students had the best achievement at certainty sentences and the worst at possibility sentences, with probability sentences somewhere 'in between'.

The same applies to the achievement of master's students. They were much more successful in marking correctly the sentences containing certainty markers than those containing probability items, $t(41) = 3.67$, $p < .01$, or possibility items, $t(41) = 8.25$, $p < .01$, as well as the sentences with probability markers compared to those with possibility markers, $t(41) = 6.23$, $p < .01$. As in the case of bachelor's students, the level of achievement was dependent on the types of markers used in sentences – moving from certainty towards probability and possibility implied moving from the best to the worst achievement.

Paired-sampled comparisons on the sample as a whole showed the same results: students were more successful with certainty markers in comparison to both probability, $t(90) = 6.45$, $p < .01$, and possibility markers, $t(90) = 11.71$, $p < .01$. Similarly, achievement was higher in the sentences with probability as compared to the sentences with possibility markers, $t(90) = 7.35$, $p < .01$. This is in line with the findings of both Hyland's (2000) and Takimoto's studies (2015), which showed that boosters were significantly more "visible" than hedges. This finding, also, supports our second expectation (H2).

Our data offer additional insight into the nature of these differences. In the second part of the questionnaire, students were asked to state the words and expressions in each sentence, which helped them decide about the degree of the author's commitment. As mentioned previously, each answer was coded as correct or incorrect in this sense. The percentages of correct and incorrect answers in both subsamples are given in Table 5.

Overall, master's students performed well – in absolute or relative majority, they provided correct answers in 12 out of 15 sentences in total. The percentage of correct answers ranges from 71.4 % (Sentences 1 and 10) to 7.1 %. It is evident that Sentence 15, where students were supposed to recognize the hedge *potential*, was the most difficult one, since only 7.1 % of participants managed to select the word which was supposed to indicate the proper degree of commitment in the sentence. Still, in only three sentences (2, 12 and 15) the percentage of master's students who gave a wrong answer (i.e., an incorrect indicator) was higher than the percentage of those who chose the correct indicator.

Table 5. Selection of commitment indicators – correct and incorrect answers (in %).

Sent. No.	Master's students		Bachelor's students	
	Correct indicator	Incorrect indicator	Correct indicator	Incorrect indicator
1	71.4	28.6	79.6	20.5
2	35.7	64.3	42.9	57.1
3	66.7	33.3	61.2	38.8
4	52.4	47.6	59.2	40.8
5	61.9	38.1	73.5	26.5
6	64.3	35.7	65.3	34.7
7	61.9	38.1	67.3	32.7
8	69	31	69.4	30.6
9	54.8	45.2	55.1	44.9
10	71.4	28.6	81.6	18.4
11	69	31	67.3	32.7
12	45.2	54.8	61.2	38.8
13	50	50	46.9	53.1
14	69	31	81.6	18.4
15	7.1	92.9	26.5	73.5

As for the bachelor's students, in this part of the task, the range of correct answers is from 81.6 % (the highest, in Sentences 10 and 14) to 26.5 % (the lowest), referring to the percentage of correct answers in Sentence 15, the same sentence which master's degree students also found most difficult to select the proper word in (although, compared to master's degree students, a much higher percentage of bachelor's degree students managed to provide a correct answer). Similarly to master's degree students, the absolute or relative majority of bachelor's degree students managed to provide a correct indicator

of commitment in 12 out of 15 sentences. The only three sentences where the majority of bachelor's students provided a wrong answer were sentences 2 (57 % of incorrect indicators), 13 (53 %) and 15 (73.5 %).

When we observe students' achievement on this set of questions as a whole, the range of possible correct answers in selecting the word which helped them make the assessment is again 0 to 15. Expressed that way, bachelor's students scored an average of 9.4 correct answers, while master's students' score was somewhat lower, 8.5. Still, the difference in the achievement of the students from the two groups is not statistically significant ($t(89)=.96$, $p=.34$). Thus, once again, these findings do not support our expectations regarding the 'positive' role of explicit instructions which should have resulted in better achievement of master's students. But, at the same time, the lack of significant differences in light of the previously shown exact patterns of achievement depending on the type of markers in the sentences supports the expectations that all students should be better in identifying boosters than hedges.

In order to additionally validate the (in)significance of explicit instructions during classes, we analyzed students' achievement in correctly identifying the degree of commitment in regard to accuracy when selecting the words and expressions which were the indicators of such commitment. In other words, we compared high and low achievers on each sentence by their accuracy in recognizing the adequate markers. For the sake of easier data inspection, Table 6 presents the percentages of those who correctly identified

Table 6. Accuracy in selecting the correct indicator of commitment in the group of students who marked the commitment statements correctly.

Sent. No.	Bachelor's students	Master's students
1	80 %	0 %
2	45 %	41 %
3	78 %*	76 %
4	66 %*	63 %
5	75 %	65 %
6	78 %	82 %*
7	78 %*	79 %*
8	67 %	75 %
9	56 %	69 %*
10	89 %	83 %
11	83 %*	79 %*
12	67 %	50 %
13	45 %	65 %*
14	87 %	89 %*
15	22 %	13 %
Average	68 %	62 %

Note: The * implies that in these cases the finding is significant at least at the $p<.05$ level.

the degree of commitment in specific sentences and managed to correctly identify the specific markers. Hence, for example, 80 % of bachelor's degree students who correctly assessed the degree of the author's commitment in Sentence 1 correctly identified the specific marker in that sentence that informed their decision. The same goes for the 45 % of those who correctly assessed the degree of author's commitment in Sentence 2 and correctly identified the specific marker. None of the master's degree students who correctly assessed the degree of the author's commitment in Sentence 1 correctly identified the specific marker etc.

In both samples, in the majority of sentences, there were no significant differences in the marker identification accuracy between low and high achievers.⁹ There were some sentences where the students who had given the correct answer as to the degree of author's commitment significantly more often managed to select the correct commitment indicator (marked with an * in Table 6). This relates to four sentences in bachelor's degree students' sample (Sentences 3, 4, 7 and 11) and six sentences in master's degree students' sample (sentences 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 14). Still, even in these cases the relationship was relatively weak. In other words, successfulness in selecting the proper word indicating the degree of author's commitment did not depend on whether students had been able to correctly infer the degree of commitment in that particular sentence in the first part of the task. Also, it seems that the pattern is quite similar in two student subsamples, further possibly demonstrating the lack of significant 'effect' of instruction that master's degree students had experienced. The average level of 'successfulness' in two subsamples is quite similar as well (68 % versus 62 %, respectively).

5.3 Assessment of the degree of the author's commitment – the role of language proficiency

Bearing in mind the results of previous studies which showed that students' English proficiency may play an important role in the ability to recognize and use hedging and boosting devices, we explore the relationship between the students' level of proficiency and their successfulness in marking the commitment statements and providing the words serving as commitment indicators. In the group of bachelor's degree students, the correlation analysis indicates that those who have a higher level of knowledge of the English language had a better achievement in marking correctly the author's degree of commitment and *vice versa* ($r=.45$, $p<.01$). The correlation between the level of knowledge of English and successfulness in selecting the right words, i.e., marker identification accuracy, is also significant and positive; i.e., in the group of bachelor's degree participants, higher levels of knowledge are accompanied by a better achievement on this set of questions ($r=.46$, $p<.01$). Hence, overall, at the bachelor's degree student's level, being more proficient in English is related to better achievement in both types of tasks.

⁹ The percentages of low achievers who correctly identified markers are not shown in Table 6; the chi-square test was used for comparisons.

In the group of master's degree students, the relationship between the level of knowledge and achievement in marking the commitment correctly is not statistically significant ($r=.15$, $p=.36$), but the achievement in selecting the proper indicator of commitment is significantly and positively related to the level of knowledge ($r=.33$, $p<.05$). This implies that master's degree students who have a higher level of knowledge of English were more successful in one task only, i.e., in selecting the right commitment indicators.

As a matter of fact, language proficiency proved to be far more important for achievement than the level of study. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), with the level of study and language proficiency (recoded into three levels: A, B, and C) as factors and the achievement in marking correctly the author's degree of commitment as a dependent variable, showed that there was no significant main effect of the level of study ($F[1,85]=.15$, $p=.69$) and their interaction term ($F[2,85]=.25$, $p=.77$); language proficiency's main effects were marginally significant ($F[2,85]=2.71$, $p<.07$). As shown in Figure 1, there were prominent differences in the mean achievement level between the students with different language proficiency both among the bachelor's and master's degree students. On the other hand, the differences between these two groups of students at the same level of language proficiency skills were almost absent.¹⁰

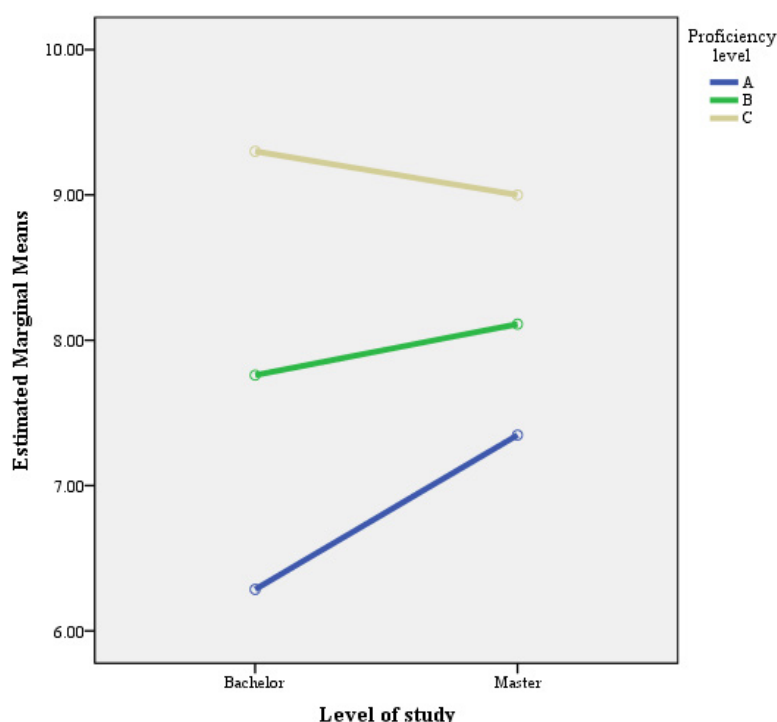


Figure 1. Mean achievement in assessing correctly the author's degree of commitment by the level of study and language proficiency.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the differences between three proficiency levels among bachelor's students were more prominent than among master's students; this could indicate that explicit instruction received on the notion and role of hedging and boosting devices in the group of master's degree students makes language proficiency less relevant, i.e., that instructions do make a difference, but these trends are only illustrative.

Similar results were obtained in the two-way ANOVA with the level of study and language proficiency as factors and the achievement in selecting the proper indicator of commitment, i.e., marker identification accuracy, as dependent variables (Figure 2). Once again, the only significant effect was the main effect of language proficiency ($F[2,85] = 7.25, p < .01$), while its effects among students at the two levels of study were even more prominent. Among both the bachelor's and master's degree students, those with higher language proficiency were far more successful in marker identification accuracy tasks than those with lower proficiency levels. Likewise, the differences between bachelor's and master's degree students at the same level of language proficiency were not registered, implying that the level of achievement was far more affected by the level of language proficiency than the level of study.

All said, the presented data strongly support the expectations regarding the relevance of language proficiency in students' achievement in the given tasks (H3).

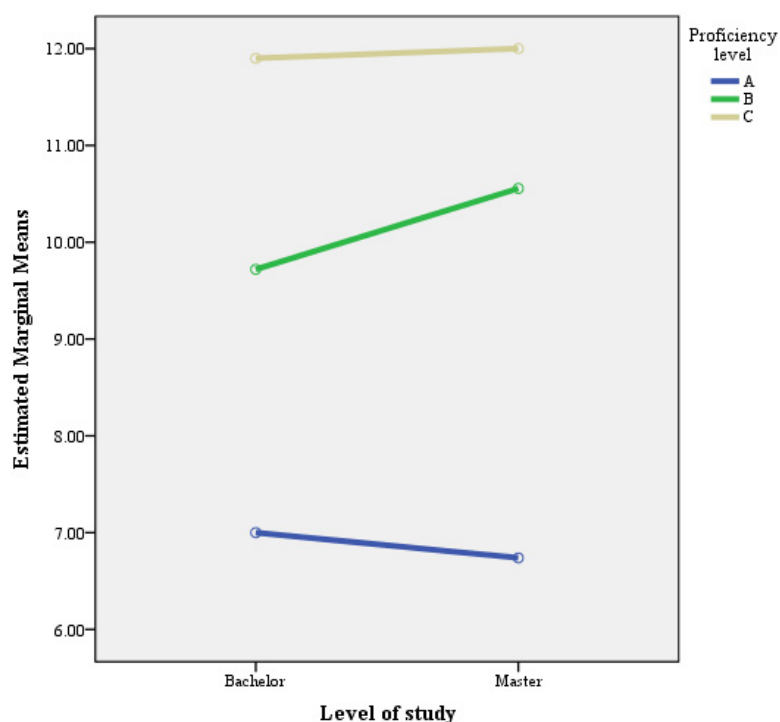


Figure 2. Mean achievement in selecting the proper indicator of commitment by the level of study and language proficiency.

5.4 Qualitative analysis of incorrect answers in the task of selection of the proper commitment indicator

In this final part of the results section, we briefly focus on the qualitative analysis of the incorrect answers of study participants of both levels of study in the items where they were asked to state the indicator of author's commitment in the particular sentences. Table 5 shown above indicates that successfulness of participants in identifying the word(s) which reflected the degree of the author's commitment varied depending on the sentence.

In Hyland's study (2000, p. 184), it was shown that participants mostly based their decisions about the level of the author's commitment on the propositional elements of the sentence instead of relying on target items. Based on our analysis of incorrect answers, the same can be said for this study. Both master's and bachelor's degree students who failed to identify true commitment markers typically opted for some lexical words or more often the whole structures which are the proposition content holders. There are also some illustrative patterns revealed in the data via qualitative analysis.

First of all, in almost every sentence, participants thought the lexical words specifically related to agriculture were commitment indicators, such as *predatory arthropods*, *cotton canopies*, *predators* (Sent. 1), *pests* (Sents. 3, 9), *yield*, *small-holder farms* (Sent. 6), *canopy* (Sent. 7), *oilseed rape and cereals*, *lipid rich seed* (Sent. 8), *vermicompost extract* (Sent. 9), *ZT seeding* (Sent. 10), *compost* (Sent. 11), *crop residue* (Sent. 12), *weevil*, *beneficial populations*, *malathion*, *species* (Sent. 13), *coffee leafminer* (Sent. 14), *pesticides* (Sent. 15). They also (incorrectly) stated different lexical verbs, such as *to suppress* (Sents. 1, 13), *to result in* (Sent. 5), *to include* (Sent. 7), *to use* (Sent. 7), or *to assess* (Sent. 15). They also stated nouns such as *variety* (Sents. 2, 5), *plants*, *experimental cages* (Sent. 3), *amount* (Sent. 5), *difference* (Sent. 8), *eradication* (Sent. 13), as well as some specific nouns which belong to scientific vocabulary, e.g. *these studies* (Sent. 4), *assessment* (Sent. 6), *these results* (Sent. 9), *current study* (Sent. 11), *inputs* (Sent. 12), *these factors* (Sent. 14), *our research* (Sent. 15). Finally, in some cases, students also stated adverbs and adjectives, e.g., *significant* (Sent. 2), *significantly* (Sents. 3, 4, 10), *large-scale* (Sent. 4), *only (six papers)* (Sent. 7). These findings indicate that a large number of participants failed to identify the wanted markers and understand their pragmatic roles due to misunderstanding or they did not understand these words' meanings properly and their respective functions in the context. In line with Hyland (2000), both bachelor's and master's degree students did not manage to identify verb *to suggest* as a hedge, which is somewhat contrary to the findings of Vesić Pavlović and Đorđević (2020a) where students employed more hedges than boosters when writing essays in English. All this could imply that students might benefit from clearer guidance and instructions in differentiating two sorts of markers or special focus on hedges, as typically proved harder to grasp.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Relying on previous research in the field, the aim of our study was to explore the extent to which ESP students were able to distinguish the authors' commitment towards a claim on the continuum from uncertainty to certainty in the examples of academic writing. The sample of study participants included two groups of students of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade, studying at the bachelor's and master's degree levels, who differed with regard to their previous exposure to the concept of the use of MD markers during their university courses of English. Students filled in the questionnaire designed for the purposes of the study, in which they first assessed the author's degree of commitment on the continuum comprising certainty, probability and possibility in 15 sentences, and then stated the words/expressions in each sentence that served as an indicator of such a level of the author's commitment.

Study results point to three important findings. First of all, the findings indicate that previous input during ESP classes regarding the use of MD markers did not significantly affect students' success in recognizing the correct degree of the author's commitment or their achievement in correctly selecting the words which were supposed to indicate such commitment, contrary to our first hypothesis. Second of all, as expected in H2, students of both levels of studies had most success when assessing the degree of the author's commitment in the sentences expressing certainty, i.e., those with boosters, and the least success with those sentences that expressed possibility. Finally, the factor which did affect achievement was the student's level of language proficiency, in the bachelor's students' sample both in selecting the proper degree of commitment and selecting the words serving as its indicators, and in the master's students, it affected the success in selecting the right words, supporting our third hypothesis.

This study corroborated the findings of previous studies conducted by Low (1996), Hyland (2000) and Takimoto (2015) that learners of English are better at noticing boosters than hedges in academic writing. Likewise, there is no doubt about the crucial importance of language proficiency in managing these rhetorical devices. The findings of this survey unequivocally support it. With that in mind, we can hypothesize that a higher level of understanding the pragmatic role of boosters and hedges, and consequently, higher successfulness in being able to recognize them in academic writing, may come from a sort of 'unfocused' efforts in promoting language proficiency *per se* or in general. It seems that explicit instructions, at best, can ameliorate the proficiency 'effects', as visible by indicative (though non-significant) trends in greater differences between students with different language proficiency at the bachelor's level. Still, it cannot compensate for the lack of language proficiency. Above all, the relevance of language proficiency might be an important methodological issue since, as already stated, it can affect not just the successfulness of assessing the boosters and hedges but the nature of the language task a student with, say, poor language skills is presented with.

Another factor that should be taken into account when interpreting the results is the factor of a specific culture, i.e. the fact that students' ability to detect boosters more easily than hedges may be attributed to cultural differences, and native language transfer. In Serbian culture, directness and clarity are highly valued, possibly leading students to instinctively recognize and grasp language elements that convey certainty or emphasis, such as boosters. Additionally, native language may play a role in this, as students tend to identify patterns and structures in their native language and apply them when learning a new language. If their mother tongue has similarities with the target language in terms of the boosting elements, students will be more likely to detect and comprehend boosters with ease. Conversely, the subtleties of hedges, which involve cautious language and uncertainty markers, might be more challenging for students to grasp, especially if these features are less prevalent or distinct in their native language as is the case in Serbian. Understanding these cultural and linguistic factors can enhance language teaching strategies, allowing teachers to tailor their approach and support students in mastering both boosters and hedges effectively.

All said, this study bears relevance since it shows the extent to which Serbian agriculture bachelor's and master's degree students are aware of boosters and hedges used in sentences extracted from RAs, as well as of their pragmatic functions within academic contexts. These findings add to the overall picture related to non-native English students' awareness of and ability to identify boosters and hedges in academic writing, implying their importance in both instruction and practical usage within academic writing. The limitation of the study is a relatively small sample of students of one faculty only. Thus, studies of this kind could be broadened to include students of other and diverse disciplines and larger groups of students. Further, the study should be conducted on more balanced samples in terms of language proficiency, as well as on a larger sample of sentences. Similarly, combining different methods (e.g. studies with a mixed method design) and using different sources of materials in a single study (e.g. a quantitative survey, knowledge-based tests, freely produced essays) could only help improve our understanding of this phenomenon. It would also be beneficial to address one inherent issue by analyzing understanding and use of MD markers in those learners who have generally low language proficiency and, possibly, by formulating more sensitive test materials, which would help overcome the effect of low proficiency effects.

As for the study material, students were supposed to infer the degree of the author's commitment in isolated sentences, while it might have been helpful to include the broader context of the whole text in which they were originally found. Future studies should address these issues as well. Finally, although such an assumption seems fully justified, it must be stated that the differences in the level of study were treated as a difference in explicit instructions on the use of MD markers since master's degree students did receive instructions regarding MD markers and bachelor's degree students did not. Still, we must not lose sight of another 'fact' – being in a position to be instructed about something does not necessarily imply being truly instructed. In other words, we know that master's degree students were taught about the concept and use of MD markers, but it was not checked

what they had actually learned with this respect. Hence, future research could address this issue by taking into account the differences in the level of acquisition of the curriculum, by, for example, analyzing the relevance of the grades obtained in the English language course at the faculty. These would, of course, include only master's degree students, but it would further test the conclusions made in this study.

Since students had more difficulty recognizing hedges compared to boosters, it is necessary to design specific instructional activities that focus on teaching students about hedges. Teachers can create exercises and examples that highlight various forms of hedges used in academic writing, such as modal verbs, tentative language, or qualifiers. In addition, explicit teaching strategies that directly address the identification of hedges in texts should be implemented. This could involve providing clear definitions, offering diverse examples, and engaging students in interactive activities where they practice identifying hedges in real-world texts.

Furthermore, students should be instructed to understand how the use of these linguistic markers can influence the overall tone, credibility, and persuasiveness of a text. Students should be encouraged to question and analyze the author's certainty and to consider the implications of different degrees of certainty on the information presented. By incorporating these pedagogical strategies, teachers can help students develop a nuanced understanding of hedges and boosters, thereby improving their critical reading skills and ability to evaluate the certainty of authors in academic texts.

In conclusion, although these findings suggest that prior instruction and input related to hedging and boosting devices did not have much influence on students' achievement related to identifying these devices in the academic context, we argue that it is important to integrate boosters and hedges when teaching university English courses, especially when it comes to academic writing. This particularly applies to those students who strive to pursue their future careers in an academic environment. Bearing the study results in mind, additional efforts need to be undertaken to better tailor the instruction that students of different levels of proficiency receive or apply different methods in instructing them. We should think of different assignments that could help students master this pragmatic competence along with boosting their level of proficiency. Diverse strategies should be employed when introducing and teaching these devices. In other words, emphasis should be focused on their productive usage apart from their identification in different contexts.

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CRedit Author contribution / Contribución de los autores

Conceptualization / *Conceptualización*: Danijela Đorđević, Tijana Vesić Pavlović.

Formal Analysis / *Análisis formal*: Danijela Đorđević, Tijana Vesić Pavlović.

Methodology / *Metodología*: Zoran Pavlović.

Writing / *Redacción*: Danijela Đorđević, Tijana Vesić Pavlović, Zoran Pavlović.

Research dataset / *Datos de investigación*: Zoran Pavlović, Danijela Đorđević.

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Appendix 1

List of sentences

1. The results suggest that outbreaks of *S. exigua* and other lepidopteran pest outbreaks in cotton are mostly suppressed by the ecology of predatory arthropods in the cotton canopies as opposed to one or a few main predators.
2. Three studies that had substantial yield variations between the N treatments were integrated for analysis, which showed a significant interaction between N levels and variety for yield.
3. Firstly, it seems that all application rates of the aqueous extracts rendered both tomatoes and cucumbers significantly less attractive to all three pest species since all three pests examined in the experimental cages were free to infest the test plants.
4. These studies demonstrate that repeated large-scale applications of malathion ULV within the Texas boll weevil eradication program significantly reduced the seasonal numbers of the majority of predators operating in the cotton plant canopies.
5. It appeared that the small amount of remobilised stem nitrogen which led to the maximum stem N concentration at maturation of any of the varieties at 27.9 kg/ha compared to the lowest at 18.5 kg N/ha for Royal resulted in the low N harvest index of NK Bravour.
6. Assessments of potential influence may consider just economic yield, or they may examine plant characteristics, resource consumption, environmental factors, or socio-economic evaluations, which might extend to forecasts of regional food security and the long-term viability of small-holder farms.
7. A crop model that clearly included the effects of CO₂ on canopy temperature was used in only six papers.
8. The difference between oilseed rape and cereals can be partly explained by the situation that 45 % more assimilate is needed to generate each kilogram of lipid rich seed compared with starch rich wheat or barley seed.
9. These results raise the question of possible methods by which these soil drenches containing vermicompost extract may affect how pests react when absorbed by plants.
10. This was probably due to a significantly lower plant number of ZT seeding than the other methods as reported in 2001.
11. Since there was no yield response to compost in the current study, an essential validation data set for DSSAT modeling was obviously removed.

12. It has been assumed that the additional C in the three FPOOLs is in the proportions of 0.2:0.7:0.1 for crop residue and root inputs.
13. It is thought that beneficial insect populations that suppress the populations of pest species decline as a result of area-wide and repeated applications of malathion ULV during the eradication of the boll weevil.
14. Presumably, these factors had an indirect impact on the abundance of coffee leafminer by lowering the numbers of its natural enemies.
15. Our research did not assess the potential sublethal and long-term non-target impacts of the pesticides.

La traducción pedagógica en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de ELE: análisis de su presencia en los manuales y estudio desde la perspectiva del profesorado

Pilar Valero Fernández ¹ y Clara Ureña Tormo ^{2*}

¹Universitat Heidelberg. Observatory of Spanish in Europe, Heidelberg, Alemania

²Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, España

Resumen: Actualmente estamos inmersos en un proceso de recuperación del uso de la traducción y la L1 en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras (Sánchez Iglesias, 2009; Carreres *et al.*, 2017). En este marco, el presente trabajo aborda la traducción pedagógica (TP) en la adquisición del español como lengua extranjera (ELE) desde dos dimensiones: según el rol que ocupa en los manuales y en función del uso y las creencias del profesorado. Por una parte, se comprueba que las actividades de traducción de los manuales abordan especialmente contenidos gramaticales y léxicos, cuya recurrencia se intensifica en los niveles superiores (B1-B2). Por otra parte, 50 docentes han respondido un cuestionario a partir del cual se desprende que la mayoría utiliza la TP en su práctica docente habitual con dos fines principalmente, como apoyo para economizar el tiempo de las explicaciones y como herramienta para que el alumnado aprenda contenidos variados, los cuales no se limitan al léxico y la gramática, sino que abarcan aspectos fonéticos, pragmáticos y socioculturales, mostrando así diferentes posibilidades de aplicación de la TP.

Palabras clave: *español como lengua extranjera, traducción pedagógica, profesorado de español, manuales, cuestionario.*

Pedagogical translation in the teaching and learning of Spanish as a Foreign Language: an analysis of its presence in textbooks and a study from the teachers' perspective

Abstract: We are currently immersed in a process of renewed recognition of the use of translation and the L1 in the teaching and learning of foreign languages (Sánchez Iglesias, 2009; Carreres *et al.*, 2017). Within this framework, the present study addresses pedagogical translation (PT) in the acquisition of Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) from two perspectives: its role in textbooks and its use and perception among teachers. On the one hand, the analysis shows that translation activities in textbooks focus primarily on grammatical and lexical content, with their frequency increasing at higher proficiency levels (B1-B2). On the other hand, 50 teachers responded to a questionnaire, the results of which indicate that the majority employ PT in their regular teaching practice mainly for two purposes: as a means of saving time in explanations and as a learning tool that enables students to acquire a wide range of content. This content is not limited to lexis and grammar but also includes phonetic, pragmatic, and sociocultural aspects, thereby illustrating the diverse potential applications of pedagogical translation.

Keywords: *Spanish as a foreign language, pedagogical translation, teachers of Spanish language, textbooks, survey.*

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Corresponding author: curetor@upv.es

1. Introducción

El papel de la traducción en la enseñanza de idiomas, a lo largo de los dos últimos siglos, ha ido modificándose según el método didáctico predominante en las aulas de cada momento. De esta forma, se distinguen tres grandes hitos en su cronología. En un primer momento, la traducción gozó de un predominio absoluto durante el desarrollo del Método Gramática-Traducción y su focalización en la comprensión lectora hasta finales del XIX (Gasca Jiménez, 2017). Posteriormente, la traducción, por el contrario, pasó a sufrir una omisión total y rechazo absoluto con la llegada del Método Comunicativo en los años 60 del siglo XX (Cook, 2010). De hecho, Calero Vaquero (2018) expone, como justificación a la consideración peyorativa del uso de la traducción durante el Método Gramática-Traducción, que esta: “ponía el foco de interés en el aprendizaje memorístico de las reglas gramaticales (...) con el objetivo primordial de leer y entender a los autores clásicos, junto a una memorización de listas bilingües de palabras (vocabularios)” (p. 41). Por último, en la actualidad la traducción se encuentra ante una “reconciliación” y presencia real en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, que se aprecia en las propias directrices de las principales obras de referencia como, por ejemplo, el *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia* (MCER, Instituto Cervantes, 2002, 2021) o el *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC, Instituto Cervantes, 2006) (Leonardi, 2010; Niamh y Bruen, 2015). A pesar de las creencias positivas que actualmente se asocian al uso de la traducción, todavía existen posturas contrarias, si bien, al respecto, Barbasán Ortuño *et al.* (2018) afirman que “muchos de los detractores de la traducción lo que verdaderamente rechazan es el método específico de gramática y traducción como base central en el aprendizaje de la lengua” (p. 53).

Por otra parte, Canale y Swain (1980) plantean que, en el aula de lenguas extranjeras, se ha de realizar un trabajo simultáneo de todos los componentes implicados en una lengua, no solo lo propiamente lingüístico, sino también lo cultural o lo pragmático, entre otros, para alcanzar un intercambio comunicativo. A partir de ahí, entendemos, que, en vistas a lograr la competencia comunicativa del alumnado, el profesorado persigue estimular la comunicación natural y fluida de sus estudiantes en situaciones cotidianas y verosímiles.

A partir de estos postulados, este artículo sitúa el foco, por una parte, en la presencia de actividades de traducción en los manuales de español como lengua extranjera (ELE) y, por otra parte, en la perspectiva del profesorado de ELE en relación con el uso de la traducción pedagógica (TP) en el aula. Para ello, primero se examina el papel de la TP en los manuales de ELE tomando como referencia la colección *Bitácora* (editorial Difusión), de corte claramente comunicativo, tanto en las tareas solicitadas al alumnado como en las pautas pedagógicas y didácticas sugeridas al profesorado (en las conocidas *Guías del profesor*). Segundo, se lleva a cabo un estudio en el que 50 profesores de ELE describen cuáles son las creencias, actuales y vigentes (la mayoría enmarcadas dentro del sistema universitario), vinculadas al uso de la TP en clase de ELE. Esto es, ¿usan los docentes la TP como estrategia de enseñanza?, ¿qué prácticas específicas se emplean para implementarla en el aula?, ¿qué objetivos se plantean cuando recurren a la TP (consolidación de léxico, particularidades semánticas, sintácticas, de estilo, de registro oral/escrito, etc.)? Nos

parece esencial incorporar la perspectiva del profesorado en esta investigación, dado que preguntas como ¿qué profesor no busca ser un docente estratégico que ayude al máximo a sus estudiantes?, ¿qué profesor no desea conocer las estrategias de enseñanza más rentables para ellos? o ¿qué profesor no ha intentado emplear diferentes mecanismos y técnicas que potencien el aprendizaje de la LE en sus clases?, tienen a simple vista una respuesta demasiado obvia: todos.

De esta forma, aquí abordamos las propuestas planteadas y los recursos empleados para maximizar tanto el aprendizaje como la comunicación de los estudiantes a través de la traducción (Fernández López, 2004), ya que nuestro estudio parte de la consideración de la traducción como una plausible actividad comunicativa y no como un propio método de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras (LE) (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2018). Dicho de otra forma, basándonos en la traducción empleada dentro de la enseñanza de idiomas (también conocida como *translation in language teaching* o TILT, acrónimo tomado de Cook [2010]), entendemos la traducción en un sentido amplio, con la que los estudiantes pueden aprender, junto con otras actividades comunicativas, a comunicarse (Cordero, 1984). Por tanto, se comparte la visión de autores como Howatt y Widdowson (2004), Cook (2010), Carreres y Noriega Sánchez (2013) y Carreres *et al.* (2017), quienes defienden y postulan las posibles aplicaciones didácticas de la traducción en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras.

En otras palabras, buscamos investigar el papel de la TP y, con ella, el uso explícito y consciente de la lengua materna (L1) o de otras lenguas extranjeras (LE), con el fin de desarrollar la competencia comunicativa de los discentes, siendo conscientes de que, “es posible intuir que, en contextos de lengua extranjera, se abusa de la lengua materna en clase y, en contextos de segunda lengua, apenas se recurre a ella, especialmente en aulas multilingües, en las que en ocasiones se echa [incluso]¹ en falta” (Galindo Merino, 2012, p. 11). Esto es, tenemos en cuenta que el contexto de aprendizaje de nuestros estudiantes puede verse repercutido en la mayor o menor presencia de la L1 en clase.

Lo expuesto hace que el presente artículo se vertebre de la siguiente forma. En el apartado 2, se realiza una descripción de la TP. Para ello, en 2.1. se ofrece una conceptualización de qué entendemos por traducción pedagógica, acompañada de una síntesis de sus principales ventajas (García-Medall, 2000; Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012; Fernández López, 2004; Amin, 2018), así como de sus desventajas (Duff, 1989; Carreres y Noriega Sánchez, 2013; Niamh y Bruen, 2015); y en 2.2. se describe el rol otorgado a la TP en las principales obras de referencia (MCER y PCIC) y en trabajos anteriores (Carreres *et al.*, 2017; Torralba Miralles, 2019; Lerma Sanchis, 2020). En el apartado 3 se analiza la presencia de las actividades traductológicas tanto en los manuales, como en los cuadernos de ejercicios y en las sugerencias pedagógicas para el profesorado en la colección *Bitácora*, de la editorial Difusión, que abarca desde el nivel de enseñanza-aprendizaje A1 hasta el nivel B2 de español. Seguidamente, en el apartado 4 se plantean las preguntas de investigación que abordamos mediante el estudio realizado con el grupo de profesores participantes. Tras ello, se describe la metodología de la investigación, en

¹ Matización propia de las autoras.

relación con el perfil de los informantes (5.1) y los instrumentos metodológicos utilizados (5.2). A continuación, se exponen los principales resultados obtenidos (6) y se desarrolla la discusión sobre estos, presentando, asimismo, las limitaciones del estudio y las líneas de investigación futuras (7). Por último, se plantean las conclusiones derivadas de este trabajo (8), seguidas del listado de referencias bibliográficas y de un anexo, en el que se incluye el cuestionario respondido por el profesorado.

2. La traducción pedagógica en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras

2.1 Fundamentos de la traducción pedagógica

Como puntualizan [Pintado Gutiérrez \(2018\)](#) y [Sánchez Cuadrado \(2019\)](#), la traducción pedagógica sirve como término “paraguas” para referirse a todos los tipos de traducción que pueden tener lugar en el aula de lenguas extranjeras (TILT). Dicho de otro modo, la TP es una habilidad de mediación que comprende no solo transferencia de significado, sino que frecuentemente se combina con otras habilidades comunicativas. Por ejemplo, la TP incluye actividades en las que se traducen enunciados o textos poniendo el foco en la gramática y el vocabulario ([Gasca Jiménez, 2017](#); [Guerrero García, 2020](#)), pero también tareas en las que se abordan diferencias culturales o pragmáticas entre lenguas, prestando atención al estilo y al registro de los textos con los que se trabaja ([Alcarazo López y López Fernández, 2014](#)). Igualmente, la TP puede implementarse en actividades que tratan contenidos fonéticos y aspectos sobre prosodia y pronunciación ([Cuellar Lázaro, 2004](#)). Así, de acuerdo con [Pintado Gutiérrez \(2012, p. 329\)](#), “la traducción pedagógica (...) se basa fundamentalmente en la comunicación”.

Por consiguiente, en este artículo otorgamos a la traducción pedagógica una concepción que sigue la propuesta de [Pintado Gutiérrez \(2018\)](#), de forma que, aun incluyendo el acercamiento de [De Arriba García \(1996\)](#), se muestra más amplia. Para esta última autora la traducción comprende tres fenómenos diferentes: la traducción de textos, con la que el alumnado pone en práctica la lectoescritura; la traducción interiorizada, la cual el propio estudiante realiza en su L1 o en otra LE para comprender mejor el significado de un determinado enunciado o de un fenómeno gramatical; y, por último, la traducción explicativa, con la que el profesorado intenta explicar ciertas palabras, conceptos gramaticales u otros elementos de la lengua que supongan una dificultad para sus estudiantes.

De hecho, la TP se presenta como una estrategia conectada con la lengua que se va a aprender, pues vincula lo conocido, la L1 del estudiante, con lo desconocido o en proceso de conocimiento, la L2 ([Carreres et al., 2017](#)). Así pues, se utiliza la traducción a la L1 como apoyo para facilitar el acceso a la L2 o a otras lenguas extranjeras presentes (L3, L4, etc.) ([Instituto Cervantes, 2021, p. 37](#)). En otras palabras, la TP refuerza la intercomprensión e interconexión de las diferentes lenguas habladas por los estudiantes, cada vez más plurilingües ([Eguiburu Hevia, 2019](#)). Por su parte, asimismo, en nuestro contexto, enfocamos precisamente el uso de la traducción como vehículo o estrategia de aprendizaje de naturaleza cognitiva ([Garayzábal Heinze y Codesio García, 2015](#)).

Con la puesta en práctica de la traducción pedagógica, por tanto, nos distanciamos de otro método, el método de la *pedagogía de la traducción*, que persigue enseñar a traducir al alumnado que busca convertirse en traductor (Hurtado Albir, 1999; Leonardi, 2010). Obviamente, se está ante una misma tarea, la traducción, pero su finalidad, su forma de trabajo, la atención otorgada a la misma y el tipo de traducción serán distintos. En cuanto a los objetivos (¿el para qué se usa la PT o la TP?), Lavault (1985) señaló claramente los fines profesionalizantes de la PT en contraste con los didácticos de la TP. Además, la TP, frente a las herramientas sofisticadas empleadas en la PT (por ejemplo, los *softwares* encargados de la traducción asistida por ordenador (TAO)), no suele utilizar recursos especializados, verbigracia, diccionarios focalizados en la lengua del derecho o de las ciencias de la salud (Alcarazo López y López Fernández, 2014). La dedicación en el aula de la traducción será radicalmente distinta: si en la PT, es total; en la TP, es parcial, puntual y con un objetivo didáctico concreto, pues su presencia está limitada por el contexto particular de enseñanza, además de las estrategias seleccionadas para el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Por último, en lo relativo al tipo de traducción, en la PT, el alumnado traduce desde la L2 (de la que tiene un dominio muy alto) a su L1, frente al alumnado de la TP, que puede traducir bidireccionalmente (L2-L1, L1-L2) (Martín Sánchez, 2014) y en cualquier estadio de dominio lingüístico de la L2 (un nivel elevado de la L2 no es una condición *sine qua non*).

Por último, se sintetizan las ventajas y las desventajas intrínsecas en la TP. En lo que respecta a las primeras, estos han sido los argumentos más recurrentes entre los expertos:

- El alumnado siente que la conciencia lingüística de su L1 u otras lenguas es relevante y desempeña un papel importante en el aprendizaje de su lengua meta; en otras palabras, no se frustrará pensando que lo logrado (por ejemplo, conocimientos de etiquetas gramaticales o expresiones idiomáticas) en otras lenguas se ha eliminado de un “plumazo” (García-Medall, 2000, p. 1) o que es inútil para aprender la nueva lengua, pues le permite avanzar o mejorar en su conocimiento y dominio de la lengua que se está actualmente aprendiendo.
- El alumnado puede sentir motivación al intentar estimular un conocimiento previo cuando intenta descifrar cómo se expresa un concepto (noción temporales, por ejemplo) o una palabra en otra lengua (Gibert, 1989, tomado de García-Medall, 2000).
- La TP exige que los aprendientes sean precisos en sus manifestaciones lingüísticas (Arbuckle, 1990, tomado de García-Medall, 2000). Como profesores debemos animarlos a formular enunciados con precisión y variabilidad léxica, no solo con corrección gramatical.
- Esta actividad puede minimizar las interferencias negativas y maximizar las interferencias positivas por parte del alumnado (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012).
- La implementación de la TP por el profesorado conlleva la puesta en práctica de otra estrategia más para el estímulo del aprendizaje (Fernández López, 2004).

- Los aprendices toman conciencia de que la traducción literal, palabra por palabra, de una lengua a otra no siempre es una opción válida, además de verificar que, en ocasiones, no hay ni siquiera equivalentes (por ejemplo, en una lengua existe una expresión idiomática, pero no existe en otra) (Stoddart, 2000, tomado de [Pintado Gutiérrez, 2012](#)).
- Por parte del profesorado, en ocasiones, la TP fomenta la economización del tiempo, esto es, se agilizan las explicaciones, al mismo tiempo que se pueden evitar malentendidos entre el funcionamiento de la L2 y de la L1 ([Amin, 2018](#)).
- El profesorado puede potenciar las ventajas de la TP adaptando las actividades en función del nivel del alumnado, teniendo en cuenta sus necesidades y combinando la TP con otras prácticas didácticas ([Alcarazo López y López Fernández, 2014](#)).

Por otro lado, igualmente, se enumeran las desventajas más llamativas en torno al uso de la TP en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras:

- En la actualidad, la investigación producida en el terreno de la TP no es excesivamente amplia ni con una trayectoria consolidada, pues, como anota [Pintado Gutiérrez \(2012, p. 330\)](#), “la TP adolece de un campo científico que se ocupe de ella y que la desarrolle como objeto de investigación lícito”. Esto supone que el uso de la TP cuente todavía con detractores que ponen en duda sus beneficios didácticos.
- La traducción no es un medio de expresión natural y puede bloquear la expresión en la LE ([Ballard, 2005](#)).
- La traducción no es un acto comunicativo, ya que los alumnos trabajan de manera aislada, dejando de lado la práctica de la competencia oral ([El Metni, 2015](#)).

Junto a estos argumentos en contra de la TP, [Carreres y Noriega Sánchez \(2013, pp. 255-256\)](#) rebaten seis consideraciones peyorativas de la traducción, descalificada como una actividad artificial, restrictiva, contraproducente, frustrante, solo aplicable a textos literarios e inútil, en lo que respecta a la traducción inversa. Si se explican estas seis atribuciones en detalle, se pueden aclarar de la siguiente forma: tradicionalmente, se le ha asociado a la traducción un carácter artificial, como consecuencia de su modo de trabajo en el Método de la Gramática-Traducción, en el que se anulaba por completo cualquier finalidad comunicativa; se ha considerado que la traducción era restrictiva porque, erróneamente, se limitaba a la adquisición de la lengua escrita; se ha creído que era contraproducente, ya que se recurre a la lengua materna o a otra LE en el propio proceso de adquisición de la lengua meta sin tener en cuenta qué beneficios puede aportar en dicho proceso; se ha pensado que era una actividad desmotivadora para los aprendices, en cambio, como cualquier intervención en el aula, va a depender de cómo se presente y de cómo se ejecute; frente a la creencia de que la traducción solo era aplicable con textos literarios, la traducción se puede desarrollar en cualquier campo de interés; y, en último lugar, la traducción inversa, si bien puede ser menos frecuente en el mundo profesional, no invalida su valor pedagógico.

2.2 La traducción pedagógica en ELE a partir del MCER y el PCIC

El uso de la TP no anula la primacía de la lengua meta en nuestras clases de idiomas y, como exponen Carreres *et al.* (2017, p. 99), en la enseñanza de LE asistimos ciertamente a un “renovado interés” por la traducción calificado como un “verdadero giro traductológico”. Esta realidad concuerda cualitativa y cuantitativamente con lo que demuestran los resultados recopilados en el apartado 6 y, por supuesto, con lo sugerido en las obras de referencia del MCER (Instituto Cervantes, 2002, 2021) y el PCIC (Instituto Cervantes, 2006), y su reflejo directo en los manuales publicados recientemente (Carreres *et al.*, 2017; Torralba Miralles, 2019; Lerma Sanchis, 2020).

Por parte de las obras de referencia, el MCER (Instituto Cervantes, 2002, 2021), en la definición de la *competencia plurilingüe* de los estudiantes de LE, apunta los beneficios de recurrir a distintas lenguas por parte de los discentes, es decir, asistimos al aprovechamiento de la diversidad lingüística. De este modo, se espera que el estudiante esté familiarizado con el uso de diferentes lenguas en su discurso, tanto en su propia producción como en la comprensión de interlocutores que utilicen otra lengua distinta. Como muestra la Tabla 1, no hablamos, por tanto, únicamente de una mediación interlingüística (transmisión de mensajes en otra lengua), sino social y cultural (Instituto Cervantes, 2021), que genera un contexto en el que la TP tiene un papel esencial.

Tabla 1. Competencia plurilingüe y pluricultural (MCER. Complementario, 2021).

La competencia plurilingüe, como se explica en la sección 1.3 del MCER de 2001, implica la capacidad de utilizar con flexibilidad un repertorio interrelacionado, irregular y plurilingüe para:
• pasar de una lengua o dialecto (o variedad lingüística) a otra; • expresarse en una lengua (o en un dialecto o variedad lingüística) y entender a una persona que habla en otra; • recurrir al conocimiento de diferentes lenguas (o dialectos o variedades lingüísticas) para comprender un texto; • reconocer palabras de un fondo común internacional que aparecen con una forma nueva; • mediar entre individuos que no tienen ninguna lengua (o dialecto o variedad lingüística) en común, incluso si conocimientos que se poseen son escasos; • aportar la totalidad de su bagaje lingüístico, experimentando con formas alternativas de expresión; • utilizar recursos paralingüísticos (mímica, gestos, expresiones faciales, etc.).

La TP está presente, además, dentro de las denominadas actividades de *mediación*,² ya que sería una de sus prácticas, bien mediante la traducción de un texto escrito de forma oral o signada, bien con la traducción de un texto escrito por escrito. Concretamente, en el MCER (Instituto Cervantes, 2021, p. 115) se exponen como principales características de

² Actividad lingüística que, junto con las actividades de comprensión, expresión e interacción, realizan los usuarios para comunicarse en una lengua. En concreto, las actividades de mediación, escritas u orales, hacen referencia a “la traducción o la interpretación, una paráfrasis o un resumen o la toma de notas proporciona a una tercera parte una (re)formulación de un texto fuente” (Instituto Cervantes, 2002, pp. 14-15).

estos ejercicios traductológicos las siguientes: carácter informal, actividad frecuente en la vida personal y profesional, traducción aproximada, captación de información básica (niveles básicos) y de información más específica (niveles avanzados).³

Por su lado, en el *PCIC*, en la sección dedicada a la *Aplicación de procedimientos de cooperación* (Instituto Cervantes, 2006), se incluye el intercambio de traducciones con diferentes objetivos formales (aspectos fonológicos, semánticos o instructivos). Igualmente, en el apartado dedicado a la *Asimilación del sistema de la lengua*, hallamos referencias a la traducción, específicamente en la elaboración e integración de información y mediante el análisis contrastivo, al recomendar específicamente la “comparación de elementos del español (gramática, nociones, géneros, etc.) con los de la lengua materna u otras que se conozcan, con el fin de identificar similitudes y diferencias” y con la “conversión de ideas formuladas en una lengua a otra que se conozca”. En la *Tabla 2* se recopilan los propios ejemplos de aplicación traductológica ofrecidos en el *PCIC*.

Tabla 2. Procedimientos de aprendizaje relacionados con la traducción.
Inventario (*PCIC*, Instituto Cervantes, 2006).

- Traducir literalmente expresiones o locuciones a la lengua materna u otras lenguas para intentar comprender su significado.
- Traducir enunciados de la lengua materna u otras lenguas al español con el fin de producir significados.
- Traducir oraciones a la lengua materna u otras lenguas con el fin de comprender y recordar las reglas gramaticales.

Por último, si la atención se dirige hacia el trabajo desempeñado por las editoriales, a partir de las directrices marcadas en el *MCER* y el *PCIC*, es necesario detenernos en la presencia y su correspondiente tratamiento de la TP en los manuales (libro y cuaderno de ejercicios) y en las guías del profesor. De esta forma, se puede conocer con qué recursos reales cuenta el profesorado para entrenar la *quinta destreza*, la de la traducción (Carreres *et al.*, 2017), sin perder de vista que cada lengua configura su entorno y su cultura de diferente manera y “los materiales deben integrar actividades de léxico que evidencien que cada lengua tiene su propia manera de conceptualizar el mundo y de expresar los conceptos mediante las unidades léxicas” (Rufat, 2018, p. 82).

3. La traducción pedagógica en los manuales de ELE

Con el objetivo de examinar la presencia de la TP en los manuales de ELE, se ha seleccionado la colección *Bitácora* de la editorial Difusión disponible para estudiantes de niveles A1, A2, B1 y B2. De modo general, tras sus revisiones, se confirma que la TP

³ Se pueden consultar las escalas descriptivas para cada nivel de lengua por actividad traductológica en el *MCER* (Instituto Cervantes, 2021): “traducir de un texto escrito de forma oral o signada» y «traducir de un texto escrito por escrito” (pp. 116-117).

es una realidad en *Bitácora*,⁴ tanto por su constancia en las diferentes unidades de los manuales, de los cuadernos de ejercicios y de las sugerencias para el profesorado, como en los diferentes niveles de dominio. De hecho, la TP se propone como actividad de lengua que facilita el entendimiento en las aulas pluriculturales, en las que la toma de consciencia de las diferencias interlingüísticas aporta, al mismo tiempo que ayuda, al alumnado en su aprendizaje. Asimismo, cabe resaltar que se ha observado una evolución en el uso de la TP, si en los niveles A1 y A2 el foco se situaba principalmente en un conocimiento gramatical o de fórmulas hechas, en los niveles B1 y B2 se desplaza más hacia el léxico con una mayor presencia que en los niveles anteriores. Como consecuencia, las actividades de traducción en los primeros niveles se ubican únicamente en la sección llamada *Agenda de aprendizaje* y en los siguientes en la sección denominada *Archivo de léxico*, además de mantener su rol en la propia *Agenda de aprendizaje*. A continuación, de forma pormenorizada, se analizan los principales resultados en torno a la traducción pedagógica obtenidos en cada manual examinado.

En lo que compete a *Bitácora 1* (Sanz Baulenas *et al.*, 2016a), centrado en el nivel A1 de español, a lo largo de sus nueve unidades, se aprecian diferentes tipos de actividades traductológicas. En primer lugar, destacan las traducciones generadas por el alumno hacia su L1 u otras lenguas, específicamente ubicadas bajo el epígrafe de “En español y en otras lenguas” dentro de la denominada *Agenda de aprendizaje* de cada unidad. En esta sección, no presente en todas las unidades (solo en las unidades 1, 4, 5 y 7), se solicita al alumnado que piense cómo cambian las terminaciones de los verbos a su L1 (*Unidad 1*), si existen verbos reflexivos en su lengua relacionados con acciones cotidianas (*Unidad 4*), cómo funciona el verbo *gustar* en su lengua (*Unidad 5*), cómo se utiliza el verbo *estar* para expresar ubicación (*Unidad 7*) y cuál es el uso de los pronombres *que* y *donde* (*Unidad 7*). Estamos, por tanto, ante actividades traductológicas interiorizadas (De Arriba García, 1996).

Si revisamos el cuaderno de ejercicios, el tipo de traducción solicitada es diferente. En esta ocasión, se observan casos de traducción de términos o expresiones. Asimismo, cabe aclarar que, en términos cuantitativos, estamos hablando de una presencia de este tipo de actividades de una o dos veces por unidad de los 25 ejercicios que, como media, hay para cada una de ellas. Sin embargo, hay que advertir que incluso existen unidades como la unidad 2, la unidad 3 y la unidad 4, en las que la presencia de este tipo de actividades es nula. Unos ejemplos de actividades ubicados en el cuaderno de ejercicios serían estos enunciados:

- Elige cinco palabras o grupo de palabras de la unidad que no quieras olvidar. ¿Cómo se dicen en tu lengua? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 13).
- Clasifica las palabras siguientes en estas dos categorías y tradúcelas a tu lengua o a otra lengua que conozcas (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 22).

⁴ Por limitaciones de la propia investigación no se han revisado otras colecciones de la misma editorial ni tampoco el trabajo realizado por otras editoriales como, por ejemplo, SGEL, EnClave o Edelsa-Anaya. Por tanto, no podemos extrapolar estos resultados a la situación que podríamos contemplar en *todos los manuales de ELE*. Ahora bien, por la propia experiencia docente de las investigadoras, sí se puede afirmar que esta es la tendencia de los manuales publicados en los últimos años.

- Traduce a tu lengua (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 42).
- ¿Cuáles son los equivalentes de estas expresiones en tu lengua? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 91).

Si la mirada se dirige a la actuación del profesorado, en la *Guía del profesor*, este recibe instrucciones puntuales, por supuesto, no en todos los ejercicios, tanto orientadas a la facilitación de un equivalente en la L1 del alumnado, como a la reflexión del funcionamiento de un elemento gramatical en otras lenguas con un fin contrastivo que permita identificar similitudes y diferencias entre lenguas. Unos ejemplos de las recomendaciones ofrecidas son estos:

- Puede pedirles que piensen cuál es el equivalente de estas preguntas en su lengua y que reflexionen sobre las diferencias (Guía del profesor, p. 20).
- Anímelos a usar un equivalente en su lengua (Guía del profesor, p. 26).
- Dígales que este verbo funciona de manera similar en otras lenguas y remítalos a los ejemplos que aparecen en el libro. Si conocen alguna de ellas, anímelos a reflexionar sobre cómo se construye este verbo. Si su clase es multilingüe, agrupe a los alumnos según su lengua materna para que discutan las similitudes y se ayuden a comprender la estructura del verbo (Guía del profesor, p. 64).

En cuanto a *Bitácora 2* (Sanz Baulenas *et al.*, 2016b), centrado en alcanzar el nivel A2 de español, el tratamiento de la traducción pedagógica es muy similar a lo expresado ya en *Bitácora 1* (Sanz Baulenas *et al.*, 2016a). De esta forma, tenemos ejercicios traductológicos, situados igualmente en el epígrafe de “En español y en otras lenguas”, que se centran en la traducción de enunciados (equivalentes a palabras) o de estructuras enfocadas en la competencia gramatical principalmente. Se puede observar esto en estas tres actividades:

- ¿Cómo se traducen estas frases a nuestra lengua o a otras que conocemos? ¿También hay tiempos de pasado? (Unidad 3, p. 50).
- ¿A qué tiempos o formas verbales corresponden en nuestra lengua los verbos resaltados? (Unidad 5, p. 78).
- Leemos los textos y traducimos las partes marcadas en verde. ¿Están en un tiempo diferente en tu lengua? (Unidad 6, p. 90).

Además, hallamos prácticas traductológicas de corte igualmente gramatical en el epígrafe de “Reglas y ejemplos”. Un ejemplo lo tenemos aquí:

- Con la expresión de *estar + gerundio* hablamos del desarrollo de una acción. ¿Cómo se traduce el siguiente ejemplo a tu lengua? (Unidad 5, p. 74).

Sin embargo, es importante destacar que, bajo el epígrafe de “En español y en otras lenguas”, se incluyen también otras actividades que no implican necesariamente una traducción, sino más bien una competencia intercultural. Así, sucede, verbigracia, en la

unidad 2 donde se pregunta cómo son las casas de sus respectivos países (*¿qué partes no pueden faltar? ¿Son muy diferentes de este piso, muy habitual en España?*, unidad 2, p. 44). Por último, cabe apuntar que se prescinde de la traducción a lo largo de las unidades 1, 2 y 4.

En vínculo con la inclusión de la traducción dentro del cuaderno de ejercicios para *Bitácora 2* (Sanz Baulenas et al., 2016b), notamos nuevamente, frente a lo detectado en las unidades del manual, una preponderancia del componente léxico, incluyendo la traducción de colocaciones o de expresiones. Así lo reflejan estos tres ejercicios planteados, en los que no solo se demanda una traducción, sino también una reflexión contrastiva entre las lenguas dominadas por el alumnado:

- Clasifica las siguientes estructuras en la tabla. Luego, traduce a tu lengua las diferentes expresiones. ¿Tienen la misma estructura que en español? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 27).
- ¿Cómo traducirías a tu lengua las palabras en negrita del ejercicio anterior? (Cuaderno de ejercicio, p. 76).
- ¿Qué expresiones usarías en tu lengua? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 116).

Es importante también apuntar que en este nivel la media de ejercicios es de 30-35 ejercicios y no siempre se han registrado ejercicios enfocados en la traducción para cada unidad, pues en la unidad 3, unidad 4, unidad 6 y unidad 7 no hay ninguna actividad focalizada en la traducción.

En la *Guía del profesor*, en cambio, asistimos a una mayor invitación por parte del profesor a sus estudiantes a realizar una interacción con otros compañeros usando la TP. De este modo, la traducción requiere de la expresión e interacción orales.

- Pregunte a sus alumnos si conocen el significado de las palabras que aparecen en la actividad D del Dossier 02. Si algún estudiante lo conoce, anímelo a explicarlo en clase, ya sea con sinónimos o con una traducción a una lengua conocida por todos (Guía del profesor, p. 21).
- Pida a sus alumnos que observen los ejemplos y que los traduzcan a su lengua o a otra lengua que conozcan (Guía del profesor, p. 42).
- Proponga a sus alumnos que traduzcan a su lengua las frases que aparecen destacadas en verde de este apartado. Anímelos a comentar las diferencias entre los distintos idiomas (Guía del profesor, p. 80).

En *Bitácora 3* (Sanz Baulenas et al., 2017), manual orientado a alcanzar el nivel B1 de español, se observa un cambio en la finalidad de la traducción, si bien el foco gramatical no queda en el olvido bajo la sección de *Agenda de aprendizaje*. Lo demostramos en estos dos ejercicios que, incluso, aparecen en la propia unidad 1, dentro del epígrafe “En español y en otras lenguas”:

- Observamos estos adjetivos y pronombres indefinidos. ¿A qué corresponden en nuestra lengua u otras lenguas que conocemos? (Unidad 1, p. 34).

- ¿A qué corresponden estos indefinidos en nuestra lengua u otras lenguas que conocemos? (Unidad 1, p. 34).

Igualmente, dentro de la sección de *Agenda de aprendizaje*, nos encontramos con un nuevo epígrafe que también da cabida a la traducción como estrategia de aprendizaje. Este es el de “Palabras para actuar”. En este caso, la traducción se vincula con el componente pragmático, tal y como se aprecia en esta actividad planteada:

- ¿A qué corresponden estos recursos o conectores en nuestra lengua u otra lengua que conocemos? (Unidad 7, p. 106).

Además, en este nivel en la sección denominada *Archivo de léxico* se hallan actividades traductológicas. En ellas lo importante es el componente léxico, tanto por la demanda de traducción de palabras (unidades simples), como de enunciados, interjecciones y de expresiones enfáticas. Lo vemos en todos estos ejemplos:

- Traduce a tu lengua estos usos de la palabra *trabajo*. ¿Corresponden a una o a varias palabras? (Unidad 1, p. 36).
- Traducimos a nuestra lengua o a otra lengua que conozcamos bien las siguientes frases. Nos fijamos en los verbos y las preposiciones (Unidad 3, p. 60).
- ¿Cómo se traduce la palabra *entonces* en los siguientes ejemplos? (Unidad 4, p. 74).
- ¿Qué es una aldea, un pueblo pequeño, etc., en nuestro idioma? (Unidad 5, p. 84).
- ¿Cómo se traduce la palabra *clase* en los siguientes ejemplos? ¿Existen palabras diferentes en nuestra lengua para cada caso? (Unidad 7, p. 108).

Por el contrario, solo en la unidad 2 se ha prescindido de la traducción.

Al examinar el cuaderno de ejercicios, comprobamos la misma tendencia que en el manual general mantenida para los niveles anteriores, *Bitácora 1* y *Bitácora 2* (Sanz Baulenas *et al.*, 2016a, 2016b); esto es, la traducción se utiliza principalmente como estrategia de aprendizaje del léxico. Algunas muestras son estas:

- Traduce a tu lengua estas afirmaciones de la entrada del 10 de enero (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 92).
- ¿Existe en tu lengua este mecanismo para ganar tiempo y poder reformular? ¿Cómo es? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 100).

En cuanto a la *Guía del profesor*, las indicaciones sugeridas no se diferencian de lo indicado anteriormente. Básicamente, se espera que el profesorado motive a sus estudiantes para que traduzcan a otras lenguas nuevas palabras o expresiones como una mera estrategia de aprendizaje.

- Pida a sus alumnos que vuelvan a leer el texto de la página 32 y que subrayen la palabra *trabajo* todas las veces que aparece y piensen en cómo se traduciría en cada caso a su idioma (Guía del profesor, p. 26).

- Anímelos a traducir los ejemplos a su lengua materna o a una lengua común que conozcan y a compararlos con sus compañeros. (Guía del profesor, p. 60).
- A continuación, anímelos a pensar en cómo se traduciría cada acepción a su propia lengua. (Guía del profesor, p. 107).
- Para finalizar, si lo considera oportuno, puede proponer a sus alumnos que traduzcan a su lengua materna. (Guía del profesor, p. 112).

Por último, en relación a *Bitácora 4* (Sanz Baulenas *et al.*, 2018), destinado al nivel B2 de español, se ha verificado que se sigue la misma actuación que en *Bitácora 3* (Sanz Baulenas *et al.*, 2017). Por consiguiente, si se hace un repaso por las actividades incluidas en las unidades del manual, se encuentran actividades focalizadas tanto en la traducción de componentes gramaticales (en la sección de *Agenda de aprendizaje*, bajo el epígrafe “En español y en otras culturas”), como en la traducción de expresiones metafóricas o de enunciados (en la sección de *Archivo de Léxico*). En este nivel, en cambio, hay que puntualizar que se pone en práctica la traducción de pequeños textos, significando así un salto cuantitativo y cualitativo en la tarea realizada por el alumnado respecto a los niveles anteriores (De Arriba García, 1996). En todas las unidades del manual se han localizado actividades que recurren a la traducción como estrategia de aprendizaje. Se evidencia en el siguiente ejercicio:

- Observamos la historia de Ana y Gabriel, traducimos las frases a nuestra lengua y clasificamos las perífrasis en la tabla (Unidad 1, p. 32).

Otros ejemplos de actividades en los que la traducción está presente son estos tres:

- Observamos las diferentes formas de dar información utilizando estructuras impersonales. ¿Cómo se hace en nuestra lengua o en otras lenguas que conocemos? (Unidad 3, p. 64).
- ¿Existe en tu lengua una expresión parecida? (Unidad 5, p. 95).
- Observamos los recursos. ¿Cómo traduciríamos las frases a nuestra lengua? (Unidad 6, p. 112).
- Observamos los recursos. ¿Existe un fenómeno equivalente en nuestra lengua? (Unidad 7, p. 136).

En cuanto al cuaderno de ejercicios, se observa una ampliación del número de actividades propuestas por unidad, ahora entre 55-60. En cambio, se ve cómo se sigue insistiendo en el contraste entre las lenguas dominadas por el estudiante a través de una o dos actividades traductológicas por unidad, es decir, el uso de la traducción no se ve apenas beneficiado por el aumento considerable de propuestas didácticas. De esta forma, de un modo quizás repetitivo, se siguen ofreciendo a los estudiantes actividades de este tipo:

- Traduce las frases a tu idioma. ¿Existen las mismas posibilidades? ¿Cuáles son las diferencias? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 45).

- ¿Cómo se dirían estas frases en tu lengua? Escríbelo en tu cuaderno. Compara tus frases con las de un compañero que comparta tu lengua materna. ¿Las habéis traducido igual? (Cuaderno de ejercicios, p. 72).

En relación con la *Guía del profesor*, se observa cómo el profesorado ha de potenciar las posibilidades que ofrece una clase plurilingüe. Para ello, se proponen diferentes formas de agrupación de trabajo, según la L1 de los estudiantes. Así se expresa literalmente:

- Pregunte a sus estudiantes si en sus lenguas existe alguna expresión que se use en las situaciones en las que en español utilizamos *Tierra, trágame*. Si trabaja con una clase multilingüe, agrupe a sus estudiantes por lengua materna para buscar una expresión similar; si su grupo es monolingüe, busquen entre todos una expresión que se use en situaciones incómodas. (Guía del profesor, p. 87).

De igual modo, es significativo que el profesorado reciba incluso una nota aclaratoria en la que se le motive para realizar en clase actividades centradas en la mediación, entre las que se destacan las de la propia traducción. Se puede leer en las siguientes líneas:

- Siguiendo el camino que marca el recién publicado volumen complementario del *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas*, hemos querido incluir en este cuarto nivel de Bitácora un epígrafe propio para la mediación. Se trata de actividades que pueden ser de diferentes tipologías: pasar un texto escrito a lengua oral (o viceversa), traducir un texto oral o escrito, tomar notas, hacer una crítica o expresar una opinión ante un texto literario, actuar de mediador en encuentros pluriculturales, etc. (Guía del profesor, p. 43).

4. Preguntas de investigación

Una vez que se ha descrito el rol que ocupa la TP en los manuales de ELE analizados, la información expuesta en el apartado 3 se completa a continuación con los datos obtenidos en un estudio que examina la perspectiva del profesorado sobre el uso de la TP. En concreto, el estudio persigue dar respuesta a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

- ¿Con qué frecuencia utiliza el profesorado de ELE la TP?
- ¿Qué estrategias docentes específicas desarrolla el profesorado para implementar la TP en el aula?
- ¿Cuáles son las creencias predominantes del profesorado sobre la TP?

5. Metodología de la investigación

5.1. Perfil de los informantes

Para responder las preguntas de investigación, se ha implementado un procedimiento metodológico basado en la toma de datos mediante un cuestionario difundido entre profesores de español. La muestra se compone de 50 informantes, 38 mujeres y 12 hombres, todos ellos hablantes nativos de español, excepto dos, uno de origen coreano y otro croata. Aproximadamente la mitad de los participantes son profesores universitarios

(54 %), si bien también hay docentes de escuelas de idiomas (24 %) y de otros centros públicos y privados donde se imparte español (p. ej., el Instituto Cervantes) (18 %), además de un reducido número de profesores autónomos (4 %).

En cuanto a su formación, el 24 % tiene estudios de grado o licenciatura, el 40 % de máster y el 36 % ha realizado el doctorado. Además, la gran mayoría afirma tener formación específica relacionada con la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera (90 %). Por otra parte, la mitad de los informantes tiene más de 10 años de experiencia enseñando español y, en cuanto a la otra mitad, el 18 % tiene entre 6 y 10 años de experiencia; el 16 % entre 3 y 5; y el 14 % menos de 3 años. El 64 % desarrolla su profesión en centros situados en España, mientras que el resto lo hace en el extranjero, en países como Bélgica, Tánger, Argentina, Singapur, Alemania, etc. El mismo porcentaje, el 64 %, asegura que las lenguas extranjeras tienen una relevancia muy destacada en sus centros de trabajo, frente a los demás informantes, en cuyos centros se les concede una importancia baja o muy baja.

A partir de los datos recopilados, determinamos que el perfil del alumnado que asiste a las clases de los profesores encuestados es muy variado en cuanto a edad, nivel de español, origen, contexto de enseñanza-aprendizaje, etc. Así, en general, los estudiantes son adultos procedentes de distintos países europeos y no europeos que tienen un nivel de competencia en español variable, desde A1 a C2. El alumnado cursa estudios de español, bien como parte de su formación reglada en el ámbito universitario, bien a través de clases de idiomas en centros externos y escuelas privadas, de ahí que la motivación por aprender la lengua sea diferente en cada caso. Además, algunos estudiantes desarrollan su aprendizaje en contexto de inmersión lingüística en España, mientras que otros aprenden el español en su país de origen.

5.2 El cuestionario como instrumento metodológico

La herramienta utilizada para la recogida de datos es un cuestionario en línea diseñado a través de la aplicación Google Forms. El cuestionario se ha compartido con los potenciales participantes a través de dos medios. Por una parte, se ha enviado por correo electrónico a profesores de español de manera personalizada y, por otra parte, se ha difundido en redes sociales como Facebook y Twitter. En ambos casos, iba acompañado de un texto informativo en el que se recogían aspectos básicos de la TP en la enseñanza de lenguas,⁵ junto a la información esencial sobre la investigación llevada a cabo.

En cuanto a su diseño, el cuestionario es anónimo y se compone de 15 preguntas (véase el [Anexo 1](#)). Las seis primeras abordan aspectos relacionados con la formación académica y la experiencia docente de los informantes. Las respuestas a estas preguntas

⁵ La información sobre la TP proporcionada al profesorado encuestado incluye: "Nuestro objetivo es analizar el papel que le otorgamos como profesores/as de ELE a la traducción pedagógica en nuestras clases, ya que cuando aprendemos una lengua extranjera, la traducción puede utilizarse como un recurso didáctico aplicado a su enseñanza. La traducción pedagógica es un tipo de traducción instrumental en la que el texto traducido actúa como herramienta para mejorar el nivel de lengua extranjera del aprendiz y, por tanto, la traducción es un medio para concienciar, practicar o evaluar el conocimiento lingüístico. El uso de la traducción resulta especialmente útil en la enseñanza del español cuando la lengua es vista como un instrumento que sirve para comunicarse en situaciones reales de comunicación."

han permitido definir el perfil de los participantes, descrito en el apartado anterior. A continuación, el cuestionario incluye una pregunta para conocer el papel que ocupan las lenguas extranjeras en la institución o el centro donde trabajan, pues entendemos que estos pueden ser de muy diversa índole. A esta le siguen cuatro preguntas más para conocer la metodología predominante en las clases del profesorado meta, el papel que ocupa la TP en las lecciones que imparten y las prácticas docentes que se llevan a cabo para implementarla. Seguidamente, se formulan dos cuestiones para indagar en las creencias del profesorado acerca de la TP. Por último, el cuestionario termina con dos preguntas más centradas en la enseñanza del lenguaje figurado y el uso de la traducción en la didáctica de este tipo de contenidos.⁶ La tipología de las preguntas planteadas incluye preguntas con respuesta basadas en escalas de Likert, preguntas con respuesta de opción múltiple y preguntas con respuesta abierta.

6. Resultados

La exposición de los resultados en los apartados siguientes se organiza siguiendo la misma estructura en la que las preguntas aparecen en el cuestionario y coincide, así, con el orden en el que se han presentado en el apartado anterior. Antes de exponer los resultados relativos a la investigación propiamente dicha, cabe señalar que, a la pregunta *¿Qué metodología predomina más en el desarrollo de sus clases?*, todos los participantes del estudio respondieron que adoptan en sus clases una metodología basada en los enfoques comunicativos, con predominio de la comunicación y la interacción del alumnado.

6.1 El papel de la traducción pedagógica y su implementación en el aula

En relación con la primera pregunta de investigación, sobre el uso de la TP en el aula, el 70 % de los participantes respondió afirmativamente a la pregunta *¿La traducción pedagógica forma parte de las estrategias didácticas que utiliza en clase?*, frente al 30 % que aseguró no recurrir a la traducción durante su práctica docente. Más concretamente, se les preguntó *¿Qué prácticas específicas emplea para implementar la traducción pedagógica en clase?*, seguido de ocho opciones posibles, de las que los participantes podían seleccionar varias respuestas.⁷ La mitad de los informantes respondió que utiliza la TP para identificar diferencias semánticas, sintácticas y de estilo entre los textos de las dos lenguas (50 %) y para traducir el vocabulario de los textos (48 %). Un porcentaje inferior de profesores recurre a la traducción para que los estudiantes elaboren glosarios con términos de la L1 y la L2 (16 %), así como para trabajar diferentes registros y estilos en textos escritos en la L2 (14 %) o discursos hablados (14 %) y traducirlos a la L1. La traducción pedagógica también se emplea para comparar varias traducciones de un mismo texto y reflexionar

⁶ Las respuestas a estas dos cuestiones no se abordan en el presente artículo dado que quedan fuera de los objetivos que persigue.

⁷ Cabe señalar que, de los informantes que aseguraron no utilizar la traducción pedagógica en el aula, cuatro de ellos sí mencionaron algunos casos en los que recurren a ella.

sobre sus semejanzas y diferencias (14 %). Además, hay una parte de los informantes que no utiliza la traducción para ninguna de las prácticas mencionadas (26 %) o la usa con otros fines distintos (26 %) (véase [Gráfico 1](#)).

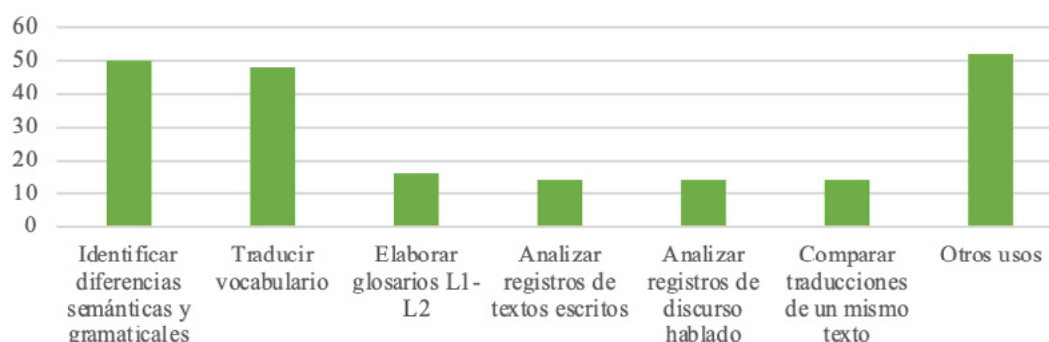


Gráfico 1. Estrategias de traducción pedagógica utilizadas por el profesorado.

El cuestionario incluía una pregunta de respuesta abierta para que los participantes que recurren a la traducción con objetivos diferentes a los propuestos en la pregunta anterior especificaran brevemente en qué casos. La mayoría de los docentes que contestaron a esta cuestión señalaron que la traducción resulta útil para abordar el vocabulario que es diferente en la L1 y la L2, especialmente en el caso de palabras polisémicas y expresiones con significado figurado. Estos remarcan que la traducción en este sentido se plantea con vistas a que el estudiante realice un análisis contrastivo y reflexione sobre cómo se expresan esos mismos conceptos en su lengua. Además de abordar el vocabulario, un docente señala que también utiliza el contraste entre la L1 y la L2 para comparar estructuras gramaticales. Igualmente, otros dos informantes recurren a la TP para tratar contenidos de fonética, pronunciación y prosodia relacionados con el uso de la entonación y las pausas para modular el significado, así como para explicar diferencias en el lenguaje no verbal. Por último, dos profesores señalan que usan el inglés como lengua vehicular para ofrecer explicaciones sobre fenómenos complejos que los estudiantes no comprenden en español.

6.2 Creencias sobre la traducción pedagógica

En cuanto a la segunda pregunta de investigación, los participantes expresaron sus creencias sobre la TP y, a la pregunta *¿Le parece útil o beneficiosa la traducción pedagógica?*, un 36 % afirmó que su utilidad y sus ventajas se muestran siempre, un 62 % aseguró que solo en determinados casos, mientras que un docente (2 %) concluyó que la traducción no es útil o beneficiosa nunca (véase [Gráfico 2](#)).

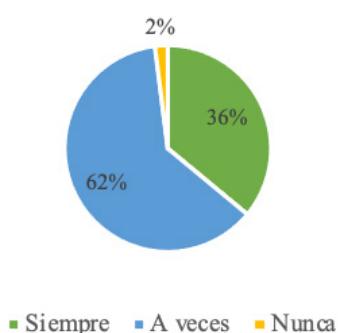


Gráfico 2. Grado de utilidad de la traducción pedagógica según el profesorado.

A los docentes que consideran positiva la TP solo en ciertos casos se les pidió que respondieran una pregunta adicional en la que debían precisar en qué casos concretamente se manifiesta su utilidad. Del 62 % de profesores que sostienen esta opinión contestaron a la pregunta planteada todos (31 informantes), excepto dos. Las respuestas aportadas se refieren a cinco aspectos fundamentalmente: el perfil de los aprendientes y su nivel de L2, la proximidad entre la L1 y la L2, el tipo de contenidos y su grado de complejidad, el recurso a una herramienta didáctica adicional y su función de apoyo para el profesorado. A continuación, se trata cada uno de estos aspectos de manera específica.

En primer lugar, para once profesores, las ventajas de la TP dependen del perfil de los estudiantes. En cuanto al nivel, dos informantes indican que resulta especialmente útil en aprendientes de nivel inicial, mientras que un participante apunta todo lo contrario, remarcando sus beneficios en grupos de nivel avanzado que deseen “tener un conocimiento más metalingüístico y reflexionar más sobre la lengua”. Para otros dos informantes, la traducción tiene ventajas en grupos de estudiantes tanto de nivel muy básico como de nivel superior. Además, uno de ellos precisa que la traducción no debería utilizarse de forma sistemática en ningún caso y el otro se muestra consciente de los riesgos que supone para estudiantes muy dependientes de su L1. Por otra parte, tres docentes consideran de utilidad la traducción cuando todos los estudiantes comparten la misma L1. A ello cabe añadir otras cuatro respuestas, cada una aportada por un informante distinto, según las cuales las ventajas de la traducción están sujetas a las necesidades específicas del alumnado, a su motivación por aprender, a si es el propio alumno quien lleva a cabo la traducción y al hecho de que sean estudiantes con un perfil universitario.

En segundo lugar, dos participantes señalan que la TP puede ser útil en la didáctica de lenguas próximas ya que, dadas sus semejanzas, es ventajoso establecer comparaciones entre ellas. Aun así, han de tenerse en cuenta las posibles interferencias que se producen debido, precisamente, a las similitudes formales entre las lenguas. En tercer lugar, otro factor que condiciona la utilidad de la traducción, según otros once informantes, son los contenidos objeto de enseñanza. Cuatro docentes remarcan sus beneficios a la hora de abordar expresiones idiomáticas, jerga coloquial, vocabulario científico y términos referidos a conceptos abstractos. Uno de estos docentes afirma que la traducción “es muy

interesante para hacer a los estudiantes conscientes de las diferencias y similitudes entre unas lenguas y otras” y añade que “el contraste con la L1 o la reflexión explícita sobre estas diferencias y similitudes es muy útil”. Relacionado con esto, un informante señala que la TP ayuda al aprendiente a entender que la traducción no siempre es literal, dado que “muchos conceptos no son traducibles”. Además del léxico, un informante menciona la importancia de la traducción para abordar diferencias en determinados tiempos verbales y estructuras gramaticales. En este sentido, un docente asegura que la traducción funciona muy bien, en general, para realizar actividades de contraste entre la L1 y la L2, independientemente del contenido que se aborde. Igualmente, para otro participante, es conveniente traducir términos o estructuras que, por su similitud con las correspondientes en la L1 del aprendiente, pueden causar confusión. Para finalizar, según dos profesores, la traducción es positiva para trabajar con determinados textos y analizar su estilo de una forma directa, lo que proporciona al alumnado una sensación de más control y seguridad.

En cuarto lugar, un informante señala que la TP es útil para aportar diversidad en las estrategias que utiliza el docente en el aula y, en quinto lugar, seis docentes conciben la traducción como un apoyo que permite economizar el tiempo de la clase en la explicación de determinados contenidos, es decir, funciona como “un recurso rápido para explicar algo”. De manera más concreta, los informantes de esta opinión utilizan la traducción para aclarar el significado de ciertos términos cuando el estudiante no logra entenderlo mediante otras estrategias didácticas. Especialmente, se traduce cuando no se comprenden palabras clave que resultan esenciales para la comprensión del mensaje.

7. Discusión

Tras la exposición de los resultados, a continuación, se presenta la discusión de estos relacionándolos, por una parte, con investigaciones anteriores (véanse apartados 2.1. y 2.2.) y, por otra parte, con los datos obtenidos en el análisis de los manuales expuesto en el apartado 3. Para empezar, como se ha indicado, una amplia mayoría de los docentes encuestados (70 %) asegura utilizar la TP en sus clases, lo que no solo constata el “giro traductológico” señalado por Carreres *et al.* (2017), sino que también confirma los resultados de Galindo Merino (2012), según los cuales el 80 % de los profesores de ELE que participaron en su estudio afirmó recurrir a la L1 del alumnado en algún momento de las lecciones.

Por su parte, el 30 % de los docentes encuestados en nuestra investigación señaló que no utiliza la traducción en el aula; sin embargo, algunos de ellos sí mencionaron el uso de técnicas específicas de TP (por ejemplo, traducir el vocabulario de la L1 a la L2) cuando se les preguntó explícitamente por ello. Aunque los informantes recibieron un documento con información básica sobre la traducción pedagógica y sus posibles aplicaciones (véase la nota 6), para abordar esta aparente incongruencia en las respuestas, es necesario reflexionar sobre cómo entienden la traducción los profesores que aseguran que no recurren a ella en sus clases. Así, es posible que el rechazo a la traducción esté producido porque los docentes asocian erróneamente la traducción con el método didáctico de gramática y traducción (Barbasán

Ortuño *et al.* 2018) o porque la traducción se ha utilizado como un “concepto paraguas” que engloba prácticas muy diversas que no están claramente definidas (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2018; Sánchez Cuadrado, 2019), por ejemplo, el término puede referirse a actividades de traducción que realizan los aprendientes o puede aludir al uso de la L1 por parte del docente para proporcionar determinadas explicaciones. Por consiguiente, podríamos pensar que, cuando los profesores responden que no utilizan la TP, en realidad tienen en mente una concepción de la traducción entendida en el marco de la gramática-traducción o, tal vez, basada en supuestos poco claros e imprecisos. A esta argumentación, cabe añadir que la presencia de actividades de traducción en los manuales de ELE no se produce en todas las unidades y no se muestra sistemática en relación con todos los contenidos, lo que también puede propiciar que parte del profesorado se cuestione su uso.

Frente al porcentaje de docentes que rechaza la TP, a partir de las respuestas de los que sí recurren a ella, podemos distinguir dos usos principalmente: primero, se utiliza como una herramienta didáctica para aprender contenidos variados; segundo, sirve de apoyo al profesor como una estrategia para ahorrar tiempo en las explicaciones (De Arriba García, 1996; Amin, 2018). Esta distinción va en la misma línea que la propuesta por De Arriba García (1996), de tal forma que el primer uso se vincula con las actividades que realiza el estudiante —de manera explícita mediante actividades para traducir textos, por ejemplo, o de manera interiorizada—, mientras que el segundo uso se relaciona con la traducción explicativa, la cual permite agilizar las explicaciones y economizar el tiempo. Tanto la traducción interiorizada (con el foco en el estudiante) como la traducción explicativa (realizada por el profesor) se relacionan con la propuesta del MCER (Instituto Cervantes, 2021), expuesta en 2.1., según la cual la traducción a la L1 se concibe como una vía para facilitar el acceso a la lengua meta.

Si nos centramos en el uso de la traducción como herramienta o instrumento didáctico, los resultados del estudio muestran que la TP sirve principalmente para identificar diferencias semánticas, sintácticas y de estilo entre textos de la L1 y la L2, y para traducir el vocabulario, de acuerdo con lo referido en Gasca Jiménez (2017) y Guerrero García (2020). Estas prácticas se observan en la mayoría de las actividades de traducción incluidas en los manuales analizados, las cuales abordan el contraste de estructuras gramaticales y la traducción del vocabulario, que incluye fórmulas y expresiones fijas en los niveles más avanzados.

Además de lo señalado, los profesores encuestados mencionan otras prácticas docentes que, aunque tienen una presencia escasa en las actividades de los manuales, sí se han contemplado en investigaciones previas sobre esta cuestión. Destacan, en este sentido, las oportunidades que ofrece la traducción para abordar contenidos fonéticos y, así, evitar interferencias producidas por diferencias en la pronunciación y la prosodia (Cuellar Lázaro 2004), para trabajar “aspectos contextuales, socioculturales y comunicativos del léxico” y para centrarse en contenidos pragmáticos vinculados a los estilos y los registros de los textos (Alcarazo López y López Fernández 2014, pp. 5-6). Al respecto, las citadas autoras apuntan que es fundamental que los profesores dediquen

tiempo a elegir textos variados y que los analicen con detenimiento antes de utilizarlos en el aula. Lo anterior demuestra que la TP no solo se aplica al léxico y la gramática, contenidos vinculados a la competencia lingüística, sino que se incorpora en actividades que buscan desarrollar la competencia discursiva, estratégica y sociolingüística del alumno y, en definitiva, mejorar su competencia comunicativa. Así, los resultados obtenidos reflejan la concepción amplia acerca de la TP desarrollada en [Pintado Gutiérrez \(2018\)](#), adoptada en la presente investigación.

Por otra parte, para el 62 % de los participantes del estudio, la utilidad de la TP está condicionada por determinados factores. Los mencionados por los docentes encuestados coinciden, en buena medida, con los que señalan [Alcarazo López y López Fernández \(2014, p. 3\)](#), concretamente, el uso de la traducción debe adaptarse al nivel y las necesidades del alumnado, ha de combinarse con otro tipo de recursos y debe implementarse de maneras diversas para abordar contenidos variados. Este planteamiento coincide con el adoptado en los manuales analizados, los cuales muestran una progresión en el grado de complejidad de las tareas de traducción según el nivel de los estudiantes y varían los tipos de contenidos que abordan a partir de la TP. En concreto, en los niveles iniciales (A1-A2) se plantean ejercicios sencillos centrados sobre todo en contenidos gramaticales, mientras que en niveles avanzados (B1-B2) las actividades de traducción incrementan su presencia y abordan fundamentalmente contenidos léxicos.

Además, en algunas respuestas, los informantes precisan que la TP ha de plantearse desde la reflexión, con el objetivo de que el aprendiente establezca contrastes entre la L1 y L2, y sea capaz de identificar similitudes y diferencias. Precisamente, este planteamiento resulta clave para [Hurtado Albir \(1994, pp. 74-75\)](#), pues considera insuficiente utilizar la traducción exclusivamente para acceder al significado y recomienda completar este procedimiento con una reflexión contrastiva posterior.

Para finalizar con la discusión de los resultados, antes de presentar las conclusiones, cabe señalar que el presente estudio adolece de algunas limitaciones derivadas del propio foco de la investigación. Entre ellas, contamos con un número de participantes reducido, lo que en parte podría justificarse dada la dificultad que supone contar con grandes muestras de profesores —por ejemplo, compárese nuestro estudio, en el que participan 50 profesores, con el de [Galindo Merino \(2012\)](#), con 25 docentes—. Por su parte, el alcance de esta investigación es limitado y podría ampliarse abordando la TP, ya no desde la perspectiva del profesor, sino desde la postura del alumno, como principal protagonista del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. En este sentido, hemos llevado a cabo una investigación en paralelo en la que hemos comprobado que el alumnado universitario de ELE, representado por 54 informantes en este caso, resalta la importancia de hacer tareas de traducción para aprender la lengua y muestra interés por realizar más actividades de este tipo ([Ureña Tormo y Valero Fernández, 2025](#)).

En otro orden de cosas, sería de interés profundizar en el objeto de análisis de la presente investigación, con el fin de abordar de forma más precisa la manera en que la TP es utilizada por el profesorado y el alumnado, a partir de entrevistas guiadas que permitan

realizar un estudio cualitativo en profundidad. Aquí convendría prestar atención también a los diferentes perfiles cognitivos de los discentes, dado que este factor puede influir en la frecuencia con la que se utiliza la TP y determinar sus ventajas e inconvenientes.

Por último, consideramos oportuno examinar en una investigación futura qué variables específicas influyen en la decisión del profesorado para no utilizar la traducción en el aula. También cabría abordar la pregunta de qué hacen estos docentes cuando en los propios manuales se encuentran actividades que emplean la TP, como las recogidas en el apartado 3. Es posible que en estos casos opten por omitirlas, reformularlas o plantearlas con una orientación distinta.

8. Conclusiones

A partir de la investigación realizada, se plantean una serie de conclusiones que se articulan en torno a dos ejes: primero, en relación con la presencia de la TP en los manuales de ELE y, segundo, con respecto al uso de la TP por parte del profesorado de ELE. En relación con la primera cuestión, concluimos que los manuales examinados incluyen actividades de traducción que, por lo general, aumentan en frecuencia de aparición y grado de dificultad a medida que incrementa el nivel de enseñanza del alumnado al que se dirige el material. Así, en los niveles B1 y B2, la importancia de la traducción es mucho mayor y más significativa que en los niveles anteriores, A1 y A2, en los que las actividades de traducción solo aparecen en algunas unidades, de manera poco sistemática. Además, las actividades propuestas en los niveles iniciales repiten la tipología de ejercicios y las dinámicas, proponiendo la misma instrucción, lo que podría afectar a la visión de los estudiantes sobre la traducción.

En cuanto a los contenidos que se abordan en cada caso, en el manual de A1 se busca fundamentalmente la traducción interiorizada (De Arriba García, 1996), mientras que en A2, la TP está muy focalizada en el componente gramatical y principalmente se proponen ejercicios sobre los diferentes tiempos de pasado para determinar si en la L1 de los estudiantes también existen. En el cuaderno de ejercicios de A2 se le da mayor relevancia al tratamiento del componente léxico mediante actividades para que el discente traduzca palabras y expresiones, entre ellas, colocaciones (*jugar a un deporte*) y fórmulas rutinarias (*oye, mire, perdone*). Por su parte, en el nivel B1 se incluyen secciones específicas dedicadas a la adquisición del vocabulario en las que destacan las actividades dirigidas a la adquisición del componente léxico a partir de la TP. En el nivel B2, la dificultad de las tareas aumenta y se propone la traducción de fragmentos de texto que incluyen contenidos que pueden ser complejos desde un punto de vista traductológico, como las perífrasis verbales (*llevaba viviendo, se puso a buscar*).

Por su parte, en cuanto al uso de la TP por el profesorado de ELE, podemos establecer que la mayoría de los docentes encuestados utilizan la TP en el aula, si bien solo un tercio del total considera que es siempre útil o beneficiosa. En este sentido, una parte importante del profesorado (el 62 %) ha reconocido que sus ventajas se producen solo en algunos casos, concretamente, cuando sirve de apoyo al docente para garantizar la comprensión de sus

explicaciones o cuando se implementa en determinados grupos de estudiantes (ya sean de nivel muy básico o de nivel superior) para abordar contenidos específicos. En particular, las prácticas docentes basadas en la traducción se concentran principalmente en traducir el vocabulario y reflexionar sobre las diferencias sintácticas, semánticas y estilísticas de los textos, aunque no se limitan a ellas. Así, en las respuestas aportadas, se ha señalado la utilidad de la traducción para abordar contenidos fonéticos, pragmáticos y socioculturales, lo que proporciona una visión amplia de las oportunidades que ofrece la TP.

En definitiva, los resultados de nuestra investigación contribuyen a confirmar que, frente al rechazo a la traducción de hace unas décadas, en la actualidad ya se tiende hacia un “examen más equilibrado de la utilidad y las limitaciones del uso de la traducción en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas” (Carreres y Noriega Sánchez, 2013, p. 253). Por tanto, de acuerdo con Alcarazo López y Fernández López (2014, s. p.), consideramos necesario seguir impulsando estudios dirigidos a “defender y mostrar el potencial de la traducción pedagógica como herramienta didáctica en la clase de ELE”.

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Anexo 1

1. ¿Cuál es su ocupación laboral?
 - ☐ Profesor/a autónomo/a
 - ☐ Profesor/a universitario/a
 - ☐ Profesor/a de escuela de idiomas
 - ☐ Otra
2. ¿Cuál es su lugar de trabajo (nombre de la institución y ciudad)? _____.
3. ¿Es profesor/a nativo/a de español?
 - ☐ Sí
 - ☐ No
4. ¿Cuál es su formación académica? Marque todas las opciones correctas.
 - ☐ Licenciatura o grado
 - ☐ Máster
 - ☐ Doctorado
5. ¿Tiene formación específica en ELE?
 - ☐ Sí
 - ☐ No
6. ¿Cuántos años de experiencia tiene enseñando español?
 - ☐ De 0 a 2
 - ☐ De 3 a 5
 - ☐ De 6 a 10
 - ☐ Más de 10
7. ¿Qué papel ocupan las lenguas extranjeras en tu centro o institución?
 - ☐ 1 (Ninguno)
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 (Muy relevante)
8. ¿Qué metodología predomina más en el desarrollo de sus clases?
 - ☐ Clases comunicativas e interactivas
 - ☐ Clases magistrales
9. ¿La traducción pedagógica forma parte de las estrategias didácticas que utiliza en clase?
 - ☐ Sí
 - ☐ No

10. ¿Qué prácticas específicas emplea para implementar la traducción pedagógica en clase? Márquelas.
- a. ☐ Traducir el vocabulario de los textos.
 - b. ☐ Elaborar un glosario con términos en la L1 y la L2.
 - c. ☐ Trabajar diferentes registros y estilos en textos escritos en la L2 y traducirlos a la L1.
 - d. ☐ Trabajar diferentes registros y estilos en discursos hablados en la L2 y traducirlos a la L1.
 - e. ☐ Identificar diferencias semánticas, sintácticas y de estilo entre los textos de las dos lenguas.
 - f. ☐ Comparar varias traducciones de un mismo texto y reflexionar sobre sus semejanzas y diferencias.
 - g. ☐ Otras diferentes.
 - h. ☐ Ninguna práctica de las anteriores.
11. Si ha marcado la casilla de “otras diferentes”, le agradeceríamos que nos las especificara brevemente aquí: _____.
12. ¿Le parece útil o beneficiosa la traducción pedagógica?
- ☐ Siempre
 - ☐ En determinados casos
 - ☐ Nunca
13. Si su respuesta anterior ha sido “en determinados casos”, indique en qué casos le parece útil o beneficiosa la traducción pedagógica: _____.
14. ¿Utiliza la traducción pedagógica en el caso del lenguaje figurado?
- ☐ 1 (Nunca)
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 (Siempre)
15. ¿Entre los contenidos de enseñanza de ELE, qué papel ocupa la enseñanza del lenguaje figurado en sus clases?
- ☐ 1 (Ninguno)
 - ☐ 2
 - ☐ 3
 - ☐ 4
 - ☐ 5 (Muy relevante)

Teaching interpreting theory through snowballing. Graduate students' perceptions and its effect on competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory

Xiangdong Li 

Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, China

Abstract: The translation and interpreting literature indicates that theory is beneficial and that students hold a positive attitude towards it, reinforcing the conviction that theory should be a component of curriculum. Since students have expectations regarding how theory should be taught and teaching theory in a way that generates positive learning experiences and encourages internalization and application is challenging, a pressing issue to be tackled is how to teach theory, which is, unfortunately, an understudied area. This article aims to propose the use of snowballing as a transformationist approach to theory teaching and explore its reception among students and its effect on their self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory. Twenty interpreting graduate students were involved as participants. A semantic differential scale was used to compare students' perceptions of snowballing with those of their prior learning experiences. A one-group pretest-posttest design was used to check the effect of snowballing. The current study adds to previous studies to confirm students' positive attitude towards theory. It provides new evidence that students' motivation to learn theory includes identified regulation and intrinsic motivation, and that snowballing is well received among students and improves their self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory.

Keywords: *theory teaching, snowballing, reception, effect, competence.*

La enseñanza de la teoría de interpretación por medio del aprendizaje 'bola de nieve' (*snowballing*): su recepción entre estudiantes y el efecto sobre su competencia, motivación y actitud auto-percibida hacia la teoría

Resumen: La literatura indica que la teoría de la traducción e interpretación es beneficiosa y que los estudiantes tienen una actitud positiva hacia ella, reforzando la convicción de que la teoría debe ser un componente del currículo. Dado que los estudiantes tienen expectativas sobre cómo se debe enseñar la teoría, y que es un desafío la enseñanza de teoría de una manera que genera experiencias positivas de aprendizaje y fomenta la internalización y su aplicación, un tema apremiante que debe abordarse es cómo enseñar la teoría. Este artículo tiene como objetivo proponer el uso del aprendizaje 'bola de nieve' (*snowballing*) como un enfoque transformador de la enseñanza de la teoría y explorar su recepción entre los estudiantes y el efecto sobre su competencia, motivación y actitud auto-percibida hacia la teoría. Participaron veinte estudiantes de interpretación. Se utilizó una escala diferencial semántica para comparar las percepciones del aprendizaje bola de nieve entre los estudiantes con las de sus experiencias de aprendizaje previas. Se utilizó un diseño de pruebas antes y después por un grupo para verificar el efecto del aprendizaje bola de nieve. El estudio proporciona nueva evidencia de que la motivación de los estudiantes a aprender la teoría incluye la regulación identificada y la motivación intrínseca, y que el aprendizaje bola de nieve está bien recibida entre los estudiantes y mejora la competencia, la motivación y la actitud percibidas por los estudiantes hacia la teoría.

Palabras clave: *enseñanza de teoría, enseñanza bola de nieve, recepción, impacto, competencia.*

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*Corresponding author: xiangdong813@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The usefulness of theory in translator and interpreter training has been an area of great debate. While some hold that theory is useless (Chesterman & Wagner, 2002; Robinson, 1997), others believe that it is helpful (Gile, 2005; Setton, 2010). If the argument that teaching theory is one important concern of higher education (Cownie, 2000) is not convincing enough, scholars have mentioned various benefits of theory, ranging from equipping translators with the ability to come up with more solutions to a given problem to cultivating a sense of professional identity (Cintrão, 2010; Di Mango, 2019; Gile, 2009; Lederer, 2007; Ordóñez López & Agost, 2022; Pym, 2014; Setton & Dawrant, 2016; Shuttleworth, 2001; Tryuk, 2011; Takeda, 2010; Williams, 2013). The benefits of theory are echoed by students' positive attitude towards it (Agost & Ordóñez López, 2015; Arumí Ribas, 2020; Hao, 2019; König, 2018; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Shih, 2011; Sung, 2016; Tryuk, 2011).

However, it seems that students have expectations as to how theory should be taught (Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Hao, 2019; Li, 2002; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Tryuk, 2011; Wali, 2015). Specifically, deductive, transmissionist approaches are associated with dissatisfaction (Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Hao, 2019; Wali, 2015). It appears that a pressing issue to be tackled is not so much why theory should be taught but rather how translation should be taught. Worse still, teaching theory courses is no easy task because it is challenging to communicate abstract theory to students in a way that generates positive learning experiences and reinforces internalization and meaningful application (Marshak, 2019). So far, few relevant studies have been devoted to exploring the effectiveness of any instructional design in teaching translation or interpreting theory and its reception among students.

Against such a background, this study aims to propose an instructional design for a snowballing activity, a transformationist approach to theory teaching, and explore its reception among students and its effect on students' self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory. It is hoped that the current study can contribute to the limited literature on theory teaching in translation studies by initiating a creative approach to theory teaching and presenting relevant evidence on its reception and effectiveness.

In the current study, theory is defined as concepts or propositions that are abstracted from practice and that describe the relations among the variables of translation or interpreting (namely, writers/speakers, source texts/speeches, translators/interpreters, target texts/speeches, readers/listeners, and communicative contexts) (Cintrão, 2010; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

2. Why teaching theory matters: a debunking argument

A popular argument against theory teaching is that seasoned translators without theoretical knowledge can nonetheless translate well. Is it an excuse for not teaching theory?

Translation theory is usually developed by theorists who are also practitioners and is based on their translation experience. As can be seen in Figure 1, after a certain amount of translation practice, practitioners accumulate preliminary experience which is then refined through more practice. Those theorists usually have backgrounds in linguistics, communication sciences, cultural studies, or any other neighbouring disciplines that have developed a rich body of knowledge, which helps rationalize their refined experiences and express them as preliminary theories. The theories are checked against translation practice and revised. They are published, read, criticized, and compared with similar theories. The advantages of those theories lie in their explicitness. Explicit theories are recorded in the literature and serve the needs of the whole translation community, including translation practitioners, theorists, trainers, and students. They can be learned, internalized, and used as a diversity of conceptual tools by stakeholders in the community, who may modify them if they are inaccurate, update them if they are incomplete, and discard them if they prove to be incorrect (Marshak, 2019).

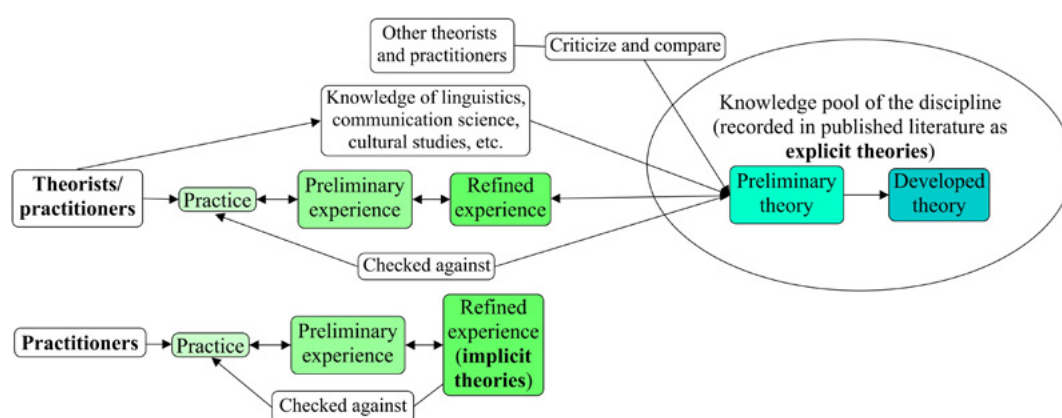


Figure 1. The development of explicit and implicit theory.

Seasoned practitioners without knowledge of explicit theory can translate well because they may apply implicit theory developed by themselves in translation practice. People act from beliefs. Based on their life experiences, socialization, and education, people hold clear but implicit beliefs or informal theories about how the world works, and such beliefs determine how they see the world and act (Marshak, 2019). Like all other human activities, translation is governed by either explicit or implicit theories (Viaggio, 2006). As shown in Figure 1, those who can translate well are usually reflective practitioners who gain preliminary experiences from practice, keep reflecting on their experiences, and go on to refine them. Their experiences are continually checked against practice and then revised. They are similar to the refined experiences developed by theorists, but usually take the form of fragmented principles instead of systematic rules and are not further developed into explicit theories. Therefore, they are the embryonic forms of translation theory that help practitioners make strategic decisions to avoid or solve translation problems. The fact that they are invisible does not deny their existence and use in translation practice. In

other words, although good practitioners can translate well without explicit theories, they do use self-developed implicit theories. Such refined experiences or implicit theories guide how they see and do translation.

However, implicit theory has limitations. Implicit theory is not recorded in the literature in the form of published contributions to the development of a discipline, and thus cannot easily be passed on as wisdom for future generations. It is usually stored in memory for personal use and normally not shared among peers. Its quality depends on the competence of the practitioner who summarizes it. Even if an implicit theory has flaws, it cannot be criticized and compared with other implicit theories by peers and theorists, and therefore misses opportunities for elaboration and advancement (Viaggio, 2012). With one's own belief system alone at disposal, a practitioner may never know if there exists a more efficient implicit theory for a given task. For a practitioner, the fewer the (implicit or explicit) theories available, the greater the chances of misuse and mistakes (Marshak, 2019). To make an analogy, had all doctors kept medical knowledge as implicit theory for private use, medical science would likely never have made any progress.

Additionally, the inefficiency of developing implicit theories individually is apparent. How many practitioners out of the total translator population can develop implicit theories that guide practice well? How long does it take for practitioners to form their own implicit theories? What if only a limited number of top practitioners can develop implicit theories, and it takes, say, five or more years of practice? This is exactly where teaching theory makes sense, as it avoids "reinventing the wheel."

The goal of teaching theory is to enhance students' efficiency in developing personal theories for practice. Unlike cookbooks that provide standard recipes, theory provides tools to inform decisions in tricky situations (Inguaggiato et al., 2021). Translation theories are like maps which never take translators anywhere but rather help them spot the best way based on their needs, by presenting all possible roads, which enables them to make an educated decision (Viaggio, 2012). Similar to seasoned practitioners, students accumulate experiences (embryonic forms of theory) from their translation practice and apply them subconsciously in translation decisions. However, such embryonic forms of theory are usually not systematic and can even be flawed due to their limited translation experiences. Translation theory allows students to be conscious of their limited theoretical perspectives, informs their translation practices, and provides a structure for them to reflect on their experiences and to organize them systematically.

According to the current literature, the benefits of teaching translation theory go beyond developing personal theories for practice and self-reflection (Shuttleworth, 2001; Takeda, 2010; Williams, 2013). Theory helps students understand better the translation phenomenon (Ordóñez López & Agost, 2022; Williams, 2013), internalize the criteria of translation quality evaluation (Lederer, 2007; Setton & Dawrant, 2016; Williams, 2013), justify the selection of appropriate strategies to tackle translation problems (Cintrão, 2010; Gile, 2009; Lederer, 2007; Pöchhacker, 1992; Pym, 2014; Setton, 2010; Williams, 2013), grow into lifelong learners capable of overcoming new problems and adapting to new market

needs (Orlando, 2016; Tryuk, 2011; Takeda, 2010), cultivate a sense of professional identity (Williams, 2013), master the meta-language to communicate with their peers and teachers (Di Mango, 2019; Setton & Dawrant, 2016), and get prepared for translation research and teaching (Bernardini, 2004; González Davies, 2004; Ordóñez López & Agost, 2022; Williams, 2013).

3. How to teach theory: our current knowledge

Do students endorse the above benefits claimed by scholars? The majority of previous studies concerning theory teaching are concerned with students' (and/or their teachers') attitude towards theory. Although a few studies suggest that some students (20%-60%) do not recognize the necessity of theoretical components (Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Li, 2002; Jeong, 2000; Seung et al., 2001), many others tend to indicate that the majority of students hold a positive attitude towards theory (Agost & Ordóñez López, 2015; Arumí Ribas, 2020; Hao, 2019; König, 2018; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Tryuk, 2011; Shih, 2011; Sung, 2016). Research also indicates that students prefer to learn theories that explain the translation process and guide practice and learning (Arumí Ribas, 2020; Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Hao, 2019; König, 2018; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Sung, 2016).

In spite of students' positive attitude towards theory, the reception of theory teaching is not satisfactory. Students complain that they understand theory but cannot apply it to practice, which might be related to the way theory is taught (Hao, 2019; Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Wali, 2015). Research indicates that students expect theory to be taught in an inductive way, in which theory is connected with practice (Hao, 2019; Li, 2002; Tryuk, 2011; Wali, 2015). If the value of theory lies in its practicality, it should be taught in ways that demonstrate its practicality (Marshak, 2019). As shown in Figure 2, theory can be taught through two approaches. A teacher with constructivist beliefs may use a transformationist approach which builds on students' prior (though limited) translation experience. The teacher scaffolds them to take advantage of previous experiences in their interactions with the theory to be learned. Through collaborative activities, students create new interpretations by integrating translation theory into their experiences. The ultimate goal is to form personal theories of translation and use them to guide their future translation practice. Since theories are developed based on experience, the transformationist approach, moving from world experience to abstract knowledge, is consistent with the way people learn things. Given students' preference for a method that connects theory with practice (Hao, 2019; Li, 2002; Tryuk, 2011; Wali, 2015), the transformationist approach encouraging learners to construct personal theories based on their prior experiences sounds attractive.

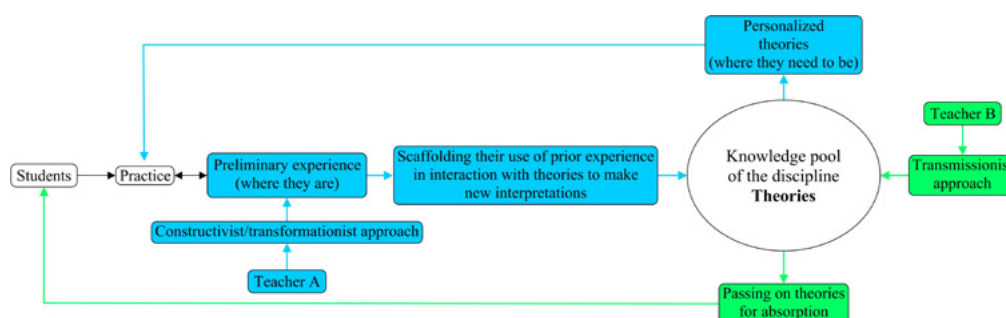


Figure 2. Two teaching approaches in contrast.

However, translation theory is frequently taught through a transmissionist approach, in which teachers transmit abstract theoretical concepts without relating them to practice (Hao, 2019; Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Wali, 2015). As shown in Figure 2, a teacher who uses a transmissionist approach to teaching theory sees knowledge of theory as the ultimate goal of teaching. The teacher passes on theory to students for passive absorption. Such a method of teaching, isolating abstract knowledge from world experience, is in conflict with the way people come to know things. Educational research indicates that a de-contextualized way of teaching theory like this is not well received among students, though they may endorse the necessity of learning theory (Yan & He, 2022).

So far, there is a scarcity of research on the use of a transformationist approach to teaching theory. The only study devoted to methodologies of theory teaching is that of Claire Shih (2011), who investigated 12 students' perceptions of translation theory and their experiences of writing reflective journals in learning theory. It was found that students see theory as guidelines to help solve translation problems and that they believe that writing reflective journals is difficult, but that it helps them to learn theory. There is still a lack of studies devoted to the systematic design of instructional activity in theory teaching, and how this impacts students' learning experience, self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude is yet to be explored.

Given the necessity of theory teaching and the dearth of research on relevant teaching approaches, this article reports on an exploratory study, presenting data regarding how interpreting students perceive the use of snowballing, a typical transformationist approach, in teaching interpreting theories to trainee interpreters, as well as its effect on their self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory.

4. Snowballing: a transformationist method of teaching

The tenets of transformationist approach to teaching are based on constructivism. For constructivists, learning is a student-centered process of constructing a personal interpretation of the world through interactions with peers with scaffolding from teachers on the basis of meaningful experiences. According to the constructivist view of learning (Fox, 2001; Kiraly, 2000; Santrock, 2004), new knowledge (theory or a systematic

interpretation of phenomena) is constructed through action and experience. To make construction happen, students need to actively and meaningfully interact with the knowledge being learned on the basis of their prior knowledge (experiences with the phenomena). Since each student has different prior knowledge, which leads to different interpretations and constructions, newly constructed knowledge should be verbalized, discussed, and negotiated through collaboration. Teachers are responsible for creating a supportive environment and learning activities that engage students to connect their prior knowledge and new knowledge. As prior knowledge helps students construct new knowledge when it is accurate, adequate, and appropriate—but hinders new knowledge construction if the reverse is true (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 14)—teachers should take the roles of scaffolding and coaching. The purpose is for students to progress from where they are to where they need to be with the assistance of teachers (or peers) who are more knowledgeable on the topic. Learning is thought of as a process and should be assessed through non-traditional formats, such as one-minute papers, reflection reports, conceptual maps, oral presentations, etc. Such an approach is consistent with the proposed principle of theory teaching in the current literature which holds that theory should be taught via connection with students' prior translation experiences (Arumí Ribas, 2020; Bartrina, 2005; Gile, 1992; Hao, 2019; Orlando, 2016; Roberts, 1988; Setton & Dawrant, 2016; Setton, 2010; Tryuk, 2011; Wali, 2015). In addition, it satisfies students' expectations concerning the connection of the theory being learned with translation practice (Hao, 2019; Li, 2002; Tryuk, 2011; Wali, 2015).

By contrast, a transmissionist view of learning favours a teacher-centered approach. Transmissionists believe that knowledge can be transferred from teachers to students, that learning can occur on an individual basis without social interaction, that teachers are knowledge transmitters and should have control over the learning process, and that knowledge can be assessed through traditional tests (Kiraly, 2000, p. 22).

Research indicates that the constructivist approach to instructional design is well received among both students and teachers (Altun & Büyükduman, 2007). This can be explained from the perspective that different ways of information processing affect the memory system. According to the level of processing (LOP) model (Craik & Lockhart, 1972), how input information is processed affects maintenance success in long-term memory. If information processing is shallow (phonemic or structural processing), it decays quickly. If it is processed deeply by relating it to prior knowledge or experiences to make sense (semantic processing), it transfers more readily into long-term memory. A transmissionist approach presents knowledge to students without relating it to students' experiences and prior knowledge. Such a shallow method of learning (information processing), even though adequate repetition can expand the duration of knowledge in memory, cannot ensure successful maintenance of knowledge in the long-term memory, let alone retrieval of it for use in future practice. By contrast, in a transformationist approach, knowledge is constructed personally by students through interactions with peers on the basis of

prior knowledge and experiences. Such deep processing of knowledge allows students to create meaning out of learning activities and relate it to their own experiences, which aids knowledge transfer into long-term memory and retrieval for use in future.

One learning activity in which teachers can scaffold students to co-construct knowledge is snowballing. Snowballing is a student-centered technique to generate ideas or knowledge (Johnstone, 1992, p. 28; Kanji & Asher, 1996, p. 151). Students process information (pictures, videos, texts, etc.) and generate their ideas or knowledge individually. They work in pairs, and then in groups of four, eight, or more students, until the entire class work as one group. During the snowballing process, students-generated ideas or knowledge is shared, compared, revised, organized, and refined to produce a complex knowledge structure. Students are active actors in controlling their learning process and they decide the learning pace. The snowballing process is displayed in Figure 3. It not only engages students in constructing knowledge in collaboration and in developing a sense of ownership of the knowledge in focus, but also diagnoses students' current understanding of the knowledge and directs teacher's scaffolding.

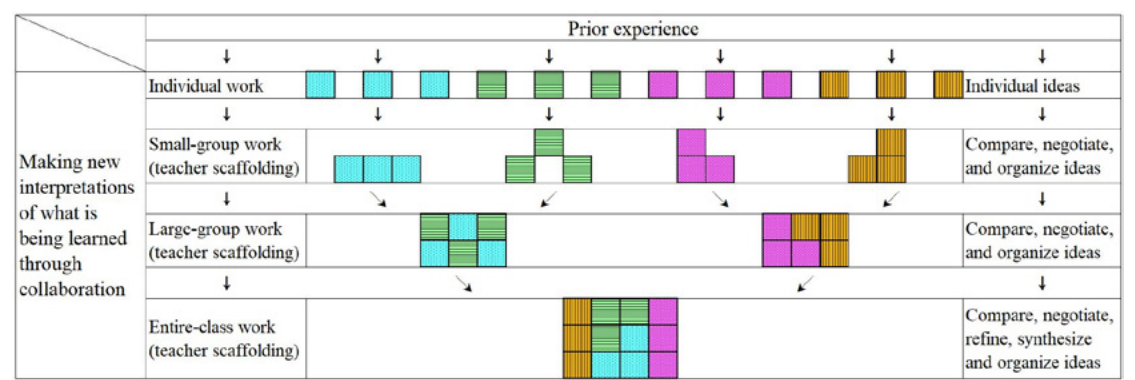


Figure 3. The snowballing processes.

5. Contextualization: teaching interpreting theory through snowballing

The context in which the current study was conducted is a three-year Master's degree program. Since 2008, the program has been offering two tracks of study, namely, Master of Arts in Translation and Master of Arts in Interpreting. Both tracks are vocationally-oriented, aiming at preparing students for professional translation and interpreting careers. In the interpreting track, the first year of study is devoted to fundamental courses, for example, consecutive interpreting without notes, interpreting theory and practice, sight translation, consecutive interpreting; the second year delves into simultaneous interpreting, conference interpreting, and domain-specific interpreting (business interpreting, diplomatic interpreting, and court interpreting); the third year focuses on research methodology and academic writing, internship, and thesis project.

The snowballing activity to be described was used to teach interpreting theory to 20 graduate students in a 16-week course entitled “Interpreting Theories and Practice” (two hours per week). The students (16 female and four male, ranging in age from 22 to 26 years old) were first-year interpreting majors. Before attending the course concerned, the majority of them (16 or 80%) had taken a general translation theory course or a course including a translation theory module during their undergraduate education. None of them had learned interpreting theories. Another interpreting course offered in parallel was a consecutive interpreting without note-taking course (six hours per week), which was more practice-oriented and aimed at equipping them with fundamental interpreting skills.

The purpose of the “Interpreting Theories and Practice” course was to provide a theoretical lens for students to understand, reflect on, and assess their current problems and challenges in interpreting learning, analyze the problem triggers, help them to propose and justify the use of specific strategies, and set goals for future development. In the words of Andrew [Chesterman \(2000\)](#), the course aims to equip students with conceptual tools (key principles and strategies) to guide the development of their interpreting competence.

The bulk of the course consisted of theories that may serve as frameworks for students to reflect on their everyday learning experiences and support their skill acquisition. It started with a needs analysis of students' expectations for the course, a group discussion of the course syllabus, and an instructor-led discussion of teaching beliefs, schedule, and activities in the first week.

The following 14 weeks (28 hours) were devoted to seven theories (concepts), namely, common problems in interpreting, Interpretive Theory, Effort Models, the listening comprehension model, working memory, interpreting strategies, and interpreting quality criteria, two weeks (four hours) for each theory. Of the four hours, two were devoted to interpreting speeches specifically selected by the teacher so that students would encounter relevant problems that could be explained by the theory to be learned, and the other two were devoted to theory teaching.

The seven theories were selected from an earlier ambitious list which included many others (interpreter competence, interpreters' roles and ethics, note-taking principles and systems, interpreting modes and settings, and relevance theory). Since teaching more theories than necessary would add to the difficulty of teaching ([Gile, 1992](#)), the limited 28 teaching hours only allowed for the inclusion of a minimum number of theories.

The inclusion of the seven theories resulted from the application of the following criteria. The first one was that the selected theories should help students make reflections on their interpreting practice. As described in the course syllabus, the course concerned aims to provide a theoretical lens for students to understand, reflect on, and assess their problems in the interpreting process and product, analyze problem triggers, propose and justify the use of specific strategies, and set goals for future learning. Common categories of problems proposed in the literature provide a framework for them to categorize and

better identify their problems. The listening comprehension model and memory model support students' understanding of problems in the interpreting process. Knowledge of strategies and their definitions recorded in the current literature makes them more resourceful so that they can prevent or solve problems with the appropriate strategies. Interpretive Theory and Effort Models, the most well-known interpreting theories so far, give them theoretical tools to understand why certain problems occur and why certain strategies are useful. The interpreting quality criteria help them reflect on the quality or problems of the interpreting product. The second criterion was that theories that would be introduced in the following courses were excluded. For example, interpreters' roles and ethics, note-taking principles and systems, and interpreting modes and settings were excluded because they would be covered in consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, conference interpreting, and domain-specific interpreting courses. The last criterion was the student-friendliness of a theory in terms of requirement in prior knowledge. Theories that require prior knowledge of linguistics on the part of students were not included, for example, relevance theory.

The sequencing of the shortlisted seven theories was set according to a rationale. The course started with a focus on common problems in interpreting because it is generally agreed that theory should be introduced after students are aware of common difficulties and problems in practice (Gile, 1992; Bartrina, 2005; Tryuk, 2011). The categories of problems served as the framework to help students track difficulties and problems in their interpreting practice throughout the whole semester. With such an awareness, students continued to learn how to explain the problems by applying Interpretive Theory, Effort Models, the listening comprehension model, and the working memory model. They subsequently reflected on how to offset the impact of problems by using specific strategies. Since the success or failure of strategy use depends on whether it can offset the impact of problems on interpreting quality, interpreting quality criteria was taught as the last theory.

During the final week, the course ended with a self-reflection report, in which students reflected on and assessed their practice during the semester, listed their problems in interpreting, used at least one of the learned theories to explain why the problems occurred, justified the selection of appropriate strategies, and set goals for future learning. This was the internalization phase, in which students learn to apply theories to their interpreting practice after theory construction based on their interpreting practice.

When teaching each theory, a snowballing activity was used. As displayed in Figure 4, it was a typical transformationist approach that reflected the beliefs of constructivists (Kiraly, 2000, p. 22). Firstly, theories were not transferred from the teacher to students; instead, students interpreted teacher-selected speeches, reflected on their problems and errors, read assigned articles, and shared, compared, and negotiated the mind-mapping process both individually and in groups before co-constructing theory with their peers. Next, learning occurred not in isolation but when it created meaning. Students' construction of theory was based on reflections of their problems in their interpreting practice and

was used to analyze problems and justify the choice of appropriate strategies. Moreover, students were in control of their learning, with the teacher serving as a scaffolder. Most activities in the snowballing process were student-centered, while the teacher coordinated the activities and scaffolded the students' construction of knowledge all the way from interpreting, through problem tracking, reflections, reading, discussion, and negotiation of mind maps, to the final step. In addition, learning was collaborative, because students went through rounds of sharing, comparison, refinement, synthesis, and reorganization based on their collaboration and negotiation with peers. Finally, theory learning was seen as a process instead of a product. Self-reflection reports, instead of standardized tests, were used to assess students' learning.

The teaching of the Interpretive Theory (ITT) will be used to illustrate the teaching activity undertaken. The ITT theory was the second of the seven theories on the teaching schedule. The first step consisted of interpreting practice and reflecting upon it. To prepare students for learning the core concepts of ITT, such as de-verbalization and transcoding, the teacher selected a speech with utterances whose meaning was highly contextualized and which tended to be rendered literally by some students. It also contained less-contextualized elements, such as names and figures. The students then interpreted the speech and their interpreting performances were recorded. Their recordings were then played back by the teacher, to enable them to keep track of and reflect on their problems and errors, with prompts from the teacher and by using the "common problems in interpreting" framework learned over the previous two weeks. This interpreting and reflection experience paved the way for their reading and co-construction of the ITT theory in the next step. By doing so, the current instructional design was consistent with the guiding principle of theory teaching that theory should be relevant to students' practice (Arumí Ribas, 2020; Bartrina, 2005; Gile, 1992; Hao, 2019; Orlando, 2016; Roberts, 1988; Setton & Dawrant, 2016; Setton, 2010; Tryuk, 2011; Wali, 2015).

The next few steps consisted of reading and theory construction. The students were divided into three groups, each responsible for reading one of the three articles on ITT: Marianne Lederer (1999, 2015) and Franz Pöchhacker (2016). The three articles were highlighted by the teacher to limit the readings to only the necessary paragraphs so that students could spare more time to engage in a deep understanding of the ideas and thus develop better comprehension. The division of readings and highlighting were done to maintain motivation levels, as too many assignments of reading academic texts and their required effort may discourage students (Ordóñez López & Agost, 2022). Every group member read individually the article that their group was responsible for and presented the core concepts of ITT in the form of a mind map. Then students within the same group shared, compared, negotiated, and organized their mind maps to co-construct a revised mind map containing ideas from the article they had read. Subsequently, new groups were formed, each with a member from each previous group. Students in the new groups shared knowledge of ITT constructed in the previous discussions and contributed to the

co-construction of new mind maps, each containing ideas from all three articles. Next, the whole class worked together to compare, synthesize, refine, and organize different versions of mind maps generated by different groups to produce a finalized version.

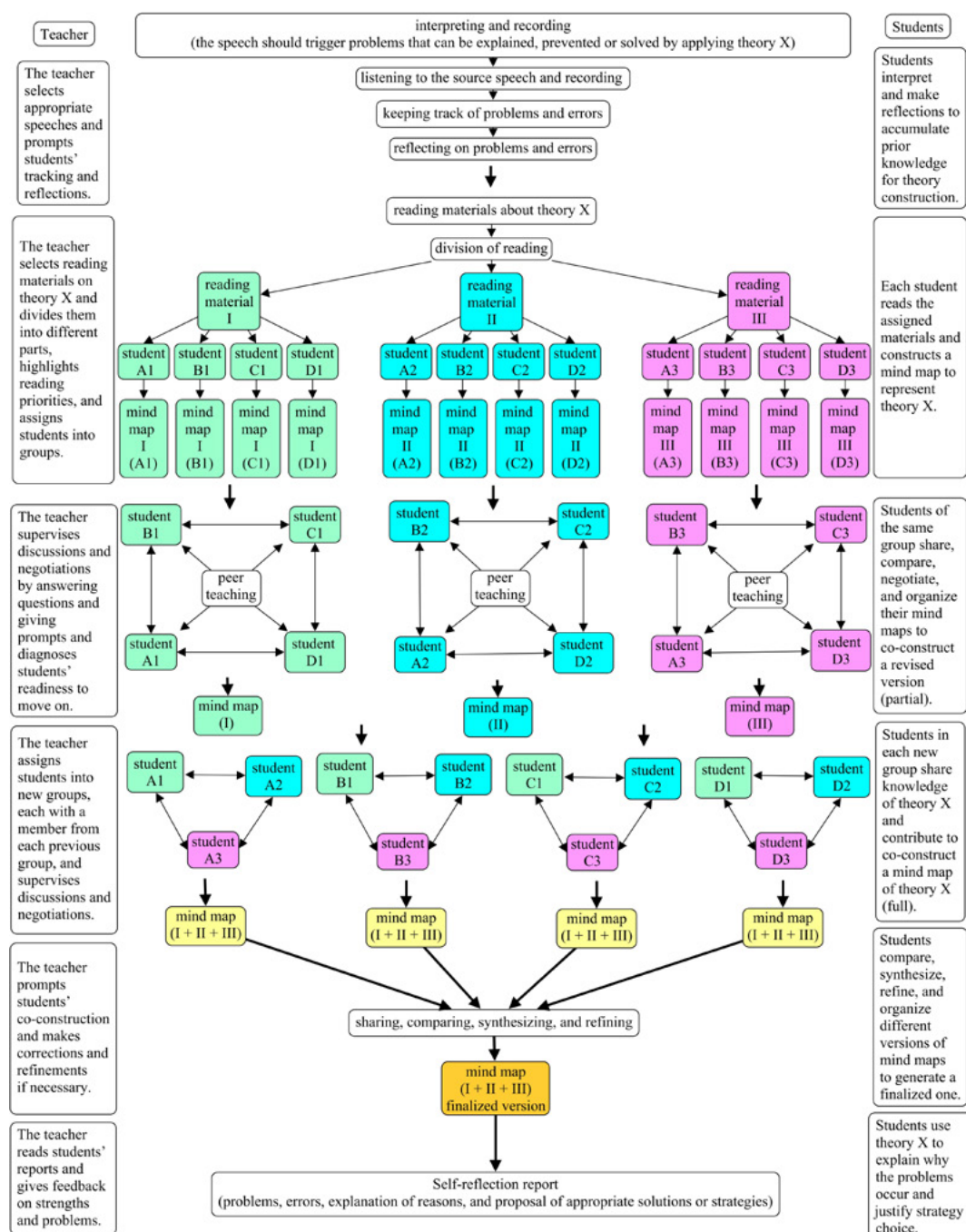


Figure 4. Procedures during the snowballing activity.

The whole process of group work was scaffolded by the teacher. When teaching ITT, the students were good at constructing the three-phase model and its core principles because they were well-versed in the reading materials. To help the students understand the deverbalization-reverbalization-transcoding triangle, the teacher used the Paris school's currant-bun (raisin bread) metaphor (Choi, 2003). A dough with raisins is compared to a source speech with non-contextualized elements, such as numbers, terms, and names. After baking, while the dough transforms into bread (the sense of the source speech is de-verbalized and reformulated in the target speech), the raisins are still physically recognizable (the non-contextualized elements with fixed equivalents are transcoded into the target speech).

The students were less efficient at summarizing the implications, limitations, and potential uses of the ITT theory. Since implications and potential uses of theory are important for theory teaching (Gile, 1992), the teacher's scaffolding was considered more significant by the students in those regards. For example, when discussing the implications, the teacher guided the students to think if the following implications could be drawn: 1) since increase in shared knowledge, language, and context with the speaker helps the deverbalization of the source speech, pre-conference preparation and lifelong learning is important; 2) less-contextualized elements are transcoded, so training on language-specific less-contextualized elements and the creation of a glossary list may increase the efficiency of transcoding; 3) what is deverbalized by an interpreter should be reformulated as meaningful utterances in the target culture, so what is implicit or odd in the source culture for target listeners should be made explicit or adapted in the target speech, in particular when interpreting between a high-context language (for example, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian) and a low-context language (for example, German and English) or between working languages that differ drastically in culture (from this perspective, the ITT theory is of great value in justifying the use of such reformulation strategies as adaptation, omission, explication, substitution, etc.); 4) successful deverbalization and transcoding are the prerequisite of high-quality note-taking in consecutive interpreting, because a good note-taking system should cover deverbalized ideas and less-contextualized elements for transcoding.

In the final step, the students wrote a self-reflection report. The report was due at the end of the course when they had covered all the theories on the teaching schedule and accumulated quite a few examples for the common categories of problems in interpreting. In the report, they reflected on and assessed their interpreting performance. They used ITT or other theories they had learned to explain the occurrence of interpreting problems and justify the use of strategies, and set goals for future learning.

6. Methodology

The current study is intended to explore students' perceptions of their experience of learning interpreting theory through snowballing and its effect on their self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory.

The participants were a convenience sample of 20 graduate students (16 female and four male). They were first-year interpreting majors at the participating university, ranging in age from 22 to 26 years old. As mentioned previously, 16 of them (80%) had taken a general translation theory course or a course including a translation theory module as part of their undergraduate education. None had learned the interpreting theories covered in the course concerned.

The current study used a one-group pre-test/post-test design due to logistical and ethical considerations. Due to the limited number of students specializing in interpreting, no control group was available for the ideal randomized two-group quasi-experimental design. In addition, it would have been unethical to divide them into control and experimental groups when the benefits of the pedagogical intervention could be predicted from the accumulated knowledge in the literature.

The study was conducted in the fall of 2021 over a 16-week semester. The pre-test, in the form of an online survey questionnaire, was implemented six days prior to week one. The 16 weeks were then devoted to the snowballing pedagogical intervention. At the end of week 16, students responded to the post-test questionnaire. Details of the two questionnaires are presented in Table 1. When prior relevant studies were available, they were used as a construct to formulate the questionnaire items to ensure the construct validity of the instrument. On average, it took about 10 minutes to complete the pre-test questionnaire and 19 minutes to complete the post-test questionnaire. Differences between the two sets of data revealed students' perceptions of their learning experience and the impact of snowballing on self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory.

Potential threats to the one-group pre-test/post-test design were controlled as much as possible (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Mortality (attrition) was not a threat because all the students voluntarily participated in the study, and none dropped out. The location did not affect the study because the location of instruction remained the same throughout the semester, and both rounds of data collection were completed through online questionnaires. Changes of instructor or data collector were not a threat because only one researcher/instructor was involved in course implementation and data collection. Since the time interval between the pre-test and post-test was 16 weeks, the pre-test's effect on the post-test was attenuated.

In relation to questionnaire design and administration, efforts were taken to minimize the researcher effect and to maximize the validity of students' responses. The researcher made it clear in the questionnaire that theory in the current study referred to systematic and established constructs (interpretive theory, the Effort model,

Table 1. Details on the pre-test and post-test questionnaire.

Sections	Pre-test questionnaire	Post-test questionnaire
Introduction	Purpose, definition of theory, voluntary nature of the study, anonymity, confidentiality, etc.	The same as pre-test questionnaire
Demographic information	Gender, age, identity number, etc.	The same as pre-test questionnaire
Experience of learning theory	1. Prior experiences of learning translation or interpreting theory (multiple-choice question; only 16 students had taken a course devoted to general translation theory or a course with a theoretical module) 2. Descriptions of prior experiences of learning theory (open-ended question) 3. Scale of agreement with the prior approach to theory teaching (ways of instruction, relevance to practice, students' role, class organization, and assessment) (semantic differential scale)	1. Descriptions of snowballing experiences (open-ended question) 2. Scale of agreement with the current approach to theory teaching (methods of instruction, relevance to practice, students' and teacher's role, class organization and assessment) (semantic differential scale) 3. Level of satisfaction with current learning experience (7-point Likert scale) 4. Helpfulness of the snowballing activity (7-point Likert scale) 5. Valued features of the snowballing activity (open-ended question)
Self-perceived competence*	1. Describing the core tenets of main interpreting theories 2. Categorizing common problems in own interpreting practice 3. Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of own interpreting performance 4. Setting goals and plans for improvement 5. Using theory to explain the occurrence of interpreting problems 6. Assess the impact of inadequate interpreting on interpreting quality or communication 7. Using theory to justify the use of appropriate strategies 8. Understanding the contribution of interpreting theory to skill acquisition (7-point Likert scale)	The same as pre-test questionnaire
Motivation	1. Intrinsic motivation (learning theory brings satisfaction and fun) 2. Identified regulation (learning theory is personally important, valuable or beneficial) 3. External regulation (learning theory is regulated by what one cannot control) 4. Amotivation (lack of intentions) (7-point Likert scale, items based on Guay et al., 2000, p. 210)	The same as pre-test questionnaire
Attitude towards theory	1. Importance of theory 2. Usefulness of theory (7-point Likert scale) 3. Reasons for attitude (open-ended question)	The same as pre-test questionnaire

* Self-perceived learning is widely practiced in educational research and practice because the literature indicates that it can measure students' progress in knowledge and skills ([Cole & Gonyea, 2010](#); [Jang et al., 2016](#); [Kuncel et al., 2005](#)).

Skopos theory, dynamic equivalence, etc.), or less systematic knowledge or concepts about translation or interpreting (competence, quality assessment, professional ethics, strategies, etc.). The students were informed of the research purpose and were told that participation was voluntary and would not affect their grades in any way. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by asking students to use a self-created but unique code as their identity number (so that each student's results could be compared longitudinally). The students were instructed to complete the questionnaires in their mother tongue so that language proficiency would not stand in the way of free and detailed expression.

For quantitative data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. To compare students' perceptions of prior and current experiences of theory teaching, descriptive statistics were used to compare their means. Since the sample was small ($n=20$), the researcher checked whether the absolute difference between the post-test and pre-test results was normally distributed. The assumption of normal distribution was met. Therefore, quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to explore the significance of post- and pre-test differences in self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory. It needs to be pointed out that a large sample size increases the chances of obtaining a p-value below .05 (statistically significant) even if the effect magnitude is small, while a small sample size ($n<20$) increases the likelihood of producing a p-value above .05 even if the effect magnitude is large (Durlak, 2009). Given the small sample size of the current study, Hedges' g (Hedges, 1981), an unbiased effect size estimator of pre- and post-test difference, was calculated. When interpreting effect sizes, a level of .20 was used, because educational researchers generally accept an effect size of .20, resulting from pedagogical interventions, as an indicator of policy interest (Hedges & Hedberg, 2007).

Qualitative analysis was confined to data collected through the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Unlike interviews or focus groups where participants produce free comments, the qualitative data in the current study belonged to one broad theme which was set by the relevant open-ended question in the questionnaire. The coding work was simple and straightforward because the coder did not have to make inferences. Inductive content analysis (with no prior development of theme categories) was conducted with the assistance of NVivo 12.0. The participants' answers were read thoroughly several times to allow the researcher to create nodes (first-level themes), and then the frequency of recurring themes was recorded.

7. Results and discussion

7.1 The reception of snowballing among participants

The first issue the current study is intended to explore is the reception of snowballing among the student participants. Data from the semantic differential scales based on the pre- and post-test questionnaires were analyzed. As presented in Figure 5, of the five

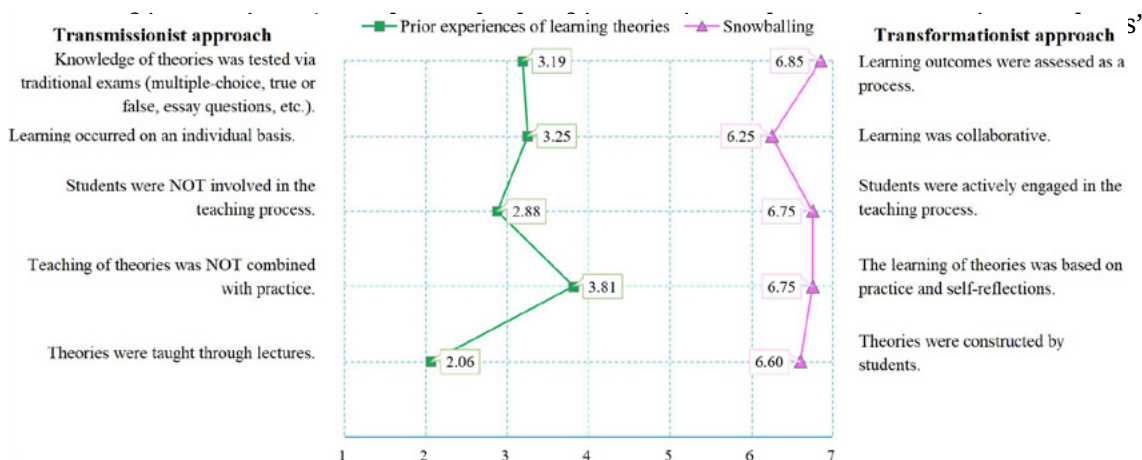


Figure 5. Students' perception of snowballing as compared with prior learning experiences.

role, class organization, and assessment), students' ratings indicate that snowballing is essentially a transformationist approach to teaching, compared with their prior experiences of learning theory which were closer to the transmissionist approach.

Students' descriptions of their prior and current learning experiences add evidence of their perceptions (Table 2). In response to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, they described their prior learning experiences as a general and brief introduction to theory, which was not combined with practice. They had relatively shallow comprehension, were confused, and had no idea of how to use theory. Some have forgotten most of it. When describing their snowballing experiences, they believed that it was challenging, funny, fulfilling, enlightening, collaborative, well-planned, and effortful. Through snowballing, they came to know theory better and could use it in practice. It seems that most of their descriptions concern their feelings regarding

Table 2. Students' descriptions of their prior and current approach to theory teaching.

Descriptions of prior learning		Descriptions of snowballing	
Categories	References	Categories	References
Very general (introduction to theories)	5	Challenging	9
Shallow comprehension	4	Funny	7
Most theory has been forgotten	3	Fulfilling	6
Not combined with practice	2	Enlightening	4
Do not know how to use theory	2	Know theory better	3
Confused	2	Collaborative	2
Brief	1	Can use them in practice	2
Abstract	1	Well planned	2
		Combined with practice	1
		Effortful	1

the instruction and their achievement. Only one student described snowballing as an approach that combines theories with practice. It seems inconsistent with students' ratings that the learning of theory was based on practice. This might have been because the relevant open-ended question in the questionnaire did not provide specific directions to guide the students, although the learning of theory was indeed based on interpreting practice as described previously.

As for students' ratings of their satisfaction with and the helpfulness of snowballing, most agree that they were satisfied with the way theory was taught and that snowballing was helpful for theory learning. As can be seen in Figure 6, 17 out of the 20 students agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the snowballing activity, and all agreed that it was helpful.

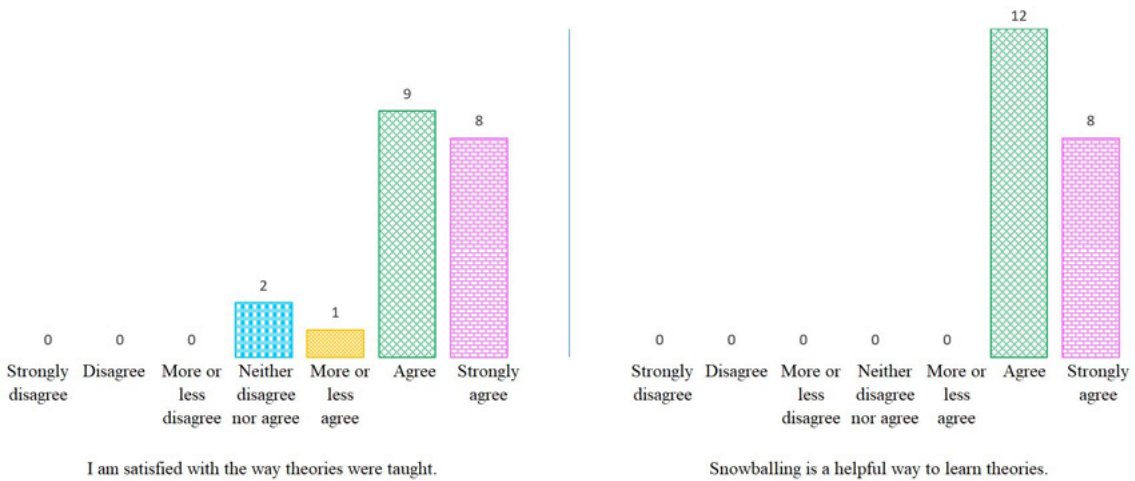


Figure 6. Students' ratings of satisfaction with snowballing and its helpfulness.

As for the valued features of snowballing, students' answers were analyzed and presented in Table 3.

The most frequently mentioned feature was collaborative exchange and construction of theory. This was evidenced in two students' responses:

Learning theories used to mean listening attentively to the instructor's lectures and absorbing them. Snowballing allowed me to be actively involved. I formulated my insights about a theory and then constructed a model with peers. The model was then refined by the instructor. ... Towards the end of the semester, when we had covered all theories, I surprisingly found that I could use them to detect problems encountered in my interpreting practice... (student 10)

What I valued in snowballing was to construct a theory of our own based on exchanges of ideas with group members. This enhanced not only our understanding of theory but also our interest in theory. I think this is excellent. At the beginning of the course, I thought theory

Table 3. Valued features of snowballing.

Categories	References
Collaborative exchange and construction of theory	16
Presentation of theory in mind maps	6
Division of reading tasks	4
Self-reflections on interpreting	2

was the foundation of practice (but how? No ideas.). After experiencing theory construction in snowballing, I realized that theory can be and should be used to reflect on practice. My knowledge of the role of theory is no longer an abstract idea but a guiding tool. (student 12)

The next theme concerns the presentation of theory in mind maps. For example, three students commented on the use of mind maps this way:

The use of mind mapping changed the usually dull and dry way of teaching. It was interactive and encouraged deep thinking. The theories learned this way can really help my practice. (student 3)

By working together to formulate mind maps, I had a deeper understanding of theory. Using them as prompts, I can reproduce the theories in my own words. (student 19)

Instead of passive reading and memorizing, theory was subconsciously internalized in the process of discussions and making mind maps. (student 9)

Another two features that students favoured were division of readings and self-reflection. Here are some quotations from the students:

We can learn more in a shorter period of time. I consider it a valuable activity. I can understand theory that I did not read by snowballing with peers. This is not only efficient but also interesting. (student 17)

The volume of reading was compressed, but we had learned just as much. (student 9)

Self-reflections helped me notice problems that I had ignored; for example, psychological problems and their triggers. I focused too much on practice without thinking of its effect. By listening to recordings of my interpreting performance, I could check if I had used a strategy appropriately for a given problem and if there was a better one. (student 18)

The current findings support previous studies on students' perceptions relating to theory teaching, indicating that students have preferences regarding the methods in which theory is taught (Hao, 2019; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Shih, 2011; Tryuk, 2011). Previous studies indicate that a transmissionist approach is disliked by students (Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Wali, 2015). Based on previous efforts, the current study has generated evidence that a transformationist approach such as snowballing is well-received among students.

Could it be possible that it was no prior knowledge of interpreting theories that influenced the participants' perceptions of their snowballing experience? In other words, could the excitement or enthusiasm of learning new knowledge have had an impact on their perceptions of snowballing? This assumption can be ruled out for the following reasons. Firstly, the findings concerning students' positive reactions to snowballing are not inferred from indirect evidence but generated from direct evidence on snowballing, for example, students' rating (quantitative data) and verbal reports (qualitative data) on snowballing as compared with the prior approach to theory teaching, students' ratings of satisfaction with snowballing and its helpfulness, and students' reports on the valued features of snowballing. Students' positive perceptions of snowballing are also substantiated by other quantitative data, for example, the difference in competences between pre- and post-tests, as reported in the following section. It can be easily noted that students' ratings and comments are not about the excitement or enthusiasm of learning new theories, but about the snowballing activity. Secondly, the current study follows the norm of examining the effectiveness of a pedagogical intervention in educational studies, namely, the elicitation of empirical evidence on students' progress in competence (quantitative data) and their reactions to the pedagogical intervention (qualitative data). In most if not all studies on instructional effectiveness, the variable of content (whether it is new knowledge or not) is usually not considered because most if not all lessons, theory-oriented ones or skill-oriented ones, aim to teach new knowledge instead of repeating learned stuff. The assumption on the impact of the excitement or enthusiasm of learning new things on students' perceptions of snowballing exaggerates the influence of the former. Since lessons aim to teach new knowledge, if the excitement or enthusiasm of learning new knowledge could influence how students perceive the teaching approach, all previous studies would have shown that both teaching approaches (the transmissionist and transformationist approach) are rated as positive by students. However, this is not the case. Previous studies have suggested that a deductive, transmissionist approach to theory teaching is not well-received among students (Giczela-Pastwa, 2017; Hao, 2019; Wali, 2015). This indicates that students' emotions in learning new theories did not shape their perceptions of the instructional approach. That said, the chances are low that students have positive perceptions of snowballing simply because the theories taught to them are new. Therefore, no prior knowledge of the interpreting theories could not have been a possible variable that had influenced students' perceptions of snowballing. Even if the excitement or enthusiasm of learning something new has had an impact, testing the impact of this extra new variable on students' perceptions can hardly be incorporated into the current research design. Its verification requires separate research in future explorations.

7.2 Self-perceived competences

The effect of snowballing on students' self-perceived competences can be seen from the difference in each competence between pre- and post-tests. As displayed in Table 4, students made enormous strides in all competences. The most significant change lay in the ability to categorize common problems in interpreting practice. The results of paired

Table 4. Paired-sample t-tests of pre- and post-tests of participants' self-perceived competence (n=20).

Competences	M	SD	df	t	p sig. (two-tailed)	Effect size (Hedges' g)
Describing the core tenets of the main interpreting theories.				-11.49	.00	-3.82
Pre-test	2.05	1.28	19			
Post-test	5.95	.60	19			
Categorizing common problems identified in interpreting practice.				-12.47	.00	-4.17
Pre-test	2.40	1.10	19			
Post-test	6.05	.51	19			
Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of personal interpreting performance.				-9.45	.00	-2.52
Pre-test	3.00	1.34	19			
Post-test	5.85	.81	19			
Setting goals and plans for improvement.				-9.96	.00	-3.01
Pre-test	2.65	1.31	19			
Post-test	5.85	.67	19			
Using theory to explain the occurrence of interpreting problems.				-13.08	.00	-3.82
Pre-test	2.25	1.21	19			
Post-test	5.85	.49	19			
Applying theory to assess the impact of inadequate interpreting on interpreting quality or communication.				-10.66	.00	-3.64
Pre-test	2.35	1.23	19			
Post-test	6.00	.65	19			
Using theory to justify the use of appropriate strategies in interpreting.				-10.66	.00	-3.51
Pre-test	2.25	1.25	19			
Post-test	5.90	.72	19			
Recognizing the contribution of interpreting theory to skill acquisition.				-9.49	.00	-2.92
Pre-test	2.65	1.46	19			
Post-test	6.05	.69	19			

sample t-tests reveal that the differences in the students' progress between pre-test (M=2.40, SD=1.10) and post-test (M=6.05, SD=.51) are statistically significant, $t(19)=-12.47$, $p=.00$. The effect size is very large (Hedges' $g = -4.17$). The students' gains in the other seven competences are all large, with the effect sizes ranging from -3.82 to -2.52. Therefore, the results indicate that snowballing has a substantial effect on students' self-perceived

competences. This might be related to the valued features of snowballing, as described previously. The current study provides evidence that snowballing has a significant effect on students' learning outcomes.

7.3 Motivation

As regards students' motivation to learn theory, the degree of difference between pre- and post-test questionnaires varies. Although the significance levels for the four types of motivation were greater than .05, the effect sizes for identified regulation (personally identifying with the value of learning theory) and intrinsic motivation (having satisfaction and enjoyment in learning theory) are larger than .20. In educational research, an effect size of .20 resulting from pedagogical interventions is an indicator of policy interest (Hedges & Hedberg, 2007). As can be seen in Table 5, the difference in intrinsic motivation between pre-test (M=4.45, SD=1.88) and post-test (M=5.10, SD=.79) is not significant, $t(19)=-1.60$, $p=.13$. The effect size is medium (Hedges' $g = -.44$). The difference in identified regulation between pre-test (M=5.60, SD=1.05) and post-test (M=6.10, SD=.64) is also not significant, $t(19)=2.30$, $p=.06$. The effect size is medium (Hedges' $g = -.56$). Since a small sample size increases the likelihood of producing a p-value of above .05 even if the effect magnitude is large (Durlak, 2009), the current level of significance could have been influenced by the small sample size ($n=20$). Compared with p-value, effect size and confirmation of replication studies are more convincing verifications of a finding (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020). Two studies with a p-value of .06 provide more convincing evidence than one with a p-value

Table 5. Paired-sample t-tests of pre- and post-test of the participants' motivation ($n=20$).

Motivation	M	SD	df	t	p sig. (two-tailed)	Effect size (Hedges' g)
Because interpreting theory is interesting (intrinsic motivation).				-1.60	.13	-.44
Pre-test	4.45	1.88	19			
Post-test	5.10	.79	19			
Because interpreting theory is good for me (identified regulation).				-2.03	.06	-.56
Pre-test	5.60	1.05	19			
Post-test	6.10	.64	19			
Because it is a compulsory course and I do NOT have any choice (external regulation).				-.75	.46	-.16
Pre-test	2.55	1.61	19			
Post-test	2.80	1.44	19			
I do NOT have any reason (amotivation).				.61	.55	.14
Pre-test	2.30	1.78	19			
Post-test	2.10	1.02	19			

of .05 (Rosenthal & DiMatteo, 2001). Given the difference observed between the pre-test and post-test and the effect size, we may conclude tentatively that snowballing slightly improved students' intrinsic motivation and identified regulation. This is consistent with the finding in other disciplines that a transformationist approach has a strong effect size (Cohens's $d=1.73$) on intrinsic motivation (Jeno et al., 2017). To further verify the finding, replication studies can be conducted in future.

For external regulation and amotivation, both p-values are not significant, and their effect sizes are very small, indicating that the snowballing activity did not have an effect on students' external regulation and amotivation.

What deserves attention is the students' limited range of longitudinal change in motivation. The range of difference in intrinsic motivation is from 4.45 (between "neither disagree nor agree" and "more or less agree") in pre-test to 5.10 (between "more or less agree" and "agree") in post-test, and the range in identified regulation from 5.60 (between "more or less agree" and "agree") in pre-test to 6.10 (between "agree" and "strongly agree") in post-test. This indicates that students' intentions to learn theory have been driven firstly by identified regulation, followed by intrinsic motivation, both before and after snowballing. Similarly, the limited range of differences in external regulation (learning theory to avoid negative influence or to gain external rewards) and amotivation (having no intrinsic or extrinsic motivation) between pre- and post-test results (all between 2 "disagree" and 3 "more or less disagree") indicates that students' intentions to learn theories are governed by neither. Since intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are associated with positive learning outcomes while external regulation and amotivation are linked with negative learning outcomes (Guay et al., 2000), the results suggest that the students have the right motivation to learn theory and that positive learning outcomes can be expected if the teaching approach is appropriate.

7.4 Attitude towards theory

Students' attitude towards theories is another concern of the current research. As displayed in Table 6, the p-values for the differences in their attitude towards the importance and usefulness of theories between pre-test and post-test are larger than .05. However, as

Table 6. Paired-sample t-tests of pre- and post-test of the participants' attitude towards theory (n=20).

Attitude towards theory	M	SD	df	t	p sig. (two-tailed)	Effect size (Hedges' g)
Interpreting theory is important.				-1.79	.09	-.49
Pre-test	6.00	.86	19			
Post-test	6.35	.49	19			
Interpreting theory is useful.				-1.67	.11	-.46
Pre-test	6.05	.76	19			
Post-test	6.35	.49	19			

discussed previously, since p level is sensitive to sample size while effect size is not, the latter is a better indicator of changes in students' attitude between pre- and post-tests. The small sample size of the current study (n=20) has increased the likelihood of a p-value larger than .05, even if the effect magnitude is large. If the level of .20 is used as a threshold (Hedges & Hedberg, 2007), the effect sizes of snowballing on students' attitude towards the importance and usefulness of theories are close to medium ($g = -.49$, $g = -.46$). We may conclude tentatively that snowballing slightly improved students' attitude towards theories.

It is important to note that students' attitude remained very positive (between "agree" and "strongly agree") both before and after snowballing. This confirms the findings of previous studies that students hold a positive attitude towards theory (Agost & Ordóñez López, 2015; Arumí Ribas, 2020; Hao, 2019; König, 2018; Ordóñez-López & Agost, 2014, 2022; Shih, 2011; Sung, 2016; Tryuk, 2011).

The evidence for students' positive attitude is supported by their answers to the open-ended questions in the pre- and post-test questionnaires. Before learning theory through snowballing, students listed seven reasons why theory is important and useful (Table 7). The most frequently mentioned reason is that they believe that theory can guide interpreting practice and learning, which is evidenced by their responses:

My humble opinion: Interpreting theory is based on frequently encountered problems or phenomena in interpreting practice and thus can be of help for practice. (student 15)

Personally, theory can explain common phenomena in interpreting, including problems interpreters may encounter in everyday practice. Novice learners, due to their lack of experience, need the guidance of theory to help them cope with problems. (student 2)

Other reasons include increasing professional development abilities in future, improving the ability to solve problems, explaining the interpreting process and phenomenon, and being helpful for graduation thesis writing, as is reflected in their comments:

Theory makes us better practitioners and helps us pass accreditation tests and grow into professional interpreters. (student 6)

Table 7. Attitude towards theory before snowballing.

Categories	Frequency
Guiding interpreting learning and practice	11
Increasing professional development abilities in future	3
Improving the ability to solve problems	2
Compensating for deficiency in skills	1
Explaining why problems occur in interpreting	1
Explaining the interpreting process and phenomena	1
Helpful for graduation thesis writing	1

Theory helps us choose the right solutions when facing problems in practice. (student 18)

I think theory helps us know more about the whole interpreting process. (student 19)

Learning theory guides not only interpreting practice but also graduation thesis writing. (student 8)

After snowballing, the students had a deeper understanding of the roles of theory because they could list more reasons for its usefulness (Table 8). Some frequently mentioned insights include explaining why problems occur in interpreting, providing a lens for self-reflection, and increasing the ability to solve problems, as is evidenced by their answers:

With knowledge of theory (and everyday practice), I can diagnose the triggers of problems in my practice and come up with a solution. I have solved most of the problems in my interpreting practice. My interpreting quality is better now. Before learning theory, it was hard to have a rational understanding of the problems and their triggers. The practice efficiency was low, and I got frustrated easily. Now I can solve problems by myself, enjoy everyday training, and feel fulfilled. (student 7)

Interpreting theory gave us a direction for reflecting on practices so that we stayed on track within a learning cycle of practice and reflection and kept making progress. (student 14)

Messages are processed and rendered quickly in interpreting because it is a transient process. In many circumstances, maintenance of problems is hard, and thus it is difficult to analyze the problems and think about how to solve them. Theory provides a lens for me to approach the problems and propose appropriate strategies. It is helpful for such a job of fleeting nature. (student 10)

Table 8. Attitude towards theory after snowballing.

Categories	Frequency
Explaining why problems occur in interpreting	10
Guiding interpreting learning and practice	10
Providing a lens for self-reflection	9
Increasing the ability to solve problems	6
Evaluating the quality of interpreting performance	4
Important for autonomous learning	2
Improving the efficiency of communication between peers	2
Increasing professional development ability in future	2
Explaining the interpreting process and phenomena	2
Helping to explain many other things in life	1
Improving the motivation to learn interpreting	1
Helpful for graduation thesis writing	1
Part of the interpreter competence to pass on knowledge and wisdom	1

Other roles of theory mentioned include evaluating the quality of interpreting, being important for autonomous learning, and improving the efficiency of communication between peers. Those are evidenced by the students' answers:

With theory, we know how to improve our performance because we can evaluate the interpreting quality. (student 6)

Theory informs our practice and helps diagnose problems, which increases our autonomous learning ability. (student 3)

Theory can be a tool that helps us communicate with each other in daily training. It ensures efficient and smooth communication. (student 4)

8. Conclusions

The current study is intended to explore the reception of snowballing among students and its effect on their self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude towards theory.

The results indicate that snowballing is well-received among the participants. Quantitative data suggest that they rate snowballing as a transformationist approach to theory teaching, which is triangulated by their positive comments. They have positive ratings about their satisfaction with snowballing and its helpfulness. Also, they identified four valued features of snowballing: exchange and construction of theory through collaboration, presentation of theory in mind maps, division of reading tasks, and self-reflection.

As for self-perceived competence, paired-sample t-tests indicate that snowballing is effective in enhancing the participants' learning outcomes because of the large effect sizes demonstrated across the differences in eight aspects of competence between the pre- and post-test results.

Regarding motivation and attitude towards theory, paired-sample t-tests suggest that snowballing can improve the participants' intrinsic motivation and identified regulation, though the effect sizes on their changes are small. Quantitative evidence indicates that, with moderate effect sizes on the differences in attitude between the pre- and post-tests, snowballing demonstrates an effect on the participants' attitude towards theories, which is also triangulated by qualitative data. The effect is that their levels of agreement with the importance and usefulness of theory are higher and that they have a deeper understanding of the roles of theory.

The current study is not without limitations. Since a small convenience sample was used, generalization of the findings to cohorts in different contexts should be taken with caution. In addition, it employed a one-group pretest-posttest design due to ethical and logistical concerns. A true experimental design with randomization of participants could have strengthened the conclusions. The limitation of small sample size is prevalent in most if not all studies involving interpreting professionals or students (Liu, 2011; Napier & Hale, 2015), as there is not a large population available for research. The one-group

pretest-posttest design, though not an ideal one, leads to tentative findings which are not otherwise accessible to the scholarly community before a better alternative design is feasible. With the absence of a control or comparison group in the current design, the cause-effect relationship between pedagogical intervention and teaching effect demonstrated is not as strong as one verified through a two-group experimental design. However, since an applied educational context does not allow sample randomization and a control group cannot be obtained (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Dezell, 2019), a two-group experimental design is, unfortunately, not feasible for many if not all educational researchers. Two-group experimental design is possible when the research cycle (implementation of a pedagogical intervention and measurement of its effect) is short, for example, one or two weeks. If it takes a whole semester for an intervention to produce the desired effect, a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design will be the next-best alternative. For this logistical constraint, about 25% of educational studies are conducted through a one-group pretest-posttest design (Marsden & Torgerson, 2012). To explore if snowballing has a consistent and comprehensive effect, a more feasible choice is to examine, using a similar research design, if an effect can be detected when snowballing is used to teach other theories (translation theories, linguistic theories, educational theories, etc.), which is a direction for future research.

Despite its limitations, the current study has attempted to enhance its validity and reliability by triangulating quantitative and qualitative data. As an exploratory study, it confirms students' positive attitude towards theory. It provides evidence that students' motivation to learn theory includes identified regulation and intrinsic motivation and that a transformationist approach to theory teaching is well received among students and can improve their self-perceived competence, motivation, and attitude to theory. Pedagogically, it is an exploratory attempt to propose a systematic instructional design for theory teaching and test its effectiveness and students' reactions.

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Una aproximación al *floor transfer offset* en español: conversación y tertulia

Natàlia Server Benetó ^{1,1}

¹Universitat d'Alacant, Alacant, Spain

²Universitat Jaume I, Castelló de la Plana, Spain

Resumen: Varios estudios han explorado la posible universalidad del tiempo entre cambio de hablantes en la distribución del turno, el *floor transfer offset*, dentro de una misma lengua y de manera interlingüística (Stivers et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2015). A pesar de tener en cuenta diferentes pares de lengua-cultura, no se ha analizado esta cuestión teniendo en cuenta los factores situacionales de cada intercambio en una misma lengua. El presente trabajo analiza y compara el transcurso entre intervenciones en dos conversaciones coloquiales y dos tertulias televisivas en español peninsular. Con ello, no solo se explora el primer género, en línea con el Grupo Val. Es.Co, sino que también se ahonda en la posible delimitación de las fronteras discursivas atendiendo a un valor numérico, el FTO, más allá de una clasificación puramente cualitativa, como se ha hecho con anterioridad.

Palabras clave: *lingüística interactiva, toma de turno, conversación coloquial, tertulia, floor transfer offset.*

An approximation to Spanish floor transfer offset: conversations and talk shows

Abstract: Several studies have explored the possible universality of the time between speaker changes in turn distribution, the floor transfer offset (FTO), within the same language and interlinguistically (Stivers et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2015). Despite considering different language-culture pairs, this issue has not been analyzed taking into account different situational factors of each exchange within the same language. This study analyzes and compares the time between interventions in two colloquial conversations and two television talk shows in peninsular Spanish. In doing so, it not only explores the genre of conversation, in line with the Val. Es.Co group, but also delves into the possible delimitation of discursive boundaries based on a numerical value, the FTO, beyond a purely qualitative classification.

Keywords: *interactional linguistics, turn taking, informal conversation, talk show, floor transfer offset.*

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Corresponding author: natalia.server@ua.es, server@uji.es

1. Introducción

Es todavía un asunto sin resolver si la cantidad de tiempo entre el final de un turno de habla y el principio del próximo, denominado *floor transfer offset*, es o no un universal del lenguaje. Desde los estudios de organización de la conversación se han realizado numerosas investigaciones sobre los mecanismos de cambio de turno y se ha postulado la existencia de un posible sistema universal, según el cual el tiempo de espera preferido entre el cambio de turno opera dentro de un marco estable interculturalmente (Stivers *et al.*, 2009; Roberts *et al.*, 2015). Se plantea que haya un sistema subyacente al que se tienda en todas las lenguas y que después se adapte según la combinación del par lengua-cultura. En líneas generales y alejadas de estudios del FTO, se ha dicho que en la *cultura española* se tiende a interrumpir más y que hay menos tiempo entre turnos e intervenciones sin que esto suponga algo negativo (Westbery, 2000). Estas generalizaciones también se aplican a otras culturas mediterráneas, como la italiana o la griega, en contraposición con culturas (y lenguas) orientales, como la japonesa o china, en la que se tiene como conocimiento general que los silencios son más largos y las interrupciones inexistentes (Hall, 1959; Koster, 2000). Algunos de estos fenómenos se podrían, *a priori*, explicar por la naturaleza de las lenguas: por ejemplo, el uso de partículas interrogativas finales, como en el caso del chino mandarín, o de partículas interrogativas iniciales, como el alemán o el inglés, que permiten o no adelantarse a responder una pregunta, interrumpiendo al interlocutor.

Sin negar el papel que juegan las presiones y tradiciones culturales de cada comunidad de habla, uno de los pilares de esta investigación es la creencia de que no se debe dejar de lado el rol de las variables situacionales y de los géneros discursivos en la configuración de un sistema de toma de turno. Hasta el momento, no hay ningún estudio que use las variables situaciones de la interacción (grado de proximidad de los hablantes, finalidad de la interacción o sus roles en la misma) como posible explicación a la distribución de los valores del *floor transfer offset*. Además, los estudios de FTO se centran, o bien solamente un género discursivo (conversaciones coloquiales, llamadas telefónicas) de manera inter o intralingüística, o bien en un tipo de secuencia en una lengua (preguntas-respuestas). Ningún estudio hasta la fecha ha explorado cómo puede variar el FTO en una misma lengua-cultura en diferentes géneros discursivos. La presente investigación tiene como objetivos generales contextualizar las afirmaciones categóricas sobre cada *cultura*, a la vez que relativizar los hallazgos de estudios universalistas previos sobre FTO. De manera más concreta, la finalidad investigadora es desentrañar la posible variedad del tiempo entre intervenciones en el español peninsular partiendo de los rasgos situacionales y de los géneros discursivos.

Partimos aquí de la base de que la dilatación o solapamiento en el tiempo entre intervenciones viene determinado o, al menos, influido fuertemente, por factores que acompañan a la situación comunicativa. Para poner a prueba nuestra hipótesis, se explora de manera preliminar la variación del *floor transfer offset* en el español peninsular en cuatro demostraciones de dos géneros discursivos, la conversación coloquial y la tertulia pública, con tal de ahondar en la relevancia de factores discursivos e interaccionales. Esta

investigación no se concibe, por tanto, como una primera aproximación a dicha cuestión que, de manera tentativa, se plantea estudiarlo de manera intergénérica en el español peninsular. Para ello, se ha empleado un marco plural: para definir los intercambios comunicativos coloquiales españoles de manera más cualitativa, la bibliografía principal ha sido la estudiada durante años en el grupo Val.Es.Co, a partir del trabajo fundacional de Briz (1996), mientras para la caracterización del fenómeno fónico estudiado y como guía metodológica y cuantitativa se ha seguido la ya mencionada teorización del *floor transfer offset* o FTO.

2. Marco teórico

2.1 La conversación coloquial

Con tal de caracterizar discursivamente las muestras de habla estudiadas, se ha empleado la taxonomía del grupo Val.Es.Co (Briz, 2010), en la que hay diferentes parámetros que caracterizan y afectan a los intercambios comunicativos. En este estudio analizamos conversaciones en las que varían los rasgos que las caracterizan para observar hasta qué punto pueden afectar en la distribución del turno y el tiempo entre intervenciones. En las siguientes líneas se hará hincapié en los rasgos que, al menos en un principio, se consideren más relevantes para este estudio, aplicados a la definición de la conversación coloquial.

1. Rasgos primarios. Estos son los que hacen referencia al registro, en este caso, el coloquial.
 - a. Fin que persigue. El corpus estudiado está compuesto por una conversación cuya finalidad es interpersonal y otra cuya finalidad es transaccional para observar hasta qué punto este factor puede afectar a la contabilización del tiempo entre intervenciones. En la primera, el objetivo de los hablantes es estrechar lazos, mientras que en la otra se sigue un fin concreto, como sería convencer de comprar un producto o pedir información. Además, estas dos conversaciones se han complementado con las tertulias, cuya finalidad es puramente transaccional (entretener a un público).
 - b. Tono informal.
 - c. Ausencia de planificación.
2. Rasgos propios del género (conversación), coloquial o no.
 - a. Oral.
 - b. Inmediatez o carácter actual.
 - c. Dinamismo.
 - d. Dialogal.
3. Los rasgos coloquializadores, los cuales favorecen que el registro sea coloquial. Lo más interesante de estos rasgos, desde nuestro punto de vista, es que no hace falta que estén todos presentes para que se caracterice un intercambio como coloquial.

Esto es debido a la *coloquialización*, un proceso que permite que estos rasgos se nivelen si alguno no estuviese presente. Esto será de especial relevancia en este estudio porque se pretende proponer una variación dentro de estos parámetros que ayuden a la clasificación del corpus estudiado.

- a. Relación de igualdad social o funcional. Esta será una de las variantes a tener en cuenta dentro de nuestro estudio ya que hay cierta variedad en el corpus. La distinción entre los roles de social y funcional se han puesto a debate más recientemente en [García Ramón \(2018\)](#). Esta puntualización estos roles viene dada por la dificultad en diferenciar qué atributos en un intercambio se pueden relacionar con el rol social (externo) y cuales con lo funcional (interno y concreto al intercambio lingüístico). Con tal de no desviarnos del tema que nos atañe en este estudio, seguiremos la distinción hecha por García Ramón de que “los [rasgos sociales] pueden adscribirse a un hablante de manera estable y sin que ello implique la relación con ningún otro hablante” (2018, p. 151). Es decir, son todos aquellos rasgos que nos caracterizan y que pueden influenciar nuestro discurso externamente a la situación comunicativa concreta. Desde una perspectiva sociolingüística, sería todo aquello relacionado con edad, género, nivel sociocultural o etnia del hablante. Por otro lado, los roles funcionales en el intercambio “son necesariamente situados (cambian de situación en situación) y no pueden existir individualmente, sino que depende de las relaciones entre los hablantes” ([García Ramón, 2018](#), p. 151, *énfasis nuestro*). Si usamos una metáfora relacionada con el mundo del fútbol, el rol social serían los jugadores particulares en su día a día, en los entrenamientos, en su experiencia profesional, mientras que los roles funcionales serían esos mismos jugadores en un partido, donde juegan un papel de central, lateral o portero. Por tanto, en este estudio se adaptará la etiqueta de “rol sociofuncional” y se seguirá la idea de [Briz y Albelda \(2013\)](#) y [García Ramón \(2018\)](#) del *principio de situación*, que defiende que, en última instancia, lo que predomina en el intercambio lingüístico es el contexto discursivo en concreto. Aplicado a este estudio, esta distinción es relevante porque se pretende determinar si el tiempo transcurrido entre intervenciones emana de la situación concreta, con sus características particulares, o si bien está directamente relacionado con el género discursivo.
- b. Relación vivencial de proximidad. A lo largo de este trabajo pretendemos ahondar en si esta es una variable que realmente vea su reflejo en la distribución y respeto del turno de habla o si esto puede depender de otros factores, tanto subjetivos como objetivos.
- c. Marco de interacción familiar o cotidiano.
- d. Cotidianidad temática.

Dado el objetivo principal de este estudio, estos últimos rasgos serán los más relevantes. Como se ha dicho, y siguiendo los argumentos del grupo Val.Es.Co y Briz (2002), estos no se entienden en una oposición binaria, sino en una gradación y nivelación. A pesar de que esta perspectiva esté prácticamente asumida dentro de los estudios de español coloquial, creemos que haría falta explorar cada una de las categorías para ver hasta qué punto la distinción en positivo, negativo e intermedio es productiva para todas las características. Como dice García Ramón (2018, p. 37), “no es suficiente asumir apriorísticamente que para cada rasgo coloquial (+) existe un correlato negativo (-), así como diferentes puntos intermedios, sino que es necesario analizar cada uno de esos componentes, por separado”. Esto será de especial relevancia cuando se analicen pormenorizadamente cada una de las interacciones recogidas en el corpus, ya que este estudio se relaciona directamente con la influencia de estos rasgos en un hecho lingüístico concreto.

A pesar de que esta teoría estuvo concebida en sus inicios como aplicable a la conversación coloquial española para definirla y acotarla, han sido numerosos los estudios a lo largo de los años que han extendido este marco teórico a otros géneros discursivos de manera exitosa (Albelda, 2004; Ruiz Gurillo, 2013; Villalba, 2016; García Ramón, 2018), incluida la tertulia (Brenes Peña y González Sanz 2013; Briz 2013; Martínez-Costa Pérez y Herrera Damas, 2014). En la presente investigación seguimos la visión de Briz (2010), de “extender la propuesta al conjunto de la variación lingüística y discursiva” (p. 21) para así explorar el potencial caracterizador de la teoría Val.Es.Co y ahondar en la clasificación de otros géneros. Por tanto, la taxonomía presentada aquí se aplicará de igual manera a la tertulia, explicada discursivamente en la siguiente sección.

2.2 La tertulia

En la propuesta de segmentación del discurso del grupo Val.Es.Co. (2014), se dice que la alternancia de turno no predeterminada está presente en la conversación coloquial pero no en “otros discursos dialogales como la entrevista o el debate” (2014, p. 15). Como se puede observar, no se menciona la tertulia, a pesar de que diversos estudios han abogado y demostrado su acercamiento a la conversación coloquial (Sánchez, 1994; Gómez Sánchez, 2004). Desde el DRAE, la tertulia es una “reunión de personas que se juntan habitualmente para conversar o recrearse”. Una tertulia no tiene por qué necesariamente incluir diferentes puntos de vista (como un debate), sino solamente gente que se junta para comentar diversos temas, normalmente de actualidad. Aunque en un principio histórico la tertulia se concebía como un género no retransmitido, nacido de prácticas culturales (en casas particulares, cafés, etc.), con el paso del tiempo pasó a ser radiofónico y, más tarde, a tener una alta presencia en la televisión y plataformas de *streaming*.

La tertulia suele presentar un registro más cercano a lo coloquial, “más distendido y menos formal” (Brenes, 2011, p. 85). Aplicado a nuestra investigación, esto puede resultar interesante porque el menor grado de formalidad aparente en la tertulia la acerca más a lo que sería una conversación coloquial prototípica, como ya se ha planteado (Martínez-Costa Pérez y Herrera Damas, 2014). Sin embargo, otras características, como la retransmisión para

un público, el mayor o menor impacto de los roles sociofuncionales o la distinta finalidad pueden afectar a profundamente a su organización secuencial. Por tanto, se complementan aquí las teorizaciones cualitativas sobre los géneros con una contabilización numérica de su distribución del turno en contraposición con conversaciones coloquiales para explorar los límites entre la adscripción a diversos géneros.

2.3 La gestión de la toma de turno. El *floor transfer offset*

Los estudios sobre la distribución del tiempo entre turnos comenzaron hace casi medio siglo con Brady (1968), quien halló una distribución media de entre 264 ms y 347 ms en conversaciones telefónicas entre amigos (por tanto, del registro coloquial) en el inglés estadounidense. Desde entonces, los estudios sobre el *floor transfer offset* (FTO), la contabilización del intervalo de tiempo entre intervenciones con la posibilidad de habla inmediata, solapamiento o silencios (Méndez Guerrero, 2014), se han expandido a otras lenguas y corpus. Así, se hablará de que el valor del FTO es positivo si hay tiempo (silencio) entre los diferentes turnos de habla entre los hablantes, y negativo si hay solapamiento entre los hablantes. El valor será más cercano al 0 si hay habla inmediata en el discurso, sin solapamientos ni silencios. La aplicación de la metodología del FTO es diversa, por lo que en estos párrafos se revisarán aquellas publicaciones más destacadas en el campo que dan cuenta de la potencialidad de su aplicación.¹

Una parte de estos estudios siguen con la propuesta inicial de explorar la distribución del FTO en una misma lengua en el contexto interactivo de las conversaciones telefónicas (Ten Bosch et al., 2004; Magyari y de Ruiter, 2008; Heldner y Edlund, 2010; Watson et al., 2020). Para medir la distribución del FTO en inglés estadounidense, Roberts et al. (2015) tienen en cuenta factores que pueden afectar al tiempo de respuesta: longitud del turno de habla, frecuencia, especificidad, *surprisal* y complejidad sintáctica. Además, también se comentan diferentes tipos de organización de las secuencias que pueden sesgar los resultados del análisis del FTO, como son los pares adyacentes, las muestras de respuesta y la risa. Con todo, los autores llegan a la conclusión de que “the timing of turn taking may be heavily context dependent” (Roberts et al., 2015, p. 5).

Otros estudios se han centrado en los pares adyacentes de preguntas y respuestas contrastivamente entre lenguas (Casillas et al., 2016), considerados “a universal context for turn transition” (Stivers et al., 2009, p. 10588). En esa publicación, Stivers et al (2009) exploran el papel de las características de cada lengua en contraposición a un posible sistema universal que puede, a cierto nivel, caracterizar en la distribución del turno a todas las culturas y lenguas (entendidas como un conjunto inseparable). Para ello, analizan esos pares adyacentes insertados en conversaciones espontáneas y coloquiales de 10 lenguas distintas y alejadas entre sí tipológica y geográficamente. Los resultados llevan a los autores a determinar que sí hay suficientes pruebas para afirmar la existencia de un sistema universal de distribución temporal del turno: aunque haya variabilidad, el

¹ Para una recopilación más pormenorizada, véase la colección editada por Holler et al. (2016) o las diversas investigaciones llevadas a cabo en el seno del Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.

tiempo que se tarda en responder varía entre 0 y 300 ms, sin que sobrepase esta cantidad de tiempo. Además, la distribución variada dentro de estos parámetros parece indicar que en todas las lenguas se busca “minimal overlap and minimal gap between turns” (Stivers *et al.*, 2009, p. 10589).

También hay investigaciones centradas en una misma lengua que exploran los límites del FTO desde un punto de vista experimental. Por su parte, Sidnell (2001) pone a prueba la concepción de que la distribución del turno en el inglés creole caribeño es ‘contrapuntual’ y ‘anárquica’ (p. 1285). Sus análisis demuestran que lo que subyace a estos intercambios es un sistema ordenado cuyos orígenes se encuentran en la interacción humana global, apuntando por una posible universalidad contextualizada del sistema de distribución de turno. De Ruiter *et al.* (2006) se interesan por los mecanismos subyacentes a la correcta proyección de la finalización del turno por parte de los interlocutores. Para comprobarlo, los investigadores manipulan la presencia del léxico, sintaxis y contorno prosódico en el final de cada intervención en unas conversaciones telefónicas en neerlandés. Previamente han contabilizado su FTO y sus hallazgos apuntan a similitudes entre los valores numéricos reales y la proyección simulada de los participantes. Además, diversos estudios exploran la distribución del FTO en interacciones entre niños y entre niños y progenitores desde el punto de vista de la adquisición del lengua (Hillbrink *et al.*, 2015; Stivers *et al.*, 2018; Lourenço *et al.*, 2021, 2023). Estas investigaciones concluyen que existen diferencias en las organizaciones del tiempo según la edad y el desarrollo de los infantes, quienes progresan hacia una convergencia con las expectativas adultas.

Para el español hay numerosos estudios que exploran ciertos mecanismos de la toma de turno dentro del español, como el silencio (Camargo Fernández y Méndez Guerrero, 2013), las tomas de turno propias e impropias (Cestero Mancera, 2000, 2005) o de manera contrastiva con otras lenguas (Keim 1994; Raga Gimeno y Sánchez López, 1999; García García, 2009). También se han realizado propuestas novedosas para entender la distribución de la toma de turno, como la visualización de los dientes de sierra (Briz, 2006; Espinosa-Guerri, 2016; Espinosa-Guerri y García Ramón, 2019). A pesar de esta rica bibliografía, ningún estudio hasta la fecha ha aplicado la metodología del *floor transfer offset* a ninguna variedad del español. Ninguno de los estudios anteriores, ni los más pormenorizados que analizan diversas lenguas, han incluido el español como objeto de estudio desde ese punto de vista. Gallardo (1993), en su detallada clasificación de los mecanismos de la distribución del turno en el español, aporta algunos datos numéricos sobre las pausas internas, basadas en Butterworth (1980) y Jefferson (1989), pero estos datos no son referentes a la lengua de interés aquí. Esta sección ha confirmado el potencial de medir el FTO para desgranar aún más el funcionamiento interno e interaccional de las lenguas, desde distintas vertientes. El presente estudio arroja algo de luz por primera vez sobre esta cuestión en el español peninsular, prestando atención a su relación con las características discursivas de las muestras, conversaciones y tertulias.

3. Metodología

3.1 Composición del corpus

El corpus consta de 2 conversaciones y 2 tertulias que suman un total de 54 minutos de grabación. Se ha elegido esta composición según criterios de variedad y diferencia entre las muestras: las conversaciones y tertulias elegidas, a pesar de pertenecer a los mismos géneros discursivos, presentan diferentes esenciales en los rasgos que las caracterizan. Hay una conversación clasificada como transaccional (*Piscina*) y otra más prototípicamente coloquial del corpus Val.Es.Co. 2.1 (Pons, 2019), referida en este trabajo como *Carnet*, pero con la clasificación original de *Conversación 21*. Además, el corpus está completado por fragmentos de dos tertulias televisivas con diversos grados de familiaridad, a saber, un episodio de *Colgados del aro* (básquetbol) y otro episodio de *Amigas y conocidas* (prensa rosa y opinión). Dado que el objetivo de este estudio es explorar cómo pueden cambiar los datos del *floor transfer offset* (FTO) según la situación comunicativa concreta dentro de una misma lengua, se ha creído adecuado explorar la cuestión no solo a través de distintos géneros, sino también mediante la variabilidad dentro de cada uno.

Tabla 1. Composición del corpus.

Nombre	Tipología	Minutos	Habla ntes	Temas	Medio
Piscina	Conversación	7	2	Pedir información sobre bonos del polideportivo municipal	Privado, grabación secreta
Carnet	Conversación	10	3	Resultados del examen de conducir	Privado, grabación secreta
Colgados del aro	Tertulia	22	4	Situación de la Covid	Público, plataforma de streaming
Amigas y conocidas	Tertulia	15	5	Viajes en coche	Público, plató televisivo

No hay ningún corpus del español formado por conversaciones transaccionales, por lo que *Piscina* fue grabada por una persona cercana a la autora para los propósitos de esta investigación. En cuanto a la conversación coloquial *Carnet*, se ha elegido debido a su alto nivel de prototipicidad, en contraposición con los otros componentes del corpus. Para la elección de las tertulias, se han seleccionado programas con un planteamiento similar, puesto que son un grupo mayor de personas, reunidas frente a cámaras y con la finalidad de comentar diversos temas de actualidad. Además, cada programa se divide en secciones, lo cual ha facilitado elegir una por corpus de una durada similar. La diferencia en el número de hablantes se nivela con la duración de cada segmento estudiado y también se aporta una variante de género ya que las participantes de *Amigas y conocidas* son todas mujeres, mientras que en *Colgados del Aro* son hombres.

Para el análisis concreto de las conversaciones y tertulias se ha procedido, en primer lugar, a su segmentación y transcripción mediante el programa ELAN. La conversación Carnet, dado que procede del corpus ya transcrito de Val.Es.Co., se ha introducido directamente en el programa. La división en tiempos de cada intervención resultaba necesaria para poder calcular el tiempo entre cada una de estas y ELAN facilita dicho objetivo. Solamente se ha atendido al criterio de segmentación a nivel dialogal, es decir, entre las distintas intervenciones de los hablantes, ya que las pausas o silencios monologales no forman parte del objeto de estudio de este trabajo. Una vez hecho esto, se ha procedido a la realización de una tabla dinámica en el programa Excel con tal de calcular el promedio de FTO, lo cual se explorará con más detalle en §4.2.

3.2 Contabilización del FTO

Para contabilizar el FTO se ha usado la segmentación y transcripción de las conversaciones y programas, los cuales se han insertado por intervenciones en una tabla *Excel*. Tras aplicar unas fórmulas al tiempo de inicio y de final de cada una de las intervenciones, se ha realizado una tabla dinámica para comparar cada promedio de FTO anterior. Se ha prescindido de la contabilización del FTO posterior porque estos valores no responden a la interrupción o habla realizada por el hablante en cuestión, sino a cómo le afecta lo dicho por otros hablantes. Por lo tanto, con tal de delimitar los resultados, se ha optado por elegir la posición anterior ya que esto refleja de manera más idónea la distribución del tiempo entre intervenciones. Además de tener en cuenta el promedio de FTO de cada muestra, también se ha realizado un diagrama de caja para cada conversación y tertulia mediante el programa *RStudio*. Debajo de estas líneas mostramos un ejemplo de este gráfico para complementar su posterior explicación.

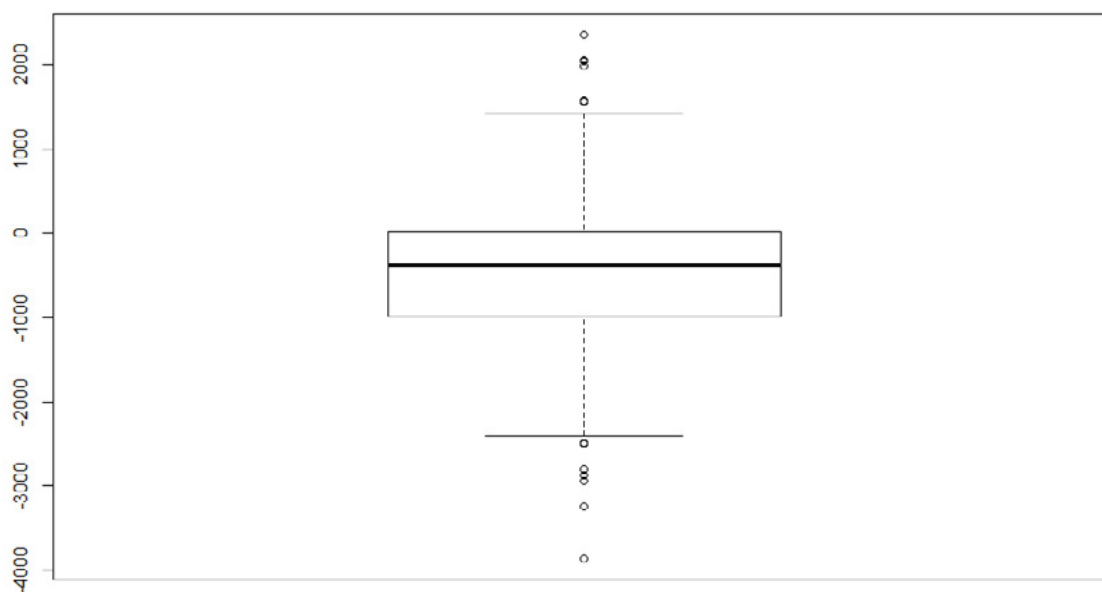


Figura 1. Distribución de los datos del *floor transfer offset* de la tertulia de Amigas y conocidas.

Estos gráficos relacionan dos variables: las agrupaciones de los valores de FTO con la muestra del corpus correspondiente. Una vez hecho esto, el programa crea el gráfico, el cual tiene en el eje y los valores del parámetro en cuestión. En el centro del gráfico se pueden observar varias figuras: una caja rectangular, una línea gruesa en algún punto de esta, dos líneas que sobresalen por arriba y por abajo y que terminan en forma de *T* y, finalmente, puntos sueltos o agrupados en ambos extremos. Entre los dos extremos en forma de *T*, llamados *bigotes*, se recogen todos los datos estadísticamente relevantes del parámetro estudiado. Esto quiere decir que, de todos los datos recogidos, los que más veces se repiten están dentro de estos dos toques. Además, de entre todos estos datos, los que más incidencia tienen son los que se encuentran dentro de la caja central, la cual representa el 50% de las cifras. Dentro de esta, la línea gruesa señala la mediana de todos los valores, el valor central de los datos. Por encima de dicha recta se encuentran del 50 al 75% de los datos y, por debajo, del 50 al 25%. Estos también tienen una mediana, llamada cuartil, que representa de todos esos datos restantes cuáles son los que se repiten más dentro de dichos límites.

En último lugar, los datos más extremos están señalados mediante puntos, externos a todo lo anterior. En muchas ocasiones, estos valores no son representativos de la muestra y debería considerarse su eliminación de la contabilización total porque pueden afectar a los datos en tanto y cuanto se alejan de lo realmente característico. Aplicado a nuestro estudio, se ha encontrado que, en algunas ocasiones, estos valores extremos pueden deberse a hechos propiciados por hechos extralingüísticos, como un cambio de escenario o la introducción de otro elemento físico. Por lo tanto, no creemos que se deberían incluir en la discusión de los resultados porque no reflejan propiamente las pausas y solapamientos por cambio o robo de turno, sino que están motivados por hechos ajenos a la conversación y, aunque sí que afectan en la distribución del tiempo en el suelo interactivo, no están en línea con el objetivo de la investigación. Por motivos de espacio, se mostrará directamente la contabilización “limpia” en el análisis contrastivo.

4. Análisis y resultados

4.1 Análisis cualitativo: eje de la coloquialidad

El objetivo de este estudio es explorar la posible correlación entre la clasificación discursiva y situacional de cuatro muestras de habla del español peninsular y sus valores de FTO. Para ello, primero cabe abordar su clasificación siguiendo los parámetros de la propuesta Val.Es.Co., explicada anteriormente. De manera global, se han considerado algunos textos a priori más cercanos a la coloquialidad que otros, como se ha justificado en la sección anterior. Además, de manera interna, en el análisis particular de cada conversación o tertulia se ha avanzado desde las características comunes a las particulares, y se han diferenciado siguiendo los niveles de la propuesta Val.Es.Co. Conceptualizamos dichas clasificaciones como escalas “[formantes] de un continuum gradual y dinámico, en el sentido de que los rasgos pueden cambiar incluso en la misma interacción” (Briz y Albelda, 2013, p. 295), presentado en la [Tabla 2](#).

Como se puede observar en dicha tabla, tras una clasificación basada en el registro, el género y los rasgos coloquializadores, la tertulia de *Amigas* y está más alejada de lo prototípicamente coloquial y la conversación de *Carnet* es la más cercana. A priori, estos resultados no sorprenden. Las dos conversaciones comparten muchos rasgos, pero difieren en su finalidad (interpersonal en *Carnet*, transaccional en *Piscina*), en la relación de igualdad (la persona atendiendo en el polideportivo tiene mayor poder dado el contexto ya que sabe más sobre el tema tratado), la relación vivencial de proximidad (muy cercana en *Carnet*, ya que las hablantes son dos hermanas y la amiga de toda la vida de una de ellas, y alejada en *Piscina*, ya que las interlocutoras no se conocen) y la cotidianeidad temática (habitual en *Carnet*, pero con desnivel en *Piscina*, ya que la clienta no está familiarizada con el contexto, pero la encargada sí). En cuanto a las dos tertulias, no sorprende tampoco que se asemejen en sus características puesto que se engloban bajo el mismo género discursivo. Sin embargo, también encontramos diferencias: en primer lugar, la relación de igualdad sociofuncional no es del todo equilibrada, ya que, aunque todos tengan el poder de intervenir y la interacción no esté mediada por un moderador (como en un debate), en *Amigas* y *conocidas* hay una presentadora (Inés Ballester) que, en caso de que fuese necesario podría controlar las intervenciones de las demás participantes. En *Colgados del aro*, los cuatro tertulianos comparten sus roles sociofuncionales y aunque el presentador tácito sea Juanma López Iturriaga, no suele actuar como tal. En vez de eso, interviene como el resto de sus compañeros

Tabla 2. Propuesta de gradación del corpus según la contabilización de sus rasgos en un eje de coloquialidad.

Rasgos Por Niveles	-Prototípico → +Prototípico			
	Amigas y Conocidas	Colgados Del Aro	Piscina	Carnet
Registro	(-) Finalidad interpersonal (+) Tono informal (-) Ausencia de planificación	(-) Finalidad interpersonal (+) Tono informal (-) Ausencia de planificación	(-) Finalidad interpersonal (+) Tono informal (+) Ausencia de planificación	(+) Finalidad interpersonal (+) Tono informal (+) Ausencia de planificación
Género	(+) Oral (+) Inmediatez (+) Dinamismo (+) Dialogal	(+) Oral (+) Inmediatez (+) Dinamismo (+) Dialogal	(+) Oral (+) Inmediatez (+) Dinamismo (+) Dialogal	(+) Oral (+) Inmediatez (+) Dinamismo (+) Dialogal
Coloquializadores	(-) Relación de igualdad sociofuncional (-) Relación vivencial de proximidad (-) Marco de interacción familiar (-) Cotidianeidad temática	(+) Relación de igualdad sociofuncional (+) Relación vivencial de proximidad (-) Marco de interacción familiar (-) Cotidianeidad temática	(-) Relación de igualdad sociofuncional (-) Relación vivencial de proximidad (-) Marco de interacción familiar (-) Cotidianeidad temática	(+) Relación de igualdad sociofuncional (+) Relación vivencial de proximidad (+) Marco de interacción familiar (+) Cotidianeidad temática

y no se mantiene al margen, como sí hace muchas veces Inés Ballester. Esto se ha asegurado mediante una contabilización de las intervenciones de ambos presentadores, la cual muestra que Inés Ballester se inserta en el discurso un total de 85 veces de 468 (18%), mientras que Juanma López Iturriaga 342 veces de 979 (35%). La siguiente desemejanza entre ambas tertulias es la relación vivencial de proximidad, la cual es más cercana en los participantes del programa de básquetbol, quienes hablan incluso de sus familiares en el programa, y más alejada en la otra tertulia, más centrada en el tema de la sección concreta. En discusión se relacionará el valor o posición de cada género dentro de la escala de coloquialidad con la manifestación temporal de la distribución del turno para ver si se corresponden los valores de FTO con su distribución discursiva más cualitativa.

4.2 Análisis cuantitativo: valores del floor transfer offset

La distribución de los valores del FTO se pueden observar en la Figura 2. Visualmente se aprecia cómo el reparto de los resultados numéricos varía según la muestra del corpus, sin una correlación directa entre el número de hablantes o la duración de cada una. También vemos cómo la conversación del *Carnet* y la tertulia *Colgados del aro* acumulan más datos extremos, tanto positivos como negativos, ilustrados mediante los puntos en el eje y. Además, se observa cómo la mediana de cada muestra (línea negra dentro de cada caja) se acerca más al valor 0 en la conversación menos prototípica y se aleja más en la tertulia, la muestra del corpus menos coloquialmente prototípica. Ninguna de estas rayas divide su respectiva caja en dos partes iguales, sino que, en vez de eso, parece dejar más espacio (y, por tanto, datos) en su parte inferior. El hecho de que la mediana de cada uno de los textos sea negativa y que el mayor grupo de datos esté abajo, significa que hay más valores negativos que positivos, puesto que se encuentran por debajo de esta división. Esto contradice lo que se proponía en los estudios de Stivers *et al.* (2009) y Roberts *et al.* (2015), en los que se abogaba

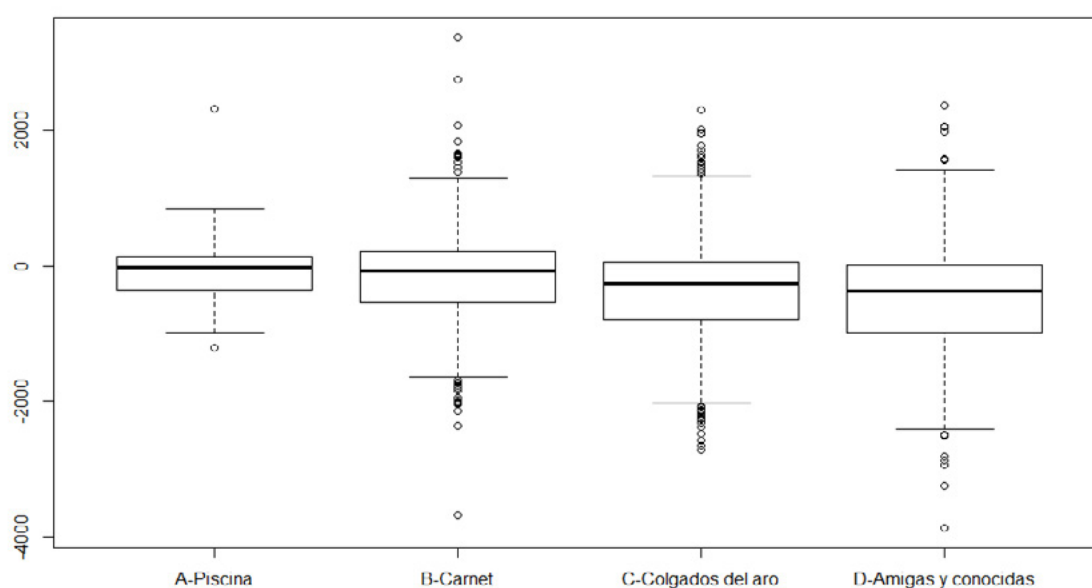


Figura 2. Distribución de los valores del FTO en todo el corpus.

por una inclinación de la curva de distribución hacia la derecha. Por lo tanto, lo que parece demostrar nuestra propuesta es que la preferencia en estas conversaciones y tertulias no está por los lapsos de habla, sino por los solapamientos o habla simultánea.

Los resultados numéricos más concretos quedan recogidos en la [Tabla 3](#), expresados en milisegundos (ms). En líneas genéricas, todas las medianas del corpus son valores negativos, lo cual, como decíamos, contradice a Stivers *et al.* en la preferencia universal por “minimal overlap and minimal gap between turns” (Stivers *et al.*, 2009, p. 10589). Si se comparan las dos conversaciones con las dos tertulias, se debe puntualizar en la diferencia notable entre ambos géneros: si bien todos los resultados medianos apuntan a una mayor presencia de solapamientos y de habla inmediata, es cierto que estos valores son más negativos en las tertulias que en las conversaciones. Cabe recordar que los estudios sobre el FTO revisados antes solamente se centran en conversaciones y en secuencias concretas, por lo que, aunque nuestros resultados no coincidan con las conclusiones de estudios previos, los valores que más se acercan a la positividad son aquellos de las conversaciones.

Tabla 3. Resultados de los valores del *floor transfer offset*.

Corpus	Mediana	Valor extremo positivo	Valor extremo negativo	Cuartil 1	Cuartil 3
Piscina	-37	837	-1200	-247,3	97,4
Carnet	-54,5	3992	-5392	-502,5	198,2
Colgados del aro	-257,5	2296	-2721	-782,2	58,7
Amigas y conocidas	-380	2358	-3860	-984	17

5. Discusión

Partiendo de nuestra hipótesis inicial, que la distribución del tiempo entre intervenciones puede estar influenciado por factores concretos de la situación comunicativa, nos dedicamos en esta sección a contrastarlo con los resultados cualitativos. En nuestra clasificación previa siguiendo el modelo Val.Es.Co., se concluye que las dos conversaciones son más cercanas a la prototipicidad coloquial, mientras que las tertulias se alejan más. Específicamente, la conversación que versa sobre el carnet de conducir presenta todos los rasgos esperables de una interacción prototípicamente coloquial. La conversación acontecida en la piscina municipal se aleja, con 5 rasgos (de 11) que difieren de lo esperado prototípicamente. A pesar de ello, ambas se engloban dentro del género discursivo de conversación. En cuanto a las tertulias, divergen en rasgos como la finalidad, que es transaccional, el nivel de planificación, que existe dada la división en secciones, y la ausencia de los rasgos coloquializadores.

Por otra parte, los resultados cuantitativos señalan diferencias notables entre las muestras del corpus. Como se ha indicado, se puede ver una clara diferencia entre las medianas de cada muestra y su distribución de datos y no se pueda confirmar que se

dé preferencia al tiempo entre intervenciones, como se planteaba en otros estudios del FTO. Primeramente, las dos conversaciones no tienen medianas inferiores a -100ms, mientras que las tertulias exceden los -250ms. Sin prestar atención ahora a las rasgos concretos de la propuesta Val.Es.Co., parece ser que el género discursivo puede dar cuenta de las diferencias en el suelo interaccional. En una tertulia, se espera que los hablantes contribuyan y añadan opiniones constantemente. Por tanto, se presupone un mayor número de solapamientos provenientes de interrupciones o de proyecciones erróneas. La toma de turno no está tan preestablecida como en otros géneros discursivos televisados o proyectados en directo, como debates o entrevistas. A continuación, se comenta rasgo por rasgo del modelo Val.Es.Co. y se relaciona con los valores del FTO para desgranar, aun más, su posible correlación.

Respecto a los rasgos del registro (coloquial), se había determinado que el tono informal está presente en todo el corpus. Sin embargo, la finalidad es interpersonal en *Carnet* y transaccional en el resto. Dentro de la finalidad transaccional de *Piscina*, se podría explicar que su mediana de FTO sea mayor que la del resto del corpus porque la situación comunicativa requiere distracciones, como escribir datos en un ordenador o procesar el pago del bono por el que se pregunta. Esto puede llevar a una mayor distribución positiva del suelo interaccional, como se observa en el resultado del cuartil 3 (97,4 ms), el segundo más elevado. En cuanto a las tertulias, su finalidad transaccional (entretener a un público) obliga a los interlocutores a no dejar de hablar. Esto se puede observar también en el tercer cuartil de las tertulias (58,7 ms para *Colgados del aro* y 17 ms para *Amigas y conocidas*), en los que se aprecia la menor presencia de silencios en los programas. A su vez, ambas tertulias presentan los valores más elevados de cuartil 1, de solapamientos, más allá de sus medianas. Al fin y al cabo, los participantes de las tertulias interactúan para un tercer agente, por lo que estar en silencio no es una opción viable. Este detalle, intrínseco del género discursivo propio, impregna la tertulia de una necesidad constante de interacción, lo cual puede explicar los resultados.

Siguiendo con los rasgos del registro, una mayor planificación tendría como resultado, en principio, que la distribución del turno estuviese más equilibrada y medida. Consecuentemente, habría menos solapamientos, lo cual resultaría en unos resultados numéricos positivos del FTO. Se había determinado que la ausencia de planificación es mayor en las dos conversaciones, pero menor en las tertulias. En la conversación *Piscina*, defendemos que el valor más elevado de tiempo entre intervenciones también se puede explicar porque es un proceso más ritualizado (preguntar por información, aportar datos, pagar y demás) y, por tanto, con menor posibilidad de interrupciones y solapamientos imprevistos. Nuestra hipótesis inicial postulaba que, a mayor planificación, mayores serían los valores del FTO. Sin embargo, ambas tertulias, a pesar de haber sido clasificadas como más preparadas, presentan valores medianos muy negativos, indicando solapamientos y falta de espacio entre intervenciones. Desde nuestro punto de vista, es posible que la concepción de “ausencia de planificación” requiera matices llegados a este punto. En las tertulias hay planificación en tanto y cuanto son interacciones concebidas dentro de un tiempo específico en pantalla, dividido en secciones y limitado a ciertos temas de interés

común. No obstante, en una visión más micro analítica, la ordenación de las intervenciones en sí no está planificada, como sí lo estaría en una entrevista, con una dinámica clara de pregunta-respuesta. Por tanto, si bien no se puede considerar que haya ausencia de planificación en las tertulias por su manera de presentarse, se debe considerar que, de manera interaccional, no hay una premeditación de la organización de la toma de turno. Esto, juntamente con los otros valores explicados y por explicar, pueden justificar nuestros resultados.

Los rasgos más relevantes del modelo Val.Es.Co. en la diferenciación entre los componentes del corpus han sido los coloquializadores. Se había determinado que la relación de igualdad sociofuncional era equilibrada en la conversación de *Carnet* y en *Colgados del aro*, pero tenía un valor negativo en la conversación de *Piscina* y en la otra tertulia. Estas diferencias en la clasificación de la relación sociofuncional entre los hablantes no parece ser relevante para los resultados numéricos ya que no hay una correspondencia en su gradación: aunque la conversación de la piscina presente una relación desigual, como *Amigas y conocidas*, estas se encuentran los puestos contrarios en los resultados del FTO. Desde nuestra perspectiva, es posible que la relación de igualdad sociofuncional sea más relevante en la contabilización del *floor transfer offset* si se presta atención pormenorizada a cada intercambio y a la dinámica de sus interlocutores, como se ha adelantado en la comparación entre Inés Ballester y Juanma López Iturriaga. Esta exploración más detallada va más allá de los objetivos preliminares de la investigación presente, pero planteamos la posibilidad a futuros estudios.

El segundo rasgo coloquializador de interés en el corpus es la relación vivencial de proximidad, muy cercana en la conversación de *Carnet*, algo cercana en *Colgados del aro* y alejada en *Amigas y conocidas* y la conversación de la *Piscina*, respectivamente. En primera instancia, no parece que la relación vivencial entre los interlocutores pueda explicar los resultados del FTO. Entre las dos conversaciones, aquella en la que las hablantes se conocen más presenta una mediana más negativa (es decir, con más solapamientos), pero, al mismo tiempo, también muestra un valor del cuartil 3 más elevado (mayor abanico de silencios). A nuestro parecer, estos datos aparentemente contradictorios pueden justificarse por la cercanía de las hablantes: una relación más cercana puede facilitar que se interrumpan más y que no esté visto como algo negativo, en términos genéricos, pero, a su vez, también podría permitir que hubiese silencios más largos sin que estos resultasen incómodos y sin que hubiese la necesidad externa de rellenarlos. En el caso de las tertulias, *Amigas y conocidas* tiene la mediana más extrema de todo el corpus aun con una relación no próxima entre las hablantes. Más allá de los resultados contrastivos de la conversación de *Carnet*, parece que la relación vivencial de proximidad no pueda explicar la variación del FTO cuando se contrastan géneros discursivos y creemos que sería más esclarecedor hacer una comparación intragenérica en futuras investigaciones.

En último lugar, la cotidianeidad temática estaba presente solamente en la conversación de *Carnet*, en la que una de las hablantes comenta con las demás su experiencia sacándose en carnet de conducir. En la otra conversación se requiere cierto conocimiento específico

para poder informar sobre los bonos de la piscina. En el caso de las tertulias, si bien se supone que debaten temas genéricos y que no requieren conocimiento, no tienen libertad completa en los asuntos que comentan. En *Colgados del aro* no se ha elegido la sección más especializada, pero sí que hace falta cierto grado de conocimiento e interés para poder seguir el programa con normalidad, aplicado al contexto del baloncesto. La temática principal del fragmento analizado es cómo adaptar la liga de baloncesto, ya en curso, a las posibles medidas a raíz del Covid-19. Aunque los interlocutores no sean expertos sanitarios, sí lo son en nociones de baloncesto y su organización, con lo que los comentarios que hacen son a partir de unos conocimientos previos. Nuevamente nos encontramos con un rasgo del sistema Val.Es.Co. que no puede captar con totalidad las diferencias en el FTO del corpus.

En esta sección hemos trazado la posible correlación entre los valores del *floor transfer offset* del corpus, ninguno con mediana positiva que favorezca el silencio entre intervenciones, y las características situacionales siguiendo la taxonomía del grupo Val.Es.Co.. En la discusión hemos propuesto que hay, al menos, cuatro elementos del modelo de clasificación seguido que pueden dar cuenta de los resultados de cierta manera: la finalidad transaccional de entretener a un tercer agente provoca que las tertulias tengan un alto nivel de solapamientos y presenten los mayores valores negativos. Esta característica se puede explicar por el género en el que se enmarca y por las expectativas que tiene. La relación vivencial de proximidad, la relación de igualdad sociofuncional y el nivel de planificación han resultado relevantes cuando se comparaba cada muestra del corpus dentro de su mismo género. No obstante, de manera global, no se puede argumentar una correlación directa entre los resultados numéricos y las clasificaciones según el modelo seguido y se debería atender a otro criterio o aproximación para explicarlos.

Con esto en mente, creemos que hay dos ideas clave que se extraen del análisis del corpus desde esta aproximación novedosa y que pueden ayudarnos a entender los resultados: primeramente, el género discursivo (conceptualizado como una concepción basada en la repetición y en la aceptación cuasi ritual) parece ser un primer nivel para diferenciar entre los valores del FTO. La distancia notable entre las medianas de las conversaciones (-37 ms y -54,5 ms) y las tertulias (-257 ms y -380 ms) ya da cuenta de que hay algo subyacente que las diferencia. La distribución de los tiempos del suelo interaccional es un factor que los interlocutores no controlan y que marca una primera frontera prosódica e interaccional entre estos dos géneros discursivos. En segundo lugar, el hecho de que una interacción se englobe dentro de un género no parece determinar taxativamente su distribución del *floor transfer offset*. Un mismo género también está sujeto a variación si se atiende a las particularidades de cada intercambio, como las que hemos analizado en estas páginas, por lo que se deberían tener en cuenta las características situacionales dentro de un mismo género, no solo contextos interactivos específicos. *A priori*, la tertulia tampoco es uniforme en su distribución temporal, lo cual pone de manifiesto la posibilidad de que haya estudios futuros que exploren su definición y cómo se puede caracterizar, más allá de su descripción lexicográfica, por el contexto interactivo concreto.

A falta de una mayor exploración, desde nuestro punto de vista, otro nivel clave en la distribución del *floor transfer offset* sería el discurso predominante dentro cada intercambio. Una vez dos muestras de habla recaen dentro del mismo género (primer nivel) y se analizan sus características situacionales (segundo nivel), especialmente si no son muy dispares, se debería prestar atención a qué discurso destaca dentro de cada uno. Aplicado a nuestro corpus, esto podría explicar por qué *Piscina* parece ser más reticente al solapamiento, puesto que se estructura como un intercambio de información en el que raramente hay momentos polémicos. Por su parte, *Carnet* está formada mayormente por co-relatos, lo cual, unido a los rasgos situacionales de proximidad y ambiente relajado e informal, puede clarificar las diferencias. Anteriormente ya se ha propuesto la posible explicación de las tertulias atendiendo a la importancia del intercambio de opiniones, el cual no tiene tanto presencia *Colgados del aro* como en *Amigas y conocidas*. En futuras investigaciones, se debería indagar hasta qué punto los análisis tradicionales por género y rasgos situacionales pueden determinar el *floor transfer offset* sin atender a otros criterios como la estructura interna de los intercambios.

6. Conclusiones

Este trabajo tenía como objetivo buscar la posible correlación entre la distribución del *floor transfer offset* de la conversación coloquial y la tertulia en el español peninsular y los rasgos situacionales de cada interacción. El español no se había puesto en el punto de mira de los estudios interesados en el FTO y tampoco había, en otras lenguas, estudios que tomasen la variación situacional y discursiva como variable del suelo interaccional. Se extraen varias conclusiones de este estudio preliminar relacionadas con los distintos puntos de partida. En primer lugar, no se ha podido corroborar la supuesta universalidad lingüística de que haya preferencia por el silencio y que se rechacen los solapamientos. Los resultados del FTO de las conversaciones presentan medianas negativas, de -37 ms y -54,5 ms, si bien no son tan llamativas como las de las tertulias, con -257 ms y -380 ms de mediana. En cuanto a la distribución de los valores, las conversaciones se distribuyen entre -247,3 ms y 97,4, en la más alejada de lo prototípico, y -502,5 ms y 198,2 ms en la más prototípica. Estas cifras esclarecen por primera vez la variación de la distribución del *floor transfer offset* en la conversación en español, algo completamente novedoso de este estudio. A pesar de reconocer la necesidad de ampliar el corpus en futuras investigaciones, se establece un punto de partida y un primer entendimiento del funcionamiento de este fenómeno en dicha lengua-cultura en términos generales.

A lo largo de estas páginas se han intentado explicar las diferencias en los resultados basándonos, en parte, en los rasgos situacionales que definen cada intercambio. Sin embargo, si se compara todo el corpus y sus propuestas de caracterización, uno podría plantearse en qué medida se puede diferenciar entre géneros discursivos si se atiende solamente a los rasgos de la propuesta Val.Es.Co. Como se ha visto en la gradación final propuesta de las características situacionales (Tabla 2), algunos de los textos del corpus se distinguen, en el papel, por pocas características (como *Piscina* y *Colgados del aro*) y, sin embargo, su contabilización final de FTO es significativamente dispar. Por supuesto, esto

se podría explicar atendiendo a que son manifestaciones de géneros discursivos distintos, lo cual podría sugerir que esto es lo relevante debido a las expectativas inherentes de cada uno de ellos. Sin embargo, dentro de un mismo género, también hay una diferencia numérica considerable. Por lo tanto, caben más investigaciones que tomen la metodología del FTO desde la perspectiva discursiva para arrojar más luz sobre este fenómeno en el español.

Aunque se huya de la taxatividad y se reconozcan las limitaciones, los resultados obtenidos parecen indicar la importancia del género, al menos en un primer nivel, para la contabilización del tiempo entre interacciones, más allá de cómo son sus rasgos situacionales. Desde nuestro punto de vista, es posible que cada género discursivo lleve consigo (por repetición) expectativas y cierto grado de aceptabilidad de las interrupciones, solapamientos y ausencias de habla. Consecuentemente, los resultados del tiempo entre interacciones cambiarán inevitablemente si se modifica el género discursivo estudiado, el marco externo. Por lo tanto, al menos en una primera aproximación, se podría decir que el FTO, hasta ahora solamente estudiado desde un punto de vista intercultural y psicolingüístico, puede ser usado para caracterizar la separación discursiva de la interacción. En un segundo nivel ya toman más importancia algunos factores situacionales concretos (la cercanía entre hablantes, el marco de interacción, la temática...), los cuales apuntan a una posibilidad mayor de descubrir el porqué de las diferencias numéricas del FTO. Se propone aquí un tercer nivel más relevante, todavía por explorar, en el que se preste atención al discurso concreto más destacable de cada muestra del habla. Si una tertulia está más diseñada para que haya polémica, por ejemplo, esto puede generar valores más negativos del *floor transfer offset* que no se reflejarían necesariamente en su género o en sus rasgos siguiendo el modelo Val.Es.Co. Quedan abiertas así nuevas y numerosas vías de exploración de la distribución del suelo interaccional para ahondar más en cómo afectan las expectativas y normas discursivas a la distribución temporal del turno en el español.

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Integrating Vocabulary Goals in University Level, Spanish L2 Content-based Courses: Flashcards for Learning Frequent Words

Nausica Marcos Miguel ^{1,2*} & Melissa Huerta ²

¹Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

²Denison University, Granville, USA

Abstract: Integrating language goals in upper-level content courses in language majors at U.S. universities has been encouraged in the literature. Nevertheless, few studies have examined students' perceptions and gains when language learning goals are integrated. This action research study explores students' perceptions and their actual gains when using flashcards in two content courses to learn the 4K and 5K bands of most frequent Spanish words. These results are compared with the same and other students learning the 2K and 3K bands of most frequent Spanish words while enrolled in a previous language-focused course in the major. Both groups reacted similarly to the flashcard activities, even though the students in the language course found them better integrated with their class goals. Learning of frequent words was higher in the language course than in the content courses, as measured by the *ITT-Receptive Vocabulary Test*. Pedagogical recommendations are given about how to better integrate vocabulary learning goals in content-courses for language majors.

Keywords: Spanish L2, literature courses, higher education, world language majors, vocabulary development.

Un análisis de la integración de objetivos léxicos en cursos de contenido en español L2 a través de tarjetas digitales para aprender vocabulario frecuente

Resumen: Aunque se recomienda integrar la enseñanza de vocabulario en los objetivos curriculares de las clases de contenido impartidas en español L2 en universidades estadounidenses, pocos estudios han examinado el aprendizaje y las percepciones de los estudiantes cuando se sigue esta recomendación. Este estudio de investigación-acción explora las percepciones y el aprendizaje en dos cursos de contenido donde los estudiantes tenían que aprender la banda de vocabulario de las cuatro mil palabras más frecuentes y la banda de las cinco mil con tarjetas de vocabulario. Los resultados se compararon con el aprendizaje de las palabras de las bandas de dos mil y tres mil en un curso de lengua previo. En los dos tipos de cursos, los estudiantes percibieron de forma similar la actividad, aunque los estudiantes del curso de lengua la consideraron mejor integrada con los objetivos curriculares. El *ITT-Receptive Vocabulary Test* mostró mejores resultados en el curso de lengua que en los cursos de contenido. Se dan recomendaciones pedagógicas sobre cómo integrar objetivos léxicos en este contexto.

Palabras clave: ELE, cursos de literatura, educación universitaria, programas de lengua, desarrollo de vocabulario.

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*Corresponding author: nausica.marcosmigu@ugent.be

1. Introduction

Content-based language instruction is a popular approach to work on language development (see [Ruiz de Zarobe & Cenoz, 2015](#)). In the case of US universities, content-based instruction is the backbone of language majors, as students in the second and third-year are exposed to language learning through content in courses focusing on history, literature, linguistics, and culture studies. In this context, content learning is the main curricular goal, and language development is considered a by-product of content learning. Therefore, grammatical or lexical goals are not typically set in these courses (see [Donato & Brooks, 2004](#); [Marcos Miguel, 2022](#); [Polio & Zyzik, 2009](#); [Thoms, 2014](#)).

However, in the last decades, there has been a call for better integrating the teaching of content and language to strengthen both areas (e.g., [Maxim, 2014](#); [Paesani, 2017](#)). For example, to comprehend and produce texts, L2 users need to have both a large vocabulary breadth and depth (see [Qian & Lin, 2020](#)). Without knowledge of the most frequent words (1k to 5k), readers will have a hard time understanding texts. Although each text studied in a class will have specific vocabulary related to its genre and content, the most frequent vocabulary will be constant across texts. Therefore, since L2 learners need more than five years to master the 3,000 most frequent words (e.g., [Coxhead & Boutorwick, 2018](#); [Webb & Chang, 2012](#); [Zhang & Lu, 2014](#)), a certain degree of explicit instruction and planning is necessary. Whereas instructors can not explicitly teach all these words because of time constraints, they can point out resources for learners to acquire them.

This study proposes and analyses an explicit vocabulary learning intervention in two content courses, an introduction to literary analysis and an introductory culture course, taught at a Liberal Arts College (LAC)¹ in the United States. We explore how students perceived an explicit vocabulary learning goal (i.e., learning the 4k most frequent words in the literature course and the 5k most frequent words in the culture course) in these courses. We compare their perceptions and learning with the perceptions and learning of the same and other students in a previously taken language course focusing on the 2k and 3k most frequent words. The vocabulary learning goal serves two functions: 1) increasing the vocabulary breadth of the students, and 2) making them aware of the importance of this goal.

This study employs an action-based approach (see [Burns, 2005](#)) by documenting the integration of the language-learning goal through several iterations of the courses. Following this approach, the teaching practice always has priority over research methodology ([Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2019](#)). Because of the prioritization of the educational practice, this article can provide insights for researchers and practitioners. Especially, the study seeks to motivate discussion of how to integrate language goals for practitioners working in similar contexts.

¹ LACs are four-year, BAs granting institution that are characterized by small class sizes and faculty with strong interest in teaching.

In the following section, the instructional context will be described in detail, comparing it to other contexts with different degrees of language and content integration. Next, the importance of systematic vocabulary instruction for language development will be discussed.

1.1 World language major programs in the United States

World language major programs are two-tier programs: the first two years are devoted to language learning, while the last two years focus on content learning (Geisler et al., 2007; Lomicka & Lord, 2018). At approximately 50% of the universities in the United States, all students need to complete two or three semesters of language study unless this requirement is satisfied with a placement test showing prior knowledge of a language other than English (Lusin, 2012). Most students who continue with the language program beyond the required two or three semesters become majors or minors. Majors typically finish the program with a proficiency level of intermediate-mid or high in speaking, advanced low in reading, and intermediate high in listening on the ACTFL proficiency scale (Winke et al., 2020). As minors typically have less exposure to the language than majors, their proficiency levels are likely to be lower.

To facilitate comparison with research conducted in other instructional contexts combining L2 development and content learning, Macaro's (2018) classification system is helpful. Macaro identifies the following contexts: immersion, Content- and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (in Europe), Content-based Instruction (CBI/CBLT), and English Medium of Instruction (EMI). Content courses in a typical Spanish major in the United States are close to the EMI label, except for the fact that Spanish is the language medium of instruction instead of English. Features shared between EMI and the content courses from which data for this study were drawn are as follows:

1. "the L2 is not spoken locally" (i.e., in the LAC where the study took place),
2. "the majority of students are nationals of, or reside in the country,"
3. "teachers are bilinguals,"
4. "teacher is always a content specialist,"
5. "the L2 is [Spanish] only,"
6. There can be variability by institution and country (e.g., Spanish majors in the UK, Germany, etc.),
7. "few officially produced policies,"
8. "almost entirely content-driven," and
9. "program objectives in terms of L2 proficiency [are] rarely stated" (Macaro, 2018, pp. 39–40).

There are some differences when comparing EMI with content-based courses in Spanish programs. For Spanish majors, program objectives include cultural understanding as well as social objectives, which does not seem to be the case in EMI as Macaro (2018) describes it. Contrary to Macaro's description of EMI, teachers in content-based courses for a Spanish major received training in L2 and content teaching, and teaching materials can consist of both authentic materials, such as short stories written for native speakers, and pedagogical materials developed for L2 learners. Interestingly, in the case of Spanish in the United States, depending on the area where the university is placed, Spanish can be locally spoken. Moreover, Spanish heritage speakers, i.e., students who speak the language at home but have received little or no formal education in Spanish, are a frequent group among the Spanish majors.

Previous studies have shown that Spanish majors are not exposed to advanced language patterns in their content courses. This limited input suggests that learners cannot develop advanced proficiency (Darhower, 2014; Donato & Brooks, 2004). Simultaneously, content learning can be reduced if the learner has low proficiency (Roussel et al., 2017; Yang & Farley, 2019). Although little empirical research has been conducted on language development in content courses, some studies have explored vocabulary teaching and learning. Regardless of the instructional focus, students believe there is an increase in their vocabulary knowledge (see Polio & Zyzik, 2009). Students also frequently ask for vocabulary clarifications for both high-frequency and specialized words related to the subject matter (see Marcos Miguel, 2022).

In these courses, learners are exposed to content through lectures and through authentic readings and audiovisual materials, which can contribute to incidental vocabulary learning (see Webb, 2020b). By providing additional support (e.g., including glossaries, captions, or subtitles) and explicit instruction, educators can help learners overcome the challenges of reading (see Vander Beken et al., 2020) and listening to audiovisual materials (see Montero Pérez, 2022). In brief, whereas these courses provide plenty of input for incidental vocabulary learning, explicit learning through a more thoughtful and goal-oriented approach guided by the instructor should also take place. The next section will delve into current recommendations for vocabulary instruction.

1.2 Recommendations for vocabulary instruction

Vocabulary researchers agree that explicit instruction is necessary for successful vocabulary acquisition in L2 teaching contexts (see Newton, 2019). Needs analysis and systematic instruction are fundamental for developing vocabulary knowledge in any language program (Barcroft, 2012; Nation, 2001). Furthermore, teachers and learners also need to find the instruction appealing (Lindstromberg, 2020).

The acquisition of high-frequency vocabulary allows for understanding more words in a text, as frequent words tend to offer greater lexical coverage than lower-frequency ones. For example, in Spanish, the 3,000 most frequent words can cover 90% of the words in any given text (Davies, 2005a). In English, knowing the 5,000 most frequent words allows

readers to understand 98% of the words in a text (see [Barclay & Schmitt, 2019](#)). That is, the more words a student knows, the better their reading comprehension can be. For content-based courses where reading is a fundamental part, larger vocabulary sizes will facilitate students' comprehension.

However, students are not explicitly taught frequent vocabulary in the language courses. Lexical analyses of Spanish textbooks have revealed that beginner and intermediate textbooks do not select their target vocabulary based on general frequencies (see [Davies & Face, 2006](#); [López Bastidas & Sánchez-Gutiérrez, 2020](#)). Even though instructors might be aware of the importance of teaching frequent vocabulary, they do not tend to prioritize it (see [Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al., 2022](#)).

In an analysis of the Spanish vocabulary development of students at a large U.S. university who did not receive explicit instruction on high-frequency words, learners in the fourth year showed knowledge of around 2,000 of the 3,000 most frequent words. Learners in this year acquired vocabulary slower than their counterparts in the first two years of the major when instruction focused on language development rather than content ([Robles-García, 2022](#)). This speed reduction can be attributed both to the lack of explicit vocabulary instruction in content courses and to the increasingly specialized nature of the vocabulary in such courses.

Clearly, the nature of word frequencies influences learning (see [Marcos Miguel et al., 2023](#); [Robles-García, 2022](#)). As the words decrease in their frequency, learners will be less exposed to them, even if they are still relatively frequent. Since the recommended learning target is the 5,000 most frequent words, instructors need to be aware that learners will be more exposed to the first frequency bands than to the following bands. For example, in a previous study with third-semester students ([Marcos Miguel et al., 2023](#)), learners in the same institution recognized over 80% of the 1,000 most frequent words, but slightly over 50% of the 2,001–3,000 most frequent words.

Because of limited classroom time, using flashcards (both paper-based and digital) is a good strategy for learning individual words outside of the classroom (see [Dizon & Tang, 2017](#); [Yüksel et al., 2020](#)). Flashcards facilitate the creation of links between form and meaning while increasing vocabulary size (see [Barclay & Schmitt, 2019](#); [Nation & Webb, 2011](#); [Lei & Reynolds, 2022](#)). However, flashcard work may be less effective if students do not use them for formal or informal self-testing (see [Nation & Webb, 2011](#)).

Given that sustainable teaching practices must be easy for instructors to implement (see [Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996](#)), digital flashcards, which are easier to create and distribute than paper-based flashcards, can be a helpful tool for instructors who teach content-based courses. In this study, the sets were created by one of the instructors who then shared them with their colleagues.

2. Research Questions

Spanish L2 majors in the United States do not master the 5,000 most frequent words in Spanish (Blake, 2020; Robles-García, 2022). Therefore, this study compares students learning vocabulary from two bands of Spanish high-frequency vocabulary (2k and 3k) in a writing-intensive language course, which was the last course of the language-development sequence, with students learning additional bands of Spanish high-frequency vocabulary in the following two content courses. These two courses were consecutively taken: an introduction to literary analysis (learning the 4K band) and an introduction to culture (learning the 5k band) (see section 3.2 for a more detailed description of the courses and the motivation for the teaching approach).

To examine whether this intervention was successful, the following questions are explored:

1. What are students' perceptions regarding the use of flashcards for explicit vocabulary study of high-frequency words in content courses?
 - a. And in the last language course?
 - b. Are there differences and similarities between both groups (content versus language)?
2. Using longitudinal data, to what extent do 1) students in content courses and 2) students in a language course make gains in high-frequency vocabulary by using flashcards?
3. What is the relationship between students' perceptions of high-frequency vocabulary learning with flashcards and their actual vocabulary knowledge in content courses?
 - c. And in the last language course?
 - d. Are there differences and similarities between both groups?

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure following the action-based research paradigm

This pedagogical practice was integrated into a Spanish major at a LAC. Two instructors-researchers (A and C) collaborated in the data collection and analysis efforts, whereas four additional instructors shared data from their classes and provided feedback (see Tables 1 and 2). Professors A and C are the authors of this study. While professor A researches L2 acquisition and language instruction, professor C's research focuses on cultural studies. At the time of the study, each had over twelve years of experience teaching language courses. However, only professor C taught the introductory literary analysis class and the culture class. One of the strengths of this action-based research study is the collaboration between a language researcher and a cultural studies researcher.

Following the action-based research paradigm (see Burns, 2005; Burns & Khalifa, 2017), each study should include four phases—initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation—and have several iterations (see Figure 1, Table 1 & Table 2). Although qualitative data is the gold standard for action-based research (see Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2019), quantitative data was also collected, as quantitative methods are the favored approach in vocabulary research (e.g., Webb, 2020a). The qualitative and quantitative data-collection instruments—a questionnaire and the *ITT-Receptive Vocabulary Test* (ITT-Test) for Spanish (see Tschirner, 2021)—and their administration will be described in section 3.4.

Figure 1 shows the semesters in which the questionnaire and the *ITT-Test* were given to the students. The first time the vocabulary test was given is marked in blue. The red text indicates the courses in which the data was collected, i.e., language, literature, or culture.

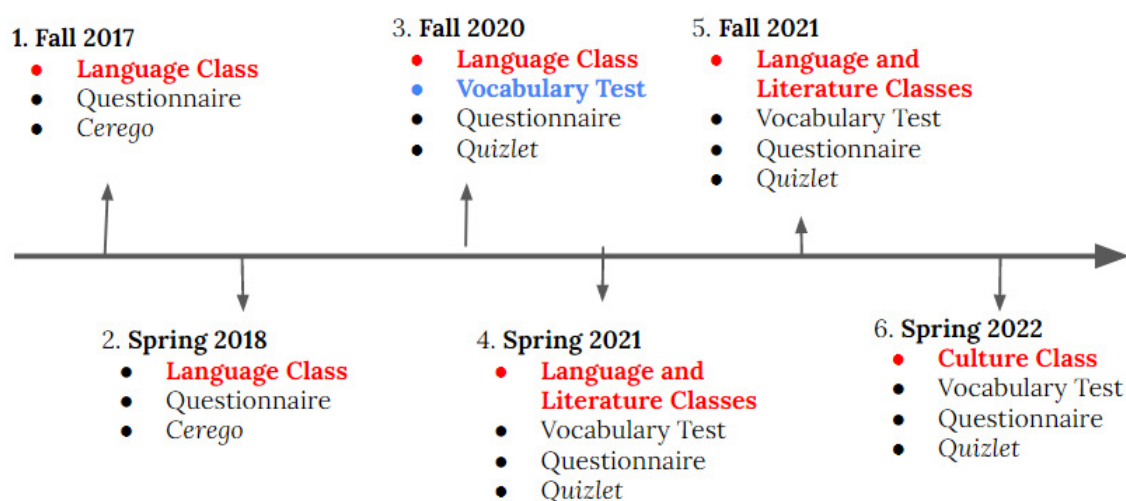


Figure 1. Timeline of analyzed data

During the Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 semesters, only the language courses participated in the study by completing the end-of-the-semester questionnaire. No additional data was collected from these students that semester or in the following semesters. This gap in data collection comes from the fact that professor A, who was the originator of the instructional plan, was not assigned to teach the writing language course during the two following academic years (i.e., 2018–2019; 2019–2020).² Professor A and C co-coordinated a fourth-semester conversation course in the major during Spring 2020 which started their common reflection on vocabulary development and contributed to their planning for the intervention during the 2020–2021 academic year.

Starting in Fall 2020, the *ITT-Test* was also given to the students in the language course at the beginning and the end of the semester. Since Spring 2021, data was collected in the content courses. Students who took the language course in Fall 2020 and after could

² Professor A was on leave for the first of those two years.

participate in the study through more than one course since the language course was a prerequisite for the content courses. Therefore, it was possible to collect data longitudinally through the three courses.

3.2. Description of the classroom curriculum and the flashcard activities (pedagogical intervention)

Before describing the flashcard activities in detail, the content, and goals of each of the three courses will be presented. Although each instructor could revise the syllabus of their section as they saw fit (see Table 1 and Table 2 for a list of instructors), the materials and activities were identical or similar across sections of the same course. In all courses, students were exposed to a variety of written and audio-visual materials that could facilitate incidental vocabulary learning.

First, the language course focused on developing students' writing abilities by working on several essays during the semester. As this class fulfilled a writing requirement set by the university, 50% or more of the course grade was determined by these writing activities. Process writing was the favored teaching approach, i.e., including planning, drafting, editing, peer-review, and instructor's feedback at several points in the process (see Seow, 2002). In addition, the class focused on developing students' grammar competence and included explicit grammar instruction. The textbook used was *Gramática para la composición* by Stanley and González (2015). The course also included listening, reading, and speaking activities, but to a lesser extent.

Second, the literature course was an introduction to literary analysis. Students read several short stories and other texts to illustrate different periods and genres of literature written in Spanish. For the first time in the language major, students were asked to read a full-length novel in Spanish, such as *Como agua para chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (1995). This course also fulfilled the university writing requirement. In addition to completing writing assignments, students presented and participated in class discussions in Spanish.

Third, the culture course was an introduction to the culture of the Spanish-speaking world. This course was structured much like the literature course. For example, students read several literary and academic texts to understand cultural and historical moments. Students also presented and discussed texts. Like the other two courses, this course fulfilled the university-wide writing requirement.

The need to initiate the vocabulary intervention was determined by an analysis of the vocabulary gains of lower-level students who took an instructor-designed test to show their knowledge of the 3,000 most frequent Spanish words (Marcos Miguel et al, 2023). Like the findings of Robles-García (2022), the results indicated that learners receptively acquired around 60% of those words after three semesters of study. However, while students could easily recognize the first 1,000 most frequent words (with an average of around 90%), the 2,000 most frequent words were slightly less recognized (around 80%), and the 3,000 most frequent words were less known (slightly over 50%). Given these findings, the training intervention started on the 2k band in the language course.

The format of the vocabulary activities was kept as similar as possible across iterations. Instructors A, B, C, D, and F (see [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) for a timeline of the courses they taught) included the flashcard activity in their syllabus and/or calendar. Apart from studying the flashcards on their own, the students completed in-class vocabulary tests (before the Fall of 2020) and *Quizlet* tests (from the Fall of 2020 on). These tests had a practice and accountability function for learning vocabulary and are not part of the data reported in this study. The frequency bands were taken from [Davies \(2005b\)](#).

During the first two iterations (see [Figure 1](#)), the online flashcard program *Cerego* was used. In these two iterations, the bands were divided into 18 sets, i.e., from the 1,001 word up to the 2,800th most frequent word. Each set included a selection of 11 to 22 words taken from each group of 100 consecutive words from each frequency band. The words were selected based on the instructor's perceptions of what their students did not know.³ Students were assigned one or two sets to learn on their own every week and took a vocabulary test in class every two weeks. This vocabulary test was graded by the instructor and was part of the students' grades.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the design of the program, the testing format and the sets varied in the following iterations. First, in Fall 2020, the program was changed to *Quizlet* given that it was free for the students. Second, as some students were attending class remotely and the institution called for a reduction in paper-based assignments, students used the "test" function in *Quizlet* to complete one weekly test and posted their scores in the course Learning Management System (LMS). This retrieval practice was fundamental to student's learning ([Karpicke & Roediger, 2008](#)). Students could repeat the tests as many times as they wished, and their scores usually ranged between 90% and 100%.⁴

Given that the testing using *Quizlet* was less demanding, each vocabulary set contained a larger number of words (100) compared to those in earlier iterations of the course. That is, all words from the 2k and 3k frequency bands were targeted. Every week, students were assigned two sets with a total of 200 words. The sets were progressively studied, i.e., starting from the most frequent to the less frequent words. In addition, students curated one set on their own and shared it with their classmates. This new activity aimed at giving students ownership of their learning by allowing them to choose the vocabulary they thought relevant.

Next, as the use of flashcards seemed to be well received by students in the language course, we implemented the vocabulary activities in the content courses (see [Figure 1](#)). In the literature course, we introduced 10 sets comprised of 100 words from the 4k-word

³ Although instructors do not always predict with full accuracy the vocabulary their students know and do not know, Spanish L2, university instructors can show strong correlations with students' knowledge ([Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al., 2023](#)). If the instructors know the course, they might be able to predict students' knowledge better than frequency ranges (low-, mid- and high-frequency ranges) ([Robles-García et al., 2023](#)).

⁴ Students in the Fall 2021 course completed the vocabulary tests in class with the sets of 200 words. This format was professor B's choice.

frequency band. Similarly, in the culture course, we introduced 10 sets of 100 words from the 5k-frequency band. The students worked on their sets independently and submitted their test scores weekly.

Figure 2 is a screenshot of the sets in *Quizlet* to illustrate how students accessed them. Each set was assigned during one week of the semester for a total of ten weeks. As all courses lasted 15 weeks, the students started working with the flashcards in the second or third week of the semester.

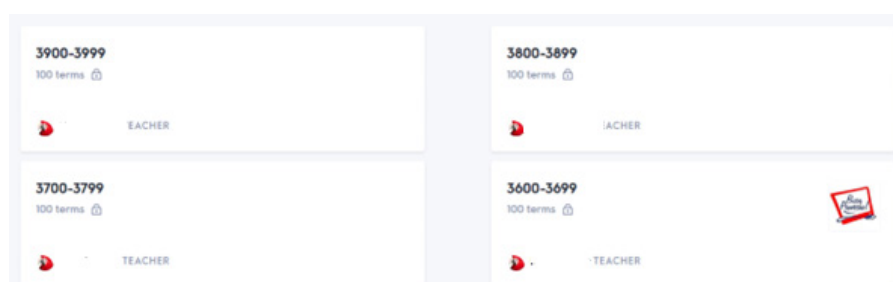


Figure 2. Screenshot of the vocabulary sets for the literature course.

Figure 3 shows a screenshot of a set with a flashcard and the different practice activities, including the “test” option. Once a student clicked on the flashcard, they could read the translation of the word into English, i.e., *pañuelo* – *handkerchief*.

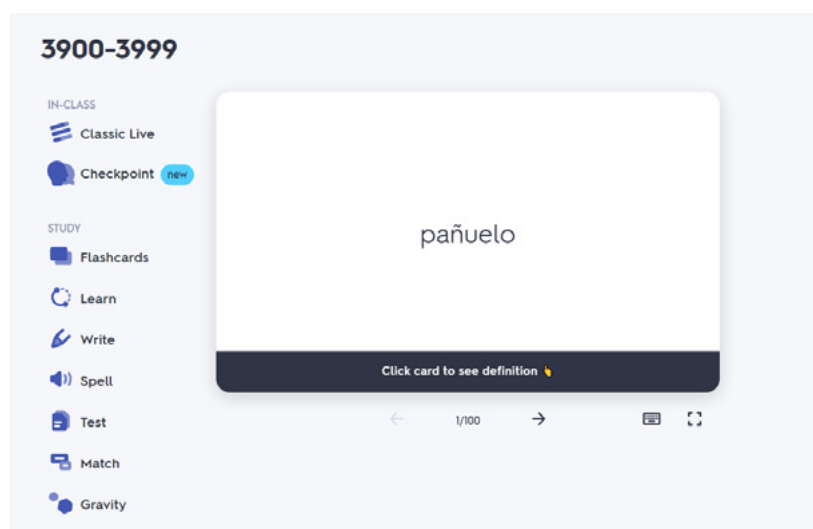


Figure 3. Screenshot of a flashcard for the literature course.

3.3 Participants in the research study

Table 1 and Table 2 offer a summary of the participating classes. Each class enrolled a maximum of 16 students. As not all students completed each data-collection instrument or decided not to share their results with the researchers, the third column indicates the

number of participants who completed each instrument in each class. Because of logistics issues, students in the Spring 2021 language course did not complete the questionnaire, while students in the Fall 2021 language course and the culture course did not complete the *ITT-Test*.

Table 1. Data reported in this study from the participating language sections.

Course	Semester	Instruments and Number of Participants	Instructor
Language Course 1,000-2,999 (Selection, in class tests)	Fall 2017 (2 sections)	Questionnaire* (n=30)	Professor A (researcher)
	Spring 2018	Questionnaire (n=12)	Professor A (researcher)
Language Course 1,000-2,999 (All words, online tests)	Fall 2020 (2 sections)	Questionnaire (n=9) Vocabulary Test (n=13)	Professor A (researcher)
	Spring 2021	Vocabulary Test (n=9)	Professor A (researcher)
	Fall 2021	Questionnaire (n=9)	Professor B

*The questionnaire data analyzed in the language courses consisted of one open-ended question.

Table 2. Data reported in this study from the participating content sections .

Course	Semester	Instruments and Number of Participants	Instructor
Literature Course (3,000-3,999)	Spring 2021	Questionnaire* (n=16) Vocabulary Test (n=15)	Professor C (researcher)
	Fall 2021 (2 sections)	Questionnaire (n=18) Vocabulary Test (n=9)	Professor D
Culture Course (4,000-4,999)	Fall 2021	Questionnaire (n=3) **	Professor E
	Spring 2022 (2 sections)	Questionnaire (n=3) Vocabulary Test (n=14)	Professor F

*The questionnaire data analyzed in the content courses consisted of one open-ended question and several closed questions (see [Figure 5](#)).

**Two of the three students also took the Literature Course at the same time.

The language course was the last course in the language sequence and the first course that fulfilled credits for the major. Students in this course had already completed the general language requirement of the university. However, for some students, this class was still a requirement, as certain university majors required students to complete two additional semesters of language beyond the university-wide language requirement. Students in the content courses were interested in pursuing a major or minor in Spanish and/or wanted to fulfill the writing requirement. These two content courses were the first courses in the major to focus on content rather than language.

Students in the language course completed a proficiency assessment at the end of the semester. This test, STAMP⁵, measures the four skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening), and provides a composite score of the learners' proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency scale. The average proficiency level of the 22 students who completed the *ITT- Test* in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 was 6.6 (SD=.88), which means that most students at the time of the study had achieved the intermediate-high level in the ACTFL proficiency scale.

To complement this proficiency information, Table 3 reports 1) the number of years participants had studied Spanish—both at the university and in other settings—before enrolling in the language course, and 2) the percentage of students who claimed that they spoke Spanish outside of class.

Table 3. Previous language experiences.

	Language Courses (N=51)
Years of Spanish before the University (% of students)	1 to 2 years = 8% 2 to 3 years = 4% 3 to 4 years = 8% 4 to 5 years = 31% Over 5 years = 49%
Spanish semester at the LAC (% of students)	1 st semester = 14% 2 nd semester = 16% 3 rd semester = 43% 4 th semester = 22% 5 th semester = 6%
Students who spoke Spanish outside of class	49%

3.4 Instruments and analysis

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Participants in each course completed an anonymous⁶ questionnaire at the end of the semester to report their perceptions of vocabulary learning. In addition to the demographic information in Table 3, the questionnaire included closed questions measured with a five-point Likert-Scale (see Figure 5) for the content courses as well as an open-ended question for all courses;⁷ namely *What is your opinion about the implementation of (the online flashcard system)? (e.g., what has worked well, what needs to improve?)*.

For the closed questions, the data was averaged to show tendencies. For the open-ended question, the two instructor-researchers read participants' responses and searched for recurring topics. After this initial common reading, the instructor-researchers

⁵ <https://avantassessment.com/stamp>

⁶ The anonymity is important as the students were in contact with the researchers because they were either their professors or colleagues of their professors.

⁷ The questionnaire in the language course included some additional questions about other class activities, which are beyond the scope of this paper.

individually revised their codes while they performed an initial coding of the literature course. Next, they met again to discuss and review the codes. Individually, the instructor-researchers coded all data for the literature sections and met again to discuss their coding. For cases in which the codes did not exhibit a 90% agreement, the instructor-researchers discussed participants' responses until the coding reached an agreement of 90% or higher. The same process to reach agreement was repeated for the language-course data and the culture-course data.

3.4.2 ITT-Receptive Vocabulary Test

The vocabulary test used in this study is the *ITT-Test* for Spanish. According to Tschirner (2021), the test format follows the English Vocabulary Level Test (Nation, 1990) and uses the Spanish frequency list created by Davies and Davies (2017). The *ITT-Test* measures the five bands of the 5,000 most frequent words. This test has been measured for reliability and internal validity and has shown a Cronbach's Alpha over .9 (Tschirner, 2021).

This test is available online⁸ and must be completed within 30 minutes. Figure 4 shows a screenshot of the section testing the first 1k words. Testers should choose the word that matches best the definition. Definitions with the same number (i.e., 1a, 1b, 1c) have the same six words to choose from. For every band of thousand words, the maximum score is 30, i.e., one point for each correct answer.

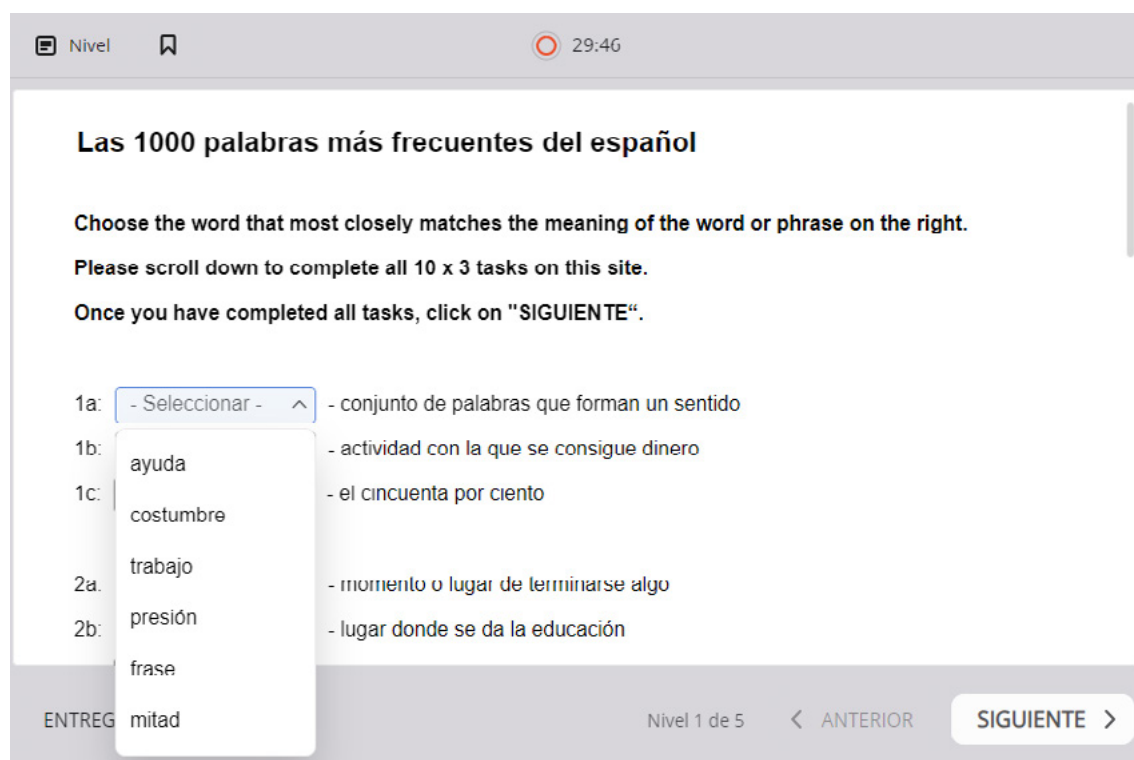


Figure 4. Screenshot of test items in the ITT-Receptive Vocabulary Test.

⁸ <https://itt-leipzig.de/about-the-vocabulary-tests-2-2/?lang=en>

Once the test is completed, participants see a report of their scores by frequency band as well as a total score. For this study, students were asked to submit a PDF version or screenshot of the report through their course LMS. The cumulative score of the test for all 5,000 words was used as a proxy for vocabulary learning.

In the language course (see Table 1), participants completed the test both at the beginning and at the end of the semester, while participants enrolled in the content courses completed the test only at the end of the semester. That is, data from some of these students was collected longitudinally. Thus, three paired t-tests were performed to compare the longitudinal scores: (1) learning in the language course, as measured by comparing pre- and post-test scores, (2) learning between the two content courses, as measured by comparing the test scores at the end of each content course, and (3) learning between the language course and a content course, as measured by comparing the post-test in the language course and the last test taken in either one of the content courses.

4. Results

4.1 Students' perceptions: content courses

Figure 5 shows the average scores (n=40) in response to the closed questions, which were only included in the questionnaire for the content courses. Responses to the first three questions are consistent with one another. Students showed agreement with the fact that they learned more vocabulary than in other semesters and disagreement with the fact that they learned less than in other semesters. Similarly, students seemed to agree that they learned the target words, but they were slightly more neutral with the statement that they saw the target words in their readings.

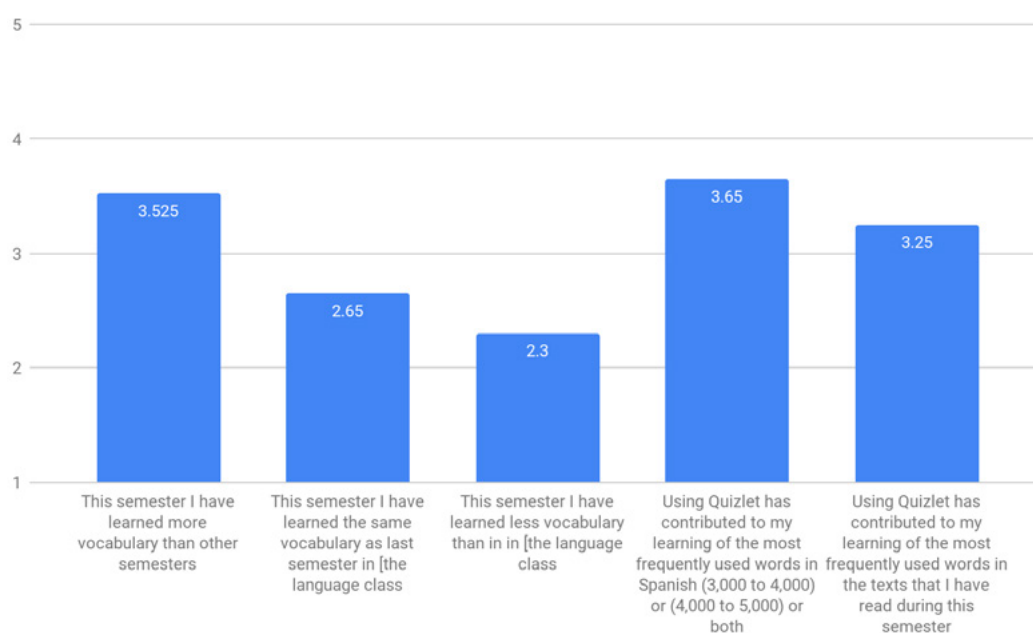


Figure 5. Closed-Questions in the Questionnaire, Likert Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

4.2 Students' perceptions: Comparing content and language courses

In Table 4, the codes used to categorize responses to the open-ended question are shown. The number of responses differs from the number of responses in Figure 5, as not all students

Table 4. Students' Perceptions in Content and Language Courses.

		Content Courses (N=33)	Language Course (N=60)	Comment from the Content Course (<i>Examples</i>)
Positive codes	Help in learning (e.g., explicit comment saying that)	55% (18)	82% (49)	Quizlet has worked well because it provides different ways for students to practice and memorize the words (Comment 1, Student 4).
	They like that there is a variety of activities with the flashcards	9% (3)	6% (4)	Quizlet is a great tool for practicing vocabulary because there are so many different activities. This allows people to find what type of learning is best for their retention (Comment 2, Student 9).
Negative codes	Not helpful for learning	18% (6)	2% (12)	[...] I wasn't incentivized to actually learn these words by heart. I think that there could have been more incorporation of the quizlet frecuencias during class to make it actually somewhat important that we learn the words (Comment 3, Student 11).
	Issues with the platform and the format of the activity (e.g., pictures instead of words, glitches)	24% (8)	48% (29)	The opportunity to learn more vocabulary is excellent, I think that having assignments to submit the Quizlets in [the LMS] would be helpful to stay on top of them (Comment 4, Student 18).
	Not appropriate number of words (e.g., too many words)	9% (3)	7% (4)	I think that Quizlet is a good way to test knowledge but the number of words in each set can be overwhelming and hard to carve out time to study them fully (Comment 5, Student 26).
	Difficulties with memorization	21% (7)	18% (11)	I think Quizlet is a good way to learn the vocabulary, especially because it introduces us to a lot of new vocabulary. However, I would only remember the words for a short period of time. I think that the Quizlet along with another practice tool would be a better approach. Rather than just learning the new words of the week, we could work to remember and use the new words (Comment 6, Student 17).
Neutral Codes	More integration with other class activities	24% (8)	2% (1)	(see Comment 3)
	More vocabulary tests in class	9% (3)	0	(see Comment 3)

who completed the questionnaire provided an answer to the open-ended question. However, because any given comment could be tagged with more than one code, the number of total coded responses is higher than the number of responses collected. Percentages are given with raw numbers between brackets. The right column shows some illustrative quotations from students' responses. The left column indicates whether these codes and comments reflect a positive, negative, or neutral view of the vocabulary activities.

Consistent with the results illustrated in Figure 5, most students considered the flashcards to be a helpful component of the learning process. This process, however, was not perfectly smooth, as students encountered issues with the format and/or the platform used to access the flashcards. This challenge seems to have arisen more frequently among students in the first two iterations of the language course, which is probably because these students were less familiar with the first software they used (*Cerego*) as well as with the format of the vocabulary intervention. Some students also preferred other formats for learning (e.g., on paper) and liked the idea of in-class tests to ensure accountability. Moreover, some students, mostly from the content courses, also mentioned the importance of integrating the flashcard activities with other topics in the class.

4.3 Quantitative results: ITT-Receptive Vocabulary Size Test

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the *ITT-Test* each time the test was administered. The *ITT-Test* was given both at the beginning and the end of the semester in the language course (two sections in Fall 2020 and one section in Spring 2021), but only at the end of the semester in the content courses (one section of the literature course each in Spring 2021 and Fall 2021, and one section of the culture course in Spring 2022) (see Tables 1 and 2). By sequencing testing this way, the longitudinal data collection follows the basic tenet of the traditional pre- and post-study design. The *ITT-Test* cumulative score for all 5,000 words of each test administration was used as a proxy for learning.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the ITT-Test (all participating students).

Course and Test	Participants	Mean (100%)	SD
Pre_language course	22	59.77	17.20
Post_language course	22	68.86	15.56
Literature	33	68.75	14.88
Culture	15	74.80	17.19
Content course (literature + culture)	35	71.26	15.60

To explore whether the increase in vocabulary learning was statistically significant, paired t-tests were performed. These analyses were limited to the scores of those students who completed the vocabulary test more than once. Table 6 depicts the descriptive statistics for the analyzed students in each t-test, as the sample of students differed by t-test. For example, the *post-language course* score is different in the second row and the fifth row. In the second row, the score belongs to the sample of students (n=22) who took the test at the

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the ITT-Test (paired t-tests).

Paired T-test	Course and Comparison	Mean (100%)	SD
Language course (n=22)	Pre_language course	59.77	17.21
	Post_language course	68.86	15.57
Content courses (n=11)	Literature	65.64	15.59
	Culture	70.18	17.74
Comparison: language versus content courses (n=18)	Post_language course	70.39	14.19
	Content course (literature + culture)	72.72	14.72

beginning and the end of the language course (*pre-* and *post-language course*). In the fifth row, the score refers to the students (n=18) who took it at the end of the language course and the end of one of the content courses. By pairing the tests this way, the analysis follows a pre- and post-test design.

First, to gauge learning in the language course, the pre- and post-test scores for students enrolled in that course were compared. The mean scores between both tests were significantly different (see Figure 6), $t(21)=-6.002$, $p<.001$, suggesting that there was an increase in receptive vocabulary knowledge. There was a large effect size ($d=-1.28$).

Second, the scores in the content courses were compared to each other (see Figure 7).

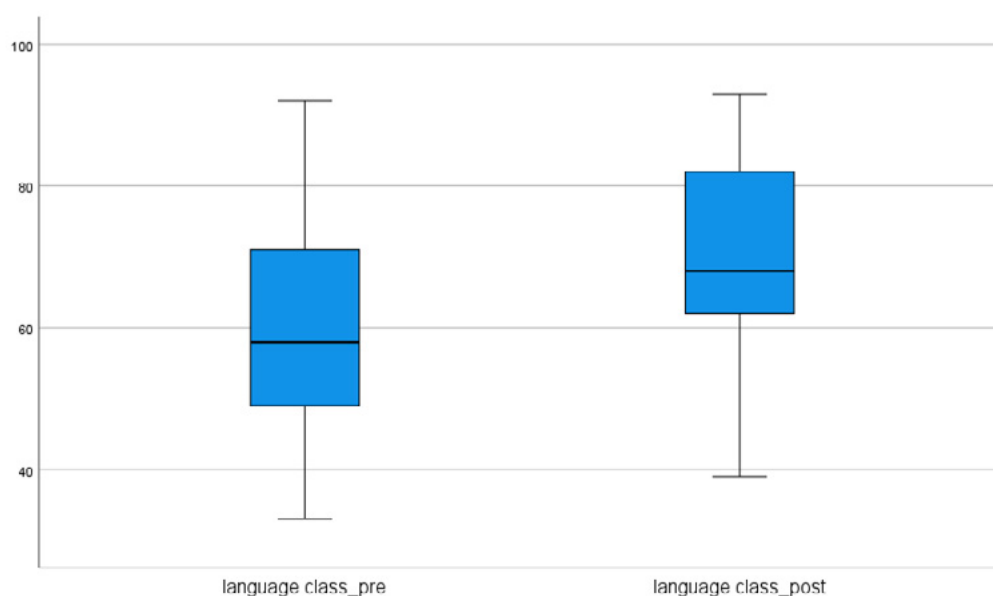


Figure 6. Descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-test in the language course (n=22).

The results were not statistically significant, $t(10)=-2.26$, $p=.047$, which suggests that there was no statistically significant increase in knowledge from one content course to the other. The p-value is established at $<.005$ in this study (see Benjamin et al., 2018). There was a medium effect size ($d=-.68$).

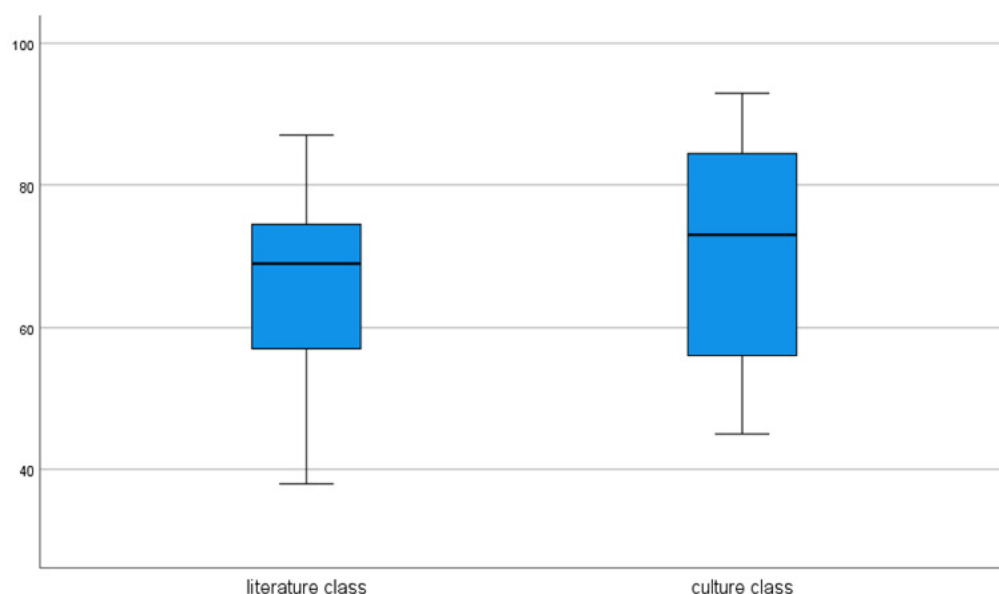


Figure 7. Descriptive statistics comparing the two content courses (n=11).

As the differences in the scores between the two content courses were not statistically significant, the scores were considered comparable and were interchangeably used as a proxy for vocabulary learning in content courses (see Figure 9). This strategy resulted in a slightly larger sample size than the one that would have been obtained by comparing the language course score with each content course score individually.

Figure 8 displays the post-test scores in the language course and the content course scores. The paired t-test result was not statistically significant, $t(17)=-1.209$, $p=.243$, which

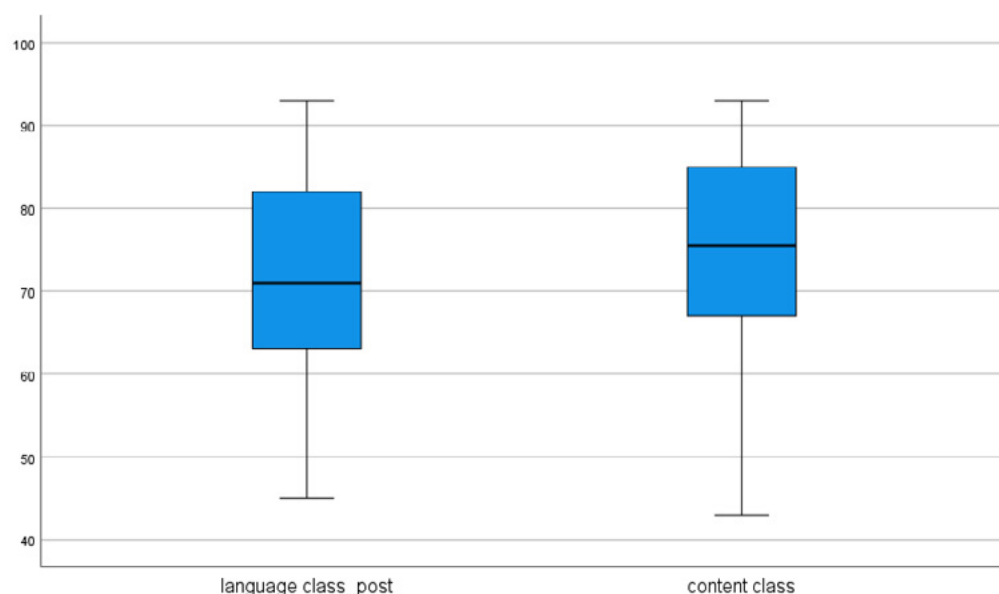


Figure 8. Descriptive statistics comparing the score from the last content course taken and the post-test score in the language course (n=18).

suggests no statistically significant increase in knowledge in the content course compared to the language course. There was a small effect size ($d=-.28$).

As Tables 5 and 6 have shown, there were large differences in SDs. To better illustrate the differences in students' developmental patterns, Figure 9 displays the growth, attrition, and/or retention of the 18 students who took the language course and either one or two of the content courses. The order of the tests is shown in the sequence they were taken. While all students scored higher on the *ITT-Test* taken at the end of the language course than on the one taken at the beginning, only 12 students showed higher scores at the end of the last content course than at the end of the language course.

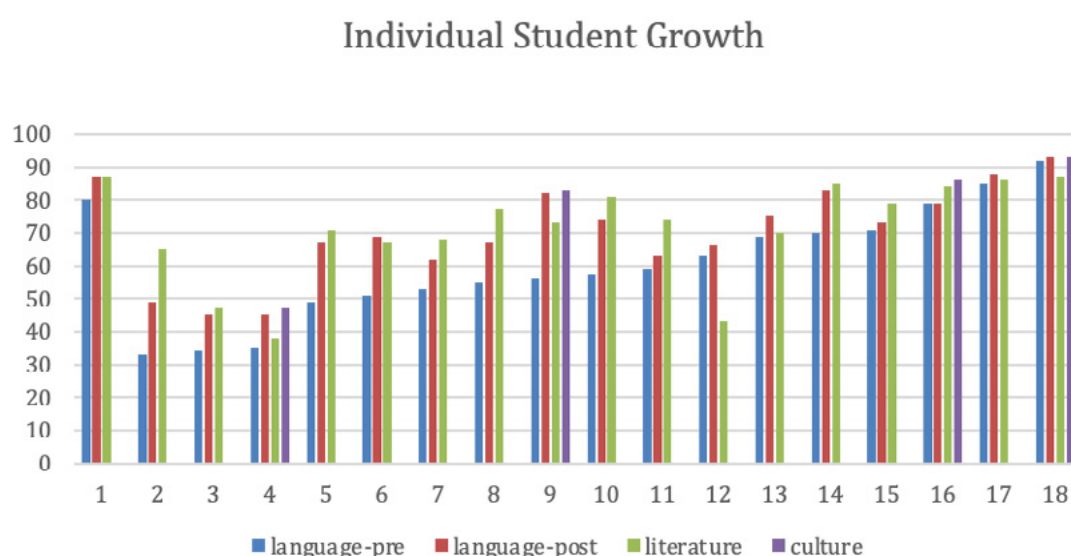


Figure 9. Individual Student Growth (Language and Content Courses, $n=18$).

5. Discussion

The main goal of the intervention was to integrate intentional learning of the most frequently used Spanish words into two content courses following a flashcard activity that started in the last language course the students took. The success of the intervention from the point of view of the students (their perceptions) and their actual gains will be discussed in detail in this section. The first research question and its subsections will be revised next: *What are students' perceptions regarding the use of flashcards for explicit vocabulary study of high-frequency words in content courses? And in the last language course? Are there differences and similarities between both groups (content versus language)?*

Table 4 suggests that both groups perceived they learned vocabulary using the flashcards. However, the positive perceptions were slightly lower in the content courses than in the language course. Figure 5, nevertheless, suggests that students in the content courses tended to agree with the idea that they learned more vocabulary during the

semester in which this study was conducted than in other semesters. We take these perceptions of learning as a positive effect of the flashcards, and of students' awareness of the vocabulary goals.

These results are consistent with students' perceptions in three similar content courses described in [Polio and Zyzik \(2009\)](#). In these three courses, vocabulary instruction came primarily from preemptive lexical focus on form, but not from explicitly planned activities in or outside the classroom. Moreover, the students in the course with the most focused instructor on vocabulary instruction perceived higher vocabulary learning than students in the two other courses with instructors less focused on vocabulary development.

In this current study, a crucial difference between the perceptions of students in the language course and students in the content courses is that the latter would like to see more integration of the flashcard activity in their courses. We assume the absence of similar comments in the language course comes from its clearer goals of language learning. In the language course, there was, however, one student who asked for more integration of the activity where students created their set in *Quizlet*. From our perspective, asking students to create their own set should provide them with the opportunity to better integrate their learning with the course activities. This particular learning activity deserves further exploration in the future.

Students in the content courses also highlighted the need to include more in-class tests, although this idea was not raised by students in the language course. We interpret this perception as a call for more accountability. Although allowing students to take the test on *Quizlet* as many times as they want is a productive idea for those students who are focused on their learning, it might be a way to pass the test with minimal effort for those who have other priorities at the time of taking the test (e.g., they can consult additional materials). At the end of the day, learners' time investment depends on their individual choices. In-class tests, on the other hand, require all students to be on top of their learning if they want to learn and/or obtain a high grade.

Something to consider, as well, is the number of words to be included in the tests. Smaller sets might be more appropriate for in-class tests than for online-based tests. In the first iterations (before Spring 2020), the sets were smaller, with around 20 words, to ensure time for learning in a week. After the move to online teaching due to COVID-19, some students found the 100-word sets too large, especially if they were tested in class. Future classroom-based studies could assess what combinations of set sizes, testing modes, and set creators (student vs. instructor) can better help learners.

Another interesting difference in perceptions relates to the ease of the platform. The percentage of students who found issues with the platform doubled in the language course compared to the content courses (24% vs. 48%). These differences may be attributed to students' familiarity with the platform: the students in the content courses were

accustomed to the activity and the platform since they had used it in previous courses. Moreover, students reported in informal conversations that they used *Quizlet* in high school; thus, this online tool may have already been familiar to most of the participants.

To address the second question, *Using longitudinal data, to what extent do 1) students in content courses and 2) students in a language course make gains in high-frequency vocabulary by using flashcards?*, the scores in the *ITT-Test* were compared using paired t-tests in three ways; namely (1) scores at the beginning of the language course with scores at the end of the language course (see Figure 6), (2) scores at the end of the two content courses (see Figure 7), and (3) scores at the end of the language course and the end of the last content course taken (see Figure 8). While the difference between pre-test and post-test scores for students in the language course was statistically significant, with post-test scores being higher than pre-test scores, the difference between post-test scores in the language course and scores in the last content course was not statistically significant. There was also no statistically significant difference in vocabulary learning between both content courses.

These findings suggest that students did not grow in their learning of the 5,000 most frequent words after the language course. The lack of a statistically significant increase in learning in the content courses does not mean that students learned no vocabulary. For example, they may have learned lower-frequency words specific to the course topics or they may have increased their depth of vocabulary knowledge. Overall, these results demonstrated that students retained the vocabulary knowledge they gained in their language courses.

With the answers to both questions, we can now answer the third research question and its sub-questions, *What is the relationship between students' perceptions of high-frequency vocabulary learning with flashcards and their actual vocabulary in content courses? And in the last language course? Are there differences and similarities between both groups?*

Learners in the content course perceived that they had learned the most frequent words and other words (see Figure 5), yet their scores in the *ITT-Test* were not consistent with those perceptions. Learners in the language course perceived they learned with the flashcards, and their vocabulary scores also showed learning.

Additional factors affecting these results need to be considered. First, the sample size comparing the content courses with the language course is smaller than the sample size of the language course (*pre-* and *post-*). Second, students' scores vary widely (see Figure 9). In brief, although we cannot conclude that students' actual learning in the content courses is higher than in the language courses, knowledge did not decrease from one course to the other, which suggests retention. The individual patterns reflected in Figure 9 also show a general increasing trend. As mentioned earlier, students' depth of vocabulary could have increased, and their learning may have included recognition and/or production of more specialized, lower-frequency words.

Based on these findings and additional anecdotal data, we offer pedagogical reflections and recommendations as well as ideas for further research. In informal conversations, some students pointed out that their classmates might not be aware of the plethora of activities available in *Quizlet*.⁹ Increased training on how to use the website might be a way to integrate the vocabulary goals more clearly. *Quizlet* also includes two games that allow for informal, in-class assessment of students' learning. While some instructors might feel these games are more appropriate for younger students, they can easily be used with university students, since they require little class time and contribute to vocabulary learning. As the students suggested, implementing formal and informal in-class tests can also improve their learning by increasing their accountability.

Furthermore, since students were not completely convinced that the learned words appeared frequently in their readings, an additional activity we recommend is introducing applications that provide information on texts' word frequencies, such as "my texts" in *Corpus del Español* (Web/Dialects) (Davies, 2016) and *MultilingProfiler* (Finlayson et al., 2023). Instructors could ask students to use these applications when reading texts so that they can select words that might be new to them from the different frequency bands. This kind of activity can be integrated with social reading tools, which allow for commenting collectively on the same text while reading through an online platform.¹⁰ Working with these two resources—the multiple options of *Quizlet* and the applications to display word frequencies—can be a way to foster the lifelong autonomous learning that is a primary goal in any language class.

In addition to these tools, vocabulary notebooks can be a helpful strategy for incorporating both general and academic vocabulary into content classes (see Dubiner, 2017; Walters & Bozkurt, 2009). By explicitly telling students to notice whether they are targeting academic vocabulary or general vocabulary, we can make learners more aware of frequent vocabulary, as learners might not target high-frequency vocabulary in their notebooks without explicit training (see McCrostie, 2007).

In our informal conversations with participating instructors, we observed different degrees of enthusiasm for the vocabulary activity. One instructor objected that students must learn specialized vocabulary rather than general vocabulary to do well in the content courses. While specialized vocabulary is certainly fundamental in content courses, the importance of high-frequency vocabulary should not be underestimated. Therefore, the abovementioned applications and students' notebooks can be especially helpful in informing both students and instructors about the importance of frequent vocabulary.

The participating instructors' varied levels of enthusiasm might serve as an important topic for future research as there is a lack of research on instructors' perspectives on teaching and learning vocabulary (Newton, 2021). The number of studies on Spanish L2 in both language-focused (e.g., Sánchez-Gutiérrez et al., 2022) and content courses (e.g., Polio

⁹ There are other online flashcards that can be used instead of *Quizlet* such as *Anki*, *Lingco*, *Brainscape*, *Wordwall*, and *Memrise*.

¹⁰ See <https://libguides.denison.edu/c.php?g=312050&p=6475125/> for a list of social reading tools.

& Zyzik, 2009) is limited. Understanding instructors' perspectives is necessary to design and include sustainable language practices in content courses. For future research, knowing when and how instructors could be interested in combining opportunities for incidental learning with their own designed materials and other materials for explicit learning would provide insights into what these instructors need to further foster vocabulary development.

Because of the action-based nature of the educational practice, the data presented has some limitations. First, although including a control group is a methodological recommendation in vocabulary research, none was included here. Nevertheless, working with flashcards is better than not working with them as previous research has already demonstrated (see Nation & Webb, 2011; Webb et al., 2020). Second, the analysis carried out here focuses only on the cumulative score of all frequency bands. While the *ITT-Test* measures each frequency band individually, students' submitted PDFs and/or screenshots of their scores did not always show disaggregated data for each band. Further classroom interventions should emphasize the importance of each band, not only to raise students' awareness of the distinctions between bands and the need to learn them but also to ensure that the data is disaggregated for research purposes. Third, we did not collect any information on how the students worked on their own with *Quizlet*. Although *Quizlet* does not track the time spent on a set, it shows whether the students practice the sets on a given week. Collecting these data points (i.e., use of the flashcards and the other *Quizlet* activities for each set by the student, see Figure 3) could be helpful to better understand how they learned and what learners' behaviors can contribute to greater success.

Finally, research in courses that are not part of the required language sequence typically results in smaller sample sizes than research conducted in lower-level courses. Although we were able to increase the sample size by including more iterations, this solution presented another challenge; namely, participating teachers used a variety of teaching practices. While the resultant data reflect the reality of our program, they may not be generalizable to other contexts. Nevertheless, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for triangulation of data, thereby increasing the likelihood that similar patterns may be seen in other programs.

6. Conclusion

This action-based study has explored the feasibility of including an explicit language learning goal in content courses, i.e., learning high-frequency words with flashcards. This study also compared perceptions of learning with actual learning within and between content- and language-focused courses. While perceptions of learning seem higher than actual learning, we take this finding as a positive result, given the contingency of vocabulary learning. Overall, using flashcards seems an appropriate tool for systematic vocabulary instruction in content courses.

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Grammatical complexity and lexical diversity in official oral examinations at B2 of the CEFR: the case of FCE and Official Language Schools in Spain

Raúl Azpilicueta-Martínez^{✉*} & Martin Majercik-Kubjatkova[✉]

Public University of Navarra, Pamplona/Iruñea, Spain

Abstract: Official examinations of English for speakers of other languages resort to substantially different tasks in order to assess oral proficiency. However, there is a lack of studies specifically comparing the language features elicited in oral tasks from different official examinations with the same population. This study compares measures of grammatical complexity and lexical diversity in the peer-peer interactions of 10 adult L1-Spanish learners of English performing one task from Cambridge's First Certificate in English (FCE), and a B2 task from the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (EOI, Spain) speaking tests. The results reveal statistically significant differences both at both grammatical and lexical levels. The ratio of dependent clauses to the total number of clauses was statistically significantly higher in the FCE task. Conversely, the EOI task elicited a significantly more varied lexicon from participants than the FCE task. The study sheds light on the potential of the FCE and EOI tasks to generate comparatively higher levels of grammatical complexity and lexical diversity respectively and highlights the need for further empirical research comparing different oral task samples from official language tests within the same population.

Keywords: CALF, EFL, FCE, oral proficiency testing, interaction.

Complejidad gramatical y diversidad léxica en exámenes orales oficiales de nivel B2 del MCER: el caso del FCE y de las Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas en España

Resumen: Los exámenes oficiales de inglés para hablantes de otras lenguas recurren a tareas sustancialmente diferentes para evaluar la competencia oral. Sin embargo, faltan estudios que comparen específicamente las propiedades lingüísticas elicidadas en tareas orales de distintos exámenes oficiales con la misma población. Este estudio compara medidas de complejidad gramatical y diversidad léxica en las interacciones entre pares de 10 adultos aprendices de inglés con L1 española al realizar una tarea del First Certificate in English (FCE) de Cambridge y una tarea de nivel B2 de las pruebas orales de la Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (EOI, España). Los resultados revelan diferencias estadísticamente significativas tanto en el nivel gramatical como en el léxico. La proporción de oraciones subordinadas respecto del número total de oraciones fue estadísticamente mayor en la tarea del FCE. Por el contrario, la tarea de la EOI elicó de los participantes un léxico significativamente más variado que la del FCE. El estudio arroja luz sobre el potencial de las tareas del FCE y de la EOI para generar, respectivamente, niveles comparativamente más altos de complejidad gramatical y diversidad léxica, y subraya la necesidad de continuar la investigación empírica que compare distintas tareas orales de exámenes oficiales dentro de la misma población.

Palabras clave: CALF, inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL/ILE), FCE, evaluación de la competencia oral, interacción.

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*Corresponding author: raul.azpilicueta@unavarra.es

1. Introduction

The assessment of oral proficiency has been rightly labelled as “an extremely difficult skill to test, as it is far too complex (a skill) to permit any reliable analysis to be made for the purpose of objective testing” (Heaton, 1988, p. 146). In contrast with the testing of other linguistic skills, the nature itself of the assessment of Foreign / Second Languages (FL/SL) speaking seems to present significant challenges having to do with its reliability, validity, being live and requiring the presence of an examiner, as well as cost and time-efficiency considerations (Foot, 1999).

Perhaps consequently, speaking tests from ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) institutions worldwide resort to different testing formats, or tasks, with which to assess oral proficiency. Interestingly, a growing body of research (e.g., Foster & Tavakoli, 2009; García-Ponce & Tavakoli, 2022; Gilabert, 2007; Ortega, 1999; Skehan, 2009) has been providing increasing empirical evidence of how task variations at different levels, e.g. kind of gap within the task, task goal, linguistic requirements or task complexity, can potentially affect the language output of same-level learners significantly. In other words, different oral tasks can provide different levels of performance in different oral measures. At the same time, different authors have warned about the excessive importance granted to grammatical measures (grammatical accuracy and complexity) in oral test ratings, as mixed results have questioned their validity to consistently differentiate between adjacent proficiency levels (e.g. Iwashita et al., 2008; Seedhouse et al., 2014). This fact has raised awareness about the need to resort to more reliable indicators of oral proficiency, such as vocabulary knowledge (Hsieh & Wang, 2019; Iwashita et al., 2008; Kuiken et al., 2019; Yan et al., 2020) at the same time it begs for further research in the field, since a high number of the existing studies have been based on subjective ratings from test performances, that is, not on empirical data from language proficiency interview transcripts (Iwashita et al., 2008).

At the same time, there is a predominance of monologic task-based studies (e.g., De Jong & Perfetti, 2011; Tavakoli, 2011), and, with a few exceptions (e.g. Foster & Skehan, 1996; García-Ponce & Tavakoli, 2022), research on dialogic task types and oral proficiency in the L2 remains limited. Similarly, studies on the effect of task type on oral performance in an L2 have tended to focus on task types often resorted to by teachers and researchers (García-Ponce & Tavakoli, 2022), and not on oral tasks from officially ESOL exams. This is important because testing formats have proven to exert a direct washback effect on the teaching that takes place prior to their being implemented (Heaton, 1988; Perrone, 2010).

In light of the above, there is a need for specific studies which i) compare the oral features triggered by different official ESOL tests, ii) use dialogic tasks iii) collect data from the same population, and iv) analyse empirical data by means of transcripts rather than more or less subjective ratings. The present exploratory study attempts to shed some light on the above lacunae by comparing grammatical complexity and lexical diversity

measures elicited by two different dialogic oral tasks pertaining to two officially recognised ESOL language testing institutions in Spain with the same population, using computational analysis with transcribed interactions.

2. Task type and oral performance

Oral proficiency tasks can be categorised depending on different criteria, including performance conditions (e.g., availability of planning time, type of interlocutor), the demands they place on test takers, as well as their specific design features (Hsieh & Wang, 2019). Some of the best-known inventories include Prabhu's (1987), who established three main categories depending on the kind of gap presented, comprising information-gap tasks, reasoning-gap tasks and opinion gaps. Ellis (2009), by contrast, classifies tasks depending on their linguistic requirements, and draws a line between focused tasks, i.e. tasks in which the focus lies on "using some specific linguistic feature" (p. 223) and unfocused tasks, in which there is no explicit focus on a particular language feature. Finally, Pica et al. (1993) classified tasks depending on their goal, and differentiates between divergent or convergent tasks. Divergent tasks do not involve task performers to reach a common agreement, whereas convergent tasks imply the learners reaching a shared consensus.

The relationship between task features and conditions, and measures of oral proficiency has been the focus of a growing body of research since the 1980s (e.g., De Jong & van Ginkel, 1992; Kormos, 2014; McNamara, 1990; Skehan, 1998; Michel et al., 2019). Research on the effect of task variations and oral performance have provided mixed results. On the one hand, there are those studies in which little or no significant differences have been reported. Iwashita et al. (2001), for example, compared different task performance conditions (including familiarity of task information, abstractness of information and nature of the operation required) for the same task type (an individual narrative task) and reported no significant influence in the candidates' task performance. In a smaller pilot study, Tuzcu & Yalçın (2019) analysed different task conditions (careful online planning and pressured online planning) and also reported no significant differences between groups. Similarly, a study by Brown et al. compared two independent and three integrated TOEFL iBT speaking tasks and reported little differences between tasks (Brown et al., 2005).

On the other hand, there are studies revealing how task variations at different levels, e.g. kind of gap within the task, task goal, linguistic requirements or task complexity can affect the language output of same-level learners significantly (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Gilabert, 2007; Kuiken & Vedder, 2007). García-Ponce et al. (2018) analysed complexity, accuracy and fluency measures during uncontrolled paired interactions in three tasks, namely personal information, narrative and negotiation tasks and highlighted how, concurring with previous research (Skehan, 1998; Tavakoli & Foster, 2011), different tasks may imply different load levels on learners' attention, therefore "causing the learner to make choices on being complex, being accurate and/or being fluent" (p. 84).

A study by Hsieh & Wang (2019) investigated the impact of two task types from the TOEFL Junior Test (a picture narration task and an integrated listen/speak task, both individual, not paired) on measures of grammar, vocabulary, content and fluency, in young learners, and their results revealed an impact on all variables with the exception of fluency. Their findings also suggested that the effect of task type on performance was most marked on lexical measures, and that, regarding grammatical complexity, “test takers tended to mimic the sentence they heard in the input material of the listen/speak task” (p. 44), yielding a comparatively more complex discourse than the picture narration task, since the language in that input material was more complex than the one produced by the young learners in their study.

In view of the mixed findings described, it is clear that more research is needed in order to shed light on the effect that specific task variations might have on the oral performance of same-level learners.

3. Grammatical and lexical measures in oral proficiency testing

One of the most commonly accepted frameworks of linguistic measurements in research today is CALF¹ (former ‘CAF’), comprising complexity, accuracy, lexis and fluency (Tavakoli, 2018). Within this framework, scholars have looked into a myriad of aspects with which to analyse and measure oral language performance (e.g., Biber & Gray, 2013; Pallotti, 2009). The connection between CALF and ESOL oral proficiency testing is noticeable by the presence of grammatical, lexical and fluency performance indicators in rating scale repertoires across oral proficiency tests, of which the two first constitute particularly central elements (Cambridge English: Understanding Results Guide, 2014). Within these, the grammatical aspect has outweighed other elements (vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation) and has acted as the strongest determinant factor for global scores among raters across proficiency levels in oral testing (Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Iwashita et al., 2008; McNamara, 1990), with exceptions like the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) test (Brown et al., 2005).

In a review of the existing literature, Iwashita et al. (2008) highlighted that, across different proficiency levels, “grammatical accuracy is the principal determining factor for raters assigning a global score” (p. 27), with a more variable specific weight of other measures (e.g. vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency or appropriateness). The same study (Iwashita et al., 2008) analysed the differences between five different individual oral tasks across five proficiency levels at the the TOEFL iBT exams and relied on a range of aspects including grammatical complexity and vocabulary measures. Grammatical complexity, that is, the degree to which production in the TL reflects grammatically complex and advanced structures (Richards, 2015), was operationalised via the *T-unit complexity ratio*, the *Dependent clause ratio* and *Verb phrase complexity*, while measures for vocabulary included an analysis of tokens (i.e., words) and types (i.e., range). Their results revealed that the grammatical turned out to be a measure which did not always help differentiate between

¹ Although the terms “CALF” has come to replace “CAF” in recent years, the latter term has been maintained when making reference to studies in which “CAF” (i.e. not including lexis) was analysed.

adjacent proficiency levels, that is, the lowest-level students in their study did not always produce the least complex grammar. In fact, results showed no significant differences in increasing complexity across levels for the *T-unit complexity ratio* and the *Dependent clause ratio*, while differences for *Verb phrase complexity* were only significant when related to the number of utterances produced, and yet, their effect size was “marginal” (p. 37). Vocabulary measures, however, revealed a significant linear increase across levels, with medium effect sizes. The study’s findings highlight how fluency, pronunciation, and lexical measures like number of tokens might constitute more reliable aspects than grammatical aspects when it comes to characterising distinct levels of proficiency. The authors criticise “an exaggerated emphasis” on the specific weight of the grammatical aspect, also “in the attitudes and behaviour of many learners and teachers”, and underline the need to pay more attention to “production features and vocabulary knowledge” (p. 47). Seedhouse et al. (2014) assessed grading criteria in IELTS using CALF measures and did report a linear correspondence between grammatical accuracy (measured as errors per 100 words) and score, whereas higher grammatical complexity proved to be an less reliable oral proficiency indicator, since, in their study, grammatical complexity rates at lower proficiency levels (low C1 of the CEFR) were higher than those at C1-C2 of the CEFR, i.e., there was not a “clear linear progression” throughout the bands (p. 22). However, lexical measures in the study included number of words and these revealed a direct linear correspondence with proficiency levels (p. 22), consistent with previous findings (Brown, 2006a). Yan et al. (2018) analyzed the oral production of speakers performing an individual oral task from the APTIS computer-based test, and reported how both lexical and grammatical complexity did increase with the levels associated with the CEFR. The scope of their study allowed them to establish a mapping to the CEFR, in which more proficient speakers produce more subordination and lexical variety. This result was confirmed by Kuiken et al. (2019). A linear correspondence between measures of grammatical (including accuracy and complexity) and lexical measures and oral proficiency was also reported in Hsieh and Wang (2019), in a study comparing two task types from the TOEFL Junior test with young learners. In conclusion, whilst lexical measures seem to associate more closely with variations across oral tasks and proficiency levels, grammatical measures have provided mixed results, what highlights the need for more research in the field.

It is worth mentioning that the vast majority of the studies hitherto mentioned have been carried out with monologic tasks frequently used by teachers and researchers, since, with a few exceptions (e.g. Foster & Skehan, 1996; García-Ponce & Tavakoli, 2022), research with interactive task types from oral proficiency tests remains particularly scant. This is important, since tests have gradually incorporated dialogic or group interaction as regular tasks in their repertoire (Galaczi & Taylor, 2018), especially in the upper half of the Common European Framework of Reference, or CEFR (Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2017). To complicate matters further, researchers have highlighted the need for more research on oral proficiency testing based on empirical data, and not on more or less subjective ratings (Iwashita et al., 2008). Finally, there is a conspicuous lack of studies specifically comparing language features generated by different ESOL official tests with the same population.

In light of the body of research previously examined, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the similarities and differences in the grammatical complexity of adult EFL learners while performing the FCE and the EOI interactional tasks?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the lexical diversity of adult EFL learners while performing the FCE and the EOI interactional tasks?

4. Method

4.1 Participants

A total of 10 adults participated in the study, six of whom were female and four male. Participants were enrolled in the EOI² B2 blended learning group, in which they attended a 150-minute session once a week. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lessons were entirely online, and had a focus on the oral production skill. Access to the course was granted by having an official CEFR B1 certificate, or by passing an entry-level examination for the B2 carried out. All participants but one whose L1 was Portuguese, shared Spanish as their L1. The age of the participants ranged between 29 and 45 (mean age: 37). They had a similar linguistic background, that is, they had stopped learning EFL after their compulsory education, and had decided to take on the blended course in order to update their command of English.

4.2 The tasks

The tasks in the study were part of two public official samples, namely Cambridge's FCE, and EOI, available on their respective official websites. Due to the specific [it does not look good to talk about limited scope, as it may be interpreted as having little value] scope of the study, only one task from each of these tests was selected. The tasks chosen were the peer-peer interaction parts given the positive findings of this layout reported in recent research, including the eliciting of a) a wider range of features of interaction (Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2017; Brooks, 2009; Ducasse, 2008; Ducasse & Brown, 2009, 2011; Galaczi, 2004, 2014) and b) less "institutional" or formulaic talk than monologic tasks (Van Lier, 1989), in addition to the information provided in section 2.1.

The FCE task selected (see Appendix 1) corresponds to Part 3, the "two-way collaborative task, which involves the two test-takers in a two-way discussion" (Galaczi, 2008, p. 93). This text-prompted task has a duration of four minutes including the presentation of the task. The participants' production is expected to last approximately three minutes. The prompt consists of a small concept map with a central question (ideas to attract more tourists to the town) and seed ideas for the speakers to discuss and agree on. The FCE task was managed following following Cambridge's script, which sets the time limit, the way each task has to be presented, as well as the tester's intervention depending on the participants' production, ensuring equal treatment for all examinees.

² The Escuela Oficial de Idiomas is one of the most important ESOL institutions in Spain, including 449 local offices across the country: <https://t.ly/NCXls>

The EOI subtask (see [Appendix 2](#)), referred to as “co-production”³, is also a text-prompted activity which lasts between four and five minutes, including the presentation. The prompt is a card which includes the premise (travelling abroad with an NGO, in this case) plus four bullet points related to the topic. The premise and three of the bullet points are identical for both participants, yet one of the bullet points is different. The similarities and differences between both tasks, including the classifications described in the literature review, can be noted in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Differences between the FCE and the Spanish EOI tasks.

Commonalities		
Element	FCE / EOI	
Kind of gap	Opinion/reasoning gap	
Task goal	Convergent	
Monologic/Dialogic	Dialogic	
Tester interference	Minimal	
Differences		
Element FCE		EOI
Expected production time	3 minutes	4-5 minutes
Linguistic requirement	Semi-focused: make suggestions (using second conditional, included in prompt)	Unfocused
Number of sections	Two • Discussion on why the ideas presented might lead to a specific outcome • Jointly choose one idea out of five	One • Discussion on the possibility of performing a specified action
Preparation time	Discussion: 15 seconds Common choice: one minute	Discussion: one minute
Visibility of written instructions for participants	No	Yes, in same paragraph as central issue
Text layout	Concept map	Paragraph + Bullet points
Point of discussion worded as	Question (<i>why would these ideas attract...?</i>)	Description (<i>a friend you both have in common...</i>) + Statement (<i>have a conversation about the possibility...</i>)
Length of written prompt	Total number of words: 26	Total number of words: 72 (participant A), 74 (participant B)
	Point of discussion words: 10	Point of discussion words: 47
	Related points: 2-5 words each	Related points: 2-9 words each
Number of specific points to cover	5 (all closed)	4 (3 closed; one open)
Assignment of specific points to each participant	No	Yes
Assignment of roles	No	Yes Participant A starts conversation Participant B closes conversation

³ Appendix: Guía de Examen de Pruebas de Certificación de las Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas. Nivel intermedio B2.

4.3 Procedure

Participants undertook both tasks consecutively in a single session, as two online oral activities in their English language classes. The FCE task was undertaken first, and the EOI task was carried out immediately afterwards.

Students were randomly paired for each of the tasks. In both cases the instructions for the tasks were explained to them, as well as the time allocated for a) preparation and b) the task itself. Participants were given the chance to ask questions prior to performing the task in order to ensure they fully understood their roles and what was expected of them. In the case of EOI, each dyad was free to choose which participant would start (Candidate 'A') the interaction and who ('Candidate 'B') would finish it.

The FCE and EOI tests comprise different guidelines as for the examiner's participation or support to candidates in the exams, which were carefully followed by the researcher.

4.4 Data coding and analysis

Data collection took place between 6th and 8th April 2020 in the participants' regular online classes. The instrument used for video and audio recording was the *Blackboard Collaborate* software, which was integrated within the EOI's online *Moodle* platform. In order to avoid the much-criticised use of subjective ratings, the present study resorted to computational analysis of written transcripts.

Grammatical complexity was examined using the *Web-based L2 Syntactical Complexity Analyzer*, a tool previously used in written-performance analysis and more recently incorporated in oral performance-based studies (e.g. Hu, 2021). We examined the most useful measures of complexity according to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), as followed by relevant CAF-based studies:

- a. Number of clauses per T-unit (or *T-unit complexity ratio*), in which clause is defined as "a production unit containing either a subject and a finite verb or a subject and a finite or non-finite verb form" (Mylläri, 2020, following Lu, 2011, p. 44; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998, p. 70). A T-unit refers to "one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it" (Hunt, 1965, p. 20).
- b. Number of verb phrases per T-unit (or *Verb-phrase ratio*), in which the verb phrase is made of a main verb alone, or a main verb plus any modal and/or auxiliary verbs.
- c. Ratio of dependent clauses to the total number of clauses (or *Dependent clause ratio*). Dependent clauses refer to groups of words that contain a subject and verb but do not express a complete thought, as in "I did not do the homework *because I felt asleep*" (dependent clause).

Following Iwashita et al. (2008), lexical diversity was analysed using the *Web Vocabprofile* online tool. This software provides different measurements from the BNC/COCA 29 word family lists, of which 25 are based on frequency and range data, and US lists based on Mark Davies' (Brigham Young University) 450-million-word Corpus of Contemporary American English (2012) (Cobb, n.d.; Davies, 2010; Nation, 2018). Frequency ratios are calculated based on the number of words in each frequency list. We examined the proportions of low and high frequency vocabulary displayed by participants, as well as the diversity in the word families present in each of the different frequency levels.

In order to avoid a misrepresentation of low-frequency words caused by participants using the words provided in the prompts, all the lexical items (including singular or plural derivatives) in the participants' prompts which did not belong to the family list of most frequently used words in the corpora above were eliminated from the data. The lexical items eliminated were the following:

FCE: attract; cameras; nightclub; providing, tourists.

EOI: accompanying; benefits; collaboration; common; enriching; professional.

All interactions were transcribed by one of the researchers into .txt format and subsequently checked by the other researcher in the study. Inter-transcriber reliability reached 99.86%. The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 24. Due to the small sample sizes, the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used.

5 Results

This section will begin by presenting the results of the three measures analysed in the first research question, that is, the grammatical complexity present in the FCE and EOI tasks, and will be followed by an analysis of the results regarding lexical diversity, our second research question.

Mean scores obtained in relation to the grammatical complexity revealed higher rates for the EOI task in two of the measures, namely the *T-unit complexity ratio* (C/T) and the *Verb-phrase ratio* (VP/T), although differences were non-significant ($z = -0.663$, $p = .508$ for C/T; $z = -1.070$, $p = .285$ for VP/T). However, the *Dependent clause ratio* (DC/C) in the FCE task did show a significantly higher rate than the EOI task ($z = -2.803$, $p = .005$). This is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean values and statistical difference between FCE and EOI regarding grammatical complexity.

	FCE	EOI	Z value	p-value
C/T	22.55	24.18	-0.663	.508
VP/T	29.89	34.13	-1.070	.285
DC/C	0.47	0.46	-2.803	.005

Note. * = statistical significance ($p < .05$).

The following examples (1, 2), might help illustrate the significantly higher *Dependent clause ratio* (DC/C) rates in the FCE task by providing the two first turns by one of the participants in both tasks, in what appeared to be a common pattern among participants:

(1) FCE

1. Participant 1: *Erm... Yes, I agree because at the end of the day tourists have to sleep somewhere, so, if there are not enough hotels, you need to have an amount of holiday flats, so I think it is a good idea, and also I think in order to promote an economy it is a good idea to have more shops, tourists erm... can go there to spend their money and also some shops like fashion shops would be a kind of places, interesting places to visit like for example in Madrid.*
2. Participant 2: *Erm... I agree, I agree with you because as I told you before, erm... to have erm... people to come to your city to visit it you need places where these people can sleep, so without hotels, erm... holiday flats you cannot receive people. So, for me it is the most important thing.*

(2) EOI

1. Participant 1: *Okay I am thinking to go with Michael. Michael is our colleague that works for an NGO organisation and I am thinking to go with him to Nicaragua in order to help to the most poor people around the country, helping to build schools.*
2. Participant 2: *Yes, I am thinking going with him because, erm... I like a lot to help other people. Mainly people who have no money to survive and they need out help.*

Note how the sentences in participant 2's turns in the FCE task might include a higher *Dependent clause ratio* due to their being noticeably longer than the ones in EOI, a fact which might have been triggered by the nature of the task itself, that is, giving reasons for or against particular items.

Our second research question attempted to compare the lexical diversity in both tasks, presented in Table 3. Since the EOI task implied a longer duration on the participants' production, the statistical analysis was made by comparing the percentage of each of the frequency levels (ranging from K-1, most frequently used, to K-5, less frequently used) in relation to the total number of tokens in each task.

In general terms both tasks were consistent in displaying an inversely proportional gradient between the frequency level and the number of tokens shown by participants. In other words, the percentage rates decreased as complexity of frequency levels increased, with the exception of the higher number of K-5 than K-4 tokens in the FCE task. The participants did not resort to any K-5 tokens in the EOI task. In descriptive terms, both tasks displayed a clear predominance of K-1 frequency level tokens, even more so in the case of the EOI, where a significant difference over the FCE task was observed ($z = -1.988$,

$p = .047$), which might relate to the EOI's overall higher number of tokens. The other statistically significant difference took place at the K-3 level ($z = -1.960$, $p = .050$), again with higher values for the EOI task. The rest of scores showed higher rates for the FCE task at the K-2 frequency level, and higher rates for the EOI task in the K-4 frequency level.⁴

Table 3. Values and statistical difference between FCE and EOI regarding lexical diversity.

	FCE	EOI		
Total number of tokens (mean)	121	154.4		
Frequency level (% over total)	FCE	EOI	Z value	p-value
K-1	88.74	92.28	-1.988	.047
K-2	3.68	3.05	-1.274	.203
K-3	0.33	1.08	-1.960	.050
K-4	0.1	0.18	-0.535	.593
K-5	0.3	0	-1.604	.109

Note. * = statistical significance ($p < .05$).

However, the analysis of frequency levels alone might fail to provide a complete picture of the lexical diversity displayed by participants in each task. If we analyse the number of different word families within each frequency level provided by the software, we are given a very different reading. With the exception of the K-5 frequency level, the EOI task yielded a substantially higher number of word families used, as illustrated in Figure 1.

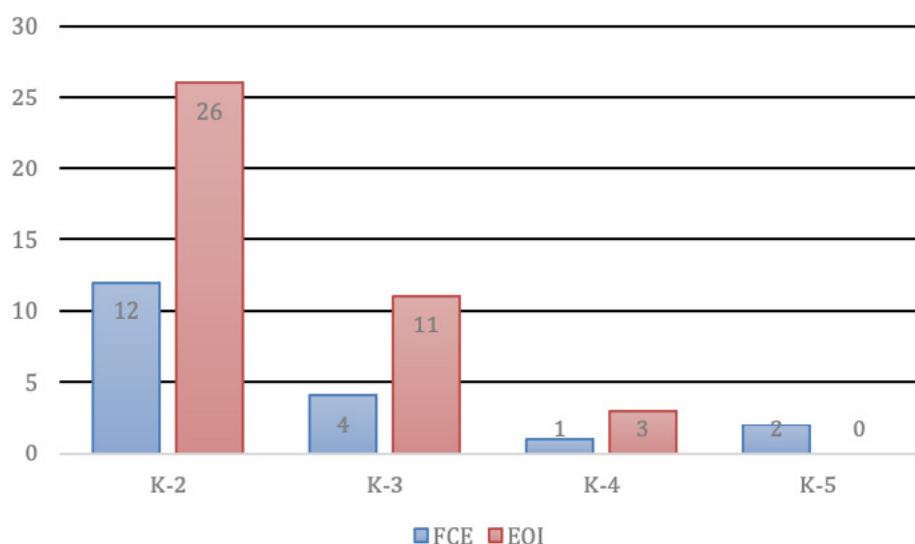


Figure 1. FCE and EOI tasks. Diversity among word families within each frequency level.

⁴ Proper nouns do not fit any frequency level in the *Web Vocabprofile* online tool. That is the reason why the addition of all percentages in each task does not add up to 100%.

With the aim of providing a clear reading of the graphic, the K-1 frequency level was not included, although the number of families at that level were also higher for the EOI task (154 word families for the FCE and 195 for the EOI task). This is further illustrated in Table 4, which attempts to provide a more qualitative approach by providing the exact word families and the number of tokens present at level K-2 in each task, with the EOI task eliciting more than twice as many word families as the FCE task. It is worth noting that this phenomenon was not at the expense of EOI data yielding fewer tokens from each word family, since the mean average of instances of the same token was strikingly similar; that is, 3.83 for the FCE task and 3.70 for the EOI task. However, this fact might have been mediated by the EOI being longer, that is, eliciting a larger amount of production from participants.

Table 4. FCE and EOI tasks. K-2 word families and number of tokens (shown in square brackets).

FCE	EOI
BNC-COCA-K2k Families: 12.	BNC-COCA-K2k Families: 26
1. develop_[1]	1. active_[6]
2. earn_[1]	2. advantage_[2]
3. economy_[1]	3. advice_[2]
4. entertain_[2]	4. attend_[2]
5. example_[4]	5. boss_[4]
6. fashion_[1]	6. career_[2]
7. hotel_[7]	7. convince_[2]
8. mix_[2]	8. encourage_[2]
9. opinion_[6]	9. example_[2]
10. option_[7]	10. fantastic_[2]
11. receive_[1]	11. flight_[2]
12. tour_[13]	12. future_[2]
	13. increase_[4]
	14. opinion_[2]
	15. opportunity_[6]
	16. option_[2]
	17. organize_[12]
	18. prefer_[2]
	19. profession_[6]
	20. project_[16]
	21. receive_[4]
	22. risk_[4]
	23. salary_[2]
	24. social_[2]
	25. suffer_[2]
	26. survive_[2]

The researchers were granted access to the results of the FCE and EOI B2 oral tests from the 2019 examination call at the Centro Superior de Idiomas (CSI) at a Public University in Spain and at one national Official Language School (EOI) in Spain, respectively.

Regarding the oral part of the test, the 2019 FCE results at the CSI displayed a 90,58% pass marks (154 out of 170 administered tests). The 2019 EOI B2 results at the EOI centre revealed an 80,1% pass marks (318 out of 397 administered tests), that is, there were over 10% more candidates getting a ‘pass mark’ on the oral section of the FCE test. However, it is worth reminding that the tasks in the present study only comprised the interactional subsection from each of the oral section in each test.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The present study compared a number of measures of grammatical complexity and lexical diversity in the oral production of learners performing two oral interaction tasks from two official language tests at level B2 of the CEFR: Cambridge’s FCE and EOI in Spain.

Results have revealed significant differences in some of the measures from both grammatical complexity and lexical diversity. Regarding grammatical complexity, the FCE task specifically yielded a significantly higher rate in the *Dependent clause ratio* (DC/C) than the EOI task. Conversely, the EOI task included significantly higher vocabulary rates than the FCE task at the K1 and K3 frequency levels. This was further ratified by substantial differences in the word families within those levels.

These results allow us to draw two main conclusions. Firstly, although more research is needed, it could be hypothesised that differences in the nature of the tasks might significantly affect aspects of the test-takers’ performance regarding oral grammatical complexity, such as the *Dependent clause ratio* (DC/C). Previous research has questioned the validity of grammatical complexity to distinguish between adjacent proficiency levels (e.g., Iwashita et al., 2008). In other words, the same speakers might be producing more dissimilar grammar complexity across two different tasks than speakers from different proficiency levels performing tasks of a similar nature. This finding concurs with the notion that different tasks may imply different load levels on participants’ attention, thus pushing them “to make choices on being complex, being accurate and/or being fluent” (García-Ponce et al., 2018: 84). This is not to say that the FCE task necessarily generates a more grammatically complex production among participants than the EOI task overall, since the EOI task provided higher values for the other two measures under analysis (i.e., the *T-unit complexity ratio* (C/T) and the *Verb-phrase ratio* (VP/T) than the FCE task, although such differences were not significant.

Secondly, the results regarding lexical diversity reveal that the EOI task yielded a significantly higher rate than the FCE task at two frequency levels. Results are validated by the fact that both tasks were consistent in their provision of a decreasing gradient of tokens across frequency levels. This finding supports previous research associating variations in language diversity rates to changes in tasks or proficiency levels (e.g., Hsieh & Wang, 2019; Iwashita et al., 2008; Yan et al., 2018).

The findings in the present study are expected to raise awareness among testing institutions about the potential of different task formats to elicit significantly different language features. Similarly, these results provide evidence of the positive potential washback effect of specific official exam formats for specific pedagogical purposes (e.g., the EOI task as an interesting format as a vocabulary activator). We believe that a better understanding of the ways in which different tasks from official exams promote specific language features would constitute an important pedagogical tool which would go beyond mere exam preparation. Conversely, this study also casts doubt on the validity of the grammatical complexity aspect as a reliable indicator of language proficiency, since, at least one of its measures seems to hinge to a great degree on the nature of the task at hand.

The study ultimately strives for more empirical research comparing language samples, rating scales and scoring from interactive oral tasks in official language tests. It also advocates for the use of instruments commonly used in research, such as the *Web-based L2 Syntactical Complexity Analyzer* or the *Web Vocabprofile* online tools as valuable means for ESOL institutions when it comes to standardising and analysing language samples with their examining staff.

Limitations

An obvious methodological issue concerning the current study lies in its limited number of language samples (20), so its findings should be taken with caution, since further studies with larger pools of participants are required in order for these findings to be validated. Another limitation is related to order effect, since the fact that the tasks were undertaken in a particular order (FCE first, EOI second) might have had an impact on performance, although it is important to emphasize that the choice of that particular order was due to the small pool of participants. In other words, the inherent limitation of sample size would have not eliminated the order effect had the tasks been administered in different orders (e.g., two dyads doing FCE first, three dyads doing EOI first).

Similarly, topical knowledge is known to affect performance (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), and the fact that each task revolved around a particular topic, namely a “Holiday resort” (FCE) and “collaboration with an NGO” (EOI) might have also impinged on the lexical choices made by participants. More research with similar task formats but different topics would be needed in order to confirm or refute the impact of the task factor in the tendencies reported in the present study.

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Data availability statement/ *Declaración de disponibilidad de datos*: The two tasks (FCE and EOI) used to collect data in the study are open access and available for the public at: (FCE): https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/CER_6168_V1_APR19_Cambridge_English_First_Handbook_WEB_v3.pdf (Accessed July 2022). (EOI): <https://www.educacion.navarra.es/web/dpto/idiomas-plurilinguismo/escuelas-oficiales?inheritRedirect=true> (Accessed July 2022) / *Las dos tareas (FCE y EOI) utilizadas para recopilar datos en el estudio son de acceso libre y están a disposición del público en:* (FCE): https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/CER_6168_V1_APR19_Cambridge_English_First_Handbook_WEB_v3.pdf (consultado en julio de 2022). (EOI): <https://www.educacion.navarra.es/web/dpto/idiomas-plurilinguismo/escuelas-oficiales?inheritRedirect=true> (Consultado en julio de 2022).

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Appendix 1

FCE task. Examiner's view

21 Holiday resort	Part 3 4 minutes (5 minutes for groups of three)
	Part 4 4 minutes (6 minutes for groups of three)

Part 3

Interlocutor Now, I'd like you to talk about something together for about two minutes.
(3 minutes for groups of three).

I'd like you to imagine that a town wants more tourists to visit. Here are some ideas they're thinking about and a question for you to discuss. First you have some time to look at the task.

Place Part 3 booklet, open at Task 21, in front of the candidates. Allow 15 seconds.

Now, talk to each other about **why these ideas would attract more tourists to the town.**

Candidates
⌚ 2 minutes
(3 minutes for groups of three)

.....

Interlocutor I thank you.

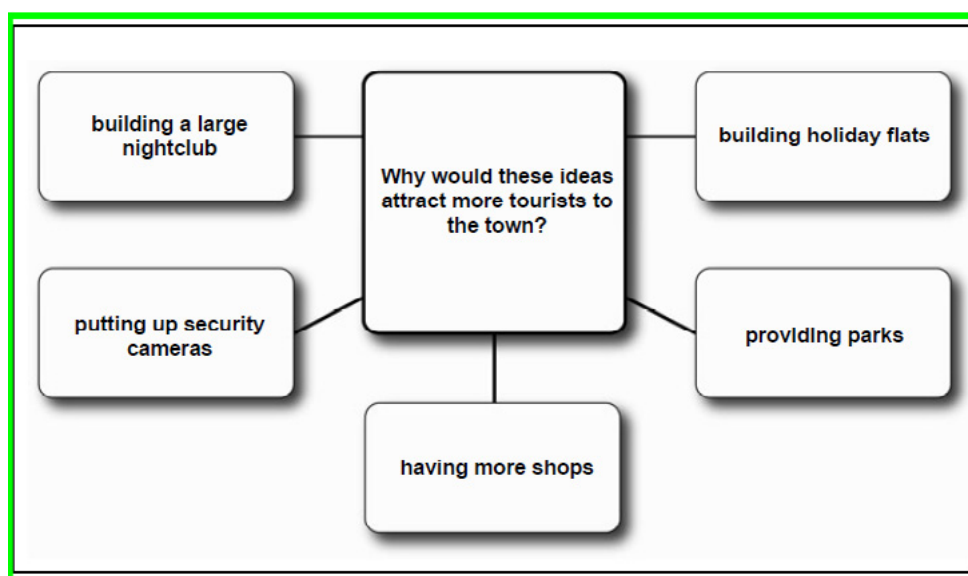
Now you have about a minute to decide **which idea would be best for the town.**

Candidates
⌚ 1 minute
(for pairs and groups of three)

.....

Thank you. (Can I have the booklet, please?) Retrieve Part 3 booklet.

FCE task. Candidates' view



Appendix 2

EOI task. Examiner's and candidates' view

INTERACTION.

(EXAMINER'S INSTRUCTIONS READ ALOUD). *A friend, you both have in common, who works for an NGO in a country from the so-called "third world" has asked for your collaboration for 2 months in the Summer. Have a conversation about the possibility of accompanying him/her. Refer to the cues on your card.*

CANDIDATE A.

- An enriching experience.
- Helping others.
- Professional benefits of taking part in such an experience.
- Anything else you want to add?

CANDIDATE B.

- An enriching experience.
- Helping others.
- People in your local area need help.
- Anything else you want to add?

Designing a Model of ICC Development for Translation-Oriented Language Education: Preparing Trainee Translators to Become Intercultural Mediators

Richard Clouet ^{1*} & Jane Woodin ²

¹Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

²University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Abstract: This article proposes the need for a re-think of the trainee-translator classroom, advocating for a combined approach to translator training, integrating linguistic skill development (translation competence) and broader interpersonal and contextual understanding (translator competence). Focusing on undergraduate BA programmes, the paper reviews the role of languages in translation education, the concept of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), and the need for stronger Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) integration. It considers various models of translator training that focus on different aspects, such as language contrasts, professional context, and interpersonal skills, all of which are essential for comprehensive translator education. However, recognising the diversity of translation curricula worldwide and the complexity of translation in a globalised world, the proposed model also aims to provide a flexible, systematic approach to developing professional intercultural mediators who can take informed and responsible decisions when faced with complex linguistic and cultural challenges. The model we propose serves as a guide for curriculum development, promoting reflection on overarching aims and outcomes in translation training programmes, and recognising the role of translators not just as language experts but as active mediators who bring their unique perspectives to their work.

Keywords: *translator training, languages for specific purposes, intercultural communicative competence, translation competence, mediation.*

Diseño de un modelo de desarrollo de la CCI para clases de lengua aplicada a la traducción, o cómo preparar a los traductores en formación para la mediación intercultural

Resumen: Este artículo replantea la formación de traductores y aboga por un enfoque que integre el desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas (competencia traductora) y una comprensión interpersonal y contextual más amplia (competencia del traductor). Centrándose en los programas de Grado, el artículo revisa el papel de los idiomas en los estudios de traducción, el concepto de Lenguas con Fines Específicos (LFE), y la necesidad de una mayor integración de la Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural (CCI). Considera varios modelos de formación que se enfocan en aspectos como contrastividad lingüística, contexto profesional y habilidades interpersonales, todos esenciales para una preparación integral de los futuros profesionales. También reconoce la diversidad de los planes de estudio en el mundo y la complejidad de la traducción en un mundo globalizado, y propone un modelo con un enfoque flexible y sistemático para la formación de los futuros mediadores interculturales, con el objetivo de ayudarles a tomar decisiones informadas y responsables cuando se enfrenten a desafíos lingüísticos y culturales complejos. Este modelo sirve de guía para el desarrollo curricular, promueve una reflexión sobre objetivos y resultados en los estudios de traducción, y reconoce el papel del traductor como experto en idiomas y mediador activo con sus perspectivas únicas.

Palabras clave: *formación de traductores, lenguas con fines específicos, competencia comunicativa intercultural, competencia traductora, mediación.*

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*Corresponding author: richard.clouet@ulpgc.es

1. Introduction

The field of translation studies has developed considerably in recent years, broadening out its scope well beyond the traditional focus on the binaries of source and target text approaches foregrounding text production. The cultural turn, together with the proliferation of hybrid and/or transcreated texts (where *source* and *target* lose their meaning) have helped to shift the focus from the text to the translator; the emphasis in the last decade on translator decision-making (Munday, 2012; Zhang & Munday, 2018) has highlighted the importance of translator training.

Such training can take a range of approaches, and excellent overview translator training is offered in Anthony Pym (2003, p. 483), who differentiates between translator ‘training’ – focusing more on linguistic skills development (labelled translation competence) – and translator ‘education’ focusing more on the interpersonal skills and attitudes required for a translator to understand the context, broader sociolinguistic and industry-related context to enable them to become self-determined translation professionals (translator competence).

This article proposes that it is not necessarily an either/or approach, but advocates the combining of a *translation/translator* focus; we do this drawing upon insights from both Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and from Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), whose contributions to translator training have not – we feel – been fully explored to date. We propose a model for how these areas could benefit more systematically the development of translators within a higher education context. The model is developed from both authors’ theoretical research in Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication, and additionally informed by educational practice with Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. Our aim is to provide a theoretical framework that can serve as a practical foundation for educators working to prepare translators as intercultural mediators. Furthermore, given our work starts from the understanding of how courses in translation are typically taught in higher education (namely with a historical focus on linguistic proficiency) our work addresses ways in which work on languages for specific purposes help to frame our proposed model.

The translation profession has been changing rapidly through advances in AI assisted technology, which has called into question the content, function and intended outcomes of translator training programmes, in addition to questioning the ‘ego’ of the translator as working independently from their AI/machine support (Lee, 2024). The authors of this article recognise the implications of a posthumanist shift in translation studies, which – although not the focus of this article – strengthens our argument for a stronger focus on the translator in terms of personal attributes often understood as intercultural communication rather than translation. Cao et al. (2025), in a systematic review of intercultural competence in translator education, note that there is still a lack of “future research [which] should give priority to the development of ‘systematic models that integrate intercultural competence into translation education” (p. 14). This article will offer a review of models which have sought to combine these two fields.

The way in which translation and translator training are justified within translation programmes within higher education can depend on a number of contextual factors, such as length or level of study programme (e.g., translation studies within a 4-year BA programme, or as specialist training at Masters' level). While we recognise that models of translator training/education differ across the world, the focus in this article is largely on the Undergraduate BA models of translation which traditionally – and in many cases still – emphasise the development of linguistic competence. The first part of this article will review the role of languages in the teaching of translation studies, the concept of LSP, and the need for stronger integration of ICC into the trainees' language classroom to help students to develop both *translation* and *translator* competence. We shall then consider the existing models which already draw upon these concepts and propose an integrated competence framework for developing ICC in trainee translators' translation-oriented language classroom.

We note that undergraduate translation teaching curricula and practices differ significantly in type across the world and indeed Europe, and our inability to represent all types of courses in this article; there are substantial differences in BA translation course offerings even within one national boundary. For example, some BA courses include interpreting within Translation programmes while others explicitly name it. In this article we refer largely to translation as involving written texts; where we feel it is necessary to make the distinction, we will do so (see for example 2.2).

2. LSP and ICC in Translation Studies: A Review of Concepts and Some Theoretical Considerations

2.1 The Role of Languages in Translation Studies Teaching

James S. Holmes (1972) has played a significant role in shaping the discipline of translation studies and his contributions continue to be influential today. His emphasis on the importance of the translation process, cultural and linguistic context, and the development of translation pedagogy have helped to establish translation studies as a distinct and important field of study. He believes that translation should be taught as a distinct discipline from language learning, with a focus on developing linguistic and cultural competencies. Although aware that FL/L2 teaching for translators has drawn on the theoretical sources of language teaching, he advocates that it should also be considered as a specific professionally-oriented field and should address the needs arising from the professional practice of translation.

Even though knowledge of languages is a key competence in translator training and, more specifically, in the development of translation competence (Malmkjær, 2004; Brehm-Cripps, 2007; Cerezo Herrero, 2020), academic works dedicated to applied languages and their teaching implications within the disciplinary framework of translation studies are still scarce. As a result, FL/L2 languages have continued to be taught following generalist methodological patterns, such as a communicative approach (see Council of Europe, 2001), inductive learning, task-based instruction or a natural

approach. While these approaches are suitable for developing general language competence, the needs of translators are considerably more specialised, going beyond (or at least in parallel with) the typical objectives of a more general language proficiency class (Cerezo Herrero, 2020; Clouet, 2010; Oster, 2008).

Some specific curriculum proposals for translation students include: (1) enhancing reading comprehension, (2) learning to dissociate languages in contact, (3) familiarising students with the use of dictionaries and other resources, (4) transforming students into cultural experts, and (5) raising students' awareness of the translation activity (Berenguer, 1996); a stronger focus on developing socio-cultural competence and contrastive competence between the working languages (Hurtado Albir, 1999; Malmkjær, 2004; Kiraly, 2000); and the development of critical and autonomous thinking (Bernardini, 2004). Among the more recent studies, Enrique Cerezo Herrero (2020), Clouet (2010, 2021) and Néstor Singer et al. (2019) highlight the importance of establishing a connection between language training and the job market.

2.1.1 Languages for specific purposes (LSP) for translator training

It is not uncommon for LSP teaching to focus on specific workplace contexts such as the medical or legal professions and to offer methodologies for training translators in these areas. In addition to language proficiency, trainee translators may also need to develop specialised knowledge in the languages they are studying such as specific laws and regulations, understanding medical terminology and procedures, or becoming familiar with technical specifications and standards; this can help open their eyes to other linguistic and cultural contexts and enable them to produce accurate and effective translations that meet the needs of their clients. Translation is often mentioned as a methodological tool in professional LSP contexts, for example, working in multilingual teams; Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield (2013) note however that the translation profession is often overlooked as an LSP context *in its own right*.

The methodological specificities of what some researchers now refer to as translation- and interpreting-oriented language learning and teaching, or TILLT (Cerezo Herrero et al., 2021), are not widely known or used by FL/L2 language teachers in translator training institutions. According to TILLT approaches, teaching should offer “well-designed translation-based language learning activities” (Carreres, 2014, p. 129), responding to the trainee translators' specific needs (Berenguer, 1997; Carrasco Flores, 2019; Cerezo Herrero et al., 2021; Clouet, 2021), which is primarily the ability to use language as a professional tool (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) and engage with translation as a means of improving their linguistic skills.

Translation-oriented BA programmes must not solely focus on developing linguistic proficiency but also nurturing the skills and knowledge of professional mediation (Schmidhofer & Ahmann, 2015; Seidl, 2021). In other words, trainee translators must understand how meaning is constructed and make decisions accordingly while ensuring effective communication of intended messages and cultural nuances. This

competence considers social, cultural and political influences on translation choices and acknowledges the process of text creation and meaning production. Intercultural communicative competence research may aid in this endeavour.

2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence and Translator Training

Intercultural communication has experienced a shift away from the more binary ‘large’ (often cross-national) culture comparisons to a focus on the processes of meaning-making in interaction; certainly, this has been the approach in much of Western European/Anglophone research and educational environments (Woodin, 2018a, 2018b). Concepts identified under the umbrella of Intercultural Communication are drawn upon in subject areas far broader than languages (Hua, 2016, p. 4), reflecting its complex nature as well as its near-universal relevance.

These shifts in intercultural communication run in parallel to shifts in translation studies, where the focus has moved in recent years from text-oriented approaches to those which focus on the role of the translators themselves (Munday, 2012), decolonising practices (e.g., Hamaidia et al., 2018), and opening up spaces through which meaning is made, both in Translation and Intercultural Communication (Woodin et al., 2021).

Researchers have defined and modelled intercultural competence in a range of ways, with some overall agreement that it relates to the ability to interact with others effectively and appropriately, and that this ability involves a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g., Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 1997, 2008, 2021; Deardorff, 2006, 2009). Of these, Michael Byram is one of the most widely cited theorists of intercultural competence development with his influential model of ICC within the field of FL/L2 education. Byram’s model of ICC (1997, 2009, 2021) incorporates five *savoirs*: intercultural knowledge and skills *savoir* (knowledge of self and other, of interaction); *savoir être* (relativising self, valuing other); *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating); *savoir apprendre/faire* (skills of discovering and/or interacting); and *savoir s’engager* (political education, critical cultural awareness) (1997, p. 16; 2021, pp. 42-44).

Designed initially to support language teachers to develop learners beyond communicative competence into intercultural communicative competence, his model (see Figure 1) focuses on the language learner as someone who “can use their competences in many other contexts – for example, in periods of residence in another country, in interactions with people of other social groups in their own country, and in their daily experiences of hybridity of cultures” (2009, pp. 326-7).

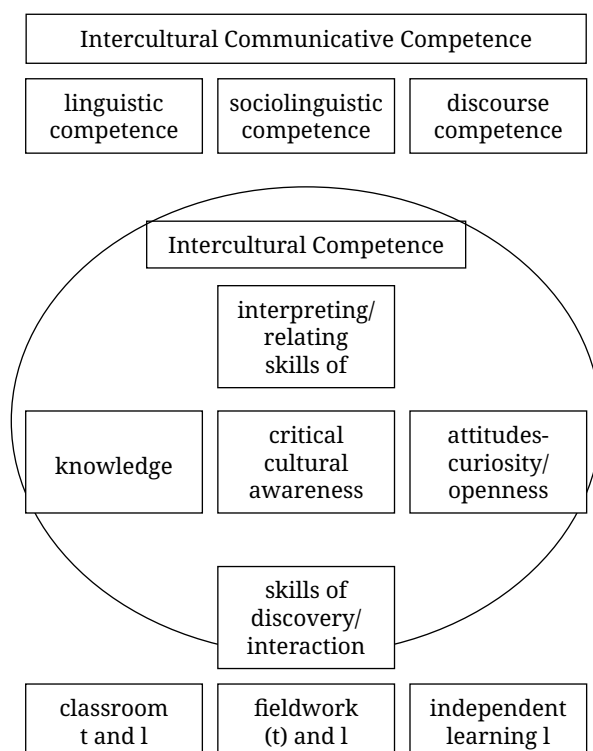


Figure 1. Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 2009).

Intercultural Communicative Competence re-positions the language learners' model from the native speaker to the intercultural speaker, able to decentre from their perspective and adopt that of others, who can show curiosity and openness about others' linguistic and cultural practices in addition to being able to use language effectively. While many have recognised the need for foreign language teaching and learning to be better aligned with increasing globalisation (e.g., Abdallah-Preteceille, 2003; Corbett, 2003; Deardorff, 2004; Dervin, 2004; Fantini, 2009), this shift has not proven easy in many language learning contexts (e.g., Sercu et al., 2005), particularly where restrictions on teachers' time are tight because of examination requirements and where fewer readily available resources exist for developing ICC.

It is not possible to describe intercultural competence for language learners without reference to the person. Angela Scarino (2010) states that an intercultural (as opposed to cultural) orientation "seeks the transformation of students' identities in the act of learning" (2010, p. 324).

One way in which the person orientation in translation studies has been conceptualised is in the concept of intercultural mediation, referring to interpreting spoken (as opposed to written) texts. Mediation involves a range of skills and techniques, including active listening, effective communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The mediator must be impartial and unbiased and must strive to create an environment of trust and mutual respect among the parties (Busch, 2022; Mayer, 2020). The Council of Europe

describes mediation in the Common European Framework of Reference as follows: “The user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 103).

Whether an interpreter can – or indeed should – remain ‘impartial and unbiased’ is questioned by some (e.g., Hamaidia et al., 2018; Spinzi, 2022). An intercultural perspective on this in relation to the translation process could be informed by a need to articulate one’s political position (critical cultural awareness) (Byram, 1997; Guilherme, 2000) and seek to decolonise the translation/process (Risager 2022) or make visible hidden inequalities (Woodin et al., 2021). This is a different goal in translation studies from the traditional invisibility of the translator.

2.3 Summary

For trainee translators, linguistic proficiency is certainly important, but not enough in itself to address the needs both of *translation* and *translator* training (see Introduction). An LSP approach entails the learning of specific linguistic terminology as well as an understanding of broader professional contexts, including that of the translation profession itself, where students need to be proficient in understanding the (linguistic and cultural) limits and possibilities within the professional task they are undertaking. As intercultural mediators, translators need to be sensitive to the cultural differences between the source and target languages, and seek to understand the underlying cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions that inform the texts being translated, and work to convey these accurately in the target language while recognising not only the context within which the texts originated and are being translated, but take responsibility as translators for the decisions they make, and allow for processes of meaning-making to be more visible. Power relations between cultural groups (Pym, 2016), and linguistic and/or professional constraints do mean that a translator does not have a blank slate to work from; in addition to the source/original text, they have ethical decisions to make. The authors are informed by both LSP and ICC research and advocate the education of students through both *translation* and *translator* approach.

3. Current Developments in Translator Training

3.1 Translation Competence

For trainee translators, linguistic proficiency is certainly important, but not sufficient. In recent years, translator training has undergone several notable developments driven by advancements in technology, changes in industry demands and evolving educational approaches, with accompanying attempts at defining, conceptualising and revisiting translation competence. Pym’s conceptualisation of translation competence encompasses various dimensions beyond mere linguistic proficiency:

There can be no doubt that translators need to know a fair amount of grammar, rhetoric, terminology, computer skills, Internet savvy, world knowledge, teamwork cooperation, strategies for getting paid correctly, and the rest, but the specifically translational part of

their practice is strictly neither linguistic nor solely commercial. It is a process of generation and selection, a problem-solving process that often occurs with apparent automatism (Pym, 2003, p. 489).

This minimalist approach is often seen as a valuable point of departure on translation competence in translator training. However, many translation scholars argue that the multifaceted nature of translation as a complex cognitive and communicative activity that goes beyond linguistic proficiency requires the necessity to develop theoretical models of translation competence from both a didactic and professional perspective. We shall now consider some of these models and reflect on their relationship both to the professional orientation of LSP and the development of ICC.

3.1.1 PACTE Group's Translation Competence Model

The PACTE research group (Process in the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation) was formed in October 1997, and in particular their NACT project (Spanish acronym for *Nivelación de competencias en la Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora*, in other words 'Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence in Written Translation') (Hurtado Albir et al., 2019) evidence the need for a multidisciplinary intercultural focus in translator training where educators are required to provide trainee translators with:

- a. Linguistic competence, by helping students to understand the role of language in intercultural communication, including the differences in linguistic structure, semantics, and pragmatics across different languages and cultures.
- b. Sociocultural competence, by providing insights into the cultural practices and beliefs of different groups, and the ways in which culture shapes behaviour and communication.
- c. Communication competence, by providing a framework for understanding the process of communication, including the role of nonverbal communication, the dynamics of interpersonal communication, and the impact of media and technology on communication.
- d. Critical thinking, by helping students to understand the social structures and power dynamics that influence intercultural communication, and the ways in which social identity impacts communication.
- e. Procedural knowledge required to ensure the effectiveness of the translation process, particularly the identification of translation problems and the application of solutions.

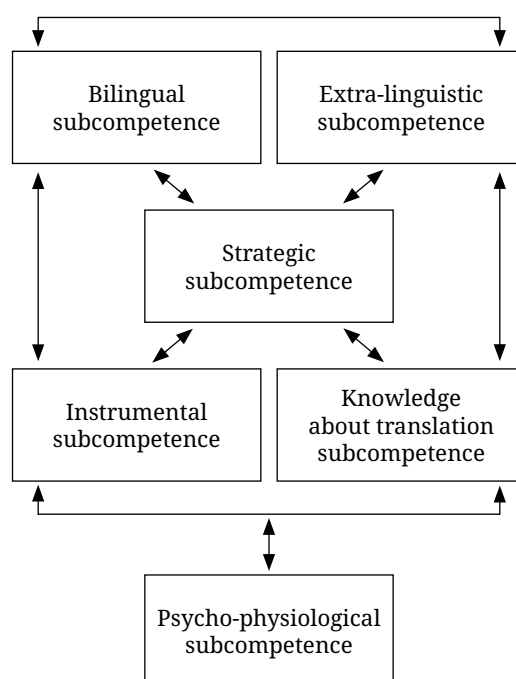


Figure 2. Model of Translation Competence (PACTE Group, 2017).

The PACTE model reflects the inherently multidisciplinary nature of translation, drawing on insights from a range of fields – including Dell Hymes’s (1972) communicative competence – that converge in intercultural communication, and highlighting the importance of collaboration and cross-disciplinary dialogue in advancing understanding of the intricacies and complexity that the translation process entails (Piecychna, 2020). It comprises both declarative knowledge (know-what) and procedural knowledge (know-how). It activates a series of psycho-physiological mechanisms that relate to the translator themselves as opposed to the translation/text including cognitive components (such as memory, perception, attention and emotions), attitudes (aspects such as intellectual curiosity, perseverance, accuracy, a critical mind, knowledge of and confidence in one’s own abilities, motivation, etc.), and other skills such as creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis ability, etc. This model emphasizes the dynamic nature of the translation process and focuses on the translator’s abilities to engage in the process of personal development. It is in line with the dynamic nature of intercultural learning, focusing on the ongoing process of acquiring, practising, and refining intercultural skills rather than viewing competence as a fixed outcome (Deardorff, 2008).

The focus on a process-oriented approach is essential as it highlights the elements that may influence the translator’s decision when deciding on the strategy that should be deployed in the translation process. This process-orientation moves us towards a

recognition of the ‘messy intercultural spaces’ found in everyday work contexts such as multilingual NGOs (Hamaidia et al., 2018, p. 119), but perhaps stops short of identifying this process-orientation as an ethical commitment to action-taking. As Woodin et al. put it:

Translating cultures necessarily requires a consideration of the concepts of translation and intercultural communication, together with opportunities for individuals to take action to open up spaces where shared understanding has perhaps either been imposed (through monolingual – usually English language – practices), or assumed to be shared (through competing agendas of efficiency and clarity over the time-consuming focus on complexities and multiple meanings, for example) (2021, p. 56).

Opening up spaces in the translation process helps understand the contexts of positions and can contribute to reducing power differentials and inequalities (Woodin et al., 2021, pp. 64-65).

PACTE also recommended that the model should be addressed in a dynamic way, as the sub-competences are subject to variation at any time, considering the fluid nature of texts and contexts. The model does not explicitly refer to the concept of intercultural competence but to extralinguistic competence. However, this sub-competence is related to the (inter)cultural aspect because it concerns knowledge of the world and bicultural knowledge (see Byram’s model, Figure 1).

Various other models have tried to describe the intercultural competences required in translation training programmes (e.g., Pym, 2004; Göpferich, 2008; Katan, 2009; Kiraly, 2013; Witte, 2000; Yarosh, 2012, 2015). Here we focus on three more well-established theoretical models: the European Masters in Translation (EMT) model (2022) and the Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators (PICT) model (Tomozeiu et al., 2016); the former is aimed particularly at trainee translators while the latter focuses more on professional translation. We shall also consider Cerezo Herrero’s (2019) contribution, which focuses largely on LSP.

3.1.2 The EMT Model

The EMT model claims to be “one of the leading reference standards for translator training and translation competence throughout the European Union and beyond, both in academic circles and in the language industry” (EMT, 2017, p. 2), with the aim of training students to “translate and mediate in specific intercultural contexts” (EMT, 2017, p. 8), thereby highlighting the importance of intercultural communication training in translation studies (see Figure 3). Recent iterations of the EMT model have identified five sub-competences (language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision) reflecting, unlike the PACTE group model, “human skills as a differentiator in a technologized employment market, where linguistic, critical, and ethical competences can combine to produce a transversal skill set to equip graduates for the future” (EMT, 2022, p. 2). It is notable also that this development reflects the transformation undergone by the

translation profession, notably technological changes, and focuses on the interdependence of all the areas of competence (Froeliger et al., 2022), as opposed to earlier models (e.g., EMT, 2017) which were founded on academic conceptual considerations).

The model highlights the importance of linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, transcultural and communicative skills. The two dimensions are made explicit: the linguistic dimension covers the ability to understand the function of language variations (social, geographical or historical) and to use the appropriate grammatical, lexical and idiomatic structures of their working languages. The sociolinguistic dimension involves identifying cultural elements, values and references in the written, spoken or multimodal text (including presuppositions, allusions and stereotypes) and writing in accordance with the cultural conventions, and conventions of genre and rhetorical standards (EMT, 2022, p. 6). Here we can see that for EMT, intercultural competence focuses particularly on texts (written or spoken) and the translator's linguistic expertise in interpreting these. These aspects can be seen to correspond with Byram's knowledge and skills (see Figure 1); less focus is on the translator's interpersonal skills in terms of attitudes and/or critical cultural awareness. It is interesting, given the focus on translator training, how the person-focused intercultural aspects of being a translator –identified in PACTE – are not reflected in the EMT, particularly given the stated focus on training.

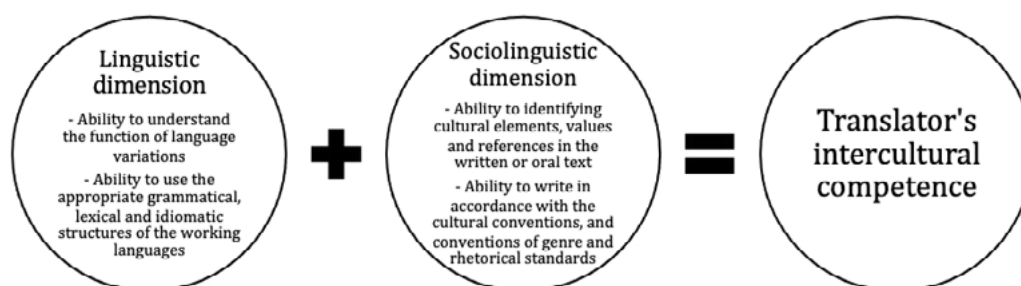


Figure 3. Model of Intercultural Competence in Translators (EMT, 2022).

3.1.3 The PICT Model

The third model (Figure 4) comes from the PICT (Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators) EU project co-ordinated by Daniel Tomozeiu from the University of Westminster between 2011 and 2013. The group's main objective was to provide a framework for teaching and assessing intercultural competence in university and higher education translation programmes, including lesson plans and assessment tasks (Tomozeiu et al., 2016). Given the desirable intercultural outcome of such programmes, translators should be trained on the basis of three dimensions: (1) a theoretical dimension, that includes core concepts of the theory of intercultural communication, conceptual tools for analysing the intercultural perspective, knowledge of the cultural context of translation, and awareness of the links between intercultural communication theory and translation studies; (2) a textual dimension, that includes the ability to analyse cultural issues and texts from source and target audiences from a comparative perspective, to recognise problems of non-equivalence and to apply strategies to address them; (3) and

an interpersonal dimension, that includes cultural awareness and empathy manifested in social exchange, curiosity and proactiveness, sensitivity to affects and potential conflicts in communication, and social positioning (PICT, 2012a). The PICT model considers the translator's overall intercultural competence which goes beyond text production. More specifically, in addition to knowledge and abilities pertaining to the theoretical and textual spheres, the intercultural competence also includes a set of attitudes, such as cultural awareness, empathy, curiosity, sensitivity, or social positioning (PICT, 2012b). These interpersonal skills make the learning outcomes of translator training explicit: beyond rendering meaning from one language into another, translators should perform their role as mediators between cultures; in the PICT model, intercultural competence is explicit, and the translator is central.

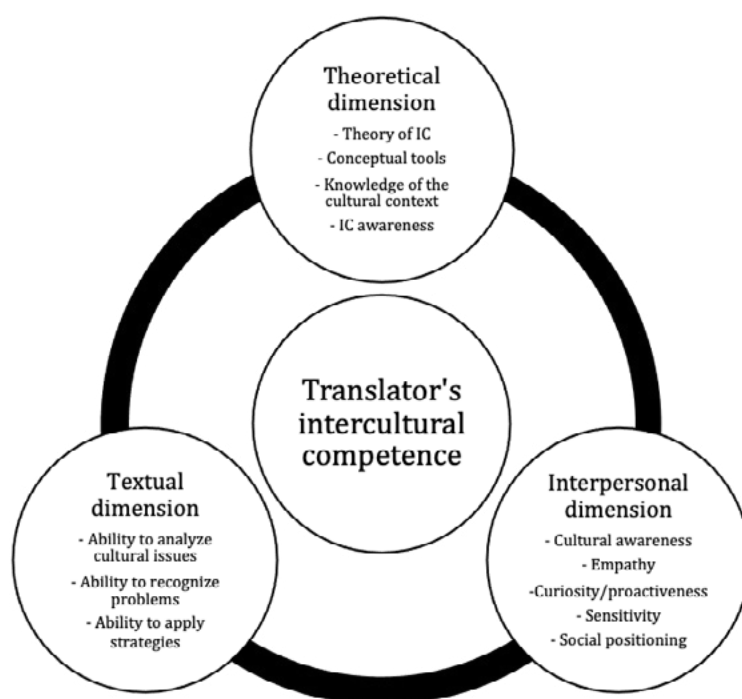


Figure 4. Model of Intercultural Competence in Translators (PICT, 2012).

3.2 Language Competence

Few researchers have been working on models for LSP competences, and even fewer on models for translation-oriented language competences (Andreu Lucas et al., 2002; Cerezo Herrero, 2019; Schmidhofer, 2022). In her systematic review of the research output in that field, Astrid Schmidhofer (2022) offers a classification of contributions published over the last thirty years and laments that most of them deal with goals, methodology and classroom procedures, and hardly any with translation-oriented language competences. The focus is too often laid on language proficiency – which is certainly a requirement and recruitment condition for translators – without paying enough attention to the specific purposes of the language. The only real attempt at designing a model was that carried

out by [Cerezo Herrero \(2019\)](#) and published in an article under the title “Systematization of competences in language B teaching for translation studies in the EHEA from a translation competence model.” The model was later developed by [Cerezo Herrero et al. \(2021, see Figure 5\)](#) to adapt it in a clearer way to LSP acquisition/teaching; it is accompanied by a series of recommendations for practitioners relating to syllabus design, and teaching approaches and resources.

Of particular note here is the focus on LSP through the centring of professional language use, while still recognising the ‘thematic spectrum’ which encompasses ‘the idea that a translator must be able to linguistically cope with any field of expertise’ ([Cerezo Herrero et al., 2021](#), pp. 145-6).

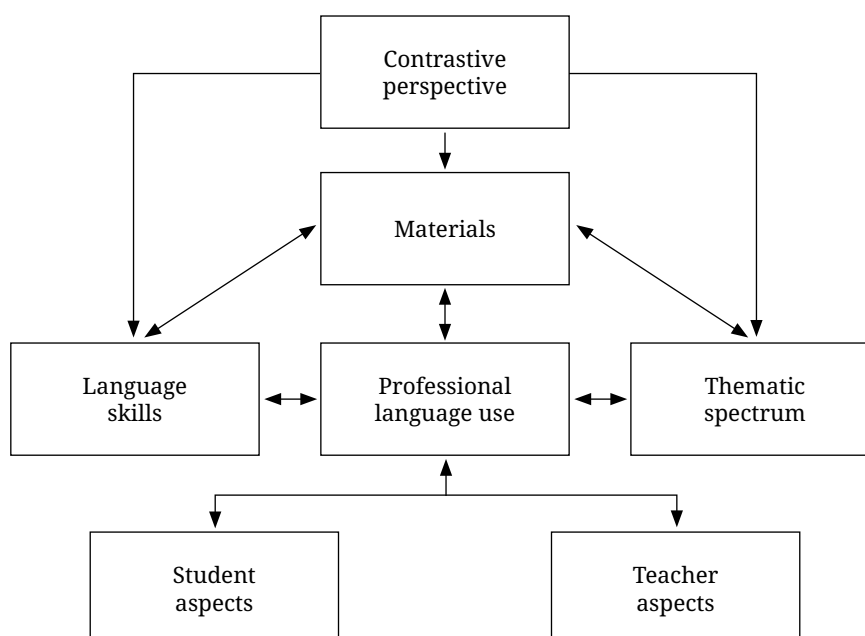


Figure 5. LSP Framework for Translation and Interpreting ([Cerezo Herrero, Schmidhofer & Koletnik, 2021](#)).

However, in reviewing these models, we acknowledge that influential perspectives in contemporary language education, notably plurilingualism and translanguaging, have not been fully addressed. These theoretical frameworks, particularly as developed by [García \(2019\)](#), [Vogel and García \(2017\)](#) and [Canagarajah \(2011\)](#), offer valuable insights into how cultural and linguistic mediation is enacted in increasingly fluid and multilingual environments. Translation students are generally trained to work with their A language and at least with one B and one C language, but they are not often led to recognise that, through this plurilingual knowledge, they can draw on a repertoire of interconnected languages and varieties, rather than function in strictly bounded linguistic systems. Furthermore, incorporating translanguaging approaches in their studies can, in turn, emphasise the dynamic use of multiple linguistic resources to make meaning, negotiate identity and engage in cross-cultural communication. This perspective shifts

the pedagogical focus from mastering separate languages to developing flexible, context-sensitive mediation skills. It is not present in the models we have explored. However, we believe that bringing translanguaging and plurilingualism into conversation with LSP and ICC in translator training would invite educators to reconsider not only what is meant by language proficiency, but also how students are prepared to navigate complex, multilingual communicative contexts with reflexivity and critical awareness.

Having reviewed the models above we can see that there are preferences for either LSP or ICC focus. We advocate the integration of both these aspects, in line with Agata Klimczak-Pawlak (2018) who notes the increasing importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in professional translation practice, particularly in specialised domains where cultural nuances can significantly impact communication.

3.3 Summary

After considering the crucial role of languages in translation studies, their specificity as LSP, the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence in classes for trainee translator, given the mediating position of translators who do not only need language proficiency, but also strive to bridge the gap between readers and texts of different languages and cultures, it is clear that linguistic proficiency approaches to translator training will not be sufficient for this important professional development. Current developments in translator training evidence a growing recognition of the importance of integrating intercultural competence into educational curricula. This acknowledgment reflects the evolving nature of translation as a profession, emphasising not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural communication and the professional context.

The models we have discussed above clearly represent a trend towards a more holistic and multidimensional approach to translator education, one that prepares students to meet the complex challenges of the globalised world and position themselves actively and acknowledge their humanity in their professional practice. This involves recognising their agency and responsibility in the translation process, as well as the subjective nature of their role as mediators between languages and cultures. Translators can thus bring their unique perspectives, experiences and values to their work, thereby enriching the translation process and fostering authentic communication, in other words promoting understanding, rather than passive conduits of information. We note that some models focus more on one aspect (for example contrastive elements of language and culture, the professional context or interpersonal attributes). We argue that these are all important aspects and are necessary if we are to bring together both translator and translation training.

It is also interesting to note how all four models generally overlook current implications related to machine translation (MT) post-editing and artificial intelligence (AI) when addressing translation competences. As stated by Clouet and Massot, these should be taken into consideration:

The integration of artificial intelligence and the increase in the use of MT, the process by which computer software is used to translate a text automatically from one language to another without human involvement, has changed translators' roles and working realities" (Clouet and Massot, 2024, p. 32).

The original PACTE model does not directly address MT or AI. However, the instrumental sub-competence includes "use of documentation resources and new technologies", which could be interpreted to include MT and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools. In more recent PACTE publications (e.g. post-2010), there is acknowledgment of technological change, but MT and post-editing are not central components of the model. The same occurs with PICT. It does not include specific reference to MT, post-editing or AI either, and its emphasis is more on intercultural awareness, mediation and ethics, meaning it is less technically oriented.

EMT, however, explicitly includes MT and post-editing. The "Technological Competence" domain includes proficiency with CAT tools and MT systems, post-editing of machine-translated output, critical evaluation of MT quality and suitability, and awareness of AI's role in translation workflows. EMT also references the need for digital literacy, ethical awareness in the use of AI, and adaptability in the current evolving technological landscape.

Finally, MT and post-editing are fully integrated in Cerezo Herrero et al.'s LSP Framework with critical, real-world competence development. The framework stresses that LSP training must reflect real-world demands, including the use of AI-assisted translation tools, and the expectation that translators critically assess and post-edit MT output.

4. Towards a Competence Framework to Develop ICC in Trainee Translators' LSP Classroom

The most currently used models in translator education differ slightly in their approach as to the competences they place at the core of the training process. Some, like the PACT group model, put the focus on the translator and on a process-oriented approach, and highlight both declarative and procedural knowledge when it comes to deciding on translation strategies. Others, like the EMT model, focus on texts – notably the translator's ability to interpret these – and give particular importance to the sociolinguistic context in which these texts are produced. In the PICT model, on the other hand, intercultural competence is central, and the "interculturally competent translator" (Tomozeiu & Kumpulainen, 2016, p. 251) is what training programmes should aim at. Finally, Cerezo Herrero et al.'s TILLT framework advocates the integration of an LSP approach in translator training, as LSP is essential to understanding texts and performing efficiently in professional contexts. In summary, these models either put the main focus on the text (EMT, TILLT), the context (EMT, TILLT), the translator (PACT, PICT), or intercultural competence (PICT).

The model we present below builds on these four translation models, as well as on Byram's model of the intercultural speaker (1997, 2021), but seeks to do so in a holistic and integrative way. It encompasses all four dimensions in an interactive process where text, context, IC and the translator are correlated to each other, but in the end, it offers a product which is, however, not necessarily fixed.

The importance of the text in translation cannot be overstated, as it serves as the foundation upon which the entire translation process is built. The text can be defined as a dynamic phenomenon with linguistic and sociolinguistic features that range from syntactic and morphosyntactic levels, the understanding of LSP lexis to the appraisal of its context and social function. By acknowledging the dynamic nature of text, we can appreciate its complexity, richness, and ongoing significance in shaping our understanding of the world. We also recognize the basic idea that text and context cannot be viewed as separate entities, as the text always refers to the particular situation – historical, social, political, cultural – enveloping it. The way readers – in this case, translators – engage with a text can also affect its dynamic nature.

Texts can be interpreted differently based on the translator's perspective, experiences, and cultural background. What one person finds meaningful, for instance, another may interpret differently. This dynamic nature of interpretation contributes to ongoing discussions and debates surrounding texts, and this is precisely where the role of the translator comes into play, as an active one. Apart from linguistic and subject-matter expertise to accurately convey technical or specialised terminology, translators must possess the necessary skills and apply the adequate strategies to mediate between languages, cultures, and social conditions, while trying to negotiate the meaning between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). The decision-making dimension in the translation process is determined by the translator's interpreting skills in their broadest sense, openness, creativity, cultural practices and ethical considerations, amongst others.

The translator, through processes of analysis, feedback, reviews, discussions, adaptations, and generally speaking, mediation, contributes to the ongoing life of a text beyond its initial creation and thus becomes an active agent of change whose choices and actions are influenced by their own cultural background, beliefs and experiences. This is why our model also advocates a person-oriented focus that emphasizes the human aspect of translation, recognising the agency, subjectivity and cultural identities of all parties involved, including power relations and positionality. The authors strongly believe that, in a post-colonial age, power dynamics highlight the need for critical awareness, reflexivity and ethical responsibility in navigating the complexities of translation within unequal linguistic and cultural landscapes (Woodin et al., 2021).

This approach prioritises the voices and perspectives of individuals and communities whose texts are being translated, ensuring that their cultural and linguistic identities are respected and represented authentically (Cronin, 2006, 2013). A person-oriented focus can be seen in the recognition of how social identity might impact communication, but this

person-focus is still somehow outside of the translator themselves and does not centralise the translator in the training model as much as the knowledge and skills which the translator should acquire.

The framework also highlights the different settings/contexts in which training can take place: the LSP classroom (through communicative and translation-related/pedagogic translation activities, for instance), the translation classroom (through professional translation activities); professional contexts (through mediation and translation activities). Indeed, models of translator training need also to recognise the contextual domains of development within –and beyond– the language classroom; for example, in-field placements or collaborative training.

Therefore, our model accommodates the above dimensions, as well as focuses on the twenty-first century translator as one with a position and perspective which needs to be recognised (see ‘critical cultural awareness’). The intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997) is always present to one degree or another, and we believe that text, context and the translator should be treated equally in translator education, in order to avoid a static or reductionist approach to intercultural competence; with IC functioning as the backbone of the model. For these reasons, LSP/translation-related courses need to involve not only a focus on linguistic abilities and awareness, but also to develop students’ ability to exercise intercultural sensitivity, especially in these turbulent times when LSP can contribute significantly to our ability to navigate and understand complex issues on a global scale and provide the tools for understanding the global purposes of documents.

In addition to building on the foundational competences of PACTE, EMT, PICT, and TILLT, our model seeks to address a significant evolution in the translation profession: the increasing centrality of machine translation (MT), post-editing, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the translator’s workflow. The EMT Competence Framework and Cerezo Herrero et al.’s LSP Framework have begun to articulate the importance of digital literacy, critical evaluation of MT outputs, and ethical awareness of AI-assisted translation. Our model takes this further by situating these technologies within the translator’s intercultural and ethical positioning. This involves training students to assess the appropriateness and consequences of using MT systems, and equipping future translators with the ethical and intercultural judgment to decide when and how post-editing is appropriate, particularly in sensitive contexts, such as legal, medical, or humanitarian translation.

Furthermore, by considering plurilingual and translanguaging approaches, the model acknowledges the lived linguistic realities of both translators and the communities they serve. Translators often operate in multilingual settings where fluid language practices are the norm, rather than the exception. Incorporating these approaches into training fosters a more realistic and inclusive understanding of communication, where language is not seen as fixed or compartmentalised, but as dynamic and contextually responsive. This allows future translators to recognise and value their entire linguistic repertoire as a resource, rather than limiting themselves to rigid, monolingual norms.

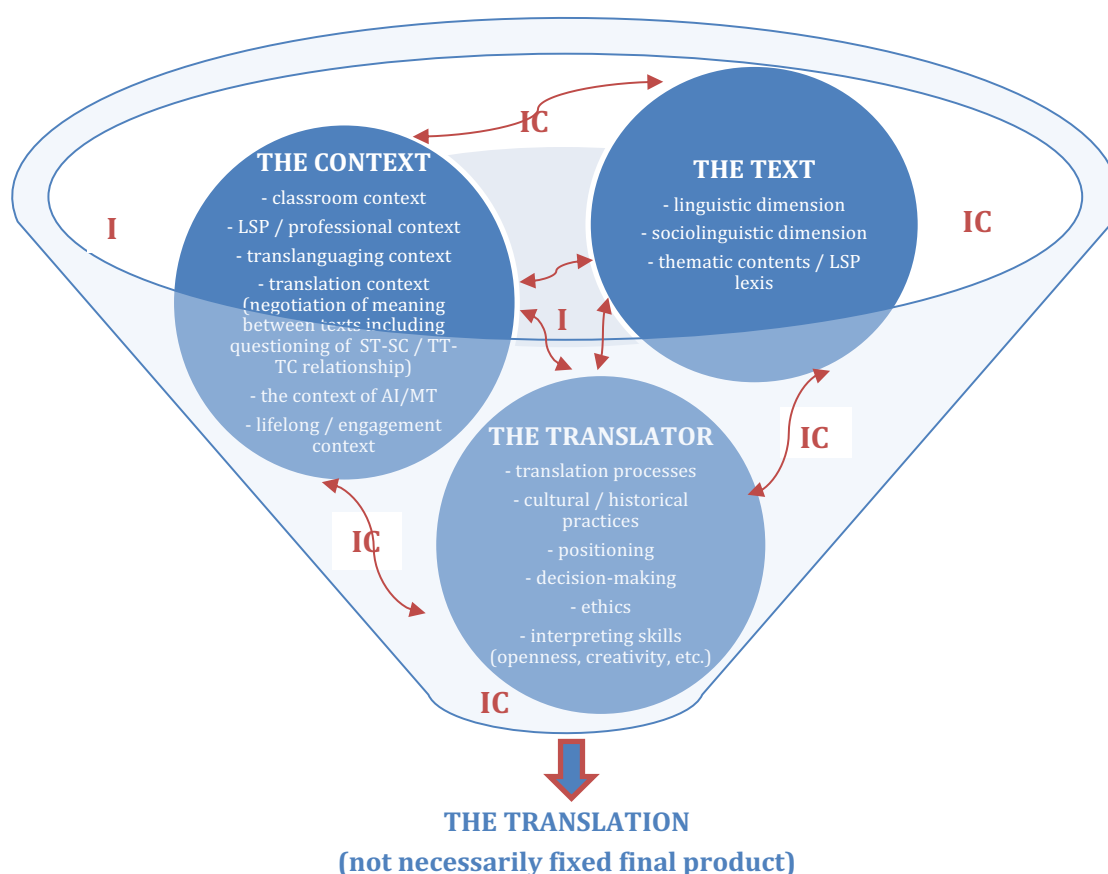


Figure 6. Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) for Trainee Translators.

To recapitulate, our model (Figure 6) proposes to re-orient translation/translator competence to provide a better balance between text and context, as well as between translation and the translator. It incorporates a range of factors, both internal and external to the translation process, that should lead to the acknowledgement that other ways of understanding written productions are possible. With this model, we also wish to promote self-awareness and perspective-taking amongst trainee translators, and to encourage them to explore multiplicity and complexity when carrying out their translation tasks. Plurilingual and translanguaging perspectives are likewise central to this vision, as they validate the full linguistic repertoires of trainee translators and support flexible, context-sensitive meaning-making across languages. In doing so, we also highlight the growing need for translators to critically engage with emerging technologies such as machine translation, post-editing and AI-supported workflows. These tools, while increasingly present in professional contexts, must be approached not only with technical skill but also with intercultural sensitivity and ethical awareness. These competences are integral to the reflective and responsible translator we envision.

5. Examples of Classroom Activities

Back-translation is the first example we would like to give to illustrate our model. It involves translating a document from the source language into the target language (outward), and then translating it back from the target language into the source language (homeward); it is particularly useful in ensuring the acceptability of translations in professional contexts, especially in sensitive or technical content where accuracy – notably LSP accuracy – is crucial.

Back-translation, if used in academic contexts, usually serves the purpose of comparing the original text with the back-translated version in order to gain insights into linguistic structures, specialised vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, or cultural norms. The ultimate objective would be to identify discrepancies, errors, or areas where the translation may not accurately convey the intended meaning. In addition, however, following our framework (Figure 5), back translation could also be used as a way to encourage ongoing critical dialogue, and give translators a voice (Ozolins, 2009; Christensen, 2016). The process of translating back and forth in this way not only develops awareness of language/cultural nuances, but can also be useful for students to position themselves actively as translators and humans, exploring meaning and choices more deeply, and promoting empathy and understanding among parties. As such, back-translation can serve the purpose of opening up spaces for intercultural communication where negotiation and positioning can take place and awareness can be raised as to the role of language and culture in understanding complex and varied meanings, multiplicities of language usage, power differentials, values and attitudes, in other words, “the messiness of everyday multilingual encounters” (Woodin et al., 2021, p. 61).

Another effective classroom activity is the use of intercultural role-play scenarios, in which students are asked to translate and then mediate between two fictional or real parties from different cultural backgrounds. For example, a scenario may involve a hospital setting where a translator must facilitate communication between a medical professional and a patient from a different linguistic and cultural background. Students first work on translating medical intake forms or instructions, and then shift roles to act as cultural mediators, identifying and negotiating areas of potential misunderstanding due to differing cultural beliefs about health, authority, or consent. This activity addresses all three model components: the Text (medical documents), the Context (healthcare setting), and the Translator (as an active, reflexive agent). The role-play enables trainees to consider ethical implications, manage power asymmetries, and adapt communication strategies appropriately.

A third classroom practice that reinforces intercultural awareness is comparative translation analysis. Students are presented with multiple professional translations of the same source text, often drawn from different regions or cultural backgrounds (e.g., a press release translated in both American and British English). Students critically examine the variations in vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, tone, and cultural assumptions embedded in each version. Through guided discussion and written reflection, they explore

how cultural positioning and local expectations shape translation choices. This activity encourages learners to identify not just linguistic but also socio-political nuances, fostering an understanding of how contextual constraints and target audience expectations affect the translator’s work. It highlights the relationship between Text and Context, while reinforcing the Translator’s interpretive role.

Introducing reflective journals as an ongoing classroom task helps trainees become more aware of their decision-making processes and cultural positioning. After completing translation tasks, students are asked to write structured reflections on questions such as: What challenges did I face in translating culturally loaded terms? What assumptions did I bring to this text? How did I adapt the message for the target audience? Over time, these journals reveal patterns in how students negotiate meaning and develop intercultural sensitivity. Teachers can prompt them to link their reflections to theoretical readings discussed in class, thus encouraging a deeper engagement with translation theory. This activity strengthens the Translator component of the model and supports the cultivation of critical intercultural competence.

The table below shows how these activities match the model components: Translator/Text/Context.

Classroom activities mapped to model components.

Activity	Translator	Text	Context
Back-translation for dialogue	Positions translator as active agent in meaning negotiation	Focus on comparing original and back-translated texts	Encourages reflective dialogue on precision, meaning, and socio-cultural fit in communication
Intercultural role-play	Develops mediation skills, empathy, negotiation, and awareness of cultural bias	Involves culturally rich texts like medical forms, legal documents, etc.	Simulates real-life settings (e.g., hospitals, courts) with social and ethical dynamics
Comparative translation analysis	Enhances critical thinking and self-positioning as a cultural interpreter	Contrasts multiple translations to examine lexis, tone, and meaning shifts	Explores geopolitical, regional, or institutional variations in translation expectations
Reflective translation journals	Encourages metacognition, self-awareness, and integration of theory into practice	Based on personal translation work and decision-making processes	Reveals evolving understanding of sociocultural dynamics in translation contexts

These examples of activities do not need to be teacher-centred – they can be undertaken with peers, groups, and/or across online communities (which reflect the reality of many professional translators’ work). This can help with focusing on the negotiation of meaning, contexts and decisions, as well as requiring students to articulate their choices to each other (Clouet & Massot, 2024, p. 39-41).

6. Conclusion

Designing a model of ICC development for translation-oriented language education requires a systematic approach that involves both theoretical and practical considerations. The model presented here above focuses on preparing trainee translators to become professional intercultural mediators who can effectively bridge the gap between cultures. A model is rarely a blueprint for developing teaching activities, as it cannot envisage the individual characteristics and needs of a classroom, and not all translation/or-oriented courses will have the same specific needs and/or outcomes. They can be used however as guides or reflection points for considering over-arching aims and outcomes, and as a reference point for curriculum development. Based on the key (flexible) components included in this model (Translator, Text and Context), we envisage intercultural competence as enabling the relationships between these components. The following considerations may help language teachers working with trainee translators when designing classroom activities:

- a. About Language/cultural knowledge: Trainee translators should have a solid foundation in the languages and cultural beliefs, values and practices of both the source and target language groups; and in the range of variations within the language/culture group as defined by the context. This includes a growing understanding of constraints and affordances within specific professional contexts including specialised linguistic and cultural practices.
- b. About conceptual understanding: Trainee translators should have a good grounding in the broad theoretical underpinnings which give rise to certain ways of conceptualising language/s and culture/s, most simply in terms of the relationship between assumed knowledge, practices and processes and key concepts in translation
- c. About intercultural awareness: Trainee translators should be trained to recognise and appreciate cultural (and linguistic) differences, similarities and processes as well as an understanding of the linguistic nuances and cultural connotations of the source language. This includes an awareness of their own cultural biases and assumptions, and an ability to adapt to the cultural norms and expectations of the target language/cultural group as defined by the context (e.g., professional context). It also includes an understanding of power implications relating to choice of lexis, potential biases in AI solutions based on large language models and translation strategy.
- d. About communication skills: Trainee translators should be trained in effective communication skills, including active listening, questioning, and clarifying. They should also be trained in intercultural communication skills, such as recognising and interpreting non-verbal cues and adjusting communication styles to suit the cultural context. These skills are clearly highly relevant when engaged in

interpreting; however, there are opportunities for negotiating meaning and making conscious decisions regarding the possibilities and constraints even within written or multimodal translation activities.

- e. About cultural mediation skills: Trainee translators should be trained in mediation skills, including negotiation, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. This includes cultural mediation skills, such as identifying and addressing cultural misunderstandings, finding ways to bridge linguistic/cultural gaps, and/or articulate decisions made and the underlying ethical reasons for making them.
- f. About cultural immersion: Trainee translators should be provided with opportunities for cultural immersion, such as study abroad programmes – including online programmes – or internships in a target-language culture and or specific professional context. This will help them to gain first-hand experience and develop a deeper understanding of the cultural and/or professional context, and develop critical awareness of the realities of our often non-homogenous groups which are often described as ‘a culture’.

The points a) to e) represent the kinds of outcomes which a university translation-training oriented curriculum might recognise. They link to the model in that they all address at least two of the moving bubbles in the receptacle (Figure 5) and link to typical activities which might be undertaken in a classroom – in the case of a) to d).

In this article we have proposed the need for a re-think of the trainee-translator classroom, focusing on both text and person (*translation* and *translator*). We have reviewed relevant models for translation-oriented training, and proposed a further model which draws on the strengths of the previous models, proposing a re-balance which positions the translator as an interculturally competent, responsible and visible linguist and mediator.

In professional contexts, speed is often an essential skill for the translator with many translation companies setting word numbers against time. The complexities behind the translation processes are not often visible in professional life, and yet decisions are made on some criteria, whether the translator is aware of this or not. For us, this points even more to the necessity of an approach like ours for trainee translation/or programmes; university education is most likely to be the place where trainee translators will have the luxury of time to develop their broad knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of translation theory and practice which will need to serve them well into their professional future.

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Conceptualization / *Conceptualización*: Richard Clouet, Jane Woodin.

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Positioning constructed through employing engagement resources in examiners' comments on applied linguistics theses

Zahra Alimorad^{ip*} & Mitra Behrouzi^{ip}

Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

Abstract: The present study investigated the way positioning is constructed through utilizing engagement resources by male and female examiners in their comments on applied linguistics theses. To this aim, nine examiners' written comments were collected through a convenience sampling procedure and semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit their perceptions of their own positions and those of the students. Drawing on the ENGAGEMENT of the system of APPRAISAL, the researchers coded all comments and calculated frequencies and percentages of different categories. To compare the two genders, a chi-square test was run after normalizing the data. Findings indicated that heteroglossic resources were utilized almost three times more than the monoglossic ones and expand resources outnumbered contract. Furthermore, female examiners tended to use all resources except for proclaim and attribute more than their male counterparts but the difference in terms of heteroglossic, expand, and entertain resources seemed to be more substantial. Analysis of the interviews revealed the positions reflected in the comments were in accordance with the examiners' view of themselves and the students as expressed in their interviews. Overall, examiners positioned themselves as kind and supportive teachers and the students as novice researchers/learners.

Keywords: *engagement resources, evaluative language, examiners, gender, positioning.*

Posicionamiento construido mediante el empleo de recursos de participación en los comentarios de los examinadores sobre tesis de lingüística aplicada

Resumen: La presente investigación investigó cómo se construye el posicionamiento mediante el uso de recursos de participación por parte de examinadores masculinos y femeninos en sus comentarios sobre tesis de lingüística aplicada. Con este fin, se recopiló los comentarios escritos de nueve examinadores a través de un procedimiento de muestreo por conveniencia y se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas para obtener sus percepciones sobre sus propias posiciones y las de los estudiantes. Basándose en el compromiso del sistema de evaluación, los investigadores codificaron todos los comentarios y calcularon frecuencias y porcentajes de diferentes categorías. Para comparar los dos géneros, se realizó una prueba de chi-cuadrado después de normalizar los datos. Los hallazgos indicaron que se utilizaron recursos heteroglósicos casi tres veces más que los monoglósicos y que los recursos de expansión superaron a los de contrato. Además, las examinadoras tendieron a utilizar todos los recursos excepto proclamar y atribuir más que sus contrapartes masculinos, pero la diferencia en términos de recursos heteroglósicos, de expansión y de entretenimiento parecía ser más sustancial. El análisis de las entrevistas reveló que las posiciones reflejadas en los comentarios estaban de acuerdo con la visión de los examinadores sobre sí mismos y los estudiantes expresada en sus entrevistas. En general, los examinadores se posicionaron como profesores amables y de apoyo y a los estudiantes como investigadores/aprendices novatos.

Palabras clave: *recursos de participación, lenguaje evaluativo, examinadores, género, posicionamiento.*

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*Corresponding author: zahra.alimorad@shirazu.ac.ir

1. Introduction

Despite the adversities students may face while accomplishing a thesis, it has a number of benefits, including having the opportunity to discern one's potentiality in doing research and learning from an experienced researcher's detailed advice, which makes this "long and (virtually endless) journey" (Bui, 2014, p. 4) worth the effort. One of the hardships that learners experience in the process of writing a thesis is the examination process. That is why examiners' comments in their written reports and viva discussions have sparked research interest from multiple perspectives such as the criteria they use (Holbrook et al., 2004a; 2004b; Johnston, 1997), the extent to which examiners of Ph.D. and M.A. theses see the importance of criteria differently (Bourke & Holbrook, 2013), the form their comments take (Holbrook et al., 2004a; 2004b), and the difference of the comments on high- and low-quality theses (Holbrook et al., 2004b). Still, some other studies centered on face-saving acts and the use of lexical hedges in dissertation defenses (DDs) (Don & Izadi, 2011; Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2018), the use of pragmatic force modifiers in DDs (Lin, 2017; 2020), and modality in DDs (Recski, 2005) as well as in examiners' reports (Starfield et al., 2015).

Another strand of research focused on viva participants' use of engagement resources and their positioning of themselves and others (Lau et al., 2020; Starfield et al., 2015). ENGAGEMENT is one of the three subsystems of APPRAISAL (Martin & White, 2005) which was developed under the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) put forth by Halliday (1994). SFL is a multi-perspectival model that offers complementary lenses for exploring meaning in language relating language use to its social context (Martin & White, 2005). At the most basic level, Halliday elaborated on the way language simultaneously achieves three functions in constructing meaning; the ideational metafunction constructs ideas and experiences, the interpersonal enacts social roles and power dynamics, and the textual manages the flow of information to make extended discourse coherent and cohesive. The second level, realization, considers language as "a stratified semiotic system involving three cycles of coding at different levels of abstraction" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 8). As displayed in Figure 1, these coding cycles include phonology and graphology, grammar and lexis, and discourse semantics. Given that APPRAISAL is placed in the third cycle, discourse semantics, which deals with meaning beyond the clause, this cycle was the main concern in the current study.

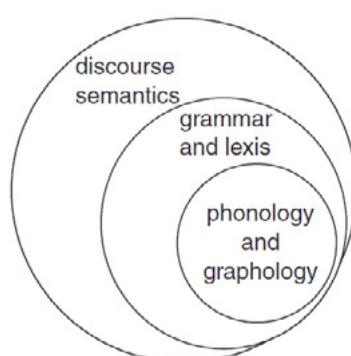


Figure 1. Language strata (Martin & White, 2005, p. 8).

At the discourse semantics level, APPRAISAL, along with two other systems - NEGOTIATION and INVOLVEMENT – co-articulate interpersonal meaning. In this regard, NEGOTIATION focuses on “the interactive aspects of discourse, speech function and exchange structure” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 33), and INVOLVEMENT focuses on “non-gradable resources for negotiating tenor relations, especially solidarity” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 33) to complement APPRAISAL. APPRAISAL itself comprises three subsystems: ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT, and GRADUATION.

ATTITUDE is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior and evaluation of things. ENGAGEMENT deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. GRADUATION attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred. (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35)

Lau et al. (2020, p. 5) postulate that, in the context of evaluation, “each participant must acknowledge the ideas of the others in a role-dependent way, and *Engagement* can be used to classify particular acknowledgement methods” (Italics in original). However, despite the importance of examining engagement, little attempt has been made to explore it in “academic English genres” including written reports of examiners “so that speakers may learn to better exploit the power of evaluative language” (Lau et al., 2020, p. 19). This is what Starfield et al. (2015, p. 15) have also called attention to, “the need for examiners to reflect more critically on their choices in evaluative language when writing reports”. Despite such recommendations, scrutinizing the language of examiners’ written comments using the ENGAGEMENT system has remained almost untouched. Furthermore, given that literature indicates “positioning interacts with various social markers, with gender being the most common” (Kayi-Aydar & Miller, 2018, p. 4), the possible influence of examiners’ gender on their use of ENGAGEMENT resources warrants more investigation. Hence, to fill these gaps, this study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What positions does the frequency of different ENGAGEMENT resources in the examiners’ comments on M.A. theses construe?
2. How do male and female examiners employ ENGAGEMENT resources while evaluating M.A. theses?
3. Are the examiners and the students’ positions reflected in the comments in accordance with the examiners’ view of themselves and the students as expressed in their interviews?

2. Background to the Study

About two decades ago, Lovat (2004) studied examiners’ reports in terms of Habermas’s ‘ways of knowing’ and found that almost all reports reflected the examiners’ empirical/analytical frame of mind because they perceived themselves as experts. In the same year, Lovat et al. extended Lovat’s study and showed that the most frequent way of knowing observed in the examiners’ reference to both the candidates and the supervisors was empirical/analytical knowledge. Likewise, the dominant type of positioning was the

examiners' positioning themselves as experts even in the theses rated as 'top box'. They attributed this to the unbalanced power relationship between examiners and candidates in evaluative contexts. In this study, not even one examiner mentioned the candidate as a 'researcher'. Instead, they used their names or labeled them as 'author', 'candidate', 'applicant' and "ensured the candidate could not begin to assume the role of researcher, which might imply some measure of equal status with the examiner" (p. 174).

Starfield et al. (2015) discovered a language mismatch in the examiners' comments; that is, while based on the examination criteria, just appreciation resources were expected to be seen, the examiners had used appreciation, affect and judgment resources. This study suggested that examiners sometimes align themselves with candidates and sometimes distance themselves from them in their comments. In another study in 2017, Starfield et al. analyzed the discourse of evaluation and instruction of the written reports on Ph.D. theses. Drawing on SFL, they identified up to 10 roles including examiner, institution, expert, editor, supervisor, peer, evaluator, reporter, commentator and viva examiner.

Besides examining positioning in general, some other researchers ventured into uncovering the relationship between examiners' gender and their language choices more specifically. In this vein, Lovat and Monfries (as cited in Monfries & Lovat, 2006) concluded that female examiners tended to protect the candidates' ego and accordingly, use a much softer language than males did. They also explained that although both male and female examiners were positioned as expert in asymmetrical dialogs with students, female examiners were less inclined to use language in ways "that are designed to increase their personal power base" (Monfries & Lovat, 2006, p. 3).

In 2006, Monfries and Lovat examined 62 examination reports on 31 high- and low-quality Ph.D. dissertations using Habermas's tripartite forms of knowledge. After analyzing the discourse of the examiners' reports, they observed differences in the balance of expression between male and female examiners. In case of low-quality dissertations, more comments were provided by both genders, but males tended to be more "objective and succinct in their criticism" whereas females attempted to soften the criticisms by "balancing negative comments with positive" ones and offering suggestions and assistance (p. 5). On the other hand, in their reports on high-quality dissertations, males were egocentric and felt like they had to criticize the dissertations and were inclined to provide understated praise. Females were, on the other hand, more self-reflective while commenting on high-quality dissertations and tended to use emotive superlatives. The researchers concluded that females are "less authoritative and less confident in the way they express their evaluations irrespective of the quality of the thesis" and "male examiners express their view with unequivocal confidence" (p. 6).

All in all, reviewing previous research suggests that the evaluators' language can be either motivating and encouraging and inspire the examinees to make more effort in their learning path or demotivating and discouraging and prevent them from learning and making progress (Bastola & Hu, 2021). Nevertheless, although a surging number of scholars have devoted their attention to examiners and supervisors' language, most of

these studies (Don & Izadi, 2011; Lau et al. 2020; Lin, 2017, 2020; Lin & Lau, 2021; Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2018; Recski, 2005) have focused on oral evaluative language of examiners, i.e., during dissertation defense sessions, while their written comments have largely been overlooked. Therefore, to bridge this gap, in this study, the researchers attempted to analyze the examiners' written comments on M.A. theses employing the system of APPRAISAL while keeping an eye on the possible effect of gender on their evaluative language.

3. Method

3.1 Context of the Study

This study was carried out at Iranian public universities where M.A. students have to do research and write its report in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. degree. At least, two university instructors guide and support the student during this process: a supervisor and an advisor. After the thesis has been completed, another instructor, most likely from the same department/university, reviews the manuscript as the examiner. Examiners are supposed to provide the research team with their written comments on the draft itself. They also elaborate on the comments orally during the defense session in which the student is expected to first, orally present the report of their study and then, be ready to respond to the examiner's comments and concerns.

3.2 Data Collection Procedures

To collect the necessary data, first, the researchers contacted some university instructors who had been examiners and also some graduate students who had already defended their theses and solicited their cooperation. After obtaining their approval, they explained the general objectives of the study to them while trying to reassure them that everything would strictly be kept anonymous and confidential throughout the study as well as in its written report. To mitigate any possible social desirability bias, no information regarding the specific objectives of the study was disclosed to the examiners. After receiving 9 theses (i.e., for each examiner, there was one thesis commented by them), the researchers extracted the comments for further analysis and interpretation. Having analyzed the comments, they contacted the examiners and asked them to arrange a time for an interview. The participants were interviewed only once and one by one. During the interviews, some excerpts from their comments along with their interpretation and analysis were given to them and their ideas regarding those interpretations were sought.

3.3 Corpus

The comments made by nine examiners from three different public universities in Iran on applied linguistics students' theses served as the corpus in this study (Table 1). Given that the focus was on applied linguistics theses which are written in English, the language of all comments was English, too. These theses were chosen based on a convenience sampling procedure in that availability and willingness of the examiners and students to cooperate with the researchers determined whose theses to be examined.

Table 1. Number of comments and words.

Examiners	Comments	Words
E 1	30	321
E 2	28	1109
E 3	30	644
E 4	12	304
E 5	77	1524
E 6	25	312
E 7	50	741
E 8	163	1000
E 9	40	459

3.4 Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used to uncover any possible accordance/discordance between the examiners' perceptions and the meanings they had conveyed through their comments. Because the interviewees were applied linguistics university instructors who were fluent English speakers, all interviews were conducted in English. Some of the interview questions were metalinguistic commentaries through which the examiners were asked about their intention behind making specific comments and the meaning they aimed to convey. The second researcher conducted the interviews under the supervision of the first one who was her supervisor. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded with the examiners' consent and then transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

3.5 Participants

The nine university instructors whose comments were analyzed were asked to partake in the interview phase of the study in order to cross-examine the data collected. Eight of them accepted to take part in this phase whose demographic information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Participants' Demographic Information.

Examiners	Gender	Rank	Age	Years of experience
E 1	Male	Professor	46	12
E 2	Male	Professor	55	25
E 3	Male	Associate Professor	55	8
E 4	Male	Professor	63	14
E 5	Male	Assistant Professor	38	6
E 6	Female	Assistant Professor	46	15
E 7	Female	Associate Professor	57	8
E 8	Female	Associate Professor	45	8
E 9*	Female	Associate Professor	53	20

*E9 did not attend the interview.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

This study enjoyed a mixed-methods conversion design as the qualitative data collected needed to be “quantitized by counting the number of times a particular” engagement resource/code was used to answer the first two research questions (Ary et al., 2019, p. 523). The coding of ENGAGEMENT resources was performed by the second researcher using the manual annotation of UAM Corpus Tool 3 considering the context-baseness of the comments. To ensure the reliability of the coding, after a period of 40 days, she coded the whole data set an additional time. Moreover, a part of the corpus was coded by a Ph.D. candidate who knew the framework well. While the index for the former was 98.6, that of the latter was 88.84, which were satisfactory for the purpose of the current study. UAM calculated the frequency and percentage of every single category and subcategory for the reports of all the examiners using its statistics part. Then, following the suggestions offered in a number of previous studies (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Biber et al., 2011; Gablasova et al., 2017), the frequency of each category and subcategory was normalized to a per 10000 words of text due to the unequal size of the sub-corpora (the number of words used by each examiner in their comments). After normalizing the data, a chi-square test for independence was run to check whether there existed any statistical difference between male and female instructors' evaluative language.

To answer the third research question, the researchers listened to the interviews several times to familiarize themselves with the data. Then, having transcribed the data, they extracted recurrent themes during repeated conferences with each other by identifying a number of possible codes indicating the positions the examiners had defined for themselves as well as the students. These codes were then compared with the results of the first research question to check whether they were in agreement or not. The researchers shared the interview codes and their interpretations with the examiners to identify and clear up any possible miscommunication and misinterpretation.

4. Results

4.1 The Positions Construed by Differential Use of ENGAGEMENT Resources

As displayed in Figure 2 below, results suggested that, overall, heteroglossic utterances (n=489, 73.97%) were used almost three times more than monoglossic ones (n=172, 26.02%) in the first dataset (i.e., examiners' comments). Likewise, regarding heteroglossic categories, expand (n=352, 71.98%) was used much more than contract (n=137, 28.01%) and with respect to expand and contract subcategories, the most frequent ENGAGEMENT resource was entertain (n=351, 71.77%) followed by disclaim (n=118, 24.13%), proclaim (n=19, 3.88%), and attribute (n=1, 0.20%) resources, respectively. To clarify the point, a few illustrative examples are given:

- Extract 1: For the first time, give the full names (imperative verb, monoglossic). (E1)
- Extract 2: This is stated in very general terms (bare assertion, monoglossic). (E3)

Monoglossic utterances are 'single voiced' and there is no sign of overtly referencing to other voices or consideration of alternative positions in them (Martin & White, 2005). In a similar vein, in neither of the extracts above, the examiners refer to other viewpoints, thereby leaving no room for the student's disagreement about the idea. However, in dialogically contractive utterances, the examiners take the student's viewpoint in consideration as a possible alternative and challenge or reject it as is the case with the following comment.

- Extract 3: In reality (pronounce), the texts we encounter in our daily lives are short. We normally (concur) do not (deny) read long texts unless (deny) there is a reason. (E2)

In Extract 3, E2 applies pronounce (In reality), concur (normally) and deny (do not and unless) resources to close down the space for the student's alternative view. First, he shows the warrantability of his view using "In reality" and then, aligns the student with himself using "normally" and finally, rejects the alternative viewpoint employing deny resources "do not" and "unless" and contracts the discourse. This utterance is contractive because while the student's viewpoint has been recognized, it is held not to apply.

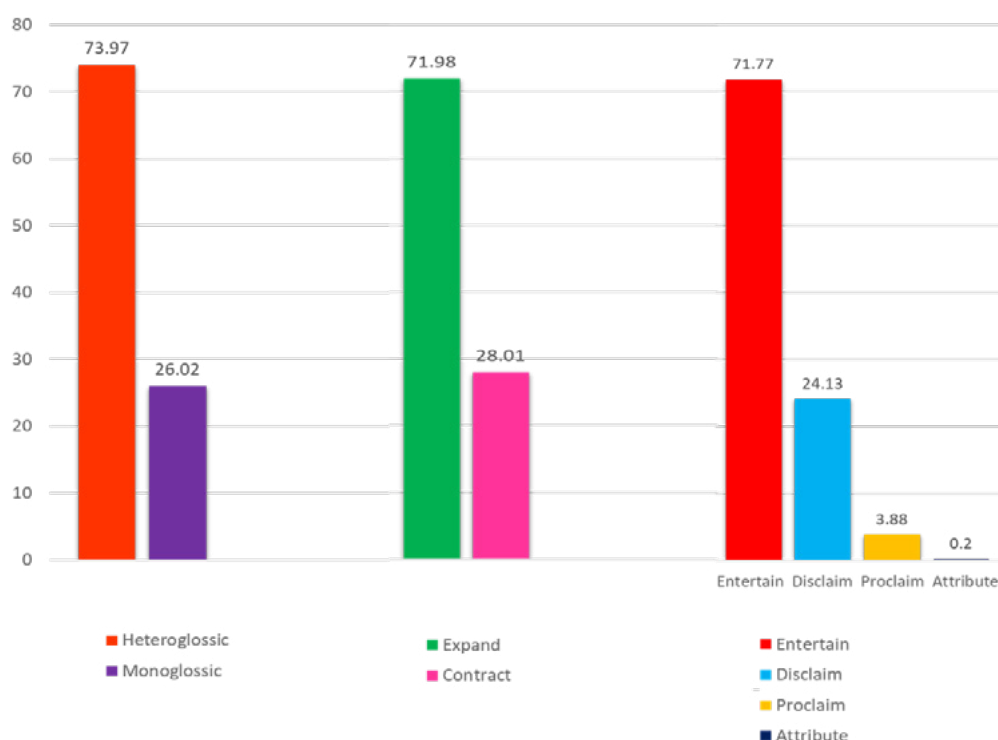


Figure 2. Patterns of the Use of ENGAGEMENT Resources at Each Level.

Dialogically expansive utterances, on the other hand, open up the space for dialogic alternatives. Unlike Extract 3, in the following extract which is an example of an expansive utterance, the student is allowed to have their own view and choice by E8 as she has lowered the interpersonal cost using the entertain resources "I think" and "you should have".

- Extract 4: I think (entertain) at the beginning of each chapter, you should have (entertain) an introductory paragraph in a separate section to introduce that chapter and its different parts. (E8)

In Extract 5, E5 entertains the student's alternative voice by asking an expository question and giving a suggestion started by "You could have". In the last two sentences, the examiner presents the student's viewpoint in order to counter that view using "only" and "merely". Although he counters the student's viewpoint, in fact, he considers alternative viewpoints by placing the modal "may" in the sentence to represent his proposition as one of a range of possible ones.

- Extract 5: How can you make sure that teachers' writing assessment practices conform to their real writing assessment practices?? (entertain) You could have (entertain) asked them to take a writing assessment test ... Your data here are only (counter) based on self-reports of teachers who have already negative attitudes ... Having merely (counter) knowledge may not (entertain) necessarily lead to knowledge in practice. (E5)

The least frequent engagement resource in the dataset was attribute (0.15%) resource with only one occurrence in the whole dataset as an acknowledge resource:

- Extract 6: ... So, can we rely on self-assessment and self-report of teachers who have already negative attitudes about scoring accuracy and assessment methods and also are inadequately familiar with technical writing assessment concepts?? Based on DelleBovi, 2012; Dempsey et al., 2009; Hout, 1996; Lam, 2019; Weigle, 2007 (acknowledge). (E5)

In the above extract, the examiner provides the student with some ideas and questions followed by a series of references. Citations are dialogically expansive in that "they associate the proposition being advanced with voices and/or positions which are external to that of the text itself and present the authorial voice as engaging interactively with those voices" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 112).

Overall, analysis of the comments indicates that the examiners primarily tended to recognize the students' voice by frequent use of heteroglossic, expansive and entertain resources. Nevertheless, despite considering alternative viewpoints, their sporadic use of monoglossic and contractive resources could construe the possible hierarchical power relationship between the examiners and the students which, in some situations, could limit the space for disagreement.

4.2 ENGAGEMENT Resources Used by Male and Female Examiners

To uncover any possible differences between male and female examiners in terms of the engagement resources they had used, chi-square test was run three times for different levels of ENGAGEMENT: 1. monoglossic vs. heteroglossic, 2. contract vs. expand, and 3. proclaim, disclaim, entertain, and attribute resources. As mentioned earlier, prior to running the test, the data were normalized. Table 3 reports the results of chi-square tests at different levels.

Table 3. Chi-square Tests.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed)		Value	Approximate Significance
Continuity Correction (Monoglossic vs. Heteroglossic)	41.739	1	.000	Phi	.139	.000
Continuity Correction (Contract vs. Expand)	55.398	1	.000	Phi	.184	.000
Pearson Chi-Square (Proclaim & Disclaim vs. Entertain & Attribute)	105.882	3	.000	Cramer's V	.253	.000

As can be seen, the difference between female and male examiners' use of monoglossic and heteroglossic resources was statistically significant, $X^2 (1, n = 2202) = 41.73, p = .000$. Female examiners tended to use more heteroglossic resources (68.7%) than male examiners (31.3%) did (Table 4 details these percentages at different levels). The phi coefficient value was .139 for this level which is considered a small effect size using Cohen's criteria (as cited in Pallant, 2016). It means that while the effect of gender on use of these resources is significant, this effect is small. In terms of contract and expand resources, overall, female examiners tended to use both expand (73.9%) and contract resources (54.5%) more than their male counterparts (26.1% and 45.6%, respectively) and this difference was statistically significant although the difference in terms of expand resources seems to be more substantial (73.9 vs. 26.1%), $X^2 (1, n = 1656) = 55.39, p = .000$. The phi coefficient value was .184 which is considered a small effect size. Finally, with respect to contract and expand subcategories, the difference was significant, $X^2 (3, n = 1658) = 105.88, p = .000$. Female examiners tended to use more entertain and disclaim resources (74% and 59.6%, respectively) than their male peers (26% and 40.4%, respectively) although the difference in terms of entertain resources is larger (74% vs. 26%).

Table 4. Crosstabulations.

Gender	Monoglossic	Heteroglossic	Contract	Expand	Proclaim	Disclaim	Entertain	Attribute
Male	46.6%	31.3%	45.6%	26.1%	84.6%	40.4%	26.0%	100.0%
Female	53.4%	68.7%	54.5%	73.9%	15.4%	59.6%	74.0%	0.0%

Taken together, these results suggest that there appears to be an association between the examiners' gender and their use of ENGAGEMENT resources in that female examiners seem to be more inclined to let students' voices be heard and recognized than their male counterparts. This might also be indicative of a more balanced power dynamic reflected in the way they utilized these linguistic resources while serving as M.A. thesis examiners.

4.3 Positions Expressed in the Interviews

The interviewees believed that an examiner's identity and duties have partially been determined by the institutional regulations. In light of such regulations, the main responsibility of an examiner is to evaluate the students' theses, which indicates that the university expects them to assume the position of an "evaluator". In this regard, E2 mentioned that a part of their responsibility is "officially defined" and E7 stated that it is expected of them to "see if it [thesis] meets the necessary qualifications". Nevertheless, E2 believed there exist "some professional responsibilities which are not officially defined". Therefore, examiners may also position themselves and their students differently based on the obligations, commitments and duties they perceive. Some of these positions are elaborated on in more detail in the following sections.

4.3.1 Examiners as Supportive Teachers

Regarding the positions examiners hold, E2 opined that defense session "besides being evaluative, is also an instructional session" not only to the student who is defending their thesis but also as E7 remarked, "to other people, guiding other people, in fact, to do the job properly in the future". Further, E1 put that after evaluation, the main responsibility of an examiner "is to provide constructive feedback so that the student who has written the thesis can improve its quality", which indicates that the examiners position themselves as teachers not only in defense sessions but also in their written comments. A reasonable justification could be the fact that before being examiners, almost all of them are teachers, which is why they have the mindset of supportive teachers even when they function as examiners.

4.3.2 Graduate Students as Novice Researchers

Despite being perceived as learners by the examiners, the students are expected to meet minimum requirements as they have passed some related prerequisite courses before engaging in their thesis study. The expectations are even higher of Ph.D. students given that they are considered to be more experienced in carrying out a research study since they have already conducted and reported at least their M.A. thesis study. In this regard, E8 explained that the language of her comments on M.A. theses might differ from that on Ph.D. dissertations,

- Extract 7: ... if it is an M.A. thesis, I will be more lenient and try to kindly guide the student because I do not expect M.A. students who are novice researchers to do an excellent job. But regarding Ph.D. dissertations, I am stricter because Ph.D. students are more experienced and I expect them to be more responsible and careful. (E8)

E8 positions M.A. students as "novice researchers" who have little or no experience of conducting research. Nevertheless, despite being novice, they are expected to have the basic knowledge of research. Ph.D. students, on the other hand, are envisaged to be more

experienced, which leads to higher expectations of them. Such a position results in less tolerance of their mistakes on the part of the examiners. Similarly, E1 referred to students as researchers,

- Extract 8: The main responsibility is to help the researcher improve the quality of the dissertation. So, this is done by critically reading the manuscript and providing relevant questions and comments with the purpose of improving the quality. (E1)

Positioning a student as a researcher might indicate a more equal power relationship, thereby making the student more accountable for what they have done and written.

4.3.3 Students as Accountable Addressees

Examiners believed that students themselves are fully responsible for what they have done and written:

- Extract 9: Basically, I consider the student as the addressee because I do believe that the main job is done by the student, i.e., the researcher is considered to be the student. Although there is a committee and there are some members who provide help to a student, I think the main job of the research is done by the student; so, I just when I'm just providing some comments or questions, I'm talking to the student not to the committee members. (E1)

Nevertheless, different types of errors might provoke various reactions from the examiners. For instance, while facing major problems or when a thesis is replete with errors, the examiner might delegate responsibilities to the supervisor too.

- Extract 10: sometimes if a thesis is replete with problems, I consider all committee members as well as the student accountable. I mean, when major issues are found in a thesis, I think maybe the supervisor has not guided the student sufficiently. In such situations, both the student and the committee members will be my addressee but of course, this is not something which is explicitly mentioned in my comments. This is what I have in my mind. (E8)
- Extract 11: Well, I explicitly address the student... there's also some hidden reference to the supervisor and the advisor when I am addressing the student ... that's why they sometimes interfere and well they try to justify the position of their student. (E2)

E2 further pointed out that this hidden reference is rooted in the difference of supervisory processes in Iran and other countries.

- Extract 12: [In other countries] The study is considered to be the original work of the student who visits his/her supervisor a number of times getting general and sometimes detailed support and suggestions and then, the student himself/herself is considered to be the major player in this project and he/she has to decide what to do and the supervisor provides overall judgement of that work. He/she does not find themselves responsible for correcting the language use and the like or

getting into the details of the methodology. They usually discuss the methodology, but how it should be written and how the text should be woven into something that is textually acceptable, that's the responsibility of the student himself/herself and there's no expectation of any joint publication. (E2)

As mentioned by E2, in some other countries, supervisors are just guides and not accountable for what the students write. As a result, in the examiners' comments, they might not be considered as the addressee neither explicitly nor implicitly.

- Extract 13: But in the context of Iran, the situation is different. The project is defined in the first place in the name of the supervisor in the research management system of the university because it is the academic member who is officially recognized and so the project can be defined in his/her name, not the student. The student would be second, officially. And then, there's the expectation of joint publication and this is specially required of Ph.D. students and so, the expectation is that the supervisor should indulge in the study intensively and provide general and detailed support.

What is worthy of notice in the Iranian context, as put by E2, is the effect of obliging Ph.D. students to publish papers extracted from their dissertations as joint publications. Such mandatory obligations will undoubtedly make supervisors more accountable in the Iranian context compared to the contexts of other countries, thereby placing less responsibility on the students.

4.3.4 Students Who Plagiarize as Deceivers

In Extract 14, E8 emphasized that detecting plagiarism in students' writings could affect the language the examiners use in their comments. She believed that committing plagiarism implies deception of the examiners because the students have already learned about plagiarism and are expected to avoid committing it. Not surprisingly, encountering "deceivers" arouses negative feelings of annoyance and anger, which subsequently affects her language choices.

- Extract 14: One thing I cannot stand is plagiarism. If I find plagiarism in a Ph.D. dissertation, or even an M.A. thesis, I choose words and structures to show that I am angry because when I see a student has plagiarized too much, I think s/he has tried to deceive me. That makes me annoyed and changes the tone of my comments. (E8)

In a similar vein, E6 acknowledged that she uses a "respectful" language unless she detects plagiarism. In such cases, her comments are critical and direct, but not sarcastic or ironic. This indicates that "respect" is mutually constructed during the examination process; by committing plagiarism, students implicitly insult examiners (and other committee members); therefore, they do not deserve to be respected.

- Extract 15: As I said, I try to use a respectful language. In some cases, the mistakes or plagiarism are very evident, which may cause a direct criticism, but not by using a sarcastic or ironic language. (E6)

4.3.5 Using Punctuation Marks as a Positioning Strategy

The examiners' evaluative language seems to be extremely complex since even the punctuation marks are purposefully and meticulously chosen and are intended to play a pivotal role in the way positions are constructed. This interesting finding which emerged as the examiners were describing their evaluation strategies seems to merit more detailed investigation.

- Extract 16: In extreme cases in which it seems that the manuscript is not studied by the supervisor or the errors are so glaring and the plagiarism is so evident that it lacks all the essential requirements of an academic text, these punctuations are usually used. Mostly exclamation marks! (E6)

In the above extract, E6 remarked that by using exclamation marks, she positions the supervisor as an accountable person. However, different examiners use exclamation marks in different ways and for different purposes.

- Extract 17: ... exclamation marks, I use many of them. I can say, in my comments, the exclamation marks are used a lot. This is, probably, a kind of idiosyncratic style. That's my personal style, but I prefer this. I usually go on with a statement and then, go on with a number of exclamation marks. For some of them, the researcher may have written something which is really strange to me and doesn't make sense at all or something which is totally unexpected; then, I put a lot of exclamation marks saying that you are really off track. (E1)

According to E1, his marked use of exclamation marks indicates that his expectation of the students is high because he views them as "researchers". Likewise, strange and senseless stuff could trigger his marked use of exclamation marks as a device to raise the student's awareness. However, contrary to other examiners, E5 believed that excessive use of exclamation marks to show your surprise, even when you are really surprised, may not be appropriate in an academic context.

- Extract 18: Yes, I use exclamation marks, usually one or two. When I'm really surprised, I put at most one or two exclamation marks at the end of the statements. More exclamation marks, I think, is far from the academic and in fact, desirable politeness. (E5)

Sometimes, the examiners use exclamation marks and question marks together to display more intense negative emotions, which is indicative of unfulfilled expectations.

- Extract 19: ... or even sometimes, well, to show my fury at the way that a part has been treated, again, I might use exclamation marks, well, exclamation marks and question marks, the two punctuation marks that I usually use. (E2)

In summary, this phase of the study identified a diversity of positions the examiners defined for themselves and the students. Conspicuously, these positions were mainly favorable in that examiners tended to view themselves as supportive teachers and their students as novice researchers who should be accountable for what they have done and reported. Nonetheless, engaging in unethical misconduct such as plagiarism or making too many glaring mistakes could negatively affect examiners' perceptions, thereby contributing to redefining students' positions.

5. Discussion

Frequent employment of heteroglossic, expand, and entertain resources by the examiners found in the current study corroborates what Lau et al. (2020) reported about the most frequent resource used by all of the viva participants including examiners in their oral feedback in DDs. The examiners' excessive use of entertain could be attributed to their asking questions to get more information or to avoid misunderstanding and their mitigating the criticisms. On the other hand, in this study, the least frequent engagement resource was attribute while in Lau et al. (2020)'s research, attribute was the second frequent resource used by all the participants including the examiners. The low utilization of attribute compared with Lau et al. (2020)'s study could be justified in terms of contextual differences existing in the two study situations. In Lau et al.'s research, the comments were oral, thereby suggesting the need for contextualizing them by "making reference to specific sections of S's dissertation" (p. 15), to the student's utterance or to the external examiner's question "to draw the conversation back in line with the intended point to be made" (p. 5). In this study, on the other hand, the comments were written and made on manuscript drafts in the absence of the research team. Overall, expand had a higher frequency than contract, which indicates that the examiners are concerned with softening criticisms through "opening up the dialogic space for alternative positions" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 103). They do this by asking questions or giving suggestions and clarifications which contain modals.

The second major finding of this study was the differential use of ENGAGEMENT resources by male and female examiners, which lends support to the idea of the difference between the speech of men and women brought up by Lakoff (1973) some decades ago. Although her research did not enjoy an appropriate methodology, more recently, other researchers like Dousti and Eslami Rasekh (2016) tested the hypothesis again. These two studies emphasized that females' speech was heavily hedged in comparison to that of males though they expressed different reasons for this variation. More specifically, Lakoff (1973) maintained that females' language is "in many ways more polite" than that of males, which is reflected in their use of hedges to soften and add uncertainty. She also added, "the reason for this is that politeness involves an absence of strong statement, and women's speech is devised to prevent the expression of strong statements" (p. 57). Dousti and Eslami Rasekh (2016), on the other hand, explained that according to their participants, the reason for females' more use of hedges is not due to their lower social status or the unequal power relationship between men and women; rather, female speakers employed

hedges to welcome and facilitate others' participation in the discussions to achieve general consensus, to mitigate their utterances to show their concern and respect for interlocutors' opinions and their possible disagreements, and finally as a device to be friendly (p. 226).

Hedges constitute a category of expand resources; hence, what the female examiners in this study mentioned (e.g., to be kind) for using specific words and mitigating face-threatening criticisms supports the reasons [Dousti and Eslami Rasekh \(2016\)](#) referred to in their study. Lovat and Monfries (cited in [Monfries & Lovat, 2006](#)), too, acknowledged that female examiners comment on the candidates' dissertations in a much 'softer' way than males do and they tend to protect the face of the candidate and are not much inclined to boast the unequal power relationship between themselves and the candidates. They also remarked that "male examiners appear to express their evaluations in ways that more obviously uphold institutional power as well as reinforce their own personal power" ([Monfries & Lovat, 2006](#), p. 3).

The male examiners' more use of monoglossic and contract resources in the present study is in line with [Monfries and Lovat's \(2006\)](#) finding. They concluded that by using these resources, the examiner wanted to tell the students that he was an expert and they were wrong and not allowed to have their own voice. However, the current participants gave a variety of plausible reasons for such excessive use of monoglossic and contract resources. For instance, they believed that their comments went to the work not to the student and assumed that the student was aware of this underlying motive and therefore, there really was not a need for mitigation (E2). Sometimes, they even intentionally used direct language and criticized students in a severe way to show that they expected the students more and to show their anger at the errors (E1). Being pressed for time was another reason for examiners' direct and unmitigated language (E3).

Finally, analysis of the interviews showed the diversity of the positions the examiners adopt for themselves and the students. Given that before being examiners, they are teachers, they seemed to be deeply engrossed with this role even when examining theses. Therefore, they mostly positioned themselves as kind and supportive teachers who could embody other positions such as experts, evaluators and examiners, too. On the other hand, they mostly positioned the thesis writers as novice researchers, researchers, accountable addressees, and respected people. Such positions could be suggestive of a more symmetrical power relationship than a teacher/student one between the two parties involved. This is congruent with the result of the analysis of comments which showed that heteroglossic utterances outnumbered monoglossic and expand resources were used more frequently than contract ones. Given that more frequent use of heteroglossic and expand resources could imply more dialogic interactions in which alternative viewpoints are recognized, it could convincingly be argued that the examiners' language is supportive and open to dialogue and disagreement, which construes a more balanced power dynamic.

In contrast to these results, working on the positioning of examiners and candidates in defense sessions, [Lovat et al. \(2004, p. 174\)](#) concluded that even in the theses rated as 'top box' and accepted as they were, "not one examiner referred to the candidate as a

researcher". The students were referred to as candidate, author, applicant or investigator, but not researcher, which indicates that this kind of labeling was probably related to the disparity in expertise and power relationship. By conscious or unconscious use of labeling, the examiners ensured the candidate could not claim the role of a researcher which might imply an equal position and status with that of the examiner.

Contrary to Lovat et al.'s (2004) findings, in the present study, monoglossic and contract resources which are known to be negative and prevent the student from having voice were less frequent than heteroglossic and expand resources which are positive and less face-threatening. This contradiction could be justified considering contextual differences because while the present study focused on the examiners' written comments on M.A. theses, Lovat et al. investigated examiners' written reports on Ph.D. dissertations which might lead to associated heightened expectations of the candidates. Further, unlike Lovat et al.'s study which revealed an asymmetrical positioning and hierarchical orientation in examination, the analysis of the examiners' comments and interviews in the present study did not depict examiners as all-knowing experts and the only people who enjoy voice and power.

Don and Izadi (2011) also referred to examiners' creating power differentiation and distance to show their separateness from the students in their study on Iranian DDs participants. Nevertheless, the examiners remarked that their duty was to "correct flaws and improve the quality of the thesis" (p. 3786) and believed that their comments were instructive and constructive in nature despite being bitter. The current findings lend support to what was found by these scholars although the contexts of the two studies were different; while this study centered upon the examiners' written comments and their answers to interview questions, Don and Izadi examined the oral utterances of students and committee members in defense sessions. Such consistent findings highlight the point that examiners are supportive in both their written and oral comments.

In the present study, the examiners reiterated that encountering numerous or glaring errors, they did not consider the student as the sole responsible person. Although in such cases, they wished to explicitly address committee members, in practice, almost always, they did this implicitly, which contradicts the findings of Lovat et al. (2004). In their study, the examiners' language disclosed they expected the thesis under examination to be "of an appropriately high technical standard" and "when this does not occur", the candidates are "not singularly criticized; rather, criticism is also applied to the standards of supervision as well" (p. 168). This contradiction could be explained considering contextual features; whereas in the present study, the examiners might have had considerations for their colleagues whom they meet every now and then in the university, in Lovat et al. (2004)'s study, the examiners were both internal and external examiners of Ph.D. dissertations who may not be in direct contact with the research team or may not be physically present in the evaluation context.

6. Conclusions and Implications

In response to the three research questions posed earlier, the evidence from this study suggests that heteroglossic and expand resources outnumbered monoglossic and contract ones, respectively. Moreover, gender also played a role in the use of these resources in that female examiners tended to use most of the resources more than their male peers even though a more substantial difference was observed in their use of heteroglossic, expand, and entertain resources. The interview results also indicated that the positions reflected in the comments lent support to the teacher/student positions perceived and explicitly mentioned by the examiners during the interviews. More specifically, examiners primarily positioned themselves as kind and supportive teachers while considering their students as novice researchers/learners.

Given such perceived role relationships, the examiners participating in this study believed that their comments were intended to help the students improve the quality of their scholarly work. In a similar vein, in oral examination of thesis, their purpose was to elaborate more on their written comments to help the students revise their thesis and to teach other viva participants useful points to be employed while working on their own theses or articles. Therefore, it could safely be suggested that the term “defense session” be replaced with the term “viva voce” because the word “defense” might imply that somebody, mainly the examiner, is supposed to attack another person, the student who is defending their thesis, thereby implying the need to defend. Such a negative perception could make the situation threatening to the student as well as the audience who are most likely other prospective “defenders”. On the other hand, “viva voce” which is a Latin word meaning “with a living voice” or “an examination conducted orally typically for an academic qualification” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) could be more positive making the situation less stressful for them.

From a theoretical point of view, findings indicated that the language of evaluation is highly complicated in that even punctuation marks could reflect different kinds of positioning. On this basis, it is suggested that in future revisions of the system of APPRAISAL, especially with regard to written evaluative language, the role of punctuation marks in constructing positions be also considered. From a practical standpoint, on the other hand, it could be argued that in the context of evaluation, especially where non-native English speakers serve as examiners, institutes and universities can hold workshops or training sessions for examiners to make them aware of the impact of language of feedback and to provide them with the effective ways of using different linguistic devices. If examiners get trained on how to use their linguistic resources more effectively while examining and commenting on theses, they could display the true picture of themselves as teachers/trainers and at the same time, foster a more caring interpersonal relationship with the students, thereby inspiring their students “to invest effort in learning” (Bastola & Hu, 2021, p. 9). The findings could also contribute evidence of the differences between the language used by male and female examiners, which implies the need for the training sessions to be tailored to the gender of the examiners. Moreover, graduate students can benefit from

the findings as thesis writing and the examination process are likely new, challenging and stressful for them. The findings could help them know that the examiners are not their enemies against whom they should “defend” themselves and their work. In this way, they might feel more relaxed and could perform more satisfactorily trying to make more effective use of the examiners' comments.

However, despite such potential implications, the study was not void of some issues. The convenience sampling procedure employed and the relatively small size of the sample might question the generalizability of its findings. Moreover, future research can study the language of a number of examiners when they function as examiners compared with when they are supervisors or advisors. Comparing language choices of M.A. thesis examiners with those of Ph.D. dissertation examiners could also provide us with illuminating insights into the positioning of these two groups.

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Hacia una caracterización de *de plano* como marcador del discurso. Un estudio en datos del español de Ciudad de México

Josaphat Enrique Guillén Escamilla 

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Ciudad de México, México

Resumen: En este trabajo se analizan las funciones pragmáticas de *de plano*, un marcador discursivo característico del español de Ciudad de México y cuyo estudio no ha sido abordado previamente. Se parte de la idea de que esta partícula ha sufrido un proceso de subjetivización que le ha permitido adquirir funciones relacionadas con la expresión de sinceridad y la intensificación. Para nuestra investigación, se consultaron tres corpus de la variante del español de Ciudad de México y los datos se analizaron a partir de los conceptos de expresión de sinceridad, compromiso del hablante e intensificación, principalmente. Los resultados señalan que este marcador discursivo puede desempeñar funciones relacionadas con: (i) la modalización epistémica, (ii) el refuerzo argumentativo, (iii) la focalización, (iv) la contraexpectativa, (v) la reformulación y la recapitulación y (vi) la autoprotección de la imagen social. Además, debido a que *de plano* trabaja en los ámbitos del *modus*, el *dictum* y la interacción, puede desarrollar más de una función de manera simultánea, afectando a planos diferentes de la enunciación.

Palabras clave: *intensificación, marcadores discursivos, lingüística de corpus, modalización, atenuación.*

Towards a characterization of *de plano* as discourse marker. A study in Mexico City's Spanish

Abstract: In this paper we analyze the pragmatics functions of *de plano*, a discourse marker characteristic of Mexico City's Spanish, which has not been previously described. Our starting idea is that this particle has undergone a subjectivization process that has allowed it to develop functions related to expression of sincerity and intensification. For our research, we consulted three corpora of Mexico City's Spanish and data were analyzed based on concepts expression of sincerity, speaker commitment, and intensification, mainly. Results show this discourse marker can carry out functions related to: (i) epistemic modalization, (ii) argumentative reinforcement, (iii) focalization, (iv) counter expectation, (v) reformulation and recapitulation, and (vi) social imagen self-protection. Besides, because it functions in the ambits of *modus*, *dictum*, and interaction, *de plano* can perform more than one function simultaneously, affecting different planes of the enunciation.

Keywords: *intensification, discourse markers, corpus linguistics, modalization, mitigation.*

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Corresponding author: josaphat.guillen@comunidad.unam.mx

1. Introducción

Durante las últimas dos décadas, el estudio de los marcadores discursivos ha experimentado un amplio desarrollo. Actualmente, contamos con descripciones bastante detalladas sobre sus funciones, con estudios en los planos diacrónico y sincrónico, con análisis de variación pragmática y con investigaciones interesadas en el estudio de marcadores característicos de una variante particular del español (García & Placencia, 2011; Jørgensen, 2012; Santana & Borzi 2020; Guillén, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Precisamente, este trabajo busca contribuir con este último tipo de análisis; en específico, estamos interesados en caracterizar las funciones de un marcador discursivo característico del español de Ciudad de México, *de plano*. En casos como (1) y (2):¹

- (1) 1232 G: [pero creo que la temporada pasada]/ *de plano* estuvieron igual [de la patada/ de la patada] (cscm, entrevista 49).
- (2) 170 I: hice a un lado la religión/ *de plano*/ porque si no/ pues <~ps> vivía muy asustado mi niñez era muy/// contradictoria/ porque era feliz/ ahí/ jugando acá con estos/ libre un poco/ si tú quieres/ peleándome con todos (risa) pero/ pero después/ sí fue con eso de la religión muy fuerte (cscm, entrevista 54).

Sin adelantar demasiado, en estos ejemplos se puede notar que el marcador tiene un carácter parentético y que puede aparecer en distintas posiciones del enunciado. Como veremos más adelante, su valor y significado es muy cercano al de *la verdad* o *en realidad*, esto es, marcadores cuya función más clara es la de expresar sinceridad o el grado de certeza que tiene el hablante con respecto a lo enunciado. Como ya se advirtió, nuestro objetivo es describir las funciones pragmáticas de *de plano* en el español de Ciudad de México. Para tal fin consultamos tres corpus de dicha variante: *El habla de la ciudad de México* (Lope Blanch, 1971), *El habla popular de la ciudad de México* (Lope Blanch, 1976) y el *Corpus Sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México* (cscm, Martín-Butragueño & Lastra, 2011-2015). Nuestro marco teórico contempla investigaciones previas sobre otros marcadores discursivos con significado y funciones similares, ya que, hasta donde tenemos conocimiento, no hay trabajos previos que hayan abordado el análisis de esta partícula discursiva.

Por último, para su exposición, el resto del documento se organiza de la siguiente manera: en §2 se discuten los antecedentes teóricos, en §3 se describe la metodología empleada. Por su parte, en §4 se presentan los resultados del análisis y posteriormente, en §5, se discuten estos resultados. Por último, en §6, se destacan las principales conclusiones del estudio.

¹ A excepción de (4) y (22), todos los ejemplos pertenecen a los corpus analizados. Se presentan respetando las convenciones de etiquetado y transcripción originales. En cada caso, se señala el corpus de procedencia y el número de entrevista o muestra.

2. Antecedentes

Las investigaciones sobre partículas discursivas y modalizadores de sinceridad (González Ruiz, 2007) le han dedicado parte de su atención al estudio de aquellos marcadores del discurso que reflejan la actitud del hablante con respecto al enunciado, a la enunciación y/o a su interlocutor. Nos referimos a casos como *la verdad (es que)*, *de verdad*, *en verdad*, *en realidad*, *francamente*, *honestamente*, entre otros similares. No obstante, en la bibliografía no se encuentran estudios que aborden, de manera central o periférica, el caso de *de plano*. Por esta razón, es necesario reseñar algunas de las características centrales de este tipo de partículas y, así, establecer un punto de partida para nuestro estudio.

En principio, varias investigaciones han descrito de manera exhaustiva que este tipo de marcadores ha sufrido un proceso de gramaticalización (Fuentes, 2012; González, 2015; Soler, 2015; Garcés, 2020, *inter alia*) que los ha llevado a transitar de tener significados léxicos plenos a desempeñar funciones pragmáticas y discursivas particulares (Traugott, 1995; Company, 2004). Durante este proceso, las propiedades semánticas y sintácticas originales se van diluyendo a favor del desarrollo de propiedades discursivas, esto es, los elementos léxicos:

van perdiendo esa conexión designativa para cumplir funciones macroestructurales que organizan lo dicho en relación con la intención del hablante, el oyente o la situación comunicativa. Van desarrollando valores y usándose para estrategias informativo-argumentativas cada vez más alejadas del contexto previo (Fuentes, 2012, p. 129).

Ahora, a pesar de su enriquecimiento pragmático (Traugott, 1995), estas partículas no pierden completa-mente la relación con su significado original, “por el contrario, este se visualiza como sustrato que actúa en un nivel secundario, generalmente poco visualizado” (Fuentes, 2012, p. 129). De esta manera, se presenta un proceso de abstracción por medio del cual se manifiesta la subjetividad del hablante, primero, como un elemento lingüístico que expresa modalidad y, después, como un elemento discursivo que codifica diferentes funciones (Fuentes, 2012).

Así pues, estas partículas han sufrido un proceso de subjetivización (Fuentes, 2012; González, 2015; Soler, 2015; Garcés, 2020) que les ha permitido desarrollar diferentes valores relacionados principalmente con: (i) la modalidad epistémica (Galué, 2002; González Ruiz, 2007; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Soler, 2017; Garcés, 2020), (ii) el refuerzo argumentativo (Serrano, 1997; Portolés, 1998; Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Canes & Delbecque, 2017), (iii) la focalización (Serrano, 1997; Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013; Canes & Delbecque, 2017), (iv) la contraexpectativa (Serrano, 1997; González Ruiz, 2007; González & Maldonado, 2007; González, 2015; Soler, 2015, 2017; Canes & Delbecque, 2017; Garcés, 2020), (v) la reformulación y la recapitulación (González Ruiz, 2007; González, 2015; Canes & Delbecque, 2017), (vi) la intensificación (González Ruiz, 2007; Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Canes & Delbecque, 2017; Soler, 2017) y (vii) la autoprotección

de la imagen social (González Ruiz, 2007; González & Maldonado, 2007; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015). De tal forma, se han vuelto construcciones fijas con funciones pragmáticas y discursivas particulares (Garcés, 2020).

Por otro lado, es importante señalar que estos marcadores pueden cumplir varias de estas funciones de manera simultánea (Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Canes & Delbecque, 2017; Garcés, 2020). Por ejemplo, cuando se emplean para señalar el compromiso del hablante con lo dicho, también focalizan el contenido proposicional de la unidad a la que refieren y la presentan como una aserción enfática, es decir, se intensifica el contenido aseverado (González Ruiz, 2007; Brenes, 2013; Soler, 2017). En consecuencia, como sostiene González Ruiz (2007), cuando estas partículas inciden en el grado de compromiso del hablante con respecto al contenido proposicional, también inciden en las estrategias argumentativas y en el tipo de relación que se establece entre los interlocutores, sea de cercanía o de distanciamiento. Cabe apuntar que esta polifuncionalidad tiene un carácter doble, uno sintagmático, relacionado con las “distintas funciones que un mismo marcador desempeña en una ocurrencia textual” (Borreguero, 2011, p. 129), y otro paradigmático, relacionado con “las distintas funciones que un marcador desempeña en sus distintas ocurrencias textuales, dependiendo del contexto y de la situación comunicativa” (Borreguero, 2011, p. 130). En consecuencia, para el análisis integral de estas formas, es necesario considerar el ámbito en el que tienen su influencia, en el del enunciado o en el de la enunciación, en el *dictum* o en el *modus*, y el tipo de relación que ayuda a construir con el interlocutor. Asimismo, se debe considerar la posición del marcador y la unidad a la que afecta.

Ahora bien, en este estudio partimos de la hipótesis de que lo dicho hasta ahora puede aplicarse también al caso de *de plano*, principalmente porque comparte con aquellos varias de sus características fundamentales; en particular, la expresión de sinceridad y el compromiso con lo expresado. Así, el significado léxico original de *de plano* estaría relacionado con un modo o manera y, posteriormente, habría sufrido un proceso de subjetivización que lo dotó de valores pragmáticos y discursivos. En lo que sigue, ahondaremos en esta explicación.

2.1 Sobre *de plano* como marcador discursivo de Ciudad de México

Antes de iniciar la caracterización de sus funciones discursivas, tenemos que explicar por qué consideramos que *de plano* es un marcador característico del español de Ciudad de México. Como se mencionó anteriormente, hasta donde se tiene conocimiento, en la bibliografía no hay estudios previos sobre esta partícula y tampoco se encuentra consignada en ninguno de los tres diccionarios más importantes de partículas discursivas del español (Santos, 2003; Briz et al., en línea; Fuentes, 2009). Como hipótesis, partimos de la idea de que esto se debe, al menos en parte, a que es un marcador propio del español de México y que, en otras variedades, se prefiere el uso de otras partículas discursivas. Ahora bien, antes de asumir esta hipótesis como verdadera, era necesario comprobarla plenamente a través de un análisis contrastivo; de tal forma, nos dimos a la tarea de revisar

corpus de varias regiones con la finalidad de verificar si existía o no un comportamiento diferenciado entre las variantes. En este sentido, hay que recordar que la importancia de los análisis contrastivos radica en que “pueden ser muy útiles para identificar lo que es propio de una variedad y lo que es compartido” (Placencia & Fuentes, 2019 p. 8).

Así pues, para aportar evidencia de que *de plano* es un marcador característico del español de México, se consultó el corpus PRESEEA (2014) y se rastrearon todas las apariciones de esta partícula en las diferentes ciudades que se encuentran disponibles. El primer resultado que se debe destacar es que no aparece ni una sola vez en las ciudades de España (Alcalá de Henares, Granada, Madrid, Málaga, Santander, Santiago de Compostela, Sevilla y Valencia). En cuanto a las ciudades de América, solo ocurre en Guatemala (Ciudad de Guatemala, N=12) y en México (Ciudad de México, N=32; Guadalajara, N=11; Monterrey, N=10; Mexicali, N=3, Puebla, N=2). Este mismo procedimiento se realizó en el Corpus Ameresco (Albelda & Estellés, en línea) y los resultados fueron muy similares, solo se encontró en Ciudad de México (N=3) y en Monterrey (N=1). Si bien, estos resultados no pueden considerarse concluyentes, al menos sí ofrecen un panorama general sobre el comportamiento de esta partícula en distintas variedades del español. En última instancia, a partir de estos datos, se pudo comprobar que *de plano* es un marcador que se emplea en un área geográfica bastante bien delimitada y que su uso es favorecido principalmente en Ciudad de México. Una vez establecida esta distinción, en lo que sigue nos detendremos en la descripción estructural de esta unidad.

La locución adverbial que nos interesa se compone de la preposición *de* y el adjetivo *plano*, este último opera como el núcleo del sintagma, por lo que hereda las propiedades semánticas relacionadas con los atributos de: “llano, liso, sin relieves” (DRAE, en línea). De tal forma, este significado nuclear está en la base de la definición de *de plano* (s.v.) “Enteramente, clara y manifiestamente” (DRAE, en línea) y “Sin duda, sin reservas, definitivamente” (DEM, El Colegio de México, en línea); así, se presenta un proceso de subjetivización, donde se pasa de la descripción de un atributo físico a la expresión de un modo o una manera. Este proceso tendría su origen en la consideración del rasgo *llano* o *plano* como sinónimo de *derecho*, término asociado generalmente con un modo particular de hacer o decir las cosas: honesta y sinceramente, sin rodeos y directamente:

- (3) Inf. B.- Bueno, en el campeón de campeones, eso sí hubo una transa del árbitro. ¡Ahí sí! Íbamos perdiendo uno cero. Empatamos a unos. Luego metimos el dos uno. El árbitro lo marcó; marcó el centro de la cancha. Después nosotros nos jalamos de media cancha para la portería de nosotros; el otro equipo se quedó con el árbitro; se arreglaron quién sabe cómo. Total, de que al último nos lo anuló. Nos fuimos a penaltis. En penaltis sí nos ganaron. O sea que ese partido, como quien dice, no nos lo ganaron *derecho*. Ya fue algo de por medio, ¿no? (Habla popular, muestra XVI).
- (4) No me des más largas: háblame *derecho* (DEM, El Colegio de México, en línea).

Es importante señalar que, cuando el hablante manifiesta explícitamente su sinceridad, también está reforzando su compromiso con la veracidad de lo dicho (González Ruiz, 2007). Así pues, gracias a este proceso de subjetivización, estos rasgos de sinceridad, franqueza y veracidad están presentes en *de plano*, por lo que muestra un carácter modal que lo acerca a marcadores como *la verdad (es que)* y *en realidad*, por ejemplo. Naturalmente, esta afirmación debe comprobarse a través del análisis detallado de *de plano*. En este sentido, en un primer acercamiento a los datos, se pudo comprobar que esta partícula desempeña varias funciones de manera simultánea, pero hay un valor que se encuentra siempre presente, el de intensificación. De tal forma, resulta conveniente describir, aunque sea de manera breve, las características de la intensificación, pues contribuirá a explicar las distintas funciones del marcador que estamos analizando.

2.2 Sobre la expresión de sinceridad y la intensificación

La intensificación se ha definido como una estrategia pragmática que actúa sobre la fuerza ilocutiva de los actos de habla y en la que interviene la evaluación subjetiva del hablante sobre el contenido proposicional de su mensaje (Albelda, 2014), por lo que está estrechamente vinculada con el ámbito de la modalización (Briz, 2017; Schneider, 2017). De esta manera, su valor afectivo es claro, principalmente porque “its use has a direct effect on the speech act and on the speaker’s attitude toward the hearer, which can range from being highly positive to very negative” (González, 2015, p. 172). Así, desde una perspectiva sociopragmática, la intensificación es una operación estratégica donde concursan la actitud del hablante, lo dicho y el decir, todos, en conjunto, codifican acciones realizadoras y, en algunos casos, también minimizadoras (Briz, 2017), como cuando el hablante –en su afán de mostrarse sincero– realza una opinión o un argumento que podría socavar su imagen social, pero precisamente este reforzamiento en la explicitud de sinceridad le permite minimizar los efectos negativos y salvaguardar su imagen.

Ahora bien, de acuerdo con Schneider (2017), se puede hablar de una intensificación semántico-pragmática y otra interactiva. La primera tiene su influencia en el contenido proposicional y conceptual, por lo que está relacionada con el *dictum*, con la calidad y cantidad de lo dicho. Esto es, se enfatiza el compromiso del hablante con respecto a la verdad del contenido proposicional (Fuentes, 2012). Por su parte, la intensificación interactiva influye en la fuerza ilocutiva y en la actitud del hablante, de manera que está relacionada con el *modus*, o sea, “refuerza la implicación del hablante en la comunicación e imprime un grado mayor de compromiso con lo dicho” (Albelda, 2007, p. 114). Así, gracias a la intensificación y a su evaluación subjetiva, el hablante advierte al oyente que está exagerando la realidad o que algo sobrepasa el curso normal, y lo hace de esta manera porque persigue fines estratégicos (Albelda, 2007).

Por su parte, Briz (2017) señala que la intensificación puede actuar en el ámbito monológico o en el dialógico y, según sea el caso, plantea tres funciones: (i) (auto)-reafirmativa, (ii) alo-reafirmativa y (iii) contra-reafirmativa. De estas tres, la primera es la pertinente para nuestro estudio, ya que es donde se intensifica al *yo* hablante, esto es,

se “refuerza lo dicho por él, su acción e intención, su argumentación o su propia imagen [...] reafirma o se reafirma en lo dicho” (Briz, 2017, p. 51), todo esto a través de una intensificación claramente monológica.

En este escenario, resulta claro por qué las expresiones o unidades lingüísticas que realzan la sinceridad del hablante actúan como elementos intensificadores (González & Maldonado, 2007; Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Soler, 2015). Esto es, cuando los hablantes destacan y se comprometen con el grado de sinceridad de lo dicho, también se intensifica y se realza la(s) unidad(es) discursiva(s) a las que remiten. Entonces, la intensificación codifica la actitud subjetiva del hablante –en este caso una de sinceridad– con respecto a lo expresado, lo que repercute directamente en el contenido proposicional y en la fuerza ilocutiva de lo comunicado. Así pues, bajo estas circunstancias, la intensificación consiste en aumentar el grado de fuerza ilocutiva, reforzar la verdad o certeza de lo dicho, realzar el acuerdo o desacuerdo con el otro y reforzar los papeles del *yo* y del *tú* (Briz, 2017).

Finalmente, como se ha señalado antes, hay ocasiones en las que la intensificación puede tener un efecto atenuante y funciona como un mecanismo de autoprotección del hablante. Esto es, a través del realce de la fuerza ilocutiva o de la manifestación de sinceridad, el hablante minimiza los efectos negativos que puede originar decir algo que normalmente no se expresaría (González Ruiz, 2007; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Soler, 2015; Briz, 2017). Así pues, el hablante se escuda detrás de “la manifestación explícita de su sinceridad para atenuar el efecto de decir algo negativo [...] el hablante justifica su discurso amparándose en su deber de decir ‘su verdad’, lo que verdaderamente piensa” (González Ruiz, 2007, p. 223). Por otra parte, también puede ser el caso que, en este afán de decir verdad, el hablante exprese algo sobre sí mismo poco favorable para su imagen, de manera que la función de autoprotección es más clara:

‘reconoce’ aspectos que podrían no decirse o que frecuentemente se ocultan [...] Por medio del recurso lingüístico de la expresión de sinceridad [...] se llevan a cabo simultáneamente las funciones de la intensificación y de la atenuación: se intensifica la fuerza ilocutiva asertiva y, como efecto de ello, la verdad de lo dicho, pero al mismo tiempo salvaguardándose en la explicitud de la sinceridad, se atenúa la enunciación de aquello que podría dañar la imagen del locutor (González Ruiz, 2007, p. 221).

Este efecto responde a que, si el interlocutor se autocritica, el oyente debe minimizarlo (Briz, 2017), ya que el hablante busca lograr el favor de su interlocutor, acercarlo a su ámbito (Brenes, 2013) y que se valore positivamente su manifestación explícita de sinceridad. Así pues, este valor atenuante proviene del exceso de sinceridad del hablante, lo que pone de manifiesto la actividad negociadora con la que se busca alcanzar un acuerdo o la aceptación del oyente ante lo dicho, de manera que se presenta un realce del oyente (Schneider, 2017). La intensificación y la atenuación son, pues, estrategias que trabajan en el intercambio entre hablante y oyente, pueden crear o incrementar el sentido de cercanía y solidaridad o incrementar la distancia social (González, 2015).

En resumen, la intensificación es una estrategia pragmática que codifica la actitud subjetiva del hablante y que repercute en el contenido proposicional, en la fuerza ilocutiva y en la relación entre los interlocutores. De tal forma, no resulta extraño que esté estrechamente relacionada con los marcadores discursivos que expresan veracidad o sinceridad, como *la verdad, en verdad, en realidad y de plano*.

3. Metodología

El objetivo de este trabajo es describir las funciones discursivas de *de plano* en el español de Ciudad de México. Para tal fin, se consultaron tres corpus pertenecientes a esta variante: (i) *El habla de la ciudad de México* (Lope Blanch, 1971), *El habla popular de la ciudad de México* (Lope Blanch, 1976) y el *Corpus Sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México* (Martín-Butragueño & Lastra, 2011-2015). El primero se compone de 32 entrevistas semi-informales y formales que corresponden a la norma culta; el segundo está conformado por 34 entrevistas semi-informales e informales y que corresponden al habla popular; finalmente, el tercero está compuesto por 108 entrevistas semi-informales e informales y está dividido en tres niveles, alto (36), medio (36) y bajo (36). Cada corpus se revisó de manera manual e individual y se rastreó todas las apariciones de *de plano* en las que cumplía funciones pragmáticas, según lo presentado en §2.1. Cabe señalar que se decidió consultar estos tres corpus con la idea de obtener la mayor cantidad de casos posibles y, en consecuencia, enriquecer el análisis.

A partir de la revisión de estos materiales, se encontraron 55 casos en total, distribuidos de la siguiente manera: (i) Norma culta N=7, (ii) Habla popular N=1 y (iii) cscm N=47. En este último caso organizados como sigue, nivel alto N=12, nivel medio N=26 y nivel bajo N=9. Una vez identificadas todas las apariciones, se procedió a analizar las funciones que desempeña, considerando principalmente la posición del marcador y el ámbito en el que trabaja. Finalmente, para su inclusión en el texto, los ejemplos se presentan respetando las convenciones de transcripción y etiquetado originales de cada corpus y, en todos los casos, se indica el material de procedencia y el número de entrevista o muestra al que pertenecen.

4. Análisis

4.1 Sobre la expresión de sinceridad y la intensificación

Una de las características más señaladas en este tipo de marcadores discursivos es la modalidad epistémica (Galué, 2002; González Ruiz, 2007; Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013; González, 2015; Soler, 2017; Garcés, 2020). En general, se ha descrito que, a través de ellos, el hablante evalúa subjetivamente el contenido de la información que está presentando, al tiempo que ofrece, de manera ostensiva, una mirada sincera sobre el tema en cuestión (Garcés, 2020); de tal forma, su función consiste en resaltar la actitud de sinceridad del hablante y mostrar un fuerte posicionamiento de actitud (González, 2015). Por esta razón,

son elementos que se vinculan con el ámbito del yo (Brenes, 2013) y, además, comunican “a highly personal opinion and attitude toward the content of the proposition, providing a strong degree of certainty to it” (González, 2015, p. 167).

Por su relación con la expresión de sinceridad, *de plano* también codifica esta función. En nuestro corpus fue usual que apareciera acompañando a verbos que comunican opiniones, sentimientos, pensamientos y creencias, donde la expresión de sinceridad supone un valor agregado, ya que afecta la fuerza ilocutiva, de manera que el hablante busca manifestarla explícitamente:

- (5) 122 I: la visito y/ tiene una pastelería// y este/ ¿cómo se llama?/ no/ súper bien con ella// pero sí/ te digo/ yo en/ la facultad <~facultá> era/ un ratón de biblioteca/ o sea *de plano*
123 E: (risa)
124 I: **sí lo reconozco**// pero entré a la/ especialidad <~especialidá> y no hombre ahí dije (cscm, entrevista 10).
- (6) 48 I: ya lo perdí/ y pues <~pus> otra/ otra de <~de:> las cosas que me gusta mucho/ es la economía pero/ pero **la verdad** no me veo estudiando en una universidad algo que no me gusta/ entonces <~entós>// no/ *de plano yo creo que me (risa) voy a dedicar mejor a la danza y/ y <~y::>/* con esto de que se acaba de abrir la licenciatura aquí/ pues <~pus>/ yo creo que me voy a venir otros cuatro años a enclaustrarme aquí (cscm, entrevista 42).
- (7) 53 I: **esto es un vicio/ de plano/ esto es un vicio/** n- no es malo pero/ sí es un vicio/ ¿no?/ que/ que este// eh/ a mí me pasa/ los domingos/ haz de cuenta que/ cuando me levanto te di-/ yo normalmente descanso aquí los domingos/ eh/ lo primero que hago es pensar en/ qué voy a <~voa>/ qué planta voy a comprar ahora o qué (cscm, entrevista 37).

En (5), la función del marcador es bastante transparente, *de plano* refleja el grado de sinceridad de la hablante ante lo dicho, “era un ratón de biblioteca”, y en la siguiente intervención lo refuerza aún más con “sí lo reconozco”. Así pues, el adverbio *sí* y el tipo de verbo señalan un grado máximo de sinceridad de la hablante. En cuanto a (6), a lo largo de su turno, I muestra una actitud particular hacia lo que está narrando, como lo atestigua la aparición de *la verdad* y *de plano*; este último, le permite indicar el grado de sinceridad que tiene acerca de su creencia de “dedicarse mejor a la danza”. Finalmente, en (7), el hablante reafirma su compromiso con lo expresado no solo con el marcador, sino que, también, emplea la repetición, que es un recurso que permite identificar más claramente la intensificación (González Ruiz, 2007).

Así pues, en los tres ejemplos, *de plano* refleja la actitud subjetiva de los hablantes y marca las unidades sobre las que tiene su influencia como sinceras, de modo que tiene un valor muy cercano a *sinceramente*. En breve, “los hablantes, por medio de los modalizadores enunciativos de sinceridad, se muestran explícitamente como sinceros,

como hablantes que comunican algo que creen cierto, que verdaderamente siente o piensan” (González Ruiz, 2007, p. 212). En este sentido, es importante destacar que *de plano* no califica *per se* el contenido proposicional como verdadero; más bien, se limita a manifestar la actitud de sinceridad del hablante y es, precisamente, esta actitud la que realza el grado de veracidad del enunciado (Galué, 2002). De tal forma, la modalización se presenta, primero, en el emisor, quien se manifiesta sincero al hablar y, después, en el enunciado, que queda revestido como verdadero (Brenes, 2013). En efecto, este proceso es el que se encuentra detrás de las funciones de refuerzo argumentativo y de focalización, como veremos enseguida.

4.2 Refuerzo argumentativo y focalización

Como se dijo, la expresión de sinceridad no modifica las condiciones de verdad, pero sí afecta al contenido proposicional. Esto es, a partir del valor modal, se destaca el compromiso con la veracidad de lo dicho (Soler, 2017; Garcés, 2020) y lo enunciado se presenta “como un hecho cierto o como un argumento que tiene mayor fuerza que otros” (Galué, 2002, pp. 33-34). De tal forma, cuando se destaca el grado de compromiso del hablante con respecto al contenido proposicional, también se destacan las estrategias argumentativas (González Ruiz, 2007): los enunciados adquieren un valor de refuerzo argumentativo (Soler, 2015) o de apoyo a la información (Serrano, 1997). En este sentido, *de plano* influye en lo enunciado desde dos ámbitos, uno argumentativo –como refuerzo de argumento– y otro informativo –destacando el enunciado al que refiere– (Fuentes, 2012; Brenes, 2013). Aquí describiremos primero la función argumentativa y, después, la informativa.

Siguiendo a González (2015), el refuerzo argumentativo está relacionado con un valor evidencial de decir la verdad, es decir, cuando el hablante manifiesta su compromiso con lo expresado reviste con un mayor grado de certeza y veracidad al contenido proposicional. Así, gracias al marcador, el hablante destaca y reconoce explícitamente, ante su interlocutor, la verdad de lo comunicado y, de esta manera, favorece la argumentación propia. En estos casos, el argumento se presenta como algo verdadero y destaca de otros precisamente por su carácter verídico, por lo que tiene una mayor fuerza argumentativa (Martín Zorraquino & Portolés, 1999).

- (8) 246 I: [que no/ que nada <~na> más no estaba mi]/ no estaba eh/ tan mal/ ahora <~ora> que lo puedo comprender/ o sea quería que estudiara una carrera bien/ y esa era mi intención también/ pero no era algo que a él le gustara// o sea él quería que fuera abogado o doctor o ingeniero/ lo que tú quieras// pero yo era/ siempre me enfoqué al arte/ siempre o sea/ era mi inclinación/ o sea no podía hacer otra cosa **porque/ de plano <en> serio/ es mi inclinación** (cscm, entrevista 54).

- (9) 59 I: y pues <~pus> a ver cómo le haces rápido// después este <~este:>/ ya no fui a lavar ahí **porque** <~porque:> *de plano yo/ me cansaba/ tres pisos subir con las cubetas y bajar/* dije “no/ ya no voy a trabajar”/ me metí a trabajar este <~este:>/ vendien-/ este/ una señora de la vecindad <~vecindá>/ vivíamos ahí <en> la colonia Bu-/ Buenos Aires (CSCM, entrevista 108).
- (10) 268 I: pero de todos modos no llevaba bien el plan/ **según** eran Montessori/ y **realmente**/ pues/ la primera un poco/ me lo llevaba más/ la segunda/ *de plano nada* <~na> más era el nombre/ porque era una escuela privada/ como todas (CSCM, entrevista 54).

En (8), I está narrando que, a pesar de los deseos de su padre, siempre tuvo la inclinación por el arte y por eso se dedicó a estudiarlo. El hablante señala explícitamente el grado de compromiso con lo dicho a través de *de plano* y *en serio*, de modo que presenta la unidad discursiva “es mi inclinación” con una mayor fuerza argumentativa, porque destaca por su veracidad. Por su parte, en (9), I está explicando por qué dejó de trabajar en el edificio en el que lo hacía e introduce la justificación por medio de *de plano*, con lo que logra una mayor fuerza argumentativa. Con esta función, los marcadores tienden a aparecer junto con otros conectores argumentativos, como en los casos de (8) y (9). Por último, en (10), la hablante sostiene que la escuela de sus hijas seguía aparentemente el método Montessori, algo que ella no cree como lo atestigua la presencia de *según*. Comenta que la primera hija *realmente* sí lo llevó un poco más, pero la segunda ya no, esta última conclusión es antecedida por *de plano* con lo que se destaca su fuerza argumentativa.

En resumen, en los ejemplos de (8) a (10), *de plano* no modifica el contenido proposicional de los argumentos, pero sí los destaca con un valor de refuerzo porque el hablante enfatiza su contribución, destaca la verdad y la razón de lo expresado (Briz, 1998), de manera que hay un realce y una maximización del yo (Schneider, 2017). En última instancia, esta estrategia favorece la argumentación propia y le permite al hablante reforzar sus opiniones, sus argumentos y sus conclusiones, con la intención de persuadir a su interlocutor (Briz, 2017). Por último, en estos casos el marcador tiene un valor cercano al de *verdaderamente* o *realmente*.

Por otro lado, el refuerzo argumentativo se encuentra estrechamente relacionado, desde una perspectiva informativa, con la focalización, esto es, el marcador ayuda a realzar “la verdad de lo que continúa [...] y a destacarlo informativamente” (Fuentes, 2012, p. 144). Así, *de plano* “convierte en *focus* la unidad sobre la que actúa. Se trata de una función metadiscursiva que interviene en la estructuración de la información, concretamente en la focalización” (Canes & Delbecque, 2017, p. 187). El marcador supone un relieve informativo de lo expresado, ya que la explicitación de sinceridad no solo actúa sobre el *modus*, sino también sobre el *dictum*, enfatizando el contenido proposicional (Brenes, 2013).

- (11) 41 I: te juro/ es **impresionante** cómo abres algo/ y está pum/ latiendo/ y cómo ves la sangre/ y cómo va todo// y dices/ **guau**/ o sea yo también quiero meter la mano/ y quiero saber qué se siente// es es **súper impresionante**//

impresionante o sea// **ves cada cosa**/ apenas vi/ este/ un paciente que tenía este// que tenía un tumor en la cabeza// y/ *de plano*/ ¿eh?/ raparon/ y abrieron así/ el cráneo/ totalmente/ entonces// yo nunca lo había visto// y fue así como que/ ah/ o sea ver cómo/ cómo están serruchando el cráneo// y que está viva la persona/ porque yo lo había visto en/ en la Semefo que están muertos ahí los/ pues <~pus>/ ahí están los cadáveres (cscM, entrevista 12).

(12) Inf. -Te digo de la Chelo... este... que se empeñó en ser mi esposa, pero dije:
“No, no”

Enc. -¿Y cómo era el plan que quería? ¿Estaba medio...?

Inf. -Es que ya *de plano*... este... se me declaró, de plano. Sí, sí, se me declaró.

Enc. -¿Cómo estuvo?

Inf. -Se me declaró.

Enc. -¿Qué te dijo?

Inf. -Que quería ser mi esposa, que le gustaba yo mucho (Norma culta, muestra xxxi).

(13) 579 I: eso es **muy fuerte**/ es **muy fuerte**/ y eso a mí/ **sí me impacta**/ porque **es tan fuerte**// que sí me haya cambiado mi forma de vivir// de plano/ o sea y que yo jamás lo hubiera cambiado por nada/ o sea/ por nada/ por nada/ por nada/ y sí lo cambié (cscM, entrevista 54).

En (11), I está narrando sobre lo emocionante que es su trabajo y desde el comienzo aparecen elementos que reflejan su actitud: *impresionante, guau, súper impresionante, ves cada cosa*. Así, platica sobre un caso particular, el de un paciente al que “raparon y abrieron así el cráneo totalmente”, y esta unidad discursiva es destacada por *de plano* y por el controlador de contacto fático ¿eh? (Briz, 1998), que sirve, entre otras cosas, para dirigir la atención hacia algún segmento discursivo y focalizarlo (Llopis, 2011). Por su parte, en (12), I está contando sobre una mujer, Chelo, que quería ser a toda costa su esposa, y que llegó al extremo de declarársele. Este último segmento, “se me declaró”, está flanqueado por *de plano* y reforzado por las repeticiones del adverbio *sí* y la reiteración de “se me declaró”. De tal forma, la focalización de esta unidad es bastante evidente. Finalmente, en (13), el hablante focaliza la unidad discursiva “que sí me haya cambiado mi forma de vivir” y lo hace a través de diferentes recursos, primero, con la repetición de “muy fuerte”, después con “sí me impacta” y “es tan fuerte” y concluye con *de plano*. En este caso, el realce informativo de la unidad también es muy claro.

Así pues, como se puede notar en los casos de (11) a (13), *de plano*, junto con otros mecanismos lingüísticos, contribuye a focalizar unidades discursivas y a realzar su informatividad, gracias a que “hay una relación directa entre este mayor grado de compromiso –real o fingido– del hablante con su mensaje y la focalización del contenido proposicional que la partícula introduce” (Soler, 2017, p. 434). Ahora bien, gracias a

que el hablante destaca las unidades que son argumentativa e informativamente más importantes, establece un contraste con otras que no lo son, de esta manera *de plano* puede señalar contraexpectativas.

4.3 Contraexpectativa

Algunos autores han señalado que cuando se destaca la veracidad o sinceridad de un argumento, frente a otros que no lo son, es común que el resultado de este contraste se perciba como una contraexpectativa (Soler, 2017). Esto es, al enfatizar un argumento, este frecuentemente “counteracts the previous one, like a counter expectation that evokes contrast” (González, 2015, p. 175). De tal manera, este carácter de contraexpectación surge del discurso previo o posterior a la unidad a la que afecta el marcador (Soler, 2015), ya que establece “una lectura preferencial sobre una alternativa, expectativa o valoración previa” (Garcés, 2020, p. 997) y, entonces, “se produce una reestructuración de las expectativas que se generan a partir de lo expresado o lo implícito por lo que este operador adquiere un valor pragmático de contraexpectativa” (Garcés, 2020, p. 1014).

En algunos casos, esta contraexpectativa adquiere valores argumentativos adversativos, “cuando [el marcador] transparenta la relación lógica ‘oposición verdadero-falso’ entre ambos segmentos” (Canes & Delbecque, 2017, p. 179), y esto se ve reforzado cuando el hablante enfatiza un argumento en detrimento de otros (Brenes, 2013). Por tal razón, en ocasiones, puede aparecer combinado con *pero* para realzar aún más el contraste o la contraexpectativa:

(14) 137 I: la primera vez por la línea/ pero pues <~pus>/ me detuvieron/ cómo fue la primera vez/ eh/ sentí miedo y todo eso/ ahorita <~orita> no/ la última vez caminé dos días en el desierto/ en la noche/ dos noches con días completos/ llegué con los pies destrozados/ todo/ pero no no/ no se me hizo pesado/ se me hizo/ haz de cuenta como una peregrinación/ Marquesa a la Chal-/ a Chalmita/ así/ de plano así se me hizo/ (cscm, entrevista 51).

(15) 2096 I: qué a todo dar que hubiera sido que <~que:>/ hubiera yo tenido los <~los:>/ los medios en aquel [entonces]

2097F: [ajá]

2098I: para seguir estudiando

2099E: [mh]

2100I: [pero] de/ *de plano de plano* sí te lo confieso hija/ fui malo para <~pa> la [escuela] (cscm, entrevista 100).

En (14), I está narrando su viaje por el desierto, señala que caminó “dos noches con días completos” y que “llegó con los pies destrozados”, entonces, el interlocutor podría suponer que, bajo esas circunstancias, el viaje fue extenuante; sin embargo, I destaca que “no se le hizo pesado” e incluso lo compara con una peregrinación más corta y lo realza con

de plano. Por su parte, en (15), I expresa su deseo de haber tenido los medios económicos para seguir estudiando cuando era joven, de manera que el interlocutor podría imaginar que le gustaba la escuela y que era buen estudiante; no obstante, más adelante confiesa que “fue malo para la escuela” y lo destaca con *de plano*. Así, en estos ejemplos, *de plano* realza un argumento o una opinión no esperada por el interlocutor (Serrano, 1997), por lo que provoca una reestructuración en sus expectativas. En estos contextos, el marcador presenta un valor cercano al de *la verdad*.

4.4 Reformulación y recapitulación

También puede ser el caso de que la expresión de veracidad introduzca una reformulación que precisa lo formulado en las unidades discursivas previas (González Ruiz, 2007). En estas circunstancias, “the marker often prefates a conclusive remark that corrects or clarifies a previous claim, adopting a meaning similar to Spanish *en realidad*” (González, 2015, p. 178). Así pues, hay ocasiones en las que la corrección se expresa de modo sutil, señalando “una leve desviación respecto del enunciado original. La función de tales proposiciones desviadas es añadir información que se considera necesaria para comprender una proposición, mientras, simultáneamente, se le introduce una modificación parcial o completa” (Canes & Delbecque, 2017, p. 184).

- (16) 510 I: en Yucatán/ está el mito de la Xtabay <~shtabái>/ una famosa princesa de los mitos mayas/ que se supone que con su canto atraía a los jóvenes/ y estos se quedaban perdidos/ y se perdían para siempre [estaban]

511 E: [como sirena]

512 I: ajá <~aijá>/ alucinados o/ o desaparecían *de plano*/ entonces <~entóns>/ se supone que los jóvenes mayas/ le tienen miedo al canto de la Xtabay <~shtabái>/ y no deben oírlo/ porque pueden perderse (cscm, entrevista 17).

- (17) 213 I: estoy enamorado ¡sí!/ me he enamorado/ pero no/ por eso voy a sufrir/ ¿no?/ si/ la persona aquella no/ no me corresponde/ no es/ pues no y ya/ o sea/ a mí no me va a afectar/ o sea no me voy a ir a/ no me voy a matar/ ni nada eso al contrario/ si/ en el caso ahorita de mi esposa/ si/ yo me llegara a enterar y todo eso/ pues/ me hace un favor/ me quita un peso de encima/ ¿no?/ ¿por qué?/ porque pues económicamente/ yo estoy bien/ y/ me va// digo/ nos vamos a lo legal yo le/ paso una pensión/ para mis hijos y/ mira/ me va hasta mejor/ p-/ pero pues <~pus> de que la quiero la quiero y/ y confío/ en/ ciertas cosas/ yo/ como/ te voy a decir como/ Santo Tomás/ “hasta no ver no creer”/ a mí no me/ que me digan/ “esto y que el otro así”/ hasta que yo lo vea/ entonces sí/ que alguna situación de/ de infidelidad ¿no?/ digo yo necesito ver/ de plano cosas ya/ más fuertes/ para/ en verdad estar/ con la seguridad/ y con la frialdad de/ pues <~pus> “¿sabes qué? pues <~pus> se acabó y/ punto” ¿no?/ “vamos a/ lo/ tuyo es/ mío y lo mío es mío” [(risa)] (cscm, entrevista 51).

- (18) 112 I: él escogió/ o sea todo mundo/ peleaba por esa plaza/ y dijimos “pues <~pus> bueno”// entonces yo escogí el Hospital Infantil/ el Federico Gómez// no hombre/ yo feliz/ con mi plaza// pero resulta// que hubo ciertos problemillas con mis amigas/ E/ de plano/ se cortó de nosotros/ o sea// dijo/ “yo no quiero ir a la graduación/ yo no quiero paquete// yo no quiero foto/ yo no quiero nada”// y nosotros/ “pero/ ¿por qué no?”/ “no/ no me gusta”// y dijimos “bueno” (CSCM, entrevista 10).

En (16), I narra el mito de Xtabay, una princesa que acomete principalmente a los hombres jóvenes. En un principio, señala que sus víctimas se quedaban “alucinados” y luego corrige apuntando que “desaparecían”, esta reformulación es introducida por la conjunción *o* y reforzada por *de plano*. Por su parte, en (17), el hablante da su opinión sobre la relación con su esposa; desde el principio señala que él no sufriría por amor y sugiere la posibilidad de un engaño –“si yo me llegara a enterar”, “confío en ciertas cosas”, “a mí no me que me digan ‘esto y que el otro así’”– y solo hasta que aparece *de plano* clarifica qué es lo que necesita para considerar algo como una infidelidad, “ver cosas ya más fuertes”. Por último, en (18), I señala que tuvo “ciertos problemillas con sus amigas” y más adelante especifica a qué se refiere, “se cortó de nosotros”, que es introducido por *de plano*. Así pues, en estos tres casos, *de plano* ayuda a corregir y a especificar lo dicho en las unidades previas.

Por otro lado, *de plano* también puede introducir “a personal stance that leads the hearer to that part of the account that is really worth listening to, one that counteracts the previous arguments and is conclusive” (González, 2015, p. 175). En estos casos, el marcador tiene un valor de recapitulación o conclusión, pues marca al enunciado al que refiere como la conclusión de lo dicho en varias unidades discursivas previas, de modo que “funciona como operador de reformulación no parafrástica de recapitulación” (Canes & Delbecque, 2017, p. 186).

- (19) Inf. B. - ...que, muchas veces, no las realiza uno porque hay cosas en que... uno pone en primer término, como es... pues... la familia, los hijos y lo que sea; pero, como ya la vida de la mujer, como ya la vida del hombre – podríamos decir– es mucho más larga que antes. Hoy, a los cuarenta y cinco, cincuenta años, una mujer tiene todavía un porvenir de quince o veinte años, y antiguamente no; entonces, la mujer que llegaba a la menopausia... pues, ya era una... una tristeza, *de plano* (Norma culta, muestra xvii).

- (20) Inf.- Como le decía yo ayer al doctor: “Mire, doctor, todo está muy bien. Ustedes están tratando de dar a los maridos una preparación por medio de estas pláticas, de estas películas y a través de nosotros. Y uno está trabajando, pero los primeros en echar todo a perder son los hospitales, porque llega uno feliz con su marido, y lo primero que hacen es cerrarle la puerta en la nariz: «Usted no puede pasar, es cosa de mujeres. Usted sálgase; vamos a

preparar a su mujer. No, usted aquí se espera»...”. Oye, pues los maridos van cogiendo un complejo... que ellos solos se hacen a un lado. Sí, *de plano*, ya ni.... ni se les ocurre por aquí... entrar (Norma culta, muestra XVIII).

En (19), el hablante está opinando sobre las diferencias entre las mujeres de antes y las de ahora, y concluye que, por su estilo de vida, antiguamente la mujer que llegaba a cierta edad y entraba a la menopausia “ya era un tristeza”. Esta lectura es reforzada por *entonces*, que introduce la conclusión y por *de plano* que indica el carácter de recapitulación de lo dicho en las unidades previas. En cuanto a (20), la hablante opina sobre lo contradictorio que resulta que los médicos intenten involucrar a los maridos en la salud de sus esposas y sean los hospitales los primeros que no los dejen pasar a las consultas. Después de varias opiniones, I recapitula con ‘ya ni se les ocurre por aquí... entrar’, que es introducido por *de plano*. Por su carácter conclusivo o de recapitulación, en estos casos el marcador ocurre después de una serie de unidades discursivas y tiene un valor aproximado a *en suma* o *en conclusión*.

4.5 Autoprotección de la imagen social

Como se apuntó anteriormente, en su afán de decir verdad, el hablante puede comunicar algo sobre sí mismo que afecte a su imagen social, pero se ampara en el recurso de la expresión de sinceridad para minimizar los efectos negativos de lo dicho (Briz, 2017). De esta forma, el hablante salvaguarda su imagen gracias a la explicitud de sinceridad, por medio de la cual consigue atenuar la autocrítica (González Ruiz, 2007).

(21) 324 I: “no se te olvide que mañana se te cumple el mes” dice/ “ya te tienes que ir/ mañana quiero el cuarto desocupado”/ y le digo “sí”/ mana yo no tenía dinero/ no tenía trabajo/ no tenía dóndeirme así *de plano*// y dije “bueno”/ y le dije a él/ “¿sabes qué?/ mira mi mamá me corrió por esto y esto” le digo/ “y este/ y pues <~pus> tienes que echarme la mano”/ le digo “échame/ ¿no? por lo menos ayúdame a rentar un cuarto/ ya después yo me busco trabajo y yo me pago mi renta” (CSCM, entrevista 57).

(22) E: mmm / yo no sé/ yo no sé / no sé / *de plano*/ Sor Juana no le<[e]>ntiendo / no me gusta (MONR_M33_106, PRESEE, 2014).

En (21), la hablante presenta una serie de afirmaciones con las que pretende explicar la situación de precariedad por la que estaba pasando: “yo no tenía dinero”, “no tenía trabajo” y “no tenía dóndeirme”, y, con el uso de *de plano*, refuerza el grado de sinceridad. Así, a partir de la manifestación explícita de sinceridad, I genera un efecto atenuante con el cual autoprotege su imagen social y minimiza los efectos negativos que podría generar lo dicho, pues normalmente este tipo de situaciones no suele expresarse. Además, al mostrarse sincera, I también busca conseguir la aceptación de su interlocutora, provocar empatía y acercarla a su ámbito (Brenes, 2013), lo que se manifiesta desde el empleo del vocativo *mana*, apócope de *hermana*.

Por su parte, en (22), E expresa algo sobre sí misma que podría generar un menoscabo a su imagen social: “Sor Juana no le entiendo, no me gusta” y, además, lo realza con el empleo de *de plano*. Con esta estrategia de reforzamiento, E se resguarda en su deber de decir verdad y logra reducir los efectos negativos, pues –ante la autocrítica sincera destacada por el marcador– el interlocutor debe minimizar lo dicho. Esta estrategia atenuante se inicia desde la reiteración de “yo no sé”. Finalmente, en ambos casos, tanto la intensificación como la autoprotección de la imagen social se muestran como parte de una estrategia sociopragmática que ayuda a crear o incrementar la cercanía y solidaridad social entre los interlocutores (González, 2015).

5. Discusión

Nuestro análisis tuvo como punto de partida la idea de que *de plano* sufrió un proceso de subjetivización a través del cual adquirió funciones discursivas asociadas con la expresión de sinceridad. Es por esta razón por la que comparte varios rasgos con otros marcadores discursivos que expresan sinceridad, franqueza o certeza. En consecuencia, igual que aquellos, *de plano* desempeña diferentes funciones pragmáticas relacionadas con: (i) la modalización epistémica, (ii) el refuerzo de argumento, (iii) la focalización, (iv) la contraexpectativa, (v) la reformulación y la recapitulación y (vi) la autoprotección de la imagen social. Como se señaló, todos estos valores provienen de la expresión de sinceridad y de su contribución a la función básica de intensificación (Brenes, 2013).

Así pues, esta relación entre expresión de sinceridad e intensificación se manifiesta, en principio, en la actitud que adopta el hablante ante lo expresado, es decir, en el *modus* que influye en la fuerza ilocutiva y que reviste al enunciado con un carácter de sinceridad y con un mayor compromiso del hablante. Este es el origen de *de plano* como modalizador epistémico. Por otro lado, también se presenta una relación directa entre el compromiso del hablante y el valor de verdad, esto es, cuando el hablante destaca su actitud sincera sobre lo que comunica, también afecta el contenido proposicional de lo enunciado y contribuye a que sea percibido como algo más certero o verídico. A partir de esta impresión, *de plano* desarrolla diferentes funciones. En primer lugar, la distinción entre verdadero y falso permite realzar unidades discursivas que pueden ser: (i) argumentativamente más certeras o (ii) informativamente más importantes, lo que dota a este marcador con las funciones de refuerzo argumentativo y de focalización, respectivamente.

En segundo lugar, en ocasiones el hablante distingue entre verdadero y falso para reestructurar las expectativas del interlocutor y señalar contrastes entre lo que podría ser esperable y lo que no lo es. Generalmente, la contraexpectativa es aquello verdadero y *de plano* contribuye a resaltar este carácter. En tercer lugar, este contraste también permite reformular o precisar alguna unidad discursiva previa, esto es, la expresión de veracidad faculta al hablante para corregir lo dicho previamente en aras de establecer una mejor comunicación o, al menos, una más específica. Asociado con esta función, se encuentra el valor de recapitulación, donde el hablante, después de una serie de unidades, sintetiza su opinión o concluye su argumentación.

Finalmente, la expresión de sinceridad y la consecuente obligación de decir verdad pueden provocar que el hablante exprese cosas que normalmente no diría y que pueden afectar su imagen pública, sobre todo en el caso de las autocríticas. Sin embargo, este exceso de sinceridad es una estrategia de atenuación que le permite salvaguardar su imagen; además, también contribuye a crear, mantener o reforzar los vínculos de solidaridad con su interlocutor y provocar un acercamiento social. Así pues, *de plano* contribuye a expresar este exceso de sinceridad y es parte de una estrategia pragmática, donde la intensificación y la atenuación están relacionadas “con aquellas acciones (minimizadoras o realzadoras) que se entienden óptimas (esto es, efectivas y eficaces) para llegar con éxito a la meta prevista (acciones estratégicas, por tanto)” (Briz, 2017, p. 43).

Ahora bien, hay una serie de rasgos formales que conviene señalar. En primer lugar, se encontró que *de plano* tiene un alto grado de independencia, por lo que puede ocurrir en cualquier posición en el discurso; sin embargo, al menos en nuestros datos, muestra una preferencia por aparecer en posición intermedia (N=31), luego en posición final (N=17) y, por último, en posición inicial (N=7). De tal forma, la mayoría de las veces *de plano* tiene un alcance prospectivo o catafórico, de manera que tiene su influencia en la unidad discursiva que introduce. Por otro lado, también se encontró un caso, empleado por el entrevistador, en donde el marcador constituye por sí mismo una intervención y donde se refleja el grado máximo de independencia; con todo, es un uso bastante periférico. Otro aspecto para destacar es que *de plano* tiende a ocurrir acompañado de otros elementos que contribuyen a realzar sus funciones discursivas; por ejemplo, suele aparecer combinado con otros marcadores discursivos para afianzar el refuerzo de argumento, como en (8) y (9), destacar aún más la unidad discursiva a la que refiere, como en (11), asegurar la expresión de sinceridad, como en (6) y (8), y resaltar una contraexpectativa, como en (14) y (15). Un recurso más es la repetición de elementos con lo que se expresa más claramente la intensificación (González Ruiz, 2007), tal y como sucede en (7), (12) y (13). Así pues, *de plano* se combina con otros recursos lingüísticos para asegurar el cumplimiento de sus distintas funciones.

6. Conclusiones

En este trabajo estábamos interesados en caracterizar las funciones pragmáticas de *de plano*. En primer lugar, se señaló que este marcador es característico del español de Ciudad de México y de algunas otras ciudades de aquel país. También, se describió que esta partícula discursiva sufrió un proceso de subjetivización, por el cual pasó de describir un atributo físico a una forma de hacer o decir las cosas. De esta manera, adquirió un valor asociado con la expresión de sinceridad que lo acerca a otras formas similares como *la verdad (es que)*, *en realidad*, entre otros. Así pues, a partir de este valor de expresión de sinceridad y su contribución a la intensificación, se encontró que *de plano* puede desempeñar funciones relacionadas con: (i) la modalización epistémica, (ii) el refuerzo de argumento, (iii) la focalización, (iv) la contraexpectativa, (v) la reformulación y la recapitulación y (vi) la autoprotección de la imagen social, todas ellas en el ámbito

monológico. Cabe destacar que el marcador puede desempeñar más de una función de manera simultánea, principalmente porque trabaja en diferentes niveles: en el *modus*, en el *dictum* y en la interacción.

Con todo, hay que señalar que este es un primer acercamiento a la descripción de este marcador, por lo que resultan necesarias más investigaciones. En específico, sería recomendable hacer una búsqueda más exhaustiva en otras variedades del español para aportar mayor evidencia sobre lo característico de *de plano* en el español de Ciudad de México. Por otro lado, también sería interesante contrastar *de plano* con otros marcadores similares para determinar si existen matices funcionales entre ellos o no. Finalmente, sirvan estas líneas como una invitación para ahondar en el estudio de esta partícula discursiva.

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CSCM: https://lef.colmex.mx/pdf/corpus_sociolinguistico.html

Norma culta: <https://www.iifilologicas.unam.mx/elhablamexico/index.php?page=norma-culta>

Habla popular: <https://www.iifilologicas.unam.mx/elhablamexico/index.php?page=habla-popular>,

PRESEE: <https://preseea.uah.es/index.php/corpus-preseea>, AMERESCO: <http://corpusameresco.org/coloquial/web/>

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On L1 Transfer in Closely Related Language Learning: Conjectural Future in L2 Spanish by French and Italian Speakers

José Amenós-Pons ^{1*}, Aoife Ahern ¹ & Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes ²

¹Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

²Universitat de les Illes Balears, Mallorca, Spain

Abstract: This study investigates cross-linguistic effects on the acquisition of non-chronological – specifically, conjectural and concessive – interpretations of the simple and compound future tenses in Spanish as a second language (L2). In particular, it seeks to compare the specific role of L1 transfer in L2 Spanish acquisition by L1 French (n=33) and L1 Italian learners (n=28), at two different proficiency levels (CEFR B2 and C1), yet with similar learning experiences. 36 native Spanish speakers formed the control group. Results of two written acceptability judgement tasks show a clear cross-linguistic effect depending on the participants' L1 backgrounds, leading to overall advantages proportional to the degree of L1-L2 similarity in the range of possible interpretations of future tenses, although certain aspectual configurations resist acquisition even at advanced levels. However, results also indicate that all the learner groups took advantage of sensitivity to the role of lexical aspect in judging the appropriate interpretations of future tense, suggestive of cognitive processes at the discourse-syntax interface that are activated independently from any effects of conscious learning or instruction.

Keywords: *aspect, future tense, L2 acquisition, feature reassembly, L1 transfer, romance languages.*

Sobre la transferencia L1 en el aprendizaje de lenguas próximas: el futuro conjetural en L2 español por hablantes de francés e italiano

Resumen: Este estudio investiga, desde una perspectiva contrastiva, la adquisición de las interpretaciones no cronológicas —concretamente, conjeturales y concesivas— del futuro simple y compuesto en español como segunda lengua (L2). En particular, busca comparar el papel específico de la transferencia de la L1 en la adquisición del español como L2 por parte de estudiantes cuya L1 es el francés (n=33) y el italiano (n=28), en dos niveles de competencia diferentes (MCER B2 y C1), pero con experiencias de aprendizaje similares. El grupo de control está formado por 36 hablantes nativos de español. Los resultados de dos tareas escritas de juicios de aceptabilidad muestran un claro efecto de la L1 de los participantes, conducente a una ventaja en función de la mayor similitud entre la L1 y la L2, en cuanto a las posibles interpretaciones de los tiempos verbales de futuro. Sin embargo, algunas configuraciones aspectuales son resistentes a la adquisición, incluso en los niveles avanzados. En contrapartida, los resultados también indican que todos los grupos de estudiantes son sensibles al papel del aspecto léxico al juzgar las interpretaciones adecuadas de los tiempos de futuro, lo que sugiere procesos cognitivos localizados en la interfaz discurso-sintaxis, que se activan independientemente de cualquier efecto del aprendizaje consciente o la instrucción.

Palabras clave: *aspecto, tiempos de futuro, adquisición de L2, reensamblaje de rasgos, transferencia de la L1, lenguas romances.*

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*Corresponding author: jamenos@ucm.es

1. Introduction: An overview on L1 transfer

This paper describes a study on the cross-linguistic effects on the acquisition of non-future interpretations of the simple and the compound future tenses (henceforth, S-FUT and C-FUT, and FUT when both forms are jointly referred to) in Spanish as an additional language (L2/*Ln*). More specifically, it compares some aspects of the role of cross-linguistic influence on the acquisition of conjectural and concessive interpretations of FUT in Spanish by L1 French and L1 Italian learners, as exemplified in (1), (2) and (3).

- (1) Lllaman a la puerta. **Será** Juan.
“They are knocking at the door. **That’s probably (S-FUT)** Juan”.
- (2) La puerta no ha sido forzada. El ladrón **habrá entrado** por la ventana.
“The door has not been forced. The burglar **must have entered (C-FUT)** through the window”.
- (3) **Será** muy listo, pero no lo parece.
“He **may be (S-FUT)** very smart, but s/he doesn’t seem like it”.

To this end, the learning outcomes of speakers of these two different L1s will be compared. Genetically and typologically, both French and Italian are closely related to each other and to the target language, Spanish. However, the relative frequency and specific restrictions in the availability of non-future interpretations of the FUT differs across the three languages.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), L1 cross-linguistic influence, also known as transfer, has been a recurrent research theme. The influence of the L1 on the acquisition of L2 tense-aspect morphology has been reported by many scholars (e.g., [Duff and Li, 2002](#); [Slabakova, 2005](#)). However, most previous studies are mainly concerned with transfer of form (i.e., morphology), not meaning (i.e., interpretation). L2 researchers (e.g., [Diaubalick and Guijarro-Fuentes, 2022](#); [Gabriele, 2005, 2009](#); [González and Quintana Hernández, 2018](#); [Rastelli, 2020](#); [Vallerossa, 2021](#), and references thereafter) have, nevertheless, started to pay attention to the effects of language transfer on the acquisition of the semantic interpretation of aspectual marking in an L2. Although such studies have brought new insights, the question of how language learners’ L1 affects the acquisition of L2 aspect still needs to be further explored.

Different hypotheses on the effects of L1 transfer have flourished in SLA in the past decades and continue to be so in current SLA research. One such hypothesis is the Full Access/Full Transfer hypothesis ([Schwartz and Sprouse, 2000](#)) which assumes that features (interpretable and uninterpretable alike) that do not form part of the L1 can be acquired by adult L2 learners. Under this hypothesis, learners in the process of acquiring an L2 (or *Ln*) use the full grammar of their L1, transferred into the interlanguage, which they then gradually restructure by means of access to UG. Thus, L1 transfer is the main

source of the L1/L2 developmental sequence and ultimate attainment differences, and a core process that significantly (and variably – depending on the L1/L2 pairing) influences the L2 learning task.

Meanwhile, the Interpretability Hypothesis (henceforth, IH) (Hawkins and Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou, 2007) digresses somewhat from the Full Access proposal; the IH states that only L1 interpretable feature values can be learnt and (re)set. More specifically, only those features instantiated within the L1 and, at most, new interpretable features remain available in SLA. Uninterpretable features, which have strictly syntactic effects, are contended to only be acquirable only during the sensitive periods for language in childhood. This would explain an L2 adult's inability to reset parameters, at least when they are contingent on the acquisition of new uninterpretable features. The IH contends that the underlying syntax of L2 grammars is destined to remain like that of the L1 grammar with localized (or surface) adjustments.

The mapping challenges that learners with different L1 backgrounds may face have been the topic of intense debate. In particular, SLA researchers have investigated whether L2 learners are able to recognize the different behaviour and nature of syntactic features, and explored whether the difficulties in attaining them are due to any specific underlying syntactic deficit. In this respect, the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (FRH, Lardiere, 2008, 2009) argues that L2 learners can acquire subtle features by way of a process where learners reassemble the sets of lexical features of the native language into feature bundles appropriate to the L2. The FRH can be summed up in that the process of acquiring L2 grammatical features consists of the learner initially identifying relevant features in the L2 grammar, which may be present, but differently arranged in mappings onto lexical items, in the L1. Next, this hypothesis proposes that the learner gradually identifies the mappings of these features in the L2; in this part of the acquisition process, grammatically encoded information may be expressed lexically at first, using expressions whose meaning is similar to that encoded in functional categories. Finally, the learner will identify the appropriate L2 mapping of the features and thereby be able to reassemble them and use the corresponding L2 functional categories appropriately.

However, interpreting utterances is not only a matter of morphosyntactic decoding. Recognizing a conjectural use of FUT involves relating the linguistic expressions to contextual information and linking it to the intention of the speaker. In this sense, it requires processing that integrates syntax and discourse, as well as semantics. These are the kinds of interpretation processes considered in the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace, 2011, 2012) as the ones that tend to be especially challenging for SLA. From this perspective, among the factors that make acquisition more challenging and lead to greater variability in the L2, the requirement of processing features at the interfaces is especially relevant. Evidence in favour of this assumption is available, for instance, in a range of studies (Sorace and Serratrice, 2009, White, 2011, Benmamoun et al., 2013, Ahern et al., 2020, 2023 and references therein) on challenges related to interface processing in the acquisition of L2 features that are present in learners' L1s. Thus, other hypotheses have

purported that L2 variability does not point to deficits with uninterpretable features, but emerges from interface vulnerabilities, claiming that interpretable features relevant to the syntax–semantics or the syntax–discourse interfaces are challenging. These kinds of proposals seem to take into account that influence from L1 on the L2 alone cannot account for all L2 variability (see Sorace, 2011, 2012 for a review of interface vulnerability in L2 theorizing).

In standpoints which consider L1 transfer and/or inaccessibility to features as the primary source of L2 variability, it is predicted that L2 learners whose L1 instantiates similar features for a given property should not display significant variation for those features in the L2. However, it has often been shown in the literature that L2 variability is not exclusively selective on a continuum of grammatical representations that can be directly applied to the L2 from the L1 (see Ahern et al., 2020, 2023, and references therein). That is, L2 learners whose L1s should supply them with features that are the same in both languages also reveal different degrees of variability in applying properties connected with those very same features; mainly when such features involve interfaces. On the contrary, if interface properties are simply more difficult for all L2 learners, then this fact can account for much L2 variability, even when it is seemingly unexpected given L1 transfer and similarities in the two languages.

On the other hand, previous research on transfer from L2s in the acquisition of an L3, as well as on the distribution of the type of influence of L1 and L2 on the acquisition of an L3, are also relevant to our investigation, as Spanish is the second foreign language learnt by many of the participants in the present study. Puig-Mayenco et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of 71 studies on the interaction among languages in L3 acquisition processes. The review covers different language combinations, and observes a strong effect of research methodology, as well as of the genetic and typological relationship among the languages, on the results obtained. In the studies based on free production tasks, the influence of the L2 on the L3 tends to be particularly noticeable, whereas in studies based on comprehension tasks, a stronger influence of the L1 is often seen. Also, the influence of the language –either L1 or L2– closest (that is, with a higher degree of linguistic proximity) to the L3 is often detected, especially if it shares the target feature with the L3.

In sum, the different hypotheses mentioned so far – Full Access/Full Transfer, the Interpretability Hypothesis, the FRH and the Interface Hypothesis – all share the common goal of explaining the ways that native languages play a role in the acquisition and development of additional ones. However, each hypothesis highlights or delves more deeply into different aspects, such as the nature of the morphosyntactic features of the language being acquired, the functions and the interaction of linguistic modules in the acquisition processes or the degree of typological (dis)similarity across the L1 and the target language. In particular, we consider the FRH to offer potential in the objectives of the present study due to the similarity of the languages under consideration and the interest, therefore, of

shedding light on the processes involved in reconfiguring and mapping features from the L1 to the target language, where the features under consideration are mapped –partially– differently across the languages.

The focus of the present study is on genetically and typologically close languages, which share the target feature: a morphological FUT amenable to conjectural interpretations. Our analysis will be centred on the potential interactions of these L1s and Spanish during the acquisition process. To this end, the research design does not include a free production task, thereby reducing to some degree the likelihood of observing influences from other non-native languages known by most participants (mainly English). In addition, in the interest of simplicity and our of focus on the influence of the L1s on Spanish as the target language, the term L2 will be used hereon to refer to Spanish as the target language of our participants.

Our study presents a good opportunity to distinguish between the types of L1/L2 cross-linguistic influence, describable as positive, which may facilitate the attainment of an L2 grammar system; or negative, reflecting the underproduction or overproduction of a particular structure, production errors such as substitutions, calques and alterations of a target language item, misinterpretations during comprehension, and so on (Odlin, 1989). Comparing these kinds of patterns in different learner groups can reveal whether and how L1 features influence patterns of transfer and, ultimately, contribute to elucidating whether such transfer patterns are specific to each language pairing.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we inform about future tense in the three languages involved. Section 3 provides an overview of previous studies on the acquisition of conjectural and concessive FUT uses and introduces our research questions and hypotheses. Section 4 presents our investigation on the acquisition of FUT in Spanish. Discussion and conclusions will be presented in section 5.

2. The semantics of FUT in Romance: a contrastive approach

Modern Romance languages (except for Romanian and some Italian vernaculars) have synthetic, inflectional future forms that stem from the periphrastic Latin obligative construction ‘Infinitive × habere’. Futurity can also be expressed in these languages by other means, in addition to FUT, such as verbs of movement (*go* and *come*), volition, markers of progressive aspect or certain uses of simple present. However, full grammaticalization of these alternative devices is uncommon (Dhal, 2000).

Since the expression of futurity in Romance is etymologically related to modality, it is not surprising that in most Romance languages, FUT forms may receive interpretations not only related to chronology, but also conjectural ones, as in (1) to (3) above. Also, interpreting chronology and conjecture often leads to the identification of additional nuances. For instance, directive and volitional nuances can be identified (as in (4) and (5)). Among the uses of FUT which can be classified as expressing conjecture, i.e., a supposition or inference the speaker makes, not necessarily referring to future time, concessive and mirative uses are included, as in the Spanish examples (6) and (7). Concessive interpretations involve an

implication that given one situation, the situation expressed in the adjacent proposition is unexpected and nonetheless, affirming both situations hold. Mirative uses, on the other hand, lead to recognising the speaker's attitude of surprise with respect to the propositional content expressed.

- (4) **No se lo dirás** a nadie; es una orden (directive)
"You will not tell (S-FUT) anyone; that's an order".
- (5) **Te lo traeré** mañana, no te preocupes (promise)
"I'll bring (S-FUT) it to you tomorrow; don't worry about it".
- (6) **Será** muy guapo, pero es muy antipático (concession)
"He may be (S-FUT) very handsome, but he's very unpleasant".
- (7) ¡**Será** tonto...! (mirativity)
"He's (S-FUT) such a fool!"

Nevertheless, linguistic and discursive restrictions that apply to each of these ways of interpreting S-FUT differ across Romance languages. In Spanish and Italian, conjectural interpretations are frequent, and in Spanish they correspond to a very high percentage of S-FUT usage (Escandell-Vidal, 2010, 2014). Conversely, the mere existence of conjectural interpretations of the S-FUT in present-day spontaneous French is a debated issue (Tasmowsky and Dendale, 1998; De Saussure and Morency, 2012).

Despite the frequency of conjectural S-FUT uses in Spanish and Italian, they are restricted to certain linguistic conditions, mainly related to lexical aspect (Soto, 2008; Baranzini, 2017). For conjectural and, more generally, for non-future interpretations of the S-FUT, it is usually necessary for the verb to have [- telic] and [- dynamic] features (as in examples (6) and (7) above for Spanish, (8) and (9) below for Italian). Therefore, states are naturally compatible with such readings.

- (8) A quest'ora Paolo **sarà già a casa** [- telic] [- dynamic]
"At this hour Paolo will already be (S-FUT) at home".
- (9) **Sarà svizzero**, ma è sempre in ritardo. [- telic] [- dynamic]
"He may be (S-FUT) Swiss, but he is always late".

On the other hand, [+ dynamic] verbs in the S-FUT can only be interpreted as conjectural if their location in the future is contextually ruled out. This generally implies that the events denoted are understood as habitual ((11) and (12)):

- (10) ?? No contesta. **Dormirá** en su habitación. [- telic] [+ dynamic]
??Non risponde. **Dormirà** in camera sua
"S/he's not answering. S/he must be sleeping (S-FUT) in his/her bedroom".
- (11) - ¿A qué se dedica Luis? × No sé, **trabajará** en cosas de informática. [- telic]
[+ dynamic] [+ habitual]

(12) - Cosa fa Luis? × Non lo so, **lavorerà** su materiale informatico.

- “What does Luis do? × I don’t know, **he (probably) works (S-FUT)** in computing”.

This aspectual restriction is related to the fact that states do not have inherent endpoints; it affects the possibility of establishing temporal reference. States in the S-FUT cannot automatically be seen as events located at a specific point in time, so they will only express future reference if an adverbial expression is used. Otherwise, a state in the S-FUT will naturally be understood as expressing conjecture. On the contrary, telic events have inherent endpoints. Therefore, if they are used in the S-FUT, future location is interpreted, even in the absence of an adverbial expression. Activities are more ambiguous, because they are atelic but at the same time (unlike states) they are dynamic; as a result, activities may achieve conjectural and chronological interpretations, depending on the context. More specifically, activities can express conjecture by adding the [+ progressive] feature to the predicate. This can also be done with accomplishments, but not with achievements, because they are [- durative]. Progressive markers (hereafter, PROG) are stativizers, i. e., they express something that is *in the state of happening* (Laca, 2017). In Spanish, progressive aspect is often introduced by means of *estar* × *gerund* (*to be* × *gerund*) (13). In Italian, the use of PROG alternates with other lexical or syntactic devices producing a similar effect, such as the adverb *ancora* (still), as in (14):

(13) No contesta. **Estará durmiendo** en su habitación.

“S/he’s not answering. **S/he must be (S-FUT) sleeping** in his/her bedroom.”

(14) Non risponde. **Dormirà ancora**.

“S/he’s not answering. **S/he must still be (S-FUT) sleeping**”.

The same tendency exists in French, although the use of conjectural FUT is clearly less common. However, examples of conjectural readings of the French S-FUT with states abound in the literature (especially, with the copula *être* ‘to be’). De Saussure and Morency (2012) argue that the conjectural future is alive and well in the Swiss and Central France varieties of French not only with stative verbs, but with activities as well.

Nevertheless, present-day French – in contrast to Spanish and Italian – lacks a fully grammaticalized progressive device. The construction *être en train de* × *infinitive* can be used to express progressivity in the future, but its frequency is much lower than the Spanish *estar* × *gerund* progressive construction (Bertinetto, 2000). This may be related to the oddity of conjectural S-FUT with activities in French, as has often been pointed out in the literature.

As regards conjectural interpretations of the C-FUT, they can be found in Spanish, Italian and French without any lexical aspect restrictions. The C-FUT is unlike the simple form in that it involves the representation of a completed event, or its resulting state, as being previous to a reference point. This facilitates non-future readings regardless of the predicate type, as in utterances (15) to (17), in which achievement predicates express conjectures in Spanish, Italian and French:

- (15) La puerta no ha sido forzada. El ladrón **habrá entrado** por la ventana.
“The door has not been forced. The burglar **must have entered (C-FUT)** through the window”.
- (16) Strano che la luce sia accesa. **Si saranno dimenticati** di spegnerla.
“It is strange that the light is on. **They’ll have forgotten (C-FUT)** to turn it out”.
- (17) Il est midi. **Max aura (déjà) atteint** le sommet.
“It’s midday. **Max will (already) have reached (C-FUT)** the summit”.

Concessive environments (like (3) and (6) above) provide a further difference between French vs. Spanish and Italian. Concessive FUT constructions are widespread in Spanish and Italian, with both the simple and compound tense; but in French, neither the S-FUT nor its compound counterpart can be used to express concession. French concessive constructions include, on the contrary, constructions like those shown in (18) and (19), using specialised connectives or modal auxiliaries:

- (18) **Il a beau être intelligent**, mais il ne le semble pas.
“He **may well be** intelligent, but he does not seem like it.”
- (19) **Il a peut-être été en retard** aujourd’hui, mais il est très ponctuel.
“He **may have been** late today, but he’s very punctual”.

A thorough description of further uses of FUT is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the previous paragraphs clearly show that, despite its common origin, the S-FUT tense has developed divergent tendencies in French vs. Spanish and Italian, particularly in terms of its potential for expressing conjecture and concession. Comparing French and Italian, Baranzini and De Saussure (2017) conclude that, in French, conjectural uses of S-FUT are only acceptable if they represent an event that is verifiable in the future. This prevents the tense from expressing purely epistemological, non-future uses; and is a requisite that is absent from the Italian S-FUT, leading to more widespread use for conveying conjectural meaning.

This line of thought is fully compatible with Escandell-Vidal’s (2021) cross-linguistic analysis of the Romance S-FUT. Escandell-Vidal’s hypotheses underlie our study because they provide explicit, falsifiable linguistic criteria for the commonalities and distinctions of the uses of S-FUT in Romance. They also offer a basis for conceptualizing the learning task of the L2 learners, which we regard as feature reassembly (Lardiere, 2008, 2009).

Escandell-Vidal describes the semantics of S-FUT in terms of features; the core features of S-FUT are common to all Romance varieties, while other features differ. On her view, the core meaning of the Romance S-FUT “encodes an instruction [for the hearer] to build the eventuality described by the sentence radical, or preajacent proposition p, as the representation of a situation (the evaluation situation, ES) that cannot be accessed from an information acquisition situation (IS), in which the discourse situation (DS) is included”.

The core semantic features do not specifically relate to time, nor to conjecture, but to the information source: the situation described is (at the IS) only available as an inference of the speaker. This implies that the S-FUT has an inherent evidential meaning.

Despite the existence of common Romance features, the ultimate materializations of the S-FUT tense in the different languages will vary depending on the values that other crosslinguistically shared features have taken in each of them. These features and their variation in French, Italian and Spanish are represented below in Table 1:

Table 1. The semantics of the S-FUT in French, Italian and Spanish (Escandell-Vidal, 2021, p. 23).

CORE MEANING	IS ES DS $\subset$ IS		
	FRENCH	ITALIAN	SPANISH
FEATURES			
ES [$\pm$ Factual]	-	-	-
IS [$\pm$ Deictic]	+	+	+
IS ES [$\pm$ Forward]	+	-	-

Following Escandell-Vidal's proposal, the Romance S-FUT is always non-factual. In the Romance languages compared here, it is also [+deictic]; this means that (in these languages) the IS is related to the speaker's perceptual field. As a result, conjectural readings are possible. However, the French S-FUT imposes a [+ Forward] relation between the information acquisition situation, IS and the evaluation situation, ES: thus, all eventualities in the French S-FUT call for a future verification. This is not required in Italian and Spanish and, as a result, conjectural uses of the S-FUT may be more pervasive in these two languages.

In line with the FRH, the following processes can be expected to form part of the acquisition of the full range of uses of the Spanish S-FUT, and more specifically, the non-chronological ones that we propose to study.

- L1 French speakers must reassemble the [$\pm$ Forward] feature.
- L1 Italian speakers can take advantage of the very similar mapping of the [- Forward] of S-FUT across the L1 and L2 forms. This claim has a direct connection with current L2 acquisition theory and will be addressed in Section 3.

3. Empirical research on FUT in L2 Spanish and research questions

3.1 Previous studies

Adopting a formal framework, Bruhn de Garavito and Valenzuela (2007) have argued that chronological and conjectural interpretations of the S-FUT cause dissimilar acquisitional problems. These researchers offer the results of an empirical task on the ambiguities involved in the interpretation of the Spanish S-FUT. Since the tense has two types of interpretation, context is necessary to decode adequately for disambiguation. This study deals with interface problems found in simultaneous bilingualism and adult L2 acquisition

which may involve delay in acquisition, fossilization, attrition, or incomplete acquisition according to the Interface Hypothesis. A group of 13 English learners of L2 Spanish were compared to a native control group made up of 13 speakers. Participants were given an oral sentence conjunction task and were asked to rate their logic on an acceptability scale (where 1=totally unacceptable and 5=totally acceptable). Task results show that it was difficult for L2 learners of Spanish, but they were able to overcome the complexity of the input, the comprehension of which was reliant on contextual cues. More importantly, learners performed in a way that is consistent with knowledge of the conjectural interpretation of the S-FUT in spite of ambiguity in the input, and demonstrate having acquired this interpretation in Spanish. However, the specific aspectual restrictions operating in the conjectural cases are not clearly operationalised in their study; only the [$\pm$ telic] variable is considered. Therefore, no direct comparisons can be made between our study and Bruhn de Garavito and Valenzuela's.

Goundareva (2014), on the other hand, seeks to investigate how the acquisition of the conjectural S-FUT in Spanish by speakers of L1 French can be facilitated through classroom instruction. Like Bruhn de Garavito and Valenzuela, Goundareva takes into account the [$\pm$ telic] variable, but no distinction is made between states and activities regarding their compatibility with conjectural readings. An experiment which measured different outcomes of form focused and meaning based instructional methods was designed, which included a grammaticality judgement and a limited written production task. Long-term effects of the instruction were also considered based on the results of a delayed post-test. Results from both tasks indicated advantages of meaning-based instruction over form-focused instruction. At the same time, both instructional methods had a more positive effect on learner acquisition, in both explicit and implicit knowledge, compared to the results of the control group. As expected, French L1 learners showed a slight benefit over English L1 learners due to the positive cross-linguistic influence of their L1.

In a study whose aims were closer to those of the present one, Ahern et al. (2020) explored the acquisition of a range of Spanish FUT interpretations by French-speaking learners; overall, learners were able to distinguish chronological from conjectural and concessive interpretations of FUT. Findings show that despite the dissimilarity in production of conjectural and concessive FUT uses (compared to the L1 control group), L2 learners' understanding of the chronological, conjectural and concessive use of FUT was shown to be similar to that of L1 speakers. However, the L2 learners were not fully aware of the linguistic restrictions operating in Spanish: in particular, they did not differentiate between the dissimilar acceptability of the conjectural FUT with states and activities.

3.2 Research questions and hypotheses

The present study is an exploration of the specific issue of language transfer at intermediate and advanced levels of L2 Spanish, assumed to take place according to the FRH. Although the conjectural FUT has been explored in previous studies, the distinction between states and activities, and the concessive uses of FUT, have generally been omitted. Our study

is twofold: by focusing on the uses of FUT in interlanguage grammars and questioning some of the standardly accepted assumptions for the interlinguistic commonalities of the semantics of the Romance FUT, it aims to generally reflect on the concepts of language transfer and grammaticality in SLA bearing in mind the theoretical hypotheses that hinge on them. This study seeks to respond to the following research questions:

- RQ1. Can the transfer of L1 interpretable features into their L2 target language be confirmed for the two learner groups?
- RQ2. Will L2 learners be able to judge FUT uses appropriately in their second language by rejecting the ones that are not possible in the target system (but possible in their L1 system) and accepting uses possible in the target system (as opposed to in their L1 system)?

It is important to highlight that our study focuses on intermediate and advanced learners. Finding a strong L1 influence among these learners would not be a trivial fact. That the L1 system may be to a large extent the starting point for L2 learners should not be surprising, and even less so in the case of closely related languages. However, at more advanced levels, the persistence of the transfer effect would reveal a durable difficulty in detecting and readjusting L2 features whose organization differs from those of the L1. This effect would be clearly observed if the L1 French participants in our research show a clear tendency to use and assess the possibilities of using S-FUT and C-FUT according to the limits and tendencies of their L1. If, on the contrary, the L1 French speakers can go beyond these tendencies (and thus, understand and produce FUT uses possible in the L2, but not in the L1), this would be a strong indication that a feature re-assembly has occurred and that L1 cross-linguistic effects are not so consistent at intermediate and advanced L2 proficiency levels.

Contrasting the answers of a group of L1 French speakers (in whose language the non-chronological uses of S-FUT and C-FUT differ from those of Spanish) and a group of L1 Italian speakers (in whose language the two verb tenses have uses similar to those of Spanish) allows us to further refine the interpretation of the results. If the pattern of responses of Italian speakers differs from that of French speakers (but is similar to that of Spanish speakers), this could be seen as a clear effect of L1 influence on the L2. Contrastingly, if Italian speakers show a significantly higher variability than Spanish speakers, and if differences were found between the intermediate and the advanced participants, this would imply that positive cross-linguistic influence has a limited and inconsistent effect from one learning stage to another.

Answering the research questions mentioned above implies paying attention to the learner's awareness of: (a) the aspectual restrictions of the conjectural interpretations of FUT in Spanish, and (b) the fact that the same restrictions operate in conjectural and concessive environments. Variability is a detectable phenomenon in any empirical research on L2 grammar acquisition, as it is, to a lesser extent, in the verbal responses and behaviours of native speakers. The acquisition of a grammatical mechanism in L2 is

never a matter of all or nothing, but of greater or lesser variability. Thus, in our case, as soon as no significant difference is observed between the tendencies of non-native and native speakers in the control group, it can be concluded that acquisition has taken place. Therefore, based on the contrasts and similarities across the participants' L1s and Spanish, as described in Section 2 in light of our research questions focused on these specific areas of tense and aspect that have not been analyzed in any previous studies, we formulate the following hypotheses:

- H1: Assuming the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis, which postulates full transfer of the L1 and full access to UG in L2 acquisition, if the L1 is fully transferred into the L2 grammar and given the similarity between the three languages, we can expect positive transfer for the L1 Italian speakers, in both conjectural and concessive uses of S-FUT. That is, the L1 Italian speakers would be able to apply their full array of S-FUT and C-FUT use in L2 Spanish. We expect some degree of positive transfer for the L1 French speakers, mainly in the conjectural cases, but anticipate that neither the S-FUT nor the C-FUT will be used to express concession.
- H2: However, assuming the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis, we could expect some degree of negative transfer in all the L1 groups, especially at the less advanced stages of development due to the readjustments learners need to make. Likewise, assuming the Interface Hypothesis, we expect variability and interface vulnerabilities in their interlanguage systems owing to the challenging nature of interpretable features relevant to the syntax–semantics or the syntax–discourse interfaces.
- H3: If participants already have some, but not all future tense uses, in their L1, then we will find that certain FUT uses in L2 Spanish will be judged as ungrammatical. Anyhow, we expect participants –both Spanish L1 speakers, and L1 French and Italian learners of Spanish– to show different rates of ability to identify grammaticality depending on the particular feature of the FUT.

In section 4.3, these general hypotheses will be developed into specific expectations related to our research tasks. Before that, however, some background information on the design of the study must be introduced.

4. Empirical study: design and methodology

This section presents the details of the empirical study, designed to explore the understanding of the conjectural and concessive uses of S-FUT and C-FUT in Spanish and the effects of the interaction of this tense with lexical aspect, by native speakers and by L1 speakers of French and Italian learning Spanish as an L2.

4.1 Participants

The participants were all adults and (except for the members of the control group), were all studying Spanish as a foreign language in their home countries (France and Italy). They had been placed in groups according to their proficiency in Spanish, as identified by the standardised placement tests used by their respective institutions, directly linked to descriptions of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR).¹ Table 2 shows the numbers of Spanish L2 learner participants by proficiency level for each language, totalling 33 native speakers of French and 28 Italian speakers.

Table 2. Number of participants for each L1 and Spanish language proficiency level.

Native language	B2	C1
French	10	23
Italian	20	8
Spanish (control group)	36	

All 36 native speakers of European Spanish in the control group were born and lived in the central regions of Spain; they had knowledge of other languages, mainly English, but none considered themselves bilingual (in the strict sense of having a similar command of two languages). We made sure that no Catalan/Spanish bilinguals participated in the study, since the restrictions on the conjectural interpretations of the Catalan S-FUT crucially differ from those of Spanish (Escandell-Vidal, 2021).

The French-speaking group of L2 adult Spanish learners included 33 members. Only two of the French participants had had Spanish immersion experiences (one in Barcelona, Spain, for 7 years, the other for several brief periods in Bolivia). Some knowledge of English was reported by 30 of them (with varying levels, from elementary to advanced); two participants had an elementary level of Dutch, two had an intermediate level of Italian and one reported an intermediate level of German. Only two participants had learned Spanish as their first foreign language; for the rest of the French participants, English was studied first.

The Italian group comprised 28 informants. Three of them had lived in Spain (for 4 months, 9 months and 1 year, respectively). Some knowledge of English was reported by 26 of them (with levels ranging from elementary to advanced); two participants had an intermediate knowledge of French, two knew German at intermediate level, and one reported an intermediate level of Russian. Spanish was the first foreign language for two of the participants, and the second foreign language for the rest.

¹ All the L1 French participants were learning Spanish at the Instituto Cervantes Centers in Paris, Toulouse and Lyon. The Cervantes Institute is a Spanish public institution, present in 90 cities in 43 countries on six continents. 15 of the Italian participants were also Instituto Cervantes' students (in Rome, Milan, Naples and Palermo); the rest of the Italian participants were learning Spanish at the University of Milan. Their instructors were fully familiar with the Instituto Cervantes levels and placement procedures (internal tests and certificates of proficiency such as DELE and SIELE).

Hence, although most participants in the present study declared some knowledge of foreign languages other than Spanish, the individual profiles were highly heterogeneous regarding language combinations, level of attainment and order of acquisition. Besides, none of the non-Romance languages spoken by our participants has a morphological future tense allowing conjectural interpretations similar to those found in Romance. As for the two L1 French participants having intermediate knowledge of L2 Italian, the possibility of some degree of positive transfer from Italian into Spanish cannot be excluded, though it is unlikely that its effect would significantly alter the overall data. Thus, the hypothetical effects of previous L2 knowledge into L3 Spanish will not be considered here.²

4.2 Experimental tasks

The participants completed two written grammaticality judgement tasks in Spanish, each consisting in a set of multiple-choice items, presented in randomised order within each set, with three possible response options per item, administered online using Google Forms. The response options expressed a metalinguistic judgement on the appropriateness of the FUT verb form use, in the following terms.

- a. *La forma verbal en mayúscula está bien usada.*
The capitalised verb form is right (lit. well used).
- b. *Me suena raro; no estoy seguro/a de si la forma está bien usada.*
It sounds strange to me; I am not sure of whether the form is right (lit. well used).
- c. *La forma verbal está mal usada.*
The verb form is wrong (lit. badly used).

These three options were presented for every item across the two tasks. As summed up in Tables 3 and 4, the first set of items (hereon, task 1) focused on the effect of lexical aspect on the acceptability of conjectural and concessive interpretations of the simple FUT (which are felicitous only with atelics, particularly with states), while task 2 focused on the differing acceptability of the simple and the compound FUT for conjectural interpretations (for the compound FUT, conjectural interpretations are felicitous with all predicate types).

Task 1 comprised 19 items made up of a brief contextualising text, in parentheses, followed by the target utterance in which the verb in FUT was written in block capitals, under which one of the three response options had to be chosen and marked by selecting the adjacent checkbox. An example of each item condition in the task is provided below (see Table 3).

The 18 items of the second task (Task 2) focused only on conjectural uses of the FUT. This task displayed items alongside external stimuli, in the form of simple line drawings or a simulation of a newspaper headline. The items consisted in written statements expressing interpretations, or conjectures on the causes, of the situations suggested by

² Future studies would, nevertheless, benefit from including more participants with more homogenous knowledge of other additional languages to test some of the claims about cross-linguistic effects on L3 acquisition stated in Puig-Mayenco et al. (2020) and Vallerossa et al. (2021), for instance.

the news headline or the scenes depicted in the drawings. Each item presented a FUT form in block capitals, half of which were simple FUT and the other half, compound FUT (e.g., *habrá hecho*). Sample items of each condition are provided below (see Table 4).

Besides, 5 filler items were included in the first task, and 4 filler items were included in the second task. Fillers targeted diverse grammatical structures, unrelated to the actual focus of the tasks. They have not been included in Tables 3 and 4. The fact that the tasks included different types of FUT interpretation (i.e., conjectural and concessive interpretations) in two different verb tenses (S-FUT and C-FUT) was also considered a distracting factor. Thus, the participants were exposed to two different interpretations of two tenses, in dissimilar syntactic constructions. This, in addition to the randomised order of the items, limited the (undesired) possibility that participants would respond mechanically, having quickly understood the objective of the tasks.

Table 3. Task 1 item conditions.

Item numbers	Interpretation of FUT		Lexical aspect of predicate containing verb in FUT			Sample items
	Conjecture	Concession	state	activity	Telic	
1 and 2	✓		✓			No conozco esta palabra, pero, si el diccionario dice que existe, pues EXISTIRÁ, claro.
3–5		✓	✓			Ana: Yo creo que María tiene sus razones para actuar así... Rosa: TENDRÁ sus razones, pero se equivoca.
6–8	✓			✓		Según el programa de actos, en este momento los ministros ya NEGOCIARÁN con sus colegas extranjeros.
9–11		✓		✓		Miguel: Pedro siempre piensa mucho antes de actuar. Por eso siempre toma buenas decisiones. Antonio: PENSARÁ mucho, pero me parece que esta vez se equivoca.
12–15	✓				✓	Tengo que daros una noticia de gran trascendencia, que alguno de vosotros ya OIRÉIS: el presidente ha dimitido esta mañana. ³
16–19		✓			✓	Rosa: Le han dado el premio a Luis porque lo ha hecho muy bien. José: Le DARÁN el premio a Luis, pero yo creo que María lo ha hecho mejor.

³ An anonymous reviewer pointed out that this example item might not necessarily be understood as conjectural. However, in the present case, the presence of the adverb *ya* ('already') is hardly compatible with a purely chronological interpretation of the S-FUT, at least in the standard peninsular variety of Spanish, which is the one considered in the study.

Table 4. Task 2 item conditions.

Item numbers	Tense		Interpretation of FUT	Lexical aspect of predicate containing verb in FUT			Sample items
	Simple FUT	Compound FUT		conjecture	state	activity	
25, 33, 41	✓		✓	✓			Es una habitación bastante desordenada. Hay unas botellas de vino con unos vasos. Entonces, supongo que esto SERÁ una fiesta.
26, 34, 42	✓		✓			✓	Yo creo que ROBARÁN la casa... porque veo a un ladrón que se escapa por la ventana.
27, 35, 43	✓		✓			✓	Puede ser un ladrón que ha entrado y que DESCONECTARÁ el teléfono para que el dueño no pueda llamar a la policía...
28, 36, 46		✓	✓			✓	Me imagino que HABRÁN ORGANIZADO una fiesta de cumpleaños...
29, 38, 45		✓	✓			✓	Los vigilantes del parking HABRÁN HABLADO con la policía para que busquen al propietario.
30, 37, 44		✓	✓	✓			Me imagino que el dueño HABRÁ TENIDO algún problema grave...

4.3 Analysis

Considering the hypothesis of an evidentiality-based semantics of Romance FUT (Escandell-Vidal, 2010, 2014 and 2021) presented above in 2.1, the predictions derivable from the value-mapping contrast between French and Spanish shown in Table 1 and the research hypotheses introduced in 3.1, our expectations for each item set were as follows:

1. Stative verbs in S-FUT: Native speakers will accept these uses with ease. If full L1 transfer is operating, L1 Italian speakers will also accept the concessive and conjectural interpretations. French speakers will hesitate to accept items with concessive readings due to its oddity in their L1. They may also face challenges identifying conjectural interpretations, considering that, in everyday French, conjectural uses of S-FUT are infrequent; therefore, for these two learner groups L1 transfer might also limit the acceptability of these items, even with states.

2. Activities in S-FUT: Native speakers will tend to only accept these items when a habitual reading is made accessible in the discourse context (as in items 6 to 9). Due to L1 transfer, our French-speaking participants will tend to reject all the items with this pattern, while the L1 Italian participants might converge with L1 Spanish speakers.
3. Accomplishments and achievements in S-FUT: The telic nature of these lexical aspect classes leads to incongruences with interpretations that differ from that of chronological future. Native speakers are expected to recognize this fact, and consistently reject this set of items. The L2 groups are also expected to reject them, due to L1 transfer.
4. C-FUT forms: considering that for the speakers of Romance languages C-FUT can often express conjecture, it was hypothesized that both native speakers and the French and Italian L1 learner groups would accept telic and atelic verb forms as conjectural.

Thus, in Task 1, items 1 and 2 are expected to be widely accepted in all groups, although more variability is predicted in the L2 groups; items 3 to 5 and 9 to 11 will only be decisively considered grammatical by the L1 Spanish and Italian speakers; items 6 to 8 and 12 to 19 should be rejected by all groups. Regarding Task 2, for the items involving S-FUT forms, those with stative predicates (items number 25, 33 and 41) should be accepted (to dissimilar degrees) by natives and non-natives; whereas all the items with verbs expressing activities, achievements or accomplishments (items 26, 27, 34, 35, 42 and 43) should be rejected by all the participant groups. Finally, the items containing C-FUT forms (items 28 to 30, 36 to 38 and 44 to 46) should be considered to be appropriate by all groups, with less variability than in the S-FUT items.

4.4 Results

Statistical analyses were carried out on the data obtained from the questionnaires, for the group results, based on the variables generated as the mean of each of the items. For each item condition, we compared the answers of each L2 group with those of the control group; inter-group comparisons were also made. For the comparisons, the arithmetic mean of the answers (i.e., the mean in the amount of options a, b or c chosen by the participants) were used.

The variables were shown to deviate from the normal distribution, so each group was analysed descriptively for its mean, minimum and maximum, and the groups were compared with each other using Mann-Whitney (comparing two groups or the two proficiency levels of a group) or Kruskal-Wallis (for more than two groups or L1s). Post-hoc, paired comparisons with Bonferroni correction were applied to any significant results of the Kruskal-Wallis test. The results are summarized below, in [Tables 5 and 6](#).

Table 5. Means.

Report							
GRUP_L1		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
GRU_1A5	FR	33	0.558	0.311	0.400	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.917	0.138	1.000	0.60	1.00
	ITA	28	0.793	0.176	0.800	0.40	1.00
	Total	97	0.756	0.091	0.800	0.00	1.00
GRU_6A11	FR	33	0.232	0.171	0.167	0.00	0.67
	CONTROL	36	0.500	0.178	0.500	0.00	0.83
	ITA	28	0.429	0.205	0.500	0.00	0.83
	Total	97	0.387	0.018	0.500	0.00	0.83
GRU_12A19	FR	33	0.780	0.205	0.875	0.13	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.663	0.248	0.750	0.13	1.00
	ITA	28	0.701	0.251	0.750	0.13	1.00
	Total	97	0.715	0.026	0.750	0.13	1.00
GRU_25_33_41	FR	33	0.525	0.277	0.667	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.824	0.203	1.000	0.33	1.00
	ITA	28	0.560	0.241	0.667	0.00	1.00
	Total	97	0.636	0.037	0.667	0.00	1.00
GRU_26_34_42	FR	33	0.333	0.186	0.333	0.00	0.67
	CONTROL	36	0.491	0.203	0.333	0.33	1.00
	ITA	28	0.417	0.215	0.333	0.00	1.00
	Total	97	0.414	0.014	0.333	0.00	1.00
GRU_27_35_43	FR	33	0.798	0.276	1.000	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.852	0.245	1.000	0.33	1.00
	ITA	28	0.869	0.262	1.000	0.00	1.00
	Total	97	0.840	0.015	1.000	0.00	1.00
GRU_28_36_46	FR	33	0.788	0.331	1.000	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.917	0.146	1.000	0.67	1.00
	ITA	28	0.845	0.212	1.000	0.33	1.00
	Total	97	0.850	0.094	1.000	0.00	1.00
GRU_29_38_45	FR	33	0.798	0.322	1.000	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.815	0.270	1.000	0.00	1.00
	ITA	28	0.798	0.246	1.000	0.33	1.00
	Total	97	0.803	0.039	1.000	0.00	1.00
GRU_30_37_44	FR	33	0.727	0.328	0.667	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.750	0.244	0.667	0.00	1.00
	ITA	28	0.833	0.248	1.000	0.33	1.00
	Total	97	0.770	0.047	0.667	0.00	1.00

Table 6. Nonparametric Tests.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1	The distribution of GRU_1TO5 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of GRU_6 TO 11 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of GRU_12 TO 19 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.230	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of GRU_25_33_41 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of GRU_26_34_42 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.003	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of GRU_27_35_43 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.352	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of GRU_28_36_46 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.010	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of GRU_29_38_45 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.049	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of GRU_30_37_44 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.171	Retain the null hypothesis.

a. The significance level is ,050.

b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

The analyses showed that the differences among the groups of participants were significant ($p < .005$) for all of the item groups (shown in Tables 3 and 4 in the previous sections) except for those with concessive uses of S-FUT, following the prediction established above. Thus, all the learner groups managed to successfully identify the ungrammaticality of telic verbs in S-FUT for expressing concession or conjecture, on equal terms with the native speaker group.

Regarding the predictions set forth in section 4.3, Figures 1 and 2 show the percentages of acceptance of each participant group, in relation with lexical aspect (in the graphs, answer option A implies acceptance; option B, doubts; option C, rejection). The exact percentages are shown below each graph. The L1 Spanish speakers accepted the items with concessive uses of the S-FUT of stative and activity verbs, in contrast with telic verbs, which were generally rejected. The Italian speakers behaved similarly (statistically equivalently to the native speaker group, though showing more individual variability); whereas the French groups were statistically different ($p < .005$) from the Italian and Spanish L1 groups in their responses: they often rejected states and activities as ungrammatical, but the rejection of telics was (as in the Italian and control groups) still significantly higher ($p < .005$).

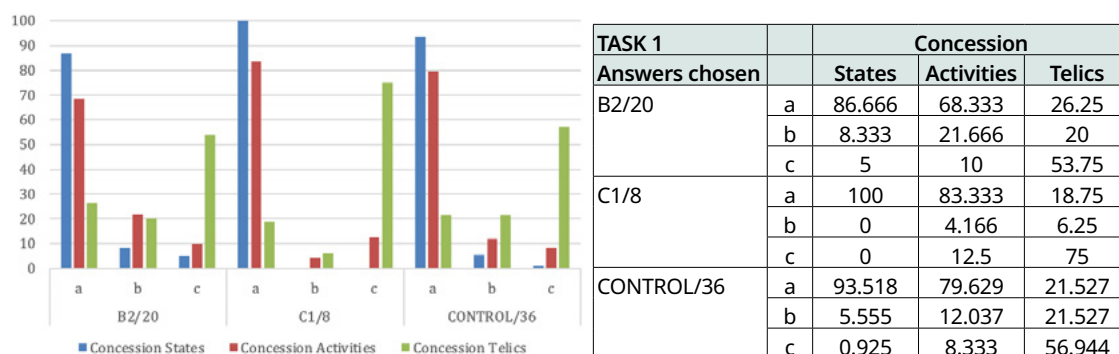


Figure 1. Italian L1 vs. Control: Concession items in Task 1 (mean).

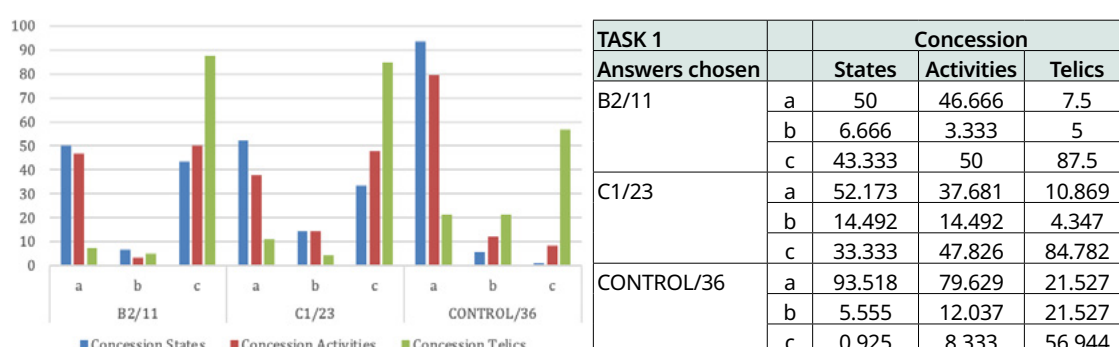


Figure 2. French L1 vs. Control: Concession items in Task 1 (mean).

The conjectural item results from Task 1 are displayed below, in Figures 3 and 4. Contrary to our expectations, rejection of conjectural use of the Spanish S-FUT was significantly higher in the non-native groups, compared to the control group. Overall, it is clear that the learner groups were not decisive in identifying stative in S-FUT expressing conjecture as grammatical. In the Italian groups, however, comparing B2 and C1, acceptance is significantly higher at C1, while the French L1 participants show no significant difference across the two proficiency groups. All non-native speaker groups (unlike the Spanish L1 control group) fail to distinguish between states and activities. Still, a clear distinction is seen in all the groups between atelic and telic predicates: telics are generally rejected.

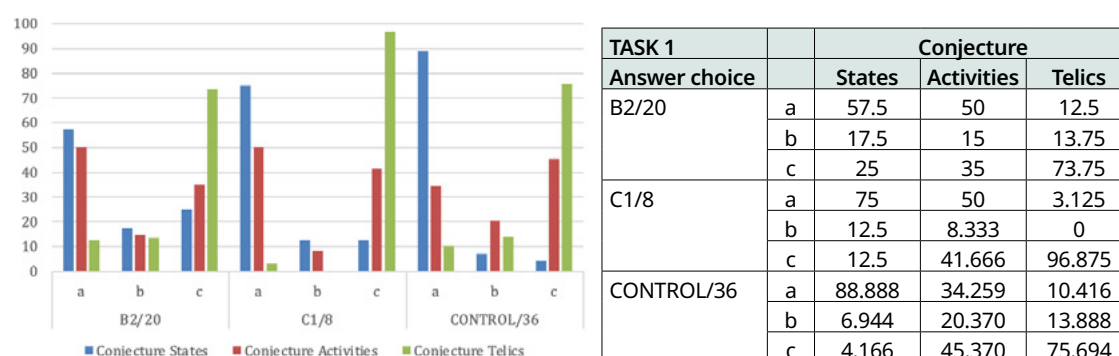


Figure 3. Italian L1 vs. Control: Conjecture items in Task 1 (mean).

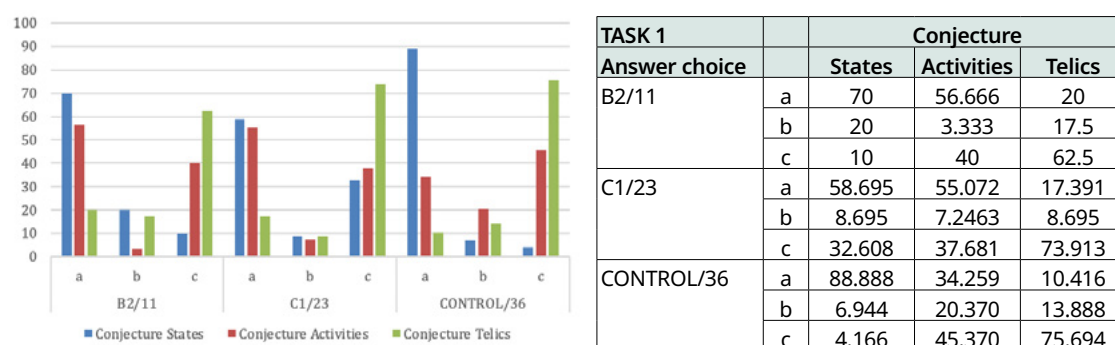
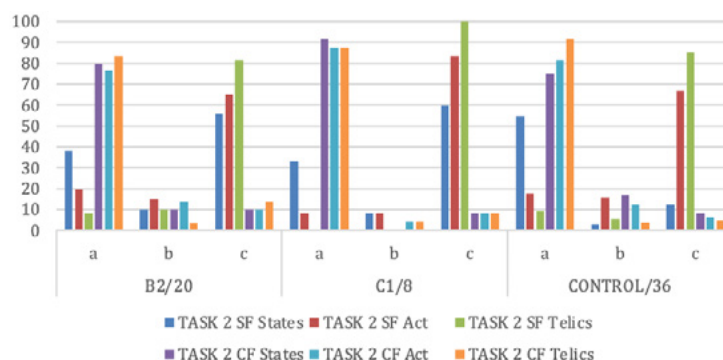


Figure 4. French L1 vs. Control: Conjecture items in Task 1 (mean).

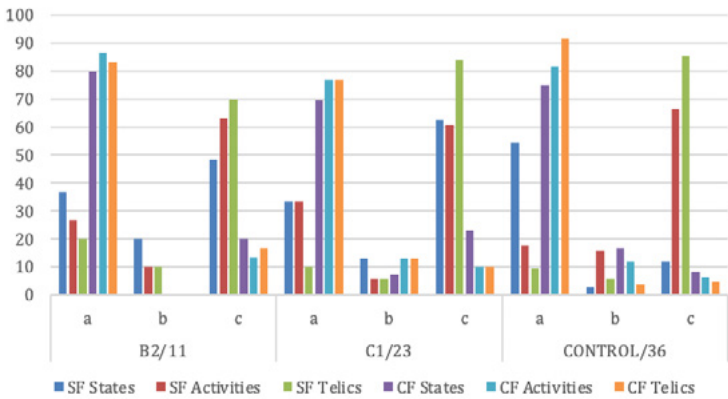
The results of Task 2, contrasting the acceptance of S-FUT and C-FUT to express conjecture in Spanish, are shown below in graphs 5 and 6. It can be seen that, as in the previous task, the items with conjectural uses of stative verbs in S-FUT were generally accepted (answer option a) in the native Spanish speaker group, as opposed to the L2 learner groups. The responses of the L2 learner groups showed similarity to each other and statistically significant differences to those of the control group.

Regarding telic predicates in S-FUT expressing conjecture, all the participant groups strongly tended to reject them. For the items containing C-FUT forms, we had predicted that they would be accepted by all groups, with less variability than in the S-FUT items. The results displayed in Figures 5 and 6 confirm these expectations.



TASK 2			SF States	SF Act	SF Telics	CF States	CF Act	CF Telics
Answer choice								
B2/20	a		38.333	20	8.333	80	76.666	83.333
	b		10	15	10	10	13.333	3.333
	c		55.833	65	81.666	10	10	13.333
C1/8	a		33.333	8.333	0	91.666	87.5	87.5
	b		8.333	8.333	0	0	4.1666	4.166
	c		59.722	83.333	100	8.333	8.333	8.333
CONTROL/36	a		54.629	17.592	9.259	75	81.481	91.666
	b		2.777	15.740	5.555	16.666	12.037	3.703
	c		12.037	66.666	85.185	8.333	6.481	4.629

Figure 5. Italian L1 vs. Control: S-FUT vs. C-FUT in Task 2 (mean).



TASK 2							
Answer choice		SF States	SF Act	SF Telics	CF States	CF Act	CF Telics
B2/11	a	36.666	26.666	20	80	86.666	83.333
	b	20	10	10	0	0	0
	c	48.405	63.333	70	20	13.333	16.666
C1/23	a	33.333	33.333	10.144	69.565	76.811	76.811
	b	13.043	5.797	5.797	7.246	13.043	13.043
	c	62.439	60.869	84.057	23.188	10.144	10.144
CONTROL/36	a	54.629	17.592	9.259	75	81.481	91.666
	b	2.777	15.740	5.555	16.666	12.037	3.703
	c	12.037	66.666	85.185	8.333	6.481	4.629

Figure 6. French L1 vs. Control: S-FUT vs. C-FUT in Task 2 (mean).

Across both Task 1 and Task 2, the sensitivity to the incompatibility of telic predicates in S-FUT for conjecture and concession was manifest in the rejection by the learner groups and the control groups of these items. Likewise, the uses of C-FUT, all of which expressed conjecture, were (almost) unanimously accepted across the learner and native speaker groups. On the other hand, a clear contrast between the L1 and the L2 groups was detected, when judging the grammaticality of activity verbs in S-FUT: L1 Spanish speakers tend to reject them, while the percentage of acceptance is noticeably higher in most L2 groups. Thus, the restrictions affecting activities in conjectural and concessive readings in S-FUT are not always clear to the L2 learners.

All the learner groups showed variability in their ability to interpret S-FUT for conjecture and concession, regardless of the lexical aspect of the target verbs. However, the learner groups were successful in showing sensitivity to telicity when it came to rejecting ungrammatical uses of S-FUT of telic verbs for conjectural or concessive expressions. The C1 Italian-speaking learner group was similar, in statistical terms, to the native Spanish group when interpreting concessive S-FUT uses, as opposed to the French learner groups, who showed difficulties with these items.

5. Overall discussion and concluding remarks

Taken together, the results of our study suggest a firm L1 cross-linguistic effect: the results of the L1 Italian group at C1 are the closest to those of the L1 Spanish control group. This is consistent with the fact the Italian FUT and its Spanish counterpart have similar potentialities in the expression of conjecture and concession. However, the Italian L1 speakers failed to accept conjectural uses of S-FUT at the same rate as Spanish L1 speakers. This casts a doubt on the systematic prevalence of L1 transfer, even though this might be a consequence of the small size of the groups: conclusions can only be tentative at this point.

The use of FUT forms to express concession is ungrammatical in French and, as predicted, this has an effect in the difficulty of French speakers in accepting this use in L2 Spanish. Regarding the conjectural uses of FUT, the L1 French participants at C1 exhibit lower percentages of acceptance than the L1 Italian and Spanish speakers; a finding related to the fact that the use of S-FUT to express conjecture is scarce in French.

However, the patterns found also suggest that, despite the L1 effect just described, the L2 participants do not merely rely on their L1 grammatical representations when judging the grammaticality of tense uses: on the one hand, there is a noticeable degree of variability even in the items whose grammatical and interpretive properties are similar in the L1 and in the L2 (see above the results for stative and activity predicates expressing conjecture); on the other hand, the participants do not systematically reject the choices that do not exist in the L1 (in particular, in their acceptability judgements, regardless of their L1, the participants clearly distinguish atelic vs telic predicates, and simple vs compound FUT forms). This suggests that the L2 speakers are sensitive to Aktionsart differences, and possibly to lexical choices in general. Turning to our research hypotheses, the general tendencies observed suggest the following:

- H1: Cautiously confirmed. L1 feature transfer across the L2 levels analysed (B2 and C1) was observed. This has mixed effects, but a mainly facilitative effect is found in the case of the Italian speakers, especially at C1. This implies a positive answer to the Research Question 1: L2 learners transfer all L1 interpretable features into their L2 target language.
- H2: Cautiously confirmed. The fact that there is variability in items allowing similar tense choices in the L1 and in the L2 suggests that (as predicted in the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis) the learners are not straightforwardly able to map the L1 features onto the L2 forms. Besides (as predicted in the Interface Hypothesis), discourse environment does play a role in the acceptability of the items, for non-natives and (to a lesser degree) for natives: non-chronological uses of FUT found in concessive environments are harder to accept, at least for the L1 French groups. A lower degree of variability also exists in the choices of the L1 Spanish control group: in many cases, the answers of the native Spanish speakers are not unanimous. This suggests an effect of the discourse environment, linked to the interpretation process (possibly related to cognitive-context building). These

facts provide relevant information on our Research Questions: The learners show persistent variability in their L2 judgements, especially in those involving FUT uses that do not exist in their L1. Therefore, the L1 is a crucial ingredient in the interlanguage grammars, but they are also constrained by the syntax-discourse interface. Both factors play a role in the (in)ability to acquire the L2 FUT uses.

H3: Confirmed. Feature reassembly is a durable source of difficulty. In the present case, following Escandell-Vidal's (2021) analysis of the Romance FUT, the feature to be reset for the French Speakers is *IS / ES [± Forward]*, while in the case of the L1 Italian group, no feature resetting is needed. In all groups, the FUT uses that do not exist in the participants' L1 tend to be judged as ungrammatical, but some L2 potentialities are more difficult to acquire than others: in particular, the different degree of acceptability of states and activities when expressing conjecture and concession causes more difficulty than the contrast between atelics and telics. This can be clearly related to Research Question 2.

Having probed the initial difficulties and the subsequent progress of L2 learners in this study has, thus, made it possible to further explore the hypothesised link between the presence of specific features and parameters of the L1 and learners' developing sensitivity to the role of discourse, in combination with aspect, in licensing the modal (conjectural and concessive) uses of FUT in Spanish. In the present study, it has been detected that the L1 French speakers, at upper-intermediate and advanced levels of Spanish, have not acquired the aspectual restrictions of the conjectural FUT regarding the difference between states and activities. This suggests that, by paying attention to contextual cues, and transferring L1 knowledge, the learners can infer that in some environments FUT does not convey future time reference. Still, our participants do not easily interiorize the aspectual configurations that limit the conjectural interpretations of this tense.

In contrast, our study displays a dissimilar tendency for the L1 Italian participants (especially at C1), in convergence with the usage of FUT in their L1. However, comparing the answers of the B2 and the C1 Italian groups, a difference was found in the acceptance of the conjectural items containing atelic predicates. This is not an L1 effect, since the aspectual restrictions for those predicates are similar in Italian and Spanish. Therefore, we hypothesise that an interface effect is in play: at B2, paying attention to lexical aspect while processing the sentences and building an appropriate context of interpretation allowing for a non-chronological use or the FUT is a hard task. At C1, such interface effects are less perceptible, even though the L1 Italian participants do not fully converge with the L1 Spanish control group.

Thus, it may be concluded that, in all cases, when acquiring the uses of FUT in L2 Spanish, our L2 learners tend to operate within the limits the interpretative strategies and routines of their own native language. At all levels, influences from the L1 interact with interface effects, even though the latter tends to be less persistent in our data. Consequently, getting acquainted with an L2 form does not automatically entail acquiring all its semantic features and its discourse potentialities. Mapping L2 forms onto meaning

is a complex and time-consuming task that needs to be distinguished from merely learning the form – even in the deceptively simple case of the Romance FUT. Thus, in acquiring an additional language, the uses of a form in which the L1 and L2 differ are a lasting source of difficulty. This is not only a characteristic of the initial L2 proficiency levels but continues into the advanced levels.

Our research suggests that, in the case of closely related languages such as Spanish, Italian and French, L1 grammar still has a strong influence even at advanced levels of L2 learning. Nevertheless, having similar grammatical usage in the L1 does not automatically guarantee fast, problem-free learning. The progressive incorporation of L2 resources into the learner's linguistic competence is not only related to the possibility of direct transfer: learners tend to construct a simplified, schematic system. Overcoming this tendency requires time, contact with the target language and –possibly– specific attention in the language classroom.

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CRediT Author contribution / Contribución de los autores

Conceptualization / *Conceptualización*: José Amenós-Pons, Aoife Ahern, Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes.

Formal Analysis / *Análisis formal*: José Amenós-Pons, Aoife Ahern, Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes.

Methodology / *Metodología*: José Amenós-Pons, Aoife Ahern, Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes.

Writing / *Redacción*: José Amenós-Pons, Aoife Ahern, Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes.

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A comparative analysis of the use of forms of address by Spanish and Polish university students

Martin Testa ^{ID}* & Sara Zakrzewska ^{ID}

University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

Abstract: Misunderstandings arising from differing forms of address can significantly impact language users' *face*. Spanish and Polish cultural preferences for informal T pronouns based on familiarity, and formal V pronouns based on respect, respectively, may contribute to such misunderstandings. This article aims to examine the usage of second person singular personal pronouns among Spanish and Polish university students. A sample of 79 students (N=40 from Poland, N=39 from Spain) was analysed in relation to their use of T/V pronouns across 15 contexts. The data was subjected to a battery of chi-square tests using SPSS v29. The results reveal distinct tendencies in the distribution of T/V pronouns, confirming prior observations that Spaniards employ T forms more frequently than Poles. These pragmatic differences may hinder communication between individuals from both countries, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural implications to promote effective and respectful interactions among Spanish and Polish speakers.

Keywords: *sociolinguistics, contrastive grammar, forms of address, courtesy, personal pronouns, Spanish language, Polish language.*

Análisis comparativo del uso de alocutivos por parte de estudiantes españoles y polacos

Resumen: Los malentendidos que pueden surgir debido al uso diferente de las formas de tratamiento pueden afectar seriamente la 'imagen' (ingl. *face*) de los hablantes de una determinada lengua. Muchos estudios sugieren que en España parece haber una preferencia por utilizar pronombres de tratamiento basados en la familiaridad que reducen la distancia (pronombres T), mientras que en Polonia existe una mayor tendencia a utilizar pronombres de tratamiento basados en la cortesía (pronombres V). Este estudio se propone examinar las diferencias en el uso de los pronombres personales de segunda persona del singular entre estudiantes universitarios españoles y polacos. Para ello, se examinó una muestra de 79 estudiantes universitarios de Polonia (N = 40) y España (N = 39) en su uso de los pronombres T y V en 15 contextos diferentes. Los datos se analizaron mediante una serie de pruebas de la χ^2 utilizando el programa SPSS v29. Los resultados muestran diferentes tendencias en la distribución de los pronombres T y V, así como también confirman observaciones anteriores de que los españoles utilizan más frecuentemente las formas T que los polacos. Tales diferencias pragmáticas pueden dificultar la comunicación entre interlocutores de ambos países, por lo que es crucial concienciar sobre las implicaciones culturales de estas diferencias en pos de una comunicación efectiva y respetuosa entre hablantes de español y polaco.

Palabras clave: *sociolingüística, gramática contrastiva, alocutivos, cortesía, pronombres personales, lengua española, lengua polaca.*

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*Corresponding author: m.testa@uw.edu.pl

1. Introduction

It is widely recognised that every country's unique customs and traditions are reflected in their language and communication styles. This cultural diversity often manifests in how different communities use forms of address, an aspect of language that can significantly impact social interactions. As noted by Goffman (1955) and Brown & Gilman (1960), misunderstandings arising from these varied uses can critically affect the *face* of language users. This issue becomes particularly pronounced in professional and educational settings, where strict hierarchies necessitate adherence to specific forms of address, including professional titles, academic degrees, and appropriate pronouns. Such nuances in linguistic etiquette can play a pivotal role in maintaining or disrupting the social harmony within these environments (cfr. Baran & Urbaniak, 2021; Czarnecka, 2023).

The complexity of these interactions is further highlighted when considering cross-cultural exchanges. Cultures that are geographically or ideologically close may still have vastly different interpretations of politeness and respect in language use. For instance, what is deemed polite in one culture could be perceived as a *face-threatening act* in another, depending on the cultural values associated with specific linguistic forms. This contrast in cultural norms is exemplified in the differing usage of pronouns in Poland and Spain. After 1989, Poland witnessed a shift toward adopting Western standards of courtesy, integrating American influences with traditional Western European practices, as observed by Marcjanik (2017).

Currently, as members of the European Union, Poland and Spain potentially share some sociocultural norms. Programs such as Erasmus+ facilitate cultural and linguistic exchanges, and the dynamics of the single market may result in more standardised communication practices in professional settings. These factors may influence the choice of address forms to achieve a balance between courtesy, formality, and communicative efficiency within a diverse and multilingual context. Nevertheless, the strategies for using address pronouns diverge considerably cross-linguistically, despite both Polish and Spanish distinguishing between informal and formal forms.

In Spain (except for some parts of Andalusia) there seems to be a preference for using informal pronouns of address based on *familiarity* (hereinafter referred to as T pronouns) that reduce distance (Calderón Campos, 2010, p. 234), while in Poland there is a greater tendency to use formal pronouns of address based on *politeness* (hereinafter referred to as V pronouns) (Lisowska, 2017, p. 410). In Spain, it is common to address people informally in contexts where in Poland it would be considered impolite or even offensive. On the other hand, Poles use V pronouns in situations where a Spaniard might feel uncomfortable, perceiving it as an initiative of distance or a suggestion of inequality.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the differences in the use of forms of address by Polish and Spanish university students. For this purpose, data from 79 university students (40 Polish and 39 Spanish) will be analysed using a battery of chi-square tests to determine whether there are significant differences in the use of pronouns between these two groups.

This article is structured as follows. The literature review is divided into two main subsections: sociolinguistic considerations of forms of address (§2.1), where we explore the general theoretical framework, and studies on Spanish and Polish forms of address (§2.2), which highlights specific research contributions in these languages. Next, the methodology section (§3) details the approaches and methods employed to gather and analyse the data. The results section (§4) then presents the findings of our study, which are subsequently discussed in §5. Finally, some concluding remarks are provided in §6.

2. Literature review

2.1 Sociolinguistic considerations of forms of address

Forms of address refer to the different ways individuals are addressed or referred to in different contexts, such as formal or informal settings. Forms of address encompass the language, titles, and terms used to address interlocutors, taking into account cultural norms, social relationships, and professional environments. David Crystal (2010, p. 44) explains that in contemporary English, “the basic choice is between first name (FN) or title with last name (TLN), but several other conventions are possible in certain contexts, such as the use of LN in business or military settings (*Come in, Smith...*), or the use of abbreviations (*Is JM in?*)”. However, many languages offer a remarkable variety of forms of address to choose from.

Crystal reminds us of the classic work by Evans-Pritchard (1948), who studied the Nuer people of Sudan. This people have a complex address system that reflects their social structure. Individuals are given personal names at birth, referring to birthplace or events, but these names are only used by close relatives and friends in adulthood. Maternal grandparents give a second personal name for use by maternal relatives. Twins have special names indicating their birth order. Context plays a role in addressing individuals (such as through the use of ‘ceremonial names’, ‘ox-names’,¹ and ‘dance-names’), and so does kinship:

A man would normally be addressed using the name of his father (his *patronymic*). But a man visiting maternal relatives will be greeted primarily by his mother’s name (his *matronymic*). The naming of people after their eldest child (*teknonymy*) is also heard, especially when talking to in-laws. For example, a woman’s status in her husband’s home is based on her having borne him a child, and this is the link that binds her to her husband’s social group: It is therefore natural for that group to address her using the child’s name. (Crystal, 2010, p. 44)

In most European languages, however, forms of address tend to be classified as either T or V forms, after Latin *tu* and *vos* (Brown & Gilman, 1960), as in French *tu/vous*, German *du/Sie*, Early Modern English *thou/ye*, and, for the purpose of our study, Spanish *tú/usted*, and Polish *Ty/Pan(i)*. In Latin, *tu* was used to address a single person, whereas *vos* was

¹ Among the Nuer, “[w]hen a boy is initiated to manhood, he is given an ox” (Crystal, 2010, p. 44).

used for addressing multiple people. However, during the 4th century AD, addressing the Roman Emperor with the plural form *vos* became customary, leading to the upper classes exclusively using symmetrical V forms as a sign of respect (Crystal, 2010, p. 45).

Although Polish has only one address system consisting of the pronouns *Ty* (informal) and *Pan/Pani* (formal; m., f.) for the second person singular, and *Wy* (informal) and *Pan/Pani/Państwo* (formal; m., f., mixed) for the second person plural² (Lisowska, 2017, p. 405), Spanish, due to its wide diatopic variation, distinguishes up to four macro-systems (see Table 1).³

Table 1. Second-person singular pronouns in Spanish (adapted from Fontanella de Weinberg, 1999).

System			Pronouns (Sg.)	Used In...
I		T	<i>tú</i>	Spain
		V	<i>usted</i>	
II*		T	<i>tú</i>	South of Spain, parts of Latin America
		V	<i>usted</i>	
III	a	T	<i>vos ~ tú</i> (more formal)	Andean region, parts of Central America
		V	<i>usted</i>	
	b	T	<i>vos</i> (intimate), <i>tú</i>	Uruguay
		V	<i>usted</i>	
IV		T	<i>vos</i>	Argentina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Paraguay
		V	<i>usted</i>	

*System I differs from System II solely in its plural forms: *vosotros* (T) and *ustedes* (V) (I); exclusive use of *ustedes* (II).

Nevertheless, pronoun choice is not solely determined by a strict formal distinction between T and V forms. Instead, it depends on the intended meaning, implicatures, and the influence of social and cultural factors on communication, all of which falls under the domain of pragmatics. Aside from variation induced by time (diachronic), social groups (diastratic), geography (diatopic), and register (diaphasic) (as discussed by Coseriu, 1978, pp. 223-224), the choice of pronoun may also be influenced by strategies of *convergence*, such as adapting to the tone set by the interlocutor when initiating the conversation (Schwenter, 1993, p. 143).

Yet, pronoun choice is not limited to these factors alone. In certain cases, political influences can also compel language users to adhere to specific linguistic forms. Brown & Gilman (1960, p. 264) point out that, in France, “the nonreciprocal power semantic was dominant until the Revolution when the Committee for the Public Safety condemned

² An anonymous reviewer highlights that the distinction between *Wy* (T form) and *Państwo* (V form) in Polish university classrooms can be more complex than traditionally understood. In efforts to bridge the gap with students, academic teachers sometimes adopt a hybrid approach: addressing students with *Państwo*, yet conjugating verbs in the *Wy* (cfr. *Państwo robią → Państwo robicie*), resulting in a combination that is slightly less formal. Regrettably, our study was limited to the analysis of second person singular pronouns and did not explore these plural forms.

³ In this paper we focus on the pragmatic aspects of Polish and Spanish forms of address. For morphosyntactic details and historical perspectives, readers are referred to Łaziński (2006) and Lisowska (2017) for Polish, and Calderón Campos (2010) and Uber (2016) for Spanish.

the use of V as a feudal remnant and ordered a universal reciprocal T”, i.e. as a sign of *fraternité*. In 1938, the fascist regime in the Kingdom of Italy officially prohibited the use of *lei* in favor of *voi* due to considering the first as a foreignism (similarly, the use of *voi* was mostly abandoned in the post-war period, likely due to its associations with the fascist regime) (Treccani, 2012). Weissenböck (2006, p. 20.4) explains that the collapse of the Soviet Union led to changes in the Ukrainian address system. The use of first name and patronymic, “strongly associated with Russian and Russia”, has significantly decreased in Western Ukraine; instead, the Polish form of address (*Pan/i*) has been reintroduced, although the use of patronymics still persists in educational and work settings.

Pragmatics also plays a crucial role in determining politeness in communication. In interpersonal relationships, politeness is essential for speakers to maintain a positive image of themselves, namely a positive *face* (Goffman, 1955): the use of familiar T pronouns can sometimes be perceived as disrespectful; on the other hand, the use of V pronouns may also make the interlocutors uncomfortable or even offend them, as it can be interpreted as creating a distance or signalling that the speaker considers them to be older. That is why every communicative act represents a *face-threatening act* (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In general, the use of T pronouns implies proximity, solidarity, and intimacy with the interlocutor, while the use of V pronouns indicates hierarchical, social or age-related distance (Calderón Campos, 2010, p. 233). However, although the T-V difference may be simple to recognise in terms of morphology, these forms “follow a complex set of rules that foreigners never find easy to master. Terms such as ‘familiar’ and ‘polite’ capture aspects of their use, but are inadequate summaries of all their social functions, and ignore important differences between languages” (Crystal, 2010, p. 45).

According to Brown & Gilman (1960), pronoun choice in language is influenced by two semantic systems, namely *power* and *solidarity*. The power semantic reflects nonreciprocal relationships based on control and superiority, where the superior uses T and receives V (i.e. asymmetrical). The solidarity semantic, on the other hand, involves symmetrical relations based on shared characteristics or like-mindedness, allowing for the use of mutual T (i.e. symmetrical). Power is determined by factors such as physical strength, wealth, age, and institutional roles, while solidarity is shaped by attributes like political affiliation, family, religion, profession, sex, and birthplace. Nevertheless, as Brown & Gilman (1960, p. 258) point out, “[n]ot every personal attribute [such as eye colour] counts in determining whether two people are solidary enough to use the mutual T. (...) The similarities that matter seem to be those that make for like-mindedness or similar behaviour dispositions”. These systems – both power and solidarity – play an important role in shaping pronoun choice, which highlights the social dynamics and relationships embedded in language usage.

Some authors have attempted to create mechanisms that can evaluate the intricate process of selecting pronouns using simplified ‘yes/no’ flowcharts. Susan Ervin-Tipp’s (1972) model is a well-known example for American English and it considers factors such as familiarity, age, social status, gender, and whether or not the speaker knows the name

of the addressee. Crystal (2010, p. 44) warns, however, that “[t]he knowledge structure represented is that of an American academic; but dialect differences, idiosyncratic preferences, and other variants are not taken into account”. Diane Uber (2016) has put forward a system for Spanish, which is presented in Table 2. While charts can be highly practical, they often assume an ‘ideal reference speaker’ and may not fully capture the diversity within a language.⁴

Table 2. Variables in the choice of pronoun in Spanish (transl. and adapt. from Uber, 2016, p. 627).

Variable	T	V
Age of interlocutor	Same or younger	Older
Sex of interlocutor	Same (esp. among women)	Opposite
Profession of interlocutor	Same or ‘lower’	‘Higher’
Rank of interlocutor (workplace)	Same or ‘lower’	‘Higher’
Colleagues?	Yes	No
Known for over a month?	Yes	No
Friends?	Yes	No
Is the interlocutor a client?	No	Yes
Type of workplace	Factory, office, workshop	Customer service, financial
Topic of conversation	Everyday life, social	Contracts, agreements, prices
By phone?	No (before id. the interlocutor)	Yes
Personal style	(individual)	(individual)

Traditional theories of politeness (e.g. Brown & Gilman, 1960; Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987) have been widely recognised but also faced substantial criticism, particularly in cross-cultural contexts (see Eelen, 2001, for an overview).⁵ Wierzbicka (1985) and Ogiermann (2009) criticise these theories for their Anglo-Saxon bias, noting that direct forms like imperatives, considered impolite in these models, are often used in polite requests in other languages like Polish. This challenges the assumed correlation between indirectness and politeness, suggesting that politeness is significantly influenced by cultural norms. In fact, Blum-Kulka (1987) argues that directness in communication can also be regarded as a form of politeness because it clearly conveys the speaker’s intentions, thereby saving the interpreter’s time. However, Ogiermann (2009, pp. 191–192, and the references therein) points out that traditional theories of politeness often fail to address the relationship between directness and honesty – this is particularly relevant in cultures such as Russia, where indirectness may be perceived as deceitful or as a waste of the interlocutor’s time.

⁴ Furthermore, Ervin-Tripp’s model fails to consider *diamesia*, which, as we will see in §§4 and 5, can be a significant variable to consider.

⁵ Despite these criticisms, Ogiermann (2009, p. 210) acknowledges the enduring importance of Brown & Levinson’s framework for cross-cultural analysis. While the concept of politeness as a dynamic and conversationally constructed notion offers insights into the diverse uses of language, Brown & Levinson’s approach, despite being static and speaker-oriented, has been instrumental in identifying different strategies across languages.

Similarly, Diana Bravo also criticises the Anglo-centered bias in traditional studies of politeness and face. In her work, [Bravo \(2003\)](#) introduces the concepts of the image of autonomy (Spa. *imagen de autonomía*) and the image of affiliation (Spa. *imagen de afiliación*). These concepts demonstrate how politeness and face in communication can be expressed through a blend of individuality (autonomy) and community belonging (affiliation). Particularly in Spanish negotiation contexts, as Bravo explains, personal territory is de-emphasised in favor of familiarity and interpersonal trust.⁶ This approach often leads to the use of traditionally informal pronouns, such as the T forms, to establish rapport. In other words, these pronouns are employed to enhance “solidarity between the speaker and the addressee” and to foster “a mutual atmosphere of kindness and goodwill” ([Bhatti & Žegarac, 2012](#), p. 284, and the references therein).⁷ Similarly, [Ferrari \(2014\)](#), p. 251) comments, referencing [Molinelli \(2010\)](#), with regard to modern Italian. Ferrari observes that in scenarios like a university professor e-mailing a colleague they have never met, the choice of the informal *tu* is guided more by the identity of the social role than by the degree of familiarity.

[Wierzbicka \(2016\)](#) rightly observes that an analysis of language use across Europe can reveal complex and intricate webs of cultural assumptions and attitudes. This phenomenon accounts for why English words such as *respect* do not have exact semantic equivalents in other languages, consequently fostering an Anglocentric perspective of these concepts. In her exploration of Natural Semantic Metalanguage, [Wierzbicka \(2016\)](#), p. 39) identifies two distinct forms of ‘respect’: ‘public regard’ and ‘personal respect’. For instance, the use of German pronouns *Herr/Frau* appears to embody the notion of public regard, in contrast to Polish pronouns *Pan/Pani*, which seem to reflect personal respect. Wierzbicka adds that this distinction is evident in the German preference for combining forms of address with surnames (e.g., *Frau Schulz/*Eva*) and the Polish tendency to pair them with first names (e.g., *Pani *Kowalska/Ewa*), suggesting a personal relationship that is compatible with the use of a first name (also see [Marcjanik, 2017](#), p. 34).

Among other proposals to explain the choice of forms of address, [Marcjanik \(2002\)](#) introduces three principles of politeness, namely *symmetry* (reacting in expected forms), *solidarity* (implying reciprocity and cooperation), and *subordination* (involving downgrading compliments and self-deprecation).⁸ These principles offer a contrast to the traditional dichotomy of *power* and *solidarity* proposed by Brown & Gilman. Moreover, the categories proposed by both Marcjanik and Brown & Gilman should be considered dynamic, influenced by ongoing societal shifts in perceptions of social hierarchy (cfr. [Baran & Urbaniak, 2021](#), p. 142). Baran & Urbaniak argue that classical power relations in society have evolved, and today, despite differences in social hierarchy, speakers often use formal

⁶ For [Bravo \(2003\)](#), p. 99), in terms of the Spanish language: “[l]a confianza interpersonal no requiere que se compartan los deseos del interlocutor, ni que se aprueben sus características de personalidad sino que se lo acepte así tal cual es aunque se lo critique ‘abiertamente’ o se disienta con lo que piensa (también ‘abiertamente’); es más importante conocer a una persona que aprobarla”.

⁷ [Wierzbicka \(2016\)](#), p. 40) contends that in Polish it is the repetitive use of *Pan/i* that functions as a method for building rapport, since repeating *Pan/i* not only conveys but also reinforces “good feelings” towards the addressee, thereby enhancing the warmth of the conversation.

⁸ In [Marcjanik \(2002\)](#): *symetryczność zachowań grzecznościowych; solidarność z partnerem; bycie podwładnym*.

address forms (such as *usted* or *Pan/i*) symmetrically. This reflects a shift from the typical asymmetrical power relations in most social situations, though they still exist in specific contexts, such as adult-child communication (Baran & Urbaniak, 2021, pp. 141–142).

Finally, the relationship between sociological identity and forms of address merits some attention. Brown & Gilman's (1960, p. 275) classic study observed that radical students were more inclined to use T forms compared to their conservative counterparts. These findings led them to suggest that forms of address might serve as indicators of broader social and political attitudes. While hypotheses of this kind may be difficult to confirm, Crystal (2010, p. 45) states that they "are well worth following up, as they bear directly on the task of establishing the basis of sociolinguistic identity". Interestingly, Weissenböck (2006) also attributes the variation in the selection of forms of address in Ukrainian to individuals' differing orientations towards either traditional or liberal values.

2.2 Studies on Spanish and Polish forms of address

In the context of our study, while European Spanish is often considered more prone⁹ to the use of T pronouns than Polish (Adamska & Waluch-de la Torre, 2005; Lisowska, 2017), Czarnecka (2023) points out that in recent years, the symmetrical system of solidarity (T-T) is becoming more common also in Poland, either due to the horizontalisation of social relationships (Sikora, 2011) or the 'Americanization' of discourse (Ożóg, 2014) (cfr. also Lisowska, 2017). Calderón Campos (2010, p. 234) claims the same for Spanish. This phenomenon began to emerge in the first half of the twentieth century, although its greatest boom has been observed in the last five decades (NGLE, 2009, p. 322).

While there are many studies on the evolution of pronouns of address from a monolingual perspective for both Spanish (e.g. Blas Arroyo, 1994; Györi & Komlódi, 1996; Hummel et al., 2010; Lara Bermejo, 2021) and Polish (e.g. Dąbrowska, 2006; Huszcza, 2006; Niżegorodcew, 2008; Sikora, 2011), as well as the difficulties they pose in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language (e.g. Ramos González, 2010), especially in closely related languages such as Portuguese (e.g. Vigón Artos, 2006) and Italian (e.g. Bettin, 2022), much less exploration has been done regarding the pragmatic differences in the use of these pronouns between Spanish and languages with greater typological distance, such as Polish.

For contemporary Spanish, Calderón Campos (2010, p. 234) observes a preference for the use of *tú*, particularly among young people and those with a higher sociocultural level. It has become common to use the T pronoun within family relationships and among friends, which was contrary to the norm until the early twentieth century. Moreover, the use of *usted* (V pronoun) has been abandoned in healthcare institutions, and there is an increasing trend of using the familiar form of address between teachers and students (at

⁹ This is interesting from a historical perspective since in the seventeenth century, Francisco Sobrino (1697, p. 36; in Sáez Rivera, 2006) noted that Spaniards 'overdid' courtesy forms. Also, in the same century, the use of *usted* seems to have influenced the spread of the third-person singular pronoun *Lei* as a courtesy form in Italian, instead of the second-person plural *voi* (cfr. Treccani n.d., s.v. lei); conversely, the Italian expression *vostra signoria* seems to have influenced the development of the Spanish forms *vuestra señoría* and *usía* during the Renaissance (see Zieliński, 2018, p. 351).

all levels of education). It is worth noting, though, that the use of *tú* can be considered offensive when addressing “un dependiente o a un camarero adulto al que no se conoce, o a un cliente adulto igualmente desconocido” (NGLE, 2009, p. 322).

For Polish, Marek Łaziński (2006, p. 112; in Lisowska, 2017) observes that the use of *Ty* is reserved for family members and close friends, although it can happen that even people who maintain a close relationship for years continue to address each other using the formal *Pan(i)* pronoun. In the work environment, it is very common to use the form *Pan(i)* accompanied by the person's profession or position (e.g. *Pani Dyrektor* ‘Mrs. Director’, *Panie Redaktorze* ‘Mr. Editor’). Another relatively new form of address is the use of *Pan(i)* followed by the person's name in the vocative case (e.g. *Pani Natalio*, *Panie Kamilu*), which is characteristic of upper classes, although some people perceive it as ‘too familiar’ and inappropriate, especially with strangers (Łaziński, 2006, p. 104). One of the most striking differences compared to Spanish concerns the family domain: while the use of the T form dominates in Spanish, in Polish it is very common to use the third-person singular with personal nouns (instead of *Pan(i)*), e.g. *Czy chce ciocia herbaty?* (‘Would Aunt like some tea?’), *Pięknie babcia wygląda* (‘Grandma looks beautiful’) (cfr. Łaziński, 2006, p. 17).

Baran & Urbaniak (2021) explore the forms of address in Spanish, Italian, and Polish languages, drawing insights from Bravo (2003). They find that despite typological kinship, these languages exhibit distinct differences in their address systems, with Italian and Polish being more similar to each other than to Spanish. They observe that Spanish society favors solidarity pronouns, indicative of an equality model in which *tú* is the unmarked form, whereas *usted* is marked for distance (Roselló Verdeguez, 2018), while Polish and Italian maintain hierarchical importance, though contemporary trends show some deviations from traditional models in the latter two (Baran & Urbaniak, 2021, p. 155). They also note that in Polish V-forms are also used in public surroundings, such as bars and shops. However, there is a noticeable tendency among the youth to prefer T-forms in these contexts. In contrast, in Peninsular Spanish, the level of acquaintance with the interlocutor does not seem to play a significant role in the choice of form.¹⁰

Furthermore, Baran & Urbaniak (2021, p. 149, and the references therein) observe that in Polish academic settings, the language system is highly asymmetrical. This is particularly apparent in educational contexts where students are obliged to use both pronominal forms of reverence and academic titles. Bogusławski (1985) describes this phenomenon as a Polish ‘obsession with titles’ (Polish: *tytułomania*), a view also discussed by Marcjanik (2017, p. 36). However, Łaziński (2006, pp. 76-78) notes a decline in the use of academic titles compared to the past. In contrast, Spanish academic environments, especially in higher education institutions like universities, do not typically require the formal *usted*. Sampedro Mella (2021) points out that both students and teachers commonly use the

¹⁰ Moreover, Baran & Urbaniak (2021) emphasise the importance of studying interaction in different contexts. They illustrate this with an academic scenario where two professors, equal in hierarchy and typically using solidarity T-forms, switch to V-forms during a faculty reunion, adhering to commonly accepted verbal behaviour.

informal *tú*, with *usted* reserved for interactions with highly respected or significantly older professors. This reflects a more egalitarian approach in these educational settings (Baran & Urbaniak, 2021, p. 149).

In a recent study, Czarnecka (2023) analysed a university sample of 200 individuals (50 Polish students, 50 Spanish students, 50 Polish professors, and 50 Spanish professors) and found differences in the use and perception of T/V pronouns in both countries. Among the most striking responses in that study, some Spanish students (although few) claimed to use the informal address even with the dean of their faculty, something unthinkable in the Polish university context.¹¹ However, without falling into extremes, the majority of both Spanish students and professors consulted stated that university-level *tuteo* (i.e. use of T forms) is normal and, in fact, strengthens interpersonal bonds. Nevertheless, opinions are not unanimous: some consider the use of T forms at university appropriate only among students, while others are in favor of ‘widespread informality’ as a means of fostering interpersonal bonds between students and professors (i.e., they view the use of V pronouns as artificial). Additionally, most Spanish professors do not consider the use of informal address as a lack of respect, while most Polish professors do.

On the contrary, most of the Polish professors in Czarnecka’s study claim that university-level informality is unacceptable¹² and explain that they tend to maintain the use of formal pronouns even in symmetrical relationships (e.g. with other professors), unlike their Spanish counterparts. Many of them emphasise that informality is not symmetrical: only professors can address their students using informal pronouns, not the other way around. Additionally, a vast majority of the Polish students in the study appear to be much more hesitant to use familiar pronouns in a university setting and, in fact, prefer to be addressed as *Pan/Pani*, unlike Spanish students.

It is worth mentioning that the majority of these studies analyse the differences from a qualitative perspective or, even when they mention certain quantitative aspects, they are limited to descriptive analysis (percentages, averages, etc.). That is why the main objective of this study will be to attempt to determine if there are *significant* differences in the use of T/V pronouns by Polish and Spanish university students.

3. Methodology

The sample of the present study consists of 79 university students from Poland (N = 40) and Spain (N = 39) (see Table 3).¹³

¹¹ The following statement by a Spanish student is striking: “a la hora de hablar con un profesor que no conoces, tendemos a tutear. Nos cuesta llamar a las personas por *usted*” (Czarnecka, 2023, p. 20).

¹² A Polish professor suggests that, in reality, some professors use *Ty* to address students, although: “w polskiej kulturze i języku (...) jedyną formą poprawną jest zwrotne *Pan/i*” (‘in Polish culture and language (...) the only correct form is the reciprocal use of *Pan/i*’) (Czarnecka, 2023, p. 24).

¹³ Unfortunately, an in-depth analysis of the participants’ places of origin is not feasible in our study, as nearly all Polish participants (N = 39) listed *Polska* (‘Poland’) as their place of origin, with only one specifying *Warszawa* (‘Warsaw’). Regarding the Spanish group, the places of origin reported were more varied, including Valencia (N = 11), Madrid (N = 5), España (N = 3), Málaga (N = 3), Alicante (N = 3), Almería (N = 3), Barcelona (N = 2), País Vasco (N = 2), Elche (N = 2), Salamanca (N = 1), Castellón (N = 1), Cádiz (N = 1), Bilbao (N = 1), and Pamplona (N = 1).

Table 3. Sample of the present study.

	POL (N = 40)	ESP (N = 39)
Age	min. 19, max. 24 ($\bar{x}$ = 21.45, median 21)	min. 19, max. 23 ($\bar{x}$ = 21.33, median 21)
Gender	female (N = 30) male (N = 10)	female (N = 36) male (N = 3)
Studies	Social Sciences (N = 22) STEMs (N = 18)	Social Sciences (N = 27) STEMs (N = 12)

In order to analyse the use of T/V pronouns by Spanish and Polish individuals, two analogous surveys were prepared, one in Spanish and one in Polish. The surveys consisted of fifteen brief questions about how participants address different groups of people (see Q1-Q15, below) and two additional questions regarding the perception of polite and informal forms.

The use of pronouns was analysed in the following contexts: (Q1) parents, (Q2) close relatives, (Q3) distant relatives, (Q4) young friends, (Q5) young acquaintances, (Q6) young strangers, (Q7) adult friends, (Q8) adult acquaintances, (Q9) adult strangers, (Q10) elderly acquaintances, (Q11) elderly strangers, (Q12) young professors in person, (Q13) young professors by e-mail, (Q14) senior professors in person, and (Q15) senior professors by e-mail. For convenience, these questions were grouped under the following labels: FAMILY (Q1, Q2, Q3), YOUTHS (non-family) (Q4, Q5, Q6), ADULTS (non-family) (Q7, Q8, Q9), ELDERLY (Q10, Q11) and PROFESSORS (Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15). Finally, two questions were aimed at evaluating the relationship between nationality and the perception of T forms as a lack of respect (Q16), as well as between nationality and V forms as a marker of distance (Q17).

The data was collected through Google Forms and shared on various social media platforms. Once the surveys were completed, the data was transferred to an Excel document to be later imported and analysed using SPSS v29 software for iOS (IBM, 2022).

The data collected meet the assumptions of the χ^2 test (cfr. McHugh, 2013), i.e. the data were obtained through random selection, the variables are nominal, the study groups are independent (i.e. Polish and Spanish), and each subject contributes data to only one cell in the χ^2 table.

4. Results

When addressing their *parents* (Q1), Spaniards (100%) were more likely to use a T form than Poles (97.5%). However, this difference was not significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = .987, $p < .320$. A similar situation was found when evaluating the relationship between nationality and the use of T forms when addressing *close relatives* (Q2). Spaniards (100%) were more likely to use a T form than Poles (90%). In this case, the difference was significant,¹⁴

¹⁴ The Continuity Correction value suggests the relationship is not significant, $p = .130$, so this result should be taken with caution.

χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 4.108, $p < .043$. Finally, with regard to *distant relatives* (Q3) T forms were used by a higher percentage of Spaniards (94.9%) compared to Poles (75%). A χ^2 test of independence revealed that this relationship was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 6.053, $p < .014$.

When addressing *young friends* (Q4), all participants in both groups use T forms (Pol. Ty, Spa. tú). On the other hand, with regard to *young acquaintances* (Q5), Spaniards (97.4%) were more likely to use a T form than Poles (65%); the difference was significant χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 13.506, $p < .001$. Finally, a χ^2 test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between nationality and the use of T-V forms with *young strangers* (Q6). The relationship between these variables was significant χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 24.300, $p < .001$. Spaniards (66.7%) were more likely to use a T form than were Poles (12.5%).

With regard to *adult friends* (Q7), T forms were used by a much higher percentage of Spaniards (94.9%) compared to Poles (32.5%). A χ^2 test of independence revealed that this relationship is significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 33.064, $p < .001$. Another χ^2 test of independence found a significant relationship, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 24.878, $p < .001$, between nationality and the use of T forms when addressing *adult acquaintances* (Q8); again, Spaniards (64.1%) were more likely than Poles (10%) to use T forms. Finally, also when addressing *adult strangers* (Q9) were Spaniards (33.3%) significantly more likely to use T forms than were Poles (2.5%); χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 12.875, $p < .001$.

With regard to *elderly acquaintances* (Q10), Spaniards (46.2%) were more likely to use T forms than were Poles (0%), and this difference was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 23.909, $p < .001$. In the case of *elderly strangers* (Q11), although the difference was not significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 1.039, $p = .308$, Spaniards (2.6%) were still slightly more likely to use T forms than were Poles (0%).

At university, T forms were used by a higher percentage of Spaniards (76.9%) compared to Poles (2.5%) when addressing *young professors in person* (Q12). A χ^2 test of independence found this difference to be significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 45.874, $p < .001$. Another χ^2 test of independence was performed in order to evaluate whether this difference held when addressing *young professors by e-mail* (Q13). Again, Spaniards (28.2%) were more likely to use a T form than were Poles (0%), and this difference was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 13.107, $p < .001$. When addressing *senior professors in person* (Q14), T forms were used by a higher percentage of Spaniards (30.8%) compared to Poles (0%), and this difference was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 14.512, $p < .001$. However, when it came to addressing *senior professors by e-mail* (Q15), although Spaniards (7.7%) were more likely to use T forms than were Poles (0%), a χ^2 test of independence revealed that this difference was not significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 3.198, $p = .074$.

Finally, a χ^2 test of independence was performed to examine the relation between nationality and the perception of T forms as a lack of respect (Q16). The relation between these variables was not significant, χ^2 (1, N = 79) = 2.206, $p = .137$. Nevertheless, Poles (52.5%) were more likely to consider the pronoun Ty as a lack of respect than were Spaniards

(35.9%) with the pronoun *tú*. On the other hand, V forms were considered as a marker of distance (Q17) by a higher percentage of Spaniards (92.3%) compared to Poles (52.5%), and this difference was found to be significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 79) = 15.574, p = < .001$.

5. Discussion

Our results confirm the trends in pronoun usage found in previous research (e.g. [Adamska & Waluch-de la Torre, 2005](#); [Calderón Campos, 2010](#); [Czarnecka, 2023](#); [Lisowska, 2017](#)), highlighting a marked preference for T pronouns among Spaniards and V pronouns among Poles, with notable exceptions based on social context and the relationship between interlocutors. Moreover, the results indicate that the difference is significant in almost all cases, except when addressing: parents, close friends, elderly strangers, and senior professors via email (as well as in terms of the perception of T pronouns as a lack of respect).

The significance of these differences becomes particularly evident when considering [Goffman's \(1955\)](#) theory of face-work, which suggests that linguistic choices serve to navigate and negotiate social identity and interpersonal relationships. The preference for T pronouns among Spaniards can be interpreted as a manifestation of solidarity and an attempt to minimise social distance between interlocutors. This is consistent with the broader Spanish cultural orientation towards fostering an image of *affiliation* and informality in social relations (cfr. [Bravo, 2003](#)). On the other hand, the Polish preference for V pronouns, even in contexts where Spaniards might opt for T forms, reflects a cultural emphasis on respect, formality, and maintaining a certain level of *autonomy* (cfr. [Bravo, 2003](#)). This suggests that in Polish interactions, face-work often involves upholding the social hierarchy and showing deference, especially in relationships characterised by asymmetry or where the social distance is greater.

Furthermore, there are certain groups of individuals whom Spaniards address using the T pronoun, whereas Poles consistently use the V pronoun when referring to them. When it comes to addressing the elderly (acquaintances and strangers), young professors via email, senior professors in person, and older professors via email, none of the Polish respondents used *Ty*, whereas some of the Spanish respondents reported using the *tú* pronoun.

It is worth noting that a Polish respondent mentioned using the third-person singular form when addressing their own parents. While this does not directly correspond to the V pronoun *Pan(i)*, it is still considered a form of courtesy (e.g. *Czy mama chce...?* 'does mom want...?').¹⁵ Therefore, we have coded this response as V. Similarly, we have applied the same coding for responses that indicate the use of the third person singular when referring to close and distant family members. Nevertheless, with close individuals such as family or close friends, both nationalities prefer T pronouns. The significant differences begin to emerge when it comes to distant relatives, where Poles more often choose V forms

¹⁵ An anonymous reviewer suggests that the use of third-person pronouns in the family domain, a custom mostly familiar among older generations who addressed their parents in this manner, is no longer common. This topic merits further research.

which, as we have seen, do not necessarily involve the use of *Pan(i)*, but rather other strategies such as the use of lexical forms (e.g. *babcia*, *mama*, *wujek*) accompanied by verbs conjugated in the third person singular.

It is noteworthy that the Polish courtesy treatment extends to young individuals as well (especially strangers or acquaintances), meaning that it applies even among peers. In the question regarding distant young individuals (such as neighbours), only one Spanish respondent stated that they use *usted* (V), whereas among the Polish respondents, over one-third of the answers were *Pan/Pani* (V). This suggests that even among individuals of the same age, distancing strategies are much more frequently used by Polish respondents. The Polish tendency to extend courtesy forms to young people, including their peers, can be seen as a protective measure for the speaker's and the addressee's face, ensuring that respect is communicated and that social boundaries are acknowledged.

Furthermore, the usage of pronouns can be dynamic. In fact, in the question regarding the form used with young professors (via email and in person), a Spanish informant responded that they use *usted* but added that it sometimes 'depends on the professor stating how they would like to be addressed'. On the other hand, this seems to be only applicable to 'young' professors, indicating that age (and not just social status) may play a significant role when selecting a pronoun for Spanish students – in the case of Polish respondents, status appears to be of greater importance.

The university context is particularly interesting, as a large majority of Spanish respondents use the informal *tú* form with young professors, while only one Polish respondent chose the informal *Ty* form in the same question. This practice among Spanish students could be seen as an attempt to construct a collegial and less hierarchical relationship with their instructors, thereby fostering a learning environment characterised by mutual respect and approachability. Conversely, the formal address by Polish students, regardless of the professor's age, underscores a cultural prioritisation of respect and formality in academic settings, aimed at protecting the professor's social face. As we have seen in §2, in Polish culture, a formal treatment is adopted towards university professors and school teachers. It should be borne in mind that at Polish universities, the pronoun *Pan(i)* is often used next to professional titles, such as *Pani Profesor* ('Mrs. Professor') and *Panie Doktorze* ('Mr. Doctor'). In fact, two Polish respondents specified that they use the form *Pan(i)* + title. However, one of them uses titles only with senior professors, while the other does not use them with young professors 'in person'. The rest of the respondents did not specify, but it is understood that they apply the same rule. Additionally, one respondent uses the form *Pan(i)* + title exclusively in email communication, both with young and senior professors.

Moreover, while the use of Spanish *tú* decreases significantly with senior professors, the already extremely rare use of Polish *Ty* with young professors completely disappears with senior professors. Another interesting aspect is that there is a tendency for Spaniards to switch from T to V when it comes to communication via email, which suggests that Spaniards perceive email contact as more formal than face-to-face interactions (cfr.

Czarnecka, 2023).¹⁶ This shift from T to V pronouns in email communications with professors signals an understanding of the digital medium as a more formal context, where the preservation of the addressee's face requires a more formal mode of address.

It is also worth mentioning that one respondent (POL40) specifically mentioned using V pronouns when addressing Polish professors but T pronouns when addressing foreign professors. This behaviour reveals an aspect of face-work that is sensitive to the cultural background of the interlocutor, which indicates a strategic adjustment of face-saving techniques to align with the cultural expectations and norms perceived to be held by the foreign counterpart. This observation raises questions about the relative influence of an interlocutor's nationality versus the language of communication. Specifically, it invites further inquiry into whether Polish speakers, when interacting in Polish with native Spanish speakers who are also proficient in Polish, would adhere to the formal *Pan(i)* in accordance with Polish conventions or switch to the informal *Ty*, as POL40's practice suggests.

Finally, regarding the perception of pronouns, almost all Spanish respondents acknowledged that V pronouns create distance between interlocutors, while only a small number of Polish respondents perceive it that way, a finding that highlights the cultural specificity of face-work strategies. On the other hand, in general, Spanish speakers do not perceive T pronouns as disrespectful, whereas Polish speakers do, which can noticeably influence the choice of pronouns, especially in less familiar contexts. This suggests that Spanish T/V forms seem to be motivated by solidarity rather than power, whereas in Polish they seem to be motivated by power rather than solidarity (cfr. §2.2).

All of the aforementioned differences can lead to misunderstandings among speakers of these two languages. Situations in which one addresses someone else using a form of address that is not customary in the target culture of their interlocutor can damage their *face*: if Spanish students were to use informal *Ty* with Polish professors who are not aware of the pragmatic differences in pronoun usage, it might be offensive. Similarly, Polish students who address Spanish professors with formal *usted* (rather than *tú*) at the end of the semester could jeopardise their face by conveying a lack of trust or familiarity towards their interlocutor.

The implications of these findings for the teaching of Spanish and Polish as foreign languages are significant. Educators must not only convey the grammatical rules governing pronoun use but also impart an understanding of the sociopragmatic nuances that dictate pronoun selection in different social contexts. This includes a sensitivity to the face-work considerations that underpin these choices, which is crucial for effective and

¹⁶ To the best of our knowledge, *diamesic* variation (Mioni, 1983) in the use of forms of address at the university level has not been explored. According to Koch (2001), language usage can vary depending on how it is conceived and the medium through which it is transmitted: "orality and writtenness concern first of all the conceptional aspect of a text and are to be understood respectively as equivalents of the concepts of communicative immediacy (orality) and communicative distance (writtenness)" (De Caprio & Senatore, 2016, p. 133).

respectful communication across cultural boundaries (cfr. Wierzbicka, 1985, 2016). These insights underscore the importance of an integrated approach to language teaching that emphasises the complex interplay between language, culture, and social interaction.

One of the limitations of this study is that the majority of the respondents are female, which is common in the Humanities in both Poland and Spain. Due to this, no conclusions can be drawn regarding linguistic variation in pronoun usage based on gender.¹⁷

6. Conclusions

As we have seen, there is a certain relationship between nationality and the distribution of use of the T/V forms of address: in our study, Spaniards more frequently use T forms, and there are even situations in which these forms are used exclusively by Spaniards (cfr. PROFESSORS above). It is also interesting that asymmetric dynamics (related to power semantics) are to be found in Polish (e.g. courtesy forms with relatives) but not in Spanish. Indeed, European Spanish seems to primarily rely on reciprocity (and solidarity semantics), except perhaps in situations involving a substantial age difference (e.g. over 40 years), combined with a very low level of familiarity.

The pragmatic differences discussed above can hinder communication and interactions between speakers of these two languages. That is why it is crucial to be aware of these disparities in order to prevent misunderstandings and potential offence. Understanding the cultural and pragmatic implications of pronoun usage can greatly enhance effective and respectful communication among Spanish and Polish speakers.

CRedit Author contribution / Contribución de los autores

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Formal Analysis / *Análisis formal*: Martin Testa / Sara Zakrzewska.

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¹⁷ Carricaburo (2015); in Czarnecka, 2023) observes that in Madrid, gender can influence the selection of pronouns: men tend to use *tú* more often than women.

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Identity in Fiction Translation. A Pragmatic Approach to Linguistic Culture

Zhishuo Ding ^{1*} & Laura Santamaria Guinot ²

¹Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China

²Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Sabadell, Spain

Abstract: This study investigates the translation of identity implicatures conveyed by linguistic cultural elements through an approach based on Relevance Theory. A theoretical framework is established to explore how a linguistic cultural element provides stimulus for the readers of the original novel to interpret the characters' identities through dialogues, and how these identity values could be transformed through translation and therefore perceived differently. Based on two Spanish novels and their Chinese translations, *La Colmena* and *El Jarama*, we conclude that linguistic cultural elements do not provide original and target readers with the same implicatures about the characters' identities, due to the difference in how original and target readers interpret the nuances provided. The five parameters - politeness expressions, emotional expressions, communicative markers, dialect varieties, and set phrases - validate this relationship between identity values and linguistic cultural referents and prove helpful in analyzing a character's relational and collective identity.

Keywords: identity implication, linguistic culture, sociolinguistic values, fictional characters, relevance theory.

Identidad en la Traducción de Ficción. Un Enfoque Pragmático a la Cultura Lingüística

Resumen: Este estudio investiga la traducción de las implicaciones de las identidades transmitidas a través de elementos culturales lingüísticos, basándose en la Teoría de la Relevancia. Se establece un marco teórico para indagar de qué forma los referentes culturales lingüísticos actúan como estímulo para que los lectores de la novela original puedan interpretar las identidades de los personajes a través de los diálogos, y cómo estas interpretaciones se ven afectadas por la traducción, pudiendo dar lugar a percepciones distintas. Al analizar dos novelas españolas, *La Colmena* y *El Jarama*, junto con sus traducciones al chino, se concluye que los elementos culturales lingüísticos no transmiten las mismas implicaciones sobre las identidades de los personajes a los lectores de la obra original y a los lectores de la traducción, debido a las diferencias en la interpretación de los estímulos proporcionados. Los cinco parámetros examinados -fórmulas de cortesía, expresiones emocionales, marcadores comunicativos, variedades dialectales y frases hechas- confirman la relación entre la implicación de la identidad y los referentes culturales lingüísticos, siendo útiles para el análisis de la identidad relacional y colectiva de un personaje.

Palabras clave: implicación de la identidad, cultura lingüística, valores sociolingüísticos, personajes ficticios, teoría de la relevancia.

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*Corresponding author: dz.shuo@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

In recent years, the study of identities has witnessed an enormous boom in research since the role played by identity in sociology, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and translation studies is of undeniable significance (see e.g., Pollali & Sidiropoulou, 2021; Sierra, 2019; Malyuga & McCarthy, 2018). However, a vast gap still exists around characters' identities in literary translation. Undoubtedly, each novel portrays a set of characters and identities, which can be correctly interpreted by the original culture readers, but might not be recognized by readers from other cultures. A proper understanding of identities contributes to a correct perception of characters, which helps readers to understand the fictitious world accurately, motivating the readers' personal insights about the specific reality (Nord, 1994), and helps cultural outsiders to gain a better understanding of the original culture. Is it possible for a translation to convey characters' identities to another culture? How much do target readers understand about the characters' identities after the translation is produced? How are the identity values expressed in the original fiction and in the translation? Such topics have not been well documented, and scholarly references are scarce.

Usually, any utterance serves as a crucial marker of the speaker's identity, and real-life listeners regularly use linguistic variables as a basis for judging speakers' social background, prestige, and personality characteristics (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972, p. 12). When writing fiction, the author, who has already taken into consideration readers' knowledge (Iser, 1987, p.107), leaves several implicatures in fictional work for readers to infer, and identity, as an essential social feature of each character, is also defined by the author. For example, in the Spanish novel *La Colmena*, when doña Rosa says *nos ha merengao* ('you got on our nerves'), Spanish readers could not only feel the negative emotion of the speaker, but would also instantly realize the lower social background of the speaker because of the social denotation of the idiomatic expression, and this could be understood as the identity implicature left by the author for doña Rosa's identity. Accordingly, we assume that the stylistic expression employed by the characters is not only created for the story development, but also helps readers to completely comprehend the character's identity. Can the translated text convey the exact identifiable clue to target readers? To answer this question, we will refer to relevance theory (Gutt, 2014; Sperber & Wilson, 1986) and will consider linguistic elements as cultural referents (Nida, 1945) during intercultural communication.

In translation studies, instances that carry extra connotations are considered as cultural referents, which require readers to have specific cultural knowledge to decode the implicit information contained in the original work. Linguistic culture is one of the five categories of cultural elements proposed by Nida (1945), who is the first to address cultural problems in translation; in his pioneer studies, he classifies linguistic culture from a linguistic point of view in the following categories: 1) phonological aspects, 2) morphological traits, 3) syntactic characteristics and 4) lexical factors. Later, as pointed out by Whorf (1956), in Katan & Taibi (2021, p. 136), "understanding of the interface between language and culture lays not so much in the lexis (the labelling) but in the underlying patterns". Therefore, the

established relation between language and culture must also be conveyed in translation. More recently, the functionalist school has stressed the social magnitude of cultural issues (Vermeer, 1983; Nord, 1997). Based on this, Molina (2006, p. 78) highlights the dynamic quality of cultural referents and emphasizes their close association with the immediate context. Likewise, Mangiron (2006) extends the linguistic cultural study by considering textual and extratextual factors, such as translators and translation norms. In the Ding's (2020) analysis, the implicatures carried by the linguistic formation of cultural linguistic instances have been taken into consideration. She argues that when linguistic forms of linguistic cultural elements are lost in translation, the implicit meaning conveyed may also disappear.

Concerning the relationship between cultural referents and character's identity in translation study, Santamaria (2000), starting from a socio-cognitive approach, explored the social value linked to the mental representations attached to each cultural referent. We understand mental representations according to the terms established by van Dijk (1998a, p. 190), where "shared beliefs or other social cognitions are, in turn, partly derived from episodic models by processes of generalization, abstraction and decontextualization" (van Dijk, 1998a, p. 190). In the Santamaria's view (2000), the cultural referents can carry identical information and perform a referential function that helps the target audience to broaden their knowledge about the fictionalized characters in the original text. Then cultural referents become markers of group identification (see Section 2) enabling viewers of audiovisual productions in a particular sociocultural environment to identify the social group to which the characters belong (Santamaria, 2000; 2001; 2010). However, in her study, linguistic culture was excluded. On this point, Wu (2013) seems to recognize this deficiency, and she particularly explores the connection between identity recognition and linguistic cultural elements. Wu's taxonomy (2013) involves not only linguistic but also paralinguistic factors, including lexicon, syntax, writing, primary qualities, qualifiers, differentiators, alternates, silence, pauses and kinesics. She assumes that familiarity with a linguistic culture helps the viewers identify the social features of the film's characters, namely, to identify the social groups to which the characters belong (Wu, 2013). Still, this approach is not adequate for our study since most instances from this categorization are exclusive to the study of audiovisual materials; therefore, such a theoretical model is not very useful when literary translation is analyzed.

All in all, despite the early recognition of the importance of linguistic cultural issues (Nida, 1945; Newmark, 1981; 1988; Vermeer, 1983; Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995; Nord, 1997; Molina, 2006; Mangiron, 2006; Wu, 2013; Ding, 2020), studies describing linguistic cultural elements in translation studies have been limited, and some sociolinguistic values carried through linguistic cultural elements, such as identification implicatures, remain overlooked.

With the objective of studying the identity values carried through linguistic cultural elements in translation, this paper aims to: 1) theoretically explore the relationship between linguistic culture and the fictional character's identity implication, and 2) based on

a corpus of two Spanish novels, *La Colmena* and *El Jarama*, and their Chinese translations, validate such a relationship by retrieving and analyzing, according to the methodology of Relevance Theory, some linguistic cultural elements, which trigger different interpretations of identities among original and target readers.

2. Identity markers and Relevance Theory

This investigation mainly aims to discuss the collective and relational aspects of identity. According to Vignoles et al. (2011, p. 3), collective identity refers to people's identification with the groups and social categories to which they belong. Inside these subcultural groups, when members are socialized, they acquire common linguistic patterns, which are shared within their subgroups, such as characteristic forms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and manners of speaking (Salzman, 1993, p. 194). For this reason, nuances in language use can be found even within a given culture. These stylistic expressions are spread among particular society members and consequently converted into crucial indicators of diverse speech communities (Duranti, 1997, p. 88). Using these specific linguistic markers as a basis, interlocutors can interpret the collective identity of the subcultural group members, such as geographic provenance or social status.

The relational aspect of identity refers to "one's roles vis-à-vis other people" (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 3). Relational identity addresses the interpersonal relationships social members maintain with others. When people see themselves as being members of a given social group, they will not only use particular linguistic patterns, but also share fundamental beliefs, which would influence their social practices (van Dijk, 1998b), such as having similar habits or developing similar ways of interacting and interpreting their social roles. Language, as a form of social behavior, is transmitted, patterned, and embedded in human social experiences (Gregory & Carroll, 1978, p. 3, 86). During long term cultural socialization, speakers learn indispensable social rules related to linguistic knowledge, that fit into their relational identity, such as forms of addressing petitions, using formal and informal formulas for visiting, or good speech manner. This helps their interlocutors to perform appropriately via verbal communication and establish and maintain relationships with others (Albert, 1972). Accordingly, the linguistic behaviors that fit their social roles become relational identity markers of the speaker.

Moreover, identity is not only a crucial sociolinguistic parameter in the real social world, but also an essential component of the fictional characters that novel writers employ. The objective of authors who write realistic novels is to portray fiction in a manner that closely resembles real life. As accurately asserted by Viñó (2005, p. 52), such novels are a microcosm of different social worlds. In this miniature virtual society, we can observe the complete social network including members of different social groups, the relationships connected between them, and the linguistic preferences of the characters (Alonso, 1998). It is argued that the internal stratification of language is also indispensable in literary fiction (Viñó, 2005, p. 52) and is the premise of plurilingualism for the novel (Bajtin, 1989). Bajtin (1989) argues that stylistic expressions are a prolocutor of the social community to which

the fictional character belongs and are the crucial part of the characters that marks their social stratification identities. Accordingly, we assume that the language stratification employed by the characters is not only created by the author for the story development, but also helps readers achieve a complete comprehension of the character's identity; this is what the author aims with the story. Since communicators use linguistic variables as a basis for judging their partners' identity information in real life communication, we have good reason to believe that they are also able to recognize the identity markers implied in stylistic dialogues of characters and, finally, sort out the identity information denoted by the author.

Human beings can "draw inferences from people's behavior" (Gutt 2014, p. 24). As argued by Relevance Theory, the audiences grasp what the communicator 'means' using correct contextual information (Sperber & Wilson, 1986; Gutt, 1991; 2014). However, the informative meaning stressed by Sperber & Wilson (1986) and Gutt (1991; 2014) is not the only implicature inferred by the audience during a conversation, since listeners will unconsciously try to figure out the communicator's identity as well (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972).

Yet, the nature of each language and its language variation are culturally different across each language, as pointed out by Catford (1965, p. 85, 91), some specific markers in the source language text may be different from those in the target. This means that the connection that has been established between the linguistic cultural referents and the identity implicatures among original readers may vary from what is set within the target. Consequently, there is good reason to believe that the implied identity information conveyed by original linguistic cultural referents might not be always communicated to translation receivers.

As relevance theory indicates, hearers can obtain all implied information if they can retrieve from the "stimulus" enough relevant assumptions from the potential context at any time (Gutt, 1991; 2014). These "assumptions about the world" are called cognitive environment, which is "a psychological construct", a set of "premises used in interpreting the utterance" (Gutt, 2014, p. 27; Sperber & Wilson, 1986, p. 15). It includes information that can be perceived in the physical environment, information retrieved from memory, and data from both sources (Gutt, 2014, p. 27). According to Sperber & Wilson (1986) and Gutt (2014), the cognitive environment is key to achieving "optimal relevance" of communications with implied information: when the contextual assumption of the interlocutor is available and accessible at any given point, the communication "will yield adequate contextual effects at minimal processing effort" (Gutt, 2014, p. 32).

This means that, when the text is translated into another culture, where individuals have acquired different linguistic knowledge and social cultural assumptions, a relevant "stimulus" needs to be reproduced in the translation to arouse among the target readers similar contextual assumptions as the source readers at a minimal processing effort, so as to obtain the optimal relevance of the implicit properties in the message. The less effort the target readers require to retrieve the mental assumptions, the more possibilities they possess to attain the full interpretation of the implicature intended by the novel author.

3. Corpus and methodology

The corpus of the study consists of two Spanish postcivil war novels alongside their Chinese translations, namely *La Colmena* ('Honeycomb') and *El Jarama* ('Jarama River'). *La Colmena* is a prominent fiction novel in Spain; it was first published in this country in 1955 and described the daily lives of people in Madrid in December 1943. It has two Chinese versions, 蜂房 (*Fēng Fáng*, 'Honeycomb') (TT1: Meng, 1986) and 蜂巢 (*Fēng Cháo*, 'Honeycomb') (TT2: Huang & Liu, 1987). *El Jarama* is also a Spanish postcivil war novel that illustrates the lives of a group of young people who spent 16 hours in the outskirts of Madrid. It has one rendition in Chinese, 哈拉马河 (*Hā Lā Mǎ Hé*, 'the River Jarama') (Xiao & Wen, 1984). These two novels were chosen because of (1) the realist style of the narrative, which reveals a high similarity to the real world, (2) a wide range of dialogues, implying a high volume of linguistic cultural elements, (3) a large number of characters, which means numerous diverse identities for study, and (4) both novels were translated in the 80's before the present globalized era facilitated intercultural communication between China and the Western countries.

A total of 705 referents from 10 characters (6 characters in *La Colmena* and 4 in *El Jarama*), which are more accurately described, were finally selected to form the final corpus. These characters were chosen because of their distinct identity backgrounds and notable language varieties in the novels. Then, each source instance containing an identity value was compared with its paired translation in Chinese, considering both cognitive contexts in order to determine the final taxonomy of the linguistic culture for this study. The present corpus revealed the following categories: (1) politeness expressions, (2) emotional expressions, (3) communicative markers, (4) dialect varieties, and (5) phraseological resources. Within the analysis, the situational context is first presented to understand the fictional conversation circumstance, which is also a basic parameter for the implicature interpretation. Secondly, the pragmatic quality, or rather, the informative intention of the utterance, will be presented, as well as the identification clue conveyed through the original linguistic cultural segments. Subsequently, the Spanish and Chinese cognitive environments of the readers are compared for exploring the processing efforts that the linguistic cultural instances take to generate the maximal contextual effect in each context. Despite the fact that it would not be surprising to find that there might be some target readers who have gained particular knowledge, which may be different from the common knowledge of the society to which they belong, our objective is to compare the level of traditional cultural beliefs of each society. The present study will not consider the slight differences in the cognitive environment of different readers from the same culture. Finally, a detailed discussion and conclusion will be followed to summarize the regularities of the linguistic cultural referents on the codification of identification implicatures.

4. Results and analysis

To carry out the analysis on the elements retrieved from the two novels in Spanish and their translations, we created a table related to each element from the five abovementioned categories. As explained previously, we analyzed the identity implicatures that original and target readers might derive from each item of our corpus, according to the stimulus originated by their cultural and pragmatic backgrounds. Using examples for each category, we will now show how we carried out our study.

4.1 Politeness expressions

The politeness utilized in verbal communication is culturally different (Escandell Vidal, 1998, p. 9). As a series of social norms, politeness can regulate the appropriate behavior of members from different communities (Escandell Vidal, 1993, p. 136), who have the purpose of maintaining their good relationships with others (Carrasco Santana 1999, p. 37) and protecting public identities (Bravo, 2005, p. 32). Therefore, as a cultural issue and an instrument to maintain social relationships and identities, politeness expressions have been considered in the study of linguistic culture. As shown in the table below (Table 1), there are 40 instances in the original novel *La Colmena* and 57 in *El Jarama*.

Table 1. Number of politeness expressions identified in the corpus.

<i>La Colmena</i>		<i>El Jarama</i>	
Character	Number	Character	Number
Don Mario	5	El alcarreño	0
Don Roberto	6	Esnáider	9
Doña Ramona	4	Juez	38
Doña Rosa	10	Sebastián	10
Doña Visitación	12		
Señor Suarez	3		
Total	40	Total	57

Even though politeness is employed to achieve the same goal of maintaining a good relationship with others in both Spanish and Chinese societies, as a cultural issue, different patterns of politeness expressions have been developed within each society and are used in different situations. In Spain, polite expressions tend to be used in every relationship, such as among friends, family members, with leaders, or employees. However, unlike the explicit polite expressions present in the Spanish culture, politeness verbalizations are used differently in Chinese society, where the frequent use of politeness in some intimate relationships, such as family members or close friends, keeps the interlocutors at a distance. That is to say, in a traditional Chinese cognitive context, when polite expressions, such as gratitude or apology, are used during the conversation, it is assumed that a very close relationship between the conversational partners has not been established.

Another different social application of politeness expressions between these two cultures occurs in the relationship between individuals with authority and those lacking it. In cultures of higher power distance¹, such as China, it is believed appropriate and necessary to maintain differences between social classes (Lustig & Koester, 2012, p. 118). Taoism, one of the principal ideologies in Chinese culture, also emphasize the importance of social norms, mainly courtesy, for protecting social dissimilarities (Gu, 1992, p. 10). Social rules related to the politeness dictate that superiors or elders would prefer to maintain their social identity by showing fewer politeness expressions to juniors. Conversely, those of younger age or lower social position are trained to act in a courteous manner to demonstrate respect and obedience. On the other hand, in the contextual assumption of Spanish readers, in a lower power distance culture, the expression of politeness is less complicated, as shown in the following example:

(1) ST: *Perdóname*, hijita.

‘Forgive me, little daughter’.

TT1: 原谅我吧, 亲爱的孩子。

Yuán liàng wǒ ba, qīn ài de hái zi.

‘Forgive me, dear daughter’.

TT2: 原谅我吧, 孩子。

Yuán liàng wǒ ba, hái zi.

‘Forgive me, daughter’.

Doña Visitación has noticed the smell of tobacco on her daughter, Julia, and asks her if she has been smoking. When she received a negative reply from her daughter, the mother keeps asking if somebody has kissed her. Julia, who wanted to behave as a decent woman in that period, blames her mother for such a sudden question. Thus, doña Visitación, upon realizing that her behavior has bothered her daughter, asks for forgiveness.

In the original situational context, when doña Visitación becomes aware that she has embarrassed her daughter, as a mother, she immediately apologizes for her unsuitable question. Obviously, the informative intention of the original expression *Perdóname* (‘Forgive me’) is to apologize to the daughter for her inappropriate behavior. Meanwhile, this pragmatic quality is maintained in both Chinese versions by the literal translation 原谅我吧 (*yuán liàng wǒ ba*, ‘Forgive me’). This translation ensures the correct recognition of the request for forgiveness among the Chinese readers, who would not invest too much processing effort to process it.

Nevertheless, as claimed previously, the pragmatic value is not the only implied content in the original utterance. There are also identification clues that may arise among different interpretations by the target readers, such as the identity of doña

¹ As Lustig & Koester (2012, p. 118) define, the power distance refers to “the degree to which cultures believe that social and political power should be distributed disproportionately, shared un-equally, and concentrated among a few top decision makers”.

Visitación and the relationship she has with her daughter. In the Spanish social context, the apology between mother and daughter is nothing unsuitable in such immediate circumstances, since it reflects that doña Visitación wants to behave as a kind polite mother, as well as showing respect for her daughter. On the contrary, unlike Spanish cultural traditions, among Chinese readers' contextual assumptions, it is not common for family members to apologize to each other, let alone an elder to a junior. This means that Chinese readers might not have enough cognitive knowledge to interpret the polite and easygoing identity of doña Visitación, and it would also require too much processing effort for them to understand the relationship revealed between the Spanish mother and daughter. Conversely, this might even lead to a divergent interpretation among the target readers, for example, about the mother, who, in the Chinese cultural context seems to act like a nervous and severe woman.

4.2 Emotional expressions

The expression of emotions is the key interactional tool that regulates intimacy or distance between individuals. It is learned and developed through different phases of socialization (Sela-Sheffy & Leshem, 2016, p. 449-450). As Gross & Feldman (2011, p. 11) argue, emotions are usually constrained by participant roles and social context. During socialization, group members learn related social knowledge about when and how to demonstrate emotions in certain circumstances, and as a result, they become capable of conceiving and controlling their own emotional utterances. For example, when someone feels a certain negative emotion, they will first consult their cultural values to check if it is appropriate to display anger in such circumstances and whether it is necessary to take measures to control it to protect their own identities.

Furthermore, the manifestation of emotion is a cultural product (Turner & Stets, 2006), and social norms about when to demonstrate positive or negative emotions vary from culture to culture. According to Hall (1976), cultures differ from high to low context. Countries such as China belong to high context cultures, where emotional expressions are reserved for promoting and sustaining harmony among interactants (Lustig & Koester, 2012, p. 102 -105). 以和为贵 (*yǐ hé wéi guì*, 'harmony is most precious') represents one of the principal ideologies of Confucianism, which requires its social members to minimize conflicts, conceal negative emotions, foster harmonious relationships, and thus protect their own identities. Whereas in some lower-context cultures, such as Spanish society, verbal communication primarily aims to convey the exact message. Accordingly, emotional expressions in such social context are typically more explicit and readily observable (Lustig & Koester, 2012, p. 102). The different contextual assumptions about social patterns of emotional expressions across cultures could lead to diverse interpretations of characters' identities between source and target readers. In what follows, we have found 58 emotional referents in the original novel *La Colmena* and 32 in *El Jarama*.

Table 2. Number of emotional expressions elements located.

<i>La Colmena</i>			<i>El Jarama</i>	
Character	Number		Character	Number
Don Mario	1		El alcarreño	15
Don Roberto	2		Esnáider	3
Doña Ramona	1		Juez	0
Doña Rosa	39		Sebastián	14
Doña Visitación	11			
Señor Suarez	4			
Total	58		Total	32

(2) ST: *¿No te fastidia? Ahora las pagas conmigo. No se le puede ni tocar.*

‘Doesn’t it *annoy* you? Now you can *vent your anger with me*.’ You cannot even be touched.’

TT: 你恼了吧?那你就跟我算账吧。这家伙连碰都碰不起。这家伙连碰都碰不起。

Nǐ nǎo le ba? Nà nǐ jiù gēn wǒ suàn zhàng ba. Zhè jiā huó lián pèng dōu pèng bù qǐ. Zhè jiā huó lián pèng dōu pèng bù qǐ.

‘Are you *annoyed*? Then you can *hold me accountable*. This guy *cannot even be touched*.’

Miguel and Sebastián are two young men who have come to the outskirts for a holiday near the Jarama River, and now they are relaxing on the bank. Miguel has a girlfriend, but he has not married her because of conflicts within his family. Sebastián wants to give him some advice, but Miguel loses his patience. The two men are arguing, and Sebastián reproaches Miguel with negative verbal expressions.

In the original, expressions like *fastidiar a alguien* (‘annoy someone’) and *pagarla con alguien* (‘vent one’s anger with someone’) carry negative connotations to source readers. In the translation, this negative emotion is rendered with two idiomatic phrases in Chinese, 算账 (*suàn zhàng*, ‘hold accountable’) and 碰不起 (*pèng bù qǐ*, ‘cannot be touched’), which further intensify the negative attitude of Sebastián. Therefore, this rendition will activate enough contextual knowledge among Chinese readers to interpret it as a manifestation of a negative emotion.

As regards the reception of identity information, in the original context, where the emotional manifestation is more explicit and direct, when there is a disagreement or conflict between friends, negative expressions - such as anger, reproach, or irony - are permitted to a great extent without hurting their relationship. For this reason, Spanish readers would regard the conflict between Miguel and Sebastián as a typical disagreement between friends that will not harm the relationship they have already built. Nonetheless, in the Chinese social context, to maintain social harmony, when a disagreement arises between friends, it is not suitable to point out faults or confront the conflict directly,

since the social members are expected to maintain a positive relationship with others and to protect their relational identity. For this reason, Chinese social members may endeavor to conceal their anger and maintain harmony. Nevertheless, if someone fails to control their negative emotions, it will diminish the relationship they have previously enjoyed. Therefore, despite maintaining the pragmatic value of the negative emotion in the translation, Chinese readers might have a different interpretation of the relational identities between the two fictional characters and misunderstand the further development of their friendship due to the contrasting cognitive environments about the social norms of negative verbal manifestations in each culture.

4.3 Communicative markers

Communicative markers are invariable linguistic elements that maintain the discourse and connect two communicative segments (Martín Zorraquino & Portolés, 1999, p. 4057; Schiffrin, 1987; Briz, 1993, p. 167). They usually lose the original literal meaning and acquire a new pragmatic function: to formulate and organize conversational interactions. This pragmatic function of helping the communicative articulation also encourages social interaction between interlocutors, thus may enhance the maintenance of social relationships and imply identification clues.

According to Ding (2019), the Spanish communicative markers are classified as the following three types: 1) conversational markers -which control communicative turns, such as *bueno* ('well'), *anda* ('go'), 2) contact markers -which strengthen or weaken the tone, such as *hombre* ('man'), *mujer* ('woman'), and 3) vocatives, which draw attention to the interlocutor and show affection or antipathy, such as *amiguito* ('little friend'), *bonita* ('beauty'). Each of them may carry implicatures of social relationships between interlocutors. For example, the conversational marker *anda* ('go'), which indicates the interruption of the previous topic and the will to start another, forms various grammatical conjugations depending on the social relationship with the listeners, such as *anda* ('go') to speak with *tú* ('you' as the second person) and *ande* ('go') with *usted* ('you' that indicates respect and courtesy). When the interlocutor changes the communicative marker from *ande* to *anda*, this may mean the change of relational identities between them.

Meanwhile, Chinese vocatives also convey social markers about the speaker's identity information. As stated before, as one of the high power distance cultures, it is considered appropriate to maintain social differences in China (Lustig & Koester, 2012, p. 118), and the vocative is one of the linguistic corroborations for this social phenomenon. In everyday life, individuals with administrative duties or higher social positions are more commonly addressed using corresponding vocatives, such as 魏院长 (*wèi yuàn zhǎng*, 'dean Wei') or 王医生 (*wáng yī shēng*, 'doctor Wang'). Similarly, in Chinese contextual circumstances, young members would not be permitted to directly address the seniors by their names (Chen, 1990; Li, 2001). The social norm is to address them with common appellatives, such as father, uncle, which demonstrate respect.

As for this category, 152 markers are detected in the original novel *La Colmena* and 138 in *El Jarama*, which is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of communicative markers.

<i>La Colmena</i>		<i>El Jarama</i>	
Character	Number	Character	Number
Don Mario	22	El alcarreño	24
Don Roberto	18	Esnáider	2
Doña Ramona	16	Juez	47
Doña Rosa	50	Sebastián	65
Doña Visitación	41		
Señor Suarez	5		
Total	152	Total	138

(3) ST: Toma, Lucí, *bonita*.

‘Take it, Lucí, *beauty*.’

TT: 抓吧, 露西, 我的小美人。

Zhuā ba, lù xī, wǒ de xiǎo měi rén.

‘Take it, Lucí, *my little beauty*.’

Sebastián and Lucía are playing a lottery game with nine other young people to decide who gets food for lunch. Sebastián’s girlfriend, Paulina, is also present. In the original context, *bonita* (‘beauty’) is a conventional vocative used by Sebastián to catch Lucía’s attention. Meanwhile, in the translation, it is rendered with a literal translation by adding a possessive adjective of the first person: 我的小美人 (wǒ de xiǎo měi rén, ‘my little beauty’). Undoubtedly, this expression could also serve as a vocative in the target cognitive context, which maintains the pragmatic function of drawing attention to the interlocutor.

Nevertheless, the positive result is not the same as the reproduction of the identity implicature conveyed in the source text. Spanish appellatives like *guapa* (‘pretty’), *bonita* (‘beauty’), *niña* (‘girl’) were generally used between friends in the original cognitive environment of the period when the novel was written, to yield some extent of amiability and confidence. The original vocative *bonita* (‘beauty’) used by Sebastián confirms their close friendship, and Spanish readers will obtain maximal contextual effect from this without expending much processing effort. In the translation, besides adding the possessive adjective, the translator also incorporates another adjunct 小 (‘little’) before the flattering appellative 美人 (*měi rén*, ‘beauty’) to reproduce a relaxed atmosphere. However, despite the fact that in the Chinese social context, the compliment is considered a strategy to get closer to the listener, it is not regarded as polite behavior for a man to express admiration for a woman’s beauty. This is because Confucianism teaches that a man and a woman should keep their distance. Consequently, Chinese readers do not have enough contextual knowledge to understand Sebastián’s verbalization of affection to a female friend, let

alone in front of his girlfriend, Paulina. Therefore, we have good reason to believe that the relational identities, that is to say, the social relationship between Sebastián and his friend Lucía, will be interpreted differently by the target readers due to the various cognitive contextual assumptions about social norms.

4.4 Dialect varieties

According to Hatim & Mason (1993), dialect is an important dimension of language varieties. This is learned during socialization and used in everyday life, thus turning into identity markers of the speakers (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972, p. 25). According to Hatim & Mason (1993), geographical, temporal, and social dialects are three main language variations that embody social implicatures. Geographical dialect is related to specific provenance, which indicates the speaker's origin (Catford, 1965; Gregory & Carroll, 1978). The second category, temporal dialect, is related to the historical era when the conversation takes place; it indicates the timeframe when the story occurs. Meanwhile, social dialect refers to linguistic varieties related to social stratification (Hatim & Mason, 1993). Several sociolinguistic studies have explored such relationships. Labov (1972) has examined the relationship between phonetic pronunciation *r* and social hierarchies; Bernstein (1964) concludes that the new generation of the cultured social class also has a high level of verbal expressions, whereas those from lower social class families employ simpler syntax. In sum, there are 47 dialectal elements in the original novel *La Colmena* and 30 in *El Jarama*, Table 4 shows this.

Table 4. Number of dialect varieties.

<i>La Colmena</i>		<i>El Jarama</i>	
Character	Number	Character	Number
Don Mario de la Vega	0	El alcarreño	4
Don Roberto	0	Esnáider	18
Doña Ramona	0	Juez	6
Doña Rosa	38	Sebastián	2
Doña Visitación	2		
Señor Suarez	7		
Total	47	Total	30

- (4) ST: Vamos a *darnos un garbeo*, mientras tanto, a ver si hay suerte y nos sale algún apaño por ahí.

‘Let us *take a walk*’, let’s see if we are lucky enough to begin an affair there.’

TT: 咱们去溜达溜达, 碰碰运气, 看看能碰到个什么漂亮人儿。

Zán men *qù liū da liū da*, pèng pèng yùnrì, kàn kàn néng pèng dào gè shénme piàoliang rén er.

‘Let’s *go for a stroll*, try our luck, and see if we can meet a beautiful woman.’

Sebastián's girlfriend, Paulina, is talking with other girls, and Sebastián cannot join them. So, he jokes with another young man about if they can go for a walk and meet some other women. In the original, *darse un garbeo* ('take a walk') is a dialect from Madrid and it is one of the identifiable markers of the speaker found in the novel. The original readers, sharing a similar cognitive environment with the novel's author, can recognize this geographic dialect, which reminds them that these young men come from Madrid. Moreover, contemporary readers would recognize this as an antiquated expression, which was commonly used in the last century, when the novel was written. Consequently, for original modern readers, this expression indicates the era when the story occurs, i.e., in the Spanish post Civil War.

Whereas, in translation, 去溜达溜达 (*qù liū da liū da*, 'go for a stroll') is an ordinary expression in Chinese, it does not carry any geographic or temporal stimulus for the target readers. As a result, it becomes challenging for them to activate corresponding contextual knowledge to determine the identity information of the character implied in the original novel.

4.5 Set phrases

The meaning of set phrases is not related to the meaning of each word in the utterance (Timofeev, 2006, p. 1030). The fixed order of the phrases allows repetition in numerous situations throughout the whole country, and speakers learn them and use them naturally and spontaneously (Casares, 1992, p. 229). With this repetition and spontaneous use, phraseological resources arrive at a series of new connotations, i.e., attain emotional, expressive, or stylistic values thus intensifying the speaker's attitude at the same time (Schellheimer, 2015, p. 62).

Furthermore, as a sociocultural product, phraseological expressions are also source of sociolinguistic variation. Specific phrases are developed within particular social groups, reflecting the environment, conventions, or social behaviors, and accordingly, characterize a given group of speakers. All the expressions are understood by all individuals throughout the entire culture, although not everyone uses them. As a result, speakers of the same culture will have enough contextual knowledge to interpret the entire meaning of the phrases, as well as to recognize a large contextual effect regarding the social identification information of the speaker.

Although sayings and idiomatic expressions could be considered as elements that share a lot of similar characteristics to elements classified as instances of geographic or social dialects, we decided that they needed a specific category precisely because of their pragmatic capacity to add information about emotions and expressive and stylistic values. As demonstrated in Table 5, there are 110 instances in *La Colmena* and 41 in *El Jarama*.

Table 5. Number of instances of phraseological resources.

<i>La Colmena</i>			<i>El Jarama</i>	
Character	Number		Character	Number
Don Mario	5		El alcarreño	22
Don Roberto	1		Esnáider	0
Doña Ramona	2		Juez	1
Doña Rosa	81		Sebastián	18
Doña Visitación	17			
Señor Suarez	4			
Total	110		Total	41

(5) ST: No perdamos la perspectiva, yo ya estoy harta de decirlo.

‘Do not lose perspective, I’m tired of saying it.’

TT1: 不能没有眼力架儿, 我不知说过多少遍了。

Bù néng méi yǎn lì jià er, wǒ bù zhī shuō guò duō shǎo biàn le.

‘Do not lose attention to detail, I do not remember how many times I have said.

TT2: 我都说腻了, 我们不能坐井观天, 目光短浅。

Wǒ dōu shuō nì le, wǒ men bù néng zuò jǐng guān tiān, mù guāng duǎn qiǎn.

‘I am tired of saying that, we cannot sit in the well and watch the sky short sighted.’

This is how *La Colmena* begins, and the expression No perdamos la perspectiva (‘Do not lose perspective’) is the statement repeated by doña Rosa during the whole story. In the original cognitive context, doña Rosa uses this idiomatic expression to remind the waiters to keep their minds clear and work hard. The use of a fixed formation of the idiomatic phrase reinforces doña Rosa’s value judgment.

In the first translation, this idiomatic expression is translated by a Chinese *guanyongyu* 眼力架儿 (yǎn lì jià er, ‘do not lose attention to detail’). Meanwhile, in the second, it is translated with two *chengyu* 目光短浅 (mù guāng duǎn qiǎn, ‘with short sightedness’) and 坐井观天 (zuò jǐng guān tiān, ‘sit in the well and watch the sky’), which have a similar metaphoric meaning as the original. *Chengyu* and *guanyongyu* are two distinctive idiomatic expressions in Chinese. *Chengyu* is generally formed by four Chinese characters and derives from, to a large extent, traditional Chinese literature. It is employed more by the upper social class than by those with a lower status. Meanwhile, *guanyongyu* has a high emotional connotation and is mainly used during colloquial and casual conversations. As shown, the original phrase is rendered with Chinese idiomatic expressions in both translations. They both yield adequate contextual effect for their Chinese readers regarding the pragmatic function of the intensification of the utterance.

In terms of the identity implication, the original referent is the expression regularly used by people with a high cultural status. It could help the Spanish readers to identify doña Rosa as a lady acquainted with certain high cultural status expressions. However, in the first translation, the original phrase is replaced by a *guanyongyu*, a colloquial and casual expression in Chinese. It does not convey any denotation of the high cultural status. For this reason, we have enough evidence to believe that this rendition does not provide any stimulus for the Chinese readers to interpret the exact identity information about doña Rosa. Whereas the two *chengyu* employed in the second translation are expressions used to a large extent by learned persons, consequently, this will activate a similar cognitive context among Chinese readers and help them to identify doña Rosa with the correct cultural level.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This paper set out to explore the translation of linguistic cultural referents that may convey the identity implicatures of fictional characters. It explored the relationship between identity information and the linguistic elements from a pragmatic theoretical point of view and analyzed the linguistic cultural referents present in literary fiction dialogues that convey identity values based on two Spanish-to-Chinese novels based on relevance theory. The theoretical framework for this article is distinctive, as it involves both intercultural translation studies as well as sociolinguistic identity analysis from a pragmatic perspective. In addition, it presented how linguistic cultural referents become identification clues in the original text and how, for target readers, their contextual knowledge helps or hinders their understanding of a given character's identity information in translation.

From these results, we conclude that politeness expressions, emotional expressions, communicative markers, dialect varieties, and set phrases are five important linguistic cultural parameters that convey identity information stimuli, and their translation could affect the understanding of the characters' identities for target readers. Primarily, the examples discussed in Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, such as politeness, emotional utterances, and communicative markers, demonstrate that the relational identity implication, i.e., the interpersonal relationship established between characters, would vary among target readers due to different contextual assumptions about social norms established in each culture. Linguistic cultural units must be regarded as a reflection of social behaviors that establish cultural distance, a means that helps to manage social relationships with others during intercultural communication.

Secondly, data revealed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5 suggests that not only the dialect varieties, like phonetic or lexical features, could be collective identity indicators of the characters, but phraseological resources could also carry geographic or stratification implicatures of characters, and their translation presents problems of perception among target readers. In addition, the findings highlight the fact that the informative intention is not the single implicature found in these utterances; the identity information concealed behind the characters' dialogues is another crucial implicit parameter that should raise

attention during intercultural communications. Despite maintaining the pragmatic value of the cultural linguistic instances in translation, the sociolinguistic quality, i.e., the relational and collective identity information about the fictional characters, may be interpreted differently or even contrastingly by the target audience due to divergent cognitive contexts formed through the different socialization processes of each culture.

In conclusion, by validating this new linguistic cultural model as a useful tool for establishing cultural distance and analyzing characters' identity implicature, this study seeks to provide some constructive directions for intercultural pragmatic studies: linguistic cultural referents not only convey linguistic or informative values, but also embody the social norms of each culture. Accordingly, cross-cultural equivalents in the target language should be chosen so that not only the pragmatic values but also the identification stimuli that the linguistic cultural referents carry in the original language can be kept. In this way, the translation will help the target audience activate enough relevant assumptions at minimal processing effort and thus perceive the fictional characters at a deeper, more meaningful level.

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Book review: Muñoz, C., & Miralpeix, I. (Eds.). (2024). *Audiovisual input and second language learning*. John Benjamins

Injung Wi 

University of Western Ontario, Ontario, Canada

In today's digital era, audiovisual input has become a prevalent source of language exposure for second language (L2) learners. This edited volume, *Audiovisual Input and Second Language Learning*, focuses on the impact of audiovisual input, especially, enhanced with onscreen text (e.g., first language [L1] subtitles, L2 captions, dual subtitles, and visually enhanced captions) on L2 acquisition, presenting nine empirical studies that were carried out as part of the Subtitles in Language Learning (SUBTill) project at the University of Barcelona. This book opens with an introduction in which the editors describe its purpose and key features, followed by nine chapters (one per empirical study), and ends with a concluding chapter in which the editors reiterate the findings, connect them to previous research, and offer insights into the role of audiovisual input and onscreen text in L2 learning.

One notable feature of this volume, as highlighted by the editors, is that it comprises studies investigating a wide range of aspects of L2 learning through audiovisual input, including vocabulary, reading skills, comprehension, L2 pragmatic awareness (e.g., English requests), pronunciation (e.g., vowel contrast: /æ/ and /ʌ/), and grammar (e.g., English subjunctive constructions). The studies also considered the roles of various learner-related variables, encompassing L2 vocabulary size, L1 and L2 reading skills, language aptitude, and age in L2 learning from viewing. This review first discusses the chapters that did not employ eye-tracking methods, organized by topic, namely vocabulary studies (Chapters 1, 5, and 9) and studies focusing on other aspects, such as reading efficacy and grammar (Chapters 2 and 8). Then, it proceeds to discuss the eye-tracking studies (Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7).

In Chapter 1, Casulleras and Miralpeix examined how L1 subtitles and L2 captions differently affect young learners' content comprehension and vocabulary development, and how aptitude, vocabulary size, and L1/L2 reading speed moderate these effects. They found that L1 subtitles are more likely to improve content comprehension, whereas L2 captions lead to better recognition of written words. They also found that the learners' aptitude, vocabulary size, and L1 reading speed were positively correlated with content comprehension. Aptitude and vocabulary size were only positively associated with

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Corresponding author: iwi@uwo.ca

vocabulary learning in the L1 subtitles group. However, using only the written prompts in the recognition test may have affected the test outcomes in favor of the captioned group due to the test-input modality congruency effects (e.g., Jelani & Boers, 2018; Sydorenko, 2010).

Popova and Miralpeix (Chapter 5) demonstrate the facilitative effects of repeated viewing on content comprehension and vocabulary learning. They compared repeated viewing (watching the same video twice) with viewing using *Language Reactor*, a language-learning app that enables self-regulated viewing with access to bilingual subtitles, pausing, replaying, or adjusting playback speed. The results showed no significant differences in comprehension or vocabulary gains between the two conditions, suggesting that ordinary repeated viewing with captions can be equally effective as self-regulated viewing for supporting comprehension and vocabulary learning. The qualitative data indicated that the first viewing supported content comprehension, enabling learners to better attend to linguistic features during the second viewing. Similar findings were reported by Wi and Boers (2024), who showed that repeated viewing is a common strategy used by advanced L2 learners to support understanding and vocabulary acquisition.

A study by Miralpeix, Gesa and Suárez (Chapter 9) investigated the extent to which audiovisual input can promote novice learners' vocabulary learning at First Exposure (FE). Catalan/Spanish native speakers who are fluent in English watched an English TV advertisement twice with Polish subtitles, which is a language they are not familiar with (reversed subtitling). The participants were explicitly instructed to learn the Polish words as much as possible. They found that learning at the level of meaning recognition could occur at FE through reversed subtitling. The researchers acknowledged that the observed learning gains could also be attributed to the intentional learning condition and repeated viewing.

While the previous studies have investigated vocabulary learning, Avello and Muñoz (Chapter 2) examined whether watching captioned videos could improve young learners' L1 and L2 reading efficacy, including silent reading speed and reading comprehension. The participants were primary students learning English in Chile. They revealed that watching captioned videos enhanced their L2 reading speed and text comprehension, with vocabulary knowledge and pretest scores moderating this effect. Age did not predict L2 reading skills. Interestingly, L1 reading efficacy was also improved through captioned videos despite the exposure to only L2 captions. The researchers suggest that L1 and L2 reading skills seem to complement one another during the early stages of development. The findings shed light on the potential of captions in promoting young learners' reading skills in both languages.

In Chapter 8, Pattermore and Suárez describe two studies that explored the role of language aptitude (grammatical inference ability) in L2 grammar learning through captioned and uncaptioned videos. They found a significant interaction between viewing condition (captioned vs. uncaptioned) and aptitude (lower vs. higher), indicating that aptitude had a greater effect when participants watched an uncaptioned video. In contrast, its effect was less pronounced when the video was captioned. Another finding was that learners with lower proficiency levels tend to rely more on their aptitude than those with higher

proficiency levels. These findings corroborate that captions can serve as a scaffolding tool, especially for those with lower language-learning aptitude and proficiency levels. However, it should be acknowledged that these studies have limitations due to their small sample size.

Another noteworthy feature of this volume is that many studies adopted a triangulation approach, incorporating eye-tracking technology, questionnaires, and retrospective interviews. Notably, four studies (Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7) employed eye-tracking methods.

Finger-Boua and Muñoz (Chapter 3) compared the effects of visually enhanced and regular captions on young learners' attention and vocabulary acquisition using eye-tracking and vocabulary tests. The results indicated that learners exposed to enhanced captions outperformed those in the regular captions group on both form recall and recognition tasks. Eye-tracking data revealed longer fixation durations for the enhanced captions group at the initial stage (episode 3), although this difference diminished over time (episode 11). While methodologically original, given the scarcity of longitudinal eye-tracking studies with young learners, the use of identical target words for both tests raises potential concerns about testing effects.

Pusadas and Puimège (Chapter 4) used eye-tracking to examine beginner learners' attention during L1-subtitled and L2-captioned video viewing and the effects of pre-teaching vocabulary on comprehension. The L1-subtitled group focused more on target vocabulary and comprehension-related text and outperformed the captioned group on comprehension, suggesting beginner learners depend more on L1 subtitles for understanding. Pre-viewing instruction affected attention only in the captioned group, resulting in fewer fixations on target words and suggesting faster processing due to prior exposure. However, pre-viewing words did not significantly influence comprehension. As acknowledged by the researchers, however, the study was limited by the small number of target words and comprehension questions.

Barón, Celaya, and Martínez-Flor (Chapter 6) explored whether captions (captioned vs. uncaptioned videos) facilitate the development of L2 pragmatic knowledge (awareness of English requests) using selected scenes from *Emily in Paris*. Employing a triangulated approach with eye-tracking and retrospective interviews, they found that the captioned group outperformed the uncaptioned group on the post-test. The interview data further support this result. Eye-tracking measures of visits to the eyes and mouth revealed no significant group differences across the three clips, except for the second clip. The findings offer valuable insights into the potential of captioned videos for pragmatic development, although the multiple-choice test format used to assess pragmatic knowledge may pose issues such as guessing and input-test modality congruency effects (e.g., Jelani & Boers, 2018; Sydorenko, 2010). Given the limited research on L2 pragmatic learning through audiovisual input, this study highlights the need for further investigation.

In Chapter 7, Mora and Fouz-González examined whether using enhanced captions in two contrasting colors versus a single color and using standard orthography and IPA symbols would differentially affect Spanish learners' perceptual learning of the English

vowel contrast (/æ/-/ʌ/). Eye-tracking measures were employed to assess the effectiveness of the visual enhancement in directing learners' attention to the target sounds. The results revealed evidence of perceptual learning from viewing with enhanced captions, although the effects were not consistently observed across tasks and conditions. The eye-tracking data indicated that enhanced captions drew more attention, as reflected by longer relative fixation times compared to regular captions. The learning gains were modest, but the researchers remained optimistic about the contrastive input enhancement method, as a single intervention appeared to draw learners' attention to challenging sounds and promote their perceptual sensitivity.

The last notable feature of this volume is its inclusion of longitudinal studies with young learners, specifically primary school students aged 9 to 12 years (Chapters 1, 2, and 3). For instance, in Chapter 1, 92 Spanish/Catalan bilingual EFL learners with an average age of 11.55 years watched 20 episodes of a children's TV series once a week over five months. Similarly, the studies in Chapters 2 and 3 also adopted multi-treatment sessions where young EFL learners watched a total of 11 episodes of a TV series. Given that the impact of audiovisual input on young learners' L2 acquisition over time remains an underexplored area (e.g., [Montero Perez, 2022](#)), these chapters deepen insights into how young learners process captioned videos and benefit from prolonged exposure to them in language learning.

This edited volume brings together a series of studies that coherently examine the effects of audiovisual input on various aspects of L2 learning. Each chapter is well-supported with extensive references, and most include appendices detailing test instruments, target vocabulary, and input materials, which enhances the transparency and replicability of the research. However, a few limitations were identified during the review process. One limitation of the volume is its exclusive focus on English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, as most studies were conducted in Spain with participants who were Spanish learners of English. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings to other linguistic and educational settings may be limited. Another limitation is that most studies in this volume employed a pretest-posttest design, leaving the long-term effects of the interventions unaddressed. Although some researchers acknowledged this limitation, incorporating a delayed posttest in future studies would be essential to evaluate the retention of learning gains over time. Lastly, the discussion could have been more informative if some of the previously mentioned methodological issues related to test modality and format (e.g., input-test modality congruency) had been more thoroughly addressed. This consideration is important given the challenges researchers face in selecting and designing appropriate and valid measures of L2 learning, particularly in studies comparing the effectiveness of captioned or uncaptioned videos or comparing various types of onscreen text (e.g., [Kurokawa et al., 2024](#); [Wi & Boers, 2025](#)).

In conclusion, despite these limitations, this volume significantly advances second language acquisition (SLA) research on audiovisual input with onscreen text. Firstly, its breadth of focus aids in understanding the comprehensive benefits of multimodal input for L2 acquisition. Secondly, the volume demonstrates strong methodological rigor, with many

studies employing a triangulation approach that combines eye-tracking, questionnaires, and retrospective interviews. This multi-method strategy enhances the validity of findings and provides a deeper understanding of learners' processing of multimodal input. Thirdly, the volume addresses an underexplored area by including longitudinal studies with young learners, offering insights into how exposure to captioned audiovisual input over time supports language development among primary school students. This is particularly relevant in today's digital learning environments, where children increasingly encounter language through media.

I highly recommend this volume to language teachers, as many chapters offer practical pedagogical implications for using audiovisual input and onscreen text for L2 learning. It is also well-suited for graduate students and researchers interested in this area of inquiry. In particular, the volume is valuable for those looking to employ diverse research instruments, especially for integrating eye-tracking methodology into studies of second language acquisition through audiovisual input with onscreen text.

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Book review: Bassnett, S., & Johnston, D. (Eds.). (2025). *Debates in translation studies*. Routledge

Xin Li 

Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

The field of Translation Studies, having decisively shifted from its former status as a mere sub-branch of comparative literature or linguistics to a dynamic, interdisciplinary sphere in its own right, is inherently defined by contention and evolution. From the seminal *cultural turn* heralded by Bassnett and Lefevere (1998), which reframed translation as an act of cultural negotiation rather than mere linguistic transfer, to the rigorous ethical debates surrounding power, ideology, and postcolonial identity explored by scholars like Venuti (2019) and Spivak (2003), the discipline thrives on a vibrant clash of perspectives.

It is precisely within this fertile ground of intellectual discord that *Debates in translation studies* finds its vital purpose. This volume is not merely welcome but essential, offering a timely and structured cartography of the key ideological battlegrounds that currently shape the field. Written by leading translation specialists, this anthology of papers under the compelling title affords a fascinating insight into some of the most contentious issues within Translation Studies. The selection of articles addresses shifting viewpoints and emergent themes about translation against the backdrop of quickened socio, cultural, and technological changes.

Grounded in the complexities of contemporary communication, the twelve studies in this collection stimulate discussion on the current profiles of Translation Studies. It encourages critical thinking on how debates within Translation Studies might contribute to shaping the future even “in some tiny way” (p. 1). As such, it provokes further debates on the future perspectives of Translation Studies.

One of the coeditors’ opening piece “How new are today’s debates about Translation?” lays the conceptual framework of the volume. Susan Bassnett traces the development of Translation Studies across time and space to make academic debate fit comfortably within paradigms of progress. She claims that although Translation Studies is now recognized as a global field of study, there are still core layers of unresolved disagreement about what it means to think in terms that may be considered *translational*, and more importantly, what it means to think of the discipline as an interdiscipline.

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Corresponding author: 26@shisu.edu.cn

In “Spacious translations”, Federico Italiano draws an analogy between translation, which is a process of de- and recontextualisation of meaning, and a map, which is a form of organisation, regulation and representation of space. He argues that for this analogy to work, the recontextualisation taking place with the translation process should have a spatial dimension. He further sketches out two modes of translational maps: the map as a translation device and the map as a translation site.

Chapter 3, titled “Translation and trauma”, attempts to confront the broader paradigmatic challenges that investigations into trauma can bring. By identifying and untangling how trauma and translation are tied together and operate on different levels, Sharon Deane-Cox hopes to underscore the importance of positioning ourselves, our research, and our translation practices in self-reflexive ways.

The following two chapters “Reparative translation and activism” and “The translational rift: Decolonising the anthropocene” attack the mainstream theories or discourses in the field of Translation Studies which were mainly Eurocentric or even white supremacist in nature. In the former, Paul Bandia draws on the historical concept of reparation which seeks to redress the inequities and power differentials resulting from the condition of colonisation and/or enslavement. In the latter, Michael Cronin claims that the importance of translation lies in its understanding of a phenomenon that is at the heart of our current ecological predicament. One of the present and future tasks for Translation Studies is to explore through biosemiotic theories of translation the multiple affinities between humans and other creatures or species that inhabit the planet.

Both Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 question the central role of technology in driving societal changes and the host of problems it poses for Translation Studies. In “Technologies and the future of translation: Two perspectives”, Dorothy Kenny scrutinizes reactions to the breakthrough of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in multilingual news production and literary translation. She does not attempt to predict how state-of-the-art translation technologies will develop, but to get a snapshot of how these technologies are being received in neural machine translation and large language models, two very different areas that are nonetheless subject to similar existential threats. In “The inTranslation and datafication”, Neil Sadler begins with a brief overview of datafication as a phenomenon and its development. Then he discusses three key ideas identified in the existing literature on datafication in terms of their implications for translation as a practice, industry and profession. While Dorothy Kenny contends that ultimately it is not the technology alone that shapes the future; rather it is the way in which it is accommodated by the socio-cultural, legal, and economic context that will have the greatest bearing on the lives of journalists and literary translators alike, Neil Sadler posits that datafication does not reduce the importance of human interpretation. Instead, the theory of datafication has much to gain from the contribution of translation scholars because many of the issues it raises are closely related to those explored within Translation Studies for many years.

“The anxiety of representation: Translation studies in China” by Lisha Xu offers a glimpse of the long tradition of Chinese thinking about translation. Her essay dwells on one of the central questions emerging from the political imperative to tell the China story today. She wonders how Translation Studies as an emerging national discipline might deal with the anxiety of representation, so that a story told *well* might also be considered *truthful* in terms of providing the basis of mutual understanding.

Catherine Boyle’s contribution, titled “The word stuck in the throat”, examines how a type of blockage of communication can be managed alongside a deluge of attempts to create continuity and promise for the future. Using her theatrical experience, she illustrates through the metaphor of the throat what informs a changing relationship with translation as well as how translation intervenes in and changes the receiving language. She believes that translation and Translation Studies articulate a familiar space, albeit in a new situation.

In Chapter 10, titled “The judgement of the translator”, Sarah Maitland raises the question: *Who are we judging when we judge translation, and why*. She advocates for acknowledging the translator’s authorial voice, since a translation is the outcome of the translator’s thought process, conscious choices, and the product of politics, and it should be evaluated as such.

Loredana Polezzi is well-known for her research on the affinities between travel writing and translation. In her essay titled “Travel and gender in Translation: The strange case of Isabelle Eberhardt”, she aims to explore the potential of a layered approach to the production of cultural representations through a particularly complex case study in the intersection of travel, gender, and translation – that is, travel diaries.

The final chapter “Translation and news reporting” by Roberto A. Valdeón considers the conceptualisation and application of the translational practice in news production. It discusses the relationship between journalism and translation as well as the gradual estrangement between the two practices. It problematises this situation by highlighting the divergent views of translation held by researchers in translation and journalism studies, which not only illustrate the different approaches to the translational practice but also point to rather inflexible views of what constitutes translation. He believes that this conceptualization is often incompatible with the definition of the practice of translation in other disciplines and professions.

As Susan Bassnett rightfully says, “where is the study and practice of translation today is a question that invites a complex answer” (p. 24). With an emphasis on challenging orthodoxies at both the macroscopic and microscopic level, this volume uncovers thought-provoking dimensions that require in-depth exploration.

First, this volume makes a potent and persuasive call for studying translation as an inter-disciplinary undertaking. It cautions us to rethink the ways in which we perceive translation or, more accurately, the ways in which translation is perceived outside our academic discipline, as this will impact any interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary

academic dialogue. To avoid repeating the calls for interdisciplinarity with little success, some of the chapters (Chapters 2-4 and 12) attempt to carve out clear and productive paths to align translation with adjacent disciplines and point towards real opportunities for collaborative research across disciplinary boundaries

Second, it draws attention to the dynamic nature of Translation Studies and raises legitimate concerns about what counts as Translation Studies in the digital age. These nuanced reflections demonstrate a keen awareness, for example, of how embracing technological advances can change our construal of translation, and how integrating the *technological turn* into Translation Studies allows us to reconfigure our field of inquiry (Chapters 6 and 7; see also, [Kenny, 2022](#); [Littau, 2016](#)). While not detracting from the traditional focus of Translation Studies, these inspiring yet unsettling discussions expose the insufficiency of traditional notions and shed light on the consequent academic and professional implications.

Most significantly, these debates, as a product of their time, not only mirror disciplinary development but also relate to broader trends in the humanities and social sciences. For example, Michael Cronin (Chapter 5) teases out the relationship between ecology and translation and illuminates the role of translation in building a richer and sustainable future. Travel writing and translation (Chapter 11) also falls within this paradigm, which typifies the need to integrate Translation Studies into the wider ecosystem of humanities to produce truly insightful knowledge.

To make it more reader-friendly, particularly to a less specialised audience, I would suggest that some important concepts and technical terms in the volume be clarified or given extra annotation. For example, it might be a good idea to explain the “ethnocentric violence of translation” (p. 18), “extended mind theory” (p. 44), “epistemic violence” (p. 48), “elemental translation” (p. 86), (translation into and out of) “low-resource languages and high-resource languages” (p. 93), among others, as they might pose comprehension challenges for those who have not read the original study. Also, to make the volume more coherent and systematic, the editors could have standardized the format rather than give the contributors free rein in terms of the chapter layout.

Despite these suggestions for improvement, I would certainly applaud the editors for bringing out a range of themes and joining the different strands together. These open, up-to-date accounts are sure to provide valuable guidance for both emerging and veteran scholars working in the field of Translation Studies and help them to navigate the inevitability of change in the modern era. Even interdisciplinary researchers — such as those working at the crossroads of linguistics, cultural studies, or digital humanities — will appreciate how the volume frames translation as a central, unifying practice across these domains, offering fresh insights to enrich their own cross-disciplinary inquiries.

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Book review: Romano, M. (Ed.). (2024). *Metaphor in socio-political contexts*. De Gruyter Mouton

Ignasi Navarro i Ferrando 

Universitat Jaume I, Castelló de la Plana, Spain

Metaphor proliferates in socio-political discourse as in a natural milieu, not just as a tool to make the abstract more tangible, but even more as a human cognitive capacity to create social and institutional reality. More and more evidence in the social sciences corroborates that the social world, i.e., economy, politics, religion, and other social spheres, does not exist intelligibly outside the meaning that human discourse ascribes (Åhäll & Borg, 2013, p. 198). Thus, discourse configures our conventional collective representation of social reality and is constitutive of it (Durkheim, 2008/1912). That reality is fundamentally metaphorical. *Metaphor in Socio-Political Contexts* expounds metaphor in socio-political discourse from a socio-cognitive approach, providing the reader with “(i) an understanding of metaphor as a powerful ideological tool; (ii) an interest in unravelling the role of metaphor within the new (multimodal) discourses and genres of the latest ways of digital communication; and (iii) a vindication of empirical and corpus-based evidence, necessary to establish more realistic links between cognition, linguistic variables and social meaning” (p. 5).

This book is organised into an introductory chapter followed by three parts: (I) Construing reality through metaphor, (II) Contesting the world through metaphor, and (III) Performing ideology through multimodal metaphor, comprising 13 contributions. The chapters in the three sections present empirical research relating metaphor to the construal of ideology, persuasion and contestation.

Drawing on a well-established background on the power of metaphor in cognitive processing and argumentation, Manuela Romano’s introductory chapter opens a fresh and fascinating perspective on the study and analysis of metaphor as an interactional, situated phenomenon, offering key insights into its role in communication and the transformation of society. The author provides an overview of the vast body of research on metaphorical applications in social and political discourse over the last two decades. Particular attention is devoted to the converging pathways of Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis by merging social and language-use aspects with cognitive ones into what the author labels Critical Socio-Cognitive Discourse Analysis. The author emphasises the evolution of the social concept of metaphor from its conception as an

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Corresponding author: ignasi.navarro@uji.es

embodied, individual, atemporal, and cognitive mechanism to a synergetic, communal, historical, and social activity understood as a dynamic and interactive process. The chapter discusses ideology as a construal of reality geared by metaphorical framing strategies and socially situated variables. Romano remarks that metaphor construes ideological frames in a wide variety of genres and modes, as the contributions in this book demonstrate. She claims the need to establish realistic links between linguistic variables and socio-political meanings using authentic data through mixed-method empirical approaches and agrees on explicit procedures for the identification and classification of verbal and multimodal metaphor. Though the book's goals seem ambitious, the contributions satisfy these challenging theoretical and methodological premises.

Part I (Chapters 1-5), titled "Construing reality through metaphor", analyses how specific construals of social reality arise. In Chapter 1, Maria-Josep Cuenca and Manuela Romano explore Spanish digital media and confirm the conceptual, cognitive, and discursive non-equivalence of similes and metaphors, the former being more specific in source and mapping. The authors attribute these differences to the sources and their conventional or creative nature. In Chapter 2, Laura Filardo-Llamas and Alba Roldán-García explore frame activation for gender construal in Tumblr users' discourse. Focusing on cultural knowledge, the authors identify a set of the most frequent frames construing queer identity. They signal the frame's pedagogic function in the endeavour to transform our present-day worldviews on gender. In Chapter 3, Veronika Koller analyses the ideologies and discourse goals behind British news scenarios portraying refugees. Her conclusions show that left-wing publications refer to refugees more frequently and with greater variety, whereas right-wing channels tend to use more emotional terms. The author suggests that the British press represents refugees as weak and relatable, creating a welcoming atmosphere in the community. Silvia Peterssen and Augusto Soares da Silva (Chapter 4) scrutinise the metaphorical construal of the COVID-19 pandemic in social network narratives by two well-known far-right populist leaders, Spanish Abascal and Brazilian Bolsonaro. The chapter illustrates how polarising metaphors enhance inter-group antagonism by promoting exclusionary, intolerant, and extremist political ideas and practices; at the same time, they build nationalist, conservative political and social identities through self-legitimation and delegitimation of the *Other*. Contrasts between Spanish and Brazilian socio-political contexts are reflected in the source domains identified and the frequency of use of particular metaphors. Chapter 5 addresses the discursive functions of metaphor and the mapping strategies that fulfil such functions. Tatjana Đurović and Nadežda Silaški reveal creative, innovative and idiosyncratic mappings that render metaphor a powerful instrument for social action.

Part II, comprising Chapters 6-8, and titled "Contesting the world through metaphor", delves into how responses via metaphorical models and construal may counteract diverse emerging social phenomena. In Chapter 6, Andreas Musolff reveals cues to the interaction between conspiracy theories and cognitive models, such as war. He suggests that this kind of blending is probably a key factor moving certain groups to violent, anti-social attitudes and claims for counteraction in the discourse arena, so that such war scenarios

are deconstructed. In Chapter 7, M. Dolores Porto explores the effects of metaphor on the social construal of health, the environment, and education through digital social media. She describes the process of reframing these target domains by resisting conventional metaphors and substituting them with innovative ones, thereby prompting the emergence of new attitudes and values that supersede the socially pre-established ones. Dennis Tay, Ying Yin, and Yating Yu, in Chapter 8, analyse the persistence of metaphor variants in blame discourse, measuring the emergent critical time point for novel metaphors and their patterns of decadence.

Chapters 9-12 in Part III, titled “Performing ideology through multimodal metaphor,” illustrate diverse phenomena of ideology performance as metaphors transcend media and modes. Roberto Asenjo and María Muelas-Gil (Chapter 9) demonstrate the similarities and divergences in the metaphorical portrayal of women in Irish Catholic and Protestant murals. Chapter 10 offers a helpful guide to identifying and interpreting visual metaphors. Charles Forceville remarks on the relevance of cultural, intertextual, and temporal context, and on the interplay of metaphorical and non-metaphorical strategies in cartoons. Elżbieta Górska (Chapter 11) explores the influence of the socio-political context of recent Polish history on the metaphoric interpretations of visual public art. Finally, Christopher Hart (Chapter 12) reveals the ideological and persuasive potential framing effects of particular metaphors in the discourse of protest. The author shows the power of this usage in legitimising or delegitimising both the authorities and the protesters’ actions.

This volume shows admirable coherence in applying corpus-based discourse methods and a critical usage-based socio-cognitive approach to language and metaphor. The central role of metonymy in social cognition is also recognised in several of the studies, as metonymic uses tend to highlight many perceptual aspects of identities (see, e.g., Filardo-Llamas and Roldán-García). One of the book’s notable contributions lies in its focus on the dynamic and synergistic role of metaphor in social discourse, as emphasised in those chapters delving into the creative-productive side of ideological frame construction (see the chapters in section II, and also those by Peterssen and Soares da Silva, and Asenjo and Muelas-Gil). Beyond that, the book tests the relationship between metaphorical conventionality and creativity, and their framing effects on recipients. The impact of these effects, i.e., how they are either accepted, resisted or contested, is a growing area of interest for discourse analysts and psycholinguists today in a world full of controversy and ideological convulsions. In addition, the volume constitutes a representative pack of research illustrating how metaphors construe ideological frames in a wide variety of media genres and modes, from the most conventional, such as news, interviews, political debates, and political cartoons, including freer social media discourses such as Microblogs, Tumblr and Twitter, up to discourses that touch the artistic sphere, such as street art and sculpture, also thereby making justice to the crucial position of multimodal metaphor in present-day social discourse.

The book responds to the need for a broad scope in the study of framing in social media communication, helping us understand the multi-layered semantic nature of institutional realities and the dynamics of group interaction within the community.

In this regard, the book illustrates the social function of metaphors as conceptual representations of social and institutional facts and worlds and, even more, their linguistic realisations as constitutive elements of these realities. The chapters collected in this volume constitute a remarkable contribution to a growing body of research in the social sciences that discloses the manifold discursive strategies for influencing people's acknowledgement of and cooperation with ideologies and institutional structures, even if it is not to their advantage to do so. In addition, some of the chapters illustrate the counteraction of discourses in favour of resistance and contestation. Thus, this volume is a vivid testimony to the present-day tour de force in the social media arena, amid the multifarious ideologies and social forces in dispute for ideological hegemony. In addition, this collection emphasises the role of human cognition in all these processes, endorsing a triangulation between discourse, society, and cognition (Romano & Porto, 2016).

Overall, the book accomplishes the editor's initial goals by providing an invaluable source of information on the different facets of conceptual representations of ideology, contestation, and protest through linguistic and other media. It constitutes a welcome addition to the extant literature on social reality, social discourse and their cognitive representations. Beyond that, it opens widening perspectives on their consequences for human beings' everyday lives in our contemporary civilisation. I recommend this reading to readers, scholars and researchers interested in disentangling the role of figurative language and discourse in the construction of ideology and social reality.

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