神戸市外国語大学 学術情報リポジトリ

はじめに

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はじめに
Introduction

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Second Language Acquisition is a complex field of study. Cognitive, linguistic, situational and personal factors interrelate with one another within the learner in ways that are unclear at the present moment. To these, we may add pedagogical considerations, given the increasing need for efficient methods of language teaching. The present research is undertaken with two main goals in mind: 1) exploring some theoretical issues about the L2 acquisition process, in particular the non-linearity of such process; 2) analyzing and discussing the implications of this process for the pedagogy of Spanish and languages in general. In particular, we concentrate on Japanese learners acquiring Spanish in a formal setting in Japan, analyzing both their acquisition process and the methods that are currently used to teach them.

Kobe City University of Foreign Studies has been teaching Spanish for 41 years. Our program aims at offering breadth of exposure in several aspects of the language, from grammar to conversation, including composition, reading, linguistics, literature and culture. At the present historical moment, we realize that new discoveries in second language teaching and learning and in theoretical linguistics impose the need to examine the processes that our students go through, in order to improve the quality of our teaching. This project arose from a need of two professionals of the Department of Hispanic Studies at that University to analyze and describe the specifics of the process of acquiring Spanish.

This research is embedded within the context of the literature on L1 interference and error analysis. We attempt to make a significant contribution to the theoretical issues on L2 acquisition by concentrating on a specific L1 group, native speakers of Japanese. We conceive of this study in two parts, of which the present book is only the first one. Here, we introduce the topics under study at a preliminary level. The first chapter presents the current status of Spanish studies in Japan. The second and third chapters present data collected among first, second and third year students at our Department. The working hypothesis is that the acquisition process is not linear: students go through regression and stagnation stages in which certain structures that had been seemingly mastered before yield mistakes. These structures belong to parameter sets: every time that a new construction belonging to a set is incorporated into the knowledge of the learner, the whole system is reorganized. It is at these times when the student resorts to strategies like using the syntax of their native language.

The data analyzed in this volume correspond to written tasks that test the production and comprehension competence of our students. The future of our project includes a set of experiments on oral production and comprehension, as well as an analysis of the methods that are currently in the market for teaching Spanish to Japanese university students.

Finally, as stated above, our objective is also pedagogical. Part of this project is an article on teaching one of the most difficult aspects of the syntax of Spanish, the subjunctive, to Japanese speakers written by Noritaka Fukushima. For reasons of space, this article, entitled "Teaching methods of Spanish subjunctive mood to Japanese speakers" is included in The Kobe City University Journal Vol.54 No.7 (2003). This volume ends with some concluding remarks by the same author.