Chapter 2 The acquisition process of Spanish by native speakers of Japanese. : Non-spontaneous production and comprehension tasks

第2章
日本語母語話者による
スペイン語の習得過程
——非自発的言語産出・理解タスク——

Chapter 2
The acquisition process of Spanish by native speakers of Japanese.
Non-spontaneous production and comprehension tasks[1]

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2.1. The non-linearity of the L2 acquisition process

Researchers on L2 acquisition naturally assume that competence increases as the student advances. The more advanced the learner, the closer his interlanguage is to the L2. However, language competence cannot be defined in absolute terms. It is a fact that students progress in their knowledge of language, but it is also obvious that, as is the case with any learning task, the process is not linear. Whereas textbooks and teachers proceed in their grammatical explanations from what are believed to be easier to harder constructions, students may only be able to use correctly some of the material at a given time, and not necessarily the 'easiest' structures. Furthermore, students are familiar with the frustrating experience of mastering a structure one

1 The present study (reported in this and the next chaper) could not have been completed without the help of Roger Civit Contra, to whom I am deeply indebted.

day only to discover that the same structure yields an erroneous sentence the next. Grammatical issues that are considered basic and that are covered in the first stages of the learning process appear problematic at very advanced stages (e.g., the difference between the copulas *ser* and *estar* in Spanish). Any language teacher has experienced the frustration of hearing higher-level students fall back into a lower competence stage than expected. This is most obvious in overt morphological marking, but it applies to syntax as well.

The non-linearity of the process is still a mysterious phenomenon that, to our knowledge, has not been described satisfactorily. It is well-known that children acquiring their native tongue go through stages in which they make mistakes in structures that they had seemingly mastered. For instance, children learning English may use irregular pasts (*went*, *broke*) correctly at one point, only to produce forms like the ungrammatical *goed* or *breaked* the following day. Researchers assume that when the child does this, he is overgeneralizing, a consequence of reorganizing the system upon establishing a grammatical rule. These 'errors' are not considered mistakes, but rather a sign of progress. In fact, this phenomenon is viewed as natural in the L1 acquisition process.

The process of learning a second language, however, is not usually analyzed in the same light. From the point of view of a language teacher, errors due to poor knowledge, performance constraints or other extraneous reasons are not distinguished from mistakes due to internal reorganization processes of the type described above for children. Methods also ignore this non-linearity, which we will call "the spiral process". However, recent studies on interlanguage (see next section) propose that, independently of the L1 of the learner, there is a natural process of acquisition subjected to some regularities. Thus, we may assume that L2 learners also face reorganization stages in the course of this natural process, and that the 'regression'

phenomena mentioned above are part of that process.

At an intermediate-advanced stage of learning a L2, linguistic demands overwhelm the student: joggling morphology, lexicon, syntax and semantics at the same time means that some of these aspects must suffer at the expense of others. This is not only obvious at the performance level, where the oral production abilities of the person are affected by stress, motivation, attention capacity, character, etc. It is also the case that some features remain confusing as students advance, even in circumstances where time pressure is not an issue. When given the task of writing or translating, in which students can monitor their production, errors reveal deep linguistic problems or shortcomings in their knowledge of a particular feature. Thus, some questions for researchers are the following: what linguistic features suffer in particular in the non-linearity of the process? What parameters do those features that remain problematic at advanced stages belong to? Is this a universal fact about interlanguages?

The debate about L1 interference in the process of acquiring a L2 is still unresolved (see next section). In spite of differences between L1 and L2 in many constructions, not all of them prove difficult for learners: L1 interference is not visible in many constructions which differ between the two languages. For example, Japanese students do not seem to have big difficulties with the head-initial parameter of Western languages. However, it is undeniable that some errors have an idiosyncratic flavor: some of the errors that Japanese students make differ from those that speakers of languages like French, for instance, might produce. Our hypothesis is that, every time a new construction belonging to a set affected by a given parameter emerges, students face the task of reorganizing the system to host that new construction. In the process of reorganization, the L1 might be used as a temporary aid. The learner might be more prone to falling into his native language for help in finding an acceptable overt way of

constructing the sentence at times in which reorganization is taking place. Hence, the more advanced the student, the more he resorts to his L1 grammar in order to deal with the increasing demands of having to reorganize several systems at once.

The idiosyncratic nature of the mistakes is in a sense a merely superficial fact: the way in which certain features are overtly expressed in the L1 determines the character of the mistake, but the fact that students make mistakes in those constructions and not others may be a universal, the result of resetting some parameters pertaining to particular features of syntax. We speculate that only some features cause a spiral effect and thus lead to L1 interference.

The spiral effect of reorganizing the whole system to accommodate a new construction can be described thoroughly by examining the errors of the intermediate and advanced students and how much or little progress is observed at these stages. The existence of certain errors indicates where and when students face the need to reorganize the system. The nature of the errors and the resulting production may be traced back to the L1 of the learner.

This new approach to L1 interference contrasts with the literature to date. In order to place our research within such digressions, the next section presents an overview of the previous literature on error analysis and L1 interference.

2.2. The role of L1 and error analysis in L2 acquisition. A brief overview.

Pioneer studies on the role of the first language in acquiring a second language speculated that L1 caused interference in the process of acquisition and was the source of most of the learner's errors (Ellis 1997, Fernández 1997 and references therein, Gass and Selinker 1983, Manchón Ruiz 2001). This view was rooted in the behaviorist

theory of learning, according to which learning is a creation of habits. If the L1 and L2 are similar, the interference may be assumed to be both positive and negative. Some constructions, already in the inventory of habits of the learner, can aid the process. However, the learner might have the false impression that similarities extend beyond what they really do and make erroneous guesses about the L2 grammar (García Gutiérrez 1993). If the L1 and L2 are very different, researchers expected negative interference, since the process would be one of changing habits. This yielded a number of studies that contrasted the L1 and L2 grammars in an attempt to predict errors and help students avoid certain mistakes. This approach is called the Contrastive Analysis (Lado 1957, Stockwell and Bowen 1965, Stockwell et al. 1965, Lee 1968, among others. See Ellis 1994 for a thorough discussion of these works in English and Manchón Ruiz 2001 for a discussion of these works in Spanish). The pedagogical consequence of this point of view was that errors were undesirable and must be prevented at any expense.

Cognitive approaches to learning arose that criticized behaviorist postulates. Based mainly on Chomsky's nativist theories, these approaches questioned the habit formation theory of learning and proposed that there is a universal and innate process of learning language that extends to the task of learning a L2. The reaction to behaviorism brought with it a reaction to contrastive analyses between L1 and L2 that had been the basis of research on language interference. From then on, interlanguage analyses took the lead, and studies concentrated on whether there is a natural course of acquisition, independently of the L1 of the learner (Ellis 1985, 1994, Liceras 1993, Flynn et al. 1998, Gass and Selinker 2001, etc.).

In the last decades, research on interlanguage has included error analyses which attempt to trace back the origins of errors and determine which ones are due to the L1 of the learner. Errors are not

demonized any longer; in fact, they are not only considered indispensable in the acquisition process, but are of interest to researchers to describe the stages of that process. It is now clear that the L1 is not the main source of errors in the learner's interlanguage, accounting for about a third of them at the most (see the review in Fernández 1997 and Ellis 1994). However, at the same time, it is undeniable that the L1 affects the learning process somehow. Whereas the question of the deep ways in which it does is still unclear, at least it can be convened that at the strategy level—most evident in production—the influence of L1 is undeniable (Ellis 1985, Manchón Ruiz 2001, Blanco Picado 2002). There are structures that are avoided in the second language, over-used structures, fossilization of certain errors, etc. Researchers have speculated that the L1 affects students more in the initial stages of L2 acquisition, when their knowledge of the L2 grammar is still insufficient.

At the same time, studies within the generative tradition have discussed whether access to Universal Grammar (UG) is intact in the process of acquiring a L2, or whether it is mediated by the L1 (Flynn et al. 1998, Slabakova 2001 and references therein). Some recent research seems to support the so-called Full Transfer / Full Access hypothesis, the view that the L1 grammar is the initial state of L2 acquisition. In other words, in the initial stages of learning a L2, it is hypothesized that students transfer the parameter values of their native language, although later they are able to reset the parameters to those of the L2.

In sum, recent studies on L2 acquisition consider two different aspects of the role of L1: the L1 affects the learner at the strategy level, according to some. According to others, the L1 is the starting point of the acquisition process, which consists of changing parameters. In both cases, the L1 is assumed to affect the learning process more at the beginning than at advanced stages. As we have

stated above, however, this is not necessarily the case. From the strategy point of view, students may need to resort more to their L1 when the demands of their level are higher than the achievements of their reorganization efforts. From the UG point of view, the parameters of the L1 might provide the only help when dealing with the reorganization process of only certain features. This process is initiated not in the initial stages, but at the intermediate ones, and continues until the student becomes a near-native, or even forever.

To conclude, it can be said that, at the current moment, one of the main questions in SLA research continues to be to what extent the experience of learning a particular language differs for learners of different L1s, and to what extent the process follows a natural course, is universal, predictable and independent of the L1. Our stance is that the process is universal: there is a spiral effect that affects certain linguistic features. These linguistic features concern sets of interrelated constructions. As a new construction needs to be assimilated by the student, a reorganization of the whole set takes place, leading to stages of regression or stagnation in the progress of the student. Thus, the non-linearity of the process, observable in any student, can be attributed to these linguistic features. However, the process also suffers from L1 interference, and in that sense it can be described differently for different groups of learners depending on their native tongue. The idiosyncratic flavor of the errors (which applies to those features only), reflect a strategy of the learner, who is forced to find an overt way of instantiating a feature temporarily and thus resorts to his L1.

To summarize: our hypothesis is that, independently of the differences between L1 and L2, L1 interference applies mainly at regression stages provoked by the reorganization process of a set of parameters. There are constructions that differ between Japanese and Spanish that do not pose any problems for learners. The progress of

students with regards to these constructions is linear (see section 2.5.1.a). However, every time a new construction belonging to a certain feature parameter (for instance, the aspect parameter) is introduced, a reorganization process begins. It is during this reorganization phase that learners resort to their L1 for help. Thus, the mistakes generated in certain structures have the flavor of the L1 of the speaker, whereas the mistakes generated in others look similar irrespective of the L1 of the student. In this sense, L1 interference is most obvious in intermediate/advanced stages of learning than at the beginning of the acquisition process.

This hypothesis is in line with studies like those of Montrul 2000, for instance, who proposes in her study of causative constructions that Universal Grammar and L1 knowledge "may not affect all linguistic domains in the same way at a given stage of development". Montrul proposes that transfer is subject to modularity in interlanguage grammars. Our study supports this conclusion, and aims at describing some of the modules in which L1 transfer is expected.

2.3. Factors to take into account in this kind of research

In order to explore these issues, a good setting is one in which the L1 and the L2 are very different and individual variation is reduced by being in a context in which age, education, instruction time and such variables are controlled for. The relevance of our study is that we analyze the process of Japanese native speakers who study Spanish (a very different language from their native tongue) in a non-Spanish speaking setting and subjected to similar hours of instruction. Spanish and Japanese differ in many aspects, but, as we will see in our study, only some constructions lead to Japanese-sounding mistakes at advanced stages of learning.

To initiate our study, we examined some random exercises that had been assigned in class as part of the requirements for the grade and that responded to the materials being covered in the courses. At this exploratory stage we did not have a focus on particular constructions. For instance, in the first year, uses of *ser* and *estar*, subjunctive, relative clauses, imperative, etc., were the target of exams. We observed the progress at different times of the year, using translations from English and Japanese into Spanish, and some brief spontaneous written production sentences in reaction to a picture. We then presented the second and third year students with similar sentences for translation.

From these preliminary analyses, it was clear that at least three interrelated factors needed to be considered in designing a complete study:

1. Initial and constant influence of native language on morphology: errors in the articles, verb agreement or adjective/noun agreement tend to become fossilized.
2. Process of interlanguage development (hypothesis testing, spiral effect). More Japanese-sounding constructions as students advance. Comparison between Spanish and Japanese feature systems.
3. Possible influence of the method and textbooks in the conscious hypotheses that students make about the language or in the degree to which they understand grammar.

Factor 1 is beyond the scope of the present study (for a detailed analysis, see Fernández 1997). It is a fact that even advanced students show deficient marking in the morphology of verbs in Spanish, but we will not analyze this fact here. Our main concern is syntax, since we are exploring the issue of resetting of parameters and the influence of L1 in the process. Hence, we concentrate on factors 2 and 3 and we

pose the following questions:

※ What aspects of the language cause a need for reorganization leading to a regression in the level of the student?

※ Do grammatical explanations lead students to wrongful reasoning and to incorrect hypotheses when reorganizing the system?

A complete study of the learning process must employ a variety of techniques and target different skills in order to arrive at solid conclusions. Tasks that allow students to monitor their production (written tasks without time pressure) and tasks in which they are required to produce under time constraints (oral tasks) might help elucidate what features of the L1 influence the real competence of the learner and what mistakes in production are simply due to communicative strategies that consist of resorting to one's L1 for lack of time. Our project includes tasks of several types, as well as a few different syntactic structures that reflect aspectual and modal features of Spanish.

About our subjects, all of them belong to the Spanish Department of Kobe City University of Foreign Studies and study Spanish as their major field of specialization. Thus, they take six obligatory subjects in Spanish each of the four years that they remain at the University.

2.4. Preliminary observations: the spiral effect.

The English stimulus "The city of Kobe is surrounded by mountains", which was included in one of the first-year (first-semester) exams, illustrates the spiral phenomenon. Among the first-

year students, 32% offered a correct translation with the verb *estar* (for our purposes, a correct response is one that contains *estar* and a past participle, even if the agreement was wrong: *la ciudad de Kobe esta rodeado por montañas*[2], for instance, was considered correct). However, only 18% of second-year students did. At this stage, many students preferred a version with "se" (*la ciudad de Kobe se rodea(n) por las montañas*), or tried a transitive construction (*las montañas rodea(n) la ciudad de Kobe*) in order to avoid the use of *estar*. 33% of the third-year students answered correctly, but the most frequent mistake at this stage was the use of the copula *ser* (*la ciudad de Kobe es rodeada/o por montañas*). This seems to indicate that, as learners progress, they become more sensitive to the difference between *ser* and *estar*, but this difference becomes more confusing. It is possible that the use of these copulas responds to some reasoning based on pedagogical mistakes or shortcomings of their acquired competence.

It may be speculated that the reasoning that our students undergo is conscious rather than the unconscious hypothesizing of the type that children experience, and that it might be based on formal instruction. Students may reason that the city of Kobe being surrounded by mountains is a permanent state, which leads them to think that the use of *ser* is more appropriate. Textbooks of Spanish often oversimplify the aspectual differences between the copulas *ser* and *estar* (for these aspectual differences, see Luján 1981), stating that *ser* is used for permanent whereas *estar* is used for temporary states. Looking at the responses of our subjects, it is obvious that the incorrect generalization that *ser* is used for permanent states is emphasized too much, that the use of past participles is not well

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2 The past participle *rodeado* is masculine, whereas the word *ciudad* ('city') is feminine in Spanish.

explained in the methods, and that aspectual notions are not assimilated by the learners. Real input in the form of many constructions that could help students make their own hypotheses seems to be insufficient in these methods. When present, that input mainly consists of grammatical formal explanations that incur in useless or counter-productive simplifications. In any case, irrespective of the reason why these advanced students fall into a regression stage, the fact is that they do.

A similar phenomenon is confirmed with the sentence *My sisters are prepared for the exam.* 50% of the first-year students answered correctly (under the same standards of correction stated above). In contrast, 31% of the second-year students did so. Finally, only 14% of the third-year students gave a correct answer. Among the second-year mistakes, many opted for the present perfect (*mis hermanas han preparado para el examen*), which shows some consistency with the meaning of the correct construction as a finished action. However, in the third year, more than half of the mistakes stemmed grom using the progressive form (*mis hermanas están preparando el examen*), a resource to a structure that they dominate in order to avoid the one they have not fully grasped. Also, among the third-year students, a tendency to use the simple present is observed (*Mis hermanas preparan el examen*). It is interesting to note that only four students out of forty-six chose this option in the first year. These signs of avoidance of a certain structure increase as students advance without enough input and too much grammatical reasoning.

Observations like these applied mainly to the parameters of aspect and mood in the materials that we had at that time, and hence we selected these parameters for close examination. Aspect and mood seem to be problematic parameters, and thus a good starting point for our research. The parameter of aspect is reflected in several constructions that students must master in the course of their studies

(*ser/estar*, imperfect/simple past, use of clitic *se*, etc.). Even though aspectual distinctions may look different in Japanese, the syntax of this language also marks aspect overtly. As an example, the structure *−te iru* is used in different ways depending on the lexical aspect of the verb (see below). The same applies to modality.

Both aspectual and modal phenomena, features of the core grammar of a language, must be acquired through exposure to input that allows the learner to make his own hypotheses until he internalizes their uses and consequences. In other words, these are parameters that need to be reset. Formal instruction (at least the formal instruction that we are providing currently) seems to do little in helping the student achieve competence of these features in Spanish; the student instead searches for ways of expressing aspect and mood in their L1 as they progress towards accuracy. It is our goal to explore the ways in which they do this.

Our conclusions are based only on the observation of percentage of correct responses. This is not a statistical measure, and it might be perceived as naive. The reader should take into account that our intention was only to observe tendencies as an initial approximation to the phenomena affecting our pool of subjects.

2.5. Observed phenomena

In the preliminary stage, we examined the results of translation tasks. Subjects had to translate several sentences into Spanish. In the uncontrolled tests, the stimuli are either in English or in Japanese (Tables 1 through 6). Later, we ran follow-up tests in which both versions were included. In these latter tests, half of the subjects received the version in English and the other half the version in Japanese (Tables 1'through 6'). The number of subjects is not always

uniform, since the tests were run during the course of regular class periods. In sections 2.5.2.a and in chapter 3 we will introduce the data corresponding to spontaneous written production tasks that were performed in second and third-year classes (compositions and letters).

2.5.1. Aspectual phenomena

The parameter of aspect is reflected in several constructions in Spanish. The distinction between the copulas *ser/estar* is only one of them. The latter copula is used with several aspectual meanings (Luján 1981). Furthermore, the Spanish clitic *se* plays a role in the overt marking of telic events (Sanz 1996, 2000, and references therein). Japanese also presents overt markers such as *−te shimau* (*shimau* indicates completion) in order to mark telicity, and has other ways of marking eventual distinctions, like the use of the postpositions *ni* or *de* depending on the stative / eventive nature of the predicate (a thorough linguistic analysis of the ways in which aspectual features are checked in both languages is beyond the scope of this study, but we assume an aspectual projection with different possibilities for overt checking (Sanz 2000, Slabakova 2001)). Aspectual distinctions are crucial in the grammar of languages, and thus are features that must be mastered by an L2 learner in order to achieve proficiency in the L2. If our hypothesis that students resort to their native language in the more advanced stages as a strategy to cope with demands while reorganizing their L2 linguistic system is correct, we should expect to see more mistakes or Japanese-sounding sentences of the type introduced in section 2.4 among second and third year students.

The next sections present several uses of the copula *estar*. As it will become clear, some of these uses are not a problem for our learners, although others, and in particular the ones that have to do with aspect, yield erroneous translations.

2.5.1.a. Use of *estar* to express location

In this translation task, students were presented with English sentences. In the first year, these exercises were part of the evaluation procedures for the grammar class. In the case of the second and third year students, it was administered in the form of a test without warning to the students. Table 1 shows that this particular use of the copula *estar* (a non-aspectual use) is devoid of problems, and thus shows a linear progression as students advance.[3]

Sentennce	After 1 month	Second semester	Second year (fourth semester)	Third year (sixth semester)
1. The hotel is here	36% (17/46)			
2. The children you are looking for are in that room		71% (33/46)	87% (14/16)	95% (20/21)
3. The station is over there		71% (33/46)	87% (14/16)	100%
4. Our neighbors are not at home today		56% (26/46)	87% (14/16)	85% (18/21)

Table 1. Estar expressing location. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

The correct translation for sentence 4 (*our neighbors are not at home today*) should include the verb *estar*. The reason for the lower percentage of correct responses among first-year students to this

3 An expression of existence with *haber* can be used to substitute for a state sentence. When the task is a translation corresponding to an English sentence with *there is/there are*, we have observed that it does not pose any problems: subjects usually respond with *hay*. In particular, subjects in the first year did not make mistakes in the use of the quantifier *un* in an existence construction. To the sentence *There is a white house*, after only one month studying Spanish, forty-four out of forty-six students responded (*Aquí*) *hay una casa blanca*. Expressions of existence like these and the presentational use of *ser* (e.g. *esto es una casa*) showed a linear progression.

sentence is the high number of subjects who left the answer blank for lack of the appropriate lexicon items. Most of them did not know the word *neighbor* and also hesitated about the possessive *our*, and it appears that they decided not to answer the question. Many of the ones who correctly used *estar* left out the word *vecinos* ('neighbors') (e.g., *nuestros no estân en casa hoy*). Disregarding that lexicon problem, it seems that there is a progression towards higher and higher levels of accuracy, especially if what modifies the predicate is an adverb (*over there*) or a prepositional phrase with *in*. Of the three subjects in the third year who did not provide with a good answer to this last sentence, two left it blank and one used the expression *los vecinos no se quedan en casa hoy*. Similarly, the mistakes in the second year correspond to subjects who did not provide an answer. It is only in the first year that some subjects use the copula *ser* in these constructions. Very soon, this non-aspectual use of *estar* seems to be assimilated by Japanese speakers.

A follow-up test that was conducted in the third semester of Spanish studies (second-year students, spring semester) and among third year students in their fifth semester (spring semester) confirmed the progression observed above. The results are presented in Table 1'[(1)].

Sentence	Second year (third semester)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. The children you are looking for are in that room	92% (26/28)	86% (13/15)
2. あなたが捜している子供達はあの部屋にいます	95% (20/21)	91% (11/12)
3. The station is over there	89% (25/28)	93% (14/15)
4. 液は、あそこです	100% (21/21)	91% (11/12)
5. Our neighbors are not at home today	66% (14/21)	100% (12/12)
6. 今日はお隣りはお留守です	71% (20/28)	86% (13/15)

Table 1'. Estar expressing location. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses

(1) All tasks containing the data from the follow-up experiments present pairs of stimuli: the stimulus in Japanese corresponds to the stimulus that appears above in English.

indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

2.5.1.b. Use of *estar* to express state

In contrast with the observations of Tables 1 and 1', the use of the copula *estar* to indicate state seems to be a source of confusion for Japanese students. In fact, this is the most striking phenomenon that arose in our collection of preliminary data. In particular, when used with adjectives like *cansada* ('tired'), this construction does not seem to pose any problems, but when used with past participles, it yields very low percentages of correct responses. Observe the data in Table 2.

Sentence	After 2 months	Beginning of second semester	End of first year	Second year (fourth semester)	Third year (sixth semester)
1. The mountains are covered with snow	83% (39/47)				
2. Mary is tired			89% (41/46)		
3. The city of Kobe is surrounded by mountains		32% (15/46)		18% (3/16)	33% (7/21)
4. My sisters are prepared for the exam		50% (23/46)		31% (5/16)	14% (3/21)

Table 2. Estar *expressing state. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.*

The surprising fact in these data is that just after two months of study, first-year students are able to provide an answer that contains the copula *estar*. However, the percentage decreases as the years pass by. As we stated above, second and third year students perform very poorly on these constructions with a past participle. The mistakes in the second year include the use of *se*, a difficult clitic that is frequently associated with states and that might confuse students at this stage. In other words, the introduction of *se* in the materials causes a reorganization that affects a previously mastered

construction with *estar* (mastered because it had probably been stored unanalyzed). Furthermore, the third-year students resort to *ser*, probably as a result of wrong grammatical reasoning prompted by the methods. These data are reminiscent of children's data: students in the first stages use an unanalyzed form, whereas students in more advanced stages apply some hypothesis-testing strategies. The fact that they do this with constructions related to aspect reveals that this is a feature that requires resetting and continuous reorganization.

Curiously enough, fourteen first-year students also chose *ser*. However, the pool of subjects consisted of two different groups, and these fourteen students belonged to the second one. Although all forty-six informants were taking the same grammar class, they were divided into two groups for conversation classes. One group was using the textbook *Sueña I* (Editorial Anaya E.L.E.) for their conversation class, a book which contains grammatical explanations. The other group was using a set of materials designed purely for conversation, with little or no explicit grammar: *Intercambio I, Como Suena I* (Editorial Difusión), and the video *Destinos. An Introduction to Spanish* (McGraw Hill)). Since our test was administered during conversation classes, students might have been influenced by the textbook; as opposed to the former group, the latter group did not apply too much grammatical reasoning of the sort that *ser* is used for permanent states (like being surrounded by mountains). Hence the difference in response between the two groups.

Another angle at the results can be obtained by observing how many students respond to both sentences 3 and 4 correctly. If a particular student does this, it can be considered a sign that he has assimilated the type of construction under analysis. Among the first-year students, fourteen (30%) used *estar* in both. Nineteen subjects (41%) used it in only one of them, mainly in number 4, because they mistook the past participle for a gerund (*mis hermanas están*

preparando el examen). Thirteen students (or 28%) failed in both sentences, either because they left both or one blank, or because they chose expressions with *se*, etc.

Among the second-year students, only one managed to translate both sentences correctly. Concerning third-year students, only two did. This indicates the uncertainty of the students in the face of constructions with *estar* and a past participle, and the deterioration of the structure as students advance in their knowledge of Spanish.

The follow-up study that included both English and Japanese translations confirmed the very low percentage of correct responses. In particular, the translation of the Japanese equivalent of *the city of Kobe is surrounded by mountains* yields amazingly low correct responses among the third-year students (only 16%). The second-year students showed a slightly higher percentage of accuracy. In the case of the English translation, only six out of fifteen subjects were able to produce a sentence with the copula *estar* and a past participle. However, the sentence *the mountains are covered with snow* in its Japanese equivalent yielded 100% of correct responses among third-year students, suggesting that the preposition *with* helps them identify the sentence as a state. Two possible explanations come to mind. Perhaps the preposition *by* in the previous sentence caused some confusion among our subjects, making them believe that the sentence was a passive and leading them to the use of *ser*. However, only a few subjects used this copula. Most subjects might have had a lexicon problem and might have not finished the translation because they did not know the word for *surround*. This would account for the difference between the sentence *the mountains are covered with snow* and the previous one (*the city of Kobe is surrounded by mountains*).

With regards to position verbs like *to be sitting*, the low percentage of correct responses shows that students have not learned that these sentences express states rather than constructions with a

gerund (similar to English).

Sentence	Second year (third semester)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. The city of Kobe is surrounded by mountains	50% (14/28[4])	66% (10/15[5])
2. 神戸市は山に囲まれています	28% (6/21)	25% (3/12)
3. The mountains are covered with snow	71% (15/21)	75 (9/12)
4. 山々は雪に覆われています	71% (20/28)	100% (15/15)
5. Mary in tired	100% (28/28)	100% (15/15)
6. マリーさんは疲れています	95% (20/21)	83% (10/12)
7. I am ready for my trip already	38% (8/21)	66% (8/12)
8. 私はもう旅行の準備を済ませています	7% (2[6]/28)	40% (6/15)
9. The old man is sitting on the bench	19% (4/21[7])	41% (5/12[8])
10. 老人がベンチに座っています	50% (14[9]/28)	33% (5/15)
11. The window is open. Shall I close it?	85% (24/28)	93% (14/15)
12. 窓があいています。閉めましょうか？	80% (17/21)	100% (12/12)

Table 2'. Estar *expressing state. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response* (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

Let us look in detail at the results for sentences 1 and 2. It is illustrative to compare the ratio of avoidance of the construction

4 In fact, only five subjects provided a correct answer. The other nine of the fourteen that we report used *estar*, but could not produce a past participle.

5 We include answers with *estar* in which the subject provided no past participle. Only six subjects provided the past participle.

6 For this sentence, most subjects produced *ya he preparado* ('I have already prepared'), etc.

7 Most sentences were wrong: the subjects used the gerund, maybe influenced by English.

8 Many of the subjects used a gerund.

9 Many subjects provided ungrammatical sentences with a gerund. The same applies to the figure for the third year.

depending on the language of the stimulus. When the stimulus is in Japanese, the native language of our subjects, avoidance increases. But the really interesting fact is that avoidance increases more among the third-year students. Thus, nine third-year subjects out of twelve (75%) produced a sentence like *Hay montañas alrededor de Kobe, Están montañas alrededor de Kobe, or Kobe está alrededor de las montañas,* avoiding the use of a past participle. In contrast with this, only 4% of second-year students did this. If we count the second-year students who leave the answer blank, 58% (eleven subjects) avoid the structure with sentences like *Hay los montes cerca de Kobe ciudad.* The other second-year subjects either start the sentence with *La ciudad de Kobe* and then do not know how to finish it, or try a version of it with a past participle. When the stimulus is in English, however, the percentages of avoidance are 26% (4/15) for the third-year students and 25% (7/28) for the second-year students, virtually the same. This finding is surprising, given that the stimulus is given in the form of a passive both in Japanese and in English. However, the following fact is observed: when the stimulus is in English, most subjects know that the right copula is *estar* and not *ser* (the latter is used for passives in Spanish); when the stimulus is in Japanese, their doubts lead them to avoid the use of any copula at all and to produce instead a sentence of existence or location. These doubts seem to be stronger among the third-year students than among the second-year ones. Indeed, only four second-year students produced a sentence with *ser* for the English stimulus.

These data confirm our initial hypothesis that advanced students stumble upon encountering an aspectual structure which should have been mastered by then. It can be argued that our translation task with stimuli in Japanese leads our subjects to think of the grammar of their native language. However, this applies to second-year students as well, and the ratio of avoidance is lower. Furthermore, English and

Japanese do not differ significantly in these structures, and nevertheless mistakes increase when the stimulus is in Japanese. This seems to indicate that students fall into their native language at times of doubt, independently of the particulars of the task. They are simply in their regression stage, caused by a possible reorganization and assimilation phase of the aspectual constructions, which pile up as years of study pass by.

2.5.1.c. Use of *estar* in the progressive

The copula *estar* is also used in the progressive tense in Spanish. The Japanese construction *－te iru* is not always equivalent to the Spanish progressive tense. This Japanese form can be used both for action and stative verbs. In particular, the stative or eventive interpretations depend on the lexical aspect of the verb in question. On the contrary, Spanish speakers do not use the progressive with a stative verb (e.g., **Estoy conociendo al señor Tanaka*, "I am knowing Mr. Tanaka'). The sentences for translation in this test contained

Sentennce	Beginning of second semester	End of first year	Second year (fourth semester)	Third year (sixth semester)
1. The children you are looking for...	39% (18/46)		56% (9/16)	66% (14/21)
2. その猫は戸口でかれを待っている		35% (15/42)		
3. あなたの友達は、戸口で待っている			56% (9/16)	66% (14/21)
4. 父が居間で煙草を吸いながら新聞を読んでいる			50% (8/16)	61% (13/21)
5. 子供が庭で楽しそうに遊んでいる			43% (7/16)	47% (10/21)

Table 3. Estar *in the progressive. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response* (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

action verbs, for which the best translation in Spanish is a progressive form. Looking at Table 3, however, it becomes obvious that this 'easy' construction, which is usually introduced at the beginning of any

method, poses many problems for Japanese speakers acquiring Spanish. 35% of the students at the end of the first year produced a continuous form, but 64% produced a simple present form. The third and second year students that did not produce a progressive opted for the simple present (*mi padre lee, 'my father reads', los chicos juegan,* 'the boys play'). It cannot be said that this option constitutes a mistake, but it is not the best choice for an action verb, especially in the sentences with *leer* ('read') and *jugar* ('play'). These data make us wonder whether students understand the different aspectual values of the form *－te iru* in Japanese and the correspondences between the aspectual options in Spanish.

In the follow-up test, we observed very low percentages of correct responses, especially in the second year, with some of the stimuli, and in particular with the Japanese ones. Verbs like *play or read* should have led to more progressive sentences than they did, since they are clearly eventive verbs. A verb like *wait* seems to suggest a simple present to our subjects in general, perhaps because it is perceived as a stative verb, more appropriate in the simple present. In other words, *wait* belongs to the stative lexical aspect group of verbs in Japanese. Our students tend to produce a sentence using the simple present in Spanish, an appropriate tense for states, even though in Spanish this verb is considered an event (an activity) and is commonly used in the progressive tense. Again, this suggests a fall-back into their L1 at times of confusion.

The difference between the English and the Japanese stimuli is striking, including the sentences with action-like verbs like *read or play*. Third-year students make more errors with this latter verb than second-year subjects when the original sentence is in Japanese.

Sentence	Second year (third sementer)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. The cat is waiting for him at the door	78% (22/28)	93% (14/15)
2. その猫は戸口で彼を待っている	33% (7/21)	75% (9/12)
3. My father is reading the newspaper in the living room while he smokes	75% (21/28)	80% (12/15)
4. 父が居間で煙草を吸いながら新聞を読んでいる	57% (12/21)	83% (10/12)
5. The children are playing happily in the garden	76% (16/21)	91% (11/12)
6. 子供が庭で楽しそうに遊んでいる	75% (21/28)	53% (8/15)
7. Your friends are waiting for you at the door	76% (16/21)	91% (11/12)
8. 君の友達が、戸口で君を待っているよ	42% (12[10]/28)	80% (12/15)

Table 3'. Estar *in the progressive. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response* (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

All sentences in this table show the effect of the language of the stimulus. In particular, the pair 1-2 illustrates the point. Percentages of correct responses decrease when the stimulus is in Japanese. Four out of twenty-eight students (14%) in the second-year used a simple present when the stimulus was in English. In contrast, thirteen out of twenty-one second-year students chose this option when the stimulus was in Japanese (61%). Only one student in the third year used a simple present when the stimulus was in English, but three students did this when the stimulus was in Japanese. These data support our hypothesis that L1 interference occurs at advanced stages, at times in which the learner is not sure about the structure, possibly due to an on-going process of assimilation or reorganization of the system.

10 As with other sentences in this group, subjects tended to provide a simple present, which is also appropriate in this context. Twelve subjects provided a progressive form.

In conclusion, the use of *estar* in location sentences does not pose problems and presents a linear progression, but all other uses related to its value as an aspectual copula create confusion among students, especially as they advance to higher courses. The reorganization process that is required to accommodate all constructions related to aspect leads students to occasional stages of regression. At these stages, subjects resort to their L1 grammar even for 'basic' aspects of the grammar of Spanish: their competence has been fed with too many grammatical explanations and not such a rich real input. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that textbooks introduce the copulas in the beginning stages of learning. However, by the third year, students have been unable to reset the aspectual parameter and still use the copulas incorrectly.

2.5.1.d. Other kinds of states

There are states that are not expressed through the use of *estar*, because they are lexically determined by the choice of verb. Sentences that are expressed in Japanese through the form *– te iru* may correspond to a progressive in Spanish when the verb is an action verb. However, when the verb is not action-like, as in the sentences in Table 4, it corresponds to a simple present in Spanish. The first sentence should be translated using the stative verbs *tener, disponer de*, etc., in the simple present. The second sentence requires the verbs *crecer* ('grow'), *vivir* ('live') or similar ones. For the third one, *flotar* ('float') is the best option, although an expression with *hay* ('there are') is also possible (*hay nubes (flotando) en el cielo*).

This difference between action and non-action verbs is in the competence of Japanese native speakers, since it is reflected overtly in the grammar of Japanese by the use of a different postposition to mark the place where the action or the state take place. However, as we said above, Japanese speakers use the form *– te iru* both for

actions and for stative verbs. Thus, we expect confusion in these constructions, hypothesis that is borne by the data. (Table 4 reflects the percentage of responses that contain a simple present).

Sentence	After 2 months	second semester	End of first year	Second year (fourth semester)	Third year (sixth semester)
1. 日本は37万平方キロの国土を持っている			83% (35/42)		
2. サボテンは、砂漠に生えている				37% (6/16)	47% (10/21)
3. 青空に白い雲が浮かんでいる				37% (6/16)	42% (9/21)

Table 4. States without *estar*. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

About the sentence 日本は37万平方キロの国土を持っている (Japan has a territory of 370,000 ㎢), twenty-six first-year subjects used the verb *tener*, and nine subjects used *dispone de*. This was obviously a construction that they had learned and prepared for the exam, and thus the high percentage of correct responses. It can be argued that we presented the second and third-year students with a test without previous preparation, which should account for the poor results. This is indeed the case, but that also applies to the data on other constructions, and, as seen in Table 1, students perform well, because the knowledge of the construction is part of their competence in Spanish. Furthermore, this is precisely what we are interested in exploring: how much of the basic knowledge students have assimilated and internalized in their competence. In this sense, they seem to be very confused about the uses of *－te iru* and their correspondences in Spanish.

Among second-year students, the six subjects included in Table 4 answered either with *crecer or vivir* to the second sentence. Five subjects left the answer blank, three students chose *estar*, one subject used *ser*, and one subject wrote *se plantan* (*'they are planted'*). Among

the third-year students, ten answered with *crecer, vivir* and *existir* (one mistook *crecer* with *crear*, producing the sentence *cactus crea en la arina*). One produced *crian los cactus en desierto*. Five students did not provide with an answer, two chose *estar*, and two chose *se ven* (*cactus se ven en el desierto*).

About the third sentence, 青空に白い雲が浮かんでいる ('there are clouds floating in the sky'), six second-year students produced a sentence with *hay*, five chose *estar*, two did not answer, one wrote *podemos ver las nobles blancos en el cielo azul* and one produced *en el cielo azul está nadando el nube blanco*. In other words, the variety of answers and the search for options that shows up in the results indicates that students are confused about the best way to approach a simple state sentence in Spanish, which is through a simple present non-action verb. It also tells us that the strategy of avoidance is resorted to more and more frequently as students advance.

A stated above, we speculated that it might be the Japanese *－te iru* construction that might influence the subjects at this stage. If this is the case, translations from English should make the data improve. This is confirmed in the sentence *Martians live in Mars*. A cautionary note is in order here, however: both this sentence and *cactus grow in the desert* showed very poor results, but this may have been due to a lack of the appropriate vocabulary, since many subjects left the answer blank. Nevertheless, the Japanese stimuli posed more problems for the subjects that the English ones, confirming that the use of *－te iru* with states in Japanese leads intermediate and advanced learners to a confusion about aspectual features in Spanish.

Sentence	Second year (third semester)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. Mr. Tanaka knows Mr.Nakata	70% (16/21)	191% (11/12)
2. 田中さんは中田さんを知っている	92% (26/28)	100% (15/15)
3. Martians live in Mars	75% (21/28[11])	100% (15/15)
4. 火星人は火星に住んでいる	42% (9/21[12])	91% (11/12)
5. Cactus grow in the desert	23% (5/21)	50% (6/12)
6. サボテンは、砂漠に生えている	14% (4[13]/28)	53% (8/15)
7. Japan has a territory of 370,000 square km	71% (15/21)	91% (11/12)
8. 日本は37万平方キロの国土を持っている	67% (19/28)	86% (13/15)

Table 4'. States witho ut estar. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

In sum, the parameter of aspect is so complex that it seems to be reorganized constantly, as new distinctions appear in the input. The acquisition process shows the spiral effect: when *se* or new aspectual uses of *estar* appear in the input, students seem to question their previous knowledge or at least they get confused and resort to their native tongue. On the contrary, the non-aspectual uses of *estar* show a linear progression. This should make teachers and textbook writers think about the efficacy or the timing of the explanations. When faced with the reorganization process, if the explanations are simple, incorrect or untimely and if real input is scarce, students can hardly

11 None of the subjects provided a correct sentence. The 21 reported here used the verb *vivir* in the present tense, but usually with the wrong agreement.

12 It may be that many subjects did not know the word for Martians and that is why they chose to leave the answer blank. It might not have been a problem with the structure, but with the vocabulary.

13 Most subjects left the answer blank

establish their own hypotheses and test them. Instead, they are forced to fall back into their L1 in order to create a sentence. Since Japanese aspectual distinctions are realized in different ways than Spanish ones, Japanese-sounding sentences are expected.

It is likely that students of languages in which aspectual distinctions are similar to those in Spanish show higher accuracy earlier in the learning process, creating the impression that they have mastered this feature of the L2 grammar. However, in general, the parameter of aspect is a place where we can expect L1 interference at later stages, and therefore constructions that differ between those L1s and Spanish should be analyzed in search for true evidence of the resetting of the parameter. As we have seen, in the case of Japanese, students have enormous problems with this parameter.

To conclude our preliminary approach to the acquisition of the Spanish aspectual parameter by Japanese speakers, we turn now to the use of the clitic se as an aspectual marker.

2.5.1.e. Aspectual use of *se*

The Japanese expressions ending in *– te shimatta* usually correspond to sentences with the clitic *se* in Spanish, in particular with verbs of consumption (*comer, beber* ('eat', 'drink')). However, the use of *se* is one language feature that most learners of Spanish never master, in particular when it must be used in combination with a dative clitic (*se le escapó,* 'he escaped from him', etc.). Textbooks usually introduce this construction with the verb *caer* (*se le cayó algo,* 'he dropped something'). Observe the decline in accuracy as learners progress in their Spanish studies. Whereas 21% of the students in the first year answered correctly using this verb, only 9% of the students in the third year did. Again, this may be attributed to the fact that first-year students prepared for the exam, whereas third-year students were caught off-guard by our test. However, again, this is a sign that

students have not assimilated the basic use of *se* with a verb like *caer* ('drop)', in spite of the instruction received throughout three years. It is important to remind the reader at this point that these are written tasks where subjects have time to monitor their answers, and therefore the results reflect their true competence (i.e., *production* competence. We will concern ourselves with *comprehension* competence later in our study).

Sentence[1]	End of first year	Second year (fourth semester)	Third year (sixth semester)
1. オオカミはまっすぐお祖母さんの家に行って、彼女を食べてしまった	57% (24/42)		
2. きこりは、その贈り物をうっかり川に落としてしまった	21% (9/42)		
3. 警官は泥棒を逃がしてしまった		6% (1/16)	4% (1/21)
4. 彼女は、大切な皿をうっかり落としてしまった		12% (2/16)	9% (2/21)

Table 5. Aspectual se. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

A high proportion of the mistakes were due to the fact that students started the sentence with *ella* as a subject but still used the clitic (*ella se cayó el plato importante*, 'she *se* dropped an important dish'). Four students in the second year made this mistake but, significantly, none in the third year did. Except for two correct answers, the third-year students seem to have forgotten completely about the use of *se* in this construction. Some subjects started the sentence with *ella* but did not use the clitic (*ella ha caído una plata importante*, two in the second year and eight in the third year). In

(1) Sentence 1 corresponds to English 'the wolf went to grandma's house and ate her up', Sentence 2 is 'the tree-feller dropped a a precious present in the river', sentence 3 is 'the thief escaped from the policeman's hands, and sentence 4 is 'she dropped a precious dish without intending to.

other words, apart from the two students in the third year who provided a correct translation, none used *se*. The type of sentences they produced followed the Japanese pattern of making the dish the direct object of the verb. Other mistakes of this type include *cayó la plata necesita sin cuidad, dejó el plato importante, ella bajó un plato precioso por su falta de cuidado,* etc. The percentage of non-answers increases in the third year, indicating a growing insecurity and uncertainty.

The follow-up test revealed the following: with a consumption verb like *eat* or with an accomplishment like *break*, the third-year students improve their performance and remember to use *se* more often than the second-year students, although they still show uncertainty. Most subjects in both years produce an incorrect sentence, but they are aware that the construction requires *se*. With verbs like *caer*, with which one must use a dative construction, most subjects produce an incorrect sentence. Even though the third-year students seem to be aware that the construction requires a clitic, they are mostly unable to produce a correct translation. It is noticeable that performance accuracy increases when the stimuli is in Japanese and contains *－te shimatta* and a verb like *break* (コップは割れてしまった).

Sentence	Second year (third sementer)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. An important dish fell off her hands	0% (0/28)	40% (7/15)
2. 彼女は、大切な皿をうっかり落としてしまった	0% (0/21)	16% (2/12[14])
3. The wolf (lobo) went to grandma's house and ate her up	39% (11[15]/28)	80% (12/15)
4. オオカミ (lobo) はまっすぐお祖母さんの家に行って、彼女を食べてしまった	33% (7/21)	66% (8/12)
5. The child's toy fell off his hands	4% (1/21)	16% (2/12)
6. 子供は、おもちゃを落としてしまった	0% (0/28)	33% (5/15[16])
7. The lumberjack (leñador) dropped the present into the river involuntarily	0% (0/21)	8% (1/12)
8. きこり (leñador) は、その贈り物をうっかり川に落としてしまった	0% (0/28)	26% (4/15)
9. The glass broke	14% (3/21[17])	33% (4/12)
10. コップは割れてしまった	25% (7/28)	93% (14/15)

Table 5' . Aspectual se. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

In sum, the close correspondence between the overt marking of telicity in Spanish and Japanese with consumption verbs (clitic *se* and *－te shimatta* form, respectively) seems to account for the linear progression observed in Table 5'. However, the high percentage of mistakes among the third-year students reveals that *se* is a difficult feature to acquire, and that its use with a dative is one of those features in which regression takes place. Furthermore, when *se* is introduced in the input, students start making mistakes that affect other aspectual features like the uses of *estar*, etc. At this stage, the influence from the language of the stimulus is obvious: with verbs like *caer* ('drop'), Japanese starts the construction with the human subject as topic. In contrast, English starts the sentence with the object that falls. Our second and third-year subjects seldom realize that this construction in Spanish requires that the object that falls be the subject and that the human to whom the action happens be stated in the form of a dative. When the stimulus is in English, twenty-six out of twenty-eight second-year students correctly used the dish as the subject of the sentence. Of those, two used the dative clitic *le* and six used *se* but not accompanied with *le*. In other words, none of the subjects produced the right translation, but all of them correctly used the dish as the subject of the sentence. Among third-year students, five out of fifteen produced a correct or nearly correct sentence with

14 Most subjects produced an incorrect construction. Only one produced a correct sentence with *se*.
15 These were the subjects who used *se*, even if the sentence was ungrammatical
16 Most subjects produced an incorrect sentence. These are the subjects who provided a sentence with *se*, even if incorrect.
17 Most people left the answer blank.

se le. Two more used *se*, but not *le*, and one used *le* without *se*. One hundred per cent of the subjects made the dish the subject of the sentence. On the contrary, observe what happened when the stimulus is in Japanese. Nine out of twenty-one second-year students used *ella* as the subject of the sentence (*ella cayó el plato importante*, for instance). In four cases, it is difficult to tell with whether the subject of the sentence is*ella*, because they omit the pronoun and the sentence becomes ambiguous between having the dish or the woman as subject (*cayó involuntariamente el plato precioso, cayó el plato importante sin cuidado*, etc.). However, the presence of the adverbs makes us think that the student had the woman in mind as the subject. Only one subject used *se* and none used *le*. In a word, most people created a transitive sentence with *ella* as the subject, and forgot that the construction requires a dative. Among third-year students, nine out of twelve also chose *ella* as the subject when the stimulus was in Japanese. Eight people used *se*, but only two of those accompanied it by *le*, producing a correct translation. The influence of the language of the stimulus proves that students have not mastered the use of *se* in these involuntary telic actions in Spanish, and that they resort to their native grammar.

In this section, we have examined some observed phenomena regarding the acquisition of aspect, based on production tasks. The following section examines similar phenomena with regards to mood.

2.5.2. Modal phenomena

Another of the salient topics in our preliminary view of the data is mood. Modal constructions differ greatly between Japanese and Spanish. Except for imperative constructions, requirements and desires are expressed in significantly different ways in both languages. In particular, the use of the subjunctive is a Spanish feature completely

foreign to Japanese speakers. Japanese speakers may use a suffix to express probability (*desyou*), and wishes are usually expressed through adjectives like *ii* or *ureshii*, following a verb ending in *−te*. Requests are constructed with added verbs like *moraitai* after a verb in the *−te* form. In all these cases Spanish resorts to the subjunctive. If mood is a feature affected by the spiral effect, we may expect Japanese-sounding sentences in the advanced stages of learning, when students reach one of their regression or stagnation stages.

Among the translation tasks in the first year, there are sentences requiring the subjunctive as well as the imperative. In the test that we passed to the second and third year students, we included two very simple imperative sentences, but no subjunctive. Later, we included subjunctive constructions in the follow-up tests. We also have composition data about the use of the subjunctive in these two courses, which we will present at the end of this section.

2.5.2.a. Subjunctive

The only construction requiring the subjunctive that we have for the first-year students is the translation to the sentence *I want you to clean this room now*, which was part of an exam at the end of the year. Thirty-nine out of forty-six subjects provided a correct response with the verb *querer* ('want') followed by *limpiar* ('clean') in the subjunctive (although some incorrectly changed *limpiar* by *cumplir*, by they still used the appropriate form in the subjunctive). This may indicate that students had learned an unanalyzed form for this construction, for the purposes of the exam.

To the second and third-year students, the following task was assigned in their first semester. They were given instructions in Japanese to write a fifty-word letter to a Spanish friend as if they were a Midori (see appendix for the instructions in Japanese). The instructions specified that Midori had traveled to Barcelona, and that

her friend Miguel had shown her around and treated her very well. Thanks to Miguel, her stay in Barcelona was a lot of fun, the Japanese instructions explain. Miguel has expressed his desire of traveling to Japan the following year. In the letter, the student should:

1. Thank Miguel for everything he did for her
2. Tell him what good a time she spent in Barcelona
3. Tell him that she is looking forward to seeing him in Japan the following year

A typical expression in Spanish for the meaning of 3 above includes a verb of desire (*espero que vengas a Japón, quiero que vengas a Japón,* 'I hope that you can come to Japan', 'I want you to come to Japan'), or at least a temporal expression like *cuando vengas a Japón, yo te ayudaré* ('when you come to Japan, I will help you'), for instance. The test was administered to thirty-one students in the second year and twenty-nine in the third year.

Of the second-year students, only two (6%) used the expected and correct expression: *Yo espero que tú vengas a Japón el año que viene, Espero que vengas a Japón y nos veamos de nuevo el año que viene.* In contrast, twenty-one students (67%) searched for alternative ways that did not include the use of the subjunctive (see Appendix 1). Eight students (25%) attempted a construction with a verb of desire but did not use the subjunctive accordingly (see Appendix 1). These data indicate that most students avoid the use of the subjunctive, and others do not know clearly that a verb of desire like *deseo, quiero, espero*, etc., is usually followed by this mood.

Among the twenty-nine third-year students, only six (20%) provided a correct answer. Five other students (17%) produced also some version with the subjunctive. Thus, 37% of the students used the

subjunctive. Still, a majority (eighteen students, 62%) avoided the construction through several alternatives (see appendix 1).

The observation that third-year students are unclear as to the basic uses of the subjunctive is confirmed by the fact that they were asked, at the end of the year, to translate a short story from Japanese into Spanish. In that story, the following sentence appeared: しかし、早くあけすぎて、価値のある物とも知らずに捨ててしまうことはないでしょうか ('however, if they find it too soon, they may throw it away, unaware of its value'). The most natural translation for this sentence should include the subjunctive. Out of twenty-one subjects, only nine tried this option, however (see Appendix 2).

In the follow-up test, the poor understanding of the subjunctive is confirmed. When the stimulus is given in English and contains a verb of desire like *hope*, the results are rather accurate. However, when the stimulus is in the L1 of the speakers, the percentage of correct responses is very low, noticeably low among third-year students.

Sentence	Second year (third semester)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. I hope that you can come to Japan next year	71% (20/28)	86% (13/15)
2. 来年あなたが日本に来れるといいですね	52% (11/21)	58% (7/12)
3. I am glad that you came	17% (5/28)	73% (11/15)
4. あなたが来てくれて嬉しい	38% (8/21)	33% (4/12)
5. I want you to come here immediately	57% (12/21)	50% (6/12)
6. 私はあなたにすぐにここに来てもらいたい	75% (21/28)	93% (14/15)
7. It is possible that they do not see it and throw it away	57% (12/21)	33% (4/12)
8. 彼らはそれがあるのに気が付かなくて捨ててしまうでしょう	0% (0/28)	0% (0/15)

Table 6. Subjunctive. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

Let us examine first the results of the use of the subjunctive in requests as is the case of the pair I *want you to come here immediately*/ 私はあなたのすぐにここに来てもらいたい. Contrary to what happens with sentences of desire, when the stimulus is in Japanese, the levels of accuracy are rather high, especially among third-year students. Of the second-year students, twenty-one out of twenty-eight produced a correct translation. Even if the translation was incorrect, twenty students used a subjunctive after the verb *quiero*. However, when the original sentence is in English, only six out of twelve third-year students produced a correct sentence, and only twelve out of the twenty-one second-year students who participated in this test did so. The most common mistake was the use of an infinitive (*Te quiero venir aquí pronto, Te quiero a venir aquí inmediatamente, quiero venirte aquí de prisa*, etc.)[1]. It is noticeable that third-year students perform much worse than our second-year subjects when the stimulus is in English. Again, this is arguably a sign that third-year students are going through a phase in which core grammatical features are unstable. An English stimulus with a different structure than that of Spanish can create confusion among this group.

The use of the subjunctive in constructions of desire or affective constructions in which the speaker expresses satisfaction seems to be more problematic. Observe the results of the pair *I am glad that you came*/ あなたが来てくれて嬉しい. The results when the stimulus is in Japanese show the influence of the lack of tense marking in this language. Not only do subjects in general not realize that the subjunctive is necessary in this case, but they also forget that the correct form in the subordinate sentence should appear in the past tense. The high percentages of incorrect sentences shows that this

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(1) The translation in English (e.g., 'I want you to come here soon'), with an infinitive, is ungrammatical in Spanish.

structure is problematic for Japanese students of Spanish. When this is the case, Japanese-sounding constructions are expected, since students resort to their L1. Examples of translations reminiscent of Japanese grammar are induced by our Japanese stimulus: *me alegro de que vino, me alegre mucho de que viene, yo me alegro que lo viene, me alegro que tu vienes*, etc.

The conclusion is that neither the use of the subjunctive with a verb of desire nor its meaning in a hypothetical situation are part of the competence of most learners at the end of their third year. After an initial stage in which students understand the construction consciously and are able to perform well in an exam, this type of knowledge never passes from the conscious to the personal competence of the student. Modal features need to be reset and are among the features that cause a strategic fall-back on the L1 when grammar explanations and an insufficient amount of real input places intermedi ate/advanced students in a difficult situation.

2.5.2.b. Imperative

It is difficult to select what is a correct response in the case of the imperative. For instance, for the expression *shut up!* we were expecting an affirmative like *cállate!* However, most of the first-year students chose a negative like no *hables!* (*'don't talk'*) or an affirmative like *tranquilo!* (*'quiet!'*), both of which are correct responses. Nevertheless, in the table, we only report as correct those that, if affirmative in English, are translated as affirmative in Spanish, and vice versa. As for expressions like *tranquilo!*, since they are not verbs, we do not include them in the table, but comment about them in the text later.

Sentence	Beginning second semester		End of first year		Second year (fourth semester)		Third year (sixth semester)	
	Tú form	Usted form	Tú form	Usted form	Tú form	Usted form	Tú form	Usted form
1. Shut up!	4% (2/46)				37% (6/16)		76,% (16/21)	
2. Don't look at me					12% (2/16)	12% (2/16)	28% (6/21)	4% (1/21)
3. Carmen, please don't go			36% (17/46)	54% (25/46)				
4. Come back here			63% (29/46)	29% (14/46)				

Table 7. Imperative. The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

It is shocking to observe that simple constructions like those in sentences 1 and 2 show so few correct responses even in the third year. Especially, the chosen verb (*mirar* 'look') is not a difficult verb (although many students confuse it with *ver* 'see'), and thus we would expect students to have internalized the subjunctive form of *mirar* that is used in the negative imperative.

For the sentence *shut up*, thirteen students out of forty-six in the first year did not provide an answer. Nineteen chose a negative expression, some of them with mistakes (*no digas nada, no diga, no hable, no habla, no hables, no dije nada*, etc.). Nine used a version of *tranquilo* (*tranquila, tranquilas*, etc.), whereas the rest produced sentences like *deje hablando, dejes hablar, no des*, etc.).

Of the second-year six correct answers, four did not use a clitic (*calla!*). Four students produced negatives like *no habla, no conte, no digas, no hable.* Four chose a name or an expression with *silencio* ('silence'): *haya silencio, silencio, silenciona.* Two left the answer blank.

Among third-year subjects, one chose the negative *no digas*, one translated it as *tranquila*, one as *basta!*, one as *silencio!*, and one did not answer.

Therefore, there is a linear progression in this affirmative sentence. And, even though the progression is also linear for sentence 2, let us examine the responses to this stimulus. Three third-year students chose *no me veas* ('don't see me'). Other mistakes in this group include *no relaciõneme, no me ve, no me miras, no mireme, no me vetes*, including three subjects who left the question unanswered. One opted for the alternative *no debes de verme* ('you should not see me'), a strategy to avoid the use of something that s/he could not produce.

The mistakes in the second-year group are also varied: *no me mira, no me ve, no me mira, no mire a mi, me no mire, no me vea, no me ve*, and four blank responses.

Sentences 3 and 4 were presented together in the test as part of the same complex sentence. A surprising fact is that eleven students produced an imperative in the *usted* form in one part of the sentence (usually, the negative), whereas they used a *tú* form in the other, even though the two imperatives refer to the same person, Carmen. Only one out of those eleven used a *tú* form in the negative and a *usted* form in the affirmative.

Sentence	Second year (third semester)	Third year (fifth semester)
1. Wake up!	75% (21/28)	86% (13/15)
2. おきてください！	52% (11/21)	66% (8/12)
3. Come back, please!	90% (19/21)	100% (12/12)
4. ここに戻ってください！	96% (27/28)	93% (14/15)
5. Don't go there!	52% (11/21)	58% (7/12)
6. あそこへ行かないでください！	67% (19/28)	86% (13/15)

Table 7'. Imperative.The numbers express percentage of students who provided a correct response (agreement is not considered in the results). The parentheses indicate the amount of students who answered correctly and the total of informants.

The follow-up tests revealed that, indeed, results are bad when the stimuli are negative, especially if they are presented in English (*don't go there, please*). The Japanese おきてください！ ('wake up') was also problematic for the second-year students, although curiously enough, they all knew that the correct lexical item to use was *levantarse*, since most of them tried a construction with the clitic and this verb.

As part of the same exam in which sentences 3 and 4 appeared, there was a task in which two pictures were provided and the student was to generate the conversation of the characters. In one of the pictures, a student appears sleeping in class as a classmate tries to wake him up because the teacher is looking at them. The target is an imperative like *despiértate!* or a similar expression. Ten students produced something along these lines, like *levántate o levanta.* But the presence of the clitic obviously made this construction a difficult one, since most students produced sentences like *te levantés, te levanta, te levantes, levántete, debes levantarse, levante, se levante,* etc. The same occurred in the answers to the follow-up tests. Some students, of course, opted for the negative *no duermas* ('don't sleep').

The second picture portrayed a person who is very cold sitting by the heater, while another person is opening the window. The person by the heater gestures to the other not to open (or to close) the window. Nine students chose *no abra la ventana* ('don't open the window', usted-form). Five students produced *no abras la ventana* ('don't open the window', tú-form). Six students wrote *cierre la ventana* ('close the window', usted-form), whereas nine wrote *cierra la ventana* ('close the window', tú-form) (or some erroneous version of the plain form, like *cerra la ventana or cierras la ventana!*). Other subjects chose dialogues in which the person opening the window asks for permission, and the other denies it. Again, we see the correlation between the use of the

usted vs. the *tú* form and the order being a negative or an affirmative one.

2.5.3. Conclusions from the data so far

Aspect and mood are at the core of the grammar of natural languages. They are functional features that determine the structure of sentences and are parameterized. The ways in which languages mark aspectual and modal distinctions overtly vary greatly. L2 learners probably undergo a constant reorganization of the aspectual and modal systems as new aspectual and modal constructions emerge in the input. The type of student that we analyze is exposed to conscious analyses through formal grammatical instruction. However, this does not lead them to mastering the system. In particular, we observe little or no progress or even deterioration of the competence as the student advances. We speculate that, in the complex task of reorganizing the aspectual and modal systems by resetting parameters, students go through a non-linear process of advancement in which they resort to their L1. In order to aid the student in surpassing these fall-back stages in the spiral process, rich input that allows them to make their own hypotheses would be needed.

The overt teaching of these grammatical issues should take into account the reorganization process: teachers and textbook writers might want to consider when and how to introduce constructions, taking into serious consideration the fact that the introduction of one causes a regression in the mastering of a previous one that is assumed in the student. Current traditional and/or functional methods are flawed in this respect. Our data have shown that students who can otherwise communicate in Spanish rather fluently still make the types of mistakes that we have observed even at the end of their third year of formal (and intensive) instruction in an academic institution as part of their core curriculum. That they make these mistakes in

written tasks in which they can monitor their production is evidence in favor of this conclusion, since the errors could not be due to pressure to talk, time constraints, etc.

The fact that they answer correctly to some constructions in the first year, but later lose competence indicates that grammar explanations are useful only at a superficial level, when the learner does not have to joggle several sentence issues at the same time and when he can prepare little material for a concrete test. At this point, students probably learn unanalyzed forms. However, those grammar explanations do not serve the purpose of helping the student internalize the grammatical knowledge. As parameters to be set, these features must occur in a rich input dealing with several contexts in order for the student to hypothesize and test his/her own hypotheses against the real data. For the most part, textbooks in Japan are a collection of short stereotyped dialogues custom-made for students, that have little to do with real language and which are clearly insufficient.

2.6. Grammaticality Judgments

We have speculated that students, irrespective of their L1, undergo the same process with regards to aspectual and modal features of the L2. In the intermediate/advanced stages, they must resort to their L1 for a while. It is at that point that mistakes reflect the most L1 interference. L1 influence is more noticeable at the intermediate/advanced stages, at least in L2 acquisition in a formal setting, where rich input is missing. We have checked this hypothesis through production tasks that consist of translating sentences out of context. This task shows the real shortcomings in the competence of the student. However, the student probably knows consciously what the correct structures in Spanish look like. We presented our students with

a grammaticality judgment task in which they were asked to judge the grammaticality of forty-three sentences (thirty stimuli and thirteen fillers), among which we included some of the mistakes that they had produced in the translation tasks. Students must assign a value from 1 to 5 (1 being absolutely ungrammatical, and 5 being absolutely grammatical). The results are summarized in the following table.

Sentence	Type of sentence	Corrected sentence	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
1. Los niños que estás buscando son en esa habitación	*Estar*= location	Los niños que estás buscando están en esa habitación	2.49	2.20	2.77
2. Hay muchos libros en la biblioteca	Filler		4.28	4.80	4.64
3. Las montañas son Cubiertas de nieve	*Estar*+past participle	Las montañas están cubiertas de nieve	2.56	2.60	2.73
4. ¡Te levanta!	Imperative	¡Levántate!	2.56	2.68	2.00
5. Esta Universidad no es muy grande	Filler		4.42	4.44	4.05
6. La estación es alli	*Estar*= location	La estación está allí	2.77	2.24	1.77
7. Le cayó un plato importante de sus manos	Se with dative	Se le cayó un plato importante de las manos	2.51	2.76	3.18
8. Los vecinos no hay en casa hoy	*Estar*= location	Los vecinos no están en casa hoy	2.02	2.20	1.59
9. El año pasado fui de vacationes a Hawaii	Filler		2.91	3.17	3.41
10. María es muy cansada	*Estar*=state	Maria está muy cansada	2.72	1.83	2.23
11. Desde el hotel hay una vista muy bonita	Filler		2.98	2.68	2.77
12. La ciudad de Kobe está cubriendo por montañas	*Estar*+past participle	La ciudad de Kobe está rodeada de montañas	2.91	2.59	1.77
13. Quiero que vienes aquí enseguida	Subjunctive	Quiero que vengas aquí enseguida	2.49	2.68	1.86
14. Marcianos viven en Marte	State	Los marcianos viven en Marte	3.70	4.22	3.45
15. Últimamente los programas de telrvisión son muy aburridos	Filler		3.28	3.73	3.64
16. Hoy hemos comido pasta	Filler		3.28	3.32	3.41

17. Los niños están jugando en el jardín	Progressive		4.16	4.73	4.41
18. Japón tiene un territorio de 370,000 Kilómetros cuadrados	State		3.54	4.00	4.18
19. Cuando era pequeño, me gustaba jugar al fútbol	Filler		2.98	4.22	4.64
20. Quiero que podrás venir a Japón el próximo año	Subjunctive	Quiero que vengas a Japón el año que viene	2.77	2.63	1.82
21. El lobo fue a la casa de la abuelita y la comió	*Se* with consumption verb	El lobo fue a la casa de la abuelita y se la comió	2.51	3.73	3.86
22. Me gustan los cuadros de Dalí	Filler		3.98	4.66	4.41
23. Tus amigos te están esperando en la entrada	Progressive		3.21	3.21	4.00
24. ¡Te vuelva, por favor!	Imperative	¡Vuelve, por favor!	2.33	2.61	1.95
25. El gato le está esperando en la pverta	Progressive		2.79	2.98	3.36
26. El leñador se le cayó el regalo al río	*Se* with dative	Al leñador se le cayó el regalo al río	2.21	2.90	3.59
27. ¿Has visto a tu amigo hoy?	Filler		2.95	3.88	4.36
28. El cactus crece en el desierto	State	Los cactus crecen en el desierto	2.93	3.44	4.00
29. Me alegré de que vengas	Subjunctive	Me alegré de que vinieras	2.60	4.17	3.14
30. Han abierto un museo nuevo en nuestra ciudad	Filler		2.93	2.59	2.64
31. El vaso rompió	*Se* with telicity	El vaso se rompió	2.77	2.80	2.23
32. El viejo está sentando en el banco	*Estar*=state	El viejo está sentado en el banco	3.51	3.78	3.18
33. Soy aficionado a leer cómics	Filler		2.47	3.27	3.64
34. La ventana es abierta. ¿La cierro?	*Estar*=state	La ventana está abierta. La cierro?	2.53	1.59	1.82
35. ¿Llegaste a tiempo a la boda?	Filler		2.98	4.00	4.18
36. Ya soy preparado para mi viaje	*Estar*=state	Ya estoy preparado para mi viaje	2.00	1.68	1.68
37. Mi padre está leyendo el periódico en el comedor mientras fuma un cigarro	Progressive		2.72	3.59	4.27

38. Quizá lo tiran cuando lo vean	Subjunctive	Quizá lo tiren cuando lo vean	2.56	2.93	3.36
39. Mi escritorio está lleno de papeles	Filler		2.74	3.95	4.41
40. ¡No ve allí, por favor!	Imperative	¡No vayas allí, por favor!	3.53	3.10	3.00
41. El señor Pérez conozca al señor González	State	El señor Pérez conoce al señor González	2.63	3.12	3.05
42. Mi ordenador se ha estropeado	*Se* with telicity		3.19	3.95	3.64
43. El niño se le cayó el juguete	*Se* with dative	Aniño se le cayó el juguete	2.86	3.29	3.23

Table 8. Grammaticality judgments

Let us examine first the sentences expressing location that should contain *estar* but appear incorrectly in the stimuli. It is surprising that sentence 1 (*Los niños que estâs buscando son en esa habitación*) is rated higher by third-year students than by second and first year students, in spite of containing a basic mistake (the use of *son* instead of *estân*). Sentences 6 and 8, however, prove that third-year students know about this use of *estar*. About constructions with *estar* + past participle, sentences 3 and 12 present two different aspects of their syntax. In sentence 3, the wrong copula is used. The results of sentence 3 are again surprising, showing a progression from less acceptable among first-year students to more acceptable among third-year ones. However, sentence 12 contains the right copula but the wrong form of the main verb, namely a gerund instead of a past participle. The results of this stimulus show the expected rejection by the more advanced students. If the uses of *estar* were solidly embedded in the competence of our subjects, sentence 3 should have yielded similar results to sentence 12. These data confirm the spiral effect that affects L2 students: although they might suspect that the use of a gerund in this construction is wrong, they are unclear about the use of *estar* even at very advanced stages of their learning.

The spiral effect is clearly shown in the responses to sentences in

which *estar* expresses state (sentences 10 and 34). In both cases, even though our students know that the sentences are ungrammatical, third-year students seem to accept them better than second-year ones. The high ratings for sentence 32 (*El viejo está sentando en el banco,* a sentence that contains an incorrect use of a gerund) also confirm the findings of our translation task that this type of position verbs is not understood by our Japanese learners of Spanish. This sentence should be constructed with a past participle instead. These results contrast with those for sentence 12, in which, as we saw, students know that the use of the gerund is erroneous.

About the use of the progressive in Spanish, the ratings of the grammaticality judgment task show the correct linear progression of acceptance, although we are surprised that students did not rate these sentences with a number closer to 5, given that they are perfectly grammatical (observe that some of the fillers obtained a punctuation over 4).

Striking confirmation of our previous findings about regression is found in the answers to incorrect sentences with *se* and a dative (stimuli 7, 26 and 43). Note the higher ratings of acceptance among third-year students, compared to the lower ratings by first-year students. The same applies to sentence 21, in which *se* should be used with a consumption verb. On the contrary, sentence 31 (*El vaso rompió*, incorrect because it lacks the clitic *se*) proves our initial finding that students know that this type of construction requires the clitic.

Let us now focus on the subjunctive. Sentences 13 and 20 contain a verb of request and are followed by an erroneous indicative. The results of our translation task proved that, at least when the stimulus was in Japanese, students were pretty accurate in producing this type of construction, third-year students making fewer mistakes than second-year ones. This is confirmed in the present data on grammaticality

judgments, in which third-year students clearly reject these erroneous stimuli.

Other uses of the subjunctive are illustrated in stimulus 29 (*Me alegré de que vengas,* 'I was glad that you came') and in stimulus 38 (*Quizá lo tiran cuando lo vean* 'perhaps they throw it when they see it'). The former contains a mistake concerning the tense of the subordinate clause in the subjunctive, which should appear in the preterit, since the main verb is in the preterit. The latter is a plain misuse of the indicative in a subordinate sentence which should appear in the subjunctive in a sentence expressing hypothesis. The results to stimulus 29 show the right reaction among first-year students, but an unusually high acceptance ratio by second-year students. Third-year students lower their acceptance rate in comparison with their classmates in the previous course, but still accept the sentence widely. It can be argued that our subjects estimated that this type of mistake in the tense is more acceptable than a mistake in the mood, which is understandable. However, their responses to sentence 38 are surprising. This confirms our initial finding that the subjunctive in hypothesis sentences is quite problematic for our Japanese students.

Sentences 4 and 24 contain erroneous imperatives in the affirmative form. The results show a linear progression: third-year students reject these erroneous constructions more than first and second-year students. Although the same can be said of sentence 40 (an imperative in the negative), the higher means of acceptance (from 2.00 and 1.95 for sentences 4 and 24 respectively to 3.00 for stimulus 40 among third-year students) confirm our initial observation that students do not understand very well the syntax of negative imperatives in Spanish, syntax that requires the subjunctive form of the verb.

In conclusion, the results of this grammaticality judgment task basically confirm our findings in translation tasks. Correct aspectual

uses of *estar* and of the clitic *se* (with the exception of *se* with accomplishments like *break*) are not part of the competence of third-year students. With regards to mood, the use of the subjunctive in requests and the affirmative imperative seem less problematic, but desires, hypotheses and negative imperatives remain confusing at advanced stages of learning. It would be interesting to explore whether the teaching of the subjunctive is deficient in not introducing all uses of such mood efficiently, and in oversimplifying its functions.