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第1章 中間言語の再構築過程：日本語話者によるスペイン語補文構造の習得

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第１章
中間言語の再構築過程
—日本語話者によるスペイン語補文構造の習得—

Chapter 1
Restructuring Processes of Interlanguages: The Acquisition of Spanish COMP Structures by Japanese Speakers[1]

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1. Interlanguages evolve in a non-linear fashion

As research on the mental processes involved in L2 acquisition advances, it has become clear that students of a language are not mere *tabula rasa* on which one can imprint knowledge through pattern repetition (a behaviorist premise) and grammatical explanations of structuralism-style paradigms. Independently of the influence of the L1, a learner's interlanguage (heretofore IL) undergoes constant restructuring triggered by either universal principles and/or by features of the L2 in question, akin to the 'U-shaped' progress of children acquiring their native tongue (discussions in Ellis 1994, Gass & Selinker 2001, White 2003, among others). In our previous work, we have described some restructuring or reorganization phases of Japanese native speakers acquiring Spanish as a L2 (Sanz & Fukushima 2003, Sanz, Civit & Rodríguez 2005). This research was motivated by our observation that, in spite of obvious progress in sentence complexity and variety, intermediate-advanced students perform

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worse with regards to certain structures than learners at a more basic level of their studies.

We are often told that the fact that our third-year students make mistakes in structures that they appeared to have mastered as second-year students is a natural consequence of the sheer pressure and memory constraints that increased knowledge and task demands entail. If this were the case, however, mistakes should be random and would not respond to any identifiable patterns. On the contrary, if errors and inhibitions are due to a mental process of system reorganization, as we speculate, we should find correlations between structures that depend on the same syntactic feature, as our analysis of aspectual constructions with the clitic *se*, the past tenses and the copulas showed (Sanz, Civit & Rodríguez 2005). Furthermore, it makes sense to think that processes of this kind are very personal, and thus individual variation is expected. Although all our subjects start studying Spanish at the same time and have been exposed to the same *curriculum* by the time they come to our lab, not all students are at the same stage with regards to every feature of the grammar.

We also observed that, when a construction in the L1 corresponds to a variety of overt structures in the L2, students start by assuming only one of them as the equivalent, typically the one most similar to their L1. When learners realize that the pattern of correspondences is more complex, a period of avoidance and/or mistakes follows, and the production of even the basic use decreases dramatically.[2]

In order to corroborate that progress and errors are not random but systematic, we turn now to the analysis of structures involving a CP: completive and relative subordinate clauses. Completive constructions allow us to observe a situation in which one L2 grammar form corresponds to several L1 constructions. Completive subordinate sentences in

[2] For instance, the differences between the copulas *ser* and *estar* lead to confusion after the initial success stages, which are based on simplification of their uses. The basic use of *estar* to indicate location suffers at later stages (Sanz & Fukushima 2003, see also Rodríguez, this volume, for a discussion of *-te* forms in Japanese corresponding to a variety of structures in Spanish).

Spanish involve the presence of the complementizer *que*, whereas in Japanese they are translated into an array of forms, depending on the meaning and modality, indicating that the properties of the complementizer position differ in meaningful ways in the two languages (see next section). The task for the learner is thus to acquire the constructions on the basis of the features of the L2. These differences are also reflected in relative constructions: whereas this type of subordinate clause always involves a pronoun or complementizer in Spanish, in Japanese it requires neither.

Consequently, we expect to find some kind of phenomenon related to the acquisition of these structures in Spanish by native speakers of Japanese. The fact that the two structures under study are related allows us to explore the connections in the acquisition process of grammatical constructions that appear different but rely on the same features.

Describing the process of Spanish L2 acquisition is a responsibility that we cannot elude as pedagogues. It is our intention to contribute to the understanding of this process and of the relationship between linguistic structures, a necessary tool in designing the way in which grammar should be introduced in the teaching materials. A simple look at a few compositions reveals clear patterns of acquisition that are being ignored in the current way in which grammatical lessons are designed (see Civit, this volume). If methods that separate grammatical topics are to be used in classes, at least we should have a rationale for dividing the topics in a certain way. We hope that our exploration of the relationship between structures will shed some light in this process. The present analysis, however, is succinct and should be complemented in the future with several controlled experiments.

2. COMP constructions in Spanish and Japanese

Observe the following correspondence between completive sentences involving *que* in Spanish and their translations in Japanese.

(1) a. Le dijo [*que* Marta se había casado]
(object completive clause, indicative)
a′. Sono hito wa [kare ni Marta ga kekkon shita] *to* itta
He said to him that Marta had gotten married

b. Pienso [*que* debemos solucionar este problema]
(object completive clause, indicative)
b′. Watashi wa [jibuntachi de kono mondai o kaiketsu shinakereba naranai] *to* omou
I think that we must solve this problem

c. Le dijo [*que* trabajase más]
(object completive clause, subjunctive)
c′. Sono hito wa [kare ni motto hataraku *yoo ni*] itta
He told him to work harder

d. Quiero [*que* vengas a mi casa]
(object completive clause, subjunctive)
d′. Watashi wa [kimi ni watashi no ie ni ki*te*] hoshii
I want you to come to my house

e. Es obvio [*que* lo sabe todo]
(subject completive clause, indicative)
Kare ga [sore o subete shitte iru] *no wa* akiraka da
It is obvious that he knows everything

f. Me gusta [*que* estés contento]
(subject completive clause, subjunctive)
f′. Watashi wa [kimi ga manzoku shite kure*te*] ureshii
I like it when you are happy

The sentences in (1a) and (1b) contain completive subordinate clauses as direct objects. They convey information and state an opinion,

respectively. In both cases, the indicative mood is required in Spanish, and both correspond to structures with the complementizer *to* in Japanese. The next two object subordinates ((1c) and (1d)) require the use of the subjunctive mood in Spanish. They are expressions of request and desire. The complementizer *to* is not used in these structures in Japanese. The request is conveyed through the form *-yoo ni* attached to the embedded verb and the desire is expressed by the adjective *hoshii* preceded by the *-te* form of the verb. Finally, two completive clauses in the subject position are exemplified by sentences (1e) and (1f). The former, an information giving sentence, calls for indicative mood in the subordinate and corresponds to a nominalization/topicalization in Japanese. The latter, involving the use of subjunctive and the expression of a mental state, is translated again with an adjective preceded by *-te* in Japanese.

As seen in the previous examples, the clearest correspondence between the two languages occurs only in sentences that fulfill the syntactic function of object and the pragmatic function of information sharing. In these cases, both Spanish and Japanese require a complementizer. In all other instances, including sentences in the subject function and expressions of mental states in general, Japanese does not require a complementizer and Spanish opens a CP often built in the subjunctive. It is to be expected that Japanese students of Spanish first establish a simple correspondence between *que* and *to* and apply it to opinions and the expression of facts. Then, when newer structures become part of the input, they reconsider the function of the complementizer *que* and undergo a period of confusion, reflected not only in mistakes, but also in avoidance.

To complete this brief overview of completive subordinate clauses in Spanish, we should point out that embedded sentences which lack a complementizer appear in the infinitive in Spanish. In other words, if COMP is filled, conjugation is needed. If COMP is empty, the sentence is non-finite. The Japanese equivalents resort to turning the verb into an adjectival form, as the following example indi-

cates[3]:

(2) Quiero ir a España
Supein-e ikitai
I want to go to Spain

Learners of Spanish must master another COMP construction: relative clauses. A detailed linguistic analysis of these structures spans beyond the scope and objectives of this paper, but we present a brief summary of some of the patterns here.

Japanese relative clauses do not contain relative pronouns. In addition, they depart from Spanish with respect to the fact that some relative clauses do not present a gap and to the existence of so-called internally headed relative clauses (Tsujimura 1996). Examples are provided below.

(3) a. [Mary ga e_i tutta] sakana$_i$-o John ga ryoorisita
John cooked the fish that Mary fished

b. [syatsu-no botan-ga torete-iru] kodomo
The boy with the shirt with no button

c. [Mary ga sakana-o tutta] *no-o* John ga ryoorisita
John cooked the fish that Mary fished

As the sentence in (3a) illustrates, relative clauses have a gap, co-

[3] Infinitivals are also used in periphrases that can be of two kinds. Aspectual periphrases are expressions like *acabar de, dejar de, llegar a, ir a, empezar a, ponerse a, echarse a, explotar a, continuar, seguir, soler, volver a, andar, etc.* Non-aspectual periphrases comprise modal ones like *tener que, haber de, deber, poder, deber de, querer* and others (*poder* with the meaning of skill, for instance). Periphrases are not considered to be subordinate structures, but nevertheless we have analyzed the use that Japanese L2 learners of Spanish make of them, since they involve infinitivals. Non-aspectual periphrases were generated an astonishing 5 times more often than aspectual ones among second-year subjects and 2.14 times more often among third-year students. 75% and 62% in second and third year respectively were modal periphrases with *poder*.

indexed with the head of the relative clause. However, Japanese exhibits a type of relative clause in which a gap is not observed ((3b)). The head noun ('kodomo'), which usually finds its relation to the relative clause via an index, does not have any NP with which it is co-indexed. Kitagawa (1982) (cited in Tsujimura 1996) argues that the relationship between the relative clause and its head in this case is not syntactic, but based on semantic or pragmatic grounds.

(3c) is an example of an internally headed relative clause. Shimojo (2002) claims that these clauses denote an event without singling out a particular referent to modify, the two events linked by pragmatic relevancy and possibly translated as coordinate sentences. In internally headed relative clauses, the relative clause is complete.

In Spanish, on the contrary, all relative clauses involve an overt relative pronoun, which serves as the link between the antecedent and a position in the subordinate clause. Relative clauses can be restrictive, appositive (or explicative) and headless, although we will only be concerned with the first two in our analysis. In the following examples, we refer to the function performed by the relative pronoun within the sentence as subject, object or object of a preposition.

(4) a. El chico$_i$ [que$_i$/*quien vino ayer] es tu hermano
(subject restrictive relative clause)
The boy who came yesterday is your brother

b. El chico$_i$ [que$_i$/a quien$_i$ invité e$_i$ a la fiesta] es tu hermano
(object restrictive relative clause)
The boy to whom I invited to the party is...

c. El libro$_i$ [con el que$_i$ yo me divierto mucho] es...
(object of a preposition, restrictive)
The book with which I enjoy a lot is...

d. David$_i$, [que$_i$/quien$_i$ vino ayer], es mi hermano

(subject appositive relative clause)
David, who came yesterday, is my brother

e. David$_i$, [*que$_i$ /a quien$_i$ conozco e$_i$ muy bien], es tu hermano
(object appositive relative clause)
David, whom I know very well, is your brother

f. Este libro, [con el cual$_i$ yo me divierto mucho], es...
(object of a preposition, appositive)
This book, with which I enjoy a lot, is...

Many are the differences between restrictive and appositive relative clauses, but we will only refer to the most visible ones. The head of an appositive relative clause has its own reference, unlike the head of a restrictive relative clause, and, being a *Wh*-word, it raises to [Spec, COMP]. The relationship between the head and the appositive relative clause is similar to that of coordinate sentences. In restrictive clauses, the interpretational rule is instead the predication rule. (Torrego, 1992) The relative is not always a *Wh*-word, but the complementizer *que*, which fills the head of COMP position. This occurs in subject restrictive and certain object restrictive clauses, as the examples above indicate. In addition, some facts related to quantifiers play a role in the type of head that a relative clause may have. For example, *nadie* can be the head of a restrictive clause, but not of an appositive clause.[4]

(5) *Nadie, que es nudista, lleva calcetines

We assume that the relative in an appositive clause in Spanish occupies the operator position ([Spec, COMP]), whereas the relative pronoun in restrictive relative clauses is the head of the COMP Phrase (as in

[4] Furthermore, restrictive relative clauses have a quantificational interpretation. In (ia) below, the subject may have bought more than three books. Not so in (ib).
(i) a. Maria compro tres libros que tratan de los romanos
b. Maria compro tres libros, los cuales tratan de los romanos

completive sentences). In the former case, the relative is a *Wh*- element, similar to that of interrogatives. In the latter, it is a pronoun (not a *Wh*-element) that can be bound by a QP/operator in [Spec, COMP]. With regards to the tense of the verb in relative clauses, appositive sentences cannot be infinitival or subjunctive, because of their nature as main clauses. (Torrego, 1992).

In sum, even though we do not perform a deep linguistic analysis of the properties of the COMP position in Japanese and Spanish, the differences stated above can be assumed to be due to the features of the Specifier position of the COMP Phrase.[5] For an L2 learner of Spanish, the task is to acquire the different constructions that rest on COMP. This paper is devoted to analyzing the production of second- and third-year Japanese university students with regards to completive and relative sentences in Spanish in a written task. Our goal is to find general patterns of acquisition and correlations in the IL of individual students as to correct/incorrect production of structures derived from COMP.

To the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that enquire into the process of acquisition of these Spanish structures by native speakers of Japanese. However, previous research has explored the acquisition of relativization in ESL. Comrie and Keenan (1979, cited in Ellis 1994, pg. 418), found that the following hierarchy in the relative pronoun functions holds in languages:

(6) subject< direct object< indirect object< oblique< genitive< object of comparative

This means that a language that permits direct objects to be relativized also allows relativization of the subject noun phrase. Hierarchies like these reflect degrees of markedness: a subject relative is a less marked function than an object relative. The effect of these typological univer-

[5] Pesetsky (2000), for instance, claims that Japanese has a C_0-Spec, that is, a COMPP without a Specifier. Whatever the case may be, it is obvious that the deep featural differences of the COMP position in both languages reflect themselves in the overt structures that they produce.

sals on the order of acquisition and avoidance of grammatical features has been a topic of research in the L2 acquisition literature (Schachter 1974, Gass 1980, cited in Ellis 1994). In general, although it is controversial that learners of English whose L1 lacks relative clauses or has left-branching ones (e.g. Japanese) tend to avoid using relative clauses in English, it seems clear that the markedness reflected in (6) affects the order to acquisition (Gass 1980, Pavesi 1986, Eckman, Bell and Nelson 1988, Jones 1991, etc. References in Ellis 1994). As stated, our study aims at describing the pattern of acquisition in a formal setting by native speakers of Japanese of completive constructions (corresponding to many different structures in Japanese) and relative structures in Spanish (with no correspondence in Japanese).

3. Acquisition processes of COMP constructions

Students were asked to write a speech on any topic of their choice. The first version was collected by the teacher, who marked with a code the points at which errors were observed, without correcting the errors themselves. Errors were divided into three categories: lexical, agreement mistakes and general grammatical errors. The latter group included misuse of the past tenses, lack of articles, wrong order of constituents, subjunctive deviations, and so on. Students were explained the code and asked to think about their own production in order to correct themselves. The second version of the speech was collected after two weeks and the teacher wrote corrections or suggestions for the remaining errors. Students then had to re-write their speech and produce a third and final version. Therefore, subjects reflected on their errors and had the chance to correct themselves if they identified the problem, once told that *there was* a problem at certain points. If the subject had mastered the structure and the error was due to lack of attention, they should have been able to correct it immediately upon seeing the teacher's mark.

3.1. Data on completive subordinate sentences

The following are the results of the first version of the compositions, 13 compositions from third-year and 18 from second-year students. As the graphs in Fig. 1 show, second-year students produced 2.4 times more correct object completive than subject completive sentences with the complementizer *que*. Of the former, 63% were clauses embedded in main sentences with *creo/pienso/opino*, that is to say, the sentences which correspond to the same structure in Japanese. The rest of the sentences (except for one) conveyed information in the indicative. Only one sentence expressed desire and it was correctly produced in the subjunctive. 61% of the subjects did not produce any subject completives at all and 50% did not produce any object completives. 38% did not produce either type of completive sentence.

Third-year students, in turn, produced 3.1 times more correct object completive sentences than subject completive sentences, 56% of which were introduced by *creo/pienso*. Among the rest, only four were expressions of desire in the subjunctive. 61% of the pool of subjects, exactly as in the second-year group, failed to produce any correct subject completives, whereas all subjects generated correct object completives. Thus, a definite improvement is observed in the production of object completive sentences, although roughly the same proportion corresponds to sentences introduced by *creo/pienso* as among second-year students. Completive subordinates requiring the subjunctive are only timidly tried by some of the students (only three students produced them).

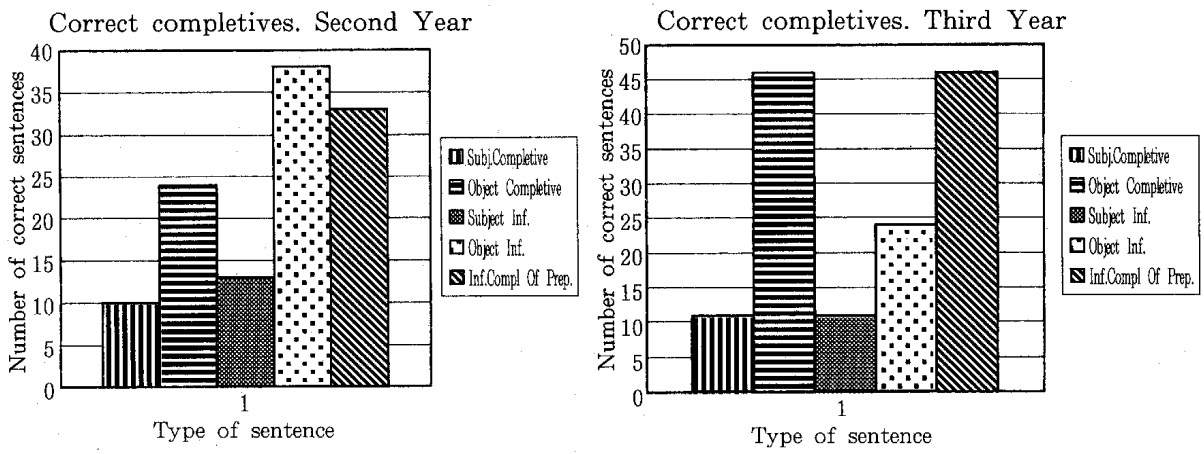

Fig.1. Correct completives in second and third year

Subject completive sentences are complicated in that they are usually post verbal in Spanish. They are also less frequent than object completives. In particular, the object completives of verbs like *creo, pienso,* etc. are common, especially in speeches containing the authors' opinions. Furthermore, as stated above, these sentences show a similar grammatical pattern in Japanese. Thus, it is expected that Japanese L2 learners of Spanish will initiate their acquisition of filled COMP structures from the object completives on, in particular, from those sentences which convey information and are constructed in the indicative mood. This hypothesis is borne out by our data. Both second and third year students generated more object than subject completives.

With regards to non-finite completive sentences, those fulfilling the function of direct object are generated 2.9 times more often in the second-year and 2.09 times more often in the third-year than subject infinitivals. 71% of those generated by second-year students and 61% of those produced by third-year students were introduced by the verb *querer* (as in our example in (2) above). Thus, we observe persistence on the same expressions and very little variety of constructions in both groups of subjects. 61% of second-year students failed to generate any subject infinitival clauses, whereas 33% did not produce object infinitival completives. 22% did not produce any of either. Among third-year students, similar percentages were observed: 53% did not generate any subject infinitival sentences, whereas 46% did not generate any object infinitivals. 30% did not produce either type of infinitival completive.

Mistakes, although scarce due to the short length of the compositions, confirm the conclusions of correct production. More errors are observed among subject than among object completives in the second year. Most of them involve lack of the complementizer *que,* use of unnecessary *que,* lack of subjunctive, and lack of conjugation. The nature of the mistakes in the third year is similar.[6]

[6] Examples are: *Pero yo pienso trabajo por horas es importante (Pienso que el trabajo por horas es importante), *Es agradable que estudia algo (Es agradable estudiar algo), *Deseo que no hay gente sufre y la sociedad sin discriminación (deseo que no haya gente que sufra ...).

3. 2. Individual variation

As we said in section 1, individual variation is crucial in our investigation. Naturally, not all subjects undergo mental processes at the same time. For instance, three students in the second-year group (S04, S12 and S16) produced seven, four and three correct object completives respectively, but with those exceptions, subjects only produced between none and two. If we look at the mistakes, the student who produced four also had five erroneous tries. The student who generated three correct ones had an equal number of mistakes. Thus, these three students show signs of having undertaken a process of assimilation of completive sentences in Spanish (the most successful being subject S04), even though their mistakes prove that they have not mastered the construction yet. In contrast, six students did not produce any correct or incorrect completive sentence with *que*, which suggests that they may be at an earlier stage in their grammatical development. Furthermore, one of these students (S14) tried erroneously six times and got none correct, suggesting an even earlier stage of assimilation than his three classmates mentioned above.

Among the third-year group, 53% produced more than four correct object completives, but student T03, who produced five, for example, also showed five mistakes, mainly due to erroneous use of the subjunctive. This suggests that she is in the process of enlarging her repertoire of completives, having realized that in Spanish they may require the subjunctive, but she has still not tuned her IL enough to produce them correctly. Likewise, subject T06 produced four correct object completives (which called for indicative mood) and no subject sentences, and generated four mistaken sentences in which the main problem was the lack of needed subjunctive. Subject T08 also shows confusion as to the properties of COMP structures in Spanish, and generates four correct object sentences and five incorrect ones in addition to two incorrect subject completives.

Curiously enough, the two subjects in the second year who generated the most infinitival object completive sentences (five and four

respectively), did not produce any completives with the complementizer *que*. Other subjects who produced three object infinitival completives had a very low amount of completives with *que*. This suggests that, for our pool of subjects, subordination in L2 Spanish starts with non-finite clauses (typically with verbs of opinion) and advances towards the use of COMP (which, as we said, requires conjugation, not an easy issue for Japanese speakers). In the third-year group, students generate a few more infinitivals as objects of prepositions, although not always successfully. Even though their vocabulary and use of periphrases is larger than that of second-year students, the paradigms of completive subordinate sentences that they had acquired until then seem to be disturbed.

In sum, the acquisition of completive sentences appears to progress from object to subject clauses, independently of whether the complementizer *que* or an infinitival is called for. Infinitival constructions are used more often than sentences with a complementizer requiring conjugation. Individual students seem to be at different stages of development. Those who are most successful at generating object completives show a pattern of mistakes indicating that they also start trying subject completives and object subordinates in the subjunctive but that they encounter difficulties. Those students who are at less advanced stages stick to uses of non-finite forms, repeating the structures they dominate (i.e., complements of *querer*) over and over again.

3. 3. Data on relative subordinate clauses

Let us turn to the other construction under study: relative clauses. As can be seen in the graphs in Fig. 2, second-year students produced 2.6 more subject than object relatives. Only 38% of the students produced some of the latter, usually one or two. Among the relative clauses, only nine were appositive, the rest being restrictive with *que*, which suggests that *Wh*-movement may be problematic for Japanese learners. Three students failed to generate any relative clause at all. All third-year subjects also produced more subject relative clauses than object relative clauses

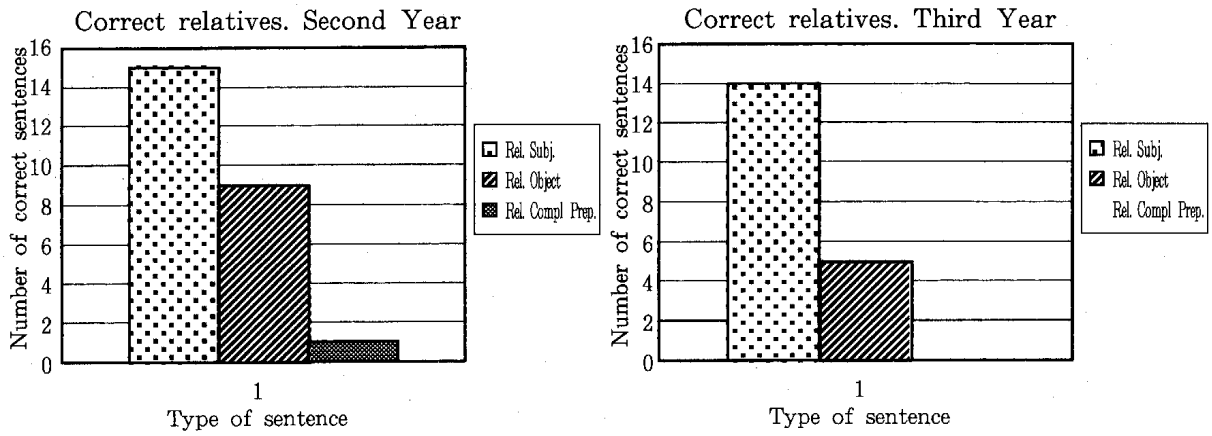

Fig.2. Correct relatives in second and third year

(3.5 times more subject relatives).[7]

These results are to be expected if we take into account the universal hierarchy in (6). Object relatives involve a more complex structure than subject relatives, including a gap that is absent from subject relatives.[8] It is striking to discover that, even though Japanese lacks a relative construction similar to the Spanish one, Japanese native speakers follow this linguistic universal in their acquisition of relative clauses in Spanish.

3. 4. Related progress in completives and relatives

Two questions arise: do students who produce object relatives (showing a degree of progress in their acquisition of this aspect of Spanish grammar) also display a larger production of subject completives (which would also be a sign of advancement in their understanding of COMP structures)? The second question is: what types of mistakes do these students make most often?

Let us address the first question first. Among the second year group, only seven subjects (S03, S05, S07, S08, S12, S14, S15) generated any correct object relative at all. None of these people produced correct

[7] Since seven of the subject relatives come from the same person, we may say that on average, we face about twice as many subject as object relatives.

[8] We have obviated in our examples the movement of the relative from a subject position to the COMP position for being a vacuous movement. The movement of the object relative, on the other hand, does involve major category crossing. Recall examples in (4).

subject completives, but all of them except subjects S07 and S08 did produce *erroneous* subject completives. For instance, S14 generated six of these incorrect constructions. This may be an indication that their progress in relative constructions affects their use of completive ones. Among third-year students, only subjects T01, T02, T08 and T13 produced any correct object relative, but, as with second-year students, did not generate any correct subject completives. However, all but T02 produced erroneous subject completives and all of them except for T01 produced erroneous object relative sentences as well (subject T08 generated five of these. This is the same subject that we pointed out in section 3.2 who generated roughly an equal number of correct and mistaken object completives. His pattern seems to indicate a period of IL tuning towards fixing COMP constructions).

The second question concerns the nature of mistakes. Typically, students make three types of errors: lack of complementizer *que*, use of unnecessary *que* in a sentence with an infinitival, and creation of an infinitival sentence with a preposition (typically *para*) instead of the proper conjugated clause with *que*.[9] Third-year students' mistakes also include instances of erroneous use of the subjunctive in structures that do not require it. This leads us to think that there is a slight improvement, in the sense that these students know that the subjunctive is involved in some of these structures, but they are still in doubt as to its correct use, and mistakes of overgeneralization occur in sentences that they had been able to produce correctly before.

Looking at the data from the other end, we wonder if the students who generate correct subject completives show any progress towards object relatives. Similarly to what we have been describing so far, it could be possible that a person who shows progress by generating correct subject completives also begins to at least try to create more complex relatives, such as object relatives. Curiously enough, of the subjects who we

[9] Examples are: *Era muy difícil para hablar esos en otros lenguas (Era muy difícil decir eso en otras lenguas, *Era una primera vez para mi participar en un partido (Era la primera vez que participaba en un partido), *No me gustaba verse mi jugando (No me gustaba que me vieran jugar).

have not talked about until now, seven in the second year and five in the third year did produce correct subject completives, but none of them showed any signs of object relativization, not even in the form of an incorrect try. This pattern of results is interesting in that it suggests that the natural order of acquisition starts with the *completive* COMP structures and progresses towards the possibility of making object *relative* sentences. However, if the subject has understood object relatives first, this leads to a reconsideration of his other COMP structures, reflected in an improvement of his production of completive sentences.

To summarize: even though these data are not conclusive, it appears that the advancement towards more complicated COMP structures starts from object completives to subject completives and from subject relatives to object relatives, respectively. More research is needed to clarify this point, since the fact that a student does not generate a type of sentence does not necessarily mean that he does not have it in his competence. It may simply indicate that the speech did not require such structure. Controlled experiments are needed to describe this process of acquisition of COMP structures more accurately.

A look at the second version of the compositions allows us to probe into the competence of our subjects. If, after being told by the teacher that the sentence in question is erroneous, the subject is still unable to correct himself, we may hypothesize that the construction is not part of his competence. For instance, we have speculated that subject S14 was at an early stage of assimilation of these constructions, due to the fact that she produces many sentences of these types but all of them incorrect. In the second version of her composition, she persisted in all the mistakes concerning completives that she has made before, even though the teacher had pointed out the problems. We also mentioned student S12 as an example of behavior typical of a person who is in a confusing stage because she generates both correct and incorrect sentences. In the second version of her speech, she corrected herself one time but persisted in two of the previous errors. In addition, she generated more sentences, some of which were correct and some which were incorrect. On the

contrary, subject T03, who overgeneralized the use of the subjunctive, corrected herself in all instances in her second version. Overgeneralization seems to be an easier error to be realized by the student.

Subject T08 showed that he had not mastered the use of the complementizer *que* or of the subjunctive. In the second version, he corrects himself successfully at times but he also tries unsuccessfully at others, indicating that his confusion is genuine. For instance, the sentence "*esperan alguien contestar" was corrected as "*esperan a alguien que contestar" instead of the correct "esperan a que alguien conteste" ('they wait for someone to answer'). The mistake "*no sé todos saben, pero..." was corrected as "*no sé que todos saben", instead of "no sé si todos lo saben" ('I don't know if everyone knows this but...'). Incidentally, he does not correct any of the relative clauses in which the relative pronoun was missing in the first version. In general, then, our observations that students are in a period of hesitation as to the correct properties of COMP constructions and that mistakes are not due to processing overload or lack of attention is confirmed when we look at the self-corrected version of the compositions.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In general, both groups of subjects use more completive than relative sentences and they generate more infinitival sentences than sentences requiring conjugation. Within the latter, very few requiring subjunctive are observed. Third-year students produce many more object completives than their younger counterparts. Among relatives, the most errors occur in structures that are complements of prepositions and in subject relatives in both groups. Typical mistakes include misuse of the complementizer and lack of subjunctive mood when needed. Overuse of the subjunctive or of the complementizer was also observed, especially among third-year subjects. Concerning relatives, subject relatives rank higher in a universal hierarchy than object relatives. Even though the L1 of our subjects is of no use in acquiring relatives in Spanish, universal

principles seem to guide our students, who indeed produce many more subject than object relatives.

In a word, correct production in second and third-year groups indicates mental processes based on universal principles and principles of the target language that may be influenced somehow, but not completely, by the L1. There seems to be little progress from one year to the next, since avoidance is observed in that roughly the same proportion of the different types of COMP constructions is generated in both courses. Avoidance of appositives is significant. *Wh*-movement (involved in appositive relative clauses) seems to cause problems for Japanese speakers.

The types of mistakes in both groups are similar, except that third-year students venture into producing some periphrases requiring infinitivals that are absent in the second-year speeches and start overusing the subjunctive in structures that require indicative. Most errors in relatives in both groups of subjects have to do with sentences that should involve a preposition, but students cannot generate them correctly.

Thus, the results of the two COMP structures that we have analyzed help us understand that features of the L2 in question, universal principles and L1 contribute to the mental processes that students undergo when facing the input: their interlanguage is in constant evolution and restructuring occurs as they become aware of the different types of completives in Spanish.

We have observed some correlation between the correct/incorrect production of one type of COMP construction and the occurrence of mistakes in another. This indicates that linguistic structures who share some feature, when added to the mental grammar of the student, cause a revision of the existing knowledge of that feature, if there is such a knowledge. For instance, a student who has been able to master the basic use of object completive sentences, when faced with relatives, reorganizes his internal system to accommodate the new structure on the basis of what he knows. This may cause a period of uncertainty/avoidance of the object completive structures that he had acquired, visible in

phenomena like overgeneralization of the subjunctive, for instance.

We believe that these mental processes should be acknowledged as a criterion in the way teaching materials are organized. For example, noting that students show difficulties in the production of object relatives or subject completives, textbooks should include input and exercises reinforcing the knowledge of the properties of these structures, with the intention of facilitating hypothesis-testing and reorganization processes. As was observed in Sanz & Fukushima 2003 and Sanz, Civit & Rodríguez 2005, stagnation seems apparent among the third-year group. Students in their third year display problems generating subject completive sentences and object sentences that require the subjunctive. The quantity and quality of mistakes varies little between our two groups of subjects. Once again, materials and teachers should acknowledge these difficulties and provide the right input for their overcoming.

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