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Comparative Study of Lexical Categories in Spanish and Japanese and its Influence on the Acquisition of Spanish L2 by Japanese Speakers

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1. Objectives

Over the last decades, the studies on theoretical linguistics –traditionally focused on syntax– give more prominence to the lexicon and its properties. Thus, lexical items are now conceived as carriers of a very rich feature structure that predicts their syntactic behavior. This internal structure can explain, for example, the grammaticality/ungrammaticality of certain combinations of words and the potentiality of words to acquire different meanings depending on the context. In this sense, the Generative Lexicon proposed by Pustejovsky (1991, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2006, 2008) represents a novel approach in the treatment of the study of the lexicon, since it allows to analyze the syntactic features of lexical items.

These syntactic features of lexical items are part of the knowledge that native speakers have about their language and make the properties of lexical categories vary between languages. Therefore, the learning of an L2 should aim the acquisition of these lexical features in the target language, since the transfer of the lexical categories from source language to target language can explain many errors of learners.

The correspondence in the meaning of a lexical item between two languages is never complete. An essential part of this mismatch lies in the syntactic behavior of words. The syntactic behavior of words is result of its internal structure, which means it can be systematized. Therefore, the mismatch between two languages can also be explained by a thorough analysis of each category and each lexical item, in order to predict and minimize the occurrence of errors in pedagogy.

Other phenomena are also observed, such as nouns that can appear with certain verbs in one language but with different verbs in another one, lexical categories in one language that correspond to different categories in another one, etc. Particularly, there are in Japanese some categories missing in Spanish grammar (adjectival noun and verbal noun), which can be at the root of many interference errors. These two phenomena –internal features of lexical items differentiated depending on the language and diversity of syntactic categories– are the cause of many of the errors during the learning of an L2.

In summary, the main objective of this thesis is to systematize the mismatch between Spanish and Japanese lexical categories with the aim of contributing to an improvement of the teaching of Spanish language to this group of speakers.

2. Conclusions

After a review of the theories on syntax-lexical semantics interface in chapter 2, Generative Lexicon is classified as projectionist since the properties of words determine the syntactic constructions, and as constructionist in the sense that contextual variation of lexical entries allows the materialization of their meaning.

Chapter 3 presents the principles of Generative Lexicon, namely, levels of lexical representation -argument structure (true arguments, default arguments, shadow arguments, true

adjuncts), event structure (state, process, transition), *qualia* structure (constitutive, formal, telic, agentive roles) and lexical typing structure-; types of words by their sub-lexical structure -natural, functional/artifactual and complex types-; and generative mechanisms -pure selection, accommodation, type coercion (exploitation, introduction) and co-composition-; and an analysis of the internal structure of some nouns, adjectives and verbs of Japanese and Spanish. Thereby, this thesis allows to reveal how it is possible to systematize the transference of L1 during the learning of Spanish as a foreign language in Japanese speakers, and corroborate the theoretical assumptions of Generative Lexicon having found examples of all its components in the proposed analysis:

(1)   a. Differences in the roles of *qualia* structure: *e.g.*, in apparently equivalent functional/artifactual nouns such as *heya*/*habitación* "room" –constitutive, formal and telic roles– (*e.g.*, **Hace mucho calor en la <u>habitación</u> del club de folk song "It is very hot in the room of folk song club"*), and *mise*/*tienda* "store" –telic role– (*e.g.*, **Fuimos a la <u>tienda</u> de queso de soja para comer "We went to the tofu store to eat"*).

b. Differences in argument structure: *e.g.*, in nouns such as *gakkou*/*escuela* "school" where the taught argument in Japanese is underspecified to all kind of learners, whereas in Spanish it is exploited to children; in adjectives such as *kirei*/*guapo-bonito* "beautiful" or *isogashi-i*/*ocupado* "busy" there are differences in the true arguments in subject position; and finally, in verbs such as *oshieru*/*enseñar* "teach" the differences are found in the true argument functioning as object, whereas verbs *asobu*/*jugar* "play" differ in their default arguments.

c. Differences in types of words: *e.g.*, while the Spanish word *comida* "food/meal/lunch" is a complex type noun (*event•food*), the Japanese word *gohan* "cooked rice" is a functional/artifactual type noun (physical_object $\otimes_{telic}$ eat), that can only be interpreted as a complex type noun through coercive mechanisms (event introduction and *qualia* exploitation).

e. Differences in the relations of complex type nouns: *e.g.*, *dot* relation of *eiga* "movie/cinema" is (*information•physical_object*) and *dot* relation of *cine* "cinema" is (*process•result*); complex relation of *e* "picture" is (*process•result*) and complex relation of *cuadro* "picture" is (*container•containee*).

f. Examples of co-predication: *e.g.*, in the word *comida* "food/meal/lunch" (*e.g.*, *La comida estaba muy <u>buena</u>* [FOOD], *pero ha sido <u>aburrida</u>* [EVENT] "The lunch was very delicious, but it was boring"), since there is a simultaneous access to two different senses of the word.

g. Examples of underspecification: *e.g.*, in the taught argument of *gakkou* "school" or the default arguments of *asobu* "play".

This thesis also contains a detailed analysis of Japanese lexical categories, including mixed categories, missing in Spanish (adjectival noun and verbal noun) in chapter 4. After a review of previous theories about Japanese lexical categories, I argue –against Miyagawa (1987) and based on an argument of case marking proposed by Endo (1990)– that Japanese adjectives have the feature [+N], which allows the application of the system of syntactic features [+/-V], [+/-N] by Chomsky (1970) to Japanese lexical categories (Endo 1990):

(2)   V: [+V, -N]   A: [+V, +N]
        N, AN, VN: [-V, +N]   (P: [-V, -N])

On the other hand, I refute the arguments by Baker (2003) against mixed categories in Japanese, arguing its existence and describing the properties of adjectival noun and verbal noun, missing categories in Spanish grammar. I also argue the verbal nature of Japanese adjectives.

In chapter 5, I took as an example some production errors in students of Spanish whose L1 is Japanese, in order to determine the causes of the mismatch between lexical categories in Japanese and Spanish. I conclude that a category in Japanese can correspond to one or more categories in Spanish, resulting in many lexical-syntactic errors in learners when trying to transfer the same properties of Japanese categories into Spanish.

Regarding the categorial correspondence of adjective from Japanese to Spanish I establish, in principle, two main groups:

(3)   a. Adjectives that correspond to adjectives, nouns (with intensifiers) and verbal phrases: *e.g.*, *nemu-i* (A) → *soñoliento* "sleepy" (A), *qué sueño* "how sleepy" (N), *tener sueño* "to be sleepy" (VP).

b. Adjectives that correspond to adjectives, nouns (with intensifiers), verbs and verbal phrases: *e.g.*, *urayamashi-i* (A) → *envidiable* "enviable" (A), *qué envidia* "what an envy" (N), *envidiar* "to envy" (V), *tener envidia* "to envy" (VP).

These differences in the correspondences of Japanese adjectives into Spanish can produce errors of incorrect transfer as follows:

(4)   a. Era las actividades del club hoy. *<u>Estaba muy caliente</u> "It was the club activities today. It was very hot".
b. *Todos mis amigos viajan a los paises extranjeros, así que <u>estaba envidiable</u>. "All my friends travel to the foreign countries, so I was enviable".

I also determine that, in principle, the correspondences of adjectival noun into Spanish are noun (5a) and adjective (5b):

(5)   a. *Shimin wa kakumei ni katte, <u>jiyuu</u>* (AN) *wo tsukunda*. → Los ciudadanos ganaron la revolución y consiguieron la <u>libertad</u> (N) "Citizens won the revolution and got freedom".

b. *Amerika wa <u>jiyuu</u>-na* (AN) *kuni da*. → Estados Unidos es un país <u>libre</u> (A) "The United States is a free country".

Errors resulting from incorrect transfer of AN are as follows:

(6)   a. *<u>Estaba muy felicidad</u> (*I was very happiness).
b. *Tokushima <u>es muy campo</u> (Tokushima is very country).

Regarding VN, I distinguish five types of correspondence:

(7)   a. VN that correspond to nouns and the structure "hacer (to do) + noun": *e.g.*, *benkyou (suru)* → estudio "study", hacer (un) estudio "to do a study".

b. VN that correspond to nouns but not the structure "hacer (to do) + noun": *e.g.*, *touchaku (suru)* → llegada "arrival", *hacer (una) llegada "to do an arrival".

c. VN formed by loanwords: *e.g.*, *memo (suru)* → nota "note", tomar notas "to take notes".

d. Onomatopeic VN: *e.g.*, *chin suru* → calentar en el microondas "to microwave", *hacer chin "*to do chin".

e. VN composed of a verb and an adverb: *e.g.*, *gaishoku suru* → comer fuera "to eat out".

From the collected corpus, I establish four types of errors due to incorrect transfer of VN into Spanish:

(8)   a. Use of the structure "hacer (to do) + noun" instead of verb: *e.g.*, ?Debo volver a casa y <u>hacer preparación</u> de vuelta pronto "I must go home and do preparation back soon".

    b. Use of verb instead the structure "hacer (to do) + noun": *e.g.*, ?<u>Intercambié</u> de español con dos chicos españoles "I exchanged Spanish with two Spanish guys".

    c. Incorrect use of the causative form "hacer (to do) + verb": *e.g.*, *Pero no me gusta <u>hacer arreglarse</u> "But I don't like to do manage".

    d. Use of the structure "hacer (to do) + noun" with sports and games: *e.g.*, *Todavía es agradable <u>hacer el baloncesto</u> "It is still pleasant to do the basketball".

Finally, I study the categorial mismatch in nouns and verbs. Regarding nouns, I present the main characteristics of Japanese classifiers, framing Japanese language in the group of languages with numeral classifiers, and then I describe the different types of classifiers in Japanese: essence of the entities, shape, size, location and quantity, according to Allan's classification (1977). Then, I compare Japanese classifier constructions with Spanish partitive constructions following the classification by Bond *et al*. (1996), and establish their correspondences:

(9)   a. Unit classifiers:

- *Individuate*: *1-satsu-no-hon* → 1 libro "1 book"
- *Part*: *1-tsubu-no-kome* → 1 grano de arroz "1 grain of rice"
- *Default*: *1-tsu-no-niku* → 1 trozo de carne "1 piece of meat"

    b. Metric classifiers: *2-kiro-no-ringo* → 2 kilos de manzanas "2 kilos of apples"

    c. Group classifiers: *1-gun-no-hachi* → 1 enjambre de abejas "1 swarm of bees"

    d. Species classifier: *3-shurui-no-chokoreeto* → 3 tipos de chocolate "3 types of chocolate"

This lead us to divide the errors found in the corpus into four types:

(10)   a. Change from count noun to mass noun: *e.g.*, *En Gifu hay <u>muchas naturalezas</u> "In Gifu there are lots of natures".

    b. Infrequent use of the singular form: *e.g.*, ?Quiero hacer todo lo posible en <u>este vacación</u> de verano "I want to do as much as possible on this summer vacation".

    c. Meronymic relations: *e.g.*, *Me gusta ver los <u>cines occidentales</u> "I like watching western cinemas".

    d. Use of Japanese classifiers in Spanish: *e.g.*, *Compré <u>dos pedazos de camisetas</u> "I bought two chunks of T-shirts".

Regarding verbs, I present a classification of Japanese verbs (Makino y Tsutsui 1986, Uchida 1991) and the errors in this field:

(11)   a. Unnecessary reflexivity: *e.g.*, *<u>Me he disfrutado</u> mucho "I really enjoyed myself".

    b. Lack of reflexivity: *e.g.*, *Tres personas <u>sientan</u> y comen "Three people sit and eat".

    c. Change from intransitive verb to transitive verb: *e.g.*, *<u>Enfermé una enfermedad</u> "I sickened a sickness".

d. Transitivization due to incorrect case transfer: *e.g.*, *Estoy deseando <u>viajar el mundo</u> "I look forward to traveling the world".

This research represents an important theoretical contribution at two levels: on the one hand, it confirms the theoretical assumptions of Generative Lexicon, and on the other hand, it constitutes a contribution to the field of second language teaching, since it proves that the mismatch between two languages can be systematized, which allows to predict and avoid the occurrence of errors by the learners. This thesis aims to serve as a basis for future research, since there are still few studies applying this theoretical framework to second language acquisition, and more specifically to the acquisition of Spanish L2 to Japanese speakers.

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