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edited by Anthony Mollica

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The language graduate who never reads a professional journal and participates only minimally, if at all, in professional meetings, will stagnate. There is an onus on the profession in all areas to upgrade and keep abreast of current developments in the field.

- Peter Heffernan

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Anthony Mollica, Frank Nuessel
and Lisa C. Wagner

Problematic Grammatical Constructions in Spanish: A Review of the Research and Suggestions for Teaching Them

This article identifies ten of the most problematic grammatical constructions in Spanish based on an examination of selected elementary and advanced Spanish textbooks, consultation with students, high school teachers and colleagues, and our own professional judgment.

Introduction

There are a number of grammatical points in Spanish that cause recurrent problems for the second-language learner, especially the Anglophone. We have chosen this arrangement because this order represents a frequent pattern of occurrence in pedagogical grammars. The first nine grammatical constructions appear in simple sentences while the final one (the subjunctive) appears in subordinate clauses. In this sense, our presentation addresses a hierarchy of difficulty. This paper will examine the following common problematic grammatical constructions:

1. *Ser/estar*
2. Forms of Address
3. Gender
4. Adjective Position
5. Preterite/imperfect
6. *Por/para*
7. Personal *a*
8. *Gustar*-constructions
9. *Se*-constructions
10. Subjunctive.

Problematical Grammatical Constructions

This section, discusses some of the most common problematic grammatical constructions in the Spanish for Anglophones. The inclusion of these specific grammatical points derive from the following sources:

1. Personal experience as teachers

of Spanish.

2. Classes taught in applied linguistics and surveys of students and teachers enrolled in these courses.
3. Survey of textbooks for elementary and intermediate Spanish courses.
4. Survey of textbooks for advanced grammar and composition courses.
5. Articles in professional journals and anthologies.

We intend to:

1. Provide a comprehensive literature review of problematic grammatical structures in Spanish.
2. Extract from the available literature materials, strategies and techniques that may be useful to Spanish teachers.
3. Make available a substantial listing of references on each of these problems so that the interested instructor will be able to carry out further research on particular aspects of these grammatical questions.

One question that caused us some initial difficulty was how to arrange the grammatical problems included in this essay. There are, in fact, many possible approaches to this issue:

1. Arrange the materials in order of difficulty for the students.
2. Organize the materials in the order of their appearance in most elementary and interme-

mediate textbooks.

3. Structure the materials in terms of their probable usage in a conversational situation.

Krashen (1981; see also Ellis 1994: 20-22, 73-117 and studies cited therein; Krashen and Terrell 1983: 28-30) suggests that language structures are acquired (not learned) in a natural order. Krashen's research dealt primarily with morphology rather than with syntax and semantics – the focus of the grammatical materials discussed here. Ultimately, we have elected to discuss the grammatical points based on our own judgments of difficulty based on classroom experience, discussions with students, teachers in our classes and our colleagues, and our own survey of textbook materials.

In their discussion of the hierarchy of difficulty encountered by Anglophones in terms of certain Spanish structures, Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965: 282-291) enumerate several contrastive problems. They also speak of negative correspondences in the native language which they divide into split and new correspondences.

1. *Split correspondence:*

English has a rule or category which corresponds with two in Spanish which are obligatorily distinguished. Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965: 285) state that in this situation, "[o]ne of this pair may be said to correspond with nothing in English, or it may be said that the choice between them does not exist in English."

- a. Indicative/subjunctive.
- b. Imperfect/Preterite.
- c. *Ser/estar*.
- d. *Por/para*.

2. *New correspondence:*

English has no grammatical category while Spanish has one. Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965: 285) state that in this situation "... a Spanish rule or category corresponds to nothing in English."

- a. Grammatical gender
- b. Personal *a*
- c. *Se*-constructions

- d. Adjective position
 d. *Gustar*-type constructions (Stockwell, Bowen and Martin 1965 did not include this grammatical construction in their list).

3. *Optional correspondence*:
 English has no category while Spanish has an optional one.
 a. Forms of address (*tú/Usted*).

1. *Ser/Estar*

Numerous theoretical studies and pedagogical analyses on the use of *ser* and *estar* exist (see Appendix 1). These verbs cause problems for students of Spanish in at least three ways noted below.

- Both verbs mean *to be* in English.
- Several common adjectives may combine with either *ser* or *estar* with differences in meaning (*aburrido, borracho, bueno, bueno, callado, cansado, despierto, divertido, listo, malo, nuevo, seguro, verde, vivo*, and so forth).
- Event vs. Location Usage
La fiesta es a las ocho.
La fiesta está en mi casa.

Traditional textbooks have explained item # 2 above by having recourse to the permanent/temporary dichotomy. Any instructor of Spanish who has used this approach usually regrets it almost immediately because of the inevitable counter examples provided by students.

With regard to item #2 above, Franco and Steinmetz (1986: 381) note that one of the most intransigent problems discussed in the previous literature on *ser/estar* with predicate adjectives has been that of accounting for the difference expressed when the same predicate adjective and the same subject may be linked in ordinary Spanish usage by either *ser* or *estar*.

Franco and Steinmetz (1986: 381) believe that the use of either *ser* or *estar* depends upon whether not items of the same category are compared or items from different categories. They illustrate their point with the following examples:

- Juan está rico.*
- Juan es rico.*

- El jefe está amable.*
- El jefe es amable.*
- María está loca.*
- María es loca.*

In their system (Franco and Steinmetz 1986: 381), sentences 1, 3 and 5 are comparing "X with X;" while in sentences 2, 4 and 6, the comparison is "X with Y." By this, (1986: 381) state that:

... the interpretation of [1] would be that John now has more money than usual or than we expect him to have, of [3] that the boss is in a better mood than usual or than one would have expected him to be, and of [5] that Mary's behavior is crazier than usual or than we would anticipate. Similarly, because they contain *ser* and hence employ a comparison of X and Y, our theory would predict for [2, 4, 6] the following interpretations respectively: [2] that John has a lot of money (in comparison with most other people), [4] that the boss is in a good mood or friendly (in comparison with other bosses), and [6] that the behavior of Mary is typically crazy (in comparison with that of most other people).

Mason (1990) suggest the use of the acronym PLACE as a way to remember the use of *estar* which we reproduce here.

Position:

expresses the physical position or posture of a person or thing:
estar sentado, levantado, etc.

Location:

expresses where places, people, or things are located

Estoy en Nueva York
El libro está en la mesa.

Action:

expresses the result of an action or progressive

El hombre está muerto
Estoy comiendo ahora.

Condition:

expresses health and other changeable states

estar enfermo, sucio, lleno, etc..

Emotion:

expresses emotions such as (*estar contento, triste, deprimido*) but one must remember that *alegre, melancólico* and *feliz* are consid-

ered inherent character traits and not simply experienced emotions that may change.

2. Forms of Address

The forms of address in Spanish (*tú* vs. *Usted*) generally receive scant attention in most elementary and intermediate textbooks. Their use, of course, is of great importance in terms of how we address other people in Spanish. Failure to use these forms in the appropriate social contexts may result in what Thomas (1983) calls pragmatic failure. In this regard, Thomas (1983: 96-97) states that:

[G]rammatical errors may be irritating and impede communication, but at least, as a rule, they are apparent in the surface structure, so that the H[earer] is aware that an error has occurred. Once alerted to the fact that the S[peaker] is not fully grammatically competent, native speakers seem to have little difficulty in allowing for it. Pragmatic failure, on the other hand, is rarely recognized as such by non-linguists. If a non-native speaker appears to speak fluently (i.e. is grammatically competent), a native speaker is likely to attribute his/her apparent impoliteness, not any linguistic deficiency but to boorishness or ill-will. While grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a *person*. Misunderstandings such as this are almost certainly at the root of unhelpful and offensive national stereotyping...

Terrell and Salgués de Cargill (1979: 119-123) discuss the uses of *tú* and *Usted* in Spanish by pointing out that the primary difficulty for Anglophones is the fact that this distinction no longer exists in English with the exception of certain communities such as the Amish. A related formal problem for neophyte Spanish students is the fact that the difference in forms of address correlates to a difference in person (second vs. third person singular). Solé (1978: 941-942; Solé and Solé 1977: 24) states that the difference between these two forms of address depends upon various socio-cultural dimensions:

1. the interpersonal relationship of the speakers.
2. the norms governing personal relationships within a given setting.
3. the personal characteristics of the speakers – country of origin, rural/urban precedence, level of education, sex and age.
4. the speech context in which the exchange occurs.
5. the neutrality or affectivity of the speech event itself.

The usage of *tú* and *Usted* is morphologically and sociolinguistically complex in Spanish. Nearly three decades ago, Marín (1972) argued that *tú* alone should be taught in the elementary classes because it is a form that appears to be replacing *Usted*. In a reply to that essay, Hampton (1974) advises the continued uses of both forms because the projected demise of *Usted* is premature.

One specific morphological problem that students have initially with *tú* and *Usted* forms is a confusion of the second and third person singular forms. It is not uncommon for neophyte students to generate ungrammatical forms such as the following: **Usted ves; tú ve*, and so forth. This morphological problem requires attention early on. We advocate using a chart such as the following to address this matter (Fig. 1).

3. Gender

The gender of nouns in Spanish is important because knowledge of this segment of Spanish grammar is crucial to adjectival agreement. In essence, the only way that we know that there is gender in Spanish is through the different allomorphs (variants) of adjectives and determiners. Most Spanish textbooks identify the gender of a noun by its ending. In statistical terms, this is a

reasonable strategy since there is a relatively high correlation between the noun ending and its gender. Bergen (1978b) provides a comprehensive analysis of previous studies on the correlation of the endings of nouns and their gender which is worth consulting for its completeness. For ease of presentation and simplicity, we believe that the chart developed by Terrell and Salgués de Cargill (1979: 110) is the simplest representation of these correlations, exceptions notwithstanding (see Fig. 2).

There are, of course, commonly used nouns (masculine: *el análisis, el día, el lápiz*; feminine: *la cárcel, la flor, la foto, la mano*, etc.) that do not adhere to the generalizations in Fig. 2 above, usually for etymological or morphological reasons. These nouns will require memorization.

Bergen (1980) points out that

... there is a different kind of semantic utilization of Spanish gender, the extensive nature of which has not been previously described. That is, although the gender classification of most Spanish nouns does not have a semantic basis, and although the term 'gender' is commonly thought of as describing a purely grammatical category, nevertheless there are numerous contrasting semantic notions...

The following are selected examples of this phenomenon. We note that several of these are sexist in nature (see Suardíaz 1973 for a detailed discussion).

1. Derivationally related nouns (*huésped/huéspeda*).
2. Males and females (*abuelo/ abuela*).
3. Men with an occupation and their wives (*presidente/ presidenta*).
4. Men and their related practices (*físico/física*).

Fig. 1

| Subject Pronoun (optional in first and second persons singular, i.e., for emphasis only) | Verb Stem | Verbal Suffix (Present Tense) |
|---|-----------|----------------------------------|
| (yo) | habl- | -o |
| (tú) | habl- | -as |
| Usted | habl- | -a |

Fig. 2

| Feminine | Masculine |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| -a mesa | -o coro |
| -d sed, ciudad | -e parque |
| -is crisis, hepatitis | -v café, rubí |
| -ión nación, unión | -C reloj, andén, |
| -z vez, luz | revólver, papel. |

5. Men and related objects or places (*abejero/ abjejera*).
6. Trees and their fruits (*aceituno/ aceituna*).

Once again, gender is implicit in nouns but it does not manifest itself unless there is an adjective or determiner used to modify it, or unless there is a pronominal reference to a previously stated or understood noun. Wonder's (1985) article about gender agreement in Spanish points out just how complex gender agreement is. In it, he demonstrates the exceptional problems involved in trying to state such a rule for Spanish in simple terms (see also Appendix, 3).

4. Adjective Position

Terker (1985) disagrees with what he calls the transformational position on adjective placement in Spanish (Luján 1973, 1980). Instead, the author agrees, in essence with Bolinger's (1952) notion of linear modification. Bolinger (1954 - 1955: 52) discusses this notion as it applies to Spanish in the following way:

In *casa roja* the adjective narrows the reference of the noun; in *roja casa* the noun follows the reference of the adjective... Furthermore, when there are no parentheses a series will give step-by-step narrowings: *vino rojo italiano* is primarily about *vino rojo* which happens to be *italiano*; while *vino italiano rojo* is primarily about *vino italiano* narrowed, for this particular occasion to *rojo*.

Ultimately, Terker (1985: 507) alters Bolinger's notion of linear modification of adjectives in Spanish with the following pedagogical principle:

[T]he specificity of meaning increases from left to right, and

most important element is the last; when greater emphasis is desired the adjective is placed in pronominal position and is given intonational prominence.

The entire question of adjective position in Spanish is complex because many factors enter into the relationship of meaning and placement (Contreras 1976). Tuttle (1981: 582) provides a very useful mnemonic device for remembering the usual position of adjectives in Spanish. It is LND (pronounced 'land'). Its meaning follows: Limited adjectives precede the Noun while Descriptive adjectives follow it (see Appendix 4 for additional studies).

5. Preterite/Imperfect

The theoretical literature on the preterite/imperfect contrast in Spanish is substantial (see Appendix, 5). Frantzen's (1995) recent article on the preterite/imperfect dichotomy advocates the use of a more reliable, simpler set of rules for acquiring the preterite/imperfect dichotomy. Frantzen (1995: 146) cites several of the conventional textbook statements about which she labels "half-truths." Instead, she (1995: 147) proposes the following set of principles for making a choice between the preterite and the imperfect.

1. The *imperfect* is used for
 - a) actions and states in progress at some focused point in the past,
 - b) habitual past actions,
 - c) repeated past actions,
 - d) anticipated/planned past actions.
- 2) The *preterite* is used to focus on
 - a) the completion of past actions or states,
 - b) the beginning of past actions or states.

We advise students and teachers alike to read Frantzen's (1995) article because it addresses specific problems in textbook presentation of the preterite/imperfect tenses and it discusses in detail how to use her revised principles.

Several innovative approaches to the teaching of the preterite/imperfect distinction are worth noting because of their use of visualization

strategies through television and video. First, Delgado-Jenkins (1990) advocates the use of television weather in Spanish reports as a means of demonstrating and teaching the preterite/imperfect contrast. Next, Hernán (1994) reported on an experiment carried out at the University of Illinois at Chicago in which a video demonstrated graphically the distinction between the two Spanish past tenses. In particular, the University of Illinois at Chicago developed an interactive video known as VIPI (*Visualización del Pretérito y del Imperfecto*) as a strategy to teach and to evaluate these aspectual differences in Spanish. Initial results have proven positive.

The so-called "meaning-changing" verbs of the preterite tense (*conocer, poder, querer, saber, tener*) have received separate attention in elementary-intermediate-advanced textbooks. These predicates are said to undergo a meaning change from their imperfect counterparts. Bull (1965: 166-171), Terrell and Salgués de Cargill (1979: 162-165), and, more recently (Frantzen (1995: 151-154) all share the opinion that this strategy is misleading. All three authors argue that these verbs should not be treated separately in any discussion of the preterite/imperfect dichotomy because their aspectual meaning is the same as any other verb in these two tenses. Quilter (1993: 91; cited in Frantzen 1995: 151-152) states that:

It is true that the English equivalencies for these three verbs do at times deviate from what we would expect given the citation form in the dictionary. But does this fact mean that these verbs are somehow 'special' in the sense of 'irregular' or 'unusual,' behaving differently from other verbs? Three considerations should make us suspicious about the claim of exception:

- (a) native speakers do not appear to notice any consistent shared difference between the pastness of forms like *tuve* and *supe* and that of *hablé* and *corrí*;
- (b)... 'special' preterites can be translated in more than one way; and
- (c) the phenomenon, whatever

it is, does not seem to be limited to these five verbs.

Mason (1996: 16) suggests a mnemonic device for helping students to remember under what circumstances they should use the imperfect tense. The acronym is CHEATED which stands for the following:

- C**ontinuous Actions
- H**abitual Actions
- E**motions
- A**ge
- T**ime
- E**ndless Actions
- D**escriptions

6. Por/Para

Research on *por* and *para* is abundant, though some of it is rather esoteric (see Appendix, 6). Most traditional discussions of *por* and *para* amount to lists with examples and their respective translations and when to use them. Typical of this approach is the following.

Por

- a. Motivations, reasons, compulsion
¡Por Dios!; Lo hizo por sus hijos.
- b. Feelings
su odio por aquel hombre.
- c. Object of an errand after certain verbs of motion
Fue por pan.
- d. Approximate location, time or space
por aquí; Pasó por la avenida.
- e. Duration of an action
por una hora.
- f. Substitution, price and exchange
Pagó diez dólares por el libro.
¿Me tomas por loco?.
- g. Correspondence and rate
Dos por dos son cuatro.
Recibió diez dólares por hora.
- h. Means, manner and instrument
por teléfono; por fuerza; La tarea fue hecha por Juan.

Para

- a. Purpose
Mi amiga estudia para doctora;
Para ir a Nueva York hay que ir en avión.
- b. Motion toward a destination
Va para Los Angeles.

- c. Use and suitability
Copa para vino.
- d. Deadlines or specific points in time
para mañana.
- e. Comparison
Para un niño, sabe mucho.

The above are the inevitable lists that virtually all elementary, intermediate and advanced textbooks feature. While we can offer no simple and foolproof strategy for differentiating *por* and *para*, it may be easier to show students the uses of *para*, with its fewer and less complicated uses, and then explain that *por* is used elsewhere. To this end, Mason (1992: 198) suggests a mnemonic device to assist students in recalling when to use either *por* or *para*. The mnemonic acronym for the use of *para* is PERFECT. We cite his examples here.

- P**urpose-indicates the purpose of an action
Lo hizo para ganar dinero.
- E**ffect-indicates the effect that something or someone has on something or someone else
Estudia para maestro.
- R**ecipient-indicates the person or entity that receives something
El regalo es para mamá. El dinero es para el fondo especial.
- F**uture-projects to a future date or event
La tarea es para el lunes.
- E**mployment-indicates both what something is used for or job employment
Las tijeras son para cortar. Carlos trabaja para IBM.
- C**omparison-indicates a comparison of person or thing with others in a class
Para un gato es muy inteligente.
- T**oward-indicates movement toward in terms of direction
Pablo camina para el parque.

7. Personal a

The personal “a” in Spanish creates problems for students because it does not exist in English. A number of excellent studies on this grammatical form exist (see Appendix, 7). This grammatical form is important because it helps to identify direct objects and disambiguate sub-

ject and object in sentences with inverted word order.

King (1984:397) notes that this grammatical function word has been called “personal,” “prepositional,” and “meaningless.” Nominally, it is a function word inserted before a direct object that refers to a person. This statement, however, is a simplification of this grammatical form as Weissenreider (1985) points out in her discussion of the exceptional uses of *a* in Spanish. Weissenreider (1985: 393) cites the following examples for such usage.

1. *El carro alcanzó al azul.*
2. *El adjetivo precede/sigue al sustantivo.*

Both of these examples fail to meet the criteria we stated above for the use of “personal *a*” which she attributes to the “Ambiguity Principle” which has to do with the relative freedom of word order in Spanish and the need to identify objects through a marker such as *a*. This usage is somewhat esoteric and probably requires no discussion in an elementary class.

Weissenreider (1990) employs the notion of individuation taken from Hopper and Thompson (1980: 253) who speak of “Highly Individuated” nouns (proper, human, animate, concrete, singular, count, definite, referential) and “Less Individuated” (common, inanimate, abstract, plural, mass, non-referential). These are precisely the features that would cause a Spanish-speaker to use, or not use the direct-object marker *a*.

8. Gustar-Constructions

Perhaps one of the most problematic grammatical constructions, *gustar*-type structures present difficulty to teachers and students alike. Relatively few studies on this construction exist (see Appendix, 8). Briscoe (1989: 747) suggests that *gustar* should follow a specified sequence.

1. Mastery of present indicative forms in regular *a*-verb (first-conjugation) verbs.
2. Awareness of the reversal of the subject-verb sequence in Spanish. This would include interrogatives word order and word in statements such as *llegaron tarde mis amigos.*

Next, Briscoe (1989: 747-748) proposes a six-stage approach which we reproduce in part here.

1. Teach *disgustar*, introducing it as a regular *a*-verb cognate of *disgust*.
2. Talk students through a simple analysis of the *dis-* prefix (morpheme), emphasizing its negating function in such English words as *dissatisfy*, *disarm*, and *disconnect*. Ask students to give such verbs without the prefix (*satisfy*, *arm*, *connect*). Show them that *disgust* has this prefix. Finally, ask what is left when we remove the negative prefix from the English *disgust* (*gust*).
3. Tell students that *gust* is an archaic English form with the present-day meaning of *gusto*. Have them pretend that it is a modern day antonym for *to disgust* and ask them what the meaning would then be (*to please* or any close equivalent).
4. In English ask several students questions or seek rejoinders using forms of *gust* as if it were a modern English word.
5. Tell students that *gustar*, the Spanish opposite for *disgustar* is commonly used in present-day Spanish. It is regular in conjugation and is used like its antonym *disgustar*.
6. To help students substitute the *gustar* construction for the English *like* construction, give students translation drills (i.e., you give the English; students respond in Spanish), gradually increasing their speed to where students make automatic responses without apparent analysis.

Finally, Briscoe (1989: 749) advocates the somewhat common format of using arrows to indicate the transformation between the English and the Spanish forms in this grammatical structure (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 3

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Subject | Verb | Direct Object |
| <i>I</i> | <i>like</i> | <i>the book</i> |
| ↓ | | ↓ |
| Indirect Object | Verb | Subject |

Parsons (1988: 176) advocates the use of *gustar* constructions as a way to engage students instantly in the language. Thus, the question *¿Qué te gusta?* can generate a number of responses with *Me gusta...* One specific examples is to ask students what they like to do in different seasons of the year. Answers might include *Me gusta nadar en verano*, and so forth.

9. Se-Constructions

Studies on *se* constructions in Spanish are numerous, though a mere handful of these studies are included in the Appendix, 9).

The title of this section is probably a confusing one because there are many *se*'s. These include at least the following grammatical constructions pointed out by Jordán (1973):

1. The indefinite *se* *Cuando se es rico, se está mejor.*
2. The morphophonemic variant of *le* [spurious *se*] *Se lo di a Juan.*
3. The reflexive *se* [paradigmatic *se*] *Juan se lava.*
4. The reciprocal reflexive *se* limited to the third person plural *Juan y María se aman.*
5. The intrinsic reflexive *se* *Miró mucho lo que se hacía.*
6. The inherently reflexive *se* of certain verbs *arrepentirse.*

To these six uses of *se*, Roldán (1971) adds the following.

1. Reflexive inchoative *se* *Juan se murió.*
2. Impersonal *se* *Se compran las botellas.*
3. Impersonal *se* construction with a human subject *Se saluda a los generales.*

Finally, Davis (1972) points out the use of *se* constructions for so-called true passive constructions as follows.

1. *Se apagó el incendio por los bomberos.*

If one adds to all of these manifestations of *se* the existence of so-called acceptable ungrammatical sentences with *se* discussed by Otero (1972, 1975; see Knowles 1974), the situation is further complicated as seen by Otero's now classic example.

| <i>Se</i> | + Verb (third person singular/plural) | +/- Noun (singular/plural) |
|-----------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Se</i> | <i>dice</i> | <i>la verdad</i> (impersonal usage) |
| <i>Se</i> | <i>venden</i> | <i>los libros</i> (impersonal usage) |

Fig. 4

1. *Se alquilan los apartamentos.*
(Agreement of subject with verb)
2. *Se alquila los apartamentos.*
(Non-agreement of subject with verb)

All of these forms can produce confusion in students and major problems for Spanish teachers. We argue here, for pedagogical purposes that there are two *se*'s. The first is paradigmatic *se* which occurs in reflexive verbs and it is part of a complete verbal paradigm. The other is non-paradigmatic *se* and it has a single manifestation with the third person singular or plural of a verb in any tense (Suñer 1973.) The best way to present this usage is to provide the following formula in Fig. 4.

The above formula applies to #'s 5 and 6 Jordán's (1973) list above, to #2 on Roldán's (1971) list, and to Davis's example of the passive usage in non-paradigmatic *se* constructions. Our formula would have to be slightly modified to address reciprocal *se* whose constructions normally have the subject in initial position but this is a minor point.

10. Subjunctive

The theoretical and pedagogical research on the Spanish subjunctive is considerable (see Appendix, 10).

The following sections will deal with

1. the subjunctive in noun clauses;
2. the subjunctive in relative or adjectival clauses;
3. the subjunctive in adverbial clauses;
4. the sequence of tenses; and
5. the inherent grammatical complexity of structures with the subjunctive.

Subjunctive in Noun Clauses

Tuttle (1981: 582) suggests the acronym WEDDING as a way to remember which meaning classes of verbs take the subjunctive. WEDDING stands for the following predicates:

Will

Emotion

Desire

Doubt

Impersonal expression

Negative

Generalized Characteristics

The WEDDING acronym thus covers noun clauses introduced by verbs of volition, emotion, desire, doubt and impersonal expressions. Likewise, it covers the use of the subjunctive in relative clauses when there is a negative antecedent or an unspecified antecedent. This acronymic mnemonic does not, however, cover instances of the subjunctive in adverbial clauses (for discussion see below).

The following chart shows some typical examples of the subjunctive as found in the WEDDING acronym (see Fig. 5).

Chandler (1996: 127) uses the acronym VOCES to indicate when to use the indicative after impersonal expressions (see #5 in Fig. 5 above). His mnemonic device is reproduced here as Fig. 6.

Wakefield (1992: 200) employs a travel analogy as a way to help students remember when to use the subjunctive in noun clauses (this "passport" applies to examples 1-5 in Fig. 5). She states that

... sentence must contain a trigger verb indicating influence, emotion, or doubt. Two other conditions must also be made clear. There must be two clauses in the sentence indicated by a *Que*, as well as a change of subject.

Wakefield then proposes a visual mnemonic namely the "pasaporte oficial" which has the following form (see Fig. 7).

Subjunctive in Relative (Adjectival Clauses)

Mood selection in relative clauses is simple, though the syntax involved, is not (Rojas 1977; Rivero

Fig. 5

| WEDDING Acronym: | Examples in Spanish: |
|--|--|
| 1. Will (verbs of volition such as <i>preferir</i> and so forth) | <i>Prefiero que Jorge llegue a tiempo.</i> |
| 2. Emotion (verbs and verbal expressions of emotion such as <i>sentir, estar alegre (de)</i>) | <i>Siento que María esté enferma. Estoy alegre de que puedas visitarnos.</i> |
| 3. Desire (verbs such as <i>querer, desear, and so forth</i>) | <i>Quiero que Juan escriba la carta.</i> |
| 4. Doubt (verbs such as <i>dudar, and so forth</i>) | <i>Dudo que llueva hoy.</i> |
| 5. Impersonal expression (verbal expressions such as <i>es importante, es posible, and so forth</i>) | <i>Es posible que haya mucha gente allí.</i> |
| 6. Negative (relative clauses with negative antecedents such as <i>nadie, nada, and so forth</i>) | <i>No hay nadie que pueda trabajar el domingo</i> |
| 7. Generalized characteristics (relative clauses with unspecified antecedents) | <i>¿Hay alguien que tenga la tarea de hoy?</i> |

Fig. 6

Impersonal expressions calling for the indicative

| Es | + VOCES | + que | →Indicativo |
|----|----------------------|-------|--|
| | V erdad | | <i>Es verdad que te quiero mucho.</i> |
| | O bvio | | <i>Es obvio que me quieres también.</i> |
| | C ierto/Claro | | <i>Es cierto que te quiero más todos los días.</i> |
| | E vidente | | <i>Es evidente que él no te quiero como yo.</i> |
| | S eguro | | <i>Es seguro que nos queremos muchísimo.</i> |

1975, 1977). The antecedent (the word to which the relative pronoun refers) must be either negative or indefinite to trigger the subjunctive. The following examples illustrate this syntactic phenomenon.

1. *No veo a nadie* [negative antecedent] *que sepa* [subjunctive] *hablar chino.*
2. *¿Hay alguien* [indefinite antecedent] *que diga* [subjunctive] *la verdad?*

Subjunctive in Adverbial Clauses

Spanish in adverbial clauses is the final part of the Spanish subjunctive conundrum. The traditional approach is to provide lists of adverbial conjunctions:

- (1) those that always require the subjunctive *a fin de que, a menos que a no ser que antes (de) que con tal (de) que en caso (de) que, para que, sin que;* and

- (2) those in which there is a choice *cuando en cuanto después (de) que hasta que.*

It is only in the latter case that students experience difficulties because they are face with a choice. The indicative is used when the verb in the adverbial clause refers to a habitual action or past action. When the verb in the adverbial clause alludes to an action that has not yet taken place, it is in the subjunctive. In their "semantic" approach to the latter case, Terrell and Hooper (1974) label these "potential events." Our approach, we admit, requires memorization.

Sequence of Tenses

The sequence of tenses in Spanish is yet another factor in the use of the subjunctive in Spanish. One rule-of-thumb is simply to tell students that if the main clause verb (= first verb) is in a past tense, then the

Fig. 7

| Pasaporte Oficial |
|--|
| 1. Trigger |
| 2. Que |
| 3. Cambio de sujeto |
| <i>Sin las condiciones de arriba, no se puede pasar a la tierra del subjuntivo</i> |

subordinate (= second verb) will be in the past. We recognize that this is an oversimplification, but it is a starting point.

Grammatical Complexity and the Subjunctive

Despite all that has been written about mood selection in Spanish, Collentine (1995: 122) points out that:

Foreign language learners of Spanish seemingly cannot master mood selection – the indicative/subjunctive distinction – by the end of the intermediate level of instruction (within four semesters). Yet their courses ordinarily reserve a considerable amount of time for the study of mood selection. An analysis of two oral-production tasks suggests that, by the end of the intermediate level, learners are not likely to reach a stage at which they have the essential linguistic foundation to fully benefit from instruction in mood-selection.

Collentine (1995: 122) concludes that

... in addition to assisting learners with the morphological aspects of mood selection, instructors should seek ways to assist learners with the syntactic aspects, namely, with the production of complex syntax.

While we do not take such a dim view about students' ability to acquire the subjunctive, we recognize that its mastery requires more time and practice than is available in the traditional elementary-intermediate sequence. We agree with Collentine that in order to make decisions about the use of the subjunctive/indicative dichotomy, students need to control some fairly sophisticated grammatical structures

such as sentential complementation, relativization and adverbial clauses.

Concluding Remarks

We view this paper as a concise, uniform resource for teachers of Spanish who wish to have some useful materials for presenting some of the most challenging structures for their students. It is also a resource for teachers who wish to learn more about some of these syntactic structures. We have chosen what we believe to be the most common problematic grammatical structures in Spanish at the elementary and intermediate-level and which require additional review in advanced grammar courses. Our approach has been to focus on practical pedagogical materials and to provide selected references to theoretical studies for those who wish to delve into specific issues in the various areas discussed. We acknowledge that the literature on the areas discussed above is far greater than what we have included in an already extensive bibliography (see Nuessel 1988). But, we believe that this mini-reference work will be of long-lasting use for classroom teachers of Spanish (see also Mollica 1998, Mollica and Nuessel 1997, Nuessel 1999).

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Appendix

This appendix contains a selected bibliography for each one of the grammatical constructions discussed in this paper.

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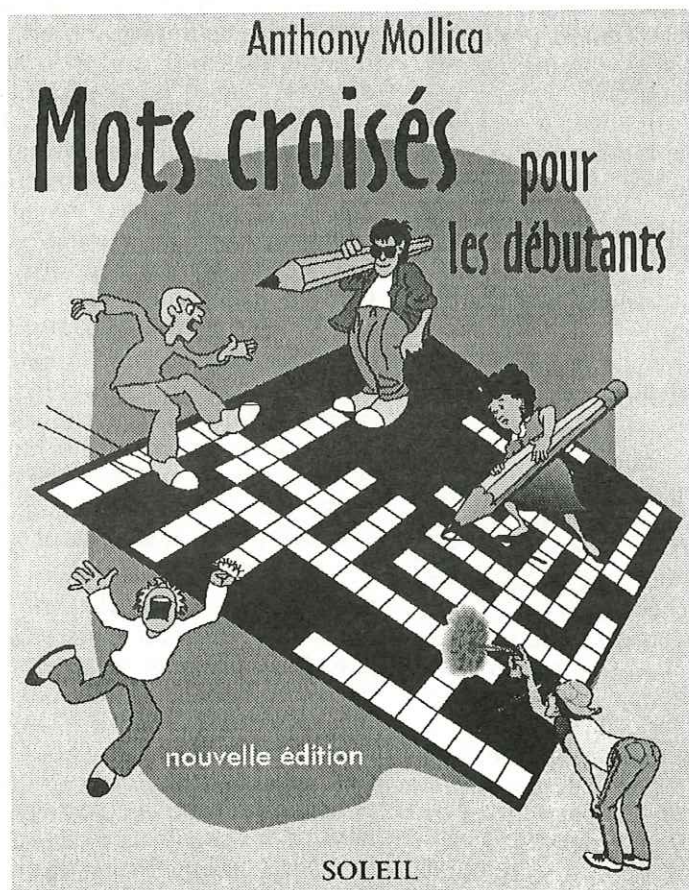
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Marcel Danesi

Expanding Conceptual Fluency Theory for Second-Language Teaching

The author expands the notion of the conceptual flowing theory developed in a previous study by Danesi and Mollica.

Introduction

The central objective of conceptual fluency theory is to ensure that learners have access to the conceptual structures inherent in the target language and culture in a systematic, sequential, and integrated fashion with other areas of language learning. This article expands on the notion of *conceptual fluency theory* developed in a previous study by Danesi and Mollica (1998).

Conceptual Fluency Theory Expanded

The notion of conceptual fluency was derived from the research investigating the role of metaphor in discourse and cognition. The basic premise of conceptual fluency theory is that while student discourse may manifest a high degree of verbal accuracy or fluency, based on the ability to use memorized structures to form simple sentence, it invariably lacks the conceptual fluency that characterizes the corresponding discourse of native speakers. Students use the words and rules of the second language to deliver meanings that are conceptualized in terms of their native language and culture: *i.e.* students typically use memorized second-language words and structures as carriers of their own native-language concepts. When the native and second-language conceptual systems coincide in an area of discourse, then the student discourse emerges as "natural"; when they do not, it manifests an asymmetry between language form and conceptual content. What student discourse often lacks, in other words, is conceptual fluency.

Conceptual fluency theory is based on the central notion, derived from recent intriguing work in

the semiotic, psychological, and language sciences, that abstract concepts are knowable primarily (if not exclusively) as "metaphorized ideas," *i.e.* as ideas that are constructed cognitively through metaphorical reasoning. (Summaries of relevant work in this domain can be found in Gibbs 1994 and Goatley 1997).

In this paper, a conceptual metaphor will be renamed a *metaform*, for it is in essence a *form* made up of a meaning subsystem referring to an abstract concept in terms of a concrete vehicle (Danesi 1999). The formula [thinking = seeing], for example, is a metaform because it is made up of an abstract concept, [thinking], that is delivered in terms of forms, structures, categories, etc. that involve [seeing]. This metaform underlies utterances such as:

1. I cannot *see* what use your *idea* might have.
2. I can't quite *visualize* what that *theory* is all about.

Each of the two parts of the metaform is called a domain: [thinking] is referred to as the *target domain* because it is the abstract topic itself (the "target" of the metaform); and *seeing* is called the *source domain* because it enfolds the class of vehicles that deliver the meaning of the metaform (the "source" of the metaphorical concept) (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). A specific metaphorical statement uttered in a discourse situation is now construable as a particular instantiation of a metaform. So, when we hear people using such metaphorical statements as the following

1. Those ideas are *circular*.
2. I don't see the *point* of your idea.

3. Her ideas are *central* to the discussion.
4. Their ideas are *diametrically* opposite.
etc.

it is obvious that they are not manifestations of isolated, self-contained metaphorical creations, but rather, specific instantiations of the metaform whose target domain is [ideas] and whose source domain is identifiable as [geometrical figures/relations]:

This revision to conceptual fluency theory is critical for second language acquisition and second language teaching, because, psychologically, the notion of metaform as a single form or *Gestalt*, allows the instructor to relate the "experience" or "understanding" of some target domain to something that is familiar and easily picturable in both mental and representational terms. For instance, the above metaform, [ideas = geometrical figures/relations], is, in effect, the reason underlying the common practice of representing ideas and theories with diagrams based on geometrical figures (points, lines, circles, boxes, etc.). All "models" in Western culture are, in effect, geometric diagrams. Metaforms reveal the deployment of a mental strategy that allows for abstractions to become knowable in concrete picturable (or other sensory) ways.

Since the source domain of a metaform encompasses concrete vehicles, it follows that the selection of one form or another from a particular domain will produce connotative nuances. Take, for example the metaphorical statement

The professor is a snake.

which is an instantiation of the metaform [human personality = perceived physical features of animals]. The meaning of [snake] that this statement embodies, however, is not its denotative one, but rather, the culture-specific connotations perceived in snakes, namely "slyness," "danger," "slipperiness," etc. It is this complex of connotations that is implied in the depiction of the topic, [professor]. Each different instantiation of this metaform changes the view we get of the topic: e.g. in *The professor is a rat*, the [professor] is portrayed instead as some-

one "aggressive," "combative," "rude," etc. – a complex of connotations which are implicit in the new selected vehicle [rat].

Once the first "layer" of abstract metaforms in a language has been formed, on the basis of concrete source domains, then this layer itself becomes a new productive source domain for creating a higher (=more abstract) layer of concepts. Elsewhere, I have referred to this as the *layering principle* (Danesi 1999). Layered associations among metaforms can be called meta-metaforms. Thus, for example, in utterances such as the following the target domain of [ideas] is rendered by source domains that are themselves metaforms [devising something in the mind = upward motion] and [reflecting = scanning motion].

1. Where did you think up that idea?
2. I thought over carefully your ideas
3. You should think out the whole problem before attempting to solve it.

Even though these phrasal verbs have abstract referents, they nonetheless evoke images of location and movement. The phrase *think up* elicits a mental image of upward movement, thus portraying the abstract referent as an object being extracted physically from a kind of mental terrain; *think over* evokes the image of scanning with the mind's eye; and *think out* elicits an image of extracting something so that it can be held up to the scrutiny of the mind's eye. These constructions allow speakers to locate and identify abstract ideas in relation to spatiotemporal contexts, although such contexts are purely imaginary. It's as if these imaginary indexes allow us to locate thoughts in the mind, with the mind having the features of a territory and thoughts of objects within it.

Another aspect of metaphorical reasoning is *symbol formation*. Metaforms and meta-metaforms are frequently the sources of symbols, of grammatical categories, and of the other representational techniques that make up the "signifying order" of a culture. Elsewhere I have referred to this as the *intercon-*

nectedness principle (Danesi 1999). In the case of symbol formation the form-user and the referent are linked to each other by the forces of historical process and social convention. For example, a rose is used as a symbol for love in Western culture because it derives ultimately from the metaphorical association of [love] to a [sweet smell], to the color [red], and to the notion that love grows like a [plant]. These are all metaforms that lead to the formation of the symbol: [rose = love].

The above version of conceptual fluency theory posits that abstract meanings are, first, experienced in terms of concrete ones producing, metaforms with connotative properties. These then become themselves source domains for further metaphorization producing meta-metaforms with indexical properties. Finally, the metaforms and meta-metaforms are themselves the basis of many symbolic processes since they become interconnected within the signifying order of a culture.

In this framework, a specific *metaphor* is not considered to be an isolated construction, but rather, a specific instantiation of a metaform:

1. The professor is a *snake*.
2. Keep away from her; she's a *rat*.
3. What a *gorilla* he has become!
4. She's a sweetheart, a true *pussycat*!
5. He keeps everything for himself; he's a real *hog*.

As these examples show, the [human personality = perceived physical features of animals] metaform is one of the conceptual strategies used for understanding notions such as *slyness*, *betrayal*, *aggressiveness*, *kindness*, etc. Also as mentioned above, each different selection of a vehicle from the source domain – [snake], [rat], [gorilla], [pussycat], [hog], etc. – provides a different connotative depiction of the specific personality to be evaluated. Needless to say, perceptions of animal behaviors vary according to situation. But the fact remains that people the world over react experientially and affectively to animals in specific ways and that these reactions are encoded into a source

domain for evaluating human personality.

Once this concept has been formed, then it becomes itself a source for providing further descriptive detail to our evaluations of human personality, if such a need should arise. Thus, for instance, the specific utilization of [snake] as the vehicle can itself become a sub-domain (made up of types of snakes), allowing one to zero in on specific details of the personality being described:

1. He's a *cobra*;
 2. She's a *viper*.
 3. Your friend is a *boa constrictor*.
- etc.

In effect, within each source domain, there are sub-domains that provide the metaform-user with an array of connotations that can be utilized to project subtle detail on to the description of a certain personality. This is perhaps why in 1973 the psychologist Elinor Rosch (1973a, 1973b) came to the conclusion that there are three levels in concept-formation. Some concepts have a highly general referential function. She called these *superordinate*. The metaform [human personality = perceived physical features of animals] itself is, in her scheme, a superordinate concept, because it refers to the general phenomenon of personality. Other concepts have a typological function. Rosch called these *basic*. The choice of specific metaphorical vehicles from the [animal] source domain – [snake], [rat], etc. – produces, in effect, basic concepts because vehicular choices allow for reference to types of personalities. Finally, some concepts have a detailing function. Rosch called these *subordinate*. The selection of sub-types of [snake], [rat], etc. – [cobra], [viper], etc. – are all subordinate concepts that might be needed for specialized purposes, as we saw above.

Metaforms are not generated in an arbitrary fashion, but on the basis of an experience of beings, objects, events, etc. The [human personality = perceived physical features of animals] concept is guided, arguably, by a common experience, namely that animals and humans are interconnected in Nature's

scheme of things. What does talking about people in this way imply? It means that we actually perceive humans as behaving like animals, and that our reactions are parallel to those experienced physically when we see certain animals.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) trace the psychological source of metaforms to *image schemas*. These are mental impressions of our sensory experiences of locations, movements, shapes, reactions, feelings, etc. They are the mental links between experiences and abstract concepts. These schemas not only permit us to recognize patterns within certain bodily sensations, but also to anticipate certain consequences and to make inferences. Schemas are mental *Gestalten* that can reduce a large quantity of sensory information into general patterns. Image schema theory suggests that the source domains enlisted in delivering an abstract concept were not chosen originally in an arbitrary fashion, but rather, that they are derived from the experience of beings, objects, events, etc. The formation of a metaform, therefore, is the result of an experiential induction. This is why metaphors often produce aesthetic or synesthetic effects, and this explains why metaphorical utterances are more memorable than others.

Knowledge of human personality entails knowledge of metaforms such as the [human personality = perceived physical features of animals] one discussed here. Clearly, this kind of knowledge is culture-specific. The very same source domain could have been utilized differently; *i.e.* applied to a different target domains such as [justice], [hope], etc. Or else, a different source domain could have been used, in tandem with this metaform. In Western culture, for instance, the target domain of [human personality] is frequently conceptualized in terms of [mask-wearing]. Indeed, the original meaning of the word *person* reveals this very conceptualization. In ancient Greece, the word *persona* signified a "mask" worn by an actor on stage. Subsequently, it came to have the meaning of "the personality of the mask-wearer." This meaning

still exists in the theater term *dramatis personae* "cast of characters" (literally "the persons of the drama"). Eventually, the word came to have its present meaning of "living human being." This diachronic analysis of *person* also explains why we continue to this day to use "theatrical" expressions such as *to play a role in life, to put on a proper face*, etc. in reference to persons.

Whatever the case, once a metaform gains currency in a cultural context, it makes representation and communication efficient and convenient, conditioning its users to anticipate or project its occurrence in other domains of reference and knowledge. In effect, any metaform can become a productive resource for further meaning-making activities.

Now, the layering of metaforms to produce higher abstractions is an unconscious culture-based process. The higher the density of layering, the more abstract and, thus, more culture-specific, the concept. Metaforms like the [thinking = seeing] one are relatively understandable across cultures: *i.e.* people from non-English-speaking cultures could easily figure out what the statements that instantiate this metaform mean if they were translated to them, because they connect concrete source domains – *e.g.* seeing → to abstractions → thinking – directly. *Meta-metaforms*, on the other hand, are more likely to be understood primarily in culture-specific ways, and are thus much harder to translate, because they connect already-existing metaforms to abstractions. In other words, there are some source domains that are dependent upon specific cultural knowledge. People living in cultures without knowledge of Euclidean geometry would be hardpressed to decipher statements cited earlier:

1. Those ideas are *circular*.
2. I don't see the *point* of your idea.
3. Her ideas are *central* to the discussion.
4. Their ideas are *diametrically* opposite.
etc.

The point to be made here is that highly abstract notions are built-up from meta- metaforms which coalesce into a system of abstract meaning that holds together the entire network of associated meanings in the culture. At a cultural level, metaforms and meta-forms can, thus, be seen to be the sources of many symbols, grammatical categories, discourse flow, etc. The [knowing = seeing] metaform crystallizes, for example, in the art of *chiaroscuro* – the technique of using light and shade in painting, invented by the Italian baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573-1610). It is also the conceptual source for the fact that *illumination* is emphasized by religions. So-called "visionary" or "revelatory" experiences are regularly portrayed in terms of dazzling sensations of light. The metaform [justice = blindness], to use another example, crops up not only in conversations, but also in pictorial representations. This is why there are statues of blindfolded women inside and outside courtrooms to symbolize *justice*. The [love = a sweet taste] metaform, to use one further example, finds expression not only in discourse (*She's my sweetheart; I love my honey*; etc.), but also in rituals of love-making. This is why sweets are given symbolically to a loved one at St. Valentine's day, why matrimonial love is symbolized at a wedding ceremony by the eating of a cake, why lovers sweeten their breaths with candy before kissing, and so on.

A *symbol* is a form that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way. Symbols allow for representation separately from stimulus-response situations. But as examples such as those just cited make saliently obvious, symbolism is more often than not the end result of a metaphorical linkage process, a form of thinking that is not the result of conventional sense-making, but rather, its very source. For example, the [human personality = perceived physical features of animals] metaform is the source of such symbolic activities as the use of animals in totemic codes, in heraldic traditions, in the cre-

ation of fictional characters for use in story-telling to children, in the naming of sports teams, and in the creation of surnames, to mention but a few.

This view of symbolism would also explain why cultural meaning systems are in a constant state of change. If someone were to say *Those ideas are a cup of coffee*, it is unlikely that one would have heard this expression before. But its novelty forces one to reflect upon its meaning. The vehicle used, a [cup of coffee], is a common object of everyday life and therefore easily perceivable as a source for thinking about [ideas]. The metaphor compels one, in effect, to start thinking of ideas in terms of the kinds of physical, gustatory, social, and other attributes that are associated with a [cup of coffee]. For this metaphor to gain currency, however, it must capture the fancy of many other people for a period of time. Then and only then will its novelty have become worn out and will it become the basis for a new conceptual metaform: [ideas = drinking substances]. After that, expressions such as *Your idea is a cup of tea*, *That theory is a bottle of fine wine*, etc. and the like will become similarly understandable as offering different perspectives on *ideas*.

Very often, metaforms are also traces to a culture's historical past. A common expression like *He has fallen from grace* would have been recognized instantly in a previous era as referring to the Adam and Eve story in the Bible. Today we continue to use it with only a dim awareness (if any) of its Biblical origins. Expressions that portray life as a journey – *I'm still a long way from my goal*, *There is no end in sight*, etc. – are similarly rooted in Biblical narrative. The metaphorical link to the past is also evident in proverbial language. Proverbs are extended metaphors that provide sound practical advice when it is required in certain situations.

The use of metaphor extends to scientific reasoning. Science often involves things that cannot be seen – atoms, waves, gravitational forces, magnetic fields, etc. So, scientists use their metaphorical know-how to get a look, so to speak, at this hid-

den matter. That is why waves are said to *undulate* through empty space like water waves ripple through a still pond; atoms to *leap* from one quantum state to another; electrons to *travel in circles* around an atomic nucleus; and so on. The poet and the scientist alike use metaphor to extrapolate a suspected inner connection among things. Metaphors are slices of truth; they are evidence of the human ability to see the universe as a coherent organism. When a metaform is accepted as fact, it enters human life, taking on an independent conceptual existence in the real world, and thus can suggest ways in which to bring about changes in and to the world. Euclidean geometry, for instance, gave the world a certain kind of visual metaphorical structure for millennia—a world of relations among points, lines, circles, etc. But this structure can be changed to suit new conditions and ideas. This is precisely what happened when Nicholas Lobachevski (1793-1856) literally imagined that Euclid's parallel lines would "meet" in some context, such as at the poles of a globe, thus giving the visual world a different structure. As physicist Robert Jones (1982: 4) aptly puts it, for the scientist metaphor serves as "an evocation of the inner connection among things." Experimentation is a search for connections, linkages, associations of some sort or other.

Metaforms can also be seen in the "meaning flow" that shapes most discourse situations. Over a seven-year period I tape-recorded everyday conversations as they unfold spontaneously in various social situations (from 1992 to 1999). The conversations caught on these tapes are typical instances of everyday social interactions. Most of the taping was done on the campus of the University of Toronto. It is certainly beyond the scope of the present study to provide a detailed breakdown and analysis of the data that these tapes contain. That is the objective of a future study. Here, the aim is simply to present an initial picture of how "meaning flow" in discourse is shaped by a syntagmatic chain of metaforms, a finding which suggests that discourse unfolds primar-

ily through a "circuitry" of source domains through which interlocutors "navigate mentally," so to speak.

Examine, once again, the expression "The professor is a snake." The following brief stretch of conversation between two students (captured on one of the tapes) shows how this instantiation of this source domain shaped the pathways of one of the circuits of their conversation:

Student 1: You know, that prof is a real snake.

Student 2: Ya', I know, he's a real slippery guy.

Student 1: He somehow always knows how to slide around a tough thing.

Student 2: Keep away from his courses; he bites!

An analysis of the research of conversation generally shows that verbal communication consists of arrays of such mini-circuits that are somehow seen as leading to an overall meaning source or purpose to a specific conversation (Danesi 1999).

Often the circuit is made up of a series of metaforms, which are interconnected to each other in the discourse pathway. In one conversation about *ideas*, an interlocutor made use of the following sequence of metaforms: [ideas = seeing] - [ideas = food] - [ideas = persons] - [ideas = fashion]:

"I do not *see* how anyone can *swallow* his ideas, especially since most of them have gone out of *fashion*, and thus are *dying*."

The presence of metaforms can be found, moreover, in grammatical phenomena. The linguist Ronald Langacker (e.g. 1987, 1990) has formulated a theory of grammar suggesting that certain aspects of sentence grammar are, in effect, generated by what can be designated a *metaformal reflex system*, built from source domain thinking. Nouns, for instance, trace a "region" in mind-space – e.g. a count noun is imagined as referring to a bounded region, whereas a mass noun is visualized as referring to a non-bounded region. Thus, for example, the noun *water* elicits an im-

age of a non-bounded referent; whereas, a noun like *leaf* evokes a picture of bounded referent. This entails a grammatical *reflexivization* in the forms and functions of these nouns—*leaves* can be counted, water cannot; *leaf* has a plural form (*leaves*), water does not (unless the referential domain is metaphorical); *leaf* can be preceded by an indefinite article (*a leaf*), water cannot; and so on. Similar reflex patterns can be found in other representational systems – in painting, for instance, *water* is represented either with no boundaries or else as bounded by other figures (land masses, the horizon, etc.); *leaves*, on the other hand, can be depicted as separate figures with circumscribable boundaries. As this suggests, the parts of speech are end-products of experiential factors and, more significantly, are interconnected with other representational forms and activities.

Grammar is really a metaformal code, “summarizing,” so to speak, at the level of abstraction our direct perception of things in the world as they stand in relation to one another. It probably originated in the human species as a system of organizing the perceptual experiences encoded by metaformal thinking. This is perhaps why we can understand stories in virtually the same ways that we understand music or paintings. In the same way that a painting is much more than an assemblage of lines, shapes, colors, and melodies a combination of notes and harmonies, a sentence in language is much more than an assemblage of words and phrases built from some rule system in the brain. We use the grammatical elements at our disposal to model the world in ways that parallel how musicians use melodic elements and painters visual elements to model it.

A Pedagogical Revisitation

The kind of conceptual programming and metaformal thinking described above is exactly what seems to be lacking in student discourse. The implications of this line of research for second-language teaching were made quite clear by Danesi and Mollica (1998), among a grow-

ing number of other pedagogists.

Research conducted previously on students and reported on in the Danesi and Mollica (1999) study, suggest that students have very little control over the metaformal processes discussed above in this paper. Exposing students in systematic ways to the conceptual system of the target language and culture was the objective of a summer course I gave to teachers of Italian at Middlebury College in the summer of 1996. They were taught the basics of conceptual fluency theory and then asked to prepare a unit on either “love” or “birthdays” following the implications of conceptual fluency theory and wherever they might lead.

The first thing that the student-teachers did was to write dialogues in conceptually-appropriate ways. For instance, one student wrote a dialogue on birthdays which was structured conceptually by the metaform [age = a denumerable quantity]. This metaform underlies the reason why the following expressions are common in native-speaker discourse:

1. *Li porti bene gli anni* (lit. “You carry your years well”).
2. *Gli anni incominciano a pesare sulle mie spalle* (lit. “The years are beginning to weigh on my shoulders”).
3. *Quanti anni hai? Ne ho 22* (lit. “How many years do you have? I have 22 of them”).
etc.

The dialogues were then evaluated by three native speakers of the language (professors from Italy visiting Middlebury College that summer) and found to be “authentic” when compared to those found typically in textbooks. Here is an excerpt of one dialogue:

Role A: Ciao, Marco. Ho sentito che oggi compi gli anni.

Role B: Eh, già.

Role A: Quanti ne hai?

Role B: Troppi! Oggi ne faccio 35.

Role A: Ma, li porti veramente bene.

etc.

The explanatory, grammatical, and activity sections that the stu-

dent teachers composed, following up on the dialogue-writing exercise, also demonstrated the facility with which conceptually appropriate practical material could be devised by teachers. In the above dialogue, the teachers explained the verbs (*portare, compiere*), nouns (*anni*), and particles (*ne*) as reflexive structures of the basic metaform. Then, expressions such as *Ho due anni più/meno di te* were explained within this conceptual framework, thus allowing them to expand upon the purely structural components of the unit. Typical exercises that showed the relation between language and metaformal discourse programming were also written with great facility:

Quanti anni hanno i tuoi amici e come li portano?

Chi ha più/meno anni di te?

Quanti ne hanno? etc.

Fill-ins, completions, multiple choices, etc. were designed to bring out the conceptual subsystem based on the underlying metaform. This was followed by typical role-playing and textual analysis activities. Without going here into details, suffice it to say that the Middlebury “experiment” showed that the notion of conceptual fluency theory is as teachable and usable in the creation of units as is any other pedagogical notion. By simply structuring designated units of study around metaforms and then by presenting the appropriate grammar and communication patterns of the language as “reflexes” of these, the result seems to be a pedagogical product that is as usable as is any other kind of pedagogical artifact. The most significant implication of CFT is in the area of syllabus design. But, as Danesi and Mollica (1999) asked: How can a conceptually-based syllabus be organized? The Middlebury experiment taught those participating in it that much work needs still to be done in this area, since it entails interconnecting the conceptual syllabus to the more traditional structural and communicative ones. Such a three-tiered design would allow the teacher and/or syllabus-designer to identify and catalogue the conceptual domains that deliver specific topics in discourse, together with a “reflexive” analysis of the grammat-

ical/communicative categories that encode them.

Concluding Remarks

The primary purpose of this paper has been to expand upon the conceptual fluency theory model discussed by Danesi and Mollica (1999) by introducing the notion of *metaform*; its subsidiary goal was to add a brief pedagogical commentary to metaformal analysis so that the reader can him/herself consider adopting conceptual fluency theory as a general framework for lesson and syllabus design. Conceptual fluency theory is not a theory of second language acquisition, but rather an organizing principle around which to plan for language teaching. If concepts are to be placed at the core of language courses and curricula, on what basis should they be selected and sequenced? The Middlebury experiment has suggested that more work needs to be done precisely in this area.

Conceptual fluency theory is not new. It has been identified in various ways, and with differing terminological guises, in the relevant literature. As Henry Schogt (1988: 38) perceptively remarks, all languages "have meaningful units that articulate human experience into discrete elements." The domain of concrete concepts comprises the "discrete elements" of all human thinking. In this domain, concept-formation is "pattern-

inferencing" based on concrete sensory perception. As argued in this paper, many common abstract concepts are based on such concrete source domains; they are the result of a form of metaphORIZING that produces what has been called metaforms. These in turn constitute source domains on their own that produce higher and higher orders of abstraction (meta-metaforms). Metaforms and meta-metaforms surface not only in discourse but also in most symbolic representational systems.

In my view, the appropriate goal for second-language teaching research should be, therefore, to analyze the metaformal system of the target language and to use it as a template for organizing instructional and material-preparation activities. Future work in methodology should thus involve three paradigm shifts, which can be articulated as follows:

1. Theories and methodological frameworks within second-language teaching should be based on the relation that exists between concepts and grammatical categories.
2. The target language culture should be viewed as a system of interconnections among metaphorical forms of reasoning, and it should be presented to students primarily in these terms.
3. Discovering how different cultures may select different

metaformal properties of abstractions for symbolic elaboration should be a central task of second-language teaching research.

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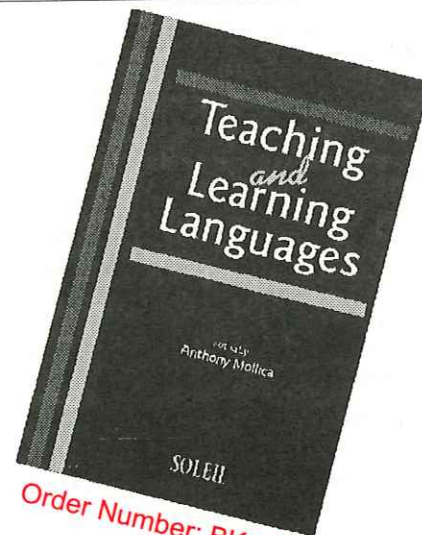
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Serafina Lina Filice and Domenico Sturino

The Video Song Clip in the ESL Classroom

This article presents a number of practical ideas in promoting the learning of English through the use of a video song clip. The authors have used the classic "We are the world" successfully over the years with students at the University of Calabria, Italy as well as with adults in the Adult Education Program at Mohawk College in Ontario, Canada.

Music videos have become the mainstream in today's society; they are real and provide a link between the classroom and the outside world. A great deal of out-of-classroom time is devoted to the listening of songs. In principle, songs will always be available to the students long after they leave school. Thus, the aim is to encourage them towards learning for life; in other words, they should become more confident so that when they hear a song in the target language they are able to understand it, react to it and learn from it. In fact, many threads connect music to language learning. In using songs and music language teachers are exposing the learner to the rhythms of language. A vivid image of this derives from the oral tradition whereby the young Hebrew child would memorize parts of the Bible by singing. Even today modern psychologists state that one recalls words and expressions put to rhythm more readily than "artificial textbook language". Songs provide meaningful contexts for introducing vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. How many times have students expressed themselves using colloquial speech and natural living language taken from lyrics of their favourite songs? As Griffiee states:

Songs have a socially unifying feature for the selected audience. Songs create their own world of feeling and emotion, and as we participate in the song, we participate in the world it creates.

Indeed, music possesses a "sweet power", as Lorenzo says in *The Merchant of Venice*. We tend to identify ourselves in songs because they speak to us directly about ex-

periences, reassuring us in difficult moments and affecting our emotions in mysterious ways. For all these reasons, music is undoubtedly "the universal language" and, as such, bridges all cultures to make teaching and learning a second language fun for both the teacher and the learner. The value of songs as an authentic vehicle for language practice is widely acknowledged by ESL experts (Murphey 1992, Mollica 1979, Griffiee, 1992).

The following procedure can be applied to any video song bearing in mind that an interesting unit may be developed around its theme.

Teaching Device

- Video clip of the song "We are the world" (USA for Africa)

Aims:

- to increase communicative skills
- to develop listening skills
- to stimulate discussion through cultural elements

Level

- Intermediate/ Advanced

Target Group

- Teenagers/Adults and young Adults

ESL Skills:

- focus on speaking and listening

Procedure:

Step 1

Warm-up: The learners are asked to explain the meaning of the title and what they know about the song.

Step 2

Brainstorm together any vocabulary related to famine, poverty, peace, starvation, brother-

hood, etc.

Step 3

First video play: the video is played without stopping.

Step 4.

Distribute copies of lyrics: cloze exercise used as listening comprehension with the purpose of reviewing verb tenses. (See Figure 1)

Step 5

Second video play: listen to song while following the written words. T

Step 6

Third video play:listen again and fill in the blanks. (if necessary play video a fourth time)

Step 7

Have the learners exchange papers and make corrections using overhead projector. Clarify any meaning of unknown words and/or structures.

Step 8

Everyone takes part in singing the song. The purpose of this step is twofold:

- it provides an enjoyable break in lesson routine and
- it's an excellent exercise for reinforcing pronunciation.

Step 9

Group discussion:

- class is divided into groups of 4
 - each group is given a file card with questions on it
 - each group chooses a secretary who is responsible for reporting the group's ideas to the class.
- a) What singers did you recognize?
 - b) Which singer did you like best? Why?
 - c) In which country did they record this song? When was it recorded?
 - d) What is the purpose of the song and video?
 - e) Who, do you think, is the target audience?
 - f) Is there an important message in the song/video?
 - g) What emotional impact does the video have on you?
 - h) What kind of atmosphere is created by the music?
 - i) Do you think it is difficult to

bring together all the artists in order to record a song? Why?

Step 10

In chart form list singers in order of preference and give reasons for your choice.

Step 11

Group activity 2: same procedure as step 9.

- a) Was the United States the first country to coordinate such an effort?
- b) Who initiated the project?
- c) What other countries got involved in the same type of project?
- d) Were they successful in their efforts to raise funds for Africa?
- e) Did your native country get involved? How?
- f) Do you feel that this was a good idea? Why?
- g) What would you do if given the opportunity to raise funds for a needy cause? (For example: Earthquake Relief Fund.)

Options and Follow-up activities:

- A. Step 1 may be replaced by the entire video presentation by Jane Fonda. Students listen for any background information (such as name of project, artists involved, what year, etc.) followed by class discussion.
- B. The lyrics may be used as a stimulus for dictation.
- C. Have the learners write another verse to the song in pairs or in groups.
- D. *Roleplay: interview one of the singers about his/her experience.
*pairwork task: dialogue should be written first and then performed in front of the class. Interviews are of great value for reinforcing the structures of question formation.
- E. Comment on why you would have liked to have been a part of this project.
- F. Step 9 could be done as a research activity and then report to the class.
- G. Step 2: the vocabulary list (nouns, verbs, adjectives) may be used by students to create

| ARTIST | REASONS | | |
|--------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| | PHYSICAL APPEARANCE | PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES | PERSONALITY |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Figure 1

@SONG: We are the world
- U.S.A. for Africa

There comes a time when we heed a certain call
When the world must.....together as one
There are people.....
Oh, and it's time to lend a hand to life
The greatest gift of all

We.....go on pretending day by day
That someone, somehow will soon a change
We all a part of God's great big family
And the truth - you know, loveall we need

(CHORUS)

We are the world, we.....the children
We are the ones whoa brighter day
so let's.....giving
There's a choice we're
We'..... our own lives
It's true we'..... a better day
Just you and me

Well, 'em you your heart
So theythat someone cares
And their livesbe stronger and free
As God us by..... stone to bread
And so we alllend a helping hand

(REPEAT CHORUS)

When you're down and out
Thereno hope at all
But if you just
There's no way we can
Well, well, well, realize
That one changeonly come
When wetogether as one

1. ...there are *people dying*
In the classroom there are people writing
In the library there are people reading
...
2. *It's time* to lend a hand to life
It's time to rest
...
3. *We can't go on pretending*
I can't go on asking you for help
...
4. *Love is all we need*
Time is all I need
Money is all I need
...
5. *let's start giving*
let's start singing
...

their own song.

- H. *Roleplay: interview Bob Geldof about the Live Aid Concert.
*pairwork task: dialogue should be written first and then performed in front of the class. Interviews are of great value for reinforcing the structures of question formation.
- I. Group work: the learners may work on a research project dealing with the history of "Live Aid" and then report to the class.
- J. Organize a debate—divide class into two groups—FOR and AGAINST the "Live Aid Project"—they must support their arguments.
- K. Enjoy designing a poster illustrating the song they composed.
- L. If one of the objectives is to stress grammar points and new expressions, then the teacher can put the following chart on the OHP and the learners give examples orally for each structure:
- M. Group work: Research other fund-raising projects for needy causes organized by famous artists in the last decade. How were they organized? Was a song written for that occasion?
- N. While the students are singing the song (see Step 8), the teacher could record them on tape. Students enjoy listening to their own performance. This provides practice in tone, rhythm and stress.

Final Comments

This video song may be used as a springboard for further work revolving around this theme and the unit may be expanded by introducing other songs on the same subject like "Tears are not enough" by the Canadian group Northern Lights. We suggest checking web sites on the history of Live Aid where you can find information on other countries/organizations/artists as well as other video songs like "Do they know it's Christmas?/Feed the world" etc.

The activities outlined above offer many advantages in promoting the learning of English. Although the aim is to emphasize the speaking/listening skills, in reality all four skills are integrated. The authors have found that one task leads to another, generating a chain reac-

tion of interesting and meaningful activities, some of which are often proposed by the students themselves. Their interaction level increases and the learners become active participants in the lesson. Learning English through songs fosters a pleasant fearless environment where even the most passive and timid learner is encouraged to speak in the foreign language. Video song clips are therefore an immensely valuable tool for the L2 teacher. Not only do they aid in aural/oral practice, but they also lend themselves to creative exploitation and provide a visual stimulus which further enhances communication. Thus, language learning becomes highly motivating and highly memorable.

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