

Triadic relationship: *ser*, *estar* and *haber* in the use of Spanish by foreign students through a methodology based on the principles of corpus linguistics

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Abstract

One of the main difficulties foreign students experience is the acquisition of lexis. However, the problem goes beyond that issue since learners ignore or neutralize the difference between lexemes of the same semantic field that share a common core of semes. Often it occurs not just because of the wrong choice, but because of the generalization of the use of only known lexeme. The semantic field that generates more errors in the process of teaching/learning of Spanish as a foreign language is related to the choice and use of the verbs *ser*, *estar* and *haber*. This article is the result of the merger between the acquisition of second languages and corpus linguistics. The research data was obtained through collecting, analyzing and providing results from the compositions written in students' blogs. A blog was used as a written genre. A blog is a transparent and simultaneous means of writing and publishing with discursive features that are converted into linguistic characteristics. These characteristics reflect the personal, informal and spontaneous nature of this genre and compile a corpus of written language and observe a variety of mistakes that students make when learning Spanish as a second language. Specifically, in this article, the mistakes they make with the verbs *ser*, *estar* and *haber*.

In particular, we follow a methodology based on the principles of corpus linguistics in its different stages, from the collection of the corpus, its labelling (identification and classification of errors) and annotation to the extraction of the results.

Keywords: corpus; data base; *ser*; *estar*; *haber*; second language acquisition; Spanish as a second language.

1. Introduction

In recent decades there has been a growing interest in tackling the problem of second language use. The way of analyzing the error has gradually evolved over time. In the last decades the error was considered as negative; later, these ideas, with the rise of the communicative approach, gave way to an assessment of the same, considering it as an indispensable step in the learning process.

In Skinner's (1957) behaviorist theory, the formation of linguistic habits based on similarity, not analysis, leads to language learning. The error was to be avoided, so that it would not be noticed in the student's mind. By rejecting "incorrect" productions, errors are gradually extinguished from the student's repertoire. Therefore, the learning of the mother tongue takes place thanks to the successive reinforcement of the "correct" emissions. The learning of a second language, from a behavioral perspective, will imply the formation of a new repertoire of linguistic habits through the mechanisms of repetition and reinforcement.

The model of teaching that was implemented was the audio-lingual method, which gave value to the understanding of the spoken language and the oral production of the same.

In reaction to this approach, the mentalist current emerges, based on the ideas of Chomsky (1957). It postulated that the structure of mind determined the language and that all human languages had certain structures in common.

Later, the cognitive theories arise from the reflections of Piaget (1953), whose fundamental objective was to clarify the role that language played in cognitive development.

His views on schemes and the notions of accommodation and assimilation have great application in the teaching of second languages. Some importance is given to the mistakes and it is considered necessary to design activities in which the student makes mistakes, being able to reflect and correct them.

The theories of acquisition of the mother tongue and the methodological conception of the teaching of second languages are closely related. For decades, attempts have been made to explain the psycholinguistic processes that occur in a student's transition to competence in a second language. Contrastive analysis emerges. The works of Fries (1945) and Robert Lado (1957) brought the beginning of the model, whose main postulate was to compare the two linguistic systems involved, with the aim of predicting which were, on the one hand, structures that presented difficulties and, therefore, could be considered as potential errors, and, on the other hand, those that, because they resemble the mother tongue, should not present any type of difficulty.

We assume that the student facing the foreign language finds that some aspects of the new language are very easy, while others offer great difficulty. Those traits that resemble those of your own language will be easy for you and, on the contrary, those that are different will be difficult for you.

In this model it was assumed that the learning of a second language was automated and that all errors could be predicted and explained from the interference of the mother tongue. The error is conceived as negative and experts argue that errors can be predicted by the systematic comparison of two languages. Contrastive Analysis was insufficient to explain students' errors, making it necessary to develop a more efficient model in describing and explaining the complexity of the second language acquisition process. It was shown that not all errors were explainable because of a negative interference of L1.

Within the framework of various controversies, Error Analysis appears in the sixties, a new model of research inspired by generative linguistics that accentuates the creative aspect of language, raising the role of error. It proposes to analyze and explain the errors of the students in order to discover their causes and identify the psycholinguistic processes that show universal strategies of learning. The error stops being reproachable to become necessary from its conception of indicator of the learning process. The analysis developed in this model, as its name implies, focused exclusively on the erroneous productions of the students. The change of perspective against the error leads to a rethinking of the type of analysis that was carried out and it is the same Corder who raises the need to analyze not only the wrong productions, but also the right ones. Corder (1981: 75-76) decriminalizes the error and again elevates its status since it considers that it is a faithful indicator of the process of learning.

Making mistakes is an inevitable and even necessary part of the learning process. The "correction" of errors, precisely, is that which gives us the kind of negative evidence necessary for the discovery of the correct rule or concept. Consequently, a better description of idiosyncratic sentences directly contributes to an explanation of what the student knows and does not know at any given moment in his learning, and ultimately he should train the teacher not only to provide him with the information that his hypothesis is wrong, but also the correct type of information or data so that the student will form a more appropriate concept of a rule of the target language.

The interlanguage analysis becomes a method of linguistic research as of 1972, when Selinker, drawing on the contributions of previous studies, creates a model based on his theory in which the student of a second language builds his own linguistic system with elements of L1 and L2, but with particular characteristics. So the student creates a non-real intermediate language in his mind, which is the combination of his mother tongue and the language he intends to learn, and based on that system operates when he intends to express himself in L2.

The errors are, now, the sign that students try to create a language, indicators of the stage of the construction process in which they are. It seeks to describe the construction process by analyzing all the structures of the student's performance, both the wrong and the right ones. Interlanguage studies have shown that those who learn a second language put into practice a series of strategies, variable from one individual to another, which allow them to integrate new information into their schemes, while testing their hypotheses. Among the strategies used are simplification, hypergeneralization, fossilization and transference.

The studies in the framework of the Analysis of Errors have allowed to know better the difficulties of acquisition and the persistence of certain errors of Spanish in speakers of different mother tongues.

2. Methodology

In this research 34 students of different levels of command of the Spanish language participated, specifically from two courses that were being taught at the Polytechnic University of Valencia (Campus of Alcoy).

The error analysis comes from the errors of the 766 compositions of our corpus.

The total errors collected in the compositions is 17,827 divided into subparagraphs referring to lexical, grammatical, discursive and graphic errors.

In a first overview we have observed that, among lexical errors, those that refer to meaning rather than to signifier are more important. Within the grammatical errors, those that reach higher percentages are those referred to the verbs, prepositions, the use of the article and the structure of the sentence.

3. Analysis

The problem between the use of *ser-estar* is one of the typical difficulties that most concern in the teaching of Spanish to foreigners. This problem is explained if we start from the fact that in Spanish we have two verbs for a content and some values that in other languages only one covers. There is usually more difficulty in the copulative use of *ser* or *estar* + adjective and the predicative use to indicate place.

- *lunes estaremos muy muy cansados porque Andalucía es un poco lejos de Alcoy y vamos a hacer muchos kilómetros*
- *Es tres meses que soy aquí, en Alcoy*
- *Aquí es un foto de Joan y Rafa*

- Aquí es una foto de la universidad
- Aquí son fotos de los otros Erasmus
- Queremos ir a Sevilla y a otros lugares que son en nuestro camino
- Creo que soy en España
- martes fue casi todo el día en la universidad porque tenía muchos cursos
- Esta situación es en casi todo el mundo y no se puede mejorar solo si unos países están endentando
- Queremos ir a Sevilla y a otros lugares que son en nuestro camino
- La mayoría de los terremotos son situados en los mismos lugares
- geográficamente somos sobre la misma línea, Entonces no hubiéramos
- Universidad también que se llama Yildiz Teknik Universitesi. Es en Besiktas
- Algunas veces la solución de un problema puede ser bajo tu nariz pero tú te compli-
cas la vida para nada
- tengo que mejorar mi español y es por eso que yo soy aquí

We also find errors in the wrong choice of the verb *estar* instead of the verb *to be* to define and identify people and things:

- Espero a pesar de todos que vaya a estar una buena idea
- Estaba la sexta procedimiento judicial
- Hoy no estaba un buen día
- puede estar una buenísima idea!
- para nosotros "Schwarzi" estaba más conocido
- creo que es un poquito triste porque las minas estaban lugares donde
- Quizás la mujer estaba su madre o su tía
- la situación económica está crítica
- la comida fue muy rica!
- La decoración estaba muy bonita
- La noche estaba muy agradable, buena, divertido
- estuve muy contenta porque la noche estaba muy divertido
- El tiempo estuvo muy frío

Errors in incorrect choice of the verb *estar* instead of the verb *ser* to inform of the place of a celebration:

- La fiesta estaba en la casa de Dogan y sus amigos de Colombia
- Esta una fiesta allí

Incorrect choice of the verb *ser* instead of the verb *estar* to talk about the state of mind or state of things:

- no pude hacer nada: fui demasiado cansado. Sólo trabajé un poco para mi curso de dirección financiera
- hoy es cansado. He dormido poco después
- La madre de la chica es enfermo
- porque hoy soy muy cansada y quiero tiempo antes de salir
- y como siempre soy un poquito cansada!!!!
- soy un poquito cansada
- creo que soy un chico con mucha suerte porque soy todo el tiempo nervioso y estresado

Incorrect choice of the verb *ser* instead of the verb *estar* to express the ambient temperature in degrees:

- donde en verano es 32-37°C

We find errors in the copulative use of the verb *ser* or *estar* + adjective:

Malo/a

- La gente debería tener algunos principios y reglas que seguir, no deberías estar tan malo

Joven

- Cuando estaba joven
- Jamás encontré en España tan buenas que cuando estaba joven

Caro

- Mi opinión es que los proveedores de discos venden los discos demasiado caros mientras que un disco esta muy barato a...
- Hacer un gran parque así es chulo pero esta carísimo, y quizás se necesita esos dineros

Abierto

- *En Francia, las tiendas son abiertas de las 8 a las 19 sin descanso y es la misma cosa para los horarios de clase*
- *y tengo que hacer la compra, porque el domingo las tiendas son cerradas!*

Seguro

- *Soy segura que es un progreso pero es necesario estudiar bien todos los puntos de vista*
- *Soy segura que esta noche nos divertiremos*
- *Soy seguro que la tienda china tiene esos productos. He oído que hay más de 17 personas que van también en*
- *leer un libro pero todavía no soy seguro*
- *zum de naranja y azúcar pero no soy seguro*

Claro

- *es claro que una grand parte de la izquierda socialista no se reconoce mas*

The learners present difficulty in ignorance of the rules, they make the mistake of choosing the use of the verb *estar* instead of the verb *ser* in adjectives that go exclusively with the verb *ser*. These adjectives are: *aficionado/a*, *divertido/a*, *famoso/a*, *fiel*, *accesible*, *importante*, *infiel*, *inteligente*, *necesario/a*, *posible*, *imposible*, *semejante*, *lógico*, *justo*, *injusto*, *importante*, *increíble*, *conveniente*, *necesario*, *innecesario*, *útil*, *inútil*, *amigos*, *inocente*, *alegre*, *egoísta*, *inteligente*, *optimista*, *culpable*, *trabajador*, *peligroso*.

Errors are observed in the following adjectives:

Divertido/a

- *va a estar divertido también*

Accesible

- *un poco caro y no esta accesible a toda la gente que quiere practicarlo*

Imposible

- *entonces estaba imposible de*

Amigos

- *pienso que estamos amigos, pero me parece que nos conocimos desde años!!*

Peligroso

- *cadenas para circular con el coche y tuve que conducir muy despacio porque la carretera estaba muy peligrosa*
- *Pero el agua está muy peligroso*

On the contrary, learners make the mistake of choosing the use of the verb *ser* instead of the verb *estar* in adjectives that go exclusively with the verb *estar*. These adjectives are: *acostumbrado/a*, *contento/a*, *de acuerdo*, *de buen/mal humor*, *de vacaciones*, *de viaje de moda*, *descontento/a*, *estropeado/a*, *harto/a*, *lleno/a*, *preocupado/a*, *preparado*, *roto/a*, *prohibido*, *bien*, *mal*, *fatal*, *enfermo*, *enfadado*, *enamorado*, *encantado*, *interesado*, *genial*.

After analyzing the texts we have found errors that refer to adjectives such as:

Acostumbrado/a

- *que yo soy acostumbrada a poder estar en lugar donde es*
- *y como semos acostumbrates*
- *es muy singular, porque en Italia yo soy acostumbrada*
- *Pero la gente de Venecia son acombrustado*
- *Creo que todos somos acostumbrados a este tipo de noticias. Siempre los que tienen todo lo que quieren...*

De moda

- *seguro que muchas personas piensan que soy pasado de moda pero me da*

Lleno/a

- *Todos son llenos*

Preparado

- *encontrar un gobierno con tantas mujeres porque en Italia no son preparadas para una actividad de gobierno*

Prohibido

- *Yo creo que hacer una ley que dice que es prohibido fumar en presencia de menores de 12 años*

Interesado

- *Mac Donald o Burger King porque al fin vamos a despilfarrar mucho dinero. Bueno todavía todo eso no es más que un proyecto pero soy bastante interesado*

Genial

- *El piso es genial*

Encantado

- *Todo el mundo fue encantado con nuestros platos*
- *Creo que todo el mundo fue encantado de la manera en cual*

Another frequent error in learners of Spanish as a foreign language is the triadic relationship between the verbs *ser*, *estar* and *haber*.

The verb *haber* goes with the indefinite articles *mucho*, *mucha*, *muchos*, *muchas*, and therefore the choice of the verbs *ser* or *estar* would be incorrect.

- *Allí son muchas personas con concepciones raciales y puede ser que ahora las cosas van a cambiar*
- *Un chico de Alemania nos dicho que son muchas cosas que visitar y sería*
- *puedes estar seguro de algo antes de irte porque son muchas personas que cambie*
- *en nuestro piso y estaba mucho ruido*
- *allí son muchas personas con concepciones raciales y puede ser que ahora las cosas van a cambiar*

The wrong choice of the verb when it accompanies nouns to speak about the existence or not of people, animals, objects or places that would correspond to the use of the verb *haber* has been observed.

- *pero también estaban personas un poco extrañas*
- *son personas que me han dicho que la cena de borregos es muy bonita y otras que dijeron que la comida es bastante mala y no vale la pena irte*

Finally we have observed the incorrect choice of the verb *haber* against the articles *él*, *la*, *los*, *las*; the verb *haber* can never accompany names introduced by the definite article.

- *Actualmente en Paris hay el primer salón del “street-golf”, un deporte que consiste*
- *Había las fiestas de los Moros y cristianos*

4. Conclusions

The problem of using the verbs *ser* and *estar* is not only of choice between two verbs that are only one in the mother tongue, but also the lack of mastery of the semantic features

of the adjective attribute, to indicate an acquired circumstantial quality, descriptive of the name. This difficulty is aggravated when the adjective is polysemic and can be used with either of the two verbs or when the speaker's subjective choice is chosen (Fernández, 1997).

This total change of meaning of some adjectives as used with *ser* or *estar* affects adjectives such as: *abierto/a*, *aburrido/a*, *bueno/a*, *cansado/a*, *católico/a*, *comprometido/a*, *decidido/a*, *delicado/a*, *despierto/a*, *entretenido/a*, *fresco/a*, *limpio/a*, *listo/a*, *maduro/a*, *malo/a*, *orgullosa/a*, *rico/a*, *seguro/a*, *verde*, *vivo/a*, *viejo*, *joven*, *nuevo*, *viejo*, *antiguo*, *caro*, *barato*.

It adds to this problem the confusion between the use of the verb *ser*, *estar* and *haber*. This type of error is caused by ignorance of the rules.

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