Introduction: Tense, Aspect and Modality in Second Languages (TAML2). Recent Applied Studies

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[es] Tiempo, aspecto y modo en segundas lenguas (TAML2). Estudios recientes de Lingüística Aplicada

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1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the acquisition of tense, aspect and modality in second languages (TAML2) is a widely studied topic, due to the complexity it entails, being, in fact, one of the most fruitful lines of research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). However, after a long tradition of 30 years of study, which has brought to light numerous and important findings as regards how these three grammatical categories are acquired by second language learners, such as, for instance, the Aspect Hypothesis (AH) (Andersen & Shirai, 1996), the Discourse Hypothesis (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000), the Default Past Tense Hypothesis (Salaberry, 1999), and the Lexical Underspecification Hypothesis (Giacalone-Ramat & Rastelli, 2008), in the twenty-first century there are still many unanswered questions related to their acquisition in second languages.

Specifically, the Default Past Tense Hypothesis has revealed that beginners are insensitive to lexical aspect and the Discourse Hypothesis has shown, for its part, the relevance of narrative structure for L2 learners. Hence, the recommendation given in this same issue by Salaberry to incorporate the findings derived from the Discourse Hypothesis into future studies on TAML2 and to integrate, as a consequence, pragmatic information in the elucidation of aspectual meaning. On the contrary, despite its proven validity and usefulness from different viewpoints, as evidenced in the detailed review that Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé (2020) offer about it, the leading hypothesis in this field, the so-called Aspect Hypothesis, does not fully account for the theoretical concept of Aspect itself, thus leaving some issues associated to it without a conclusive response. Furthermore, it still fails to explain how and why aspectual meaning influences the use of verbal morphology in advanced L2 learners. Therefore, to refine and improve the AH, recent studies must be taken into account, since they demonstrate the existence of an extra-aspectual categorisation which is based on traditional and fundamental aspectual features (Domínguez, Tracy-Ventura, Arche, Mitchell, & Myles, 2013; González, 2003; González & Quintana Hernández 2018; Quintana Hernández, 2019). In this sense, Vendler's (1957) aspectual classification, resorted to in most SLA studies on aspect, owing to the innovations that it brought about at the time for the investigation of such grammatical category, cannot be currently regarded as a completely successful taxonomy since, as recently demonstrated, it is not able to describe all aspectual classes. Although clearly different in their orientation, some of the latest analyses on the acquisition and learning of tense, aspect and modality also have to be taken into consideration since, by addressing the phenomenon of crosslinguistic variation in their expression in the target language and disclosing interesting new findings Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler, Henriksen & Killam, 2012; Geeslin, Fafulas & Kanwit, 2013; Nishi & Shirai, 2019), have opened an unknown line of research, also present in the present volume (see the paper by González and Kleinherenbrink).

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Some of these questions have been dealt with in a series of biannual international Conferences (McManus, Vanek, Leclercq & Roberts, 2017; González & Diubalick, 2019) that, gathering together a great number of leading and renowned specialist in this area from all over the world, started seven years ago in the Paul-Valéry University Montpellier 3. The fourth edition of these TAML2 Conferences, held at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Huelva (Spain) in November 2019, is, in particular, the origin of this special issue, which offers a selection of the most significant contributions there presented, after having undergone a strict blind peer review process. By bringing together recent research on the acquisition and learning of TAM in second languages from different theoretical, empirical and pedagogical perspectives, thus highlighting their multidisciplinary nature, the present work is, thus, intended to complement and contribute to the investigation carried out in this field to date.

2. SLA findings and language teaching

Since the papers this monograph contains address issues that have not been tackled to date, such as, for instance, the crucial role that different variables, among which the learner's proficiency level, crosslinguistic variation in second languages, task types, and the learner's mother language stand out, play in the acquisition of the three aforementioned grammatical categories, or offer new pedagogical resources that, deriving from the application of Cognitive Linguistics premises, as well as from different SLA approaches, can help the teaching and acquisition of TAM in the second language classroom, they have to be considered original and crucial contributions to the SLA field. The languages pairings they examine, either as first or second languages –namely, Russian, Dutch, English, Catalan and Spanish–, is, in addition, one more proof of their novelty.

As regards the learner's proficiency level, in particular, it should be noticed that most of the studies carried out to date have focused on the first stages of their acquisition process. Therefore, the research that follows on how the three grammatical categories which are our main focus manifest at subsequent and higher levels has to be highlighted as a clear sign of the freshness and originality of this special issue. The effect that the particular variety of the second language that serves as input for learners' has on them is, also, for its part, sound evidence of the recent and new character of the research here included, since, being an almost completely unexplored area within SLA studies in general, and in relation to the acquisition of tense, aspect and modality in particular, it opens a line of research which, we hope, will be successfully exploited in the near future.

The impact that the student's first language has on their learning and acquisition of any grammatical issue is, on the contrary, a well known fact, as it is the basic hypothesis underlying the pedagogical dimension of Contrastive Analysis (Fries 1945; Lado 1957). However, as it is presented in this volume, it sheds new light on such premise for two main reasons: first, because its connection with the acquisition of TAM in second languages has not been deeply studied (but see Collins 2002; Izquierdo & Collins, 2008; McManus, 2019; Nishi & Shirai, 2019; Slabakova, 2000, among others); and secondly, as a consequence, because the first and second languages it correlates (Russian/Spanish, Dutch/Spanish, Catalan/English, among others) have not been deeply examined from this perspective within this field.

Due to the contents of its papers, the present volume is structured in three different sections. Section one comprises two chapters: the first one, by the two guest editors, is an introduction to the issue; and the second one, by Salaberry, presents a critical review of the recent state of the scholarship concerning the Aspect Hypothesis, as published in Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé (2020). Section two includes three research studies in TAML2 which mainly focus on the influence that the learner's mother tongue has on their acquisition process of different facets related to tense, aspect and modality. The first one (paper three), by Mañas, Rosado, Fullana and Alexeeva, analyses the problems that Russian advanced learners of Spanish have when facing the different forms and meanings of the Spanish imperfective; the second one (paper four), by González and Kleinherenbrink, focuses, for its part, on how Dutch, being the first language of the learners whose interlanguage is examined, determines their acquisition of the Present Perfect and Preterit verbal forms in two different varieties of Spanish; and finally, the third one (paper five), by Diez-Bedmar, revolves around the impact Spanish has, as the mother tongue in the learner corpus analysed, on the acquisition of English progressive forms and meanings. A different orientation is seen in the two papers contained in the final section of the volume (section three), which, accounting for some pedagogical implications derived from the use of Cognitive theories, have a clear didactic nature. The first one (paper six) presents the advantages of introducing in the second language classroom the concept of metonymy to teach the grammatical category of aspect. And the second one (paper seven) offers, for its part, a temporal sequence to teach the aspectual and temporal morphology to beginners of Catalan as a second language.

Besides explaining its origin, the introductory paper presents the contents of the volume as recent and remarkable original contributions to the acquisition of tense, aspect and modality in second languages both from theoretical, methodological and pedagogical perspectives since, by highlighting what is new and original in them, they have to be considered as a clear progress and enhancement to the previous research carried out in this field to date.

The paper by Salaberry, entitled "Expanding the Definition of Aspect in L2 Acquisition: Assessing Advanced Levels of Competence to Understand Aspectual Knowledge", offers a critical review of the recent paper on the state of the scholarship of the Aspect Hypothesis by Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan–Colomé (2020), thus constituting an

excellent starting point for the rest of the volume. It focuses, specifically, on two recent developments in the study of the acquisition of aspect in second languages: namely, (i) the need to focus on non-prototypical associations between verbal morphology and lexical aspectual classes, which in Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé's words (2020, p. 24) "leads back to the semantics of aspect"; (ii) and the need to research how aspect manifests in the production of advanced level learners, since most of the studies to date mainly consider the initial stages of the acquisition process due to the strong influence the Aspect Hypothesis (AH) has on this particular level (Andersen, 1986, 1991; Andersen & Shirai, 1996). Therefore, according to Salaberry, future research on the L2 acquisition of verbal morphology needs to incorporate, in the first place, data of advanced learners, and, in the second place, a broad definition of aspect where lexical aspect, viewpoint aspect, and additional contextual information must be intertwined.

In the third paper, entitled "Imperfect Spanish Meanings Acquisition by Advanced Russian Learners. Evidence from Acceptability Judgments Data", Mañas, Rosado, Fullana and Alexeeva deal with the difficulties that the continuous, progressive and habitual meanings of the Spanish Imperfect pose for Russian advanced learners of Spanish. By means of an on-line acceptability judgments task, conducted at Saint Petersburg State University and consisting of 36 experimental items, divided in three sets of 12 sentences with an imperfect verbal form –one set per each of the three aspectual aforementioned meanings the imperfect has in Spanish and 24 distractors–, the authors aims to identify, on the one hand, the role of Russian, as the students' L1, in their use of the Imperfect, and on the other, the combinations between lexical and grammatical aspects in the configuration and processing of aspectual relations that they establish. After analysing the reponses given by the participants in the study (54 L1 Russian learners of Spanish, distributed into three groups according to their Spanish proficiency level –upper-intermediate, advanced, and proficient– and 18 Spanish-Catalan adult bilinguals in the control group, with Spanish being their dominant language), two important conclusions are drawn. As for the influence of Russian as the L1 of the learners in their acquisition of the Spanish imperfect, the results have confirmed those of previous investigations (Amenós-Pons, Ahern, & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2017; McManus, 2015; Diaubalick & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2019; Domínguez, Arche & Myles, 2017). In particular, Russian, as their mother language, has entailed only a difficulty for them in their recognition of continuous aspectual meanings, as their interpretation of the progressive and habitual readings has not been any obstacle. On the other hand, too much variation has been found among the control group and the three learners group, and also within the latter, as regards the different variables –lexical aspectual classes (states, activities, events), aspectual meanings (continuous, progressive, habitual), and verbal forms (Imperfect, Preterite)– included in the task, which confirms, as stated in Kempchinsky and Slabakova (2005) and Schmiedtová and Flecken (2008), that, besides the recognition and processing of verbal morphology, the acquisition of aspectual relations in languages like Spanish, being clearly in an interface domain, have to integrate lexical and pragmatic information as aspectual features.

In the fourth paper, entitled "Target Variation as a Contributing Factor in TAML2 Production", González and Kleinherenbrink offer a preliminary study that analyses how crosslinguistic variation in the target language influences L2 learners' acquisition of tense and aspect. Specifically, through the responses to a small written narrative task, the authors examine the use that Dutch students of L2 Spanish, having been exposed either to the variety known as European Spanish or to the Latin American variety, make of the Spanish Present Perfect and Preterit past verbal forms in hodiernal and prehodiernal contexts. The results derived from this particular analysis reveal, in the same line as previous studies (Geeslin et al., 2012; Geeslin et al., 2013), that the language input used in the second language classroom has more influence on the interlanguage of Dutch learners of Spanish than their mother language for two main reasons: first, because, as predicted, due to the behaviour this particular tense exhibits in both target varieties, Present Perfect forms have been more used both in the hodiernal and prehodiernal contexts by the students exposed to European Spanish than by those receiving the Spanish Latin American variety as input; and second, because owing to the extended use it has in Dutch, more Present Perfect forms were expected in the production of both groups of learners, thus suggesting the their first language is no present to the extent that it was initially hypothesised in their interlanguage. These findings open, thus, as the paper's authors themselves remark, two specific new lines of future research: on the one hand, the design of pedagogical material focused on the specific Spanish variety that serves as input in the classroom, which is nonexistent to date in the Netherlands, where most of Spanish textbooks are based on Europan Spanish; and on the other, the investigation, also from a crosslinguistic perspective, of how learners with a first language different from Dutch acquire Spanish TAM.

In the fifth paper, entitled "The Use of the Progressive in Light of the AH in Monolingual EFL-Instructed Spanish Learners at University Level: A Longitudinal Learner Corpus-Based SLA Study", Diez Bedmar offers the findings derived from a longitudinal study that analyses the two associations related to the progressive of the Aspect Hypothesis (AH), as formulated in Bardovi-Harlig (2012, p. 484) –namely, (i) the use of the progressive with dynamic verbs; (ii) and its possible overextension to stative verbs– in a written learner corpus which comprises the written exams for Linguistics, Literature and Use of English courses of 16 students Spanish University students of the BA in English Studies at the University of Jaén. As set forth in the paper, in the analysis offered, three different variables –(i) the academic year of the student; (ii) the task type required (iii) and students' individual preferences –reveal themselves as determining factors for the right and wrong use that Spanish advanced learners of English make of the present and past progressive verbal forms, thus suggesting that they have to be taken into account in their teaching.

The paper by Castañeda Castro and Sánchez Cuadrado, entitled "The role of metonymy in teaching the Spanish verbal system to L2/FL learners of Spanish", explores the advantages of using some techniques and resources from

Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2009) in the teaching of the Spanish verbal system to foreign learners. After briefly introducing some of the basic tenets of this particular theoretical framework, such as the concept of 'construal', the profile/base distinction and different subjectification processes, Castañeda Castro and Sánchez Cuadrado proceed to analyse the concept and use of metonymy (Panther & Thornburg, 2017) so as to make students understand the two following meaning extensions of the Spanish Preterit and Imperfect past tenses: first, the eventive meaning that stative verbs adopt when conjugated in the Preterit, as seen in *Supo la verdad* 'He learned the truth', or when entering some progressive periphrasis; and second, the so-called distancing use of the Imperfect, illustrated, for instance, in ¿Cómo te llamabas? 'How was your name?'. To reach their aim, they provide some examples of pedagogical grammar descriptions, accompanied by extremely useful images, which show how the most prototypical meanings of past morphemes are metonymically extended to non-prototypical ones and, consequently, difficult for learners to understand. The authors finally outline three pedagogical implementations which surely will help in the teaching of the Spanish Imperfect and Preterit past verbal forms.

The seventh and final paper by Comajoan-Colomé and Llop Naya, entitled "An SLA-informed and cognitive linguistic approach to the teaching of L2 Catalan tense-aspect" and also rooted in the grammatical theory known as Cognitive Linguistics, presents an innovative sequence, following Blyth's recommendations (2005), to teach foreign beginner students (A1 and A2 levels) of Catalan its temporal and aspectual morphology. They focus, specifically, on the following three past tenses: the perfective past, the imperfective and the perfect form. From their pedagogical contribution, based on the findings of three SLA approaches –(i) the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996); (ii) the Discourse Hypothesis (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000); (iii) and the Input Processing (Van Patten, 2017)– two important conclusions can be drawn: first, that, since the perfective forms are easier to be processed, the instructive sequence should start with the teaching of the perfective to proceed, later on, with the imperfective and, finally, with the perfect; and second, that the prototypical uses of the three aforementioned past verbal forms should be presented to learners, by means of input flood and input processing activities, earlier in time than their non-prototypical functions, so that they can make adequate progress in their learning process. It is worth noticing, furthermore, that their proposal forces both perception and production communicative skills in the learner.

3. Conclusion

The present special issue has to be understood, in sum, as an answer to a widely recognized need to enrich the research on the acquisition of tense, aspect and modality in second languages carried out to date by connecting the findings derived from previous SLA studies on TAML2 with the results of new ones which prove the need, on the one hand, to focus on the expansion of the theoretical construct of Aspect, and on the other, to integrate the advances already achieved in the SLA field to further connect with language teaching techniques which, based on the relevance of meaningful contextualized forms, foster the acquisition of tense, aspect and modality. The theoretical and applied analyses in this special issue undoubtedly constitute a clear advance in our contemporary insight and comprehension of how the acquisition of TAM progresses in second languages, as well as in the way these three different complex grammatical categories have to be taught in the second language classroom.

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