Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development as a Unifying Approach Towards Teaching L2 Grammar and Communication in Japan

日本における第 2 言語の文法とコミュニケーションの
一体教育の取り組みとヴィゴツキーの最近接発達領域

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　ヴィゴツキーの最近接発達領域（ＺＤＰ）とポストヴィゴツキー学派アプローチ（社会文化理論と活動理論）は、生活的概念と科学的概念の間の密接な関係についてより良い理解をもたらす。日本の高等教育の第 2 言語プログラムで、生活的概念の習得は主にコミュニケーションクラスで、一方、科学的概念の習得は文法クラスで起こる。最近接発達領域を用いた教育では、状況的な問題と科目領域の中心概念グループの生徒の取り組みの間で「両方向移動」が必要とされる。この論文では、（生活的概念から科学的概念への）「ボトムアップ移動」を強化するための、コミュニケーションと文法クラスの両方において「欠落した移動」と呼ばれる活動を提案する。

Introduction

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and post-Vygotskian approaches to instruction (sociocultural theory and activity theory, or AT), allow a better understanding of the close relationship between spontaneous or everyday concepts and scientific concepts. In foreign language programmes at tertiary level in Japan, the acquisition of everyday concepts takes place mainly in communication classes, whilst the mastering of scientific concepts takes place in grammar classes. This widespread but arbitrary division of labour is becoming less viable due to the new demands exerted upon the educational system (education for practical mastery). Instruction within the ZPD requires a 'double move' between students' work with situated problems and with a group of central concepts of a subject domain. In other words, development is the result of the constant movement between these two types of concepts. In this paper, the ZDP is used as a framework to analyse instruction methods for teaching Spanish as a foreign language, implicit in an array of textbooks, and activities are proposed to reinforce the 'bottom up' movement (from everyday to scientific concepts), which could be designated as the 'missing

movement', both in communication and grammar classes. Finally, the use of the ZDP in the analysis of instruction helps to bring to debate once more three of the most important issues in SLA (Second Language Acquisition): the connection between the learner's native language (L1) and the target language (L2), the explicit-implicit instruction option, and the code-communication dilemma (formal/academic or communicative/implicit instruction).

Grammar and communication, an arbitrary division

The focus of the debate surrounding teaching Spanish as a foreign language, as well as many other L2s at the tertiary level in Japan, has been the dilemma of instructed language versus naturalistic language acquisition. Structural reasons have contributed to reproduce the grammar-communication division during the last two decades almost without variation, but important developments, such as the demand from the political and economic fields for a language education for practical mastery, have already brought some change.

The division of labour into two groups of practitioners at the tertiary level in Japan has enormous pedagogical implications. The dichotomies *linguistic/communicative competence*, in the abstract, and *grammar/communication class*, in the concrete, are based, in the best of cases, upon a two-fold concept of what proficiency is (linguistic competence and communicative competence), and in the worst of cases, upon a unique concept, such as the one forwarded by Oller (1976) with his concept of *grammar-based expectancies* or *expectancy grammar*. According to this concept, both receptive language use (listening, reading) and productive use (speaking, writing) are anticipated and planned from the grammar. In other words, the subtextual ideology is either the existence of two different disciplines, more or less independent from each other, indeed almost autonomous (to teach for the acquisition of linguistic competence, or to teach for the acquisition of communicative competence), or to frame communicative competence under the field of linguistics.

Vygotsky's dialectic of development, however, questions the validity of this type of theoretical construction, especially the arbitrary nature of a categorical division between abstract and concrete concepts.

A subordinated grammar

The historically hegemonic paradigm, that of equating *language* with *grammatical system*, has shifted to a paradigm which now focuses on communication. Stern (1983), analysing historically

the concept of proficiency, pointed out two decades ago that "proficiency is today emphatically expressed in communicative and not merely linguistic (i.e., grammatical) terms" (p. 347). Nevertheless, Stern recognises the fact that the grammatical component of proficiency cannot be ignored. This shift in perspective, which sets the study of the grammatical system in the service of communicative competence, has been included in the most recent approaches to L2 teaching, including Europe's adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) considers grammar (language as a system) as part of the communicative competence, but also expresses the notion that linguistic knowledge and skills have a domain independent of sociolinguistic variations and pragmatic functions of linguistic realisations. Of course "grammar defines meaning only very partially" (Bourdieu, 1991, p.38) but, in the pedagogical domain, language as a system enjoys an autonomy which can be useful to pedagogical work.

Furthermore, Negueruela and Lantolf (in press), assert that the lack of control over grammatical features of the L2 observed among students who have gone through language programmes where opportunities to communicate were given priority over formal performance has rekindled the interest in teaching grammar in the foreign language classroom. This is not the case where tertiary education in Japan is concerned, but reflects a trend that questions certain pedagogic practices partly based, but perhaps not appropriately grounded, on the communicative approach.

In sum, the relationship between grammar and communication is far more complex than the historic paradigms based on particular conceptions of proficiency. The very notion of *native speaker*, just to mention one SLA construct based upon a particular conception of proficiency, is being recontextualised by new L2 theoretical and research approaches (Thorne, 2005).

Scientific and everyday concepts

The division between grammar and communication, can, nevertheless, be helpful if pedagogic practice is framed within what Vygotsky denominates the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is a complex concept within Vygotsky's theoretical body, one which I will analyse from the point of view of the two conceptual systems on which grammar and communication are based at their most fundamental level: scientific and everyday or spontaneous concepts, respectively.

The ZPD is one of the key metaphors of Vygotsky's *cultural-historical* psychology. It is at the centre of most mediated human mental functioning, both as a powerful descriptive tool and as a notion upon which to base pedagogical practice. Wertsch (1985) points out that Vygotsky

introduced the notion of the ZPD "in an effort to deal with two practical problems in educational psychology: the assessment of children's intellectual abilities and the evaluation of instructional practices" (p. 67). As a theoretical construction, the ZDP has received multiple interpretations along the years. On many occasions, the translation from one conceptual system to another has not been the most appropriate (Griffin and Cole, 1984). Nevertheless, with the purpose of situating Vygotsky's theoretical work within post-Vygotskian theoretical trajectories, especially those which lately have inspired SLA research, I subscribe together with Thorne (2005) and Lantolf and Thorne (2006) to what has been called *sociocultural* theory (SCT), and, of more recent development, to activity theory (AT).

According to Wertsch (1995), "the goal of sociocultural research is to understand the relationship between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and cultural, historical, and institutional setting, on the other" (p. 56).

Vygotsky defines the ZPD as:

··· the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

He clearly distinguishes between spontaneous learning and that which is developed through schooling, which fundamentally implies the acquisition of conceptual systems which cannot otherwise be acquired spontaneously. Vygotsky (1987) points out that "in a problem involving scientific concepts, [the child] must be able to do in collaboration with the teacher something he has never done spontaneously" (p. 216).

In language pedagogy and SLA theory, the difference between solving one type of problem or another is part of the debate on pedagogic codes, which Stern (1983) calls 'the code-communication dilemma'. Learning may be based upon formal instruction and depend upon academic analysis, or acquisition may not depend upon formal instruction at all, but only upon tacit transmission. This kind of debate is not exceptional. In his theory of knowledge structures and pedagogic discourse, Bernstein (1996, p. 159) puts together a complete framework to analyse any pedagogic practice (formal or not) from a sociological perspective. Nonetheless, it is just too easy to forget that these two types of problems intersect. Everyday concepts and scientific concepts are interdependent. They both have a role in mediating mental activity. About this interdependence, Hedeegard notes:

> Most 5 to 6-year-old children can understand the relationship between brother, sister, mother, father, uncle, aunt. This understanding builds on concrete experiences with their own family. In contrast, the subject-matter explanation builds on the exposition of the general definition of the concepts. In class, the child learns logical relationships between subject-matter concepts, but to become functional in the child's activity the movement of these subject-matter concepts should go towards the immediate and spontaneous by being combined with the experiences the child has within the domain that the subject-matter concepts cover. (Hedegaard, 2002, p. 41)

Daniels (2001) also warns against dualistic approaches that do not acknowledge the interdependence between everyday and scientific concepts.

> Vygotsky argued that the systematic, organised and hierarchical thinking that he associated with scientific concepts becomes gradually embedded in everyday referents and thus achieves a general sense in the contextual richness of everyday thought. Vygotsky thus presented an interconnected model of the relationship between scientific and everyday or spontaneous concepts.
> (Daniels, 2001, p. 53)

Hedegaard (2002) notices the close relationship between content and structure but she thinks it is necessary to redefine or recontextualise Vygotsky's notions of scientific concepts according to "different forms of subject-matter concepts (empirical, narrative and theoretical)" (p. 40). Although Negueruela and Lantolf (in press) opt for the use of the term *theoretical concept* to refer to Vygotsky's scientific concepts, in a fine attempt to avoid the misinterpretation of the term *scientific* - often referred to mean concepts exclusively developed by what is understood as the field of science - I prefer to cling to Vygotsky's original terminology, since I will be drawing from many other sources who also encounter the same problem. I will also be using the term *subject-matter* concepts, as Hedeegard does, to refer to scientific concepts.

Grammar and communication for the threshold level

From the application of Bernstein's (1996, pp. 3-24) pedagogic codes and modalities of practice, one can easily observe that there is a *strong classification* between the curricular subjects 'grammar' and 'communication'. They are subject-matters insulated enough from each other

(Bernstein's metaphor is a spatial one), whose transmission develops and reproduces legitimate and differentiated forms of communication, i. e., there are legitimate forms to teach both. To understand the formation and reproduction of this strong classification, as well as its limits and modalities of practice, a detailed study is required that refers fundamentally to the concrete pedagogic practices taking place in the classroom. In the meantime, I will analyse informally some of the textbooks used in the teaching of both subjects at the threshold level. Obviously what follows is an informal review of these educational materials, for the purpose of analysing the relationship between scientific and everyday concepts within the ZPD in the activities these materials presuppose or propose.

At first glance in Japan there are two kinds of textbooks for the threshold level: (a) textbooks published in Japan, written mainly by individual Japanese faculty members or in collaboration with other peers, including foreigners, and (b) textbooks published in Spain, written mainly by editorial teams. The former are used mainly in grammar classes, and the latter, in communication classes.

There is also an indeterminate zone composed of all works published in Japan by Japanese or foreign authors which are very difficult to classify because they are based on a vast array of approaches and methods. In any case, there seems to be a tacit consensus on whether a textbook will be selected for a grammar course if the authors are Japanese and belong to a certain 'school', or if it will be selected for a communication class if the authors are foreigners.

Textbooks produced in Japan

It transpires that most of the textbooks published in Japan are organised around the exposition of the linguistic system and use, for that end, subject-matter concepts in the L1. Thus, everyday concepts contained in L2 linguistic realisations are organised according to the need to explain the grammatical system. This implies the use of multiple semantic fields at once. In many cases, this amounts to a functional double-dip, i.e. two or more grammatical or communicative functions are taught at the same time, and, due to the lack of positive input, to focusing on teaching the L2 using almost exclusively the L1. Wide semantic extension does not ensure lexic comprehensiveness for communication purposes.

Subject-matter concepts play a role in the explanation of grammatical schemata and grammatical rules. With the exception of handbooks or textbooks which focus exclusively on grammar (see Naoka and Okihara, 2002), explanations about grammatical rules are concise, constituting a guideline to teachers, who will have to expand the contents in class, rather than a

textbook containing clear definitions and comprehensive explanations.

Learning tasks are structural and play the role of assessing the learning of grammatical rules. These tasks do not reflect a concern for linguistic verisimilitude or cling to actual communication contexts, i.e. they do not seem to be shaped by the use of linguistic corpus, frequency analysis, or actual linguistic realisations in communicative contexts. Individual work dominates tasks and it is almost impossible to find activities that involve pair or group-work. Auditory samples contained in these works tend to be monotonous readings of dialogues or reading passages, or simple pronunciation guidelines.

The organisation and structure of these textbooks seems to fit the course length (two semesters or annual courses) and class frequency (one 90-minute class per week, 12 to 14 classes per semester) of the Japanese college. Textbooks contain between 15 to 20 lessons and do not run over 100 pages.

Because of the aforementioned characteristics, the predominant movement within the ZDP is 'top down'. In his lucid analysis of Japanese textbooks, Civit (2006), using Ellis' terminology, defines this movement as 'deductive' (p. 35). The exposition of grammatical structures and rules is carried out crudely by using subject-matter concepts. The difficulty lies in the fact that learners are not sufficiently acquainted with linguistic realisations (positive communicative input), which allow them to assimilate morphosyntactic structures, nor they are able to deduce the rule. They are situated as passive recipients of a set of rules they can hardly infer.

As in any other pedagogic situation, teaching in concepts makes gradation extremely difficult because each concept plays a role in a conceptual network or system (variable, invariable; signifiant, signified; masculine, feminine; voice, passive, active; tense, modality, aspect). Concepts presuppose one another and the entrance points, according to Vygotsky, are the spontaneous concepts, which act as mediators of the scientific concepts.

In this case the entrance points are necessarily the linguistic realisations and the tacit instruction done in the L2, which provide the concrete part of the system, and the natural contrast of L1-L2, supported by the development and explicit learning of conceptual systems. The development of conceptual systems should be supported wherever possible by high quality conceptual explanations and descriptions that facilitate learners' adequate practices. In this regard, concept-based pedagogies (CBP) and Systemic-Theoretical Instruction (STI) (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Lantolf, 2006; Negueruela and Lantolf, in press) have a lot to say, especially in the case of the 'top down' move in the ZPD.

The fundamental problem of textbooks produced in Japan is an instructional design

concerned almost exclusively with the teaching of subject-matter concepts, lacking an adequate connection with grammatical structures and reasonings that explain grammatical rules. According to Negueruela (2003) and Negueruela and Lantolf (in press), the acquisition and application of heuristic (incomplete and unsystematic) systems such as rules of thumb, are potentially harmful. Rules of thumb depict language as a fixed entity and often intersect and become incompatible one with another, leading learners to confusion and frustration.

On the other hand, learning of linguistic and conceptual models must be based upon situating problems appropriately so as to avoid instruction becoming an exercise in academic verbalism, which Vygotsky (1987) dubbs the 'learning of dead and empty verbal schemes' (p.170).

According to Negueruela and Lantolf (in press), once the minimum unit of instruction has been determined (these authors work with the notion of *aspect* in teaching the Spanish preterit), the materialisation of the concepts constitutes a critical step in their internalisation by learners. They argue that learners' understanding and interiorisation of concepts are the most effective ways to have learners regulating their meaning-making ability in the L2, allowing them to perform across contexts. Drawing on Gal'perin, Negueruela and Lantolf (in press) point out that it is fundamental to give attention to the tools that play a mediating role of activity and behaviour because "didactic models such as charts are often times the better option to represent the properties of sophisticated and complex objects of instruction such as grammatical concepts." (p.11)

Textbooks published in Spain

Textbooks published in Spain are organised around pragmatic aims and objectives. They focus first on having learners handle certain linguistic models and acquire a baseline pragmatic competence before moving on to teaching grammatical rules. These works include grammatical objectives, and in few cases they also include phonological and lexical objectives. Nevertheless, a significant number of textbooks set aside grammatical contents in appendices as reference material. Grammatical contents tend to include schemata of grammatical structures and very concise grammatical rules. The starting point is linguistic production and the end point is the induction of the grammar rule, which in many cases is reinforced through the aforementioned schemata and appendices. This instructional design is being modified in most recent publications (see the new series *Ven*, Castro et al., 2003), situating grammar in a more relevant place within the structure of the work, but it does not mean new textbooks have overcome the difficulties mentioned by Negueruela (2003) and Negueruela and Lantolf (in press) regarding learning of

heuristic systems.

It is common for lessons to start with facilitating activities, avoiding the use of subject-matter concepts. Recent textbooks use the CEFR in the gradation of contents and frequency analysis to select vocabulary in a particular semantic field. Gradation tends to be more and more cyclical, that is, items are reintroduced throughout the textbook. The variety of objectives and the cyclical gradation contribute to making these textbooks too thick for the expectatives of Japanese practitioners. These works are 200 pages long and surpass the small B5 format used for Japanese textbooks.

Some textbooks attempt to introduce situated examples of linguistic production, almost as if learners could listen to colloquial speech or have access to everyday documents, e.g. colloquial forms of requesting coffee or beer, a copy of a real menu from a bar, etc. (see the series *Planeta ELE*, Cerrolaza et al, 1998). Gradation in this case is attained through good content *sequencing*, not through adaptation. Other textbooks are based on more idealised linguistic practices. Nevertheless, in most works, linguistic models play the role of facilitating communicative competence.

The introduction of concrete situations inspired by real elements has the capacity to situate the problems to be solved by learners in such a way that they can draw on resources from their own experiences. This, however, can be an obstacle. It is difficult to prepare situated problems that match all pedagogical contexts. Textbooks published in Spain are often Eurocentric. Too little attention is paid to Asian contexts and needs. Situated activities also tend to date quickly. Do young Japanese know the German tennis player Boris Becker or the former President of the Spanish Government Felipe González? (Borobio, p. 16). In 12 years the activities have become stale and perhaps they never matched Japanese learners' needs or context anyway.

Except for those textbooks that do not displace the teaching of grammar to the appendices, the fundamental move in these works is 'bottom up'. Nevertheless, the 'bottom up' movement in the ZPD stops halfway, being truly the 'missing move'. This may be due to the difficulty of facilitating the move between the concrete and the abstract other than through natural learning and implicit instruction; and of documenting conceptual understanding, boosted by the tension between formal instruction and natural learning; and lastly the suspicion with which foreign teachers and curriculum developers regard the teaching of grammar. Furthermore, it does not help to contradict the widespread belief held by teachers and students alike that grammar and meaning are disassociated (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, pp. 303-304).

The double move

From the informal analysis and evaluation of the textbooks used in the teaching of grammar and communication in Japan, it can be concluded that both groups of materials lack an instructional design which integrates in coherent and fluid fashion both the 'top down' and 'bottom up' movements in the ZPD. These movements run short of either the upper or lower limits of the ZPD. Therefore, their effectiveness as a whole is questioned. For Hedeegard (2002), instruction within the ZPD can be characterised as "a double move between appreciating the traditions of practice that have characterised students' everyday life and concepts and procedures central for subject-matter traditions" (p. 78). The lack of integration of the Japanese curriculum does not seem to serve the best interests of pedagogy.

In the communication class, the textbooks that are used prefer to ignore or displace teaching of subject-matter concepts, thus not allowing learners to know what Hedeegard (2002) calls the 'conceptual system of central conceptual relations' (p. 78). Not understanding the central model, students cannot evaluate with precision their own learning, let alone formulate new central problems.

Drawing on Vygotsky, Hedegaard (2002) describes subject-matter and everyday concepts as:

> ··· two developmental lines that run opposite, since the spontaneous concepts develop from 'bottom up' through the child's spontaneous activities and experiences and gradually become reflected experiences. Counter to this, the scientific concepts develop from 'top down', and through conscious reflection gradually become integrated with spontaneous concepts and non-reflective activities (Hedegaard, 2002, p. 41).

CBP and STI offer new perspectives in L2 teaching and amount to a new valuation of the role concepts play in explicit teaching in formal schooling contexts.

Pedagogic implications of the double move

In teaching an L2 to adolescents and adults at the threshold level, the introduction and practice of linguistic realisations implies a stage of implicit and natural *transfer* of everyday concepts from the L1 to the L2, as most of the concepts have already been acquired in the L1. The linguistic realisations that will be used as the linguistic model must be organised in such a way

that teaching them amounts to an exercise in *pedagogic economy*. As Ellis (1994) points out, 'learners fail to develop full L2 linguistic competence simply by communicating' (p. 658). Natural learning and communicative input do not necessarily equate with unsystematic practice. Furthermore, delegating to learners the process of deducing grammatical rules in an unsystematic fashion does not constitute an exercise in pedagogic economy, either. The necessity for formal and explicit instruction in SLA is clear (Ellis, 1994). What is not so clear is what precisely that instruction should consist of.

At this stage is recommended to introduce situated problems based upon linguistic models organised in meaningful units, contextualised and always aiming at having students acquire communicative competence. Instruction may imply learning a completely different L2 sociocultural background. Nevertheless, L2 everyday concepts with clear equivalents and acceptable use in the L1 sociocultural background should be introduced first, and later L2 concepts without equivalent in the L1 sociocultural background. For instance, urban design notions (e.g., 'street', 'avenue', 'boulevard', 'drive', 'place', 'footway' and 'ground floor') and systems for organising addresses may differ from foreign countries to Japan, and, accordingly, are difficult or impossible to grasp without actually teaching a completely new system. In other words, it is still possible and recommended to fine-tune communicative input within learners' ZPD.

A concept-based teaching of the linguistic system is also recommended, taking into account conceptual clarity, learners' different learning styles, the use of a variety of appropriate mediating tools, and instruction and evaluation methods which allow verbalisation and documentation of explicit knowledge. Negueruela and Lantolf's (in press) work implies an important challenge to teaching grammar, especially for Japanese practitioners. It is necessary to fully evaluate the feasibility of using methods or techniques of conceptual analysis and description such as the Schema for Complete Orienting Basis of Action (also known as SCOBA) (Negueruela and Lantolf, in press; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

The move from the concrete to the abstract, which, as I already pointed out, is fully missing from the textbooks already analysed, can be planned through learning activities centred on the analysis of grammatical structures and the relationship between concepts within the linguistic system. The elaboration of schemas of classification or relationships based on concrete linguistic realisations or more abstract concepts could help move learners to the upper limit of the ZPD once they are familiar with linguistic realisations and models.

Pedagogy 1

I designed certain activities with the purpose of fostering the 'bottom up' move in the ZPD. They are all experimental activities carried out in communication courses. At this stage, these activities are far from being part of a formal research. Nevertheless, I believe it is necessary to document them to illustrate the pedagogical methods or techniques which can be developed to facilitate the double move within the ZPD.

Let us suppose that our interest, from the point of view of proficiency, is that students learn as communicative competence to 'state their nationality', 'say where they are from', 'ask for other people's nationality', 'say where things are from' and 'ask where things are from', which, in turn, implies as far as linguistic competence is concerned, an understanding more or less implicit or explicit of the present tense of the verb *ser*, grammatical gender and number, and the adjective of nationality, as well as some notion of syntax.

Based on linguistic realisations introduced in the communicative class using the communicative approach, some of those realisations were categorised so as to have learners reflecting on the morphology of adjectives of nationality. Categories were presented in a schema drawn on the blackboard in no particular order, without following any syntactic pattern (see Figure 1). In this initial phase, it was not necessary to establish any formal relationship within the grammatical conceptual system (article, adjective, gender, number, invariable, variable, etc.). A symbolic representation of key concepts on which the schema was based upon was sufficient, such as the use of drawings to depict singular and plural genders.

Figure 1. Concepts to be schematised, adjectives of nationality
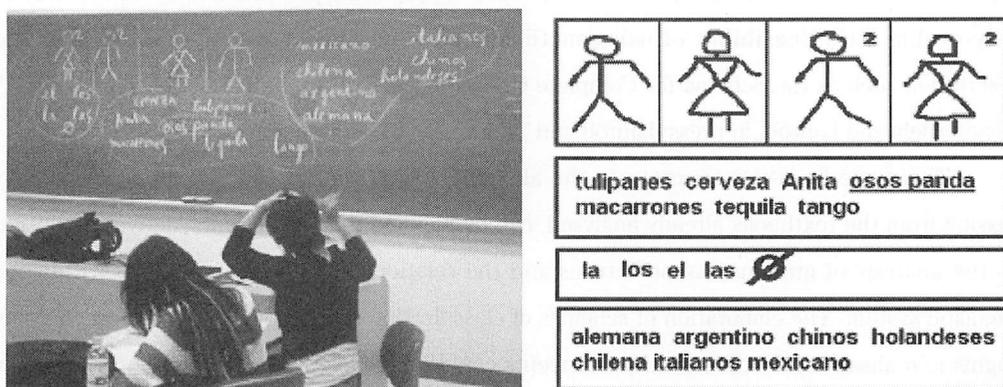
Categories: 1, drawings of singular masculine, feminine singular, plural masculine and plural feminine; 2, tulips, beer, Anita, pandas, macaroni, tequila, and tango; 3, articles "la", "los", "el", "las" and ʻempty set' symbol; 4, German (singular feminine), Argentine (singular masculine), Chinese (plural masculine), Dutch (plural masculine), Chilean (singular feminine), Italian (plural masculine), and Mexican (singular masculine).

In a course of communicative L2 Spanish for threshold-level learners taught by the author of this paper, the aforementioned activity was introduced in the fourth class as the first evaluation activity of the semester. After seeing the items in the categories, learners had to draw a schema appropriately grouping the items. The activity was to be carried out individually and the schema had to be drawn on a piece of blank paper. The learners had received equal number of grammar classes, having also one 90-minute communication class per week. Out of 33 participants, only one could complete satisfactorily the schema (see Figure 2). His only mistake was to copy the word cerveza ("beer") wrongly. More than half of the participants coped well with the activity, even though many confounded the gender of the nouns tulipanes ("tulips") and ignored completely the "empty set" symbol in the articles category (see Figure 2). This was caused perhaps by the assumption that the items in the schema had to be symmetrically allocated. This was not the case, since there were not any plural feminine items (see Figure 3). It should also be added that prior to the evaluation, students went through a significant number of

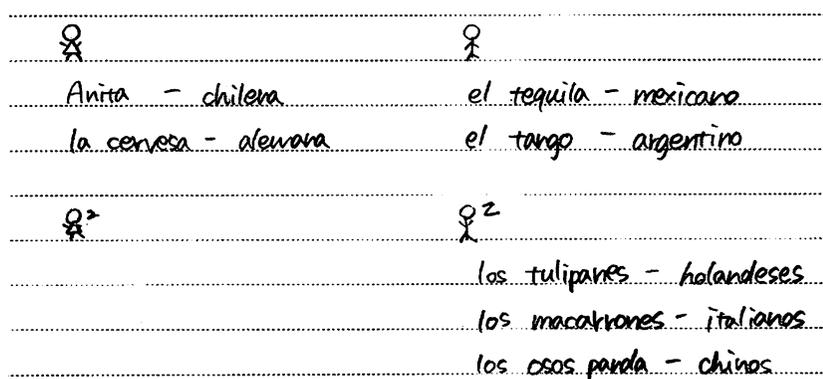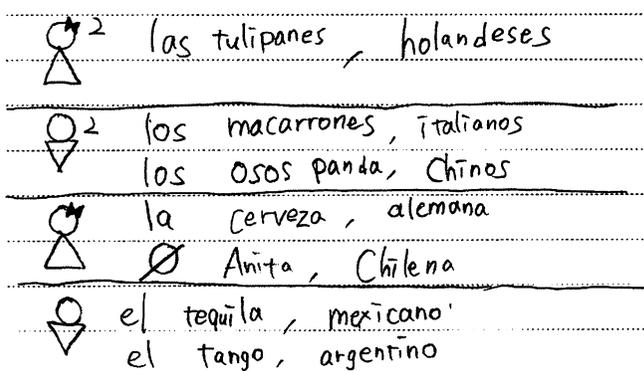**Figure 2. Schema correctly elaborated by a student**

Figure 3. Schema incorrectly elaborated by a student

activities through which they could have learned each one of the problems posed in the schema, e.g. the morphological contradiction between the noun tequila and the article (in Spanish, nouns ending in "a" usually are feminine) and several linguistic models where it could be inferred that articles should not be used before proper nouns. A few pleasant surprises were detected, such as the correct use of the 'empty set' symbol by one student (see Figure 3), even though she failed to see the morphological relation between article, noun and adjective in the case of tulips.

At the end of the activity, the results were analysed in class through the exhibition of the schema elaborated by the learners. At this time, key grammatical concepts were used, such as singular masculine, plural masculine, etc., which previously had only been depicted through drawings, together with a wider array of grammatical concepts such as "concord".

Pedagogy 2

Figures 4 and 5 show a schema activity on the difference between reflexive and non-reflexive verbs and their relationship with direct and circumstancial complements. This activity is halfway between the structural organisation of linguistic realisations and the organisation of subject-matter conceptual systems. This evaluation activity was carried out in a course for threshold-level learners taught by the author of this paper at the end of the second semester of a two-semester programme. It was administered to 33 participants through *Excel* spreadsheets. Students had to organise the information individually. During the first semester, learners had had 28 90-minute classes of grammar with Japanese teachers and 14 communication classes with a foreign teacher. Linguistic and metalinguistic items were placed in categories in the original matrix. Some key grammatical concepts were translated to facilitate the activity. These concepts had been previously used in Spanish and Japanese during the course in order to explain the grammatical rule of Spanish reflexive verbs and the morphosyntactic relationships (see Figure 4).

The results were quite promising. More than 20 participants could organise the items correctly in the spreadsheet. Most of the problems came from the misplacement of direct complements, especially when these were in connection with reflexive verbs.

The activity can also be conceived as a leading activity (Dreier, 2004) which helps reorganise and recontextualise learners' learning trajectories. At first glance, the move 'bottom up' which fosters this activity caught the students by surprise, who showed some perplexity. Some students asked for clarifications about the purpose of the activity and the right way to proceed. Being aware of this, I explained as much as I could the purpose of the activity, telling

Figure 4. Concepts for a schema, reflexive and non-reflexive verbs

年　　　　月　　　　日（Date)	
名前：（Full Name)	学籍番号：（Student number)
図表を書きなさい（Draw a schema)	
levanto（"I get up"), lavo（"I wash"), ducho（"I take a shower"), estudias（"you study", singular), acuestas（"you go to bed", singular), trabajo（"I work")	
me, te（1st and 2nd person reflexive pronouns, singular)	
los martes（"Tuesdays"), los sábados（"Saturdays")	
español（"Spanish"), inglés（"English"), la cara（"my face"), los dientes（"my teeth")	
a las ocho（"at eight"), por la mañana（"in the morning"), por la noche（"in the evening"), en un restaurante（"at the restaurant"), en la universidad（"at the university")	
reflexivo（再帰動詞）（"reflexive"), no reflexivo（"non-reflexive")	
（yo)（"I"),（tú)（"you")	
sujeto（主語）（"subject"), pronombre reflexivo（再帰代名詞）（"reflexive pronoun"), verbo（動詞）（"verb") , complemento directo（直接補語）（"direct complement"), complemento circunstancial（状況補語）（"circumstancial complement")	
primera persona（１人称）（"1st person"), segunda persona（２人称）（"2nd person")	

Figure 5. Schema correctly done by a student

		SUJETO	VERBO		COMPLEMENTO		
		PRONOMBRE REFLEXIVO	REFLEXIVO	NO REFLEXIVO	DIRECTO	CIRCUNSTANCIAL	
PRIMERA PERSONA	yo	me	levanto			a las ocho/ por la mañana/ por la noche	los martes/ los sábados
			lavo		la cara los dientes		
			ducho				
				trabajo		en un restaurante	
SEGUNDA PERSONA	tú	te	acuestas			a las ocho/ por la mañana/ por la noche	
				estudias	español inglés	en la universidad	

them to organise first the linguistic information to form appropriate sentences and then to use metalinguistic/grammatical concepts. I also monitored the activity, giving positive feedback when I saw students moving in the right direction and inquiring about the reasoning behind wrong moves. For the same reason, more than an evaluation activity, the exercise must be seen as an excuse to have learners reorganise past activities.

The work on spreadsheets seemed to facilitate the development of the activity more

smoothly. It limited the kind of schema students had to produce, in contrast with the activity reported above, where students not only had to pay attention to the concord of the items, but also invent a way to organise the information. The use of spreadsheets meant that the variation of schemata models were small. In contrast, the variation of schemata models in the case reported in Pedagogy 1 was larger (see Figures 2 and 3). Thus, it is important to pay attention to the mediating tools used in these kinds of activities.

Finally, perhaps the highest example of a 'bottom up' move might be the elaboration of conceptual schema such as SCOBA, not with the purpose of analysing grammatical structure, but aiming at defining grammatical rules. Of course this kind of task could only be useful after learners receive a significant amount of positive input. Nonetheless, it is necessary to do a formal research on the pedagogical methods and techniques which may foster the 'bottom up' movement within the ZPD.

Conclusion

The use of SCT, and Vygotsky's notion of ZPD in particular, in SLA research and practice, and the publication in 2001 of the CEFR, calls for a re-evaluation, not only of the curricula of Spanish as a foreign language programmes at the tertiary education in Japan, but also for the transformation of the division of labour (grammar and communication) currently being used.

The shift of approach, from one which has emphasised grammatical competence, to one in which grammar is still seen as a system, but only as a mediator in the acquisition of communicative competence, can be considered a paradigm shift in the Japanese context. Adapting to this paradigm constitutes a challenge for teachers and their organisations, for instructional designers, editors, curriculum designers, assessment experts and evaluation organisations.

It is necessary to reappraise the current role of learning grammar and the way it is facilitated at the tertiary level in Japan, and also how applied linguistic and SLA approaches to learning based on Vygotsky's works, especially SCT and AT, offer new possibilities to integrate formal instruction and naturalistic approaches. Grammar should be centred on the learner and should not constitute the unreflective reproduction of a detached knowledge, but should take into account learners' different learning styles and incorporate strong pedagogical principles. CBP and STI seem to fulfill those expectations.

Even though the communicative approach was intended, in practical terms, as a supplement to the grammar-translation approach in the Japanese educational system, and even a

reaction against it, practitioners and researchers should not ignore approaches that can integrate in a coherent way the dialectical movement between the upper and lower end of the ZPD. From this perspective, the method or technique aimed at fostering the 'bottom up' move proposed in this paper, once fully evaluated, could help develop Vygotsky's dialectic approach to development both in the grammar and in the communication class.

In sum, it is not only the 'bottom up' move that is lacking in all textbooks that are currently being used in the teaching of L2 Spanish, but also a complete 'top down' move is absent. If there is something common to all these works, it is that it is almost impossible to integrate them coherently. Thus, the informed use of Vygotsky's ZPD could constitute a key transformation when reformulating an inadequate curricular and labour division.

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