

Language, Learning and Teaching

**Edited by
Siu-Lun Lee
Victoria Tuzlukova**

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
2011**

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Chapter 1

Language, Learning and Teaching: An Introduction

Siu-lun Lee, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
Victoria Tuzlukova, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

This book entitled Language Learning and Teaching includes selected papers presented at the 3rd Annual International Conference on Philology, Literatures and Linguistics, 12-15 July 2010, at the 12th Annual International Conference on Education, 24-27 May 2010, at the 4th Annual International Conference on Literature, Languages & Linguistics, 11-14 July 2011 and at the 13th Annual International Conference on Education, 23-26 May 2011.

Language, learning and teaching have always been in focus of research. However, in spite of the accumulated experience and knowledge, there is still a lack of concentration on the different areas related to the field with regard to the local educational contexts. The central purpose of the book is to feature the latest research findings and topical developments in language learning and teaching across the curricula and around the world. The book also harnesses enthusiasm and passion for language research and language teaching profession.

There are five parts in this book. Part I addresses the issues related to language learning strategies and language teaching pedagogy. Titled Language learning and teaching strategies this part includes seven papers that examine instructional and learning styles, communication, listening comprehension and motivational strategies in language learning and teaching. All of these issues are discussed taking in consideration both challenges shared by all language teachers in global educational environment and those faced in local educational contexts. The following paragraphs describe in brief the focus of each paper included in this part.

The first paper in this part Specific aptitude for foreign language – musical intelligence explores a correlation between musical aptitude and perception, and production of some aspects of the foreign language phonetic features. The author of this paper Jerzy Zybert from the Academy of Management in Lodz (Warsaw Division), Poland, addresses musical intelligence and regards it as an important factor in the language classroom. In the author's assessment, musically smart students are better foreign language learners, and musically non-gifted ones who get musical training do improve their learning capacity.

In the paper Phonological awareness of learners of English as an L3 Surabhi Bharati from The English and Foreign Languages University in India, examines a complex issue of cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. The author speculates on the number of factors that are associated

with it and their possible interaction. It is pointed out that the study of cross-linguistic influence is affected not only by the knowledge of other languages but also by the process of acquiring those languages, and the strategies the learner used to acquire them. This paper also raises certain issues of the metalinguistic awareness of sub syllabic unit - an area which is still in its infancy. In the opinion of the author, trilinguals or multilinguals have more instances of task accuracy than bilinguals and therefore have more metalinguistic awareness of subsyllabic units.

Paper by Sarah H.J. Liu from Newcastle University, UK is titled “*Listening comprehension strategies and learning style in foreign language learning.*” The author of the paper firstly reviews the dynamic aspects of the listening comprehension and the cognitive styles underlying the information processing in terms of how L2 knowledge is processed, stored, and retrieved, and then reports the results of listening strategy use by two proficiency levels of listeners and their learning styles. She contends that for strategy-use investigations in the L2/FL classroom, there might be a recent urge to train less proficient learners who would learn the strategies from more proficient ones to enhance or acquire specific skills in the target language. The author of the paper also comments on the non-participatory (or one-way) listening strategy use that restricts to the metacognitive and cognitive strategies rather than social/affective strategies. Therefore, she recommends that the participatory listening should be conducted to explore a relationship between the social and affective strategies, listening ability, and cognitive style.

Kiriakí Palapanidi from the University Antonio de Nebrija and María Pilar Agustín Llach from the University of La Rioja in Spain in their paper *Lexical errors in the written compositions of Greek students of Spanish* explore the evolution of lexical intralingual formal errors in their attempt to determine the causes of greatest difficulty in different foreign language proficiency levels. This paper has interesting insights into the authors’ understanding of the lexical intralingual formal errors and their categories. Of special interest is the category of errors which are generated by the creation of nonexistent words in the target language. The authors stress the active role of learners in the process of acquisition of the vocabulary in a foreign language and exemplify it by the fact that students tend to use this communicative strategy in the cases of lack of lexical knowledge.

Communication strategies used by successful and less successful adult learners is the title of the paper by Szu-Ling Tseng and Ya-Li Lai from Taipei Municipal University of Education in Taiwan. In their paper the authors include the content that fosters understanding of communication, communicative competence, communicative strategies and communicative language teaching. The authors argue that to reveal EFL learners’ use of strategies for oral communication is a crucial task, especially in the need of investigation of Chinese EFL learners. The authors strongly believe that teachers should strive to emphasize meaning rather than functions of the language for the purpose of communication. Moreover, according to them, when teaching communication strategies, the material for the task should be

adapted to suit students with different English language levels and interests. The authors make it clear that the relationship between communication strategies and other language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing, should be further investigated and explored.

In the paper Motivation strategies for the Greek EFL teachers Charoula Gkioka from Lancaster University, UK discusses the concept of motivation in the context of foreign language acquisition from both research view and personal reflective experience in the Greek context. According to the author, three areas are possible for enhancing the effectiveness of L₂ learning and acquisition, namely the development of motivational strategies that can generate and maintain learners' motivation; the formation of self-motivating strategies that can lead to autonomous and creative learners in the language classroom and the study of teacher motivation in terms of their motivational characteristics, teaching methodology, etc. Considering the application of these in the Greek context, the author points out that a range of self-motivating strategies in combination with a cross-curricular approach and enhanced Greek teachers' motivation could enhance both the learning process and students' motivation.

The last paper in Part I by Chiung-Wen Chang from National Changhua University of Education in Taiwan is entitled *Exploring the relationship between Taiwanese college students' perceived instructional styles and their self-determination*. It examines the relationship between teachers' instructional styles and students' self-determination. The author raises certain concerns that most of the previous studies on learners' role in their language learning mainly focus on Western learners, so the result about the relationships between teachers' instructional styles and students' self-determination may not be suitable to be generalized to students in Asian educational settings. Therefore, the author discusses the results of an empirical study that investigated teachers' major instructional styles from the Asian learners' perceptions in the Freshman English class. In the author's opinion teacher's controlling instructional style is still needed for students' classroom learning since it might guide them, especially low English achievers, to make decisions in their own learning. However, according to the author, both teachers' autonomy-supportive and controlling instructional styles benefit Asian students' self-determination. Therefore, the author believes that teachers might need to vary their instructional styles in class.

Part II of the book titled Sociolinguistics and language teaching addresses cultural, social and linguistic factors that influence foreign language teaching and learning. Some of these factors are specific to some educational settings; others are universal.

In the first paper in this part, Cultural, Iconic and linguistics determinants used in the discourse of advertising in Spanish in the US. *Implications and Consequences of Learning Spanish as a Second Language*, Hilda Velásquez from Angelo State University, USA addresses the perspective based on the study of messages that marketers, advertisers and publicists transmit to Hispanics in the United States toward the advertising in Spanish. This

perspective makes it possible to the author to identify the impact of socio-cultural factors on teaching Spanish as a second language. The author asserts that media, advertisers, and news organizations that play a decisive and enormous educational role in the appreciation of Spanish as a second language in the U.S. are unaware of this role. Therefore, the author recommends certain actions necessary for media and advertising professionals to consider, for example, participation in more public forums to promote the proper use of Spanish in advertising and media.

In their paper *Culture Integration into Foreign Language Teaching: Fostering Identities and Transcending Boundaries* Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Victoria Tuzlukova from Sultan Qaboos University in Oman trace the journey of culture integration into the foreign language classroom and address its most prominent aspects. They also address the unique situation of English language teaching and the dilemma of which culture to teach since English is now the lingua franca of the world. According to the authors, EFL classrooms can be the forum for culture learning. They believe that integrating culture by juxtaposing the foreign language culture, students' native culture and other world cultures can help students to improve their language and to acquire communicative and pragmatic competence, which is the main goal of language teaching and learning.

The third paper in this part *What are metaphors telling us? Revealing language learners' beliefs through metaphors* is contributed by Julide Inozu and Seden Tuyan from Cukurova University in Turkey. This insightful paper starts with a quotation from Tom Anderson, "Success begins with an educator's cultivation of the ability to identify the students' preconceptions, and to *discover the seeds from which knowledge can grow.*" Acknowledging the importance of learners' beliefs about language learning, the authors focus on several areas, namely (1) nature of language learning, (2) difficulty of language learning, (3) aptitude for language learning, (4) learning strategies, (5) motivation to learn English, (6) role of teachers, and (7) attitudes towards English. In the authors' opinion searching learner beliefs and, at the same time, building up our teaching on those, are critical in the learning process.

The last paper in Part II is an account that addresses *Multiculturalism in English learning and teaching in Taiwan: A critical discourse analysis*. This paper is contributed by Yuhshi Lee, Wenzao Ursulline, Chia Chou and Yi-Ching Hsie from Wenzao Ursulline College of Language in Taiwan. According to the authors, studies concerning the implementation of multicultural English curriculum within schools primarily focus on the macro-level and how policy is enacted from the top-down. Acknowledging the importance of a micro-context perspective and applying critical discourse analysis, the authors examine how multiculturalism plays out in two undergraduate courses from a micro-context of school and classroom practice. Their findings show that the multicultural English language materials consist of materials that present Anglo-American cultures; they play an important part in the constitution of the students' view of the world and cultures. Therefore, they argue that the incorporation of multicultural curricula within English language learning

courses in Taiwan should not be an extension of America ways, values, and images, but a representation of the world's dynamicity and multiculturalism. Thus, in their opinion, with English being increasingly used in global contexts, English is gaining a different identity as it is no longer exclusively represented by the American discourse. The authors, therefore, strongly believe that to become a participant within the current diverse and global community, English language learners, teachers, and policymakers in Taiwan should all partake in the transformation and reconstruction of a multicultural English language.

The theme of Part III, "Linguistic Research and Second Language Acquisition," is closely interconnected with the theme of the previous part.

This part starts with the paper *New prototypes of syllable structure for teaching/learning Portuguese* by **Sara Candeias and Fernando Perdigão** from University of Coimbra in Portugal. In this paper the authors examine Portuguese Syllable (PS) as an intermediary level between words and phones that can serve as a consistent linguistic tool to explore complementary methodologies of teaching and learning Portuguese. In their clear and lucid presentation the PS structure, the authors identify "syllable structure" as a linguistically descriptive unit definitely useful for information processing and allowing an immediate procedure to the lexicon access. According to them, there is a certain potential of using statistical information methods to improve the PS specifications used for the process of teaching/learning Portuguese language. This potential is underlined by the work reported in their paper.

Non-native Students' Problems in Structuring Argumentative Essays in English at Tertiary Level is the title of the paper contributed by Monta Farneste from University of Latvia, Latvia. The author focuses on the importance of mastering genres at tertiary level to develop academic discourse expertise. She brings to the readers' attention the fact that there are contradictory findings regarding similarities and differences in academic writing between English-speaking countries, on the one hand, and other cultures. Additionally, the author points out that there is little research done concerning the problems in structuring tertiary level essays written by NNS (non-native speakers) in Latvia. In her paper the author addresses the problems that tertiary level students face in structuring argumentative essays. She also traces essay writing traditions in different cultures, and investigates cultural influences and rhetorical structure in academic essay writing.

Gülten Gençoğlu and Yunus Emre Akbana from Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam niversity in Turkey are the authors of the next paper, which is titled *Second language acquisition of English reflexive and referring pronouns by Turkish university prep-class students*. The ultimate purpose of the study discussed in this paper is to render the positive effect of explicit training about English reflexive and referring pronouns on Turkish university prep-class students. According to the authors of this paper second language acquisition has grasped the attention of a great number of academics all over the world. In particular, they mention a substantial amount of obstacles non-native speakers of English undergo throughout the process of acquisition of the target language. English language learners in Turkey, in their opinion, are not an

exception. To quote their words, “Among the difficulties that Turkish pre-class students encounter, the differences between English and Turkish within the scope of reflexive and referring pronouns come to the stage.” To overcome these difficulties, the authors suggest that English lecturers should act as the main source and facilitator of the comprehension of the focused grammatical component.

A study on influence of Russian as L1 on the learning of the copula BE in present simple tense in English is the title of the next paper. Its contributors are Elena Anotonova Ünlü from University of London, UK and Çiler Hatipoğlu from Middle East Technical University, Turkey. The authors explore whether native speakers of Russian encounter any difficulties in the acquisition of the copula be and, if they do, they attempt to uncover plausible reasons for these difficulties. Their paper starts with a brief review of the literature discussing cross-linguistic influences, and, then, focuses on the discussion of the copula be as a learning problem. These two parts are followed by the methodology (description of the participants, the methods of data collection and analysis), the results and discussion, and conclusion sections of the study. The findings of the study conducted by the authors of this paper support the view of Hyams (1994), White (2002), Herschensohn (2000) (cited in White 2003: 190-195) who argue that the properties of L₁ grammar have effects on the realization of L₂ morphology and make a point that “morphology must be learned. That is morphological paradigm must gradually be added to the lexicon, just like words. More abstract syntactic properties, on the other hand, do not require learning” (White, 2003: 194).

The last paper in this part Locative Prepositions and Their Role in Second Language Acquisition by Gunel Mammadova from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece is an account that addresses child acquisition to see how “universal” spatial concepts actually are. According to the author, traditional approaches to locative acquisition take as their starting point the fact that the meanings of locatives are composed of a number of components or attributes which contribute to the overall meaning and functions of a locative. They also originate from the general belief that some spatial concepts are universal, i.e. all languages encode these concepts. The author notes that whatever form children’s non-linguistic spatial understanding may take, and in spite of the influence it exerts on the initial acquisition of spatial terms, this understanding must eventually be applied to adapting their “conceptual packing of space” to spatial organization in their native language.

Modern computer and communication technologies have undoubtedly had a pivotal effect on language learning and teaching. Any comprehensive discussion on the account of language, learning and teaching, is, therefore, incomplete if these issues are not addressed. Part IV Technology and Language Teaching addresses the areas of computer assisted language learning and teaching, virtual learning communities, and internet tools and services.

Part IV starts with the paper *Prospective EFL teachers’ field experience in an online support community*. In this paper its author Mei-hui Liu from Tunghai University, R.O.C. gives a historical perspective of the use of

computer-mediated communication (CMC) in promoting online teacher professional development. The author's aim is to further uncover the nature and development of online community members' interactions, discussions, and negotiation of meanings. According to the author, the employment of online learning communities may foster pre service teacher education. The development in online communications may also reduce temporal and spatial barriers and allow pre-service teachers to communicate with others, especially when they are placed in disparate geographical locations.

The title of the next paper is The perceptions of English language teaching students on ELT websites. It was contributed by Bedir Hasan from Cukurova University and Ates Ozdemir Emsal from Mersin University in Turkey. The authors discuss the role of technology, with its interactive software, Web-based study, and rich resources and materials, as a motivating tool for communicative language teaching. They also explore the role of the teachers as technology extends the communicative classroom to provide authentic tasks and audiences for English language learners locally and globally. (Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg, 2003: 47) According to the authors, this role is essential. They share their belief that teachers should be good guides for students to access ELT websites which are suitable for their needs. The authors contend that this means extra work apart from class work. However, in their opinion, when students learn how to reach and make use of the information they need, they will become lifelong learners.

The last chapter in this part was contributed by Bahman Gorjian from Islamic Azad University in Iran. Its title is The role of computer in instructing writing skills in SLA. The author contends that computer technology has had a great impact on language teaching and learning as a facilitative device and as a popular component in educational curricula. In the paper the author explores whether using computer e-mailing can enhance EFL students' writing abilities. The author focuses on using e-mails as on line software which helps learners do excessive drills in spelling and grammar activities and generally in the writing tasks. According to the author, computer e-mailing helps the teachers who run essay writing courses to implement a multimedia project. It can also motivate students and provide teachers with additional tools to correct recurrent grammatical errors, therefore, enhancing writing instruction essay writing classrooms.

Part V that concludes the book is titled "Evaluation of Language Programs." It addresses the problems of language programs design, creation, assessment and successful implementation.

This part starts with the paper Implementing successful dual-immersion bilingual programs by Anne K. Soderman from 3e International School in China and Michigan State University, USA. The author of this paper asserts that bilingual instruction that takes the form of dual immersion to support both languages equally appears to be the most effective model to become fluent in a language. This assertion is supported by an example of 3e International School in China. To quote the author, "The model at 3e International School is one of awarding equal and separate status to both Mandarin and English. Neither one is treated as a second language." The author describes how the school model

was conceptualized, and appropriate age was implemented. This description is followed by the discussion of teacher observation, training and support. The author contends that effective teachers are the key to high quality educational programs, and all school systems seek the very best teachers possible. In addition, the author explores the role of parent involvement, assessment and research. The author concludes the paper with some recommendations for successful implementation of dual-immersion bilingual programs.

In the next paper titled *The ESL classroom assistant program* Roberta Devlin-Scherer from Seton Hall University, USA addresses teaching second language learners as a growing concern across all subject fields. From the point of view of the author, pre-service ESL teachers need information to offer support and encouragement, practical activities that will help their students grasp challenging content, and techniques for increasing access to the content without minimizing the level of the material. Therefore, the author explores the ESL classroom assistant program as a way for the pre-service teachers to observe and practice and as a career path opportunity. She also suggests finding ways to ingrate cross-disciplinary knowledge and exposing secondary education students to more targeted strategies in the general methods class.

Part Y concludes with an insightful paper *The Problems within the Process of Foreign Language Teaching in Turkish Primary Education System* by Erten Gökçe from Ankara University and Berna Köseoğlu from Kocaeli University in Turkey. The authors explore the problems within the process of teaching English as a foreign language in Turkish primary education system. They also examine the most effective methods and techniques of learning and teaching a foreign language. The authors place specific emphasis on teachers, parent involvement, new methods and activities. They also discuss the need for cooperation with the educational institutions in other countries so as to compete with the new technological and educational developments, to share knowledge and practices, to create an environment in which lifelong foreign language learning comes to the fore.

Given above was a concise description of the papers in all five parts of the book. The potential contribution of this book is likely to be to linguistics, language teaching and learning, by comprehensively presenting and covering issues of language pedagogy across practices and perspectives around the globe. Working on this book was a very interesting and valuable experience for both editors. We would like to thank all the contributors and colleagues from international academic community for their invaluable help in reviewing some of the chapters. Our special gratitude is due to Dr. Feyza Doyran, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Bahçeşehir University, Turkey, Dr. Mohammed Nasser Alhuqbani Al-Dossari, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics/Psycholinguistics, The Department of Languages & Translation, Chair, King Fahd Security College, Saudi Arabia, Chinaka S. DomNwachukwu, Ph.D., Professor of Multicultural Education, Chair, Department of Teacher Education, School of Education, Azusa Pacific University, USA and Georgeta Rata, Assistant/Associate Professor at the Banat University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine, Romania.

Chapter 5

Lexical Errors in the Written Compositions of Greek Students of Spanish

Kiriakí Palapanidi, University Antonio de Nebrija, Spain
María Pilar Agustín Llach, University of La Rioja, Spain

Lexicon constitutes an integral and central part of the linguistic system; for that reason, it is not possible to conceive the acquisition of a foreign language without learning its vocabulary. Nevertheless, the acquisition of the lexical component is a complicated process, which entails special difficulties for learners of foreign languages.

The strategies that foreign languages learners follow during this process are many and very varied, but in this study we focus basically on two of these strategies: 1) the use of formal associations between two target language words and 2) the use of the innate human capacity or ability of creating words.

As far as the use of the communicative strategy of phonological association is concerned, it relates to the organization of the mental lexicon in the bilingual mind. Previous studies have showed that the organization of the lexical system in L₂ is based on phonological associations. According to Laufer (1989), this organization of the mental lexicon of FL learners generates confusion between formally similar words in the L₂. Laufer (1989: 11) contends that this phenomenon is called deceptive transparency and that it is considered as one of the factors that make the acquisition of the vocabulary in a foreign language a difficult task.

Haastrup (1989) has also investigated the organization of the mental lexicon and the use of phonological associations by FL learners to organize the new words they incorporate to the lexicon. Haastrup's study (1989) adds a new dimension to this matter. The results of this study have shown that phonological association is preferred by FL learners at the lowest levels of proficiency, whereas in higher levels of proficiency they tend to use semantic associations to classify the new vocabulary.

In light of these results, Haastrup (1989) reaches the conclusion that the processing of the lexicon in a foreign language is like a continuum that goes from the use of phonological association at the lowest levels of proficiency to the use of formal similarity as well as the use of semantic similarity with the creation of semantic networks at more advanced levels.

Singleton and Little (1991) add another interesting parameter related to this matter. These researchers claim that the use of phonological association is characteristic of learners at the lowest levels of proficiency, native speakers or not. In other words, the use of the strategy of phonological association depends

on the speaker's proficiency rather than on his/her status as a native speaker. In this sense, Singleton and Little (1991) come to the conclusion that the processing of the lexicon in L₂ does not differ from the processing of the lexicon in L₁.

The use of the communicative strategy of creating nonexistent words in the target language resides in the innate human ability of creating words, which is a special aspect of the lexical competence, as Baralo (1997) notes.

According to Aitchison (1987), whole words are stored in the mental lexicon whole words together with morphological information of those words, such as the different word parts or the internal structure of the word, syntactic constraints, word class information, and so on.

This kind of information offers the possibility of creating new words, of analyzing them, of combining parts of the words in order to create new ones, and of understanding the creations of other speakers. The rules that regulate this process are a constituent part of the lexical tools of the mental lexicon. This ability of creating new words, of recognizing the parts of the words and of decomposing them constitutes the innate human capacity of creating words.

Another researcher that examines this human capacity is Pinker (1994). According to Pinker's opinion, the human ability of creating words in a limitless way is impressive. Pinker (1994) believes human beings to be endowed with a combinatorial system that is governed by concrete rules, which are used in two ways. On the one hand, this system allows for the combination of words and the forming of phrases and sentences, and on the other hand, it offers the possibility of combining parts of the words in order to create new words according to the morphological rules of the particular language. This system, then, offers the speaker the possibility of creating new words basing on the correct combination of the different word parts, without exactly knowing either their meaning or their articulation (form in either speaking or writing).

Lexical Errors in the Written Compositions of Greek Students of Spanish

Methodological Issues

The objective of this study is to explore the evolution of lexical intralingual formal errors of Greek SFL students of four different proficiency levels (A, B1, B2 and C1) in order to determine the causes of greatest difficulty in every level of proficiency. For that reason, we are doing a twofold analysis of the written interlanguage of the Greek students in which we provide with quantitative and qualitative data. This analysis is going to apply the procedure of Error Analysis in a corpus of written compositions.¹

Data has been collected in a pseudolongitudinal way. We have gathered data from participants in periodic intervals but with different informants in each one of the analyzed stages.

¹It is possible to find more information about the procedure of Error Analysis in Santos Gargallo (2004).

Lexical Errors in the Written Compositions of Greek Students of Spanish

Our sample is composed of 81 Greek SFL students which belong to four different linguistic levels of proficiency: A, B1, B2, and C1. In level A, 19 students have participated, in level B1, 20 students, in level B2, 18 students and in level C1, 24 students. All the participants are adults, of Greek mother tongue, and they are learning Spanish as a foreign language in an institutionalized context.²

Our corpus of data is composed of 81 compositions written by the participants. Students were allotted half an hour to complete the writing task during a regular class at their language institute. The topic of the composition is the same for everyone “Ocio y tiempo libre” (Leisure and free time). No maximum or minimum word constraints or length constraints were imposed. Participants were not allowed to use any support material such as dictionaries, or grammars. See Table 1 for details on participants.

Table 1. Number of Participants in Every Level of Proficiency

Level of proficiency	Number of participants
A	19
B1	20
B2	18
C1	24

After data collection took place, lexical errors were identified and classified. Taking into account the objective of our study and based on previous studies of analysis of lexical errors ((Dušková, 1969; Ringbom, 1978; Zimmerman, 1986, 1987; Vázquez, 1991; Santos Gargallo, 1993; Fernández, 1997) we have classified the lexical errors of our corpus into two categories: i) formal lexical errors and ii) semantic lexical errors. In addition to this, we have classified lexical errors into i) interlingual lexical errors, ii) intralingual lexical errors and iii) lexical errors of ambiguous origin. This classification follows the criterion of the psychological origin of the lexical error. Nevertheless, in the present study we will concentrate on reporting lexical intralingual formal errors exclusively.

Within the category of the lexical intralingual formal errors we distinguish among the following types of errors: gender production, number production, use of formally similar Spanish words, and creation of nonexistent words.

Results of the Quantitative Analysis of the Data

A total of 350 lexical errors were identified in the 81 compositions which constitute the corpus of our data. Of the 350 lexical errors, 228 are intralingual errors. Of these, 80 are formal representing a percentage of 22.8% over the total number of lexical errors of our corpus and they show an average by participant of 1 instance. This means that, on average, each participant produces a formal intralingual lexical error in his/her composition.

²Our participants are Greek SFL students of the private institute specialized in teaching Spanish as a foreign language “El Mundo”.

As far as the evolution of the lexical intralingual formal errors is concerned, as a general observation, it may be concluded that they tend to decrease slightly as the level of proficiency of our participants increases.

In particular, the results of our analysis show that the weight of the intralingual formal errors is greater in levels A and B2, in which they present the same and the highest percentages with up to over one fourth of the total production of lexical errors (25.3%). In level B1, formal intralingual lexical errors represent 21.0% over the total and for the last proficiency level, C1, the percentage of formal intralingual lexical errors over the total amounts up to 20.7%.

As far as the evolution of the intralingual formal errors, our results show instability with a slight decrease in B1, a slight increase in B2 and a slight decrease again in C1. Concretely, every participant of the first course has committed 1.1 intralingual formal errors, every participant of the second course has committed 0.85 intralingual formal errors, every participant of the third group has committed 1.1 intralingual formal errors and finally every participant of the group of the highest level has committed 0.96 intralingual formal errors. These figures may be reflecting the instability typical of the intermediate levels. Table 2 offers these figures schematically.

Table 2. Amount Total, Percentage of the Intralingual Formal Errors on the Total Number of the Lexical Errors of the Course, Average by Participant, Maximum and Minimum Values

Level of proficiency	Intralingual formal errors				
	Number	Percentage	Average	Maximum	Minimum
A	21	25.3%	1.1	4	0
B1	17	21%	0.85	3	0
B2	19	25.3%	1.1	5	0
C1	23	20.7%	0.96	4	0

Within the intralingual formal errors, we could identify 16 errors of gender production, which amounts to 20.0% of the total number of the lexical intralingual formal errors and average 0.2 instances by participant, 14 errors in the production of number, which is the 17.5% of the total number of the lexical intralingual formal errors and 0.2 instance on average by participant, 27 errors due to the confusion of two formally similar Spanish words, which is the 33.8% of the total number of the lexical intralingual formal errors and 0.3 instance on average by participant, and 23 errors which result from the creation of nonexistent words in the target language, which is the 28.8% of the total number of the lexical intralingual formal errors and 0.3 instance on average by participant. We present these figures in Table 3.

Table 3. Amount Total, Percentage of the Types of the Intralingual Formal Errors on the Total Number of the Intralingual Formal Errors and Average by Participant

Type of intralingual formal error	Number of errors	Percentage on the total number of the intralingual formal errors	Average
Production of gender	16	20.0%	0.2
Production of number	14	17.5%	0.2
Use of formally similar target language words	27	33.8%	0.3
Creation of nonexistent words	23	28.8%	0.3

Results of the Qualitative Analysis of the Data

The errors in the production of gender can be traced back to three possible causes. One is the lack of agreement in gender of the words that end in -a but are masculine. These are usually words deriving from Ancient Greek ending with the morpheme -ema which are always masculine: muchas problemas, esta idioma. The second cause of the errors in the recognition of the gender is the lack of rules that regulate the gender of nouns finished in other vowel different from -o and -a: una baile. In these cases, the Greek learners of Spanish have used the masculine or the feminine gender randomly. The last cause that has generated errors in the recognition of gender is the attribution of the gender to nouns finished in consonant without any criterion, given that the rules are as many as the exceptions: los grandes ciudades, el razón, el obsesión para el trabajo.

The errors in the production of number could be classified in two categories. First, errors have been detected in nouns which are not countable because of their use in plural: es major hacer sus ocios que dormir y estar acostado todo el día. In this case, according to the grammar of Gómez Torrego (1998), the noun ocio is not countable. Nevertheless, Greek learners use it in the plural number, although this noun is not countable in Greek, either. It seems that the confusion has been generated by the noun ocio and the noun afición, which can be used in the plural number as countable.

Secondly, errors were identified in nouns, which in the Spanish linguistic system function as collectives in contrast with these that function as individuals: los trabajos de muchas personas están lejos de sus casas, leo revista. In the first example, the nouns el trabajo y la casa have been used erroneously in the plural number, although they can function as collectives. In the second case, the noun la revista has been used erroneously in singular, although it is an individual noun and does not have collective value.

As far as the errors caused by confusion of two formally similar Spanish words are concerned, the exploration of the examples of our corpus allows us to conclude that in all the cases the beginning letters of the unknown words are the same as the beginning letters of the words created by the students. Nevertheless, five different cases of application have been analysed: a) change

of just one letter of the word: tiempo libro (instead of libre), b) add a letter to the correct word: pasean en poco tiempo con sus familias (instead of pasan), c) remove a letter from the correct word: dar una vuelta con mi pero (instead of perro), d) change the affix of the correct word: pero ahora su objeto es hacer un carrera (instead of objetivo), e) change the correct word completely but maintaining the beginning letter: los dos son satisfacciones simples (instead of soluciones).

As far as the errors caused as the result of the creation of nonexistent words in the target language are concerned, we could classify them in two categories. First, words have been created by adding a different affix from the correct one to the root of the word: la intimación entre las personas (instead of intimidad). It is interesting to note that the affix that has been used erroneously is considered incorrect in relation to the norm of the Spanish language and not in relation to the possibilities that the Spanish linguistic system offers.

Secondly, words have been created words by slightly altering the root of the words: para embelizar nuestras vidas (instead of embellecer). Also, in this case the same creative process has been used. The word that has been created could exist in the Spanish language because it has been formed according to the rules of the Spanish linguistic system, but it does not exist in real language use.

The results of our qualitative analysis show that the type of error of this category which presents the highest interest is the confusion of two formally similar target language words. The qualitative analysis shows that a possible cause for this kind of errors is the use of the communicative strategy of phonological association between two Spanish words. This result is a contribution to enlightening the problem of how the bilingual mental lexicon is organized and the way in which the lexicons of the two languages are stored in the human mind.

Another type of error of this category which presents a special interest is the creation of nonexistent words. This type of errors is a sign that the acquisition of the lexicon is a creative process in which the student is using his/her innate capacity of creating words that could exist according to the rules of the Spanish linguistic system.

Discussion

In order to interpret and to explain the results of our analysis, we first try to explain the results of the quantitative analysis and then we continue examining the results of the qualitative analysis.

As far as the results of our quantitative analysis are concerned, we can observe that the lexical intralingual formal errors tend to fall slightly as the level of proficiency of our participants increases from level A to level C1. This result allows us to conclude that the formal aspect is acquired first and this may explain the fact that at the highest proficiency levels formal errors tend to be fewer.

Nevertheless, these results are unstable, given the slight increase noticed for the level B2, in which the percentage and the average by participant increase and arrive at the levels of the first level group. This result can be explained if we take into account that in this level students have developed a wider lexical network than the one they had in the lower levels and they try to use it. Nevertheless, given the fact that they have not acquired this knowledge completely yet, they commit formal errors at the time they try to produce the correct words.

At this point, it is important to indicate that these unstable results have been found in other studies, as well, dealing with the production of errors, such as the study of Alexopoulou (2005), who analyzed morpho-syntactic errors of Greek learners of Spanish as a foreign language. In relation to the results of our qualitative analysis, analysis of the data revealed that the major difficulties appear in the cases in which formal similarity between two Spanish words exists. This result confirms the studies of Laufer (1990, 1991), who considers the formal similarity of the words as one of the factors that make the acquisition of the vocabulary in a foreign language a difficult task.

Furthermore, this result can be explained by taking into account the organization of the mental lexicon of the Greek students. In their mental lexicon, learners connect the words they know and the words they are learning in a phonic way. That is, words that sound similarly are connected and stored together, thus they are confused. In many cases, students use formally similar words to the correct one but with different meanings.

Our results have also showed that another category of errors of special interest is the category of errors which are generated by the creation of nonexistent words in the target language. The fact that students tend to use this communicative strategy in the cases of lack of lexical knowledge reveals the active role of learners in the process of acquisition of the vocabulary in a foreign language.

As a conclusion, we believe that the fact that the use of phonological associations between the Spanish words and the creation of nonexistent words appear at every level of proficiency, with a slight fall in level C1, tells us that Greek SFL learners in the process of acquisition of the Spanish vocabulary do not just recur to their mother tongue for help to overcome language problems in the new language, they also struggle to create an independent lexical system in the language they are trying to learn and they use their innate competence of creating words.

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