

*La expresión de cambio en español como lengua
extranjera*

Desarrollo y variación en la interlengua de aprendices
suecohablantes

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the learning process of the expression of change in Swedish-speaking learners of Spanish as a foreign language. In Swedish, general verbs —*bli/göra*— may be used to express diverse semantic nuances of the notion of change, while in Spanish, this is expressed by using a wide range of change-of-state verbs (*ponerse/poner, quedarse, dejar volverse/volver, hacerse/hacer, convertirse en/ convertir en*, etc.). Because of this difference, Swedish-speaking learners of ELE experience a difficulty, which consists of learning to associate the notion of change in Spanish with different verbs that do not exist in their L1.

This investigation aligns itself with studies of the phenomenon of variation in interlanguage and its role in the learning process. Based on a functionalist approach, this study documents how speakers of Swedish learn to associate the semantic nuances of the notion of change with the corresponding verbs in Spanish, while at the same time explaining how these meaning-form associations vary and change according to linguistic and extralinguistic factors.

The language samples of the expression of change which are analyzed come from two experimental tasks completed by speakers of Swedish with different levels of linguistic competence that study Spanish at university in Sweden. One is a written task (picture composition task) that is collected twice: once at the beginning and once at the end of the academic year (semilongitudinal study) and is completed by 20 learners. The other is a task of translating sentences from Swedish to Spanish, completed by 79 learners (pseudolongitudinal study). These language samples are compared with those of Spanish-speakers in order to have a reference point and to document the development of the learning process.

The results show that there is a preference for using certain verbs instead of others when expressing the different semantic nuances of change, depending on the level of competence of the learner and the amount of their exposure to the language being learned. The differences found are statistically significant. Low level learners overuse the verb *ser* to express internal processes of change (*Fui triste con la noticia*), and *hacer* to express external caused change (*La noticia me hizo triste*). Intermediate level learners begin to use change-of-state verbs. However, they tend to use them randomly. High level learners are the ones whose use of change-of-state verbs is quite similar to that of Spanish-speakers; there is finally a tendency to correctly associate certain change-of-state verbs with their corresponding semantic nuance.

With respect to the linguistic factors that explain the use of change-of-state verbs, no factors were identified in low level learners. In intermediate level learners, certain patterns of using change-of-state verbs begin to emerge. Learners start to use the verbs adopting the same linguistic criteria that Spanish-speakers apply. This development is not always linear; there are contexts in which even high level learners have difficulty choosing the change-of-state verb. When using change-of-state verbs, the factor that is most often taken into consideration is the semantic category of the noun or adjective that accompanies the verb. Depending on this, other determining factors appear and interact, such as durability (long-term /temporary), gradualness (immediate/gradual) and cause.

Finally, this investigation confirms that the expression of change is an inherently variable phenomenon. In most of the studied contexts of change, Spanish-speakers use more than one change-of-state verb, although in general, there is always one that is predominant. This means that the same notion of change can be conceptualized in different ways. As the level of competence of learners increases, so does their ability to cognitively perceive the notion of change as Spanish-speakers do.