

USING COGNITIVE PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING SPANISH L2 GRAMMAR

REYES LLOPIS-GARCÍA
Columbia University

Title: Using Cognitive Principles in Teaching Spanish L2 Grammar

Abstract: Grammar instruction, when informed by linguistic theory, can add an important value to the foreign language classroom. The present contribution examines the evolution of the role of grammar in language teaching and proposes that Cognitive Linguistics may be a powerful ally for language teaching and learning when applied to the design of pedagogical materials.

Key words: Cognitive Linguistics. Grammar Instruction. Foreign language pedagogy. Spanish as a foreign language. Classroom materials. Teacher training

1. TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

Grammar and its instruction have always been the bone of contention in all and any discussions on second/foreign language (L2) learning. It is the longest-standing source of controversy amongst scholars, instructors, and even students: Is grammar needed in the L2 classroom? What kind and how much? How is it taught and what do language instructors need to know? The last 30 years have seen advancements in methodologies for foreign language teaching through the “detailed analysis of communicative contexts, themes, tasks and purposes as well as scaled descriptions of the competences on which we draw when we communicate” (CERF 2014¹).

However, according to Llopis-García, Real Espinosa and Ruiz Campillo (2012: 15), approaches to the explicit teaching of grammar have remained largely unchanged, and a largely descriptive, philological design to the grammatical curriculum has been traditionally implemented. For instance,

Cítese como: Llopis-García, R. (2016). Using Cognitive Principles in Teaching Spanish L2 Grammar. En M^a del Carmen Méndez Santos (coord.). *Nuevas perspectivas en la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera*. *Hesperia*, XIX(2), 29-50.

¹http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

when dealing with the Spanish verbal system, we may find classifications according to: *time* (present, past, future, post-preterit, present-for-past, past-in-the-present); *type of enunciation* (main actions, background actions, recurrent actions, one-time actions); *aspect* (durative, descriptive, repetitive, perfective); *mood* (virtual, assertive, declarative), etc. This type of grammatical instruction treats language as an object and creates a pedagogical divide between the formal properties of linguistic forms and their use and function (Grundy 2004: 121).

Traditional approaches to grammar are then generally mechanical, with rules that are “presented as a property of the target linguistic system, and not a result of the speaker’s choice” (Achard 2008: 441). A large literature review for applied linguistics research in L2 Spanish by Antón (2011:92) pointed out that traditional approaches to grammar instruction do not interact well with the communicative language teaching paradigm and are hard for language instructors to manage, because it is hard to find balance between the formal study of a linguistic system and the active learning processes necessary for meaningful interaction with the target language in real-life contexts beyond the classroom.

In addition, the relationship between linguists and language instructors does not appear to be mutually informative. One of the main issues in the field is that there seem to be many linguists theorizing about Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and how it should inform teaching, but they themselves have barely or ever set a foot inside a classroom, and much less taught one. At the same time, a large portion of language instructors shows little or no interest in professional and academic development, never pausing to consider that they are the first beneficiaries of such training (Llopis-García 2013, Achard 2004). To further illustrate this point, and in the words of Langacker, “unless they are themselves experienced language teachers, the advice of linguists on language pedagogy is likely to be of no

more practical value than the advice of theoretical physicists on how to teach pole vaulting.” (2008a: 7)

Larsen-Freeman (2015: 263–264) corroborates the views outlined above by stating that grammar teaching consists mainly of rules that explain how linguistic forms are used, followed by controlled, *ad hoc* practice that does not seek to interrelate the different sections of the language curriculum. She then points out that both the textbook publishing industry and the lack of interest for professional development on the part of language instructors are to blame.

2. PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR. TRADITIONAL VS. COGNITIVE

When considering what Pedagogical Grammar is, two questions must be asked: (1) When instructors teach grammar explicitly, are they aiming towards the standardized testing the students will undoubtedly have to take?; and (2) Is our instruction geared at covering a series of points in the syllabus with a final assessment test at the end of the chapter, course, or program?

If the answer to both questions is yes, grammar will most likely be taught in terms of what is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ in the language, where lists of rules and uses of linguistic forms are the effective means to an end. But there are other choices, pedagogical options that aim at teaching for competent, able, and independent users of the target language, where “from a pedagogical point of view, there is a presupposition that grammatical elements are carriers of meaning (however abstract or schematic it may be), and not mere formal structures that are randomly imposed [on students]” (Castañeda 2014: 59).

As Boers, De Rycker, and De Knop (2010: 4) point out, there is a real need to search for both effective and efficient teaching options, given that in many cases of instruction, contact hours with the target language are limited. The aim of this article is to advocate a cognitive approach to teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language (ELE in the native acronym, *español como*

lengua extranjera), where grammar pairs meaning and form as one teachable unit. This approach aims to give learners the option to build language based on their own communicative intent, and not on what the textbook instructions describe the linguistic system to be.

A cognitive curriculum design for the explicit teaching of grammar will provide learners with operative principles in the target language that will enable them to control their performance without the sheer memorization of random lists of notions and functions. This idea was already being proposed at the beginning of the 21st century, when Dirven, Niemeier and Pütz (2001: xiv) advocated for Cognitive Linguistics-inspired learning materials for all levels of instruction: from absolute beginners to the most advanced learners.

To illustrate the differences between a traditional and a cognitive approach to grammar (CG onwards) in the L2 classroom, the following table gives a comprehensive overview of what distances them from one another (Bielak and Pawlak 2013: 128):

Table 4.1 Comparison of CG and traditional grammars as a basis of pedagogical grammar

CG as a basis of pedagogical grammar	CG examples	Traditional pedagogical grammar	Traditional grammar examples
Meaningfulness of all grammatical elements	<i>Of</i> is meaningful: it designates an intrinsic relationship	Not all grammatical elements meaningful	No meaning ascribed to <i>of</i>
Highly detailed semantic analyses of grammatical elements	The analysis of the semantic contributions of the components of the English progressive: <i>be</i> , <i>-ing</i>	Semantic analyses of grammatical element not as detailed	No semantic analysis of the components of the English progressive and no precise semantic value of the English present tense
Grammatical meaning is conceptualization, existence of different construals	Different conceptualizations and construals of perfective (bounding, heterogeneity) and imperfective (no bounding, homogeneity) verbs, even in the case of seemingly stative verbs such as <i>like</i>	No conceptual value of grammatical items specified	No precisely described conceptual values and construals of active and stative verbs, no specification of different construals associated with the stative and dynamic uses of <i>like</i>
Discourse and other pragmatic factors often included in the meaning of grammatical elements	The meanings of declarative clauses depend on the meanings of neighbor sentences (<i>Harold has finished his thesis followed by It is very good/And I was just elected pope</i>)	Discourse and other pragmatic factors not/rarely included in the meaning of grammatical elements	The meanings of declarative clauses do not depend on the meanings of neighbor sentences
Grammar is motivated	The use of the non-progressive present tense with performatives clearly explained by the semantics of these elements	Grammar is often arbitrary	The use of the non-progressive present tense with performatives not explained
Little/no vagueness and imprecision of description		Significant vagueness and imprecision of description	Hedging of rules by words such as <i>normally</i> and <i>usually</i> , not followed by reference to "abnormal" or "unusual" cases
No contradictions between different rules/subrules		Contradictions between different rules/subrules	The rule that the non-progressive present is used with such (dynamic) verbs as <i>promise</i> and <i>refuse</i> followed by the rule that the non-progressive present refers to general, permanent characteristics of people and things
Frequent use of pictorial illustrations of meaning	Figures accompanying the description of English aspect	Infrequent use of pictorial illustrations of meaning	

Table 1: Traditional vs. Cognitive Grammar

As Table 1 shows, CG is seen as meaningful for all linguistic forms, with conceptualization and motivation as basis for a networked, related presentation of grammatical concepts to students, whereas traditional approaches present new concepts in a disconnected, random fashion, with little or no meaning assigned to linguistic form –unless it is a lexical item or construction.– Also, since CG establishes relationships in meaning and form between concepts, there are no contradictory sub-rules and exceptions to the main rule.

The ultimate plus for classroom explicit instruction from this point of view is the pedagogical use of images and schemas as a foundation to foster the understanding and processing of new grammar. Graphic depictions of lexical items, constructions, and conceptual meanings are a powerful ally of instructor and student, because they allow both to build experiential bridges between the mother and target language, and facilitate the interpretation of embodied concepts in the foreign language. Moreover, where the use of images truly contributes to effective L2 learning is in the depiction of grammatical elements (such as verbal morphology), because:

Images present in an integrated way many things that otherwise would be disperse or unconnected; images are easy to understand and identify as a whole and serve as a base or guide from which to interpret more abstract concepts, which cannot be perceived physically but can be understood as if they were objects that we can “see” when we interpret them metaphorically (Castañeda 2012: 257)

In line with these views, all materials presented in the following pages are actual examples used in the Spanish Language Program at Columbia University, where Spanish is taught with an explicit focus on CG, and they are informed by Cognitive Linguistic theory, as well as by extensive empirical and applied research conducted by linguists and language instructors at the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures (Alonso Raya *et al.* 2005; Llopis-García 2010, 2015; Ruiz Fajardo 2012; Ruiz Campillo 2014; Alonso Aparicio 2014; Montero Gálvez 2014; Pérez Serrano 2015).

3. IN FAVOR OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR

Studies derived from cognitive psychology and theories of thought that are applied to language teaching/learning, assume that human cognition results from the interaction between the declarative and procedural memories (Alonso Aparicio 2014: 21). And this interaction can be fostered through explicit attention in grammar teaching in order to contribute to how learners process the system of the foreign language. Additionally, “cognitive and sociocultural L2 theories alike hold that developing explicit knowledge of target L2 forms is an important part of the longer process of building the implicit knowledge that sustains real-time communication.” (Toth, Wagner, and Moranski, 2013: 300)

From this point of view, explicit instruction must provide students with operational information on how the target language works, combined with a systematic practice that allows learners to use any new form-meaning connection (FMC) in a meaningful, reliable, and efficient manner during real-time communication.

Only through structured systematic practice can explicit knowledge be processed and eventually incorporated into the mental corpus of the L2. Systematic practice is what makes the students’ interlanguage progress and advance, and it means being mindful of aspects such as (Llopis-García 2014):

- The use of both structured input and output activities –that is, comprehension and production–, because as Dekeyser and Prieto Botana (2014: 460) point out, enabling the students to make FMC in both situations is the toughest challenge of grammatical instruction.
- Practice in all different skills. And not only the four major communicative language skills (aural/written comprehension, aural/written production), but also intercultural, personal, or social competences through both individual and collaborative tasks.

- A sequence that facilitates processing (first comprehending the target form, then producing through meaningful practice, for example). On this account, Focus on Form (FonF) has proven to be a systematic, pedagogically sound approach to practicing new grammatical forms in the L2 classroom (see Table 2). Robinson and Ellis (2008: 7) support FonF as opposed to implicit learning, which has been proven inefficient when dealing with opaque grammatical functions, and add that raising the students' awareness of those functions through explicit instruction has been shown to positively affect interlanguage. Additionally, Cadierno (2008: 264) goes a step further and claims that FonF is the ideal companion for teaching L2 grammar when applying a cognitive linguistics-informed pedagogy. The idea, then, is that this methodology establishes a relationship between the learner and the linguistic form, and allows for language processing that is based more on noticing/perception and comprehension, and less on memorization.

Bielak and Pawlak (2013:133) support Cadierno's earlier point and compile research studies conducted between 1998 and 2010 where CG and FonF supported a pedagogical grammar and offered evidence of success and learning gains by students.

4. TEACHING SPANISH WITH COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS: CONCEPTS AND APPLICATIONS

“Language is a collective human creation, reflecting human nature, how we conceptualize reality, how we relate to one another. And then by analyzing the various quirks and complexities of language, I think we can get a window onto what makes us tick” (Pinker 2005), which is what we can conceptualize in our native tongue through the interaction with the world around us, and therefore communicate with others in a meaningful manner.

In the world of foreign language teaching and ELE in particular, the “ticking” must be to focus on the conceptualization differences between the students’ L1 and Spanish. CG offers some conceptual tools that may create “opportunities for languaging”, that is, the ability to create the meaningful communication of our experience through language use. Some of these tools will be discussed in the pages that follow, and they are the *embodiment of language*, *semantic networks*, *construal*, *prototypes*, *perspective*, *visuals*, and *metaphor*. We argue that the pedagogical use of these tools in the ELE classroom allows for motivated learning, which in turn fosters acquisition, helps with fine-tuning of grammatical performance and understanding, enhances learning and memory, and opens the way for a better understanding of the target language’s conceptualization.

To begin with the concept of **embodiment of language**, we refer to Lee (2001: 18), when he states that “one of our earliest and most basic cognitive achievements as infants is to acquire an understanding of objects and of the way in which they relate to each other in physical space.” From a very early age, and well before we can begin uttering words, we attain an understanding of our surroundings and become able to signal things of interest, differentiate between up and down, or understand what is within or without our immediate reach. In time, our own perception and our body’s interaction with the world will shape how we verbalize our thoughts.

In fact, data from a growing body of studies in cognitive science proves that when we need to understand movement, we actually activate the brain areas that we use in the *actual* movement of our bodies; or that when we read about food or smell, brain activity shows activation of the same areas that are at work while we ourselves perform these activities (Pérez Ruiz 2015). To summarize: thought processes are highly abstract, but in language, they are grounded in human experience, which draws on the motor functions of our bodies. Through language, our bodies and our mind

are construed as one entity (Littlemore 2009: 127). The idea of language as embodied is a most effective teaching tool in ELE, not only for the obvious advantages to teaching lexical items, but especially when introducing and explaining more abstract grammatical forms and constructions. In the case of vocabulary teaching, instructors can use the experiential concepts of movement and space to move from literal, easier-to-understand terms, to more complex, semantically motivated collocations. Consider the following example:

(3) Movement and space — The sentence *Subir al segundo piso* (*To go up to the second floor*), has a literal meaning that conveys movement towards a destination that is located on a vertical axis, higher than the speaker. Drawing from the metaphorical representation of the verb *subir*, where up is more, and therefore up is vertical increase, literal elevation equals an increase in quantity of value. This way, *subir los precios* (*to raise prices*) could be taught in relation to the literal example, where literal space and movement can be extended by establishing a **semantic network** of related meanings that move from the experientially grounded senses to concrete representations of abstract concepts (*a price increase*) in terms understandable by all speakers. Semantic networks are motivated and provide a “user-friendly” approach to lexical variation, mainly because they establish direct connections between seemingly unrelated concepts.

Within this notion, we can even “raise” the stakes and make students aware of collocations such as *levantar sospechas* (*raise suspicions*) and even idiomatic phrases like *levantar ampollas* (literally, *to lift off blisters*), which in English could roughly and with the same metaphor translate to: *to raise hell on something*, both meaning “to cause trouble by bringing controversy”. Both idiomatic constructions in English and Spanish use the construct of verticality to relate movement and pain to anger and controversy.

Instructors of Spanish can take advantage of these approaches to vocabulary and search for common foundations in the native and target languages of their students, thus enhancing the vocabulary learning experience of their students, fostering a motivated comprehension of lexical items, and minimizing the soulless memorization of words and their unrelated translations.

For the case of grammatical forms whose experiential representation might not be as apparent as that of their lexical counterparts, consider the following example:

(4) Everyday (grammatical) experience — with verbs that express feelings related to how we react to a situation, Spanish uses the reflexive verb *ponerse* (*nerviosa, feliz, triste, enferma*), which literally means *to put on (oneself)*, although it rightfully translates to *get* (*nervous, happy, sad, sick*). For the literal interpretation of the verb, however, it can be argued that similarly to how one puts on a jacket or a dress, or a pair of sunglasses, one *puts on a feeling*, which makes it “the feeling of the moment” and not a defining, more permanent experience, because you can always take it off. This correlates with what a textbook might say in more traditional terms and along the lines of “non-permanent situations or spontaneous feelings to express changes in people”, which only informs the students of what a verb is for, and says nothing about why Spanish chooses the reflexive verb to express that particular situation.

Establishing connections between verbal morphology and its selection helps our students realize that “a word is better understood as an access point to the interlocutor’s rich background knowledge, which is comprised of organized, interconnecting networks of knowledge” (Tyler 2012: 32). In this case, feelings can be construed as clothes: we put them on because they fit for a particular moment, and we will choose to take (or shake) them off as the situation changes because we no longer need them.

The next useful and related process that should inform Spanish language teaching is known as **construal**, which is the manner in which speakers choose their words in order to present their abstract thought processes, and which, in turn, attempts to build a conceptual representation as close to the speaker's own in the mind of the interlocutor. With construal, it is easier to explain why some constructions in Spanish seem to be too similar for the students to successfully tell them apart without proper –coherent–explicit instruction. Such is the case of the imperfect/preterit contrast, where the verb alone will encode the particular construal that the speaker has in mind. When students use either one, their native interlocutor will “visualize” or construe a different scene depending on which tense is used, as in the example provided in Figure 1 (Alonso Raya *et al.* 2005: 129):

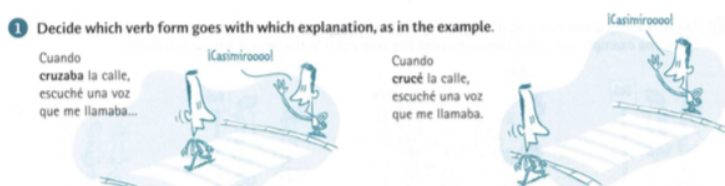


Figure 1: Construal of an action in the past: imperfect vs. preterit

In Figure 1, the sentence in English for both examples is: *As I crossed the street, I heard a voice calling my name*, which uses the imperfect left, and the preterit on the right. The drawings clearly show the construal of each verb, where for the imperfect the action of crossing is in the midst of happening, but is shown as finalized with the preterit. Teaching construal will not only liberate students from memorizing the apparently random relationships that link tenses to temporal markers and specific combinational discourse patterns (*yesterday, the other day, before, every year, etc.*), but it will also enable students to be exact and precise in how they phrase the narrative of stories in the past, where actions occur both in succession or simultaneously.

Another advantage of teaching aspectual selection with construal resides on the fact that on occasion, both tenses will differ from each other not because they are conceptualizing different scenes, but because can also be representing the same scene from different angles. Consider the following example from Llopis García, Real Espinosa, and Ruiz Campillo 2012: 169: *my grandfather was a very nice man. He died five years ago.*

(5) *Mi abuelo era un hombre muy simpático. Hace cinco años que murió*

(6) *Mi abuelo fue un hombre muy simpático. Hace cinco años que murió*

When construed with imperfect (5), the point of view of the speaker situates her “within” the action it describes, as if the interlocutor were inside the speaker’s memories and could see how her grandfather interacted with other people. The specific duration of the action is not conceptualized here, mainly because in this case, it is not relevant to what the speaker wants to communicate. Example (6), in contrast, presents the action as “far removed” from the speaker and the listener, where we don’t “see” the grandfather’s interactions, but imagine his character and the action of “being” as terminated. There is an ending to the action, giving the interlocutor the sense that *being nice* defined him through his entire life until the end. This leads us to present the **prototype** for each tense, which can be seen in Figure 3 below (Llopis-García,² Alonso-Aparicio and Llopis-García, in press):

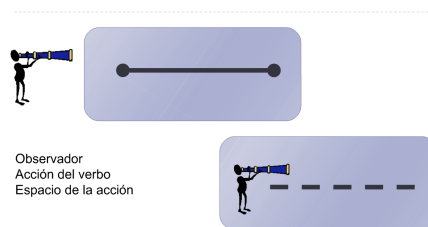


Figure 2: The prototypical representation of preterit (above) and imperfect (below)

²Whenever classroom examples are referenced as Llopis-García, they indicate course materials of the author’s own creation and used in her own language courses.

Prototypes “are considered mental representations of cognitive reference points that are used in the process of categorization” (Cadierno and Hijazo-Gascón 2014: 97) and are of pedagogical interest because understanding the core meaning of a linguistic form will undoubtedly assist with the comprehension of any related and extended senses. Figure 2 shows the centrality of the main semantic representation of both tenses, where we can see an observer with a telescope (*observador*); the black lines of the action represented by the verb (*acción del verbo*); and the colored frame that represents the space where the action occurs (*espacio de la acción*). In the case of the preterit, the action described in (6) would apply to the upper image of the schema, where we see the observer *outside* the scope of the action, looking at a completed process (marked by the continuous line that is closed on both ends) of which she does not partake. The imperfect, on the other hand, depicts the observer *within* the frame of the verb, and its progress is represented as a discontinuous line to signal the ongoing process of the action with its ending out of sight. The schema for the imperfect relates to example (5).

The main focus of this prototype is that it considers the speaker’s point of view, also referred to in CG as perspective, and it draws on the fact that “a conceptual scene can be viewed from a number of vantage points and that each change in viewing can give rise to a change in interpretation of the scene” (Tyler and Evans 2004: 276). The prototype presented for the aspectual distinction, when used in the Spanish/L2 classroom, provides a foundation for learners to begin applying the idea to their own conceptualization of how actions occur in the past in Spanish. In addition, it helps them understand the core meaning of both tenses and the possible interpretations of the same scene that the choosing of preterit or imperfect may convey (Alonso-Aparicio and Llopis-García, in press).

Generally, the use of prototypes in the L2 classroom empowers the students to move away from long lists of uses for each tense, and concentrate on *what they want to convey* with each use, also creating semantic associations with instances observed in the input. At the very least, they provide learners with the idea that grammar uses are not arbitrary, nor do different linguistic forms randomly overlap depending on pragmatic constraints that are dependent on context and independent of the speaker's choice, which truly reinforce the perception of studying a fully *foreign* language. Pedagogically speaking, Langacker's claim is supported by our arguments so far: "If properly analyzed, every grammatical element makes a semantic contribution and every grammatical distinction has conceptual import. Awareness of these factors offers a basis for effective language instruction aimed at their full exploitation in thought and communication." (2008b: 78).

As students and instructor move forward from the preterit/imperfect distinction, and on with course content and the grammatical syllabus of intermediate levels, the importance of having acquired a solid understanding of the pair becomes apparent when the pluperfect is introduced at a more complex discourse level in Spanish. If the construal of the tenses is clear, it becomes more manageable to communicate the chronology of events in the past, as the following classroom material shows in Figure 4 (Llopis-García):



Figure 3: Conceptualization of a chronological narrative in the past

In the image, the speaker is shown in the current moment, at 5pm (and therefore to the right side of the slide, which “physically” represents actions that appear in chronological order), while he remembers an earlier occurrence that happens in three stages, and that is set in a thought bubble that emanates from the speaker, thus separating past from present. The prototype for each tense is depicted by way of animated visuals in the Power Point slide, as well as the aspectual representation of the imperfect/preterit pair, both paced to appear in time with the instructor’s live explanation. The color schemes used also contribute as input enhancement to distinguishing the simple tenses (in green) from the perfect one (in orange), and this takes us to the next example in Spanish language instruction, which combines the use of **visuals** and the consideration of **perspective**.

One major issue with foreign learners of Spanish is the conceptualization of verbs of motion in contrast, as is the case of the deictic pairs of verbs *ir/venir* (*to go/to come*) and *traer/llevar* (*to bring/to take*). These verbs may appear at any time during the elementary levels, but acquire a major role in the intermediate and advanced levels as students deal with indirect speech, and how to communicate someone’s words to a third party. The learning difficulty here stems from the fact that traditional instruction does not pay specific attention that these are highly deictic verbs that will depend on the location in space of the speaker, which makes their use highly idiosyncratic and would require special consideration in instruction.³

It is advisable to pair the four verbs not according to meaning, but to *direction of motion*: *ir/llevar* (*to go/to take*) and *venir/traer* (*to come/to bring*). Then, make students aware that there is a correlation between the *speaker’s location*, the *direction of motion*, and the *final destination*. Figure 4 (Llopis-García) shows the visual cue for the representation of both pairs:

³For a study that applied a pedagogical intervention using both cognitive grammar and processing instruction for the teaching of deictic verbs of movement, see Colasacco 2014.

¡CUESTIÓN DE PERSPECTIVA!



Figure 4: Cognitive depiction of deictic verbs of motion

Stating that the verb distinction is an *Issue of perspective!* the slide depicts a party and presents the speaker (*hablante*) as a host for the first pair (*venir/traer*), and as a guest for the second (*ir/llevar*). In the case of the speaker hosting the event, we see her wearing a party hat and standing before her own home, while she states: *La fiesta es en mi casa* (*The party is at my place*). She is home and therefore does not need to move or go anywhere. Her guests, on the other hand, are elsewhere and do need to travel to her home, so when she talks to them, she will select the pair of verbs that profile her location as static and construe *her* lack of movement, in order to place the motion *on everyone else*: they *come to her* and *bring something to her party*.

The second distinction happens when the speaker is no longer wearing the party hat that signals her as protagonist, nor is she staying where she is, but having to go *somewhere else*. The slide then shows her saying “*La fiesta es en otra casa*” (*The party is at some other place*) and makes clear that

in order to get to the other house and all the guests, she must be the one moving: she has *to go* and *take* something with her *for someone else*.

Visual cues in the slide include coherent colors for text according to situation presented, arrows to indicate direction of movement, and pictures depicting all parties involved, as well as their location in the construal of the spatial scene. As Castañeda (2012: 264-5) argues:

Drawings can be even more effective if they are linked, using colours or other typographical items, with additional examples and combined with diagrams and other more abstract formats (...) [The use of] images, examples, paraphrasing, explicit verbal descriptions, tables, schemes and colours must all be combined in multidimensional formats that help students of Spanish to identify in the grammar a set of forms and resources that enable them to convey meaning and communicate with each other.

Of all the theoretical concepts reviewed here, there is one that permeates them all and that entails a primary cognitive operation all by itself, simply put because it enables the “translation” of our very abstract mind and thinking processes into comprehensible linguistic terms that our peers may understand. We are referring to **metaphor**, and it is the strongest pedagogical ally for the ELE classroom and its students because it enables us all to discover that although our languages may be linguistically different, they conceptualize the world in a manner a lot more similar than we may have anticipated.

Metaphors can be conceptual or linguistic, where the first refers to abstract thought and the relationships between concepts in our minds. Earlier in this chapter we considered movement and space and the verb *subir* (*to go up/to raise*), where *subir los precios* (*to raise prices*) can be construed as the metaphor up is more, or vertical elevation is increase in quantity. Regardless of their wording, these are conceptual metaphors because they relate to the abstract, source domain of our thoughts in order to connect to the more concrete and experience-based target domain of physical experience. Linguistic metaphor, on the other hand, will be responsible for expressing

those thoughts with specific words and will account for differences across languages, where diverse constructions and linguistic items are selected to express a construal, sometimes even from different points of view. In our other examples, *levantar sospechas* (*raise suspicions*) and *levantar ampollas* (*raise hell on*) both share the same verb, but in English you can *raise a child*, whereas Spanish will not construe that instance in terms of that particular linguistic metaphor. However, in Spanish you can construe *levantar el vuelo* (*take flight*), whereas English would not be able to use the same verb.

According to Littlemore (2009: 95) “our ability to engage in higher-order reasoning and deal with abstract concepts is related our more direct physical interactions with the world”, and we bridge the gap between the two by engaging in the verbalization of abstract thought through concepts that are readily available to our interlocutors because they are grounded in a conventional understanding of what surrounds us. In the foreign language classroom, this idea opens a whole new and positive dimension for teaching and learning.

Figure 5 (Llopis-García) shows one last example of a cognitive-based explicit instruction on the simple future vs. the future with *going to* used in class at the intermediate level. All concepts previously explained here apply to this case:

+ ¿Comeré vs. Voy a comer? 🍷

- ¿Qué significa el verbo IR?
- **¡MOVIMIENTO!** 
- VOY A comer, salir, hacer, dormir, querer...
- **¡Determinación!** 
INTENCIÓN PERSONAL
- El futuro es **esotérico**, no depende de nosotros, sino de otras circunstancias **ajenas** a nuestra intención:
 - Comeré, saldré, haré, dormiré, querré 
- **¡Es incontrolable!** 

nosotros
El futuro

Figure 5: The future in Spanish

The **embodiment of language** can be seen in the literal representation of movement of the verb *to go*, which **metaphorically** represents the personal intention of the speaker, who “moves towards an idea” and thus construes with *I’m going to eat* instead of with *I will eat*. By establishing a **semantic** network of related concepts, the *ir a/going to* construction includes the source domain of movement in space to transfer to the target domain of intent, determination, and assertion, which is also **construed** metaphorically through the use of the present in the construction *voy* (*I am going*) instead of the more attenuating morphology of the future tense (*-é* or the auxiliary particle *will*) and the preposition *a* as signal of movement towards a goal (Llopis-García 2015). In order to allow the students to connect the more abstract grammar explanation with **visual** input, animated/in motion images depict: an angry man showing *frustration* at the pair of constructions; *movement* and *direction* to construe the verb *to go* in the form of a running man with an arrow sign; *personal intent* to conceptualize the speaker’s use of *ir a/ to be going to* through a boy riding a flying plane; and the *unpredictability* of the future tense with an animated cartoon of a rodeo. Additionally, the **construal** of both constructions is presented from the **perspective** of the speaker, who may choose to express their point of view to profile intention towards what is being said, or mere expression of an event that is chronologically still to come.

5. CONCLUSIONS

All concepts outlined in this work, when used with pedagogical intent by an informed language instructor, enable learners to choose how they tell their own story with the background and linguistic knowledge necessary to link grammatical form to their shaping of events in real communication. In the words of Tyler, “speakers appear to choose among these competing patterns in order to guide their listener’s attention in various ways with the ultimate goal of making mental contact with the listener.”

(2012: 34). And if that is what native speakers unconsciously do, the advantages of giving learners of Spanish that same choice is undoubtedly of great pedagogical interest. Instruction in the L2 is then aimed at motivating students to fully make use of their progressing interlanguage systems and to move away from the rules the textbook by exercising their own creativity.

In order to make cognitive approaches to grammar teaching in the ELE classroom more widespread and known to language instructors, more opportunities for professional development are needed at this point. The pedagogical applications and advantages of cognitive linguistic theory in ELE instruction are many and great, but much more is needed and certainly desired in order to:

1. Properly train language instructors in both the theoretical linguistic background necessary and the methodological approaches to grammar that best fit a CG teaching design. Also, it would be advisable to make this training available to language instructors outside the scope of higher education as well.

2. Increase the body of research conducted in CG applications to ELE in order to further ascertain their pedagogical benefit and their impact on efficient and motivated language learning.

The combination of all the above considerations tackles the notion that “with proper instruction, the learning of a usage is thus a matter of grasping the semantics ‘spin’ it imposes, a far more natural and enjoyable process than sheer memorization.” (Langacker 2008b: 72). Understanding the grammar of Spanish from a cognitive perspective means to become independent from lists of rules that assign linguistic forms to some meanings, and the same meanings to other forms.

REFERENCES

- ACHARD, Michel (2004), “Grammatical instruction in the Natural Approach”. Michel Achard & Niemeier, Susanne (eds.). *Cognitive Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 165-194.

- ACHARD, Michel (2008), "Teaching construal: cognitive pedagogical grammar". Robinson, Peter and Ellis, Nick (eds.) *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*, London: Routledge, pp. 432-455.
- ALONSO APARICIO, Irene (2014), "Fundamentos cognitivos de la práctica sistemática en la enseñanza gramatical". Castañeda, Alejandro (ed.) *Enseñanza de gramática avanzada de ELE. Criterios y recursos*, Madrid: SGEL, pp. 9-38.
- ALONSO APARICIO, Irene and LLOPIS-GARCÍA, Reyes (in press), "La didáctica de la oposición imperfecto/preterito perfecto simple desde una perspectiva cognitiva: un estudio empírico", Iraide Ibarrexe-Antuñano, Alejandro Castañeda Castro y Teresa Cadierno (eds.), *Lingüística cognitiva y español como lengua extranjera*, Oxford: Routledge.
- ALONSO RAYA, Rosario; CASTAÑEDA, Alejandro; MARTÍNEZ GILA, Pablo; MIQUEL, Lourdes; ORTEGA OLIVARES, Jenaro and RUIZ CAMPILLO, José Plácido (2005), *Gramática básica del estudiante de español*, Barcelona: Difusion.
- ANTÓN, Marta (2011), "A review of recent research (2000-2008) on applied linguistics and language teaching with specific reference to L2 Spanish", *Language Teaching*, 44(1), pp. 77-112.
- BIELAK, Jakub PAWLAK, Mirosław (2013), *Applying Cognitive Grammar in the foreign language classroom. Teaching English Tense and Aspect*, Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.
- BOERS Frank; DE RYCKER Teun; DE KNOP Sabine (2010), "Fostering language teaching efficiency through Cognitive Linguistics: Introduction", Boers Frank, de Rycker Teun, de Knop Sabine (eds.), *Fostering language teaching efficiency through Cognitive Linguistics*, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 1-26.
- CADIerno, Teresa (2008), "Learning to talk about motion in a foreign language", en Peter Robinson & Nick Ellis (eds.) *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*, London: Routledge, pp. 239-275.
- CADIerno, Teresa and HIJAZO-GASCÓN, Alberto (2014), "Cognitive Linguistics approaches to second language Spanish", en Kimberly Geeslin (ed.) *The Handbook of Spanish Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 96-109.
- CASTAÑEDA, Alejandro (2012), "Perspective and Meaning in Pedagogical Descriptions of Spanish as a Foreign Language", en Guadalupe Ruiz Fajardo (ed.) *Methodological Developments in Teaching Spanish as a Second and Foreign Language*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 221-272.
- CASTAÑEDA, Alejandro and Alhmodud, Zeina (2014), "Gramática Cognitiva en descripciones gramaticales para niveles avanzados de ELE", en Alejandar Castañeda (ed.) *Enseñanza de gramática avanzada de ELE. Criterios y recursos*, Madrid: SGEL, pp. 39-85.
- DEKEYSER, Robert and PRIETO BOTANA, Goretta (2014), "Acquisition of grammar by instructed learners", Kimberly Geeslin (ed.) *The Handbook of Spanish Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 449-465.
- DIRVEN, René; NIEMEIER, Susanne; PÜTZ, Martin (2001), "Introduction", René Dirven, Susanne Niemeier, Martin Pütz (eds.) *Applied Cognitive Linguistics II: Language Pedagogy*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. xiii-xxv.
- GRUNDY, Peter (2004), "The figure/ground Gestalt and language teaching methodology", Achard, Michel and Niemeier, Susanne. (eds.). *Cognitive Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 119-141.
- LANGACKER, Ronald (2008a), "The relevance of Cognitive Grammar for language pedagogy", De Knop, Sabine De Rycker, Teun (eds.) *Cognitive Approaches to Pedagogical Grammar*, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 7-36.
- LANGACKER, Ronald (2008b), "Cognitive Grammar as a basis for language instruction", Peter Robinson and Nick Ellis (eds.) *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*, London: Routledge, pp. 66-88.
- LARSEN-FREEMAN, Diane (2015), "Research into practice: Grammar learning and teaching". *Language Teaching* 48(02), pp. 263-280.
- LEE, David (2001), *Cognitive Linguistics: an introduction*, Oxford: OUP.

- LITTLEMORE, Jeannette (2009), *Applying Cognitive Linguistics to second language learning and teaching*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- LLOPIS-GARCÍA, Reyes (2010), "Why Cognitive Grammar works in the L2 classroom. A case-study for mood selection in Spanish", en Jeannette Littlemore, & Constanze Juchen-Gründmann (eds.) *Applied Cognitive Linguistics in Second Language Learning and Teaching. AILA Review* 23, pp. 72-94.
- LLOPIS-GARCÍA, Reyes; REAL ESPINOSA, Juan Manuel and RUIZ CAMPILLO, José PLÁCIDO (2012), *Qué gramática enseñar, qué gramática aprender*, Madrid: Edinumen.
- LLOPIS-GARCÍA, Reyes (2013), *LdeLengua 70 con Reyes Llopis hablando de gramática*, Podcast. <http://eledelengua.com/ldelengua70-con-reyes-llopis-hablando-de-gramatica-2/> (1 June, 2015.)
- LLOPIS-GARCÍA, Reyes (2014), "Efficient language pedagogy: What Second Language Acquisition research can bring to the classroom". Plenary talk in *Methodological development of teaching of Spanish as a second language. A workshop for teachers, VII: Acquisition*, New York: Barnard College.
- LLOPIS-GARCÍA, Reyes (2015), "Las preposiciones y la metáfora del espacio: aportaciones y potencial de la lingüística cognitiva para su enseñanza", *Journal of Spanish Language Teaching*, 2, (1), pp. 51-68.
- MONTERO GÁLVEZ, Sonia (2014), "Los nombres escuetos y el artículo Ø", *Verba Hispanica* XXII, pp. 37-58.
- PÉREZ SERRANO, Mercedes (2015), *Un enfoque léxico a prueba: efectos de la instrucción en el aprendizaje de las colocaciones léxicas*, Salamanca: USAJL dissertation.
- PÉREZ RUIZ, Javier (2015), "Formación neurolingüística práctica para el profesor de ELE en un entorno sinohablante", Plenary talk in *III Jornadas de Formación de Profesores en Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University.
- PINKER, Steven (2005), "TedGlobal: What our language habits reveal", TedTalks. http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_on_language_and_thought?language=en

recibido: septiembre de 2016

aceptado: noviembre de 2016