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RESPONSE

Fortaleciendo la colaboración para beneficiar al estudiante

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The Lion and the Lamb: Literature and Linguistics in Spanish Departments

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Abstract: Linguists are an increasing presence not only in graduate programs but at undergraduate institutions as well, and this could lead to positive interdisciplinary changes in curricula. Literary/cultural texts contain masterful examples of how linguistic features are used to communicate meaning, and learners need to notice these features in order to continue acquiring Spanish. One role that linguistic analysis can play in this ongoing process is to facilitate noticing. Such analysis is exemplified in four texts in which the manipulation of forms of address contributes to plot and character development. Integrating linguistic analysis into reading practice requires intentional steps, some of which are suggested here.

Keywords: forms of address/tratamiento, interdisciplinary initiatives/iniciativas interdisciplinarias, linguistic analysis of literature/análisis lingüístico de literatura, “No oyes ladrar los perros,” “El otro,” Sin nombre, La soledad del manager

Introduction

The composition of the faculty in Spanish departments is changing.1 With the broadening of the canon and the emergence of cultural studies, some faculty positions have been redefined. Other positions are new; in many large departments, thriving programs in Spanish Linguistics have developed from a small nucleus of linguists. Although not all large departments have embraced this change, the arc of tradition is bending in the direction of acceptance. Indeed, having linguists on staff has become a point of pride; the Hispanic Linguistics program at the University of Arizona, for example, claims on its website that “The University of Arizona has the highest concentration of linguists per student of any Research-1 University in the United States.”

The increasing number of linguists in Spanish Departments is bound to have an influence on undergraduate programs. Linguists who are hired to meet the needs of graduate programs also teach undergraduate classes, of course. And, many linguists are being hired at undergraduate institutions. The Hispanic Linguistics program in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Indiana University, for example, provides a list on its website of tenure-track positions accepted by recent graduates; of the twenty-three schools on the list, only a few offer a PhD in linguistics, and several have fewer than 5,000 students. These changes in staffing will inevitably lead to curricular innovations at both large and small institutions. This essay is offered as a contribution to collegial discourse about curricular goals and how to reach them.

Traditionally, undergraduate programs in Spanish are literature-based, and defining the role of linguists in such programs is an ongoing process. Linguists often coordinate the language courses and, in large departments, supervise teaching assistants, but they rarely teach literature.
Given that the literature faculty is usually in place before any linguists are hired, this staffing pattern has the ring of inevitability, though calls to move away from the language/literature divide occur on a regular basis (as chronicled in Frantzen 2010).

Considering the current popularity of interdisciplinary initiatives, failure to capitalize on the natural affinities between linguistics and literature is an anomaly. One way of addressing this anomaly is to use linguistics to illuminate the literary/cultural texts that constitute an important part of the undergraduate curriculum. Intermediate and advanced language learners are engaged in identifying what they do not yet understand, and linguistic analysis can help them to notice critical examples of the communicative potential of grammar. (See Paesani and Willis Allen 2012 for a review of recent research on the relationship between language, literature, and culture courses at the advanced level.)

**Contributions of Linguists to Literary Analysis**

All language—including the language of texts—is grist for the mill of linguistic analysis (Azevedo 2009; Gugin 2008; Yáñez Prieto 2010). Milton M. Azevedo has pointed out that there is a solid core of interdisciplinary research that combines linguistic and literary analysis. He describes literary linguistic analysis as "a kind of close reading that pays attention to language details . . . that form a frame of reference for conveying not only specific denotative meanings but also a whole spectrum of connotative meanings" (4; emphasis ours). Noteworthy examples of pedagogical applications of literary analysis of Hispanic literature can be found in: Albrecht and Lunn 1997; Azevedo 2002, 2004, 2009; Barrett, Paesani, and Vinall 2010; DeCesaris and Lunn 2007; Frantzen 2002, 2009, 2013; Kingsbury 2011; Lunn 1985; Nuessel 2000; Paoli 1992. These studies focus on linguistic data of various kinds: phonetics/phonology, dialectology, syntax, lexicon, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics.

**The Potential Role of Literary Texts in the Acquisition Process**

Very few advanced undergraduates are fully proficient speakers or writers; they have acquired some Spanish, but need to improve their skills. Researchers agree that for second language (L2) learners to show acquisitional gains they must notice the L2 features to be acquired (Robinson 1995; Schmidt 1990, 1993; Wong 2005). Schmidt (1990) labeled this phenomenon the Noticing Hypothesis and explained, "This requirement of noticing is meant to apply equally to all aspects of language (lexicon, phonology, grammatical form, pragmatics), and can be incorporated into many different theories of second language acquisition" (149). We know too that L2 learners do not automatically notice linguistic features. Wong (2005) pointed out, "Input is fundamental for acquisition because it provides the data that is available for intake. However, if learners do not notice and comprehend the input, form-meaning connections or intake will not be created and that input will have little use for acquisition" (30). Similarly, researchers in Second Language Acquisition have long argued, based on empirical data, that focusing on form in meaningful contexts results in gains in performance and perception (e.g., Arteagoitia, Doughty, Fridman, and Leeman 1995; Svalberg 2009; Wong 2005).

Drawing examples of linguistic features from literary texts is one means of providing meaningful input to learners. Literary texts do not just supply context; they embody context. Literature classes mediate between literary texts that contain masterful examples of how the features of Spanish can be used to communicate meaning, and learners who can profit from those examples. Recently, the nature of this mediation has been formally studied. Daryl M. Rodgers (2015) and Charlene Polio and Eve Zyzik (2008, 2009) show that much of what students learn about language structure is incidental both to teachers’ goals and to classroom interactions in literature classes. In other words, although "formal instruction may heighten learners’ awareness
of things in the input they might miss otherwise or might get wrong” (Wong 2005: 32), very little of the formal instruction that has been studied is used to heighten this awareness.

Sample Linguistic Analyses

This section provides four examples of the ways that a single linguistic feature—how speakers address one another—can be manipulated to create meaning. The difference between tú and usted is taught in beginning Spanish classes, often in terms of who is likely to be addressed as tú (close relatives, friends, children) or usted (older people, authority figures, strangers). These lists, though, don’t account for all usage and obscure the fundamental fact that usage is variable.

There has been a great deal of research about the meanings of forms of address and virtually all of it cites Roger Brown and Albert Gilman’s classic article (1960) in which the authors discuss the T and V pronouns (in Spanish, tú and usted) in various European languages. Brown and Gilman conclude that the core semantic value of the T pronoun is solidarity between speaker and hearer, while that of the V pronoun is power on the part of the speaker. “The recipient of V [the hearer] may differ from the recipient of T in strength, age, wealth, birth, sex or profession. As two people move apart on these power-laden dimensions, one of them begins to say V. In general terms, the V form is linked with differences between persons” (257).

Brown and Gilman’s (1960) analysis can be used to understand the switches between tú and usted in “No oyes ladrar los perros” by Juan Rulfo (1953). In this short story, a father is carrying his wounded son in search of medical attention. The father talks to his son continually, addressing him first as tú, when focused on the urgent task of getting help, and then as usted, when lamenting his violent and dissolute behavior. Late in the story, the father displays his ambivalent feelings towards his son by using both forms in the same sentence. At the end, when the son is no longer responsive, the father’s use of tú suggests that his love has won out over his disapproval. Brown and Gilman’s image of speakers moving along the dimensions of power and solidarity illuminates the fluctuation between tú and usted in this story.2

The Jorge Luis Borges story “El otro,” in which the author (as a character in the story) meets his youthful self, provides another instructive example of the meaning behind changes in forms of address. Before the narrator (the older Borges) begins to believe that the younger man is actually himself at a younger age, the “two” men employ reciprocal usted. Once Borges believes he has identified the younger man, he begins to use vos, the T pronoun used in Argentina, signaling the solidarity that one would feel toward oneself. However, the younger man, who never buys into the older man’s belief, demonstrates his skepticism by maintaining usted throughout the encounter. In this text, students can observe not only T/V switches, but also the verb and pronoun forms of voseo, with which they may not be familiar.

Courses on film have become a standard part of the undergraduate curriculum, and film dialog provides many examples of switches in the use of forms of address. Sin nombre (Fukunaga 2009) follows a member of a youth gang in Chiapas, Mexico. One of the striking characteristics of the speech of the gang members is that they call one another usted even though some of them are very young. One boy is addressed as tú until he has committed the murder that gains him admittance into the gang; after that, he is addressed as usted. Clearly, the issue here is not age, but solidarity and, additionally, politeness. The concepts of negative politeness (avoidance of affront), and positive politeness (expression of solidarity) introduced by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987) allow us to understand how the gang members’ desire to avoid insult and create group solidarity results in the reciprocal use of usted.3

The choice of a form of address is related to other linguistic choices, of course; all linguistic choices are contextual. La soledad del manager, a detective novel by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, reveals the relationship between forms of address and forms of the subjunctive mood (1977). On an ascending scale of politeness, the detective gives orders to his collaborators: “Quiero que me
brates a todas estas personas.” (91); asks for favors from his girlfriend: “Quisiera que recordaras primero si ha sido cliente tuyo.” (33); and makes requests of well-connected suspects: “Quisiera que usted me aclarase algunas cosas.” (60). DeCesaris and Lunn (2007) suggest that the core meaning of the subjunctive is low assertiveness. On this analysis, the speaker who uses quisiera is being as unassertive—and, hence, as polite—as possible. The fact that the form belongs to the past tense paradigm is also important; politeness is communicated in many languages by using past tense forms with present tense meaning.4 Of the two past subjunctive forms, the –se form is slowly being lost, and since recessive forms always have an aura of formality about them, the use of aclarase (as opposed to aclarara) adds additional politeness.

Students can be encouraged to approach data like these in a variety of ways. At lower levels, they can be asked to identify the forms of address, which is not a trivial task for learners who have not completely mastered the verb and pronoun systems, and then to identify places in the text where switches occur. At the intermediate level, students can be asked to explain the effects and implications of the uses of the forms of address in specific textual contexts. More advanced students, who have read widely, can be asked to compare usage in multiple texts and contexts to highlight variability among speakers, dialects, and circumstances. Activities like these, which can be applied to any linguistic details that have an impact on plot or character development, constitute the kind of close reading envisaged by Azevedo (2004, 2009), and can help students notice linguistic features.

Bringing Linguistic Analysis into the Literature Classroom

We argue that linguistic analysis can be a valuable addition to many approaches to literature, and that the attention to detail required by such analysis can be a useful component of the acquisition process. However, given that the proportion of literature/cultural studies faculty to linguistics faculty in Spanish departments remains heavily weighted in favor of the former (Azevedo 2009; Lipski 2006; VanPatten 2015), linguists are not usually called on to teach literature classes.5 How, then, can linguistics be integrated into these classes? Here are a few suggestions:

• Include a unit on linguistic analysis of literature in the introductory course in reading literature, which is part of virtually all major and minor programs in Spanish.
• Require all undergraduate students to take an introduction to linguistics course, which could include a unit on text analysis.
• Incorporate linguistic analysis into reading practice in intermediate- and advanced-level grammar courses. See Frantzen (2009) and DeCesaris and Lunn (2007) for examples.
• Invite linguists as guest speakers in literature courses. Obvious pairings include articulatory phonetics and poetry, and verbal aspect and narrative.
• Apply for internal or external grants to facilitate the changes needed to integrate linguistics into literature classes.

Using Literary Data in Linguistics Research and Teaching

Linguists, too, can benefit from collaboration with their colleagues in literature. The various subfields of linguistics can utilize literary texts as a source of data (Azevedo 2002; Gugin 2008; Lipski 1995; Ocampo 2006). For example, Lipski highlights the value of literary texts to an assessment of the African contribution to American dialects of Spanish, and Azevedo has shown what mixed or border dialects reveal about standard Spanish and Portuguese. DeCesaris and Lunn (2007) and Frantzen (2009, 2013) use data from literature to exemplify linguistic rules.

Linguists will have to reach out to their colleagues in order to integrate their contributions into the curriculum and into broader research agendas. Here are a few suggestions:
• Include literary works in the syllabi of beginning- and intermediate-level courses supervised by linguists.¹
• Include literature as one source of linguistic data examined in advanced grammar and composition classes (e.g., Zyzik 2008).
• Invite literature faculty as guest speakers in linguistics courses (e.g., to exemplify how phonetic material is used in poetry, or verbal aspect is used in narrative).
• Propose regular linguistics sessions at literature/cultural studies conferences.
• Collaborate with colleagues in literature on co-authored papers (e.g., Albrecht and Lunn 2007).

Literature and linguistics have long been separated in university foreign language departments. Whatever its historical justifications, this separation is hard to defend—either in terms of interdisciplinary initiatives, or in terms of ongoing acquisition. The lion and the lamb of the title share an academic home, and we suggest taking intellectual and pedagogical advantage of this fact.

NOTES

¹ The departments in which Spanish courses are housed have many different names: Spanish, Spanish and Portuguese, Romance Languages, Modern Languages, Foreign Languages, World Languages, and so forth. The term “Spanish Department” is used as a cover term for all of these.

² This story is used to exemplify the use of the forms of address in the textbook Lazos (Frantzen 2009), as are several other stories featured in Lazos. Frantzen (2002) explains that the father’s use of usted demonstrates “linguistically the distance he feels on an emotional level” (121).

³ In the course of the plot, the Mexican gang member teams up with a Honduran girl who speaks a voseante dialect. The film could also be used to illustrate these two different second-person systems.

⁴ Social distance, physical distance, and temporal distance are related components of politeness.

⁵ Practitioners of stylistics focus on close readings of meaning-based structural and pragmatic detail. This approach to literature, however, is unlikely to be tied to efforts to facilitate acquisition.

⁶ Of course, literary texts were once a standard part of such courses. Current practice, though, avoids excerpts in favor of complete works and employs a battery of techniques to enhance understanding, so this suggestion is not a case of “everything old is new again.”

WORKS CITED


Respuesta a “The Lion and the Lamb: Literature and Linguistics in Spanish Departments”

Fortaleciendo la colaboración para beneficiar al estudiante

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Palabras clave: agreement/concordancia, Balún Canán, collaboration/colaboración, El condado de Belken, conjugation/conjugación, learning/aprendizaje

Propongo enfocar esta agregación al artículo “The Lion and the Lamb: Literature and Linguistics in Spanish Departments” con el objetivo de añadir al ensayo comentando que la usanza de pasajes literarios ha sido práctica esencial en las clases de gramática y en un curso de sociolingüística que hemos dictado para alumnos de español y los que buscan obtener la certificación como maestros de español.

Hemos empleado varios ejemplos literarios para resaltar o aclarar semántica y puntos gramaticales. “No oyes ladrar los perros” de Juan Rulfo es el ejemplo maestro para destacar las sutiles del uso de “usted” y “tú” bajo contextos muy definidos como sucede con el padre e hijo en el cuento. Igualmente, se recomienda adoptar Balún Canán por Rosario Castellanos (1957) en cátedras de filología para exhibir la distancia lingüística que se marca entre los blancos y los indios al usar “usted”, “tú” y “vos”: “Oílo vos, este indio igualado. Está hablando castilla... Porque hay reglas. El español es privilegio nuestro. Y lo usamos hablando de usted a los superiores; de tú a los iguales; de vos a los indios” (38–39).

Dada la brevedad de esta respuesta, nos limitamos a un segundo y último ejemplo literario que da luz a algunas dificultades de índole gramatical que suelen surgir en el habla y la escritura de algunos estudiantes cuyo aprendizaje del español ha sido de manera natural en familia y comunidad: Los estudiantes del español como un lenguaje de herencia (Valdés 1988; Valdés 2000).

Veamos un ejemplo de la obra El condado de Belken por Rolando Hinojosa (1976). Aquí el recién llegado al pueblo, Tomás Imás, acentúa el español aprendido de un libro de texto ante la forma natural, aprendida y heredada por los otros personajes. Escuchamos a Jehú Malacara: “divisé a Edelmiro Pompa hablando con un señor... estaba conversando con Edelmiro... [Y] oí que el fuereño decía '.... bien así que tú crecer, tú ver lo importante del educación’” (47). Las palabras de Tomás Imás resaltan la falta de conjugación de los infinitivos y concordancia de género y número. Hacemos hincapié al hecho que el personaje que maneja un español textual no ha tenido la experiencia directa en un ambiente bilingüe como lo es el área geográfica de la narrativa de Hinojosa. De ahí la falta de conjugación y concordancia. Igualmente vale la pena incluir el diálogo entre Imás y Malacara una vez fueron presentados por Edelmiro:

'Servidor del Señor y suyo, Tomás Imás. Yo ser predicador del Señor'.

¿Dónde ir tú con ese pala, jovencito?
Voy a cubrir un pozo.
¿De un persona muerto?
Si viera que sí, pero el muerto no está en ese pozo.
Oh, perdón yo no entender. (47)

Esta conversación subraya dimensiones gramaticales, como se comentó antes, la conjugación de verbos y la concordancia de género y número. Aparte de la gramática, las citas anteriores de El Condado de Belken también ofrecen la oportunidad de señalar un par de matices culturales y regionalistas, por ejemplo, el verbo "divisar" no se usa en un ambiente formal; se emplea un verbo más contemporáneo como "observar" o "distinguir". Igualmente, el término "fuereño" es ya una palabra de antaño. Hoy día se escucha "extraño" que "fuereño". No obstante, en el contexto bilingüe y culturalmente mexicano/México-americano del sur de Texas el español arcaico todavía tiene una presencia en la comunidad del Valle.

La instrucción del español en las aulas, ya sea a nivel de principiantes, intermedio o en cursos avanzados, se fortalecerá con la colaboración y trabajos multidisciplinarios entre lingüistas y literatos. Ambos grupos tienen que estar dispuestos a aprovechar y compartir las herramientas filológicas que la literatura brinda. La colaboración es clave para seguir regenerando y vigorizando la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del idioma determinadamente enfocando los esfuerzos al aprendizaje de los estudiantes y a la vez erradicando el elemento de corderos y leones.

OBRAS CITADAS