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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to find the linguistic challenges inside and outside the classroom faced by American students who are learning Spanish in a context of immersion in Puebla City, and the similarities and differences between English and Spanish. In order to achieve it, the following research questions were asked: What are American students' most common problems in productive (writing, reading) and receptive (listening, speaking) language skills when learning Spanish? What are the most common problems of American students when using Spanish inside the classroom? What are the most common problems of American students when using grammar and speaking Spanish in society? What are the similarities and differences between English and Spanish?

The methodology includes the subjects, and the instrument of the study. The subjects were five North American students who are living in Puebla City for a period of time; and at the same time they are learning Spanish at "Spanish Institution". The majority of them are between 28 and 63 years old. The instrument was a questionnaire of ten questions, seven were open questions, and three were closed questions; the questions investigated the challenges faced by American students inside and outside their classroom, the challenges they faced inside the city of Puebla. The results indicate that the most common problems when learning Spanish are a) Sentence Structure, b) Vocabulary, and c) Conjugating Verbs. The most common problems inside the classroom are a) New Information and Reinforcement, b) Using Spanish. Besides, the most common problems in Society are a) Speaking Spanish b) Interacting with native Spanish speakers. Also, the results indicate that four similarities between English and Spanish language exist: a) Alphabet b) The use of general syntax, Expressions, Latin roots of words. Besides, the differences between English

and Spanish are: a) Structures of Sentences b) Expressions c) Words Conjugation d) Subjunctive.

With these results, the purpose of the study was achieved and the research questions were successfully answered.

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Dedications

I dedicate my thesis to my mother who has been my great inspiration to continue the degree giving me advices and motivation to face any problem. I dedicate to my boyfriend who has been an inspiration too. Finally, I dedicate this project of thesis to any person who believed in me and gave me support in any situation.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, Spanish language is one of the most important languages that foreign learners want to learn, not just for business but also, because they love Mexican culture. Many foreign learners come to visit Puebla because of the culture; others come to learn Spanish as a second language because they have to speak Spanish in their country to get a high level in their jobs.

When I was at Preparatory School I knew a boy who lived in Puebla to learn Spanish, because in his country (Holland) he needed Spanish to get a good job. I asked him how difficult Spanish was for him, and he told me that the worst part to learn Spanish is the use of Subjunctive, using the correct verbs such as “Ojalá pueda”. The use of the subjunctive was very difficult for him, but also the grammar structures of all the tenses in Spanish. These problems are normal when a foreign student is learning Spanish; they get confused with the use of tenses.

In the city of Puebla there are many places where foreign people can learn Spanish. This investigation will be part of one of these institutions to analyze American students who are learning Spanish in a context of immersion. The context of immersion involves the places, people, and interaction that American students have with the culture of the city of Puebla. The objective of these schools is to provide foreign students with real tools to face learning Spanish, giving them the opportunity to interact with native speakers of Spanish, and at the same time, to know the culture to have a better learning and production of the language that they are learning.

The same happens when a native Spanish speaker wants to learn another language. They need to live in the context of the culture to understand the language. Having interaction

with the context of the country will be gratifying for students who are learning a second language. Moreover, if a native speaker is living in a different context from the real ones, he or she will have to face linguistic challenges at the moment of learning a second language.

This study focuses on finding the most common challenges in productive and receptive skills, learning Spanish as a second language by American students. This study will be useful in the manner to identify errors learning Spanish, once those errors are identified it will be easy to find learning strategies to help future American students learning Spanish.

1.2 Problem

Linguistic challenges inside and outside the classroom faced by American students who are learning Spanish in a context of immersion in the city of Puebla, and differences between English and Spanish. This problem is based on an experience giving classes of Spanish to American students in a Spanish Institute, and in the manner how American students receive and produce Spanish, learning Spanish through the use of the book “Dicho y Hecho”, and the immersion that includes the program of the school.

1.3 Research Setting

The setting of the study is an institution which offers Spanish courses in different contexts, from the cultural part to the development of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing Spanish. This school uses UNAM's books to teach Spanish, which include nine levels of practicing Spanish divided into exercises and Mexican culture. The school has as objective the development of Spanish learning through the use of media such as web sites made for the school; in this way, foreign students can practice Spanish by themselves. Also, this school counts with a program aimed at interacting with native Spanish

speakers. For this, the school offers jobs to Spanish speakers from “Facultad de Lenguas” to work as guides. The function of the guides is to provide information to foreigners about the culture of the city of Puebla; if they need some help with vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, they can ask the guides. The main objective of the guides is help foreigners to pronounce Spanish in a good way without confusing them.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the most common linguistic challenges in productive and receptive language skills, and practicing Spanish in society, and differences and similarities between English and Spanish that American students have at the moment to learn Spanish as a second language, using a group of participants who are studying Spanish in a Spanish school in the city of Puebla.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the issues commented above, this study addresses the following research questions:

- What are American students’ most common problems in productive (writing, reading) and receptive (listening, speaking) language skills when learning Spanish?
- What are the most common problems of American students when using Spanish inside the classroom?
- What are the most common problems of American students when using grammar and speaking Spanish in society?
- What are the similarities and differences between English and Spanish?

1.6 Justification

I want to do this investigation because I am interested in Linguistic challenges that foreign students who want to learn Spanish as a second language usually have. My principal interests to the elaboration of this study are to identify American students learning's problems which are relevant at the moment to learn Spanish as a second language, and to give possible solutions for a better learning including the creation of web sites to practice Spanish. This can be very useful for any foreigner learning Spanish, and for Spanish teachers.

Discovering the linguistic challenges learning Spanish can be a tool for Spanish teachers who are teaching Spanish to foreign students. It can be useful in the way that teachers can find the most common linguistic problems and at the same time find a possible solution to get a better learning to their students, which means creating new strategies to learn Spanish.

In addition, this study will help me with future study opportunities in the area of teaching Spanish for foreigners.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the problem was introduced according with the main objective. The research setting was described in order to understand what the study is about. The research questions were shown according with the purpose of the study. A justification to conduct this study was provided, and finally it was mentioned a brief conclusion about the whole chapter. In the next chapter, the theory that supports this problem to identify future solutions will be explained.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter is about the linguistic challenges faced by American students who are learning Spanish as a second language at a Spanish Teaching Institution, and how students learn Spanish in a social context; in other words, having interaction with Spanish culture and society. This chapter also includes the differences between linguistic challenges inside and outside the classroom and the distinctive factors of English and Spanish.

2.2 Learning Spanish

Spanish is one of the most difficult languages to learn, because of the different variations that are in the conjugation of verbs. However, many people want to learn Spanish, because it is the most important language after English (Lafford, 2003). Spanish has contact with many languages and dialects in different geographic areas. Those areas have as their native language a similar Spanish with some variations. For example, Náhuatl has a lot of similar variations in Spanish sharing words with the same meaning such as “chocolate”.

English is the first business language people want to learn but, on the other hand, Spanish is one of the languages with more importance in business. The 12.8% of the population in the US speak Spanish for business; this helps Latin America to grow in culture (Penny, 1991).

In Latin America, Spanish is the language with more power learned by foreigners, not only for the benefits to learn it, but also for the grateful way to learn. For some students learning Spanish in a context of immersion is more satisfactory than learning it in their countries. To learn Spanish, foreigners come to other places to improve their learning, in this particular case, Puebla. In Puebla there are many institutions where foreigners can learn

Spanish such as Spanish Institute of Puebla, Livit Immersion Center, Spanish Awakenings, and the Volkswagen of Puebla. All these institutions have as objective to give students a good learning of Spanish through contact with the culture and native speakers of Spanish.

2.2.1 Errors Learning Spanish

Students are living in a constant learning with errors and learning from these errors. Different situations that confuse foreign students' learning exist. For example, some American students have difficulties with the use of masculine and feminine, an example of this is the use of “mucho” and “mucha”. In Spanish the word “mucho” is used to specify masculine, and “mucha” for feminine, e.g. “Tengo mucha tarea”. In this example, “mucha” is used because “tarea” is feminine. It is not the same to say “Tengo mucho tarea”; grammatically this example in Spanish is incorrect.

Foreign students get confused not only with the grammar structures of Spanish but also because in English it is used just one term to say a specific quantity, it does not matter if the noun is masculine or feminine. Facing this kind of learning problems, students have to find a solution finding the correct use of the language following the grammar rules and giving the meaning to each situation they face. Foreign students learning Spanish must understand which rules apply according to the context if they want to have a good learning, and develop the second language in the correct form. Students can have different errors; those errors depend on the manner they receive the information of the SL and how they interpret the language through their learning (Gass & Schachter, 1989).

From another point of view, the teacher is a very important part of foreign students' learning, because as instructors of the language, they need to implement the use of students' knowledge underlying the linguistic structures. Teaching a second language is not easy if the

teacher does not use the correct strategies to teach the second language. The different strategies vary from the students' learning, because each student has different forms to learn according with their abilities. Some teachers tend to relate their language with the native language to a better understanding of students, making comparisons between the meaning and use of the tenses. This aspect is not always useful for students, because they get confused and they begin to have errors using the foreign language (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Some teachers speak in a correct or incorrect way. Here is when some errors occur at the moment to identify if what teacher says is correct or not. However, if a teacher is confused in what he or she is teaching, students will be confused, too. Learners' language and also learners' grammar can have errors at the moment to put into practice the second language. Making errors when students are learning a second language can be useful, in the way that they can notice what is wrong with their learning and based on that to find solutions to their problems.

“Linguistic transfer carries many errors caused by linguistic rules and structures from the first to the second language, or vice versa” (Odlin, 1989). The errors can be understandable or not by students creating a confusion about the second language. For example, “the interference of the first language inside the second language creates several errors which are caused most of the time by students who are not identified with the second language” (Ellis, 1994, p. 29).

Interpreting the second language through the first language is an example of transfer. Transfer is commonly used by students to understand listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the four skills necessary to learn an SL. A native speaker commonly tends to find an easy form to learn an SL, because in this form the learning will be easier, but it is difficult when they do not recognize a concept that is not similar with their language. Transfer is a

challenge faced by students when they are learning a second language, because they are not familiar with the second language and use what they already know about their language in order to make sense learning the second language (Odlin, 1989).

The most common errors that students tend to have inside the classroom are basically guided by students' thinking. Students think in the SL that they are learning and that may not be useful sometimes because it is confusing to think in another language which is not familiar for us. The best form to understand an SL is learning the rules, including strategies to learn the SL. Students have to be conscious about their errors for the future learning.

The most common errors that students have while they are learning a second language are in the use of productive and receptive language skills, which are the bases to learn a second language; by using them any person can understand a different language (James, 1998). When we are talking about productive and receptive skills, we refer to the four principal skills to improve a language; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills have the function to be received and produced depending on the use to learn a second language.

2.3 Learning a Second Language

Many people around the world are in a constant learning. Every thinking is about learning something new. As humans, most of the time we tend to learn something new; that is because we need to develop our abilities. In a constant learning, we can have interaction with society that helps us to improve our language learning process. This investigation focuses on the linguistic challenges faced by American students who are learning Spanish as a second language in a context of immersion, and how these students practice Spanish in society; that is, how American students learn Spanish by interacting with Spanish speakers.

Other people want to learn another language for competence making their own language less useful, but they cannot notice that they need their own language to learn a second one. Teaching and learning a second language change all the expectations that a student or teacher has of their own language, because they are experimenting the culture and the development of the language in a different context (Krashen, 2002).

Students' linguistic knowledge is put into practice at the moment to learn an SL (Puffer, Nikula & Smit, 1961). Learning a second language is not so easy because it includes the difficulties and variations of another language that are not totally known by learners. Students' linguistic knowledge cannot be understood by foreign students because they are living in a different context. They are not in their countries, and for this reason they have to develop other skills which are different from the Spanish language. Some people learn an SL through imitation as if they were a child learning their mother tongue. The nature of the speech has several differences with the mother tongue of a foreign student. According with Bloomfield (1984), imitation cannot be the only tool to learn an SL because as he notes, "There is reason to believe that it is by no means an exact imitation, and that some of its features are based not upon the subjects' mistakes but upon grammatical relations that exist within the upper language itself" (p. 472).

Learning a second language constitutes a different task from learning the first language; that is why students may face difficulties and get confused at the moment to learn an SL.

2.3.1 Developing Skills to Learn a Second Language

Most of the conflicts learning an SL occur when students try to understand the new language through theirs, because they make a comparison between their language and the foreign language that they are learning. When skills interact with other cognitive skills,

students tend to have benefits and conflicts learning an SL (Gass & Schachter, 1989). For example: when we as Spanish students want to learn English, we link our language with English language, not only grammatically, but with vocabulary and speaking, too.

A foreign language learning can be very complex in many aspects, because students do not keep enough relevant information about the new language. This brings problems at the moment to put into practice their learning. Students construct different concepts and develop meanings in their first and second language; that is, because they select what they consider is relevant for their learning (O'Malley, 1990).

Benefits learning an SL occur solving specific problems in the language learning, using strategies of learning or finding manners to improve skills. We can be good at some things where our skills are more developed, but on the other hand, we do not have some others well developed. It is the same when a person wants to learn how to play chess, she or he can learn how to do it, but it does not mean that he or she can be an expert playing chess. If students want to succeed in learning an SL, they need to control their cognitive learning capacities that affect their mental process at the moment to learn something relevant for their learning (Lanigan, 1998).

Learning a second language carries some benefits and conflicts inside the process of learning (Ellis, 1999). At the moment to put into practice all what students understood about any structure or tense of the language, the majority of them have conflicts when they have to represent their knowledge. Having interaction with the environment of the language being learned can help students to get a high level not only developing all the skills, but also being competitive in their area. When students are learning a second language, they have some notion about what they are going to learn. They are conscious about all the varieties and

forms that the new language carries, from grammar to the use of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

We as students know that learning an SL is very complex, but we need to find strategies to develop our skills according to our necessities. Some students find as strategy to understand the word order of the new language (Crawford & Walker, 2008). They only focus on grammar structures of language without noticing another part, which includes spoken aspects of the language. For example, in Spanish we use subject, verb, and predicate to make a sentence, it is similar with English the grammar structure is subject, verb, and complement. Even if we add an adverb or another tense in the sentence. Spanish is not so different, we have this sentence “Ella es muy bonita”, foreigners can interpret this sentences like “She is so beautiful”, and in this way they are not confused in the structure of a simple sentence. Other students think that the most difficult part to learn a second language is the vocabulary, because as we know if there is no vocabulary, we cannot formulate or interpret any sentence. There are forms to correct this possible problem for them, and it is just using their memory. By memorizing all the new vocabulary, they will be able to organize and control their knowledge to implement at the moment to use the language in the right way.

2.3.2 Verbal and Non-Verbal Language

Learning a second language implements language development. The language can be verbal or nonverbal both with the same functions, that are to help the improvement of learning an SL. The verbal or non-verbal process can vary depending on the interaction that foreign students have in society, because they begin to establish communication with people using their linguistic structures which can vary according with the way students are learning the SL (Key, 1980).

When we are talking about verbal language we refer to the linguistic verbal representations, the most common uses are in speaking, that its use depends on the language. Verbal knowledge is developed when students have experiences in the real world using the two languages that they know. The two languages are used in different aspects but both are making the same work learning the second language. The mother tongue helps to understand and apply the second language. Students link the first language with the foreign one in an abstract form to implement the use of the second language. This process of learning is complex because students cannot understand the form they are learning (Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009).

2.3.3 Methods to Learn a Second Language

Teaching an SL through the use of methods is an everyday work of teachers who want to implement the Foreign Language (FL) for good learning. First, to talk about methods to teach a FL it is needed to know what method means. According to Anthony (1963, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001), "method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural" (p. 21). In other words, a method is the way teachers put theory into practice, it means, what student is learning it would be practicing in a determinate moment in the FL, according with the method that the teacher uses. The methods can vary, depending of the institution and the objectives of teachers.

There are different methods of learning an SL, and its usefulness depends on the development of any method, the response of students to the method and teachers' skills to practice with their students (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). However, some students have no

relation with the method that the teacher is using. Some methods are good for some students, but maybe not for others. Depending on the skill that teachers want to practice with their students, they will use a specific method. For example, if teachers want to practice listening with their students, the “audio-motor” method may be useful as it focuses on the development of listening skill and the fluency of the language. (Asher, 1969, cited in McDonough, 1984).

Other methods which involve learning more vocabulary for fluent speaking exist. As students of English, we know that teaching vocabulary helps us to have fluent speaking in any situation. Games are a very useful technique to learn new vocabulary. Students tend to be motivated when they play any kind of games, because it includes not just a joy environment, but also their memory to remember some structures or new words. Memory is a good tool for games for all the benefits that carries what students learn. Teachers create games according with the topic they want to explain. Playing games is about learning in a nice environment to get a high level in the process of learning (Oller, 1984).

2.4 Linguistic Challenges inside the Classroom

The classroom can be a space to the learning of an SL. Sometimes, students tend to be distracted inside the classroom because of the environment in which they are interacting. In many cases, not all students pay attention to the instructions of the teacher; that is a disadvantage for students at the moment to understand a certain structure or topic of the SL.

There are levels of difficulties learning an SL; some of them focus on linguistic aspects of students when they compare their mother tongue with the foreign language (Stockwell, 1965). Most of students tend to compare their mother tongue with the foreign language that they are learning. This situation is named transfer (Odlin, 1989). This is a common challenge inside the classroom; here students use their first language to try to interpret the meaning of

the second language for better understanding. Even if the second language is different to their first language, students are not learning the second language from zero, because of the possible similarities between the first and second language. The first language provides a rich and specific set of hypotheses that learners can use to learn an SL (Corder, 1978, cited in Rutherford, 1997).

Learning a second language in a classroom has a lot of challenges that includes teachers and students' interaction (Ellis, 1990). The interaction that students can have with the teacher can help them to develop the SL in the right way, because teacher is having interaction with the language that students are learning. The interaction that teachers and students have is not only about communicative language teaching and learning but it influences in every oral exchange that occurs in the classroom (Allwright, 1984a, cited in Tomlinson, 1998). The interaction between students and teacher provides opportunities to improve students' skills. When the teacher is providing feedback and students are paying attention and understanding what the teacher is saying, here teacher and students are having a good interaction because both are learning to learn. In other words, students are having good learning through the comprehension of structures and the right use of teachers' methods (Wright, 2015).

Students are surrounded by many challenges in a classroom, most of them created by students when they try to understand the rules and structures of the SL. Sometimes, students predict some rules by using their own language. For example, a learner of English learning the rules for forming plurals. This lets students predict that a noun can be plural by adding "s". However, when a student says *We saw two mouses*, he or she has predicted and applied the same rule. Another example is "when students are learning the Past Simple form, they have to know that there are some irregular verbs which cannot have the ending –ed. Students

tend to overgeneralize this rule by saying that all the verbs end with –ed and make mistakes such as comed or goed” (Littlewood, 1984, p. 23).

The way teachers teach an SL can affect students’ learning. Teachers’ teaching can be a challenge for students inside a classroom too. Based on this, students may face some linguistic challenges, which will be developed in the following section.

2.5 Linguistic Challenges outside the Classroom

People use language to establish a conversation and communication between a sender and a receiver. At times, communication is not satisfactory because there are factors that affect the process of understanding. Communication is more fluent in a social context, it means, having interaction with the society. In first instance, talking about students any kind of communication can be satisfactory when the learner enjoys learning the SL. When the learner is having interaction with the society according to his needs, he will develop the use of the SL. By doing this, students may face many challenges including pronunciation and some idioms of the SL (Reagan & Osborn, 2002, cited in DeKeyser, 2007).

The nature of SL helps students to understand in a better way the implications and functions in the SL. The interaction that learners have with the SL is a big tool for the development of their skills; for that reason, they are establishing communication using what they have already learned about the language.

Learners modify the use of the SL according to social media. In an SL context, most of students tend to use what they have seen on media such as TV programs, radio, and magazines, to connect some terms according to what they want to say. In this way, they will be more able to establish a common communication with a native speaker (Gass, 1997). Different variations of language in social contexts exists. The variations include the different

functions of the language at the moment to have an interaction with the culture. For example, some learners imitate their classmates' language to improve their own learning. Some others prefer to imitate the language of a native speaker to a better understanding of the SL (Gass & Schachter, 1989).

A different language has its linguistic variations, this is a disadvantage for foreign students who want to learn the SL in all the contexts. For example, in Mexico there are some expressions which may be difficult to understand by foreign people such as !caramba!. Foreigners may not identify the use of this kind of words; in this case !caramba! is the same as !Dios mío!, which is understandable for foreigners (Bayley & Preston, 1996). The easy solution that some foreigners find to this problem is finding the literal meaning of the words like the previous example to a better understanding.

The social effects like the use of the language learning such as idioms or the colloquial language can have a big impact on the learning of foreign students at the moment to have a connection with the rules of the language, it means, the correct use of their abilities (Gonzalez, 2006). Practicing the SL outside the classroom includes these kinds of challenges like the one previously mentioned. Being unable to understand the colloquialism of the SL is a big problem to interact and have communication. When foreign students are trying to talk in the SL inside a specific community with native speakers, they can have some mistakes in speech, it depends on the rules of the SL and the students' proficiency level of the SL.

2.5.1 Learning a Second Language in a Social Context

Learning an SL in a specific community plays a big role in the comprehension of the SL because learners are not just interacting with people, but also with culture, which includes ethnicity, religion, and class. All these factors are inside a social context to practice the SL.

Humans not only learn one language, most of them learn two, three, four languages, and it is understood that this kind of people can interact in a community with minimal problems, because they are always having interaction with the society (Romaine, 2000). When a foreign student is learning a second language in a Spanish speaking country, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation can vary. For example, if an American student has been living in Mexico and in Spain, eventually he will notice that many differences in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation exist.

Learning an SL in a social context helps learners to share information through communication in a speech community. The concept of speech community is defined “as a community sharing knowledge based on rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech” (Mckay & Hornberger, 1996, p. 49). In other words, a speech community is constantly using communication where the speakers apply the correct use of the language in different contexts.

When two or more languages are in a community, speakers commonly switch from one language to another. They change their native language to the foreign one, using some familiar structures to understand the meaning of the language. They use the social meaning, that means, the message that they receive to interpret the SL governed by grammar of consequences (Myers, 1997). “The structure and familiarization with another language influences in the way speakers understand the different situations of the SL. Situations that are connected with the interaction between the two languages” (McKay & Hornberger, 1996, p. 60).

As we know, learning a second language includes learning how to manage different situations and also their varieties. The variation of the language depends on the speaker, for example, if a young boy has a conversation with other boys of his same age, they will have the same kind of variations of the language like the use of some words or idioms. In society

“social variations exist which are influenced by social experiences, categories, and the use of the language in different contexts” (McKay & Hornberger, 1996, p. 165). Social variations in language includes speaker’s perspectives including socio cultural framing, genre framing, and interpersonal framing (Coupland, 2007). These concepts are understood as follows:

“Socio cultural framing: in socio cultural frames, acts of identity are undertaken by speakers positioning themselves, or others, in relation to a pre-understood social ecology. Genre framing: genre framing set meaning parameters around talk in relation to what contextual type or genre of talk (e.g. conversation versus set-piece performance, business talk or informal chat) is understood by participants to be currently on going and relevant. Interpersonal framing: the issue here is how participants dynamically structure the very local business of their talk and position themselves relative to each other in their relational histories, short and long term” (Coupland, 2007, p. 113).

Society influences people to learn and built their own concepts about the SL that they are learning not only for the interaction with a community but also the situations, occasions, encounters and rituals of everyday life (Durkheim, 1982). It is not easy to learn an SL in a social context because of the different types of pronunciation, grammar structures, and variations. However, some people find an easy manner to do it, like the use of casual speech, it means, the use of a comfortable language. Being relaxed at the moment to establish a conversation can be a good way to develop the SL inside a community without rules and standards, just the ability to speak.

2.5.2 Learning Spanish in a Context of Immersion

Living in the country where the target language is spoken facilitates the learning. Interacting in the real world with native speakers makes the development of language more efficient. Learning Spanish in a context of immersion includes the relationship between culture and people. This relation has meaning at the moment to talk about experiences.

Foreigners commonly share their experiences with native Spanish speakers to make a more comfortable environment of immersion. Sharing every day experiences with people of a foreign language creates the climate of sympathy necessary and establishes the *sine qua non*, which is the desire of students to learn to communicate with foreigners (Oller, 1993).

Many different programs of immersion exist to facilitate the communication between native speakers and non-native speakers. Immersion programs are effective in the manner that they do not have the grammar rules as schools, following the necessities of students to improve their SL learning (Genesee, 1981 cited in McLaughlin, 2012). Learning Spanish using a method of immersion may be a good strategy to develop the four skills. Having contact with the FL makes more comprehensible the use of the language in any context (Johnson & Swain, 1997).

When students are in a context of immersion, they enjoy learning the SL because of the interaction with people, culture, and different situations of conviviality. In Puebla, there are schools for foreigners. Some of these schools take foreigners to communities where they can interact and have contact with Spanish culture such as orphanages or hospitals. Other schools organize trips to important sights where foreigners can also interact with the environment and learn more about the traditions of Puebla.

2.5.3 Miscommunication

Miscommunication is a linguistic challenge that usually occurs in society, it takes place at the moment to talk with non-native speakers who are learning a FL. This problem causes many difficulties at the moment to establish a conversation with a native speaker. It is the same, when a Spanish student learning French wants to speak French with a native speaker,

if there are mistakes in grammar rules, it will be reflected in the speech. This will cause miscommunication between both speakers (Mortensen, 1997).

Miscommunication is guided by a mismatch between a speakers' intention and a hearers' interpretation (Milroy, 1984 cited in Mora, 2001). In other words, what the speaker tries to communicate is not understood by the hearer as it should be, because the information is not clear for the hearer. If students have a better communication with a native speaker, the learning will be more satisfactory because they will enjoy the new language and they will notice that they are having good speaking in the SL. Students begin to be more motivated to learn if they are practicing the SL with native speakers because they can help them to develop what they already know (Chaudron, 1988).

The interaction that students have with native speakers is a good tool to learn and improve the SL. However, inside this interaction there is not only miscommunication, but also there are linguistic structures which students tend to have problems with at the moment to have a conversation. When a non-native speaker is speaking with a native speaker, he or she immediately finds structures to construct their speech, this process is call "Scaffolding" that refers to the linguistic structures that promote learners' cognition, associating forms that learners recognize (Hatch, 1978, cited in Chaudron, 1988). Learners begin to incorporate the SL in sentences to reproduce what they want to communicate and have a communication without repetitions such as the copy of some lexical items.

Interacting with native speakers implies challenges learning an SL but some advantages exist such as incorporation. Interacting helps students to incorporate TL (target language) structures into their own speech to formulate the SL. The SL is developed through the needs of students. This makes a contribution to the communication and learning of the SL (Van Compernelle, 1984).

2.5.4 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics provides interactional contexts at the moment to learn a second language in society, it is focused on who uses the language, and proposes the use of language at the moment to have interaction with the society. Sociolinguistics studies the social uses of language in different contexts. Verbal exchange takes a big place in Sociolinguistics. Learners get information about something specific they want to know. The verbal exchange is guided by five general categories in which the conversation begins to form part of knowledge (Chambers, 2003).

The first category is Personal. It focuses on the speaking ability of a person, the way the speaker is talking to you, and the fluency or variety of the speech that is noticed by the listeners. This usually happens learning an SL in conversational clubs or in communities intended to practice a FL. What occurs in this kind of environments is that the person who speaks the FL fluently leaves no space for pauses in his/her speech, giving the listener no time to understand the message clearly. It does not happen the same with beginners. They speak in a slow manner as if they were thinking and ordering the words they want to say. The speaker who has a high level of the FL is influenced by the vocabulary that he or she knows. Knowing more vocabulary helps to have a fluent and conscious speaking to transmit whatever they want to say (Nation, 2001).

A person learning an SL knows that learning new vocabulary is going to be useful to develop all the skills, not just speaking. In the case of beginners, they have to find by themselves strategies to improve their speaking such as listening to music, watching movies, reading books or magazines, which help them to learn more new vocabulary (ibid).

The second category is Stylistic. The social differences occur when the participants take place in style. When speakers find their manners to talk, it means they find their speaking style. Some speakers talk in a formal manner that helps them to have more connection with the grammar rules. Some other speakers prefer an informal way. Informal communication involves casual conversations where speech tends to be more fluid without thinking on grammar rules (Eckert & Rickford, 2001).

The third category, Social, affirms that according with the social background, people have different styles to communicate with the other. Age, class, and sex define the style of the social communication (Kristiansen & Dirven, 2008). For example, two men are not going to have the same conversation as two women, because of their social context. They create the relationship according with their background.

Cultural differences are an implication to communicate with foreigners because of the style of speech. For example, in some cultures, people seem to give a long explanation to be late. For others, this is not very common because they may not be so expressive in their personal things. Culture is the fourth category in Sociolinguistics that needs to be taken into account regarding communication (ibid).

The last category, Sociological, refers to social structures, and when to use the language according with the place speakers are interacting. For example; Spanish students have to know when to use Spanish and when to use their language in social situations such as going shopping or to the movies (Wardhaugh, 2010).

2.6 Similarities between American English and Spanish Language

Since I have been giving Spanish classes to foreigners at “Spanish Institute” in the city of Puebla I noticed that the similarities between English and Spanish language can vary

according to the perspectives and experiences of foreigners. For a better understanding about similarities between American English and Spanish language, two important similar aspects between the two languages are mentioned.

The first aspect occurs in the use of sentence structure, it means, when students want to create a sentence with the correct grammar. For example: *Él duerme mucho*. This simple Spanish sentence for an American student has the same structure as in English, e.g. “Él(subject), duerme(verb), mucho(complement)”. However, the sentence can vary depending on what the student wants to say.

The second aspect is related with Spanish words which are similar to English words. Principally, for American foreigners, Spanish language has a lot of similar words to English language, those words in English grammar are called “cognates”. The studies of cognates have a connectivity between the first language (L1) and mental lexicon in additional languages (Otwinowska, 2016). It means, when a cognate is presented orthographically (formal), representations of the word in both languages are activated, that activation helps to the translation process (Van Hell & De Groot, 2008, cited in Otwinowska, 2016).

It happens the same when Spanish native speakers see grammatically a word in English such as “chocolate”, automatically the mental process begin to understand that word because of the similar connection with the Spanish word. As humans learning a second language, we are always looking for similarities into another language for a faster understanding in their native language which is very helpful if the word meaning is the same.

2.7 Differences between English and Spanish

The differences between English and Spanish outnumber the similarities, but it does not mean that foreigners cannot understand Spanish. Therefore, it is better to know those

differences to not be confused at the moment to use Spanish. The following sections present some differences between American English and Spanish.

2.7.1 Verbs Conjugation

The conjugation of Spanish verbs is very complicated for American students and most difficult at the moment to speak it with a Spanish native speaker because of the change of the verbs according with the tense they are speaking. E.g. When the verb “to have” is used in English as an auxiliary verb, it is translated into Spanish as “haber”; but when it is employed as an active verb, denoting possession, it must be translated as “tener”. We therefore say, “He comprado un libro, for “I have bought a book”, but we must say, “Tengo un libro”, for “I have a book.” In English, verbs are not conjugated extensively as it is done in Spanish. Sometimes, this makes it hard to learn Spanish for foreign students. E.g. the verb “go” is conjugated in three different forms: **goes**-3rd person, **went**-Past form, **gone**-Past participle. In Spanish all the verbs are conjugated, depending on the tense you are talking about. For example, when the verb “ir” is conjugated in past, it is correct to say “fuí”. That verb changes, because it is irregular, and has five forms to be conjugated in indicative form, seven in subjunctive form, and eight in compound forms. (Fernández & Sorrosa, 2001).

2.7.2 Subjunctive Tense

The subjunctive mode in Spanish has relation with the unreality of life. Lunn (1995, cited in Islas & Ramírez, 2005) associates the subjunctive as irrelevance mark. It means the subjunctive can be real or a fantasy. In Spanish we have the subjunctive tense, which is used to express doubt, wish, hate, etc. The subjunctive expresses an attitude of a person referring to someone or something. In a sentence what is going to be changed in the subjunctive tense

is the verb. (e.g. *Ojalá que fuera rico*). This sentence is based on a wish and the verb that changed in subjunctive is “*fuera*), its main verb is “*ser*” (ibid). In English grammar, the subjunctive changes into different words to communicate a wish, hate, hope, etc. as in Spanish. With the meaning in English of “if only” or “I wish”, the subjunctive tense is used after “*Ojalá*”, e.g. *¡Ojalá venga!* vs. *If only he would come!* (Bradley & Mackenzie, 2004).

2.7.3 Expression Words

There are many expressions in English which help Spanish students to understand the American culture; the connection of the words will create a learning to a better development of Spanish in the case of American students learning Spanish. In Spanish there are many expression words to express different ideas. One word can have lots of meanings changing the word root. E.g. People from Latin America use the word “*mamá*” to refer to a mother, to say the same word more sweet they say “*mamita*”, but, to change the meaning of the word, they say “*mamacita*”, that means pretty lady (Hualde, 2001). In English, people use three forms to say mother. They use mother, mom, ma, but all these words mean the same, it does not change the meaning as in Spanish.

2.7.4 Pronunciation

The vowels and consonants constitute the pronunciation of any word in any language. Talking about differences between Spanish and English pronunciation, the pronunciation of vowels is relevant because they constitute the syllable core and can be combined giving space to the diphthongs and triphthongs. The diphthongs are a combination of two vowels in which one of them always has to be (i) or (u). A triphthog is the combination of three vowels which are always (i) and (u) and whose central element is (a) or (e) (Olivé, 1999).

Spanish students must know that the pronunciation of Spanish words depends on the accents, because using accents can change the tone of each Spanish word for a better understanding. In English, different phonetic symbols to pronounce words with different meanings exist. E.g. beer (bi:r)/ bear (bɛr). Although some Spanish speakers may pronounce them equally, phonetically they are different (Roach, 2001).

2.8 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, it is mentioned relevant information along with some authors who are important for this study. The topics mentioned in this chapter are helpful in understanding how the language is used in society and in different social contexts. Emphasis was given to some differences between English and Spanish in the context of immersion where this study was conducted.

The following chapter describes the methodology followed in order to obtain the necessary information to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explain the methodology followed to accomplish the purpose of this project. First of all, the subjects and the instrument are described. Next, the data collection and data analysis procedures describe the steps that were taken to obtain and analyze the data that was necessary to answer the research questions. Finally, a short conclusion is provided.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects in this study were five North American students who were learning Spanish at “Spanish Institution” at the time of the study. There were four males and one female. Their ages ranged from 28 to 63 years old, They have different jobs such as a pharmacist, a physician, a sociology graduate, a computer animator and one is retired. For ethical considerations, the participants’ real names are not provided; instead, they are referred to as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), and Participant 5 (P5). Table 3.1 summarizes the participants’ background information.

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation	Nationality
P1	Female	63	Retired	American
P2	Male	36	Pharmacist	American
P3	Male	54	Physician	American
P4	Male	28	Sociology Graduate	American
P5	Male	48	Computer Animator	American

Table 3.1 Participants’ Background Information

3.3 Instrument

The instrument is a questionnaire with 10 questions (see Appendix A). Seven were open questions, and three were closed questions. The questionnaire was focused on investigating the challenges faced by American students inside their classroom, and inside the community and culture of the city of Puebla. It also included some aspects of the differences between English and Spanish.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

To collect the information for this study, a private Spanish school was selected to apply the instrument. An informative paper stating the objective of the instrument was elaborated, and at the same time permission was asked to apply the questionnaire to a certain group of American students. Five participants agreed to be part of this study. Because of time constraints, the instrument was applied when students finished their classes. The participants had sufficient time to answer the questionnaire so they could provide the necessary information to answer the research questions.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

After the questionnaires were collected, an in-depth analysis of the information was carried out. The answers provided in the questionnaires were carefully read several times. Then, the most important information to answer the research questions was highlighted. As a result of the analysis, different categories emerged for each research question. These

categories will be presented and exemplified with the participants' extracts in chapter IV, sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodological steps conducted in the development of this project. The chapter described the subjects that participated in the study, the instrument that was applied to the participants, and the data collection and data analysis procedures that were conducted in order to obtain and analyze the information.

In the following chapter, the results of the study will be presented with the purpose of answering the research questions that led this investigation.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the results of this research about the linguistic challenges that American students faced inside the classroom and also the linguistic challenges that they face in society in a context of immersion at Spanish Institute in the city of Puebla. The information was classified in categories and some extracts are taken from the instrument to exemplify the categories (see Appendix B).

4.2 Research Questions

- What are American students most common problems in productive (writing, reading) and receptive (listening, speaking) language skills when learning Spanish?
- What are the most common problems of American students when using Spanish inside the classroom?
- What are the most common problems of American students when using grammar and speaking Spanish in society?
- What are the similarities and differences between English and Spanish?

4.3 Answers to the Research Questions

The following information is provided by five participants from the USA. Every answer is collocated in different sections with the finality to answer the research questions.

Some extracts were taken from the questionnaire in order to understand the categories that emerged from the analysis for each research question.

4.3.1 American Students' Most Common Problems when Learning Spanish

The first question is based on the difficulties that American students have when learning Spanish as a Second Language. The categories for this question were: a) sentence structure, b) vocabulary, and c) conjugating verbs. The results are presented as follows:

4.3.1.1 Sentence Structure

In this first category, P1 mentioned the following:

“Learning the differences in the structure of sentences. Not translating the words in English in a literal form to Spanish” (P1).

P1 mentions that the structure of the sentences in Spanish is difficult, not only for the words that are not understood, but for the translation into English. From the information, it is clear that for P1 learning the differences of the structure of a sentence is not good to use the literal form to translate the meaning of the sentences, just words.

4.3.1.2 Vocabulary

The second category was vocabulary. In this case, P2 mentioned the following:

“I feel overwhelmed when native speakers talk so fast that I cannot understand the words. It is also hard when they use vocabulary that I have not learned yet” (P2).

For P2 learning Spanish is difficult in the aspects of learning new vocabulary and when he has to practice this vocabulary in real situations such as having interaction with native

speakers. He feels overwhelmed when he is talking with a native speaker, because he cannot understand some vocabulary that he has not studied yet.

P3 commented the following:

“Transitioning from class (where it logically makes sense) to real time, sentences come flying at you so quickly” (P3).

For P3, the creation of sentences in real time is the most difficult part to learn Spanish. He feels that the sentences come to him so fast that he cannot understand their meaning, and at the same time, he cannot make sense of each sentence.

4.3.1.3 Conjugating Verbs

The last category was conjugation of verbs. P4 expressed the following:

“Conjugating Verbs” (P4).

P4 mentions that the conjugation of Spanish verbs is the difficulty while learning Spanish. This coincides with Lafford’s (2003) idea that in any language different language variations exists which generate conflicts at the moment to learn a second language.

P5 mentioned the following:

“Verbs conjugations, understanding the uses of different verbs like ser vs. estar or other verbs like tener, hacer, poner that have uses other than one” (P5).

For P5, the conjugation of verbs and the meaning of the different uses of the verbs are the most difficult to learn in Spanish. Understanding the verbs in different situations makes the use of Spanish more complex for him. In this comment, he notices that the verbs have more than one function in a sentence.

These categories are summarized in the following chart:

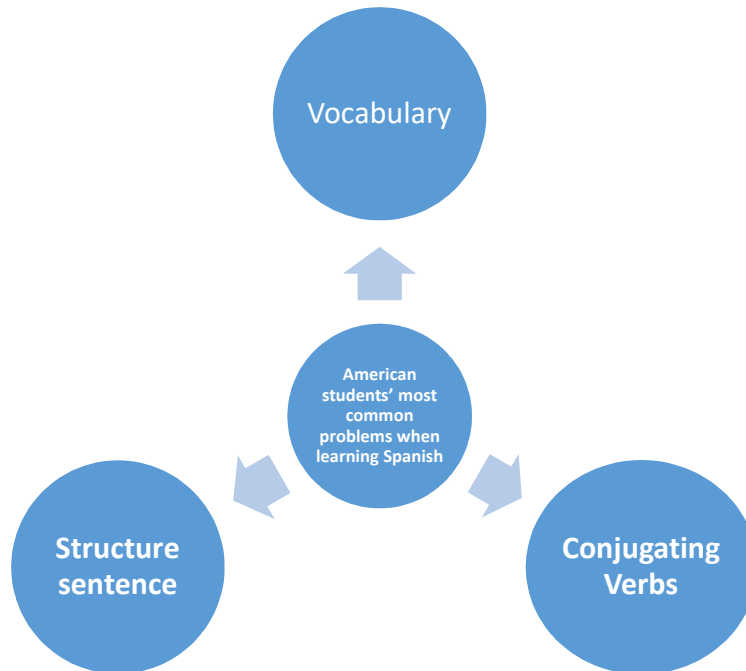


Figure 4.1 American Students' Most Common Problems when Learning Spanish

4.3.2. Linguistic Challenges American Students Face when Learning Spanish inside the Classroom

The second question is based on the difficulties faced by American students when learning Spanish inside their classrooms. The categories were: a) new information and reinforcement, and b) using Spanish. The extracts are presented as follows:

4.3.2.1 New Information and Reinforcement

In this category, P1 mentioned the following:

“It is a large quantity of new information. It is hard to remember it all, especially over time” (P1).

From this extract, it is understood that a lot of information is given in the Spanish course, and for P1 this makes it difficult to remember all the information.

Very similar to the previous extract, P3 said the following:

“Things move quickly: topics and themes make sense in the immediate time frame but need to be reinforced, reinforced, reinforced” (P3).

P3 coincides with the amount of information moving too quickly for him; he mentions that the topics are not reinforced to keep that much information. This is the challenge that he faces in the classroom.

4.3.2.2 Using Spanish

The second category for this question was related to the use of Spanish. P2 answered the following:

“Sometimes it is hard to learn, because the teachers speak only Spanish and I do not have enough time to look up words in the dictionary” (P2).

P2 mentions that he does not have enough time to look up new words in the dictionary while the teacher is speaking Spanish. Because he does not grasp the ideas of what is being said in class, the participant does not seem to learn the language. This coincides with Allwright’s (1984) idea that the interaction that teachers and students have is not only about communicative language teaching and learning, but it influences in every oral exchange that occurs in the classroom.

For participant 4, the challenge is basically the use of Spanish regarding verbs and vocabulary. He said the following:

“I guess/ suppose jut learning conjugations tenses and memorizing vocabulary” (P4).

P4 may find it difficult to use the language because he may not have the correct word, or use the correct tense, to express his ideas correctly. This is his challenge inside the classroom in learning Spanish.

Finally, P5 made the following remark:

“The ability of the student (me!!), the amount of time I have available to learn” (P5).

For P5 the ability and time to learn Spanish is his main challenge inside the classroom.

His comment indicates that more time is necessary to learn Spanish inside the classroom.

The categories for research question two can be summarized in the following chart:

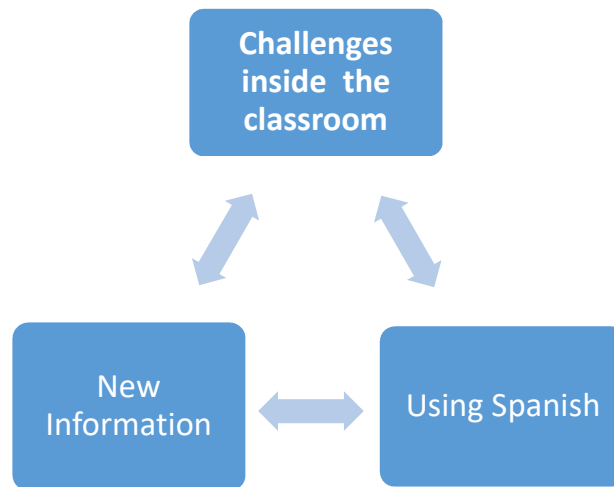


Figure 4.2 Challenges Faced by the Participants inside the Classroom

4.3.3 Linguistic Challenges of American Students Learning Spanish in Society

The third research question is based on the linguistic challenges faced by American students learning Spanish in society. Two more categories emerged from the analysis: a) speaking Spanish, and b) interacting with native Spanish speakers. Extracts taken from the participants are provided in order to understand better these categories.

4.3.3.1 Speaking Spanish

Regarding this category, P1 mentioned the following:

“Sometimes people outside the school speak very rapidly and it is hard to understand. Also, there are words and phrases that are unfamiliar but they are important to learn” (P1).

P1 mentions that native speakers of Spanish speak fast and is difficult to understand what they are talking about. Additionally, P1 mentions that some words and phrases that are unfamiliar do not help to understand the language. This coincides with McKay’s (1996) idea that the structure and familiarization with another language influences in the way speakers understand the different situations of the SL.

P2 answered the following:

“A lot of locals just want to sell you stuff” (P2).

For P2 the interaction with the community of the city of Puebla has been through the people who want to sell stuff. To a certain extent, this is part of the culture where the target language is spoken. According with Krashen (2002) learning a second language includes learning a second culture which will be useful to establish a communication. In this particular case, selling things is also part of the culture.

4.3.3.2 Interacting with Native Spanish Speakers

In the second category, P3 mentioned the following:

“Getting adequate correction of grammar” (P3).

In this extract, it may be understood that native speakers do not use correct forms of grammar during their talks. That makes the interaction with the target language community difficult because of the confusion of meanings. As Mortensen (1997) mentions, establishing a conversation with a native speaker of another country carry what is called miscommunication by the different structures on grammar.

Related to the previous remark, P4 said the following:

“The difficulty outside the classroom is what I expected to be the problem, understanding fluent/ rapid native speakers, which time and experience within the language itself will improve/resolve” (P4).

For P4 also the way native speakers establish communication is the most difficult part to have interaction with the Society. For P4, native speakers talk fast, but P4 knows that this will eventually help to improve Spanish Language.

P5 answered the following:

“Most people in Puebla are kind. I do find people speak too fast sometimes, but that is my problem. I find Pueblans very patient and easy to talk to” (P5).

Just like participant 4, participant 5 mentions that native speakers of Spanish talk in a fast way and is difficult to understand them. However, the patience that people have with him may be useful to practice the target language more.

The challenges faced by American students learning Spanish in society are summarized in the following chart:



Figure 4.3 Challenges Learning Spanish in Society

4.3.4. Similarities and Differences between American English and Spanish

The fourth question is based on the similarities and differences between American English and Spanish. Charts were used to indicate the similarities and differences that the participants identified in both languages.

4.3.4.1 Similarities between American English and Spanish

According to the participants' answers, English is similar to Spanish in four important aspects. These aspects are indicated in the following figure.

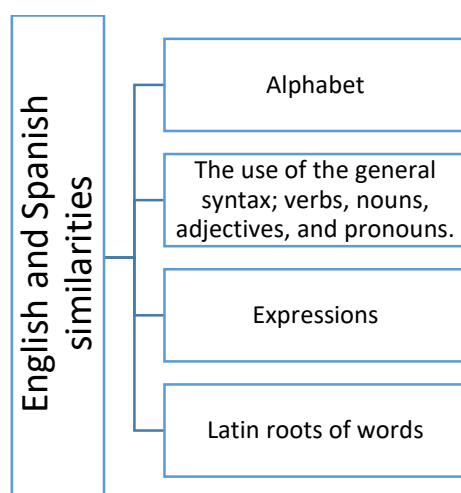


Figure 4.4 Similarities between English and Spanish

According to the participants' answers, English and Spanish are similar in the alphabet, and general syntax. The general structure of a simple sentence is similar for them, making the translation of sentences into English easier. They mentioned that some expressions are familiar for them such as the use of greetings. Also, they identified a lot of Latin roots in Spanish similar to English, e.g. bibliografía – bibliography.

4.3.4.2 Differences between American English and Spanish

The participants identified four main differences between English and Spanish. These differences are represented in figure 4.5.

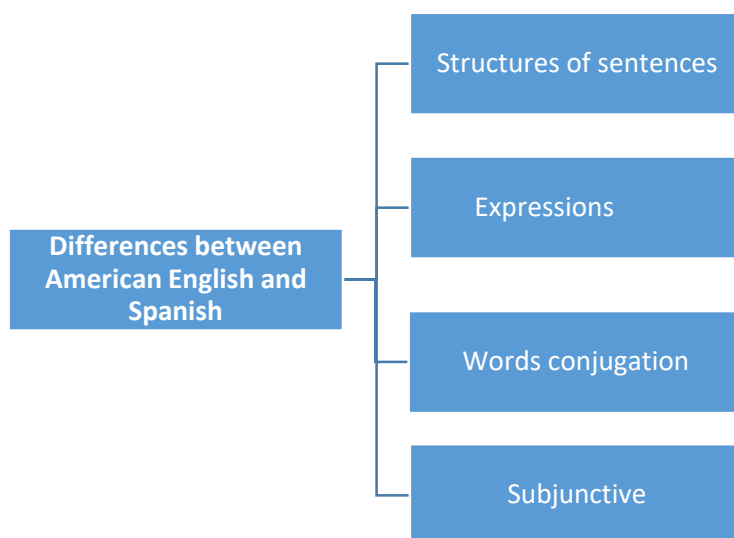


Figure 4.5 Differences between English and Spanish

Although the participants mentioned that syntax is a similarity between the two languages, here it is possible to see that more complicated structures are not easy for them. As sentences become more complex, it is more difficult for them to understand them. Also, some expressions are different in their language, making it difficult to translate into the target language. As it was explained in some extracts mentioned above, the conjugation is another difference since in English the same verb form is used for all the pronouns, except the third person singular pronouns, where –s, –es, or –ies is added to the verb in simple present. Finally, the subjunctive form is another difference for them. This is related to the previous difference because as they do not conjugate verbs, the subjunctive in English does not need to be conjugated, whereas in Spanish, it is necessary.

With all the extracts provided in these sections and the figures used to graphically show and understand the information, the four research questions that were initially formulated have been successfully answered.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter described the results that were given by the five participants in order to identify the linguistic challenges that American students have to face when learning Spanish in a context on immersion in the city of Puebla. The results were divided in different categories and different figures were used to show the information.

In the next chapter, the conclusions of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of the findings about the challenges faced by American students learning Spanish at a Spanish teaching Institution in the city of Puebla. It summarizes the results and it mentions the accomplishment of the aims. Also, it includes the limitations, it mentions some suggestions for further research, and a personal reflection of the study. finally, a final comment is provided at the end of the chapter.

5.2 Summary of the Results

The results were obtained through a questionnaire of seven open questions, and three closed questions; this questionnaire was answered by five American students learning Spanish at Spanish Institute in the city of Puebla. Firstly, the results suggest that the majority of them have problems with Spanish verbs. The results also seem to indicate that conjugating Spanish verbs is difficult for American students. They mentioned that in their native language they did not need many structures as in Spanish language. However, they find more easily learn those verbs in a constant practice, in this case, having interaction with a native Spanish speaker. When an American student is learning Spanish in an environment of immersion, it is constantly practiced the new language, that helps to improve their skills.

On the other hand, American students consider that memorizing Spanish verbs including vocabulary in Spanish is a little bit tedious, not only because there are a lot of new vocabulary words they want to learn, but also because they do not practice that vocabulary and verbs in different situations.

The results suggest that American students really enjoy learning Spanish because they can practice what they have learned in class and in society, in this case American students who are learning Spanish at Spanish institute have the opportunity to practice Spanish with Spanish guides.

The results indicate that learning Spanish for American students is not easy. They have a lot of difficulties which include grammar structures, conjugating verbs, remembering the meanings of Spanish verbs, vocabulary, and learning a lot of new information which is relevant for them such as the creation of sentences with the correct structure and verb. The participants indicated that they have problems with the structure of Spanish sentences. They get confused in the correct use of the verbs within a sentence.

As conclusion, American students have different difficulties leaning Spanish, this depends on the effort that they put to learn the new language. Most of them answered that sometimes the time of the class is not enough to learn Spanish, but others answered that it is not enough time to practice with native speakers outside their classroom what they have learned. In other words, American students improve their learning through the use of Spanish language inside and outside their classroom.

5.3 Research Aims

The aims of this study were:

- Find the most common problems in productive and receptive skills when learning Spanish.

- Find the linguistic challenges faced by American students when using Spanish, inside and outside their classroom.
- Find the differences and similarities between English and Spanish language.

5.3.1 Accomplishment of the Aims

My first aim was to identify the most common linguistic problems faced by American students learning Spanish at a Spanish Institution in the city of Puebla. American students have different problems learning Spanish from grammar to the correct use of Spanish; this creates a lot of difficulties when learning Spanish. The aim was achieved satisfactorily because those most common linguistics challenges were identified with the information they provided in the instrument.

My second aim was to identify American students' most common problems learning Spanish, inside and outside their classroom. They use Spanish in two different perceptions, in a common class with rules and grammar structures, and having interaction with the community of Puebla. The aim was achieved with the application of the two following questions "What are the difficulties you consider that exist in learning Spanish inside your classroom?, What are the difficulties you find leaning Spanish having interaction with the community of Puebla? Most of them mentioned that inside their classrooms the time is not enough to learn Spanish, but having interaction with the society, they can improve the little information that they learned in class.

Finally, my third aim was based on the similarities and differences that American students find between English and Spanish. The majority of them answered that a most

common similarity between American English and Spanish language is the same function of a verb, noun, adjectives, and pronouns with the creation of a sentence. Regarding differences, most of them mentioned the use of subjunctive and conjugating verbs. This aim was achieved with the answers of the following questions “What are the similarities you find between American English and Spanish language?, What are the differences you notice in the use of American English and Spanish language?.

5.4 Limitations

There were three limitations in conducting this study. The first limitation was the limited number of participants, who were from U.S.A. The second limitation was the setting the instrument was applied. It was a private school named “Spanish Institute”. For this reason, it was difficult to get permission to apply the instrument. And finally the third limitation was the time of application. The time had to be carefully selected to apply the instrument because of the different class schedules of the American students.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Two main suggestions can be recommended for future research. In the first place, a larger number of participants may be appropriate in order to have a wider perspective of the Spanish learning process that foreign students go through. This may be helpful for future Spanish teachers who are teaching Spanish to foreigners in the city of Puebla or in another country. The second suggestion is to conduct research of this type but in a public school. This

may be useful to understand if there are conditions that facilitate or impede the learning process of foreign students.

5.6 Personal Reflection

During my investigation, I had been in a constant learning of many topics of my interest such as Spanish structures, variations of Spanish language, and its difficulties to learn it in different contexts. Many times, I had to look for more than one author to support what I wanted to say. Moreover, I could find authors which specified what I wanted to say, that made easier the elaboration of my first and second chapters.

Whenever I needed some help, my teachers of Seminar I and II, were there to support me. That made me improve the way I wrote. They helped me not just to look at my mistakes, but also they made me correct it in a better way to specify what I wanted to say. Worth mentioning that sometimes I did not know how to write what I wanted to say, but with the constant practice of searching information and paraphrasing, I was able to improve the way I wrote, making sense of what I wanted to transmit, and in a better way it made more enjoyable and comprehensible my text. Furthermore, I consider that I can improve some aspects on grammar and syntax for a future use in a master degree or a new project.

I had some difficulties with my participants. The school where I wanted to apply my instrument is private, and for that reason I had to face some uncomfortable situations which made me feel a little bit angry. However, I found the solution, and I could apply my instrument, not as I wanted, but it was useful for my study.

Finally, I really enjoyed working in this topic, not just for making emphasis to Spanish language, but also because this study will help me in my personal development since I want to become a specialist in the area of Spanish for Foreigners. In the future, I want to investigate more deeply, but with teachers who want to help me with my investigation, and I want to help other teachers of the same area related with Spanish language with problems to teach Spanish to foreigners.

5.7 Final Comment

This study reflects what I learned during my degree, and the effort that I had put into practice during the creation of the five chapters to elaborate a good investigation in the area of my interest which is Spanish for Foreigners. Based on this study, I hope that my investigation will be useful to Spanish teachers who want to teach Spanish not only with the use of books, but using new strategies to the development of students' abilities. Also, creating new web sites, materials, and methods to get a high level of Spanish, and the most important, to make teachers aware of the difficulties that foreign students have when they are learning Spanish. My recommendation for this study is not just to understand why it is important to learn Spanish, but also to give a different view of Spanish language inside the Faculty of languages BUAP, and in the near future open courses of Spanish for foreigners.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE HAS THE OBJECTIVE TO IDENTIFY THE MOST COMMON LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES FACED BY AMERICAN STUDENTS LEARNING SPANISH, AT A SPANISH TEACHING INSTITUTION.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE COUNTS WITH TEN QUESTIONS. ANSWER THEM ACCORDING WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE.

NAME:

AGE:

OCCUPATION:

NATIONALITY:

- 1._ What are the difficulties that you find in learning Spanish as a Second Language?

- 2._ What are the skills you have more developed in Spanish language? (Mention them)

- 3._ What are the difficulties you consider that exist in learning Spanish inside your classroom?

- 4._ Do you consider that the society is a good tool to develop your Spanish? Yes/No Why?

- 5._ What are the difficulties you find learning Spanish having interaction with the community of Puebla?

- 6._ What are the differences you notice in the use of American English and Spanish language?

- 7._ What are the similarities you find between American English and Spanish?

- 8._ Do you think your mother tongue affects your Spanish learning? Yes/No Why?

- 9._ Mention five aspects you consider that affect your Spanish learning.

- 10._ Is it the same to learn Spanish in Puebla than to learn Spanish in your country? Yes/No Why?

APPENDIX B

1. What are the difficulties that you find in learning Spanish as a Second Language?

- verb conjugations
- understanding the uses of different verbs ^{eg} like ser vs estar or other verbs like tener, hacer, poder that have uses other than one.

2. What are the skills you have more developed in Spanish language? (Mention them)

- better clarification of common usage of phrases
- better pronunciation and understanding of verb tenses
- better overall comprehension of Spanish due to daily classes.

3. What are the difficulties you consider that exist in learning Spanish inside your classroom?

- the ability of the student (Me!!)
- the amount of time I have available to learn

2. What are the skills you have more developed in Spanish language? (Mention them)

Conjugating verbs ~~tambien~~, from present tense to Past tense, to ~~Capreterito~~ ^{Preterito}. In general, speaking Spanish every day helps with every aspect of learning the language.

3. Do you agree with the way your teacher teaches you Spanish? Yes/No Why?

¡Por supuesto! ~~she~~ B/c she speaks at a rate where we as students can understand. She will explain what she is asking/saying to us. She makes the learning very fun/interesting.

4. What are the difficulties you consider that exist in learning Spanish inside your classroom?

I guess/suppose just learning conjugation tenses and ~~recess~~ memorising vocabulary. ~~not~~