JOURNEY METAPHORS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING: WAYS OF TRAVELLING / LEARNING IN MULTIMEDIA ENVIRONMENTS

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Résumé

Les recherches dans le domaine de l'acquisition de langues secondes accordent de plus en plus d'importance aux métaphores qui sous-tendent les manières dont chercheurs et apprenants conceptualisent l'apprentissage des langues étrangères, tout en constatant les points de vue contradictoires qui se révèlent d'un côté et de l'autre. Tandis que les métaphores utilisées par les chercheurs décrivent les apprenants comme des entités passives, ces derniers se voient souvent eux-mêmes comme des voyageurs entreprenant un long voyage. Le présent travail aborde une réflexion sur les manières dont la métaphore APPRENDRE C'EST VOYAGER peut être efficacement appliquée dans les techniques de classe ainsi que dans l'élaboration de matériels. L'hypothèse de départ est que les technologies et les environnements multi et hypermédia peuvent constituer des outils et des contextes efficaces pour imaginer des plans d'enseignement / apprentissage. L'article présente ainsi comment les métaphores du voyage sont actuellement appliquées dans le projet SMAIL conçu par le groupe GIAPEL.

Abstract

Second language acquisition research has started to pay attention to the metaphors underlying the ways both researchers and learners conceptualise foreign language learning, drawing attention to the contradictory views held by both sides. Thus, whereas the metaphors used by researchers portray learners as passive entities, the latter often see themselves as travellers on a long journey, therefore construing their experience in more active terms. This paper explores the ways in which the metaphor LEARNING IS TRAVELLING may be usefully applied to classroom techniques and foreign language material design. The starting premise is that multi- and hypermedia technologies and environments may be useful for devising teaching / learning programs where journey metaphors may be exploited for the students' benefit. Particular attention will be drawn to how journey metaphors are currently applied in the SMAIL project designed by the GIAPEL group.

Introduction

SLA scholars have started to pay attention to the ways in which L2 learners think about their learning experience and, more specifically, about their role in it. The starting premise is that knowing how students see themselves as learners may shed some light on those aspects of SLA research that still need further attention, as well as restoring learners to centre-stage.

Researchers dealing with these issues have also called attention to the role of metaphor in both the learners' and the researchers' (teachers included) representations of L2 learning (D. Block, 1992, 1999; C. Kramsch, 1995; J. Lantolf, 1996; M. Cortazzi & L. Jin, 1999; R. Ellis, 2001; R. Oxford, 2001). Not unsurprisingly, the exploration of the metaphors involved in these constructions has highlighted the contrasting views that the participating sides often hold on the same issue—and, of course, the quite opposite or even conflicting metaphors underpinning them. For instance, Ellis (2001) notices that whereas the dominant researcher metaphors render learners either as passive artefacts or as mechanical contrivances via the metaphors LEARNERS ARE CONTAINERS[1] and LEARNERS ARE MACHINES, students picture themselves in rather more active ways. Thus, the six adults whose learner diaries were scrutinised in his study coincided in portraying their learning in terms of SUFFERING, PROBLEM-SOLVING, and above all TRAVELLING—the latter two views implying their unquestionably active agency.

Ellis's discussion raises two related questions. In the first place, it leads us to consider to what extent the metaphorical constructions of the six students analysed are representative of other learning situations. For regardless of the heuristic potential of metaphor at all levels of human experience, metaphor is anything but culturally aseptic. Given the impact of culture in a broad sense in our figurative construal of experience, the first question is then to see whether the metaphors found by Ellis are also present in students from different social and cultural milieus.

In this connection, I started to pay close attention to the possible metaphors in the answers of the questionnaires my own students regularly fill in throughout their courses, either to evaluate the different units in the syllabus, or to reflect upon their achievements. Although not an in-depth study, the exploration yielded similar results to those in Ellis (2001): my students also saw learning as involving suffering of diverse sorts, and evaluated their accomplishment according to their ability to "follow the rhythm" of their "faster" classmates, to "move forward" or "make progress", despairing when they couldn't see "where this is leading to"—ie in terms of travelling. Indeed, the very words *course* and *carrera* (the Spanish term for university degree) somehow suggest that the use of journey metaphors to discuss or refer to education is deeply entrenched or conventionalised. Interestingly, the metaphor is also found in the representations of Japanese learners, as discussed in Cortazzi and Jin (1999), which suggests the universal nature of our experience of travelling and, therefore, its potential to construe and refer to learning as well as to other life experiences.

A second issue involves considering the ways in which knowledge of such metaphorical representations may be "a useful addition to the tools available for SLA

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[1] The metaphors are capitalised throughout this paper according to metaphor research convention.

research" (R. Ellis, 2001: 83) and, most importantly, to actual L2 teaching, leading to either better classroom techniques or to better learning materials. Common sense should make us say yes. For regardless of the somewhat confused views that learners may have about what language learning is or should be about (mostly at the beginning of a language course), and despite their ignorance of their own learning potential or profile (partly influenced by their previous experience as learners) they are, indeed, the true protagonists in the language classroom. Learners' representations of their own learning—metaphorical or otherwise—should, in this sense, provide an invaluable source of insight for teachers interested in making the most of their students' learning potential.

The present paper is a brief reflection on how the metaphor LEARNING IS TRAVELLING may be usefully exploited in L2 learning / teaching. The starting premise is that the rich number of entailments afforded by this metaphorical schema will enable us to design materials that promote enjoyable and effective learning experiences. Moreover, since travelling is one of the domains any student is familiar with, the materials and practices drawing upon it may be seen as truly constructive. Finally, journey metaphors may help both teachers and learners get rid of the "pace" or "rhythm" constraints frequent in large classrooms, and therefore eliminate the stress of many students who perceive that "lagging behind" their most advanced classmates is a personal failure—with obvious negative consequences for their learning process.

Indeed, one of the problems of many language courses in both secondary and higher education in some countries (eg Spain) is the large number of students per course, which makes it difficult to pay close attention to the idiosyncrasy of each student. In other words, catering for the diversity of styles and concerns in large classrooms requires a context different from the ones some of us are familiar with. The solution may be in the growing development of hyper- or multimedia materials and environments for language teaching / learning (M-L. Villanueva & M. Sanz, 2002; M-L. Villanueva, 2003b; M-L. Villanueva & M-N. Ruiz, 2003). Their flexible and non-linear nature may indeed enable students to actually "travel" when learning a second language. Before discussing how this may take place, let us explore journey metaphors a bit further.

1. Journey metaphors

As described by cognitive scholars, the domain of journeys has provided the means whereby a varied number of experiences are understood and discussed, from love relationships to life itself (G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, 1980, 1999; G. Lakoff & M. Turner, 1989; R. Gibbs, 1994). In fact, the metaphor belongs to a higher-order hierarchical structure which has come to be known as the EVENT STRUCTURE METAPHOR whereby states are seen as locations, changes as movement in space, causes as forces, actions as self-propelled movement, purposes as destinations, and means as paths—to mention but a few of the entailments of this complex metaphorical schema. An important implication of this metaphor is the view of long-term, purposeful activities as journeys, which leads to the aforementioned more specific metaphors: A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS A JOURNEY or, in our case, LEARNING IS A JOURNEY. These underlie such everyday, common expressions to

describe love relationships as "look how far we've come", "we're at a crossroads", "he's gotten off the track" or "I don't think this relationship is going anywhere"—expressions that may well be applied to describe any other purposeful activity such as one's studies and/or career.[2]

In turn, journey metaphors are motivated at a very basic level by what is known in cognitive linguistics as a PATH image schema. Image schemas are basic schematic structures grounded on the configuration of our bodies and the associated locomotive functions, which lie at the basis of our conceptual system and help us to make sense of space and those objects in it in terms of VERTICALITY, CONTAINER or PATH notions (M. Johnson, 1987). The logic of this PATH schema would consist of the following elements: a source or starting point, a destination or goal, a series of contiguous locations connecting source with goal, and a directionality. Thus, by saying that a given relationship "goes nowhere" we are "using" the goal element (and probably also the directionality element) of the PATH schema underlying the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, whereas the expressions "look how far we've come" and "he's gotten off the track" evoke ideas of the path itself—ie the series of contiguous locations connecting source with goal in the schema.

1.1. Learning is travelling

Of course, the metaphor LEARNING IS TRAVELLING reflects the structural properties of the hierarchy to which it belongs as well as the logic of the underlying PATH schema, as suggested by expressions used to describe what happens in the classroom such as "sailing through a lesson" or "covering a great deal of ground", and the students' personal response to the course's exigencies as being or not being able to "catch up", "keep up" or "move forward" (R. Ellis, 2001).

The concrete metaphors making up the LEARNING IS TRAVELLING schema could thus be summarised at a very basic level as follows:[3]

- A PURPOSEFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE IS A JOURNEY
- A LEARNER IS A TRAVELLER
- LEARNING PLANS ARE DESTINATIONS
- A LEARNING PLAN IS AN ITINERARY
- DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTRUCTIONS THAT IMPEDE MOTION

Interestingly, in general the students' responses briefly outlined earlier point to a rather negative view of their learning journey. Thus of all the possible aspects of learning that might be understood in terms of travelling, it is negative aspects that appear to be most frequently highlighted by the expressions. For instance, apart from the neutral description in "going through a lesson" and the positive assessment of having "covered (a great deal of) ground", students make abundant use of the following statements to evaluate their performance or "progress": "cannot catch / keep up / follow", "be left behind", "lag behind", "be miles away", "go in / choose the wrong direction" or "get nowhere" to list but a few of those found in questionnaires. At the same time, these comments suggest that of all the things involved in the

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[2] Expressions quoted in Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 45-46).
[3] For another view of journey metaphors in foreign language learning, see Villanueva (2003a).

metaphor only the movement, direction and goal aspects—indeed, the "bare" elements in the path image schema outlined above—seem to be exploited in the students' representations, rather than other more enjoyable aspects of travelling. Moreover, the implicit view is that learning consists of a somewhat fixed path or travel itinerary (established either by teachers or by the most advanced or "faster" students in the class), and hence the sense of failure when not being able to "catch up" or "follow the rhythm" of others. Accordingly, whether consciously or unconsciously, goal or achievement is often measured in terms of those that "go ahead", rather than being a personal issue.

Indeed, if we stop to reflect about our own experience, travelling encompasses more things than goals to be achieved and the steps to achieve them—personal experience being, in fact, the truly original source in metaphorical thinking. For if we draw upon our experience as travellers, we find that journeys hardly ever involve a fixed itinerary but a number of tailor-made ones, some of which are actually made up ad hoc as the journey takes place. Thus not only can we devise our own trajectory when visiting a foreign country, but we may also depart from it at certain times according to our particular interests. In other words, tour operators may be very good at their job, but we always have the final choice. Likewise, we seldom travel alone, but make use of a tourist guide or follow the suggestions in brochures and travel guides. Finally, the ultimate purpose of travelling is not only getting somewhere, but also, and most importantly, to enjoy the very process of doing so—slowing down, even stopping at times, and speeding up at others.

Travelling is, in short, a personal experience that should match our expectations, wishes and personal preferences, and of course enrich our present and future experience. The question is how this brighter side of travelling could be incorporated in the teaching / learning context so that the metaphor LEARNING IS TRAVELLING may truly become a "bridge for learning" (M. Cortazzi & L. Jin, 1999) rather than being an empty slogan. In other words, how can we usefully apply our ideas of what an enjoyable journey should be into the concrete situation of learning a second or foreign language?

2. Travelling / learning in multimedia contexts

One of the most evident domains or environments where motion (journey or otherwise) metaphors have been recurrently and consistently exploited is cyberspace. Terms like "site", "links", "gate", "navigate", "surf", and "search" belong to the new cyber meta-language of web users all around the world, who interact with interlinked pages of text, sound, images and animation by actually moving through them. Likewise, many of the teaching materials posted on the web require some kind of motion on the part of the learners / users—if nothing else, they must click on given links to move from one page to another, scroll the page they are reading or working on, or open various windows and move alternatively from one to the other when doing the exercises or activities in them. The ultimate sense of purposeful motion— and hence of travelling in its most basic sense—is provided by the various quests found in the web, the students having to complete some kind of questionnaire by virtually (and actually) touring the web.

The question is whether all these experiences are travelling experiences in the comprehensive and positive sense outlined in the previous section. For if the journey view invoked is that of a purposeful activity in order to attain a goal, engaging in the learning activities proposed on the various learning sites currently available is indeed a journey, with the added advantage that one actually gets the feeling of "going places" by the click of the mouse. However, if the journey metaphor includes aspects such as the possibility of re-designing one's route as one moves along (ie itineraries in the plural), of having the help of a guide ("human" or otherwise), or of getting "lost" (or deviating from the chosen route for some time and then going back again) for the sake and pleasure of it, the answer is, unfortunately, no.

For although the web is full of sites and pages that offer students of all ages the possibility of learning languages in a new way, one still has the feeling that routes or itineraries are fixed, and therefore that one must adjust to them hoping to get something in exchange in the end. And when this is not so, there is always the risk of not knowing why or what we are doing, ie of getting lost yet without the pleasure sometimes involved. In fact, many "multimedia" learning environments actually reproduce the type of exercises and activities which can be found in many print materials—the only advantage being the quick access to the key of the activities by the click of the mouse. With the exception of Web Quests, very few of the learning pages posted on the web nowadays make use of the huge potential of multimedia environments and hypertext technology to engage learners in designing their own learning plans and activities and/or exploring diverse aspects of the language studied as they do them (eg access to an online dictionary or grammar, to other related activities and texts).

There is a different way of designing language learning materials by using journey metaphors. One possible model may be exemplified by GIAPEL's project SMAIL. It started from the assumption that new technologies can be usefully applied for devising truly interactive language-learning systems susceptible to being adapted to diverse learning needs and styles, and to promoting the development of learners' cognitive and learning abilities. The key notion in such a system is diversity: of tasks, of learners, and of ways of doing things—ie of achieving goals.

Bearing in mind the characteristics of real-life journeys, the design of SMAIL exploits some of their most prototypical components. In the first place, languages are presented as *countries* to be explored, and their texts as the *lands* to be travelled while exploring them—either by means of an autonomous journey or, rather, a guided tour. Particular attention is paid to the system's interface, devised as a virtual tutor or more experienced *traveller*, helping students through their learning journey and, most importantly, opening discourse spaces where they can navigate, negotiate, and indeed actively participate in their own learning experience.

All the activities and tasks proposed in SMAIL are presented to its users as *journeys* or as *excursions*. The latter are fairly short activities dealing with a concrete learning point (eg classifying and grouping texts, re-constructing a text from a set of headlines, de-composing a text into a number of headings, looking for information according to various reading objectives). In contrast, *journeys* are longer learning modules which cover a set of interrelated activities (eg excursions and what are referred to as *training* activities and exercises) organised in terms of various graded

stages (journeys through narrative texts, descriptive texts, etc). In this respect, learners may engage in different journeys according to their needs and/or preferences.

When designing the activities, each text (ie *journey*) was exploited bearing in mind prototypical learning styles or types of *travellers* built upon four prototypes. These were devised by the GIAPEL by drawing insights from previous work on learning styles (M-L. Villanueva & I. Navarro, 1997; M-L. Villanueva & M. Sanz, 2002) as well as from the work of scholars dealing with similar issues (C. Chapelle & P. Green, 1992; K-S. Soo & Y-H. Ngeow, 1997), and were referred to as "travellers wanting the help of a guide", "travellers with a clear route in mind", "determined travellers", and "fearless travellers". For if diversity is both a starting assumption and a desired result in CALL design, it may also represent a serious threat when actually building up a realistic and workable learning system—multimedia or otherwise. A good way to overcome this issue was to design the system according to a small set of *models* or *prototypes* exemplifying various types of learners, tasks, and patterns of language use (genres).

The system also includes a number of resources like dictionaries, grammars, extra texts and, of course, external resources (ie resources posted in the various online webs available). The way journeys and excursions are presented to the language learners in the preliminary version of SMAIL is illustrated in the screen shots shown in Appendix 1 at the end of this paper. Finally, learners are advised to make use of what is presented as a learner diary or *travel log*. This consists of the following pre-designed files: *learning styles*, *self-evaluation*, *objectives and plans*, *materials and methods*, *notebook*, and *tutorials*.[4]

The journey metaphor in SMAIL exploits the idea that discovering a language is engaging in a journey where the learner enters—ie discovers—a new culture through its language. The advantages of this metaphor are diverse. First, it takes into account the learners' previous real experience and corresponding background knowledge of journeys, and foresees that their capacity to establish analogies between journeys and language learning will make it easier—and, presumably, more enjoyable—for them to engage in the latter. Second, the comprehensiveness of the metaphor allows learners to enter a reticular system of links that adapts itself to their needs and styles, thus offering them different paths, long journeys and excursions, training tasks, and orientation devices. Third, if we take into account that the best way to become an experienced traveller and hence make the most of a given journey is by travelling itself, it seems plausible to expect that it is by learning that people actually learn how to learn, that is, learn how to organise their learning process, set up objectives and goals, and choose the best tools to achieve them.

Conclusion

In her paper The Concept of the Journey, Jane Mill (2003) explores two opposing versions of the LEARNING IS TRAVELLING metaphor, namely: (a) one in which

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[4] We have not had time to analyse in full detail all the comments and reactions that the students interacting with the system wrote in their learning diaries. For a preliminary analysis, see Caballero and Ruiz (forthcoming).

teachers are drivers or tour operators and learners are moved at high speed through the knowledge / land in which the journey takes place; and (b) one in which learning is a journey of discovery in which teacher and learners travel together and there is time to stop along the way to enjoy the landscape or to make side trips to unexpected places. The latter is a kind of journey where learners are allowed to sit "in the driving seat at least some of the time" rather than being mere "road kill" striving to reach a destination as fast as possible—a fast pace usually set for them in advance by the teacher of the course.

Of course, this second version of the metaphor may well be achieved in "normal" or conventional classrooms. However, given the constraints often imposed (eg the number of students per class and the limited hours of face-to-face instruction per course), it may be argued that the ideal place to exploit the metaphor and pursue the benefits derived from it is the sort of "paperless", virtual learning space granted by ICTs and CALL. Indeed, the flexibility of systems and environments like these may help us flesh out the journey metaphor outlined in these pages, and provide the conditions and opportunities for learners to "travel" when learning a new language— with all the positive aspects of travelling so difficult to cater for otherwise in the classroom.

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APPENDIX

estudiante

Viernes, 9 de Enero de 2004 12:42:40

TESTS

PERFILES

RECORRIDOS

Recorrido tipo para un viajero con guía
Recorrido tipo para un viajero con la ruta clara
Recorrido tipo para un viajero con opinión propia
Recorrido tipo para un viajero sin miedo a la aventura

GRAMÁTICA

DIARIO

materiales

Viernes, 9 de Enero de 2004 12:49:28

VIAJES LARGOS

EXCURSIONES

ENTRENAMIENTOS

FORMACIÓN AL APRENDER

JUEGOS Y CHISTES

..| **Materiales** | **Estudiantes** | **Biblioteca** |**Sisten**

PARA CONTINUAR

¿Cómo tomar decisiones para continuar?

SI TE HA GUSTADO EL TEXTO y quieres aprender más puedes hacer dos cosas:

1. Continuar con la opción LA ORGANIZACIÓN DEL TEXTO

2. VOLVER A LA PANTALLA INICIAL y elegir tu propia opción

SI TE HAS CANSADO DE LOS VIAJES LARGOS puedes cambiar de actividad
volviendo a la pantalla PALABRAS Y ACCIONES

SI QUIERES SEGUIR TRABAJANDO CON INSTRUCCIONES, CONSEJOS, pero quieres cambiar de texto
puedes elegir otros DESTINOS de tu viaje por las instrucciones.

SI NO QUIERES SEGUIR TRABAJANDO SOBRE LAS INSTRUCCIONES Y CONSEJOS, puedes ir al
INDICE GENERAL

¿Quieres tomar notas en tu DIARIO DE APRENDIZAJE?

Internet

Stages in learning a language. przez admin Â· 12 marca 2013. As we all know, learning is a long-lasting and demanding process of acquiring new means of communication like vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc. All of them are really essential for speaking a foreign language. As any other process, learning also can be divided into some stages that follow one another and none of them can be omitted to achieve success in learning.Â fluency â€" the highest level allows a student to communicate freely and also grasp such language phenomena as metaphors, puns or language humor. It is essential especially when talking to native speakers. It helps to avoid misunderstandings and also enables to get the message across. This is what linguists say about learning a language. Learning & Teaching Foreign Languages. Skip Navigation Go to search form. Home.Â Multimedia CALL: Lessons to be learned from research on instructed SLA. Language Learning & Technology, 2 (1), 22-34. Crookes, G., & Schmidt R.W. (1991).Â The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In Ritchie, W. C., & Bahtia, T. K. (eds.), Handbook of second language acquisition (pp. 413-68). New York: Academic Press.Â Situating learning in communities of practice. In LB Resnick, JM Levine, & SD Teasley (Eds.), Perspectives on socially shared cognition (pp. 63-82). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Foreign language is a subject that, due to its specificity, namely, the creation of an artificial language environment for students due to a lack of natural language, presupposes the most flexible and wide use of various technical means of instruction.Â The main groups tasks solved with the help of multimedia in the English language classes, including the support of students' learning activities; Providing real communication with native speakers; Ensuring access of all participants of the educational process to the rapidly growing information funds stored in centralized information systems; Development of cognitive interest and motivation to learn English.Â What are the main ways to use the capabilities of modern multimedia technologies in teaching a foreign language?