The Development of Discourse Markers in Narrations Written by Spanish Heritage Language Learners

Mark Cisneros
University of New Mexico

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/skc


This Event is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Shared Knowledge Conference by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.
The Development of Discourse Markers in Narrations Written by Spanish Heritage Language Learners

Mark Cisneros, Doctoral Candidate, Hispanic Linguistics, University of New Mexico

Studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) indicate that the use of discourse markers (DMs) in the academic writing of second language learners improves the overall quality of these written texts by contributing to their cohesion and comprehensibility (Saif Modhish 2012; Jalilifar 2008; Intaraprawat & Steffensen 1995). The use of DMs not only improves the quality of second language (L2) written texts, but also that of texts produced by speakers in their first language (L1). Learning how to properly use DMs allows L1 writers to become more conscious of how they present the information in their texts (Steffensen & Cheng 1996).

However, despite the importance of the use of DMs in both native and foreign/second language writing, in the field of Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL), the acquisition and production of DMs among this learner population has been given little attention. Few studies on the teaching of DMs to Spanish L2 learners have recently focused on oral discourse and show that both explicit and implicit instruction promote the learning and use of DMs in Spanish Second Language (SSL) learners (Hernández & Rodríguez-González 2013; Hernández 2011; De la Fuente 2009). However, pedagogies that promote the use of DMs in SHL writing have not yet been identified in the literature, while pedagogies for the use of DMs in SSL writing are few (Saíz 2003). For this reason, my research attempts to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the frequency of use (i.e., number and type) of discourse markers used by SHL learners in narrations?; 2) Does the following pedagogical intervention (i.e., Explicit Instruction + Input Flood + Textual Enhancement) increase the use of discourse markers in narrations written by Spanish Heritage Language learners?; and 3) What are the differences and/or similarities in the syntactic complexity, morpho-syntactic accuracy, and fluency of narrations produced by two types of SHL speakers (i.e., early SHL speakers vs. late SHL speakers)?
References


Saif Modhish, A. 2012. “Use of Discourse Markers in the Composition Writings of Arab EFL Learners.” English Language Teaching. 5.5. 56-61.