

Lost in (Borrowed) Translation

The Progression of Calques in the Acquisition of Spanish as a Second Language

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Introduction

It is interesting that Spanish speakers know information that is being said, but not understand it due to a gap in vocabulary acquisition. As the level of Spanish increases, so does the creativity in expressing thoughts. When Spanish speakers understand and create words, phrases, and sentences in various ways, it leads to better communication. It's been observed that beginning and advanced speakers experience different levels of creative language, and this study addresses which types of lexical translations can be distinguished at different levels.

Methodology

A survey of 12 questions was taken by students learning Spanish at different levels. The questions constitute multiple choice and free response questions covering different types of calques: semantic, idiomatic, replication, and literal translation. It's possible to witness calques at different levels of Spanish, but also which types develop more original responses with the advancement of classes and/or experiences. A total of 21 students participated in this study.

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Main Points

This research is important because it can help identify when Spanish becomes more of an adapted, original form of communication instead of recited thoughts and ideas. If students can learn to identify information that they already know presented in a new way, Spanish can be learned and applied in a much more realistic conversational environment.

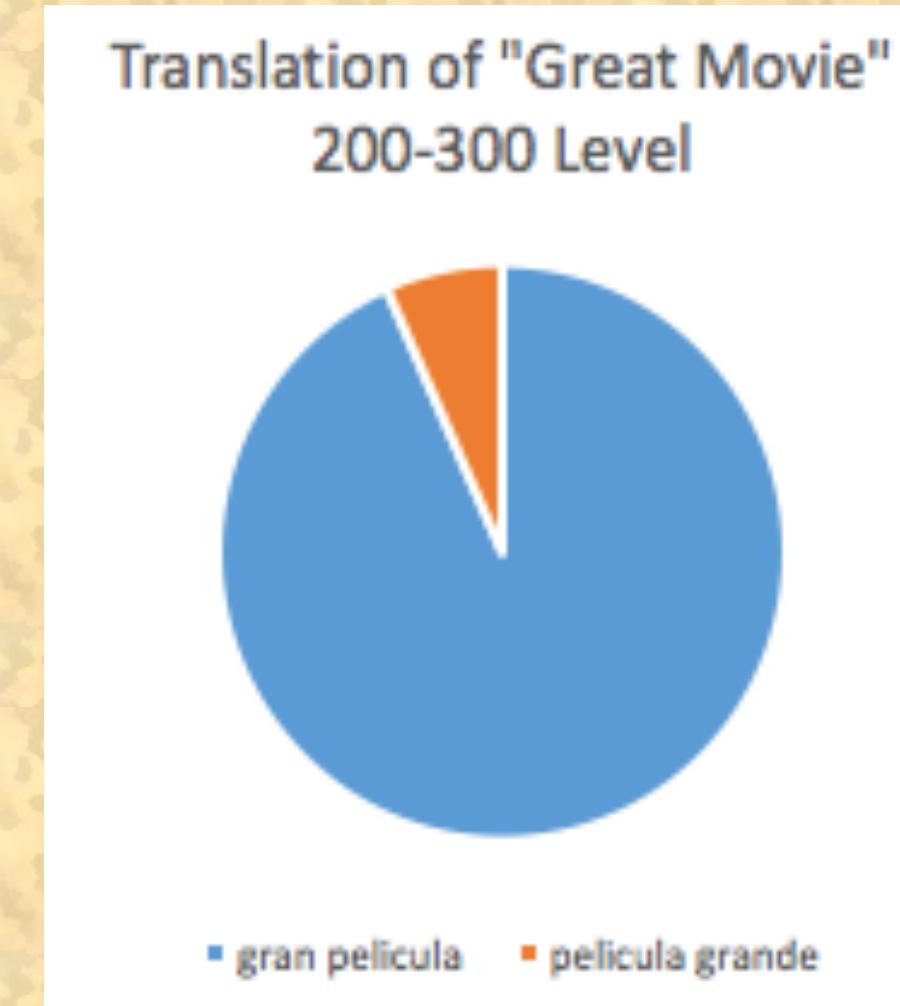
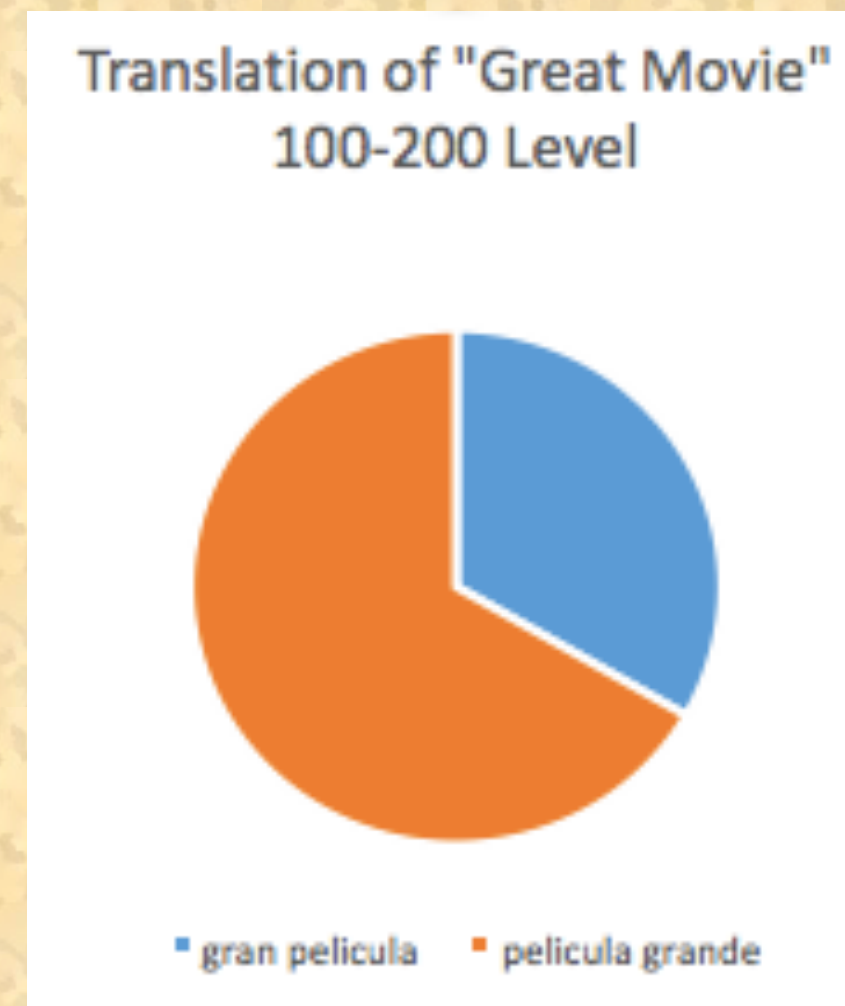
Conclusions

In addressing the level of Spanish that distinguishes literal interpretation from original thoughts, a distinction between beginning and higher levels of Spanish can be seen in thought development. Beginning learners tend to use literal translations of words, English cognates, rote expressions, and strictly followed grammatical rules. However, exceptions to this trend can be seen when it comes to frequency of the lexical translation in which the different levels of Spanish seem to blend together. Future directions involve more participants and questions surveyed.

References

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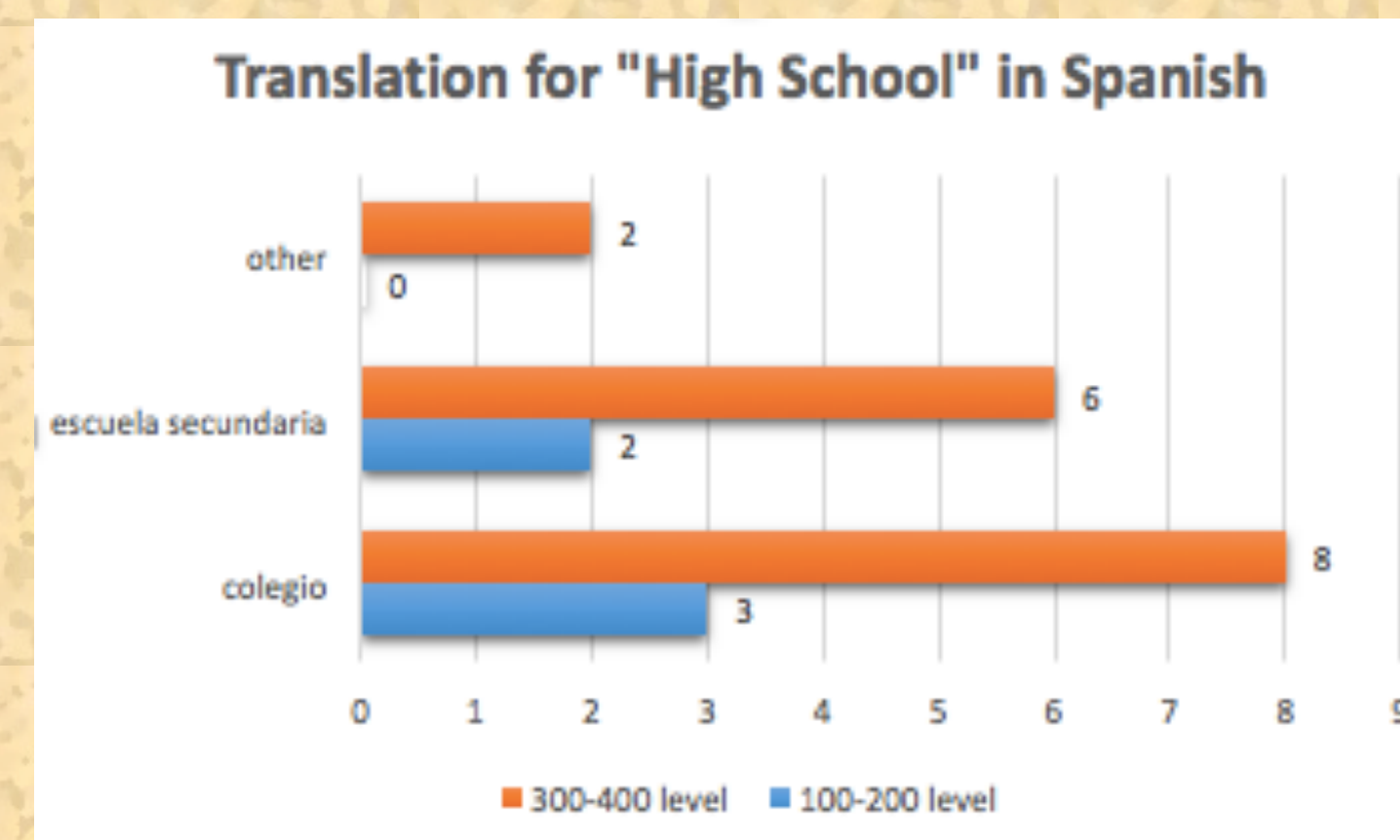
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Results

There are patterns in self-constructed responses between beginners and more advanced learners of Spanish. Based on the graphs above, it is more common for beginning learners to strictly follow common Spanish rules such as an adjective following the noun it describes; it is relatively unfamiliar to apply the fact that an adjective can have alternate meanings before or after a noun. The translation of "high school" is not distinct when it comes to different levels of Spanish as depicted in Graph 2. One explanation for this is that it is more commonly used than other words, especially when learning in a school environment. Graph 3 shows the habits of beginners to replicate information as opposed to creating their own version of the same interpretation.

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