

Linguistic Interferences with Verbal Tenses in Three Romance Languages: Spanish, Romanian and Catalan. Based on Student Texts in Schools from Castellón (Spain)

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Abstract

Interferences between languages are very common in migratory processes. This is the case of the Romanian immigration process in Spain, specifically in the city of Castellon, from the late 90s to today. We can find in our language lessons a lot of orthographic mistakes made by our Romanian students. One of these errors is located when they use the verbal tense. The methodology used to submit this article is based on the textual types in its different variants: formal and informal letters, narratives, descriptions argumentative and explanatory texts, among others. We have represented some of the original texts to support our research.

Keywords: *interferences, tense, textual types, languages in contact*

Some preliminary characteristics of three languages in contact

The similarities between Romanian, Spanish and Catalan are significant because they are Romance languages and they have preserved many linguistic structures derived from the mother tongue. For this reason, Romanian children learn the two Iberian languages quickly than other immigrant groups in Spain. Undoubtedly, there are many phonetic and lexical matches, but tenses are a bit more complex.

Romanian language was developed by Vulgar Latin, like Castilian, Catalan, Italian, French and another Romance languages and this is the most important reason of the similarities between the three languages we are going to study in this article. The main differences between Romanian and Spanish/Catalan linguistic systems are specially phonetics and ortographics. The vowel sounds *ă, î/â* are not known in the Iberian languages, and they are very difficult to learn for a new student from Spain. Although, in some consonant letters like *ș* and *ț* the sound is very similar to another phonemes, and these are easier to learn for Spanish and Catalan speakers.

In addition to this, the letter *y* in Romanian is normally not used in its vocabulary; however, we can see it in foreigner words: *New York, Str. Yucatan, Guyana Franceza*, etc.

Modern Romanian difference perfectly the phonemes *v* and *b*, but this not occurs in Spanish and in the major part of Catalan dialects, although anciently it was pronounced in all

their respective linguistic areas. Due to this process Romanian, in Spanish called *betacismo*, students have a lot of initial problems because teachers do not distinguish **b/v** while they are explaining the lessons or speaking normally, and pupils represent their texts with some errors motivated by this divergence.

We can review the Latin etymology when we have doubts in this question, and in the majority of the cases it can really help us. For example, we can observe these lexical similarities: *bine ai venit* (*bienvenido*, Spa.; *benvingut*, Cat.), *braț* (*brazo*, Spa.; *braç*, Cat.), *verde* (*verde*, Spa.; *verd*, Cat.), although we could find any difference: *avocat* (*abogado*, Spa.; *advocat*, Cat.).

Another specially significative particularities are the sounds of /s/, /ss/, /c/, /ç/ and /z/. In this case, Romanian students have one of the biggest difficulty: to pronounce the Spanish /za/, /ce/, /ci/, /zo/, /zu/ (*zueco*, *zorra*, *cerezas*), that beginners in the learning process spell **sa**, **se**, **si**, **so**, **su**, like Andalusian, Canary and American Spanish dialects (Argentinian, Mexican, Colombian). In addition to this, sound /z/ is convergent between Catalan and Romanian (and Italian, Portuguese...), but not between Spanish language: *zebra* (*zebra*, Cat.; *cebra*, Spa.), *zero* (*zero*, Cat.; *cero*, Spa.)

Castilian digraph /**ch**/, before **e** or **i**, in Romanian is pronounced with /k/ phoneme, as the same as Italian language (*perché*, It.= *why*, Eng.) and this is one of the reasons for most errors among students. Furthermore, Romanian spelling rules establish the phoneme coincident with the Spanish digraph **ch** for **ce** and **ci** groups in Romanian: *ciocolată* (*chocolate*, Spa.).

Another group of common mistakes is in relation with **g/j**, sound that does not exist in Spanish but equally pronounced in some Catalan dialects. The Romanian dipraph **gh** before **e** and **i** becomes the Spanish and Catalan digraph **gu**: *ghepard* (*guepardo*, Spa.; *guepard*, Cat.), *ghetou* (*gueto*, Spa./Cat.).

Sometimes like other Romance and Germanic languages, Romanian is also characterized because letter **h** is not mute in initial and intervocalic position, is slightly pronounced, but this does not happen in Castilian and Catalan, because in these languages this letter has become mute.

Two letters that do not exist in Romanian are **ñ**, particular of the Spanish alphabet, and digraph **ll**. **Ñ** letter is spelled like the group **-ni-** in Romanian: *Spania* (*España*, Spa.; *Espanya*, Cat.). Something similar happens with **ll**, that sounds like a **-li-**.

To finish these preliminary considerations perhaps we need to talk about **r** (simple) and **rr** (double), divergent sounds in Spanish and Catalan in relation with Romanian, maybe one of the most common interferences among learners.

These are, more or less, the main ortographic differences between the three languages. Now, we will proceed to analyze the errors of students with the tenses and temporary adverbs.

A selection of different types of texts in order to detect the usual errors. A discourse analysis proposal.

The text types are methods and proposals whose aim is to group or classify the linguistic texts (and speeches) in accordance with common characteristics. The issue of text types is approached from disciplines and learning as discourse analysis and text linguistics. Our article is based on this methodology and in particular we have used these various texts:

Text 1: Dictation.

Text 2: Narrative text: a tale.

Text 3: Descriptive text: describing a friend.

Text 4: Instructional text: a recipe.

Text 5: Argumentative text.

Text 6: An informal letter.

Texts have been written by students for 12 to 15 years of compulsory secondary education. The first two are in Spanish and the other in Catalan.

Text 1: Dictation

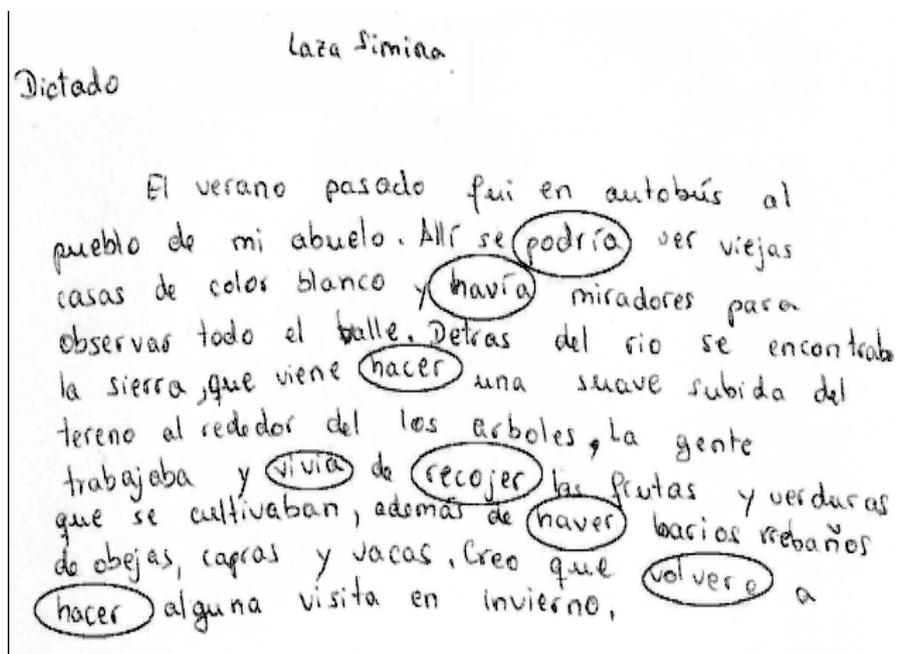


Fig. 1

Interferences tense:

- podría (incorrect tense, condicional < past simple) = podía (Spa.) = podia (Cat.) = you could (Eng.)
- había (accent mistake and b/v confusion)
- hacer (incorrect verbal periphrasis) = viene a hacer (Spa.) = ve a fer (Cat.) = it has (Eng.)
- vivía (accent mistake) = vivía (Spa.) = vivia (cat.) = he/she lived (Eng.)
- recoger (orthographic error, b/v confusion in Spanish) = recoger (Spa.) = recollir (Cat.) = to take (Eng.)
- haver (orthographic error, b/v confusion in Spanish) = haber (Spa.) = haver (Cat.) = to have (Eng.)
- volvere (accent mistake) = volveré (Spa.) = tornaré (Cat.) = I will return (Eng.)

Perhaps, the most common mistakes in verbal tense are in relation with Spanish accentuation, specially with hiatus (*podría*, *vivía*, *había*) or with normal verb conjugation - when sharp words ending in a vowel the accent should be mandatory (*volveré*). The other examples are related to spelling (*recoger*, *haber*) and verbal periphrasis.

Text 2: Narrative text: a tale.

Un día el padre de Vlad Tepes, capturó a tres turcos y llamó a Vlad para que le **diga** que quiere el que su padre haga con sus prisioneros.

Vlad **dijo** que quiere que a los turcos les quiten la cabeza y su padre **hizo** lo que él **dijo**.

Cuando **llegó** la hora de cortarles la cabeza a los turcos, Vlad **a girado** la cabeza porque no le **gustava** ver los turcos sin cabeza, pero su padre **le dejó** que no **mira** y le **dijo**: -"Si no **mira** no sabes nada pero si miras sabes si **es hecho** bien la que **es hecho**!"

Pero la cosa no **funciona** porque Vlad Tepes, cuando **crecio**, **hacia** lo mismo con los malos.

Fig. 2**Tense incorrections and interferences:**

- diga (agreement mistake)= dijera (Spa.)= diguera (Cat.)= he/she said (Eng.)
- gustava (use b/v)= gustaba (Spa.)= agradava (Cat.)= liked (Eng.).
- dejo (accentuation)= dejó (Spa.)= deixà (Cat.)= he/she lent (Eng.)
- mira (agreement mistake)= mirara (Spa./Cat.)= he/she looked (Eng.)
- crecio (accentuation)= creció (Spa.)= va créixer (Cat.)= it grew (Eng.).
- Hacia (hiatus accentuation and agreement)= hacía/hizo (Spa.)= feia/féu (Cat.)= he/she did (Eng.)

In this narrative text we can observe some tense errors in relation with accentuation, because it doesn't exist in Romanian. This is one of the most common error between Spanish learners when use the past (dejó, creció, hacía), and when they confuse b/v sounds (gustaba). The other important incorrection in this text is the agreement with past in subjunctive verbs (mirara, dijera).

Text 3: Descriptive text: describing a friend

E MÍLLER AMIC

El miller amic meu es diu Sorin i ~~vive~~ viu així en
Castelló lo he conegut així en un ciber i la meua mare con
la neua ~~eran~~ eren amigue de mucha tiempu i nosotros no sabiem així
fue mi primer amic així en España i ~~ou~~ és el miller amic
que ~~tengo~~ tinc los amics de Romania que allí també tinc amics
moltsims com així veig al cine con los amics al treball a
moltsims llocs. El miller que a los 2 mes agrada el futbol
anem junts a jugar i també con altres amics. El en Romania vivia a
una altra ciutat que es dice Targoviste es molt poca de la capital i té un
moltes coses boniques en la neua ciutat. Es juga en un equi de futbol
en la neua ciutat de Romania que es dice Felon Teisi es molt aficionat
al futbol i així en España també ~~juega~~ juga en Futbol Castelló ne
equi boit es Barcelona i el meu es Real Madrid i de Romania el ne
es Steaua i el meu es Dinamo ~~non grans a nivels Steaua i Dinamo~~
com Barcelona i Real Madrid ~~pregunta~~ me pareix que es la unica cosa
on que no ~~nos parecem~~ ens pareixem en els equis de futbol ~~com~~ ~~juegan~~ juguen aquestes equis
i ~~gana~~ el meu o el meu al dia ~~següent~~ diem que mal es teu
equi i així ~~tot el dia~~ i no agrada moltíssim el futbol a los dos.

Fig. 3

Verbal tenses

- es du (incorrect ort.)= es diu (Cat.)= se llama (Spa.)= it's called (Eng.)
- vive (Spa.)= viu (Cat.)= he/she lives (Eng.)
- lo he conegut (incorrect ort.)= l'he conegut (Cat.)= lo he conocido (Spa.)= I've known him (Eng.)
- gana (Spa.)= guanya (Cat.)= it wins (Eng.)
- eran (Spa.)= eren (Cat.)= they were (Eng.)
- fue (Spa.)= fou (Cat.)= he/she was (Eng.)
- tengo (Spa.)= tinc (Cat.)= I have (Eng.)
- me pareixi (Incorrect ort.)= em pareix (Cat.)= me parece (Spa.)= I think (Eng.)
- nos parecemos (Spa.)= ens pareixem (Cat.)= we're similar (Eng.)
- juegan (Spa.)= juguen (cat.)= they play (Eng.)

Adverbs of time

- ara (Cat.)= ahora (Spa.)= now (Engl.)
- cuan (incorrect)= quan (Cat.)= cuando (Spa.)= when (Eng.)
- al dia següent (Incorrect)= al dia següent
- tot el dia (Cat.)= todo el día (Spa.)= all day (Eng.)

With respect to Catalan language problems arrive with the combination between pronouns and verbs, and the resulting apostrophe (*em pareix*, *l'he conegut*). Furthermore, interferences with the three languages are very common, particularly when Romanian students use Spanish to conjugate Catalan verbs (*vive*, *gana*, *fue*, *tengo*, *juegan*). However, that does not happens with adverbs of time (*ara*) or circumstantial complements of time (*tot el dia*, *al dia següent*) because the use is usually very correct.

Text 4: Instructional text: a recipe

Ardeï umpluts de carn

1- Es pose l'oli i la ceba, tallada a trossets, en una paella, i es pose a fregir. Al cap de 5 minuts s'agafe el sofregit i es pose també. Quan hi haja passat els 2 minuts tot el que ha sigut fregit s'agafe i es mescle amb la carn picada i amb el ou.

2- Després dels païerats se li els corte el cap, així quedarà un llec per en tindràs que entinsar tota la merda de còims.
Al final tot ha pose a hervir una hora, mentre que està hervint pose salsa de tomaca.

Incredients

- 1kg de carn picada
- un ou
- sal
- carnes
- una ceba
- 6 païerats
- oli
- salsa de tomaca

Fig. 4

Dialectal tense interferences

- es pose (oral Cat. Dialectal form= es posa)= se pone (Spa.)= you put (Eng.)
- s'agafe (oral Cat. Dialectal form= s'agafa)= se coge (Spa.)= you take (Eng.)
- es mescle (oral Cat. Dialectal form= es mescla)= se mezcla (Spa.)= you mix (Eng.)

Other interferences

- frigit (incorrect)= fregit (Cat.)= frito (Spa.)= fried (Eng.)
- se li els corte (incorrect combination)= se'ls talla (Cat.)= se les corta (Spa.)= you cut (Eng.)
- quedarà (Spa.)= quedarà (Cat.)= it will remain (Eng.)
- tindràs que (incorrect verbal periphrasis)= hauràs de (Cat.)= tendràs que (Spa.)= you will have to (Eng.)
- hervir/hervint (incorrect)= bullir/bullint (Cat.)= hervir/hirviendo (Spa.)= to boil/boiling (Eng.)

A peculiarity detected in our study is the enormous and quick linguistic integration of Romanian students so they commit the same vernacularisms that native population, especially with termination in -e (common in oral language) in the present tense used as reflexive verbs (*es pose*= *es posa*, *s'agafe*= *s'agafa*, *es mescle*= *es mescla*). The rest of mistakes are particularly subjected to verbal periphrasis combinations (*hauràs de...*), or interferences between similar sounds in Romanian and Catalan (*frigit/fregit*), among others.

Text 5: Argumentative text

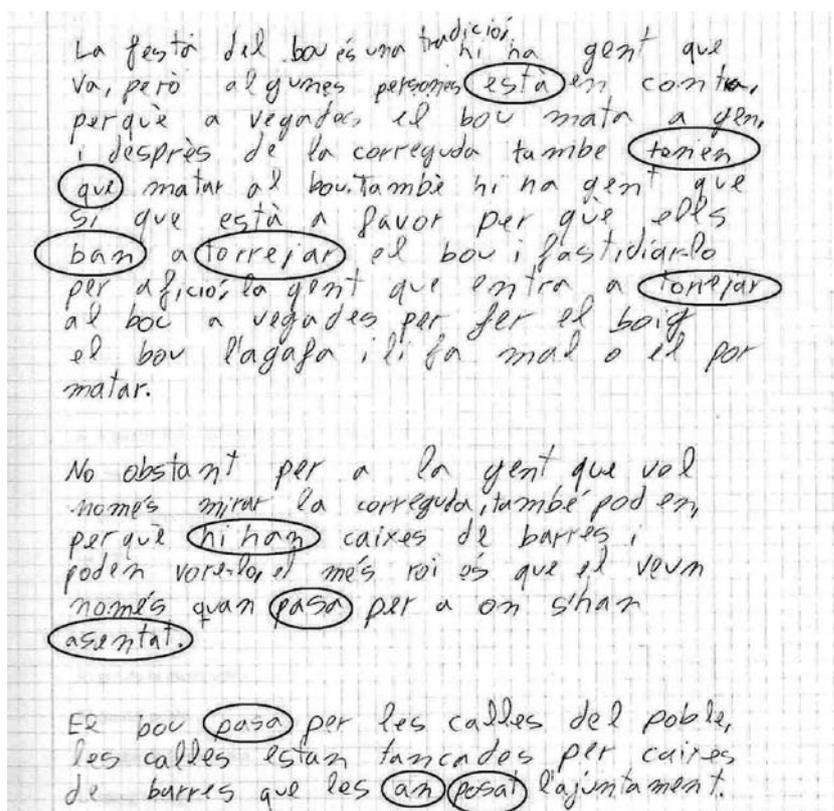


Fig. 5

Ortographic mistakes in verb tenses

- està (agreement or concord error)= estan (Cat.)= están (Spa.)= they are (Eng.)
- ban (V/b confusion)= van (Cat./Spa.)= they go (Eng.)
- torrejar (r/double r Spanish and Catalan sound)= torejar (Cat.)= torear (Spa.)= fight bulls (Eng.)
- hi han (incorrect agreement)= hi ha (Cat.)= hay (Spa.)= there are (Eng.)
- pasa (s sounds confusion)= passa (Cat.)= pasa (Spa.)= he/she passes (Eng.)
- an (dumb h ignorance in Catalan and Spanish)= han (Cat./Spa.)= they have (auxiliar v., Eng.)

Other incorrections

- tenien que (verbal periphrasis)= havien de (Cat.)= tenían que (Spa.)= they had to (Eng.)
- asentat (incorrect tense)= assegut (Cat.)= sentado (Spa.)= sat (Eng.)
- posat (agreement error)= posades (Cat.)= puestas (Spa.)= put (Eng.)

In this text we continue observing the incorrect use of verbal periphrasis (*havian de*), but the most part of errors are due to the orthographic rules: interference between r/rr (*torejar*), confusion b/v (*van*), concord or agreement (*hi ha*), s sounds confusion (*passa*), mute h in Catalan (*han*), among others.

Text 6: An informal letter

Castelló, 10 de juny de 2010

Hola Eduard,

Com et va? Segues passant amb el teu scooter?
Espero que no llisques, esta cosa anant en ell perquè
et causa regre.

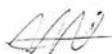
M'han arribat notícies de que perfí t'has comprat
un cavall. Et desitja que'l disfrutis molt i
també t'aconselli que'l cuides molt.

També me'nterato de que d'ordinadors ja no et
servixen tant com plens. Jo encara l'utilizo perquè
necesite molt l'internet.

Però encara no han arribat les vacances i encara
vaig a l'escola una setmana i mitja.

En fi, ens veurem este estiu.

Un abraç



ps.: No s'oblida portar el teu altre ordinador.

Redu Matoran

Fig. 6

Time adverbs and adverbials

- abans (Cat. Adverb)= antes (Spa.)= before (Eng.)
- encara (Cat. Adverb)= aún (Spa.)= yet (Eng.)
- este estiu (Cat. Noun phrase)= este verano (Spa.)= this summer (Eng.)

Verbal tenses

- llisques (incorrect)= lliges (Cat.)= lees (Spa.)= read (Eng.)
- m'enterat (incorrect)= m'he assabentat (Cat.)= me he enterado (Spa.)= I've known (Eng.)
- l'utilizo (incorrect)= l'utilitze (Cat.)= lo utilizo (Spa.)= I use it (Eng.)
- necesite (incorrect)= necesite (Cat.)= necesito (Spa.)= I need (Eng.)

Finally, the use of time adverbs is easy for students, as we saw before, and they write them correctly in the majority of situations: *abans, encara, este estiu...* Continuing with the tenses we can say that a lot of errors come from an incorrect spelling, specially with some sounds like s (necesite) and z (l'utilitze); or another type of mistakes in relation with pronouns combinations (m'he assabentat) or incorrect conjugation, as we have seen in previous texts.

Conclusions

With text analysis, philologists and language teachers can see what are the verbs and time adverbs which students present the biggest difficulties. Also we have been detected most significant spelling differences between the languages mentioned. However, learning process has been enormously successful because of two main reasons: firstly, the two languages in contact are Latin languages, better to understand and learn another one, and moreover, the act of detecting the error from the text types allow to act directly and be more effective.

In this study, based on the text types produced by the Romanian students, written in Castilian language in our classrooms, we have seen what are the most often repeated mistakes in tense, in order to correct them progressively. The results have been highly satisfactory in our classes and we are continuing studying in this direction.

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Interferențe lingvistice ale timpurilor verbale în trei limbi romanice: spaniola, româna și catalana. Bazat pe texte ale elevilor din școli din Castellón (Spania)

Rezumat

Interferențele dintre limbi sunt frecvente în procesul migrației. Acest lucru se observă și în cazul migrației spaniole, în mod special în orașul Castellón de la Plana, care a cunoscut un flux migrațional continuu, de la începutul anilor '90, până astăzi. În lecțiile de limbă spaniolă și catalană se întâlnesc numeroase greșeli ortografice, făcute de elevii români. Unele dintre aceste greșeli țin de folosirea timpurilor verbale. Corpusul pe care se bazează cercearea de față este alcătuit din tipuri textuale, în variante diferite: scrisori formale sau informale, compuneri narative sau argumentative, descrieri, texte exploratorii etc. În articolul nostru am inserat unele dintre textele originale ca suport pentru cercetarea noastră.