RESEARCH ARTICLE

Static Space Teaching: A Descriptive Study in Related Languages*

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Abstract

This paper presents the partial results of a study about the tools, procedures, and difficulties French as a foreign language teachers face when teaching static spatial relations. A comparative and qualitative analysis included 1) some pedagogical procedures followed by a group of teachers, 2) the methodological proposal for spacial teaching presented by different textbooks, 3) the observation of the pedagogical application regarding spatial relations, and 4) the literature review about static space. The method used in the investigation was the descriptive approach method for Human Sciences, based on the contrast and systematization of information. The results show the characteristics that define the conceptual representations of space.

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La enseñanza del espacio estático: un estudio descriptivo en lenguas emparentadas

Resumen

En el presente artículo, se muestran los resultados parciales de un estudio sobre las herramientas, los procedimientos y las dificultades que los profesores de francés como lengua extranjera enfrentan a la hora de enseñar las relaciones espaciales estáticas. El análisis comparativo y cualitativo incluyó 1) los procedimientos pedagógicos aplicados por un grupo de docentes, 2) la propuesta metodológica presentada por los manuales para la enseñanza del espacio, 3) la observación de la acción pedagógica en cuanto a las relaciones espaciales y 4) la literatura sobre espacio estático. El método empleado fue el enfoque descriptivo para las ciencias humanas apoyado en el contraste y la sistematización de la información. Los resultados ponen en evidencia las características que definen las representaciones conceptuales del espacio.

O ensino do espaço estático: um estudo descritivo em línguas relacionadas

Resumo

Neste artigo são apresentados os resultados parciais de um estudo das ferramentas, procedimentos e dificuldades dos professores de

francês como língua estrangeira no ensino de relações espaciais estáticas. Comparativamente e qualitativamente, analisamos: 1) os procedimentos pedagógicos aplicados por um grupo de professores; 2) a proposta metodológica apresentada pelos manuais para o ensino do espaço; 3) a observação da ação pedagógica relacionada às relações espaciais e 4) a literatura sobre espaço estático. A abordagem descritiva para as ciências humanas, baseada no contraste e na sistematização da informação, foi utilizada como método. Os resultados mostram propriedades que caracterizam as representações conceituais do espaço.

Palavras-chave: relações espaciais, recursos e procedimentos didáticos, pedagogia, língua materna, língua estrangeira.

Introduction

Within the foreign language teaching-learning process, topics related to grammar have traditionally implied a high degree of complexity, especially, regarding the comprehension of functional structures, as well as their meaning and representativeness. This is the case of expressions of time and space indicators. In this paper, we will refer to a comparative study focused on the treatment of space.

An analysis of fixed or static space relationships allows establishing some explanations related to form and function, not only of invariable elements, but also of certain locutions and segments that determine the location, the place, and their relations with the speaker, the objects, and their deictic value, if a real communicative competence is considered.

This study contributes to the understanding of functional structures in two related languages and, by the same token, explores the didactic strategies implemented by some French as a foreign language teachers in the teaching of space indicators.

Studies on linguistics and psycholinguistics have come out with relevant intralinguistic variations and have suggested some significant questions related to the universals in the domain of cognition. The semantic structures of languages widely differ, showing linguistic categorization systems that partially determine the non-linguistic behavior of speakers.

The Romance languages codify, one way or another, the distinction between location, source of movement, and destination of that movement, but they diverge in the way those elements, enunciated into spatial relations, take part in this distinction. Bearing in mind the importance of this topic, the current study emphasizes on static spatial relations and on the process of teaching such relations in L2.

Theoretical Framework

Space is a cognitive universal concept that determines all our experiences. In our daily interactions, we talk about situations, locating them in space. Consequently, three factors or dimensions, which play a significant role when allocating these situations, are considered: the geometrical place, the participants, and the time in which they occur. Therefore, we use expressions such as *here, there, behind the armchair*, or *toward the mountain* to locate entities in space. However, each one of these expressions has a different degree of clarity in the coding of referents. *Here*, an expression that is part of the deictic and indicative set, has, for instance, a low degree of clarity because it simply indicates that the object or the situation is physically around the speaker, without considering other characteristics of the situation.

This degree of clarity especially refers to the amount of information spatial relations are described with. When saying: *on the wall,* we display a very low degree of specificity in comparison to *on the upper right side of the wall* since *on the wall* refers to the whole surface as the potential location of the object and *on the upper*

right side of the wall divides the wall into regions, from which one of them is used to locate the object, thus, giving greater precision. The degree of clarity depends to a high degree on our intentions as speakers, on the addressee, and on the communicative context in which we are. Thus, when the *here* and *now* conditions are shared with the addressee, expressions with a low degree of clarity can be used and the message is totally understood. On the other hand, when the *here* and *now* conditions are not shared with the addressee, like in telephone conversations in which the *now* is used but not the *here* or in written communication, and even when the communicative momentum is based on past or future situations in other places, expressions with a higher degree of clarity must be used. The *here* of two people is not always the same because there is a great amount of subjectivity in it (Mendizábal, 1996, p. 311).

This clarity degree equally depends on the kind of linguistic interactions we might have. We locate entities and situations in space to give instructions, to describe scenes, to narrate a sequence of events, to answer questions such as *where are my glasses?* or when we refer to an object: *the back door* in contrast to *the front door.* All these interactions are called "linguistic frames" (Svorou, 1994, p. 31).

All objects are included within larger ones and the linguistic coding level of spatial relations implies an extensive list of ingrained relations. Hence, when we say *the towel is in the closet*, it is not necessary to mention the other entities that encompass it: *in the bedroom, at home, in the neighborhood, in the city, in the region, in the country, in the continent, in the world.* Describing the location of the towel, specifying all the relations from the local to the cosmic, would become difficult and useless. In fact, too precise and accurate indications could be ineffective because they would uselessly overload the message and it could delay and alter the process of production and interpretation. A very big specification could be useless, superfluous, in regard to the particular situation in which it is framed. Creissels (2006, p. 25) considers that the way we locate an object in relation to another implies the recognition of an asymmetric relation between the target and the place. Asymmetric relations can be recognized, bearing in mind the size, the

bracket, the order, the containment, the orientation, the distance, the direction, the movement, and the combination of all these. For this reason, a possible spatial relation between a plate and a table is *the plate is on the table*. Tables are normally bigger than plates, which satisfies the asymmetric condition and makes the location of the plate possible. Specifying the kind of spatial relation that there is between both requires some knowledge, or at least a kind of perception about the bracket relations: the bigger object holds the smaller object, except if there is a balance between the two objects.

However, how the speakers specify place entities in the speech, depends on formal limitations that can vary from one language to another. For instance, in English, spatial links require some speci-fications related to the place. In this language, the place for con-tainment or degree of superiority or inferiority cannot be omitted, different from other languages that display several elements that can be defined as pronominal adverbs and that allow the speakers of those languages to omit the place when they express the corres-ponding spatial relations.

Table 1. Contrast in the use or omission of place

Spanish	French	German	English
El niño está encima.	L'enfant est dessus.	Das kind ist darauf.	The child is on it.

Source: own creation.

As it can be seen, Spanish, French, and German use some parti-cles that can provide very specific information that is related to the object and places and their relations in static or dynamic situations. The place is implicit within the pronominal adverb. On the other hand, in English, the word *it*, which plays the role of the place in the sentence, cannot be omitted. That is to say, in English, when you say *the baby is on*, you mean he/she is happily ready to play or party. So, the meaning of the sentence changes when we omit the place "it".

It is noticeable that among a variety of spatial dimension verbs the verb *estar* (to be) plays a significant role in terms of denoting location: *I am in the corner of the square* or *the building is in the square* and in verbal groups (to be located, to be situated): *I am (located) in the corner of the square, the building is (situated) in the square.* Similarly, in French, the verb *être* (to be) is correlated with the Spanish verb *estar* (to be). Other purely locative verbs are *encontrarse* (to be), *situarse* (to be, to situate), *ubicarse* (to be, to ubicate), and *hallarse* (to be): *me encuentro en la esquina de la plaza (I am in the corner of the square), el edificio se halla en la plaza (the building is in the square).* All these verbs, allow, according to Le Pesant (2012, p. 37), to express internal location *(el cepillo está en el cajón/the toothbrush is in the drawer)* or external location *(la panadería está al frente del supermercado/the bakery is in front of the supermarket).*

Borillo (1998, p. 125) states that one single verb can take a dynamic meaning or, on the contrary, a static meaning, depending on the nature and properties of the sentence subject with which the statement is built. The static meaning is usually linked to several factors: allocation of a metaphorical value, perception factors, and spatial and egocentric treatment effects. Thus, it can be asserted that *El camino se sumerge en el bosque (the road plunges into the woods)* or *el tigre se sumerge en el bosque (the tiger plunges into the woods).*

On the other hand, spatial information is distributed throughout the different components of the statement in such ways that they vary from one language to another within a certain range of possibilities. Discourse analysis unveils that spatial semantics, similarly to the meaning, is compositional and is distributed since language inherently encompasses linearization and sequencialization (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 223).

The analysis of Vandeloise (1986, p. 59) about spatial prepositions in the discourse asserts that their values vary according to the words they are used with. Equally, it indicates that the semantics of spatial words embraces notions that are related to our experience

more than being associated with a spatial conception in terms of Cartesian Axes.

The analysis of Slobin (2006, p. 60) on an extensive corpus of texts concludes that lexicalization and morphosyntactic patterns subjugate the focus of information in discourse. That is to say, that in satellite-framed[1] languages, such as French, spatial statements display a prepositional categorization, which does not happen in verbal-framed[2] languages such as Spanish and English.

Methodology, Analysis, and Results

The current study is framed in the design of the grounded theory as it uses a systematic qualitative procedure to generate a theory that explains, on a conceptual level, the static spatial relations in French as a foreign language for Spanish speakers, by comparing and contrasting.

As it is stated by Hernández et al. (2006, p. 687), the basic approach of this design is that theoretical propositions come out from the data gathered in the research, more than being obtained from previous studies, as it is the procedure that generates the understanding of the phenomenon, in this case, a pedagogical phenomenon.
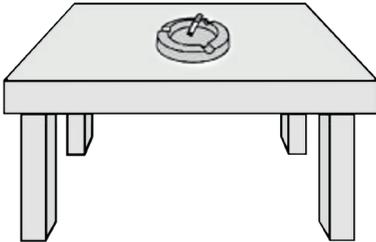
First, some bibliographical information about particles, actions, segments and their use, particular cases, and structural forms was gathered. Subsequently, the information was classified just in those cases related to static spatial relations. Apart from this, a comparison between the uses of these static spatial relations both in Spanish and in French was done, as well as their equivalences, correspondences, differences, and disparities in their use, in the structures, and in the contextualized communicative acts. All these

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1. Languages in which the verb follows a prepositive use. Examples: Vivo **en** Bogotá/ Vivo **en** Colombia. (I live **in** Bogota/ I live **in** Colombia).

2. Languages in which the verb follows a prepositive use. Examples: J'habite **à** Bogota/J'habite **en** Colombie. (I live **in** Bogota/ I live **in** Colombia); Vivo **en** Bogotá/Vivo **en** Colombia.

phenomena were analyzed in light of the linguistic theory, from a semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic approach. For instance, in the case of the topological spatial relations that are deeply developed in the final report of this research, study analysis was made as follows:

Table 2. Example of the structural linguistic analysis.

Le cendrier est sur la table (the ashtray is on the table)	El cenicero está en la mesa (the ashtray is on the table)

Semantic analysis:
In this statement, an object (ashtray) is placed in relation to another (table). The target (cendrier/cenicero/ashtray) and the place (table/mesa/table) share the same space in a relation in which the target is on a higher position over the vertical axis where the place is. In French, the expression *sur* (on) usually implies a contact among its surfaces, and as in this horizontal contact between ashtray and table surfaces that are both horizontal, the relation is established just using the link *sur*. For this reason, it would not be possible to switch the statement to *le cendrier est à la table (the ashtray is at the table)* since this sentence is incorrect in French. Now, this contact might not be direct, for example, there are three books one over the others and over all of them there is a dictionary. In this situation, the right sentence would be *le dictionnaire est sur la table (the dictionary is on the table)*, that is to say, there is not any link change, even if there is not any direct contact between target and place. In Spanish, with the expression *en* (on) people or things are specially located, that is, the place occupied by what it is on the surface of something is indicated. In this case, it is about the situation on a flat space. The Spanish sentence could be replaced by *el cenicero está sobre la mesa (the ashtray is on the table)* and this expression *sobre* (on), although it is less used, is more accurate to indicate that there is a contact and a position of an object (cenicero/ashtray) that is on the top of another object (mesa/table) located in an inferior position. That is to say, there is a presence of an elevated but horizontal surface.

Pragmatic analysis:
The speaker wants to express, through this enunciation, the location of an object (ashtray) in a place (table). The communicative purpose is to specify the speaker, perhaps smoker, about the position of the ashtray within a spatial frame, shared by both. Thanks to this linker element, the meaning of the sentence is related to its location. The enunciation would be the response of the speaker to the question or statement expressed by the addressee: *Où est-ce qu'il y a un cendrier? / ¿Dónde hay un cenicero? / Where is an ashtray? / Je vais fumer une cigarette / Me voy a fumar un cigarrillo / I am going to smoke a cigarette; Tu as un cendrier? / ¿Tienes un cenicero? / Do you have an ashtray?*

Source: own creation.

Once the analysis showed such results, more accurate didactic strategies were sought to facilitate the understanding of the use of static spatial indicators, after having compared the techniques and procedures used by several French as a foreign language teachers (FFL), the handouts used to teach French, the use of student's books and workbooks, and the use of teacher's books.

Table 3. Techniques and instruments to gather data.

Technique	Instrument
Bibliographical revision	Sitographic and bibliographical review of sheets and e-books.
Survey	Questionnaires administered to French as a foreign language teachers.
Class observations	Observation sheets for French classes: spatial relations.
Data triangulation	Information matrix (documentary sources, class observations, researchers' experience).

Source: own creation.

For the development of the current research study, two corpora were considered: one related to the gathering of didactic data, which consisted of a questionnaire based on the survey technique. The questionnaire includes eight questions concerning the teaching methods, the use of resources, and the notion of space, as it is more deeply explained later. These surveys were administered to thirty-eight French as a foreign language teachers from Peru, Colombia, and Spain. The second corpus is based on the revision of three handouts[3] used by the teachers surveyed in aspects related to the teaching of spatial relations. Both corpora were compared with the observations made in ten French classes, in which the teachers instructed the students about location and spatial relations.

The systematization of the information collected allowed us to better understand that the surveyed teachers claim to use metalanguage[4] when teaching spatial relations. 40% say they usually

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3. *Écho 1* (Girardet, J. et al., 2008, p. 72) by CLE International editions, *Álter ego A1* (Berthet, Annie et al., 2012, p. 34) by Hachette and *Nickel 1 editions*, (Auge, H. et al., 2014, p. 67) by CLE International editions.

4. "Metalanguage" corresponds to artificial language that is used to describe a natural language. The words of metalanguage correspond to the ones of a language that is subject of analysis, but with only one meaning; its syntactic rules are also the same ones of the analyzed language. Metalanguage is, for instance, the grammatical language used by the linguists to describe the functioning of the language." (Dubois, 2012, p.301).

do it, 30% say they occasionally do it, 20% say they never do it, and 10% say they always do it.

On the other hand, 60% of the surveyed teachers always encourage the students to deduce the rules by themselves, 20% usually aim at the same goal, and 20% just do it occasionally.

40% of these surveyed teachers occasionally compare the target language (French) to other languages in order to fix and facilitate the understanding of spatial relations, 30% claim to do it generally, 20% say they always do it, and 10% assert they never use comparisons between the target language and other languages.

Concerning the use of definitions taken out from dictionaries to explain the spatial relations, 70% say they never do it, 20% assert they occasionally do it, and 10% state they generally do it.

50% of the surveyed teachers state that they never translate the spatial concepts, 40% assert they occasionally do it, and 10% consider it is important to translate such concepts and therefore they generally do it.

To relate the degree of importance of the supporting material that facilitates the understanding of spatial relations, 50% consider it is essential and effective to use blueprints and maps of cities and places, 20% recognize that this material is important, 20% think this material is not relevant, and 10% consider it useless at this stage.

60% of the surveyed teachers deem that pictures of objects, places, and people are essential and effective to explain spatial relations, 30% consider this material is relevant, and 10% believe it is useless.

Regarding improvised pictures[5] that the teacher uses on the board to facilitate the understanding of spatial relations, 30 % of

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5. Drawing and images become relevant in the teaching of foreign languages as a didactic resource since they permit to explore the semiotic and cultural contents deeply. (Cuq, 2003, p. 125)

the surveyed teachers consider those are unnecessary, 30% think those are useless, 20% believe those are important, and 20% consider those are effective.

When referring to the method or textbook and its role in the assimilation of spatial relations, 30% of the surveyed teachers assert it is essential to use the handout, 30% believe it is important, 20% say it is useful, and 20% consider it has little relevance for such a purpose.

80% jointly present static spatial relations along with dynamic spatial relations. The other 20% consider that it is better to do it separately.

Now, 90% of the teachers surveyed link the topic with other previously taught topics and just 10% consider unnecessary to articulate it; therefore, they present it in an isolated way.

70% of the surveyed teachers conceive space as the particular location in a place, for which verbal, adverbial, and prepositional locutions are used. Just 30% consider it as the limited use of prepositional and adverbial indicators.

To indicate the importance of paralinguistic communication in spatial relations and their multiple manifestations inside the classroom, 50% of the surveyed teachers assert that they usually point out with their index finger to facilitate its comprehension, 40% say they occasionally do it, and 10% say they always do it. Aiming at the same goal, the gaze orientation plays its role in the comprehension of paralinguistic features in spatial relations; hence, 60% reckon they always address their gaze everywhere: above, below, beside, etc., 30% say they usually do it, and 10% reckon they rarely do it.

Now, 50% say they always move forward, backward, and sideways in order to highlight the importance of these features in spatial relations and favor a better comprehension of the same ones, 30% say they occasionally do it, 10% say they usually

do it, and 10% say they never do it. When conceiving the degree of complexity among the different spatial relations, 50% indicate that the relation on the higher/lower plane and/or verticality is the one that tends to be more difficult for learners, followed by the contact relations with its surface, and the distance relations, each one with 20 % and, finally, 10 % consider that the laterality relation tends to be more difficult.

50% of the surveyed teachers disagree with the idea of asserting that the misunderstanding between the target language and the mother tongue could be the cause of the problems seen when dealing with spatial relations in French as a foreign language, the other 50% consider this cause to be unlikely.

As for the abstract character of location instructions as a cause for these difficulties when assimilating spatial relations in the target language, 70% assert that the latter might not be the cause, and the other 30% state that this fact highly affects this assimilation. The confusion between the use of static and dynamic expressions is discarded as a possible cause of the problems in the assimilation of spatial relations for 90% of the surveyed teachers; the other 10% consider it as a fact that influences meaningfully. The complexity in determining particle structure variations and simple expressions is considered as a possible cause for the problems displayed in the application of spatial relations in the target language for 25% of the surveyed teachers, the other 75% believe this cause is unlikely.

Finally, 70% of the surveyed teachers concluded that spatial relations usually display some problems when being taught and learned, while the remaining 30% asserted that this topic is not difficult to understand.

Concerning the handouts' corpus, it has been discovered that the textbooks used by the surveyed teachers display some similar characteristics and, equally, some important differences. The three of them include objectives and contents determined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2002, p. 99). Two of them, *Alter Ego* (Berthet, Annie et al., 2012)

—used by 40% of the surveyed teachers— and *Nickel* (Auge, Hélène et al., 2014) —used by the other 40% of the surveyed teachers— are addressed to adults or adolescents, while *Écho 1* (Girardet, Jacky & Pécueur, Jacques, 2008) —used by 20% of the surveyed teachers— is addressed to adults who need to learn the target language in a short period.

The three textbooks by Hachette and CLE international publishers approach spatial relations in the first level of training. *Alter Ego* conceives the language as a set of sounds, music, and rhythms. It also perceives speaking as a global act in which the situation, the relation among speakers, the behaviors, the cultural knowledge, the words, and the gestures are considered because the human being is considered as a whole. Communications are seen as being together and acting over each other and not as a simple supply of information. Besides, communication also considers the affectivity and the development of autonomy as pillars of effective communication and learning. Similarly, it points out the knowledge of a language as the capacity to act and react in a communicative situation. *Nickel* promotes authentic communication in the classroom, taking the learner to react in terms of his personality, to exercise his creativity and to express his affectivity and, finally, to talk about reality and not only to manipulate linguistic structures. *Écho* has as a motto not to limit to the linguistic knowledge but also to develop the ability to do something and to be something, leading the learner to linguistic autonomy.

For the management of spatial relations, *Álter Ego A1* allocates four moments that are enunciated in the communicative objectives and the grammatical structures of the units (dossiers/ folders). Therefore, for folder 1 (lesson 3) we have the objective: *situer la France et ses pays voisins en Europe (locate France and its neighboring countries in Europe)* and the syntactic structure: *les prépositions + noms des pays, verbe être (prepositions + name of the countries, verb to be)*. In folder 2 (lesson 1) the communicative objective is *nommer et localiser dans la ville (name and locate in the city)* and the syntactic structure: *les prépositions de lieu + articles contractés (prepositions of place + contracted articles)*; in lesson 2 of the same

folder, these are the communicative objectives: *comprendre/indiquer un itinéraire simple* and *indiquer le mode de déplacement (understand/indicate a simple route, indicate the transportation mode)*, and the syntactic structure: *verbes prendre, descendre, aller…à pied, à vélo, en voiture, en train (verbs take, go down, go… on foot, by bike, by car, by train), and,* finally, in lesson 3 of the same folder 2, the communicative objectives are *donner ses impressions sur un lieu* and *demander/indiquer le pays de provenance et destination (give your impressions on a place, ask/indicate the country of origin and destination),* and the grammatical structure: *les prépositions + noms pays (prepositions+ country names).*

On the other hand, *Nickel 1* proposes two different times for the management of spatial relations. Hence, for unit 5 (unité 5), the communicative objectives are *demander et indiquer un chemin*, *demander des renseigements sur un lieu, le décrire, situer dans l'espace (ask and indicate a path, ask for information about a place, describe it, locate it in space),* together with the grammatical elements: *les prépositions et adverbes de lieu (prepositions and adverbs of place).* In unit 6 (unité 6), the communicative objective is *situer un lieu (locate a place)*, together with the grammatical elements: *les prépositions + villes/régions/pays* (prepositions + cities/regions/countries).

The handout *Écho 1* just proposes one moment for the expression of spatial relations, as follows: in unité 2 (unit 2), leçon 8 (lesson 8), the objective is *s'informer sur un itinéraire, une orientation (find out about a route, an orientation)*, together with the grammatical elements: *prépositions et adverbes de lieu, verbes exprimant un déplacement (emploi de prépositions) (prepositions and adverbs of place, verbs expressing a displacement (use of prepositions)).*

In *Álter Ego 1*, the text proposes spatial identification throughout charts and illustrations with pattern sentences in which it prevails the adequate form of the prepositive use. The exercises for the application of location are of two kinds: oral comprehension and explanation of journeys. These activities proposed by the handout encourage the learner to produce in context and in a direct

way, without a previous training of the linguistic structures, this, for assuring the accurate appropriation of structures.

Different from *Álter Ego 1,* the *Nickel 1* method displays additional linguistic explanations different from the graphics and illustrations of identification of spatial relations. The exercises gradually move from the grammatical to the communicative competence; the application is seen here, in this method, with oral comprehension activities, filling in the gaps exercises, and oral and written production.

In *Écho 1*, it can be seen that the treatment of space is made throughout contextualized models. That is to say, in paragraphs, expressions that indicate location are highlighted; the exercises come out from that model, to be exact, learners go directly to produce in similar conditions to those proposed by the model. The activities are displayed as oral comprehension and written production.

To summarize, the proposal within the three textbooks to manage spatial relations is different. It can be perceived that the *Álter Ego A1* situational method and *Nickel 1* functional method are more related to each other since both share the same conception about communication: speaking is acting over the others. In the books, several exercises, almost all of them, are contextualized, and in terms of space, it is evidenced that both methods encourage the recognition and use of the language; additionally, *Nickel 1* includes structural explanations and metalinguistic bases. The *Écho 1* method includes a series of characteristics similar to the other two handouts: illustrations, graphics, models, and maps for location management and orientation. *Écho 1* is designed to learn the language in a short period.

After having analyzed the three textbooks, it is noticed that their central axis is dynamic space, given that they focus on orientation and movement and little is displayed about static space treatment.

Concerning the ten classes observed, the common components of didactic development are shown as follows. These components were developed by teachers of French as a foreign language coming from Universidad de Caldas, Universidad de San Buenaventura de Cartagena, and different language institutes in both cities. The observations were made from February to May 2017. For the pedagogical development of spatial relations, eight teachers agreed with using the same strategies. The topic was first introduced using the deductive method, which, for Charaudeau and Maingueneau (2002, p. 308), concludes accurately, while the inductive method just concludes partially. The teachers explained the topic with expressions such as: *"Hoy vamos a ver las preposiciones" (Today, we are going to study the prepositions)*. Afterward, the teachers ask the students to find the subject in the handout and to detail the images and illustrations related to expressions such as *sur, sous, devant, derrière* (on, under, in front, behind). The teachers also agree with using the mother tongue as a teaching system, making comparisons between the target language and the mother tongue. The teachers, when realizing that the students identify the subject, start asking questions to locate objects: *où est la voiture? (Where is the car?)*. To these kinds of questions, students answer correctly following the patterns on the handout. Most of the teachers continue repeating the activity, not with the images this time, but with the objects in the classroom. At this time of the session, the learners show more difficulty expressing location. They finish the class by doing the exercises of the handout and its corresponding oral activity for the listening part and the written production on the board.

It was observed that in most of the classes the topic is totally explained in the same period. In the same class, static and dynamic relations are also explained, emphasizing on the dynamic relations because of the focus of the handout.

Discussion and Conclusions

After having obtained the results of the survey administered to the teachers together with the class observations, the analysis

of the handouts and textbooks used, and the comparison with the theoretical framework, it is evidenced that: Teachers assume that space is a place determined by linguistic elements used for its location. On the other hand, the observations show that the teacher's treatment of space in terms of subject notion matches with what is stated in the handouts and textbooks used in terms of a specific placed point, to which to go. The theory shows the conception of space as the experience cognitively represented. Therefore, for the surveyed teachers, space is determined by language; for the didactic practicum and the handouts and text-books, space is determined by location; and for the theoretical framework, it is determined by experience.

In regard to the use of metalanguage in the teaching-learning process of spatial relations, the survey and the observations show that teachers use metalanguage, that is to say, they appeal to grammatical explanations and use the formal theory of the lan-guage, especially in the morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels; the handouts and textbooks use the formal aspects in a restricted way.

Concerning the handouts used, both the survey and the text-books clarify that space is explained inductively. The observa-tion shows, on the contrary, that in the practicum the deductive method is strategically used.

The surveyed teachers express they appeal to the comparison between the mother tongue and one or more foreign languages, the class observations on space treatment show that this com-parison, between the mother tongue and the foreign language effectively occurs; the handouts used do not consider this possi-bility.

On the other hand, regarding space treatment for the purpose of the learning process, it is highlighted that the teachers follow the handouts' proposals, explaining static and dynamic space alto-gether, although they give more relevance to the dynamic space.

For completing the space pedagogical treatment, when explaining or inquiring about the topic, teachers use gestures, point out with their index finger (kinetic traits), and move from one place to another (proxemics traits). This strategy effectively improves the appropriation and assimilation of the topic.

In the pedagogical practicum it is not evidenced the essential distinction between spatial relations of a higher and lower level, as follows: s*ur, dessus, au-dessus, par dessus, sous, dessous, au-dessous, en dessous, par dessous* (on, above, over, under, below, and from below), because it becomes, for the surveyed teachers, very complex to illustrate them. What was perceived during the classes is the confusion with the relations of laterality, as follows: *gauche, à droite, à côté* (left, right, next), because of the speaker's location.

Bearing in mind the results of the theoretical search of spatial relations, what is commonly confusing is the teaching of internal location, as follows: *dans, sur, à, chez* (in, on, at), because of the anaphoric order of Spanish and the cataphoric order of French and also because of the need of previously determining the place and, therefore, allocating the corresponding spatial link: *Pierre est à Marseille (Pedro está en Marsella/Pierre is in Marseille), Pierre est en Provence (Pedro está en Provenza/Pierre is in Provence), Pierre est sur la plage (Pedro está en la playa/Pierre is on the beach), Pierre est chez son oncle Daniel (Pedro está en casa de su tío Daniel/Pierre is in the house of his uncle Daniel).* It is noticeable the polysemic value of the preposition *en* (in) in Spanish.

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