

Alternative guidelines to design pedagogical resources with compounds in Spanish as a second language

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present and argue for alternative didactic resources with Spanish compounds. The working assumption is the idea that the principles that govern compound formation are crucial as a means of improving a number of student skills in L2 Spanish. Compounds constitute valuable lexical additions to a speaker's repertoire, and to a wide range of communicative goals. They also show certain properties (e.g., meaning motivation, membership of marked registers) that render them especially useful for a number of learning targets, such as encouraging students' metalinguistic reasoning, fostering their creativity, and stimulating their curiosity about Spanish language and culture. To guarantee diverse learning results, several pedagogical resources were analyzed, and the activities were tested with Chinese learners of Spanish. Methodological guidelines were followed akin to those used in the task-based approaches and gamified learning. The activities are mostly cooperative and aimed at working on both comprehension and production (auditive and written) around a grammatical topic (e.g. plural) or a communicative task (e.g. description).

Keywords

compound; grammar; Spanish; teaching

Orientaciones alternativas para diseñar materiales pedagógicos con compuestos en español como segunda lengua

Resumen

En el presente artículo, se desarrolla una propuesta de recursos didácticos con compuestos del español. Partimos de la premisa de que la familiarización con los principios que gobiernan la formación e interpretación de compuestos puede contribuir a la mejora de habilidades comunicativas esenciales de los aprendientes de español. Los compuestos no solo son contribuciones valiosas al léxico del estudiante, sino que además poseen ciertas propiedades (su motivación semántica; su pertenencia a registros marcados) que los hacen valiosos para objetivos de aprendizaje como: promover la conciencia metalingüística del estudiante, estimular su creatividad y su curiosidad por la lengua y la cultura hispanohablantes. Para garantizar estos resultados de aprendizaje, analizamos previamente los recursos pedagógicos existentes sobre el tema, y desarrollamos un experimento piloto con estudiantes chinos de español. Seguimos unas orientaciones metodológicas de diseño afines a las que se proponen en los aprendizajes basados en tareas y en los aprendizajes gamificados. Las actividades son predominantemente cooperativas y contemplan el trabajo de la comprensión y producción lingüísticas oral y escrita en el contexto de un tema de gramática (p.e., la morfología de plural) o una tarea comunicativa (p.e., la descripción).

Palabras clave

Compuesto; Gramática; Español; Enseñanza.

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0. Introduction

Compounding is a process in which new words are created through the combination of two or more pre-existing ones.¹ It is found in almost all natural languages as a strategy to develop new vocabulary (Lieber and Stekauer 2009).

This paper focuses on compounding in Spanish. Typically, the literature on the topic identifies several compound patterns. I provide examples of some of the most relevant types below from the point of view of their word class and head position. Roughly speaking, this constitutes the part of the compound that provides its category and/or semantic class to the resulting construction. Thus, since *pez globo* ‘globefish’ refers to a type of *pez* ‘fish’, and it is a noun like *fish*, it is the head.

[N+N]: *pez globo* ‘globefish’/ *fotomontaje* ‘photomontage’

[V+N] nouns and adjectives: *matarratas* ‘rat poison’/ *drogodependiente* ‘drug addict’

[Adj+Adj] coordinate nouns: *blanquiazul* ‘blue and white’

[N+Adj]: *pelirrojo* ‘red-haired’

Recent decades of L2 research has witnessed a growing interest in multiword expressions such as *caerse de sueño* lit. ‘to fall over from sleepiness’ ‘to be asleep on your feet’ (Schmitt 2004; Wray 2002). Authors such as Arnon and Christiansen (2017) have demonstrated that speakers have a predisposition for learning not only words but also *chunks*, that is, linguistic fragments bigger than word-size units. With this in mind, one might think that the topic of compounding would have assumed considerable prominence in the field of Spanish L2 research, given that compounds are frequently more complex than words from the phonological point of view, and their meaning can be figured out of the words that constitute them.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. As Varela (2003) and Serrano-Dolader (2006) have pointed out, there exist very few specific studies on compounding to date (cf. Loureiro 2015; Fernández Gil, 2015; Licerias, Díaz and Salomaa Robertson, 2002). Loureiro (2015) analyses 75 textbooks for teaching and learning Spanish, and she is unable to find a single exercise devoted to compounds. Furthermore, almost none of the exercises where compounds are included in current teaching materials are concerned with the rules of compound formation –Serrano-Dolader (2018, Ch. 9) being a notable exception. Compounds and other multiword units are typically being treated simply as vocabulary to be learnt in communicative contexts.

On the other hand, there is a growing literature on L2 processing of morphologically complex words (Clahsen et al. 2010). On inflectional and derivational morphology,

¹ The reader must note that this is a rather simplistic assessment, since the definition of compound is a controversial one. I refer to the relevant literature on compounding to find an in-depth treatment on the definition and classification of compounds (e.g. Moyna, 2011). Additionally, there is an old debate on whether compounds are created by specific word formation rules, or by the same rules as phrases. Even if that discussion is not relevant here, it is nevertheless assumed that the knowledge of compounds would improve the syntactic competence of L2 students, so a syntactic conception of compound formation is favored, albeit indirectly.

previous research seems to indicate that L2 speakers resort to stored information to a bigger extent than native speakers, who use more morphological decomposition. Zyzik and Azevedo (2009, 20) suggest that the knowledge of morphological rules and contexts helps L2 students improve the competence of Spanish grammatical categories, given the kind of mistakes they make. Paribakht and Wesche's (1999) empirical results show that morphological decomposition is the second most important strategy used by L2 learners in inferring the meaning of unknown words.

The lack of materials is obviously a significant factor in the reluctance to teach general morphological rules, let alone compound formation rules. Perhaps to this we might add the widespread misconception of teachers that morphological processes are not useful in developing communicative skills. Such prejudices are often based on the idea that morphological rules are difficult to learn even for native speakers, a belief that has been challenged empirically for productive compounding and inflection, for example (Clark, 1998). However, the absence of interest in morphological rules is to some extent understandable, given the attitude towards morphology in many guidelines on L2 teaching.

The *Common European Framework of Reference for languages* (CEFR) did serve to enhance the study of compounding as a word formation process (CEFR 2002, 100). Among grammatically relevant concepts, it included morphological units such as the morpheme, and inflectional categories such as case. It treated compounds as structures, along the lines of phrases and sentences.

Strikingly, this reference to morphology has disappeared from the most recent version, which now only mentions morpho-phonological and morpho-syntactic knowledge referring to sign languages (CEFR 2018, 146). The only relevant mention now appears to be on page 67, regarding B2 reception strategies: learners at this level "can deduce the probable meaning of unknown words in a written text by identifying their constituent part (e.g. identifying word roots, lexical elements, suffixes and prefixes)".² One may wonder how B2 speakers would be able to identify roots, suffixes and prefixes with absolutely no instruction on morphology.

The *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC) – the Spanish counterpart of CEFR, although containing more precise curricular guidelines – explicitly excludes the study of compounding from the grammatical component, stating that teaching should focus here on the products of morphological rules, that is, compound words themselves (PCIC 2007, 104).

As was the case for CEFR, we find occasional contradictions in PCIC, such as it expecting learners to be able to reconstruct the meaning of a compound word through its parts (PCIC 2007, 487) with no prior knowledge of what a compound is.

However, a close examination of PCIC yields some references to compounds and on how they can be regarded as part of grammatical knowledge (e.g., syntagmatic compounds such as *silla de ruedas*, lit. 'chair of wheels' 'wheelchair', are included at B2 level in a section on null determiners (PCIC 2007, 53). Suffixes are indeed mentioned

² Neither the guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL 2015) include any mention to compounding.

several times, within the treatment of both grammatical descriptors and notions (Serrano in press). Some authors consider it feasible to include these within a program of instruction, according to the level or proficiency (Sánchez Guitiérrez 2013).

As we have noted, PCIC promotes the treatment of compounds as lexical units to be learnt in the same manner as simple words. Compounds are, in fact, very well-represented in the recommended vocabulary, serving to refer to both 'general' notions, such as *existence*, *space* and *time* (as in 1 below), and 'specific' ones, such as *human traits*, *food*, *work*, *household*, *traveling*, or *commerce* (as in 2 below).

1. A1/A2 notions: *cumpleaños* 'birthday'; B1/B2 notions: *verde limón* 'lime green', *azul cielo* 'sky blue', *gris perla* 'pearly grey'; C1/C2 notions: *sobrecarga* 'overloading', *peso pluma* 'featherweight', *vaivén*, lit. 'go and come' 'swinging', *Maricastaña*, lit. 'Mary+chestnut' 'long ago', *zigzag*, 'zigzag', *contraproducente* 'counterproductive', *usufructo* 'usufruct', *malentendido*, lit. 'badly+understood' 'misunderstanding'
2. A1/A2 notions: *pasaporte* 'passport', *fotocopia* 'photocopy', *baloncesto* 'basketball', *página web* 'webpage', *lavaplatos* 'washing machine', *aeropuerto* 'airport'; B1/B2 notions: *sacacorchos* 'corkscrew', *pasatiempo* 'passtime', *balonmano* 'handball', *audiovisual* 'audiovisual', *hidromasaje* 'hydro massage', *autopista* 'motorway', *impresora laser* 'laser printer', *altavoz* lit. 'high+voice' 'speaker', *astronomía* 'astronomy', *geografía* 'geography', *medioambiental* 'environmental'; C1/C2 notions: *paticorto* 'short-legged', *caradura* 'cheeky', *guardameta* 'goal-keeper', *manuscrito* 'manuscript', *matasellos* 'postmark', *sobrecogido* 'overwhelmed', *anteproyecto* 'draft bill', *portaviones* 'aircraft carrier', *maniobrar* 'maneuver', *aerosol* 'aerosol', *biodiversidad* 'biodiversity'

Overall, compounds are more numerous within *general notions* at the advanced level. Thus, whereas we find only *cumpleaños* at the A-level, and only color terms at the B-level (1), the C-level includes a significantly more diverse sample of compound patterns. On the other hand, compounds are distributed evenly among the specific notions (2), although the choice of examples and their distribution is less clear. For instance: are *mercadotecnia* lit. 'market+technique' 'marketing' and *Nordeste* 'North-west' appropriate notions for A-level learners? Why is *lavaplatos* considered a basic-level notion, *lavavajillas* an intermediate one, and *limpiacristales* an advanced one? Why do advanced-level specific notions include colloquialisms such as *paticorto* but advanced general notions only include compounds drawn from the formal register? Thus, it appears that *cumpleaños*³ and *pasaporte* are included under A1 notions because they are very common terms, despite their meaning being difficult to deduce from their parts. By contrast, the advanced level includes rarely-used words such as *contraindicación* 'counterindication' and *cortauñas* 'nail-clipper', which despite their low frequency are semantically fairly transparent.

³ In fact, an anonymous reviewer suggested that it seems likely that the students are taught *cumpleaños* as if it were a simple word (as one chunk).

We can conclude, therefore, that even if compounds are able to illustrate relevant notions, such illustrations are sometimes flawed, in that the selection of compounds itself does not seem to be made with the promotion of vocabulary learning in mind. This can be seen in the fact that the sample of compounds includes a lot of right-headed compounds (*hidromasaje, audiovisual, biodiversidad*), which in fact constitute a minor compound pattern in Spanish (Varela and Felú 2003).

The current study takes as a working assumption the idea that the explicit teaching of the principles that govern compound formation is crucial as a means of improving a number of student skills in L2 Spanish. These include, but are not limited to, vocabulary learning, grammatical competence, creativity, metalinguistic reasoning, and Spanish cultural background.

The main purpose of this work is, therefore, to supply alternative didactic resources with Spanish compounds pursuing not only the improvement of the lexical competence of the students, but also their knowledge on a variety of grammatical topics (e.g. parts of speech, agreement) and their mastery of general communicative tasks (e.g. description). To that end, the activities are mostly cooperative and aimed at working on both comprehension and production (auditive and written).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 1 sets out the methodological principles we will follow in the design of pedagogical resources using compounds. Section 2 provides some examples of activities that satisfy our pedagogical goals. Finally, some conclusions will be offered in Section 3.

1. Why teach compounds, and how to do so

Before entering upon the subject, a brief outline of compounding in Spanish is provided.

It is generally agreed that the language has a considerable variety of compound patterns, which are usually classified according to four criteria: (i) the word class of the compound members or of the compound as a whole; (ii) *headness* –whether one of the members of the compound qualifies as the semantic, morphological or categorial determinant of the whole–; (iii) the grammatical relations between the members of the compound; and (iv) their morphophonological status (lexical or single-stressed compounds vs phrasal or double-stressed). We offered some representative examples below.

Table 1. Taxonomy of Spanish compounds

Example	Word class	Head	Gram. Relations	Morphophonology
<i>Boquiabierto</i> mouth+open 'open-mouthed'	N+A → A	<i>abierto</i>	attribution	Lexical
<i>Maniatar</i> 'hand-tie'	N+V → V	<i>atar</i>	subordination	Lexical
<i>viaje relampago</i> trip+lightening 'lightening trip'	N+N → N	<i>viaje</i>	attribution	Phrasal
<i>Videoaficionado</i> 'video fan'	N+N → N	<i>aficionado</i>	subordination	Lexical
<i>Traje de luces</i> 'suit of lights' 'bullfighter's costume'	NPN → N	<i>traje</i>	subordination	Phrasal
<i>Portalápices</i> carries+pencils 'pencil+holder'	V+N → N	No	subordination	Lexical
<i>Compraventa</i> 'purchase+sale' 'buying and selling'	N+N → N	No	coordination	Lexical

The current study does not elaborate into theoretical issues on compounding due to its eminently practical conception, so, in the event of any theoretical doubts, readers are encouraged to consult the reference books and the specific monographies on the topic.

1.1 To learn more vocabulary, better

It has long been held in the literature that in order to know a word it is not enough to learn its meaning, or even its adequate context of use. It is also necessary to know how the word is related to other words within the same linguistic domain (Baralo 1994), and for this knowledge to be available in subsequent interactions.

Over the last three decades, the vast majority of L2 Spanish teaching materials, in whatever format (textbooks, online activities), have favored contextualized vocabulary learning, while discouraging the mere memorization of lists. The context given is usually a text dealing with a specific topic, a picture, or an everyday communicative situation. This way of approaching second-language learning is the hallmark of the so-called *communicative approaches* as opposed to the traditional *structural* ones, whose pedagogy trusts in the repeated performance of tasks to achieve the learning results, no matter whether the linguistic data looks like a realistic utterance or not.

An objection that may be raised against so-called communicative approaches to language learning is that they are sometimes "communicative" only from the outside, and in fact end up leading to traditionally-structural exercises, such as translating a

word and using it to fill in a gap, deciding whether the sentence that contains it is true or false, and so on.

More comprehensive proposals for the teaching of compound vocabulary can be found in Fernández Gil (2015) and Loureiro (2015). The former focuses on Spanish compounds that refer to animals (e.g. *pez espada*, *pájaro carpintero*, *perro policía*, *oso hormiguero*). Most of the exercises are structural ones, although some do integrate the context more fully, involving students, asked to guess why each animal is named in the way that it is.

The same is true for Loureiro (2015). The author combines structural activities with other ones inspired by games: playing *Scrabble*, *Taboo* and *Hangman* with compounds, and so on. Among these, *Dominoes* is perhaps the most useful game to learn compound rules, due to the fact that the challenge is to combine the appropriate units. Overall, game-based approaches, also known as ‘gamification’, imply contextualized learning and stimulate the kind of metalinguistic reasoning we are looking for. Gamification promotes autonomy in students, and appeals to their problem-solving strategies (Kapp 2012, 9). It has proven to be exceptionally effective for L2 learning, as the success of *Duolingo* demonstrates (von Ahn 2013), as well as many other similar applications. It seems to me that perhaps the key contribution that gamification can make to vocabulary teaching is that it provides students with external sources of motivation, such as competition and achievement, which succeeds in turning what may otherwise be a unattractive and undemanding task (vocabulary learning) into an altogether more absorbing activity (Alejaldre and García Jiménez 2015).

The exercises that will be developed in Section 3 assume several of the features of gamified and/or task-based approaches. Task-Based Language Teaching typically involve learners as problem solvers who have to fulfill a specified task involving several steps, each sub-task demanding independent skills. Learners not only have to process and comprehend linguistic data, but also to make it significant in order to fulfill the assigned task. Although the learners acquire more control over their own learning process, most of the sub-tasks are cooperative. Finally, the activities also embrace some of the principles that guide the design of L2 materials within the Cognitive Grammar framework (Boers 2013), namely the treatment of multi-word expressions, and not only words themselves, as relevant lexical units.

Even if contextualized vocabulary-based exercises are preferable to traditional lists and exercises, the activities that we have seen so far are concerned with vocabulary learning and not with the learning of compound rules. Few proposals address Spanish compounds from this perspective, one case being Serrano-Dolader (2018). His book includes many activities on prefixation, suffixation and compounding, including, but not limited to, identifying constituents of words, ordering their parts, guessing the meaning of possible but non-attested words and of parts of words, applying rules to create new words, and evaluating which rules cannot be applied. Unfortunately, the book contains only a few activities on compounds, in that it covers the whole Spanish morphological system (prefixation, suffixation, inflection).

1.2 To improve grammatical competence in Spanish

In the literature on compounding, it is generally agreed that compounds constitute a very basic but syntactic-like kind of phrase (Lieber and Stekauer 2009, Ch. 1). Its simplicity can be regarded as an opportunity to teach some aspects of Spanish grammar.

For instance, the examples in (3) illustrate how compounds provide a minimal syntactic context where knowledge about grammatical relationships (coordination, attribution, subordination) and word classes (N, V, Adj) is easily accessed.

2. Verb+Direct Object structures: *portarretratos* lit. 'carry+photos' 'photo frame',
rompecabezas lit. 'break+heads' 'brain teaser'
 Coordinate structures: *blanquiazul* 'blue and white', *altibajo* 'ups and downs'
 Attributive N+ADJ structures: *disco pirata* 'pirate CD', *azul cielo* 'sky blue'

Additionally, compounds are of great interest in working with the topological aspects of word classes (e.g. whether a noun is animate or inanimate, a substance, an artifact), as the examples in (4) show.

3. *pez martillo* 'hammer fish', *visita sorpresa* 'surprise visit', *visita relámpago* 'lightning visit', *niño prodigio* 'child prodigy'

Table 2. Topological classes of compound nouns

	Pez 'fish'	Martillo 'hammer'	Visita 'visit'	Sorpresa 'surprise'	Relámpago 'lightning'	Niño 'kid'	Prodigio
Animate	Yes	No	no	No	No	Yes	No
Abstract	No	No	yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Adj- related	No	No	no	Surprising	Quick	No	Skilled

1.3 To foster metalinguistic reasoning and creativity

Ultimately, the stimulation of metalinguistic reflection is the most effective means of improving the lexical competence over the long term. We can promote this kind of reasoning with a number of strategies. One is to explicitate the aims of the task to students, as in (5).

4. Look at the following compounds. You need to learn where to place the stresses/written accents in order to work out whether the compound units are written together or separately.

perro policía *hidroavión* *patilargo* *quebrantahuesos* *malentendido*

Place an asterisk (X) above the stressed syllables.

Another approach is to use deductive-inductive reasoning as a means of discovering regularities in the data. In such a case, any rules found would become available to students for them to use subsequently, such as in production tasks (6). A related strategy is to ask for the production of examples by the recombination and recontextualization of previously known units. An example would be to ask students to explain why *pelirrojo* is an acceptable combination and *pelorrojo* is not or ask them to try to work out acceptable combinations (e.g. *patialta*, but **sacaastro*).

5. Look at the following nominal compounds:

pasapurés, fotocopia, baloncesto, página web, lavaplatos, aeropuerto, sacacorchos, pasatiempo, hidromasaje, autopista, altavoz, astronomía, geografía, paticorto

Separate their parts and classify them, following the examples in this table.

Look for more examples and classify them, as in Table 3.

Table 3. Compound forms according to the word class and their linguistic source

Spanish Noun	Foreign Noun	Adjective	Verb
Puerto	astro	Alta	pasa
Página	pati	Corto	saca

Finally, students can be encouraged to compare the characteristics of Spanish compounds with similar ones in their mother language, as in the exercise example in (7).

6. Comment on the differences between *verdiazul/greenish blue* and *dish-washer/lavavajillas*

In order to promote metalinguistic reflection one should avoid broad or complex contexts, such as text fragments or films, because they distract the student from the more specific features of words. Even if minor errors, such as producing *mana* instead of *mano*, are not significant enough to cause communication problems, they should still be corrected, so as to help students become more highly-proficient speakers. Ultimately, we should favor any kind of contextualized learning, however small, since the cognitive domains that contain multiword expressions constitute significant learning environments in themselves (Hijazo-Gascón 2011).

1.4 To contribute to an understanding of Spanish culture

On a slightly different note, it should be pointed out that multiword expressions in general, and compounds in particular, carry as part of their meaning a host of

connotations and figurative senses relating to stereotypes and prejudices (see examples in 8). For this reason, compounds are a useful means of identifying and preventing discriminatory linguistic uses of Spanish. Additionally, compounds involve the naming of many Spanish feasts and toponyms (see examples in 9), and thus they can contribute to a better understanding of Spanish culture by learners. Finally, compounds tend to occur frequently in marked registers in Spanish, both formal and colloquial ones, and hence can be used to provide more precise vocabulary choices at advanced levels (see examples in 10).

7. *Chupatintas* lit. 'lick+inks' 'pen-pusher' (derogatory)
Matasuegras lit. 'kills+mother-in-laws' 'party blower' (mother-in-laws are despicable)
Mujer florero lit. 'woman+vase' (beautiful women are only ornamental)
Robamaridos lit. 'rob+husbands' (some women provoke men to abandon their wives)

8. *Botafumeiro* lit. 'bounce+smokes' (censer/smoke expeller found in Santiago de Compostela Cathedral)
Cincomarzada lit. 'five+March+ADA' (the Aragonese Spanish Independence War Day)
Despeñaperros lit. 'tumble+dogs' (a canyon in Andalusia)

9. Formal register: *acidorresistente* lit. 'acid+resistant' 'acid-proof'
Colloquial register: *matasanos* lit. 'kill+healthy people' 'clumsy doctor'

2. Activity development

This section presents activities following the principles outlined in the previous section. We have chosen the following areas of content from the PCIC:

- Basic syntactic order (11)
- Plural formation (12)
- Noun appositions (13)
- Inalienable possession (14)
- Descriptive resources (15)
- Definite, indefinite and "zero" article (16)
- Grammatical categories (17)
- Nicknames (18)
- Formal and colloquial Spanish (19)
- Agreement (20)

The activities were optimized after obtaining some preliminary data from a preliminary study conducted with 16 Chinese student volunteers of Spanish, aged 12 to 16, twelve boys and four girls with a level of Spanish ranging from A2-C1 according to

their exposure to the language and/or residence times. Students were divided into two groups with balanced proficiency.⁴ Five students worked with compounds doing traditional exercises of vocabulary learning (vocabulary lists, filling gaps, definitions...), whereas the rest did the experimental exercises.

I evaluated the results by counting the number of hits and mistakes throughout the sessions.⁵ For the experimental group, the performance were only slightly better than for the control group.⁶ However, there were significant differences between them with respect to the evaluation of the activities. The students were anonymously asked whether they had enjoyed the exercises, or found them useful for learning Spanish, using a five-point Lickert scale. The scores were 100% positive in the experimental group, against a 71% in the control group. The activities leveled according to the performance of the experimental group⁷.

It has so far been possible to develop the activities only extra-curricularly. The most efficient manner to implement them is providing a proper contextualization. For instance, the list of compounds in (12) could be presented along with a lesson on plural formation.⁸

2.1 The proposed activities

1. Name of activity: Driving in the opposite direction

Level: B2

Topic: Word order

Skill: Integrated task (Reading>Writing>Speaking/Listening)

Aims: Helping students understand that the order of VN and NAdj compounds in Spanish follows the order of phrases (*guardar+espaldas<guardaespaldas, pelo+rojo<pelirrojo*), but that it might also be different, as in English N+V compounds (*body guard vs. guard bodies*). Incidentally, it is also hoped that students will work out that the order of Spanish phrases can be different to the one in their mother language.

Methodology & Targets: Cooperative, Metalinguistic Reasoning

Duration: 20'-30'

⁴ As an anonymous reviewer suggests, Chinese students are known to have particular difficulties to learn Spanish as a second language, due to several factors both linguistic and extralinguistic (See Blanco Pena 2013 for a review). My own experience teaching in China tells me that, even if that is true to certain extent, Chinese students quickly adapt themselves to a different methodology and can become as proficient and cooperative to learn a second language as students from other countries.

⁵ Since most exercises were carried out in groups, I chose this way of evaluating the results, against conventional/individualized tests.

⁶ Morin (2006) conducted an experiment on derivative rules, and the results indicated that teaching morphological rules results in a better knowledge of the words in question, even if they did not seem to help to learn more vocabulary. The experimental group performed considerably better than the control group in production tasks. It is likely that similar results would be obtained for compounds.

⁷ For L2 instructors at American Universities, the activities recommended for the A level would correspond to the so-called 'Novice range' of ACTFL standards, these recommended for the B level, to the 'Intermediate range', and these recommended for the C level, to the 'Advanced range'.

⁸ As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, another option would be to reconsider the aims of these activities in terms of a lesson on compounds for an Introduction to Spanish Linguistics course.

Materials: Pairs of sentences in Spanish and in the L1 of the student (taking English as the default L1).

- La mujer **pelirroja** escoltaba al ministro porque el hombre de la barba larga no era un **guardaespaldas**.
The **red-haired** woman escorted the minister because the man with the long beard was not a **body guard**.
- La mujer **de pelo rojo** escoltaba al ministro.
The woman with the **red heard** escorted the minister.

Activity development: The activity is divided into four exercises. In the first one, students are asked to identify the nouns, verbs and adjectives in the words in bold. Next they are asked to indicate whether the identified categories are the heads of the phrase (H) or the non-heads (N-H), and we provided a model here. The third task is an oral one: students comment on the differences between the compounds and related phrases. The final task consists in elaborating a short list of Spanish compounds that differ from the ones in their L1, with regard to the relative position of the heads and non-heads in compounds and phrases.

2. Name of activity: How many *cumpleaños* do you have?

Level: A2-B1

Topic: Number

Skill: Integrated task (Speaking/Listening>Reading>Writing)

Aims: Helping students understand that compound patterns differ regarding plurals: *quitanieves* is either singular (*la quitanieves*) or plural (*las quitanieves*) despite the final -s, whereas *autobuses* is necessarily plural, and *empresas líderes* can either have both nouns in the plural or only in the first one (*empresas líder*).

Methodology & Targets: Individual/cooperative, metalinguistic reasoning, task-based

Duration: 20 min.

Materials: Pictures of the elements named by the compounds.



Figure 1. Examples of cards for activity How many *cumpleaños* do you have?

Some lists of Spanish compounds with nouns in singular and plural may also be provided. Examples are:

S. *el tragaluz, un pasatiempo, el parasol*
P. *la quitanieves, los cagaprisas, el cortafuegos*

S. *el coche escoba, el niño soldado*
P. *las empresas líderes, las pruebas reinas*

S. *fotomontaje, vitaminoterapia*
P. *eurotúneles, autobuses*

Activity development: The activity is divided into several exercises. In the first one the instructor leads a discussion on the following questions: How do we refer to more than one *pasaporte*? And to more than one *cumpleaños*? Next students are asked to relate the lists of compounds to the appropriate images, some of which show only one object, while others show several ones. The class is divided into groups. Each group receives a series of compounds and has to put them in the correct plural form. All the series are listed on the board and the instructor establishes the patterns.

3. Name of activity: Spider Man

Level: A1-A2

Topic: Noun Appositions

Skill: Listening/Speaking

Aims: Helping students understand that each of the compound nouns contributes to the meaning of the whole construction.

Methodology & Targets: Cooperative, interactive, gamification

Duration: 30min.

Materials: Pictures of the elements named in the compounds. Use of an online dictionary (Wordreference or similar) is allowed.



Figure 2. Examples of cards for the exercise Spider man

Activity development: The activity is divided into two tasks. In the first one students are asked to find the compound that corresponds to the image, and to explain why they think that these elements have such names. After this, students need to look for similar compounds and pictures; their classmates are then asked to guess their names.

4. Name of activity: The red-haired red-skin

Level: B1-B2

Topic: Inalienable possession

Skill: Writing

Aims: Helping students make the correct choice of determiners according to the alienable or inalienable nature of the noun.

Methodology & Targets: Individual/cooperative, creativity, metalinguistic reasoning

Duration: 30 min.

Materials: Sheets with the task, sample compounds, and answers. The use of an online dictionary (Wordreference or similar) is allowed.

- *barbicano, colirrojo, ojijunto, rabcorto, puntiagudo, patitieso*
 - *fotograbado, euroescéptico, angloparlante, derechohabiente, radioemirsora*
- El anciano se afeitó **la** ____ El abogado estudió ____
'The old man shaved his ____' 'The lawyer studied ____'
Al perro le cortaron **la** ____ Mi amigo está aprendiendo ____
'They cut the dog's ____' 'My friend is learning ____'

Activity development: The activity is divided into several tasks. In the first one students are asked to identify the nouns highlighted in the compounds (they can use a dictionary). Next they are requested to fill in the gaps in the sentences. After this task, students are divided into two groups: one group needs to list the nouns that follow the definite determiner, and the other group needs to list the nouns that do not. They need to try to deduce the relation between the compounds and the gaps (here, they need to work out that the former list of compounds is the one that includes the nouns appearing in the *pelirrojo* compounds). Finally, students are requested to invent compounds like *pelirrojo* with appropriate nouns (inalienable).

5. Name of activity: Blue, blue-eyed, or with blue eyes

Level: B1-B2

Topic: Description with *ser*, *estar* and *tener*

Skill: Integrated (Writing>Speaking/Listening)

Aims: Helping students understand that we construct descriptions with *tener* when we describe a *part* of a person or object (NP's), and we construct descriptions with *ser* and *estar* when we describe the *whole* person or object (AdjP's). *Pelirrojo* compounds and *peludo* 'hairy' suffixed words, which contain body parts but describe whole persons and objects, are illustrative of this, but we show other descriptive resources, such as NP's (*planta ancha* 'wide floor'), PP's (*de pelo rojo* 'of red hair'), and AdjP's (*ancho por arriba* 'wide in the upper side').

Methodology & Targets: Individual/Cooperative, task-based, metalinguistic reasoning

Duration: 30-45 min.

Materials: We provide sheets with the task, sample compounds, and answers.

- *El edificio era* **puntiagudo**/*la planta ancha/ancho por arriba.*
- ‘The building was **point-shaped**/*the floor wide/wide in the upper side’.*
- *Mi antiguo jefe estaba* **rojo de ira**/*pelirrojo/de cara roja’.*
- ‘Mi former boss was **red of rage**/*red-haired/with red face’.*
- *El perro tenía* **una sola oreja**/*lanudo/rota la pata*
- ‘The dog had **only one ear**/*wollen/the pawn broken’.*

Activity development: The activity is divided into three tasks. In the first one students are asked to choose the correct predicate for each subject. Next they need to make columns organizing the five structures (compounds, suffixed adjectives with -udo, NP’s, PP’s, and AdjP’s) depending on whether they are used after *ser*, *estar*, or both, or *tener*. After this task, students are divided into three groups: each group receives one instruction (to construct descriptions with *ser*, *estar*, or *tener*). Their classmates will judge if they are correct, and will try to guess the relevant differences between descriptions.

6. Name of activity: “I hope to see the globefish”-“Really? How did you meet each other?”

Level: A2

Topic: Choice of article

Skill: Writing

Aims: Helping students understand that the indefinite article (*un*) is used for unknown or non-specific objects, the definite article (*el*) for nicknames, and no article for compounds used as attributes.

Methodology & Targets: Individual; structural, metalinguistic reasoning

Duration: 20’

Materials: We provide sheets with the task and samples.

Íbamos paseando por el campo cuando vimos pasar ____ **quebrantahuesos**

‘We were walking when we saw ____ a bearded vulture’

Porque maté un perro me llamaron “ ____ **mataperros**”

‘Since I killed a dog they call me “the dog killer”

Tu primo es muy ____ **aguafiestas**

‘Your cousin is a party pooper’

Activity development: The activity is divided into two tasks. Our students are asked to choose the correct article (*un*, *el*, or *zero*) and to try to work out the pattern (provided at the end of the activity). Next they need to redo the sentences, so that they are able to change the article.

7. Name of activity: Appearances can be deceptive

Level: C1-C2

Topic: Grammatical categories

Skill: Writing

Aims: Helping students understand that form-related aspects (e.g., inflectional categories, selected modifiers) and non-semantic notions are what define grammatical categories.

Methodology & Targets: Individual, metalinguistic reasoning, project-based

Duration: Variable

Materials: Instructions and a bibliography.

Trigger: Students are presented with a class of compounds in which a noun carries the meaning component typical of an adjective with no explicit morphological material (they are still nouns).

empresario milagro 'miraculous businessman', *actriz promesa* 'promising actress', *ciudadano modelo* 'model citizen', *madre coraje* 'courageous mother', *prueba reina* 'the most relevant event', *momento cumbre* 'the most important moment', *guerra relámpago* 'very quick war method', *visita sorpresa* 'unexpected visit', *noticia bomba* 'hot news', *pregunta trampa* 'tricky question', *ciudad fantasma* 'ghost town', *CD pirata* 'pirated CD'

Activity development: Project meant to investigate the morphological, semantic and syntactic mechanisms used in Spanish in order to convert:

- adjectives into nouns
- verbs into nouns
- nouns into verbs

Students are then asked to compare these with comparable resources in their L1.

8. Name of activity: How would you name a...?

Level: A2

Topic: Nicknames

Skill: Integrated (Writing + Speaking)

Aims: Stimulating students' creativity and helping them discover the main function of V+N compound patterns, namely, that of referring to people and things through their salient features.

Methodology & Targets: Individual, metalinguistic reasoning, creativity, cultural background

Duration: 15'

Materials: a sample sheet of compounds with the following type of information:

matasanos 'kill+healthy people' 'a bad doctor'

chupatintas 'lick+inks' 'a lazy public worker'

meapilas 'piss+baptistries' 'a very religious person'

Activity development: Students are asked to create names for...

- people who try to cut into the line in a market or shop
- a teacher who takes a lot of time to mark exams
- a person who works out in a gym and looks at himself/herself in the mirror

Students are also asked to explain why they chose a particular name. All the new terms that arise are discussed in class, the choices are compared, and the class votes for the most original one.

9. Name of activity: Don't use that word!

Level: C1

Topic: Formal and colloquial vocabulary

Skill: Reading

Aims: Presenting the student with some marked lexical decisions involving compounds.

Methodology & Targets: Individual, metalinguistic reasoning, creativity, cultural background

Duration: 25 min.

Materials: Texts extracted from CREA, online dictionary (Wordreference or similar), and the following compounds:

- *Fehaciente* 'reliable', *patitieso* 'awestruck', *islamofobia* 'islamophobia', *acidorresistente* 'acid-resistant', *capipardo* 'redneck', *lameculos* 'ass-kisser', *burgomaestre* 'burgomaster', *acueducto* 'aqueduct'

Activity development: The exercise consists of two tasks. In the first one, students are asked to suggest a text type that appears suitable for each compound. In the second task students are provided with different texts and asked to figure out what kind of compounds might appear in them, and to provide examples.

10. Name of activity: Do you (dis)agree?

Level: C1

Topic: Agreement

Skill: Writing

Aims: Helping students avoid minor agreement mistakes.

Methodology & Targets: Individual, structural, metalinguistic reasoning

Duration: 15'

Materials: Sample sentences with the wrong compound forms, such as:

*No he aprendido todavía las consonantes **alveolipalatales***

'I did not learn yet *alveolipalatales* consonants'.

*Todos los asistentes eran **italoportugueses***

'All assistants were *italoportugueses*'.

*Los tópicos sobre las relaciones **medico-enfermeras** son **sexistas**.*

'The cliché on relationships *médico-enfermeras* are sexist'.

*El jugador de fútbol vestía una camiseta **verdoblanca**.*

'The football player wore a t-shirt *verdoblanca*'.

Activity development. Students are asked to correct the mistakes, explain why they are incorrect, and provide well-formed examples.

2.2 Activities' discussion

In the light of the workshop session, there are compelling reasons to believe that significative pedagogical results can be obtained working with compounds beyond 'simple' vocabulary learning.

The activities *Driving in the opposite direction* and *Do you (dis)agree?* allowed students to benefit from the simplicity of compound syntax. In these exercises compounds provide the minimal syntactic context where knowledge about word order and agreement is easily accessed. The exercises contained subtasks that asked for the production of examples by the recombination and recontextualization of the examples that are performed successfully.

The activities *Blue, blue-eyed, or with blue eyes* and *the red-haired red-skin* allowed advanced students to apply their theoretical knowledge (word classes, determiners, copulae) to specific communicative tasks. These activities showed the students how being able to guess the adequate grammatical choices is mandatory in order to be able to master the language fully. Furthermore, the exercise *Don't use that word!* deals with the choice of appropriate vocabulary according to the communicative context. The instructor helped the students realize that compounds tend to occur frequently in marked registers, both formal and colloquial. The compounds selected for this exercise carry in their meaning a host of connotations and figurative senses relating to low-ranked professions and people's behavior, which students found very funny. Despite that, they were persuaded to avoid using discriminatory compounds.

The activities *How many cumpleaños do you have?* And *Appearances can be deceptive* stimulated metalinguistic discussion and encouraged students to share their views on the differences between Spanish compounds and the ones in English and Chinese (e.g. on the lack of plural morphology and their different word order). Finally, the activity *How would you name a...?*, which was a lexical production task, was performed successfully (even A level students did the task nicely). Students were able to create new words, and were encouraged to continue improving their lexical competence over the long term.

The activities *Spider Man* and *"I hope to see the globefish"- "Really? How did you meet each other?"* allowed the students to find correspondences between meaning and the choice of word class or determiner. They seemed to enjoy discovering new patterns and using them subsequently in production (sub)tasks, which were integrated in both exercises.

The students overall were highly engaged in the tasks, and found the models to follow very helpful, as well as the variety of channels (visual, auditive) and materials. The whole task, or one of its parts, were cooperative, so the advanced students helped their less-succesful peers. The students combined reading, speaking, writing, and listening to complete the exercises, showing bigger difficulties in the speaking and listening tasks.

3. Conclusions

In this paper we argued that compound words are useful as a means of improving the overall competence of students of L2 Spanish. Such forms constitute valuable lexical additions to a speaker's repertoire, and are useful for a wide range of communicative purposes. They also possess certain properties (e.g., syntactic-like structure, meaning relationships, membership of marked registers) that render them especially useful for a variety of learning targets, such as promoting students' metalinguistic reasoning, fostering their creativity, and stimulating their curiosity about Spanish language and culture.

In compliance with these goals, the proposed activities were designed to lead the students to the discovery of regularities in the data, and to implement them in unprecedented contexts; they also encourage them to reflect on the differences between their mother language and Spanish. Ultimately, the activities exploited the lexical particularities of compounds to bring the students closer to Spanish customs.

In order to guarantee diverse learning results, we followed methodological guidelines akin to those used in the task-based approaches and gamified learning. These activities are mostly cooperative and aimed at working on both comprehension and production around a grammatical topic (e.g. plural compounds) or a communicative task (e.g. description).

Further developments of this proposal might include a more practical and/or contextualized approach, namely, adapting activities to specific student groups with a particular proficiency level, and validating or refuting the hypothesis that exercises that include morphological knowledge lead to improvements in overall L2 competence with experimental evidence.

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