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A Cognitive Study of TIME Conceptualizations in Spanish and Japanese

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Introduction

The time rhythms and concepts in daily life differ depending on cultural background as between Spanish and Japanese. For example, generally, Spanish and Japanese have breakfast around 7AM but Spanish start to have lunch around 2PM and take much time for it, whereas Japanese eat lunch rather quickly about 12 noon. Concerning supper Spanish eat around 9PM but Japanese eat between 6 and 8 PM.

E. T. Hall (1984:44-58) researched the behavior to time of Spanish and Latin American people and Japanese. He explains that there are two different behaviors to time: "polychronic" and "monochronic". "Polychronic" is those who do things at a same time and they make a importance of the involvement of people and completion of transaction rather than present schedules, and therefore the schedule or plans for the future are broken. "Monochronic" is those who do one thing at a same time. They are dominated by schedule and time determines and coordinates everything even the relationship with others. Hall examined that Spanish and Latin American people are "polychronic" and Japanese are "monochronic" for the official business and they are "monochronic" beside the official business.

However there are not many statistical studies about time between Spanish and Japanese. This research, utilizing E. T. Hall's time frames, aims to examine the time expressions and vocabularies used in Spanish and Japanese and the related behavior regarding time and to explore any cultural differences that occur. The time-related expressions and vocabularies, "farewells" were examined in relationships between the speakers (formal/informal), and the period of the separation was also considered. A questionnaire to examine the analysis with Spanish and Japanese subjects were carried out for the analysis.

Theoretical Background

Hall (1959) distinguished "time" in three attitudinal frames. Formal time, informal time, and technical time. He explains that "Formal time reflects formal or traditional aspects of our time. For instance, the year that has three hundred sixty five days plus one fourth of a day. Informal time is what has to do with situational or imprecise references like "awhile", "later", "in a minute", and so on. Technical time is an entirely different system used by scientists and technicians, such as the exact length of the year. For example, the solar year: (365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.51 seconds plus a fraction) (Hall,1959:64). In informal time, the expressions such as "Oh, it takes years to get that done." you have to be there and know the person and the background of the remark to judge the time periods referred to (Hall,1959:141). Depending on the culture, contexts, situations, and so on, the expression, "see you later", may be shorter, longer, or "later" may not come at all. The behavior regarding time is also different. There are some studies concerning punctuality. It is usually said that Japanese tend to be punctual, whereas Spanish tend to be late. To see if

there are any contemporary cultural differences, the questions about the waiting time attitude and the durations were researched among young people.

Method

The survey was conducted by questionnaires in Spanish and Japanese. See appendix A. A hundred seven Spanish University students in Madrid (57 male students and 50 female students) and 114 Japanese university students (54 male students and 60 female students) in Yokohama were asked to answer the questions.¹⁾ There were 13 questions concerning “farewell expressions” and their attitude toward time. In this study, question no. 1 to 4 and question no. 6 to 9 were examined.

Analysis

Farewell Expressions

Table 1 shows the percentage of the farewell expressions that Spanish and Japanese use. The questions are from no.1 to 4 and the answers are either 3 or 4 choices. More than one answer were allowed to be selected or written down as they may not always use the same expressions. “Short TS formal” means the short time of separation with formal use. “Long TS Informal” means a long time of separation with informal use. In Spanish, the representative category of speech level is formal and informal. Formal level of speech is used to older people and to those who are respected and to those who do not know. Informal level of speech is used to friends, family members, and relatives. In Japanese, there are formal and informal usage. In formal usage, which is called *keigo*, there are three levels of speech: *sonkeigo*, *kenjogo*, and *teineigo*. *Sonkeigo* is to show respect to the hearer and the third person using special address terms, or using special expressions to their acts, or belongings. *Kenjogo* is to show respect to the hearer and the third person. The speaker uses the modest words to their own address terms, to their acts, and to their belongings. *Teineigo* is to show respect to the hearer using polite expressions to the things and the auxiliary verbs.

Question 1 (Short time of separation, formal) is “What do you say to your teachers when you leave the class if you won’t see him/her for a few days?” and the choices are: 1. “*Adiós*” in Spanish and “*sayounara*” in Japanese, which is “good-bye”. 2. “*Adiós, hasta luego*” in Spanish, and “*Dewamata, sayounara*,” in Japanese which are “Good-bye, see you”. (Spanish and Japanese use these combinations, which do not have an equivalent in English). 3. “*Hasta luego*” in Spanish and “*dewamata*” in Japanese which are parallel to “see you”, and 4. others which the respondent can fill out for the other expressions. “*Adiós*”, which means “good-bye” in English is used by only 9% of the Spanish students whereas “*sayounara*” is by 80% of the Japanese students. “*Hasta luego*” which is equivalent to “see you” is used by 66.3%, whereas “*dewamata*” is 0%. “*Hasta luego*”(see you), is used the most in Spanish and “*sayounara*”, (good-bye) is considerably used by Japanese. Other expressions that are peculiar and different are “*Onukaresama*.” (Thank you for your earnest instruction.), “*Arigatougozaimashita*.” (Thank you very much.), and “*Sinureisimasu*” (Let me excuse myself.). These expressions were only seen in Japanese. The first two express appreciation/gratitude rather than a direct farewell. In the last case leaving is considered a rudeness and requires an apology.

Question 2 (Short time of separation, informal) is “What do you say to your friends when you leave the class if you won’t see him/her for a few days?” The choices are the same as above. In regard to the Japanese, the expressions with friends (informal use) were changed to a casual style because the Japanese students do not usually use *keigo* (formal language use) with their friends. “*Hasta luego*” (see you) is ranked high (61.4%) and “*Matane, bai bai*” (See you, bye) is also ranked high. (50.0%) For the short time of separation, Japanese tend to use the expressions meaning “good-bye” to both the teachers and friends.

However, Spanish students do not often use the expressions meaning “good-bye” for the short time of separation. “Chao” from Italian is also used between Spanish students. This expression is widely used in Latin American countries, and it is not usually used among older Spanish people.

Question 3 (Long time of separation, formal) is “What do you say to someone important or you wish to show respect to when you won’t see him/her for a long time?” Concerning the answers, after the “farewell expressions”, the expression meaning, “take care” was added in both Spanish (“*Que le vaya bien.*”) and Japanese (“*Ogenkide.*”). Spanish students use “*adiós*” which is “good-bye” the most and “*hasta luego*” which is “see you” is ranked next. The Japanese also use “*sayounara*” which is “good-bye” the most and the “*dewamata*” which is “see you” is ranked next. They both used the expressions “*adiós*” and “*sayounara*” meaning “good-bye” with some one important or they respect. It can be said that the formal use of long time of separation in Spanish and Japanese is rather similar.

Question 4 (Long time of separation, informal) is “What do you say to your friend when you won’t see him/her for a long time?” The answers are the same as the answers for Question no. 3 but the Spanish and the Japanese have been changed to casual expressions. In Spanish, the rate of “*adiós*” is low compared with the expression “*hasta luego*”. In Japanese, “*matane*”, or “*jane*”, both meaning “see you”, is used the most and “*sayounara*” (good-bye) or “*baibai*”(bye) is less common. They both tend to avoid the use of “good-bye” to their friends rather than an important person and people they respect. The rate of others in Question 4 is high in Spanish and Japanese. They both add expressions such as “*Nos vemos.*” in Spanish and “*Mata aoune*” in Japanese, which is equivalent to “Hope to see you.”, “*Te echaré de menos*” in Spanish and “*Samishi*” in Japanese which is “I will miss you”, and “*Te escribiré o llamaré.*” in Spanish and “*Renwaku toroune.*” in Japanese which is “equivalent to “Keep in touch”.

As seen in Table 1, the biggest difference is the short time of separation in formal use. In Spanish, “*adiós*” which is good-by is not used often (9.0%) for the short time of separation in formal use, instead, “*hasta luego*” which is “see you” in English is used the most (66.3%). However, in Japanese, “*sayounara*” which is “good-by” is used the most (80.0%) and “*dewamata*” which is “see you” is not used at all. This result suggests the need to be concerned about when and to whom to use the expressions in learning a second language.

Table 1 : Farewell expressions used by Spanish and Japanese students

	Meaning Gloss	L	ShortTS /Formal	ShortTS /Informal	LongTS /Formal	LongTS /Informal
1	<i>Adiós.</i>	S	9	0.9	67.9	32.7
	<i>Sayounara.</i>	J	80	0.7	50	8.4
2	<i>Adiós, hasta luego.</i>	S	14.5	19.2	-	-
	<i>Dewamata, sayounara, Matane, baibai.</i>	J	6.6	50	-	-
3	<i>Hasta luego.</i>	S	66.3	61.4	27.3	43.9
	<i>Dewamata, Matane.</i>	J	0	37.5	36.4	75.6
4	Others	S	4.5	18.3	4.7	23.3
	Others	J	10.8	11.7	12.7	15.9

L: Language S: Spanish J: Japanese

Short TS: Short time of separation Long TS : Long time of separation

Formal: Expressions used with teachers or someone they respect.

Informal: Expressions used with friends

“Adiós” in Spanish and “sayounara” in Japanese refers to “good-bye”.

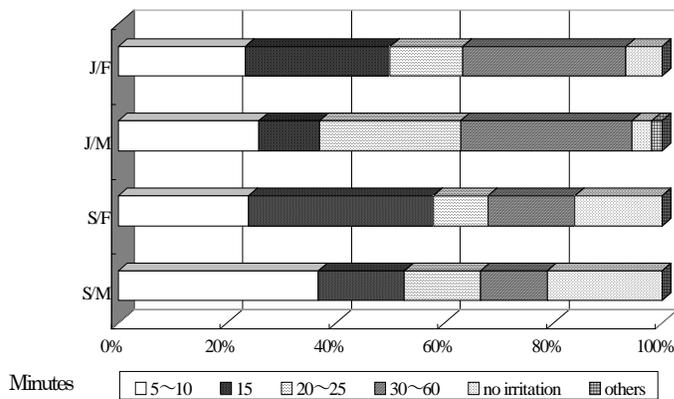
“Hasta luego” in Spanish and “dewamatai” in Japanese refers to “see you”.

Informal Japanese (answers of the Questions no. 2 and 4): “baibai” refers to “bye” and “matane” refers to “see you”.

Behavior

Question 6 was “If you can’t communicate by phone, and your friend does not come, how long would you wait without impatience?” As Figure 1 on page 118 shows, between 5 to 10 minutes, 36.8% of the Spanish men start to become impatient and compared to Spanish women, Japanese men, and the Japanese women, they start to become impatient sooner. About 15% of the Japanese females and the Spanish females start to become impatient after waiting for 15 minutes. After 15 to 25 minutes, more than 50% of every group start to become impatient. About 20% of the Spanish men and women answered that they do not become impatient even though they are kept waiting as they are accustomed to that.

Figure 1 : Impatience Rates



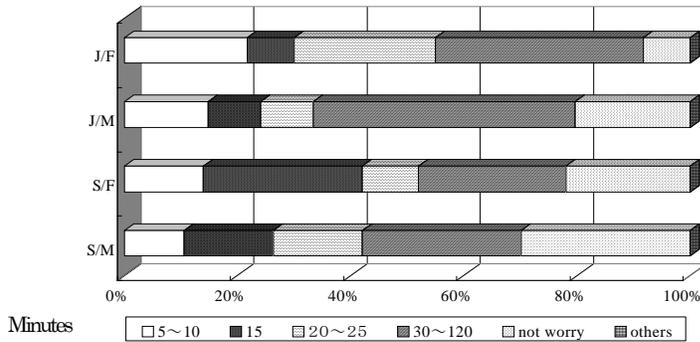
Question 7 was “If you can’t communicate by phone, and your friend does not come, how long would you wait without worrying?” As seen in Figure 2, concerning the rate of “worry”, about 30% of the Spanish men do not become worried, and 20% of the Japanese men and the Spanish women do not become worried whereas only 9.3% of the Japanese women do. The rates of the Spanish men and the Japanese men are relatively similar. The only slight difference is the rate of “not worry”. It is only about 10% higher than the rate of the Japanese men. 28% of the Spanish women start to get worried after waiting for 15 minutes and 24.1% of the Japanese women start to get worried after 5 to 10 minutes. From this figure, we can see that women tend to become worried sooner compared to men.

Question 8 was “If you are late, do you give a reason?” Figure 3 indicates that the Japanese women tend to explain the reason for being late for few minutes and next come the Japanese men followed by the Spanish women and the Spanish men. Japanese tend to explain the reason sooner than the Spanish.

Question 9 was “If you are late, do you apologize?” As seen in Figure 4, the Japanese women

apologize when they are late even for few minutes, and next come the Japanese men, the Spanish women, and the Spanish men. Both Figure 4 and Figure 3 indicate a similar tendency. We can say that the Japanese men and the women tend to apologize and explain the reason why when they are late for only a few minutes.

Figure 2 : Worry Rates



Conclusion

From the analysis of the farewell expressions, we can see that the usage of some expressions is not the same, as they are selected for use depending on the situation. In most dictionaries, the meaning of the words are explained, but not the situation of use. To avoid misunderstanding it is necessary to teach the situation adequately, the appropriateness of the use from the situation.

Surprisingly, Spanish men tend to become impatient sooner than the other groups, but the rate of “no impatience” among the groups is also the highest. The rates of the Spanish men’s results were the most extreme. Both the Spanish and the Japanese women tend to become worried sooner than the Spanish and the Japanese men. It can be considered that this is not a cultural difference but a difference between men and women. Also, Japanese tend to apologize and give the reason sooner than the Spanish.

Even though Japanese are regarded as being punctual, the Japanese university students do not become impatient as often when they are waiting for someone. This may be influenced by the well spread use of portable telephones. As most of the university students in Japan now have the portable telephones, they can call or send email when they are late.

As I examined 99 university students about their sense of time when they are meeting their friends,⁽²⁾ 26.2% answer that they get to the meeting place early, and 37.3% answer that they are on time, and 28.2% come after 5 to 10 minutes, and 7%, after 10 to 20 minutes. Because of portable phone, they do not have to worry or become impatient about waiting but also they might be changing, becoming less punctual.

In this study, I limited the investigation only to the contemporary culture of university students. For further research, by examining other age groups, and comparing their attitudes toward time cultural change may also be investigated. However, it can be said that there is a need for better social contextual information for contemporary young people in learning “time concepts” in dictionaries and textbooks, and the expressions and vocabularies should be acquired with the contextual situation.

Notes

- 1) The surveys were conducted at Universidad de Complutense in Madrid, Spain and Meiji Gakuin University in Yokohama, Japan.
- 2) This survey was conducted at Meiji Gakuin University.

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Appendix A

This is the translation of Spanish and Japanese questionnaire.

Sex M F Age Homeplace

Have you lived in any foreign countries? No. Yes, month(s)/year(s) in

1. What do you say to your teachers when you leave the class if you see him or her after a few days? 1) Good-bye. 2) Good-bye, see you. 3) See you. 4) Others _____
2. What do you say to your friends when you leave the class if you see see him or her after a few days? 1) Good-bye. 2) Good-bye, see you 3) See you. 4) Others _____
3. What do you say to someone important or you respect to when you won't see see him or her for a long time? 1) Good-bye, take care. 2) See you, take care. 3) Others _____
4. What do you say to your friends when you won't see see him or her for a long time? 1) Good-bye, take care. 2) See you, take care. 3) Others _____
5. If your friend is late, how do you value your emotion from 1 to 10? (10 is the highest score) 1) Worry 2) Displeasure 3) Impatience 4) indifference 5) _____
6. If you can't communicate by phone, and your friend does not come, how long would you wait without impatience? 1) minutes. 2) I wait calmly.
7. If you can't communicate by phone, and your friend does not come, how long would you wait without worrying? 1) minutes. 2) I don't worry much. 3) I don't usually worry. .
8. If you are late, do you give the reason? 1) I give the reason if I am late more than minutes. 2) I don't give the reason.
9. If you are late, do you apologize? 1) I apologize if I am late more than minutes. 2) I don't usually apologize. .
10. If your friend is late, do you ask for the reason? 1) I ask for the reason if he or she is late more than minutes. 2) I don't usually ask for the reason.

11. How do you point, from 0 to 10, the annoyance that you receive from the delay of . . . ?

1) Boy/Girlfriend 2) Friend (boy) 3) Friend (girl)

4) Acquaintance 5) Not acquaintance

12. If you visit your friend's house, you try to be at . .

1) minutes before. 2) minutes after. 3) On time.

4) Others. ____

13. If you visit someone important or you respect much, you try to be at . .

1) minutes before. 2) minutes after. 3) On time.

4) Others ____

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B
Representative farewell expressions in Spanish and Japanese

Spanish	Japanese
<u>Formal and informal use</u>	<u>Formal use</u>
Hasta un rato.	Mata nochihodo.
Hasta ahora.	Mata kondo.
Hasta mañana.	Dewa mata.
Nos vemos mañana.	Dewa mata ashita.
Hasta luego.	Mata aimashou.
Nos vemos luego.	Mata tuginokikaini.
Hasta después.	Osakini shiturei simasu.
Hasta otro día.	Otukare sama deshita.
Hasta la próxima.	Sayounara.
Hasta pronto.	
Hasta otra.	<u>Informal use</u>
Algún día.	Mata atodene.
Nos vemos algún día.	Matane.
Hasta la vista	Jaane.
Hasta siempre.	Ja matane.
Adiós.	Mata kondone.
	Mata ashitane.
<u>Only formal use.</u>	Baibai.
Espero que nos veamos.	Otukare.
Espero verle de nuevo.	
Hasta que nos veamos.	
Encantado(-a) de conocerle.	
<u>Only informal use.</u>	
Hasta luego.	
Chao.	
Chaito.	