

## *Schemata and ‘languaging’ in learning Japanese polysemous particles ‘ni’ and ‘de’*

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### **Abstract**

Upon reviewing the data from a study on the effects of a Cognitive Grammar (CG) explanation and schemata use, a tendency to longer-term retention for Japanese polysemous particles ‘ni’ and ‘de’ was detected in a 3-week-delayed post-test (Masuda & Labarca under review). To further explore these results, we analyzed college students’ ‘languaging’ (Swain et al. 2009) in audio-recorded protocols made while selected pairs of students were trying to... 1. identify particles in a story and name their functions; 2. name the particle functions in another story and match each of them with the corresponding schema card (see Fig.1). Since language is a powerful mediational tool (Vygotsky 1986), it was essential to analyze its quality while students were completing challenging tasks. Following basic tenets of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (Lantolf & Thorne 2006, Lantolf 2007), it was equally necessary to explore the interaction between peers, given the role shared activity plays in concept development. Pairs were engaged in a practical activity like matching particles and schemata cards. Qualitative analyses indicate that there seems to be a relationship between ‘languaging’ quality and pair ability to correctly identify and use particle functions. Progress as measured in fill-in-the-blank exercises as well as in story writing might be supported by higher-level ‘languaging’ (e. g., elaborating for self, proposing theory about particles used) and schematic tools may in turn better scaffold the understanding of difficult concepts in the classroom.

Therefore, in this presentation, quality of languaging and progress data (see Table 1) will be discussed to explore possible relationships between them. Figures provided will display schemata used. In addition, some excerpts from the oral exchanges between peers will be discussed to try and give an idea of how pairs of students process and come to correctly or incorrectly identify particle functions or match them with schema cards. The presentation will conclude by emphasizing the value of CG-inspired explanations of difficult concepts as well as of the critical role schematic aids play in the formation of concepts in the classroom. The importance of working within an SCT framework will also be demonstrated by the way we examine pair activity.

Table 1. Fill-in-the-blank test scores

Name	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed-post –test	Difference
Tom	72	75	84	3
Ed	88	94	97	6
Dan	78	94	88	16
Stephan	84	94	82	10
Hanna	41	53	44	12
Ben	50	54	60	4
Vicki	63	88	69	25
Walt	63	72	69	9

Figure 1. Example of Schemata for *ni*

