

# **INTER ASIA PAPERS**

**ISSN 2013-1747**

**n° 69 / 2020**

**REPRODUCTION OF IDENTITIES IN THE  
HISPANIC STUDIES ON JAPAN: DISCOURSE,  
TEXTUAL ATTITUDE AND PEDAGOGICAL  
MATERIALS**

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Edita

Centro de Estudios e Investigación sobre Asia Oriental

Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès) Barcelona 2008

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

ISSN 2013-1739 (versión impresa)

Depósito Legal: B-50443-2008 (versión impresa)

ISSN 2013-1747 (versión en línea)

Depósito Legal: B-50442-2008 (versión en línea)

Diseño: Xesco Ortega

# **Reproduction of identities in the Hispanic Studies on Japan: discourse, textual attitude and pedagogical materials**

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## **Resumen**

El objetivo del grado en Estudios Hispánicos impartido en varias universidades de Japón es formar al alumnado en lengua castellana y en las culturas de los territorios hispanohablantes. A partir de entrevistas con administradores, profesores y estudiantes, así como del análisis de materiales pedagógicos, este artículo analiza cómo la titulación aborda la tarea de impartir conocimiento sobre culturas que cuentan con una imagen social preexistente y consolidada. Los resultados revelan que el impacto que la docencia de especialistas tiene sobre el alumnado para corregir ideas preconcebidas y extendidas sobre otras culturas se ve mermado por la inercia y ubicuidad de funciones discursivas socialmente transversales. Así mismo, paradójicamente, los/las especialistas se apoyan de manera desapercibida, o involuntariamente refuerzan, otras creencias infundadas al tiempo que tratan activamente de corregir otros prejuicios.

**Palabras clave:** Estudios de área, estudios hispánicos, identidad nacional, educación superior, sensibilización cultural, Japón.

## **Abstract**

The aim of the B.A. in Hispanic Studies (HS) in Japanese higher education is to train the students in the language and the cultures of the Spanish-speaking territories. Through interviews with administrators, teachers, and students, as well as the analysis of pedagogical materials, this paper analyzes how said degree tackles the task of teaching about cultures that have a preexisting and consolidated social image. The results reveal that the impact on undergraduates by specialists that set out to correct widely shared assumptions about other cultures is dampened by the inertia and pervasiveness of socially transversal discursive functions. Also, paradoxically, the same specialists will inadvertently lean on, or otherwise unintendedly reinforce, other unwarranted beliefs while they focus on rectifying some assumptions.

**Keywords:** Area Studies, Hispanic Studies, national identity, higher education, cultural awareness, Japan.

# REPRODUCTION OF IDENTITIES IN THE HISPANIC STUDIES ON JAPAN: DISCOURSE, TEXTUAL ATTITUDE AND PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS

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## **Introduction: Hispanic Studies degree**

The Hispanic Studies degree (イスパニア学科) is a four year degree that is offered in several public and private Japanese universities. Some universities have a department of Hispanic Studies, but others have not.

Public universities that offer Hispanic Studies (hereafter “HS”) have a high level of academic requirements and the demand to apply is very high. Apart from the quality of teaching and prestige of schools, applications to public centers have the additional incentive of the tuition fees which are much lower than those of the private schools. Public universities can be financed through different official channels: the State (for example, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, or Osaka University get government financial support ); prefecture (for example, Aichi Prefectural University, 愛知県立大学) or city (for example, Kobe City University of Foreign Studies).

Among private universities exists a higher disparity regarding teaching quality and the academic requirements of students. However, there are some prestigious universities whose quality compares favorably with public centers’ quality (for example, Sophia University, 上智大学, in Tokyo).

Among the degree's educational objectives there is the acquisition of competence in Spanish language. Students that graduate reach a high level of Spanish language, equivalent to the advanced level, or at least intermediate level of DELE . Another objective in the degree is familiarizing the students with the History, Social configuration and Culture of the Hispanic language countries. Some of these courses are mandatory and some of them are offered just as optional courses. We will not go into depth on a detailed examination of the study plan, degree's itineraries and courses. This contribution only offers a mere general vision that allows introducing the HS to the reader that it is not informed and also allows us to put our analysis into context.

Throughout the following pages we will bring up some of the questions that concern teaching Spanish culture: What kind of cultural identity is constructed throughout the degree? Is an "imagined geography" (Said, 1978:54) reproduced? Or, on the contrary, it complies with the discipline and empirical rigor of the methodologies that emerged from Sociology and other humanistic branches during the second half of the twentieth century? Which are the most remarkable difficulties that confront the objective of familiarizing the students with the reality of "Spanish culture"?

### **Epistemological problems with the concepts of "identity" and "culture"**

A question often assumes answers to a series of previous questionings not verbalized. Then, inquisitive formulations at the end of the last paragraph incorporate the "Spanish culture" syntagm in an axiomatic way.

However, does a “Spanish culture” really exist? Or is it just an objectification, a consequence of the linguistic technology that is at our disposal? (Sakai, 2000 and 2006). And, if it does exist, what is it about? This is, which is its mode of existence? Is it a discursive formation? If so, among the discourse objects, which ones belong to or can be also considered by science? Which elements make up its archive? Or which rules allow some elements to be accurately incorporated to the archive? (Foucault, 1969). While, in Foucault works, discourse agents are restricted by discursive needs (1969, 1971), other authors such as Said (1978, 1993) or Eagleton (1990, 2000, 2003) insist on the individual responsibility of every person who makes a statement.

Discussing if a syntagm like “Spanish culture” has analytic or synthetic validity, to put it in Kantian words, would require explanations that have no space in the format and objective of this chapter. In addition, while Foucault established the existence of discursivity for some academic disciplines, he did not apply it to culture *lato sensu*, not even to the so-called “national cultures”.

Setting aside the adjective that accompanies the word “culture”, there is a previous problem and theoretical work regarding the concept of culture itself. The idea of culture has started to include practically any aspect of social life, even that of human experience. So, at the same time, the term has lost any specific and immediate referent. Talking about culture implies talking about everything and talking about nothing (for more information on the evolution of the term see Lozano 2007:14-31). Consequently, the attempt to apply Foucault’s analytic framework into the culture’s framework bumps into the problem of immeasurability. Nevertheless, although Foucault did not design his analysis with such broad objectives in mind, he was aware of the interactions and enjambments between discursive formations. This suggests that culture itself is not an univocal discourse but a group of discourses that are recognizable as an

unity. It possesses and produces discourse objects. It possesses rules of discursive formation and it produces statements.

To our purpose here, it is irrelevant if it exists something measurable such as culture. Every time statements about cultures relate to disciplines (History, Geography, Aesthetics, Sociology, Religion), it is possible to evaluate every statement separately. Culture, at least partially, is constructed in a structural way from images (Lévi-Strauss, Isaiah Berlin, Edward Said). Therefore, we can evaluate the empirical validity or the arbitrariness of those images. Even if we consider that it is not necessary to talk about empirism because culture is a whole discursive skeleton, we can analyze which kind of structure is constructed with those specific images.

These critical reflections are not mere speculative exercises that do not have anything to do with practice. If, negligently, we had started to conduct an analysis of the representation of “Spanish culture” in textbooks, for example, we would be strengthening the assumption that it does exist a natural (obvious, evident) entity, not problematic, that is called “Spanish culture”. “Negligence” means “carelessness”. Preventing negligence requires some intellectual warning (we will see this immediately). “Self-evaluation mechanisms” that are studied in the context of acquisition of second languages (SLA: second language acquisition) could be extended to the rest of the mental flow. When critical attitude is interrupted, our mind often turns to some induced concepts; reasoning and presumptions, sometimes even at a preconscious level. That is how Said’s *idées reçues* (1978:94) operate, as the encyclopedic equivalent to some phenomenon of SLA: “overgeneralization” of some structures, “fossilization” of others... (v. Saville-Troike).

Cultural images are transmitted and reinforced through some social channels. Consequently, none of the university students of Hispanic Studies applies to the degree without previous

impressions on how Spanish people are (despite the fact that the majority does not know any Spanish person yet), or on how their culture is like (similarly to the situation of Spanish students enrolled on the East Asian Studies degree).

### **Image and imagination of Spain in Japan**

The most remarkable study on the image of Spain and its citizens in Japan is Javier Noya's *Japan's image of Spain*, from 2004. This volume was ordered by some state agencies with the purpose of managing the international image of the country (Instituto Cervantes, Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior, Sociedad Estatal para Exposiciones Internacionales, Real Instituto Elcano). It was also conceived as a practical manual for commercial companies that seek the implementation of products into the Japanese market (marketing uses); or to facilitate business, because the book informs about the potential expectations or opinions assumed by Japanese interlocutors. We will briefly see later some components of the Japanese image of Spain that Noya detects. To obtain more information and complete this selection, you should refer to the complete reading of the mentioned volume, where some differentials from sociological variables are offered (age, sex, class, education...) and the Japanese image of Spain is also compared with the image of Europe as a whole or with other countries of the world.

We can start drawing that image from spontaneous associations with Spain. This is, what is the first thing that Japanese informants associate Spain with. The most common associations obtained in the research (Noya, 2004:96) are: bullfighting (27,6%), flamenco (19,5%), important figures (8,6%), passion (7%), monuments (4,6%), soccer (4,6%), cities (3,7%), historical events (3,2%), good weather, sun (2,7%), gastronomy (2,4%), paella (2,2%), beaches (1,7%), positive thinking (1,6%), party (1%).

The image of Spain is also made up of impressions regarding character and Spanish culture. Noya's study (2004:100) obtains the following composition of those perceptions that we cite verbatim:

- 92% traditional, compared to 5% modern (3% does not reply).
- 89% fun, compared to 6% boring (4% does not reply).
- 81% strong, compared to 9% weak (10% does not reply).
- 72% religious, compared to 16% atheist (12% does not reply).
- 70% democratic, compared to 20% authoritarian (10% does not reply).
- 66% reliable compared to 17% distrust (17% does not reply).
- 54% lazy, compared to 29% hardworking (17% does not reply).
- 48% selfish, compared to 29 % altruistic (22% does not reply).
- 45% rude, compared to 35% polite (20% does not reply).
- 36% right wing, compared to 30% de left wing (34% does not reply).

Next, the general opinion on Spain among Japanese citizens is estimated and, according to the result, 59% has a good impression on Spain and only 7% has a bad impression. Thirty per cent has an impression that is not good or bad, and also there is a 4% who does not have an impression at all on Spain (Noya, 2004:129).

The rate of confidence that Spaniards inspired among the Japanese is one of the highest compared to the rest of the countries from which similar information is available. Based on the obtained statistical data, Noya extrapolates that 52% of the Japanese trusts Spaniards (2004:134). The only Europeans that

obtain a higher rate on trust are the Germans (62%) and the British (60%); Spain is ahead France or Italy.

Next, we will reflect on the reproduction of the image of Spain in the context of the Hispanic Studies degree. We will focus specifically on the discourse on Spain and the textual attitude on the field studies as crucial factors on the transmission of this image.

### **The incidence of discourse and textual attitude on the field studies. The case of Hispanic Studies**

It may appear strange to speak about something or someone as holding a textual attitude, but a student of literature will understand the phrase more easily if he will recall the kind of view attacked by Voltaire in *Candide*, or even the attitude to reality satirized by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*. What seems unexceptionable good sense to these writers is that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books—texts—say; to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin. One would no more think of using *Amadis of Gaul* to understand sixteenth-century (or present-day) Spain than one would use the Bible to understand, say, the House of Commons. But clearly people have tried and do try to use texts in so simple-minded a way, for otherwise *Candide* and *Don Quixote* would not still have the appeal for readers that they do today. It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounter with the human. But is this failing constantly present, or are there circumstances that, more than others, make the textual attitude likely to prevail? (Said, 1978:92-93)

We have contrasted the information that Javier Noya offers about the image of Spain during conversations that he had maintained with third and fourth-year students enrolled in the HS degree of the Kobe City University of Foreign Studies and the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. His thesis has been reinforced: in general terms, students' impressions coincide with those of the general population. Of course, there are some differences according to age ranges (once again, we refer to Noya 2004). It should be considered that, currently, among the students enrolled in HS, there is more curiosity for Spanish sports and Media; but some fields such as arts (especially architecture and painting), gastronomy and folklore traditions are also considered interesting.

So, after studying for several years the HS major, the students' previous image of Spain does not change? If it has not changed, what is the purpose of studying such a degree? If it has substantially changed, how did it happen?

Certainly, students' knowledge involves exponential growth. Thanks to the degree, students substantially expand their knowledge, especially in History and Geography. In addition, they get an upright idea of the plurinational composition and politic and administrative organization of the Spanish state. Finally, students also become familiar with public life and culture figures of Spain. At the same time, it is shown that the image of the country and its citizens does not experience an essential transformation, but it just modifies to account for the new information. Many of the previous ideas on Spanish society and culture do not undergo any critical revision and often they are even reinforced within the academic environment.

Why are these results counterintuitive, almost contradictory? According to Said, orientalism is a discourse with an obvious didactic bent that develops until it becomes an extremely elaborated discipline. Even so, orientalist (today mistaken for

experts on the field) have never subverted the limited dramatic repertory or the poor basic vocabulary that supports the culturalist assumptions of the discipline. Maybe, as noted by Said in the citation at the beginning of the section, the projects of knowledge about other cultures are being forced into the obligation of explaining and interpreting, and sometimes, these processes imply seizing, dissecting, mechanizing, and even trivializing what, on the other hand, is maintained (always within knowledge projects) with mysterious, exotic and unseizable nucleus. None of the “knowledge projects” is free from the risk of authoritative preconceptions. Said explains the persistence of the textual attitude basing his analysis on two main factors. Now we will study them in their manifestation within the field studies and we will complete them with some other factors that also take part in the question of the representation in this discipline’s context.

### *Reference versus experience*

The first of the two factors that encourage the continuity of the textual attitude has its origins in the absence of the previous direct experience with the community from which the subject, at present, needs information. For example, the students e in HS, in the majority of the cases, have not had the experience of living in a Hispanic country and their access to cultural products of the so-called Hispanic “countries” has been very limited.

Despite the fact that there are kikokushijo (帰国子女) among the students, the percentage of returned Japanese' sons is inferior to that expected before starting the fieldwork. There are also students that come from mixed marriages or students whose parents are both immigrants, but this number is not as high as we expected. In addition, in these cases, either there is not more experience than that of the transmitted by one or both parents or the experience is limited to that of childhood.

In these situations, where subjects cannot recur to previous experience, the most common response consists on turning to a textual source as an informative resource. In the specific case of high education, the resource is maybe unavoidable, considered the limitations of the educational system in its current conception. In addition, there is the uncertainty that maybe some other action courses are feasible and desirable, or how could they be materialized. Textual attitude has the hermeneutic attitude as component, and this attitude can be transferred to documents whose medium is not printed letter, especially if these documents include a poetic process that stimulates or encourages a determined aesthetic reception. Textual attitude can be reproduced as long as it is endemic to the institution so that it can get around the discontinuity spaces of the discourse that every time, fortunately, are less common within the field studies.

Regardless of the differences that exist between the Japanese college environment and that of other countries (McVeigh, 2002; Escandón, 2004), the importance of these texts is crucial in every case that we know. Not to mention that it is not the reading what is being called here into question, but the not critical reading and the professed attitude toward these texts. The authoritarian principle also encourages the acceptance (without an opinion) of what appears in some texts as the truth or standard.

Going back to the question attached to the gap between empiricism and epistemology: can these constructions be modified or is it only possible to change the approach, without modifying the teaching model. “The idea in either case is that people, places and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.” (Said, 1978:93; cf. Farinelli, 2007).

However, how to make the students become familiar with what has been described? There are not many exchange programs with

students of Spanish universities, and the stays abroad are not the solution to the problem (although they are probably necessary as part of the solution). In the first place, even considering that all the students in HS would be able to study abroad in a Spanish university, remains the question of which method should be followed in the lessons taken in Japan (students of East Asian Studies are in the same situation). Moreover, the exchange programs question activates another domino of questions that make us go back to the starting point. So, how many exchange students do we need to modify the previous ideas that they had? Those who feel compelled to modify the preexistent image with the experienced reality; do they modify it favorably or negatively? Among the previous ideas of the students, how many have been acquired during their studies and how many had been acquired before? Had they been rejected or modified during their studies? To what extent can we refer to “the actuality it describes” when the global economy has strengthened the mechanisms of the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967). That is, to what extent can we access to a reality or direct experience when what is real and factual is spectacle. Once again appears the ghost that chases humanities and contemporary critical theory: how to avoid regulatory deformations?

In its philosophical aspect, mentioned problems interact eventually with language paradoxes. Signifier, by definition it is not the defined object. Every single system of signs implies a formulative reduction. This method of reflection, instead of leading us to a dead point, should make us conscious of the implicit difficulties faced by the objectives of degrees such as HS or EAS. At the same time, this consciousness should prevent us from considering the possibility of magic solutions. Mercurial problems that have so many implications should have the same kind of solutions. This conclusion makes us to go back to the circumstances that explain the strength of textual attitude.

### *Appearance of success*

The second factor pointed out by Said is the appearance of success (1978:93) that comes from the textual tapestry. Texts that describe other realities and that make recommendations on how to treat them or offer tips on how to understand them often include a lot of this “apparent success”. That is very logical, because these texts create themselves the reality that they describe. If a student comes back from a stay and his or her answer to predictable questions is “it is not what I expected”, he or she would be referring to what these texts told him or her to expect. However, the authority of these books is not easily subverted. There is a considerate flow of intertextual dialectic that explains why several elements of this tapestry are reciprocally and, very often, diachronically reinforced. That is the reason why the constitution of a tradition is a mere matter of time. In the cases of Spain and Japan, these traditions have an archive and a set of discursive regularities that have developed during the last decades (Sugimoto, 1997; Lozano, 2007 and 2009a/b).

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances similar to the ones I have just described, is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. This kind of text is composed out of those pre-existing units of information deposited by Flaubert in the catalogue of *idées reçues* (Said, 1978:94).

Which books are we talking about? Said refers specifically to travel books, memoirs, historical and fantasy books, but also to encyclopedias and academic works. There is a whole subgenre of essays that persists thanks to the relevance of the textual attitude. In the case of degrees such as HS or EAS, there is the risk of using pedagogical materials that, trying to be more accessible to the contents, sometimes fall into bigger (or more flagrant) deformations that those that can be found in the text to which we have refer until this point. Deformations have a reductionist character and they emerge from the attempt of condensing a historical and sociological volume that is unfathomable (from State formation to sexual roles in the working place). This process is also supported by the will of using a simple language, so that materials can be also used to help with the study of the language. Now we will reproduce some of the citations found in a text edited in 2001:

The present book has been written for Japanese students that have already studied the basic grammar and are willing to improve their comprehension of the language and also their knowledge about Spanish culture. With that purpose, we have written 20 lessons with readings relatively extensive that tackle diverse cultural topics, social aspects, educational and political systems, economy and foreign relations of Spain. There are also some references and a whole lesson that focuses on other Hispano-American countries. (Nishikawa y Puebla, 2001:3)

Further, they add:

Socio-cultural information about Spain is updated and it considers changes that have occurred during these last years. Most of the statistical data has been extracted from the yearbooks edited by the newspaper El País and other publications.

(...) we consider that students should review the main aspects of grammar while achieving an accurate knowledge on the socio-cultural, political and economic reality of present Spanish society.

Now we will cite the beginning of the lesson 5 of the text “Sports in Spain”:

Spanish people are not, in general, very good at sports. The big effort and dedication that are necessary for a sportsman are not part of the Spanish character. Spanish people prefer hanging out with friends and going to bars and other leisure places. Many of them like watching sports on television. However, recently, young people practice sports (Nishikawa y Puebla, 2001:22).

The necessity of creating an accessible style can be justified by certain simplifications, as long as the author clearly warns the reader that he has resorted to simplifications. However, it seems that that necessity does not have any cause-effect relation with the allusion to certain kind of images. This problem can be solved using academic texts that have been written by scholars in every discipline of the field studies. The difficulty rests on the fact that students cannot face a bibliography that should be very vast but that would require a high command of the Spanish language. Translations or original texts in Japanese language that cover all the desirable sphere are not always available, texts that offer a summary that help to make a better use of them considering academic load are also scarce.

### ***Administrative factors that affect the discourse inertia and textual attitude***

Anyhow, regardless of the pedagogical materials chosen, the environment in which they are going to be used and spread is going to give them authority a priori. Not in vain, an expert has

chosen the texts: the teacher of the subject. Sometimes, the appearance of textual attitude is reinforced by the principle of authority. The academic program of a specific class on Spanish culture (イスパニア文化特殊講義), proposed “ (...) in this class we will reflect about the role of the Reconquest (from the fall of Visigoths in 711 until the fall of Granada in 1492) in the configuration of the current Spanish society (...)”(2008 Nendo...:213). This is like trying to explain the victory of the Japanese Democratic Party (民主党) in the elections of August 2009 through the confrontation between Taira and Minamoto in the XII century.

If these pretensions are accepted, is precisely because there is a traditional discursive enunciation that allows the experts to do this kind of conjuring tricks without any other justification than their own authority as experts, and this type of enunciations are much more inflated in the field studies than in any other disciplines (we will not easily find someone willing to comment the poetry of the Novísimos from the troubadour poetry, or the attributions of the president of the French Republic from the figure of Charlemagne. The irony of the example that we have provided rests in the fact that the teacher was in fact an expert on the history of the medieval kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula (that is the material that he taught in other university) but he was not an expert neither on society or contemporary politics.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the teacher focuses on the Reconquest (ib.), without mentioning the influence of the eight centuries of Muslim presence in the Peninsula. We are not going to judge here any professionals' work. It would be a ridiculous pretension to assess the entire degree based on just one example (that is the reason why we are not going to give the name of that teacher). Despite the drafting of the program, it is possible that his lessons are an example of how to teach History

and how to tackle the inventory of the marks that History leave on subjects, paraphrasing Gramsci (cited in Said, 1979:25) . It is even possible that the drafting of the program of the subject in these terms is just a mistake that anyone could have had. This situation is precisely what we try to highlight here: how easily discursive formations take advantage of any chance to show up by default, sometimes infringing the deontology of those who are used as agents.

In fact, part of the success of the discourse rests in its ability to reproduce itself regardless of its agents' convictions. In the perpetuation of these situations a specific ideology does not intervene in a determinant way, but the training of the teachers and their availability on the one hand, and the working conditions on the other hand: remuneration, hours of teaching, hours of research, availability of suitable pedagogical materials, economic resources and autonomy and supervision of the hiring process by universities. These situations generate provisional natures that end up settling: they lead to a publishing fever that, with few exceptions, is against the quality of every single published text; they push an increasing number of teachers to the holding of a job position in several centers with the consequent decrease of the time available to prepare the sessions, the necessity of having at one's disposal adapted materials to an "Introduction to culture" class that lasts just a few hours and that cannot include the preparation equivalent to the social sciences, anthropology, arts, history of art, history, labor relations, law, politics degrees. This class will unavoidably commit schematizing deformations that, hopefully, can aspire to show the students some other resources that can help them complete their knowledge throughout their future lives, with the assistance of their critical capacity that ideally also requires some time to develop (it is not something that can be taught in a ninety-minute session).

The existence of a discourse is closely related to those realities and none of them can be understood separately. We have already mentioned that the discourse uses to burst in as soon as the attention (or the attitude that we compared before with SLA self-evaluation processes) decays.

Discursive reproduction occurs unnoticed most of the times, in poiesis and in estesis. In this sense, the echo of a discursive archive reverberates and carries on. Teachers that have written the book on Spanish culture cited above are very respected by their students and colleagues. We have interviewed one of them and we have no doubts about his intellectual honesty and his sense of pedagogical responsibility. About the other teacher, the selected materials for his language lessons (newspaper and magazine articles) are chosen with a sound judgment. In addition, the novels he chooses as mandatory readings in his literature class (both in the degree and master's degree) allow the students to get in touch with the present Spanish literary scene and they also respond to a good critical judgment.

In our analysis of the pedagogical materials in several occasions, we have come across materials in which one or more clichés are deconstructed, and, however, also some other clichés are reinforced or favor discursive deformations. The conclusion is that anyone, not even professionals with a lot of experience, is free from occasionally revert to routines or discursive assumptions, to shortcuts, solutions and explanations typical of the textual schematism. We are not qualified to judge someone else's work, and we also do not want to fall into that presumption. There is a previous conflict implicit in the conception of the field studies itself: its unspecialized character would require experts with superhuman capacities. Who can assume the title of specialist in all the aspects of human multiplicity that are designated by the word "culture"?

### *At the text margins or the discourse invisibility*

Discourse “invisibility” can be even subtler. Regarding deformations and textual attitude, one of the most important and influential manifestations of that attitude is among the lines or in the paratext of pedagogical materials (for example, a picture or photograph). They are manifestations where deformations go unnoticed. This happens because the main topic of the text does not consist precisely in concepts that already are discourse objects and refer irremissibly to the discourse itself. The invisibility is reinforced by the discursive operation that allows reifying and naturalizing ideas or mental constructions. Some of these reifications become discursive regularities that take part in the appearance of specific statements (irreplaceable, according to Foucault; that is, within a discourse some statements are necessarily those and not different ones, without the intervention of chance or accident).

For example, clichés on which touristic places are “mandatory visits” and the reasons why they present themselves as “more relevant” than others usually go unnoticed if the cliché is hidden in a dialog or reading on a Spanish language book, without being the main objective of reflection. If the dialogue or the reading is placed in a souvenir shop in front of the Sagrada Familia, or in the bullring’s ticket office, the choice is diluted. Nowadays, most of the Spanish language manuals focus on the acquisition of communicative skills. In the hypothetical examples that we have just presented, the purpose would be for the students to be able to extract and communicate the relevant information of a similar text or a dialogue in a real situation: to interpret directions correctly, the most common routine to buy tickets, to indicate verbally a desired product... However, in a book about Art or “popular” festivities, those “emblematic” buildings or those “national” festivities are the main topic. Is in fact this bigger

relevance which makes easier its questioning; and it does not happen this way when we are talking about realities that are taken for granted, in something that is “just there”.

### *The ambiguity of discursive deformations*

A paradoxical aspect of discursive images is that they do not always have an impact as a negative image. In some manuals of introduction to History of Spain, for example, clearly negative episodes are minimized, such as Franquism or the conquest of America. Moreover, a lot of students that considered Spanish people as friendly and sociable come back from their stays abroad disillusioned or disappointed. During an interview, the teacher Raquel Rubio summarized it colloquially like this: “Those who have the opportunity to go to a Hispanic country do not stop thinking that Hispanic people are not fun, but some of them realize that things are not how they thought: people have a job, (...) that they are more serious that what they thought”.

Simplifications are harmful because of the mental habits and the expectations that they encourage, regardless of the fact that diverse members of the groups designated by simplifications think that they are more or less flattering.

### *Spaces of discursive discontinuity*

Without going far from the question of simplifications, now, according to the arguments and examples mentioned above, the image of HS seems Manichean. That is why we should reflect on discursive discontinuity. The discourse, because it is reproduced through mechanisms of civil society, it also shares those mechanisms with voices that contravene the discursive pattern and even point out discursive instances where they usually go unnoticed.

Sometimes, opposed tendencies appear within the same voice. We will refer again to the “Sports in Spain” example. Despite the astonishment that the description may cause, the last sentence, “recently young people practice sports” (Nishikawa y Puebla, 2001:22), helps clarifying the direction of the text. Usually, projects’ assumptions on the knowledge of communities usually imply essentializations that are not historical. The Other is identical to itself through History, regardless the century being tackled and the political, social and cultural transformations. In the mentioned example, this is not what usually occurs. It verges the caricature, but at least it does not present itself as an impassive archetype.

Consequently, discursive discontinuity does not appear just as “0/1”, as absence/presence of discursive formation. Discourse can also negotiate with the complexity of human reality in one same statement; it makes concessions (discontinuity) that allow reaffirming (continuity) itself.

## **Conclusions**

There is a consideration that affects the research, the fieldwork and the analysis conducted while observing the transmission of cultural images. When trying to detect textual attitudes, we should take precautions to not to incur in the criticized tendencies; and so that the predisposition to identify discursive deformations do not degrade into hermeneutic violence. Again, we should insist on the fact that the situation within HS is not a Manichaeist one: there is no need to say that HS do not seek to reproduce discursive deformations, and the textual attitude it is not omnipresent.

The quotation that heads the previous section (IV) is one of the best ironies by Edward W. Said and refers to Amadis of Gaul (see). By chance, one of the interviewees was Nomura Ryūji (野

村 竜仁), Spanish literature teacher in the HS (イスパニア文学特殊講義) and probably, among the Japanese scholars, the most expert on Amadis of Gaul, and that is why in his classes chivalric literature is studied.

Nomura's statements insisted on evidences that should not escape our attention. For example, in the context of a literature course, we should expect it to study the literature and not use literature to illustrate a so-called "Spanish character". Probably, the course should refer to historical and social circumstances that affected the production and diffusion of the work, but the literary work should not be presented as a representation of that time's society. Undoubtedly, maybe there is someone out there that dares to choose a contemporary novel and uses it as an epitome of current Spanish society. Maybe there are still manuals that refer to the Quixote as a distillation of the Spanish "genius". In most of the cases, however, texts are chosen because of their literary value (that each teacher chooses based on his or her aesthetic preferences, agreement or disagreement with canons and critics, specialization area, etc.). In the same way, works are analyzed as literary texts, not as sociologic documents.

Discursive tics can appear at any moment or place but there are attitudes (with their approaches, methodologies and decisions) that reduce considerably the risk of incurring into discursive habits and reproducing textual attitudes. Probably, formulation of statements (the fact that statements are formulated in certain words) is fixed, as Foucault pretends, but its occurrence it is not decided beforehand. Sometimes statements are produced and reproduced, sometimes they are not.

Nomura's answers indicated that he just intended to teach a literature class, and that it is possible to do so, because textual attitude is not a priority. It is a behavior that can be approved or disapproved, imitated or avoided; even if we suspect that neither

of the poles of these binomials is produced in an absolute manner, we should consider then that negotiation is produced. Although some discursive tics can be instilled and naturalized, being alert and trying to correct them does not require a superhuman effort. Most of the vulnerability can be solved by predisposing our own intellectual exigency.

Obviously, the collective dimension of textual attitude does not disappear with just a change in our individual attitude. Neither a mere distrustful attitude immunizes against discursive slips. However, as noted above, being conscious of these difficulties should not be an excuse for resistance to change. Field studies bring up challenges in different levels and dimensions, from the most prosaic to the most indescribable (and all of them seem united and interconnected). That is why responses to those challenges should also be different. This should prevent us from being too optimistic about what can really be achieved just by mere modifications on our own attitude.

At the same time, aspirations to improve (once the progress is understood in terms of knowledge and humanistic sensibility) pass through continuous self-evaluation, a constant vigilance towards our attitude that does not intend to contribute to a feeling of guilt, but towards comprehension and collaboration. If what we are looking for is the widening of the discursive discontinuity spaces, and that those spaces are not only spoiled by but also emancipated from the discourse, changes of attitude of teachers, managers and students should occur in the same grade.

As individuals consolidate their changes of attitude and the habit to self-evaluate, the discursive discontinuity spaces will grow. At the same time, these spaces will allow other individuals to acquire conscience of the discourse assumptions, so they will be able to give them a thorough overhaul. Adapting it to Vygotski findings, individuals and spaces that participate in a critical approximation to their own projects of knowledge will build a

scaffolding that will allow other individuals to work in the area of “future development” in that same critical approach (Saville-Troike, 2006:111-119).

Despite the fact that the study conducted for this research project leads to acquire conscience of the dimension of a discourse (its archive, its inertia, its mental categories), it also contributes to demystify the role of the discourse about subjects and to detect fatalisms. In the same way that a partiality almost absolute is required to deny that discursive deformations are produced and reproduced, it will be equally presumptuous and flighty to state that people are prisoners of clichés.

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