

A COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS APPROACH TO TEACHING SPANISH *POR* AND *PARA*

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The learning problem: Textbook presentation

Uses of *para*

Destination

(toward; in the direction of)

Deadline or a specific time in the future

(by; for)

Goal (*para* + [infinitive])

(in order to)

Purpose (*para* + [noun])

(for; used for)

Recipient

(for)

Comparison with others or opinion

(for; considering)

Employment

(for)

El cirujano sale de su casa **para** la clínica a las ocho.

The surgeon leaves his house at eight to go to the clinic.

El resultado del análisis va a estar listo **para** mañana.

The results of the analysis will be ready by tomorrow.

El doctor usó un termómetro **para** ver si el niño tenía fiebre.

The doctor used a thermometer to see if the boy had a fever.

El investigador descubrió una cura **para** la enfermedad.

The researcher discovered a cure for the illness.

La enfermera preparó la cama **para** doña Ángela.

The nurse prepared the bed for Doña Ángela.

Para su edad, goza de muy buena salud.

For her age, she enjoys very good health.

Para mí, lo que tienes es gripe y no un resfriado.

To me, what you have is the flu, not a cold.

Mi hijo trabaja **para** una empresa farmacéutica.

My son works for a pharmaceutical company.

Uses of *por*

Motion or a general location

(along; through; around; by)

Duration of an action

(for; during; in)

Reason or motive for an action

(because of; on account of; on behalf of)

Object of a search

(for; in search of)

Means by which

(by; by way of; by means of)

Exchange or substitution

(for; in exchange for)

Unit of measure

(per; by)

Agent (passive voice)

(by)

Me quebré la pierna corriendo **por** el parque.
I broke my leg running through the park.

Estuvo en cama **por** dos meses.
He was in bed for two months.

Rezó **por** su hijo enfermo.
She prayed for her sick child.

El enfermero fue **por** un termómetro.
The nurse went for a thermometer.

Consulté con el doctor **por** teléfono.
I consulted with the doctor by phone.

Cambiamos ese tratamiento **por** uno nuevo.
We changed from that treatment to a new one.

Tengo que tomar las pastillas cinco veces **por** día.
I have to take the pills five times per day.

La nueva política de salud pública fue anunciada **por** la prensa.
The new public health policy was announced by the press.

Uses of *para*

Destination

(toward; in the direction of)

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Goal (*para* + [infinitive])

(in order to)

Purpose (*para* + [noun])

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Recipient

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Uses of *por*

Motion or a general location

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Unit of measure

(per; by)

Agent (passive voice)

(by)

The learning problem: Pinto & Rex (2006)

Table 2
Accurate and Inaccurate Instances Overall: *Por* and *Para*¹

Level	Accurate	Inaccurate	Percentage Accurate
1 (n = 108)	57	51	53%
2 (n = 112)	75	37	67%
3 (n = 105)	56	49	53%
4 (n = 123)	75	48	61%
Total (n = 448)	263	185	59%

Table 6
***Por*: Inaccurate and IL Usage**

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<i>por</i> for <i>a</i>	0	0	0	1
<i>por</i> for zero	3	10	3	5
<i>por</i> for <i>de</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>por</i> for <i>para</i>	4	1	0	0
<i>por</i> for <i>en</i>	1	0	0	0
IL	2	1	1	1
Total inaccurate / IL	11	12	4	7
Total <i>por</i>	32	57	28	33
Percentage	34.4%	21.0%	14.3%	21.2%

Pinto & Rex (2006)

Table 7
***Para*: Inaccurate and IL Usage**

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<i>para</i> for <i>por</i>	11	12	18	20
<i>para</i> for <i>de</i>	2	0	4	1
<i>para</i> for <i>que</i>	1	1	4	5
<i>para</i> for <i>a</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>para</i> for duration	4	1	1	1
<i>para</i> for zero	13	5	13	12
zero for <i>para</i>	5	2	2	0
a for <i>para</i>	1	1	1	0
IL	2	3	1	2
<i>que</i> for <i>para</i>	1	0	0	0
Total inaccurate / IL	40	25	45	41
Total <i>para</i>	76	55	77	90
Error percentage	52.6%	45.5%	58.4%	45.5%

Pinto & Rex (2006)

Prior CL work: Lam (2009)



Figure 1. Prototypical meaning of *para*.



Figure 2. Prototypical meaning of *por*.

Prior CL work: Lam (2009)



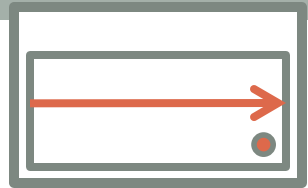
Figure 1. Prototypical meaning of *para*.



Figure 2. Prototypical meaning of *por*.

It must be noted at this point that from a cognitive linguistic perspective, this analysis of *por* and *para* is woefully lacking and by no means constitutes a complete description of their uses. Many details have been omitted; for instance, the spatial meaning expressed by *por* and *para* is more complicated than ‘through’ and ‘towards’, depending on the precise relation of the items (see example in the introduction). However, from a pedagogical perspective, this description is practical and accessible to intermediate-level students.

La futbolista corre por el campo hasta la portería.



Las personas caminan por la playa.



Alongside

Estudiamos por dos horas.



Time Elapsed

The Primary Meaning:
Path through a container

Vagaron por la casa y encontraron a sus amigos.



Containment

Temporal,
Por ahora,
Por lo general

Las personas van a Madrid por tren.



Means

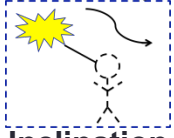
Por casualidad

La tomé por Carolina.



Exchange

Siempre voto por el mejor candidato.



Inclination

Por supuesto

El hombre lucha por la justicia.



Motivation

Por eso

Pablo estaba cansado por su tarea.



Cause

Un 30 por ciento de los estudiantes hablan inglés.



Proportion

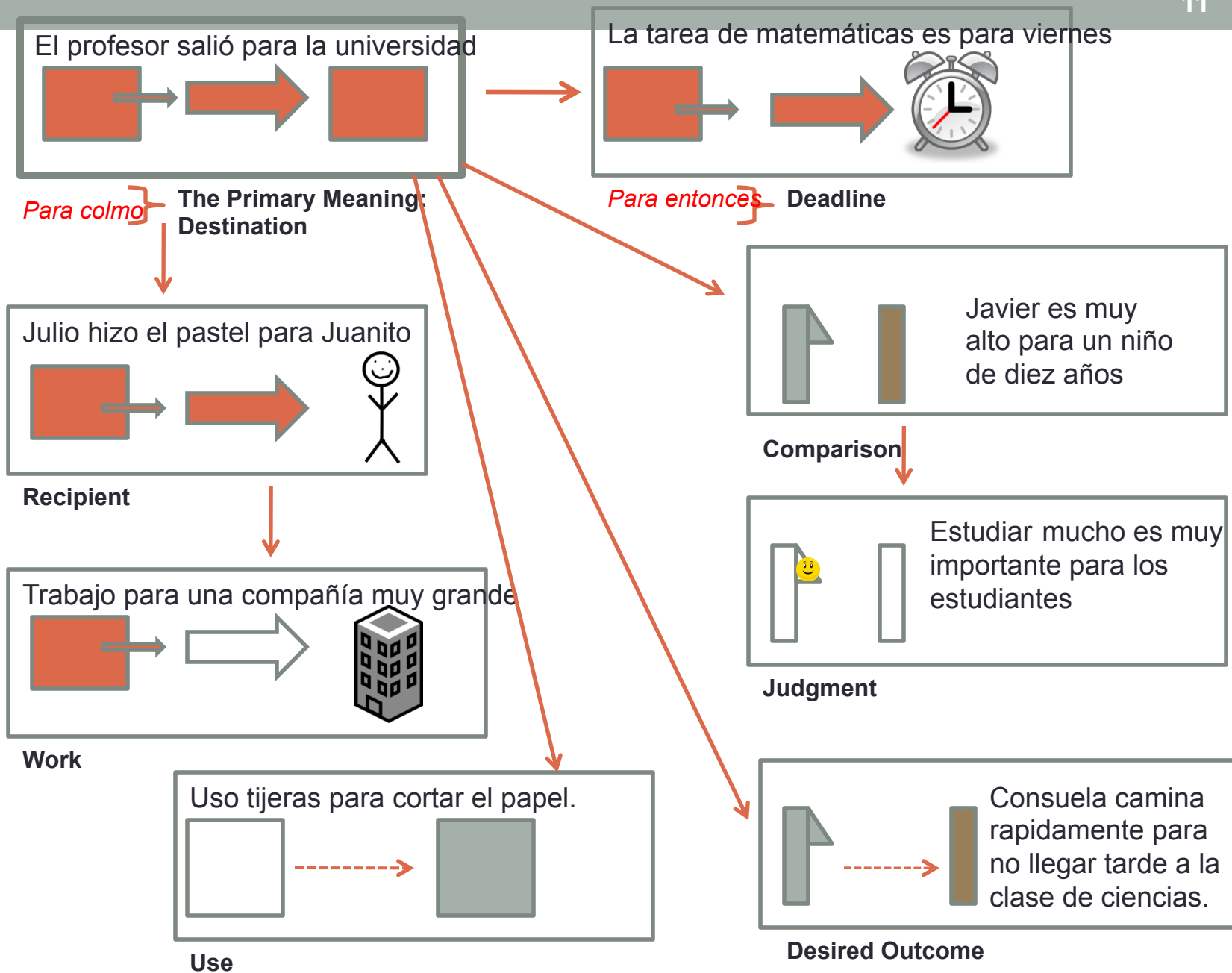
Multiplication,
Division,
Units of Measure

War and Peace fue escrito
en 1869 (por Leo Tolstoy).



Passive

Our study: the network of *por*



Our study: the network of *para*

Instructional Sequence

1/14 No preposition with *buscar, esperar, pedir*

1/28 Por: Path through container, Alongside, Time Elapsed

2/6 Por: Containment, Inclination

2/11 Por: Proportion, Multiplication, Units of measure

2/13 Por: Exchange

2/25 Por: Means, Motivation, Cause, Passive

3/13 Por: Review of network

4/1 Para: Destination, Deadline, Recipient, Employment

4/8 Para: Comparison, Judgment

4/15 Para: Desired outcome, Use. No preposition with impersonal expressions

4/24 Para: Review of network

EXPERIMENTAL (+CL) GROUP

La futbolista corre por el campo hasta la portería.



Las personas caminan por la playa.



Alongside

Estudiamos por dos horas.



Time Elapsed

**The Primary Meaning:
Path through a container**

Containment Sense



Vagaron **por** la casa y encontraron a sus amigos en la cocina.

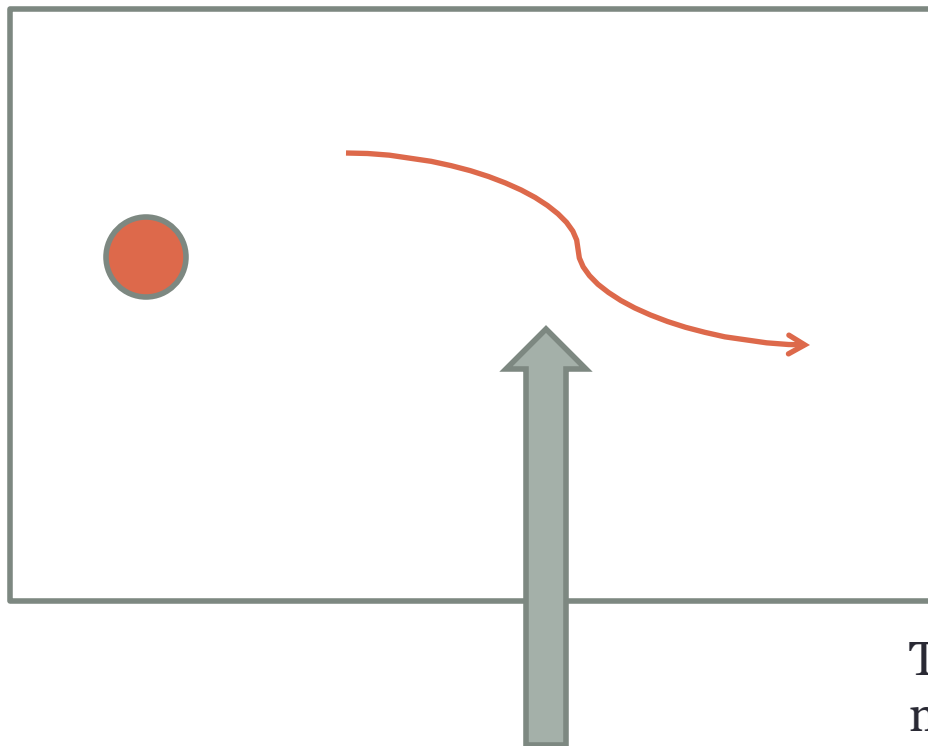
→
The people did not walk in a straight line through the house, they moved in an indirect path within it.

(They wandered around the house and found their friends in the kitchen.)

The “containment” sense of *por* also comes directly from the Primary Meaning.



Once again, we still have the container...

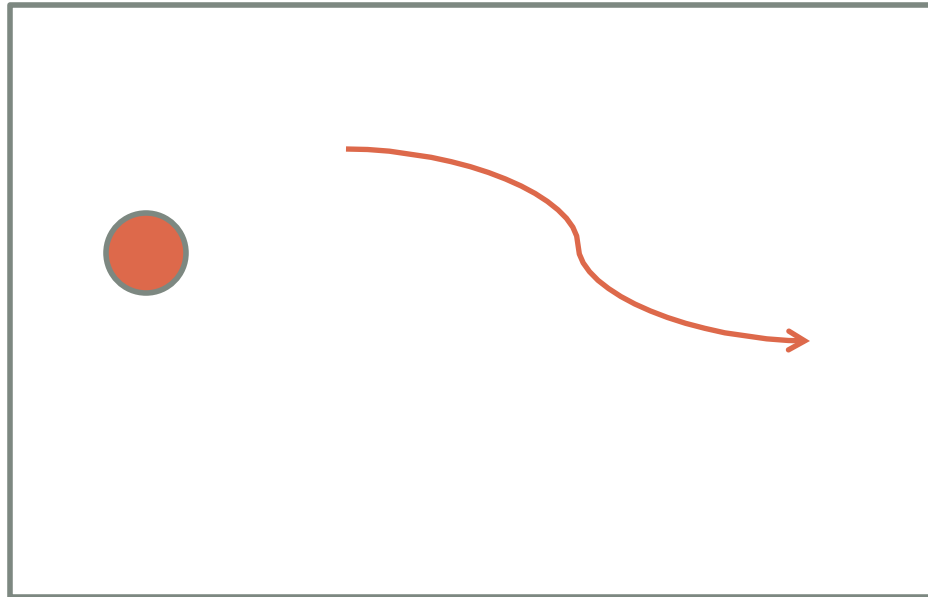


...and we still have the path.

This time the path does not move through the container, but **WITHIN** the container.

But why does the path line curve?

Because when the path is kept within the container the path is not deliberate or in a straight line.



Containment is similar to the idea of “all around place X,” “somewhere in place X” or “sometime during the period of X”

Example 2 - Containment



Russia is the container against which the movement is placed.

Quiero viajar **por** Rusia después de graduarme.

(I want to travel around Russia after I graduate.)

Example 3 - Containment

The verb used in the “containment” sense does not have to be a verb of movement.



La casa está **por** aquí.



Once again, there is not straight line of movement, but the verb is still occurring within the container.

(The house is around here.)

Example 4 - Containment



Hay papeles **por** toda la oficina.

(There are papers all over the office.)

Example 5 - Containment



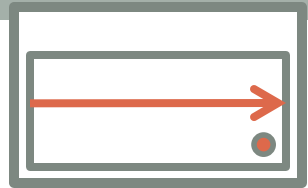
Vivo **por** acá.

(I live around here.)

¡Te toca!

- Create your own example sentence to illustrate the *containment* sense of *por*.

La futbolista corre por el campo hasta la portería.



Las personas caminan por la playa.



Alongside

Estudiamos por dos horas.



Time Elapsed

The Primary Meaning:
Path through a container

Vagaron por la casa y encontraron sus amigos.



Containment

Temporal,
Por ahora,
Por lo general

Las personas van a Madrid por tren.



Means

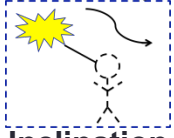
Por casualidad

La tomé por Carolina.



Exchange

Siempre voto por el mejor candidato.



Inclination

Por supuesto

El hombre lucha por la justicia.



Motivation

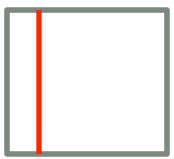
Por eso

Pablo estaba cansado por su tarea.



Cause

Un 30 por ciento de los estudiantes hablan inglés.



Proportion

Multiplication,
Division,
Units of Measure

War and Peace fue escrito en 1869 (por Leo Tolstoy).

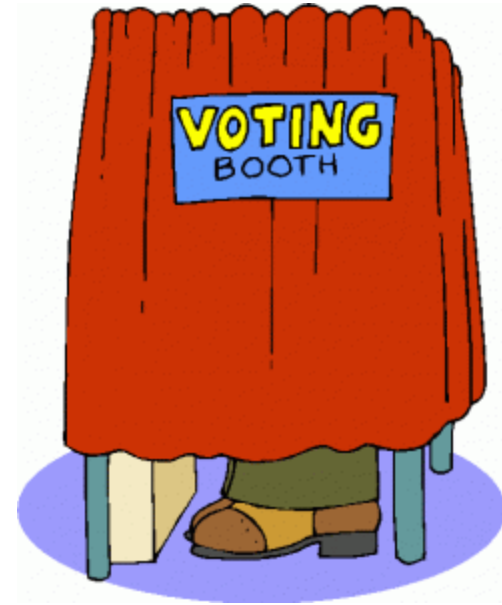


Passive

Inclination Sense



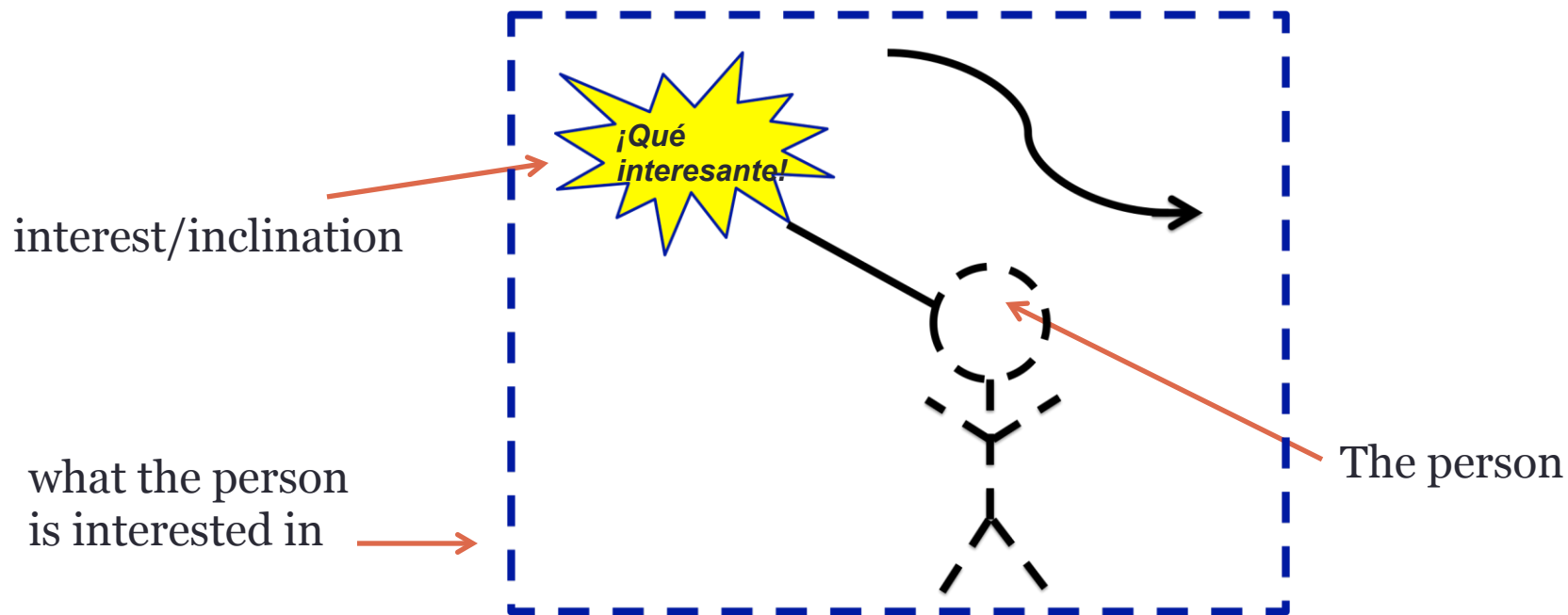
Me intereso **por** las ciencias.
(I am interested in science.)



Siempre voto **por** el mejor candidato.
(I always vote for the best candidate.)

In both of these examples the speaker has shown interest, inclination, or endorsement of the focus of the sentence.

The “inclination” sense of *por* also comes from the “containment” sense.



This is a metaphorical extension of the “containment” sense. The interest (or inclination, or endorsement) of the speaker is contained in the box. The box represents what the person is interested in. The person’s interest is located somewhere in the box, generally, but not on a particular directional path, so the path is drawn wavy here.



It is important to note that only a few verbs will use the preposition “por” in this manner:

interesarse por
votar por
optar por

Some verbs will function like *gustar* and will use the object of interest as the subject of the verb:

Me gusta mucho ir a la playa.
Me encanta el cine.

Other verbs will simply not use a preposition:

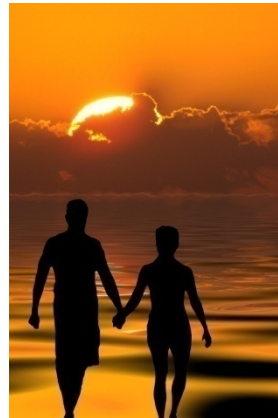
Aprecio el arte.

Example 2 - Inclination



Desafortunadamente, mis padres optaron **por** no visitarme este semestre.

(Unfortunately, my parents opted not to visit me this semester.)



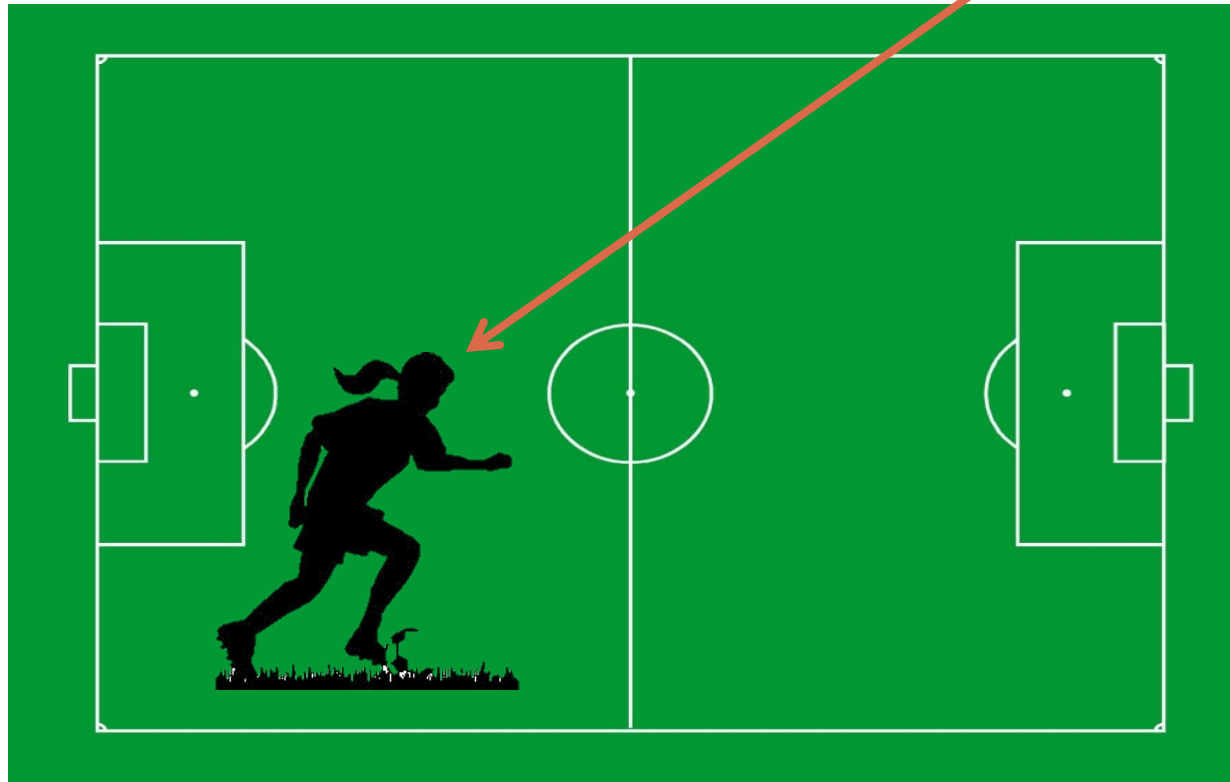
En vez de visitarme, optaron **por** ir a Hawaii.

(Instead of visiting me, they opted to go to Hawaii.)

CONTROL (-CL) GROUP

First Use: Through

The player is running through the field to get to the goal.



La futbolista corre **por** el campo hasta la portería.

Por means
“through”



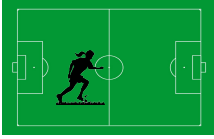
The field is what she
runs through

(The soccer player runs through the field toward the goal.)

Uses Covered

1: Through

La futbolista corre por el campo hasta la portería.



2: Alongside

Las personas caminan por la playa.



3: Time Elapsed

Estudiamos por dos horas.



Around

Vagaron **por** la casa y encontraron a sus amigos en la cocina.

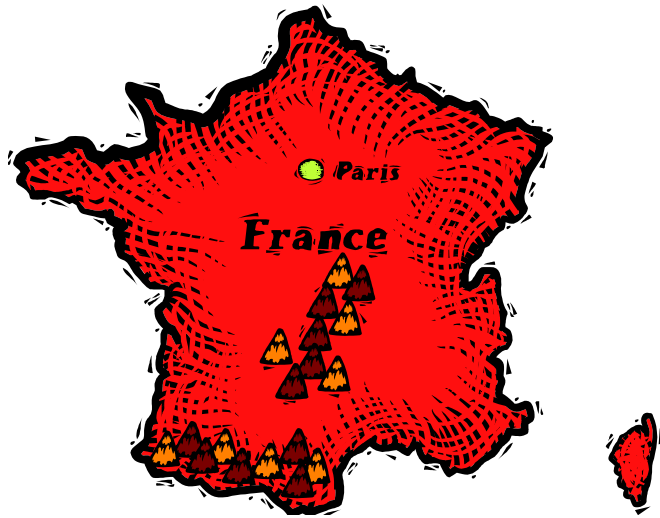
In this case, *por* means “around,” as the action is happening within a certain area.

(They wandered around the house and found their friends in the kitchen.)

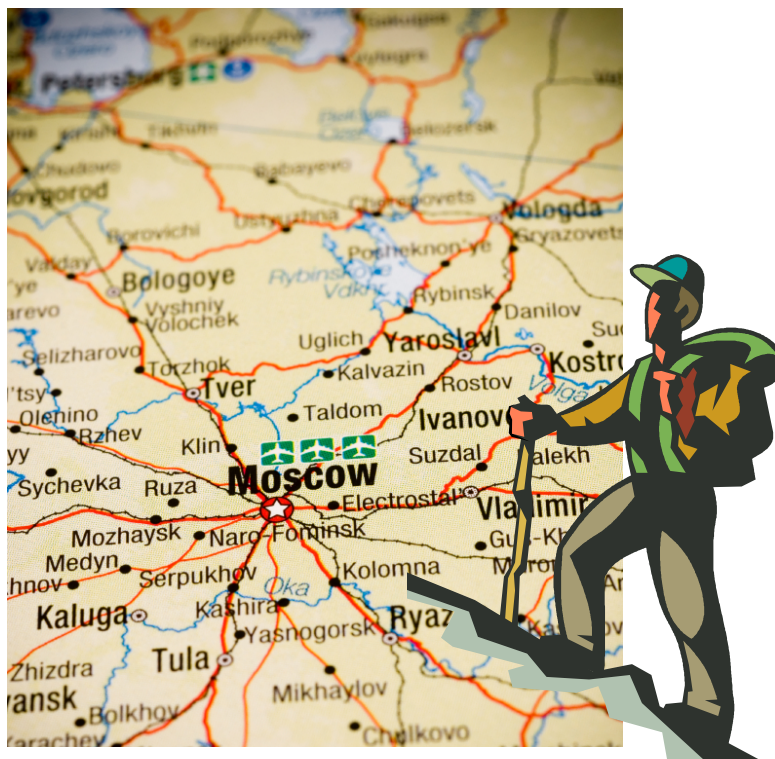
In this use, the action occurs around a certain area. In the previous example, that area was a house.



Where that action takes place might be more general, as in a country or a neighborhood:



Example 2 - Around



Quiero viajar **por** Rusia después de graduarme.

(I want to travel around Russia after I graduate.)

Example 3 - Around

The verb used in the “around” sense does not have to be a verb of movement.



La casa está **por** aquí.



Por marks “around.”

(The house is around here.)

Example 4 - Around



Hay papeles **por** toda la oficina.

(There are papers all over (around) the office.)

Example 5 - Around



Vivo **por** acá.

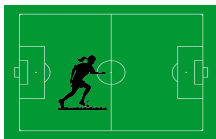
(I live around here.)

¡Te toca!

- Create your own example sentence to illustrate the *around* use of *por*.

1: Through

Ex: La futbolista corre por el campo hasta la portería.



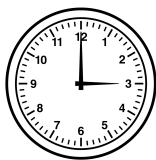
2: Alongside

Ex: Las personas caminan por la playa.



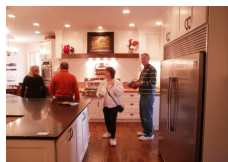
3: Time Elapsed

Ex: Estudiamos por dos horas.



4: Around

Ex: Vagaron por la casa y encontraron a sus amigos.



during,

Por ahora

Por lo general

5: Inclination

Ex: Siempre voto por el mejor candidato.



Por supuesto

6: Math

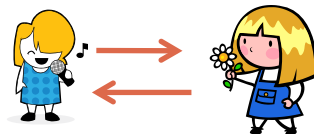
Ex: Un 30 por ciento de los estudiantes hablan inglés.



multiplication, division, unit of measure

7: Exchange

Ex: La tomé por Carolina.



8: By

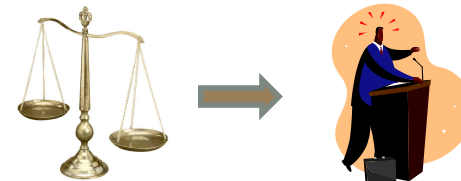
Ex: Las personas van a Madrid por tren.



Por casualidad

9: Motivation

Ex: El hombre lucha por la justicia.



Por eso

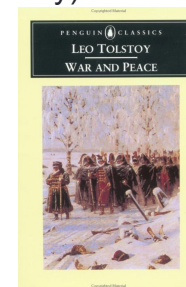
10: Because

Ex: Pablo estaba cansado por su tarea.










11: Passive


Ex: War and Peace fue escrito en 1869 (por Leo Tolstoy).



Fill-in-the-blank test

	Items	English translation help with underlined words	My confidence (circle a number)
			
1	___?___ ser niño, Juan habla como un adulto. por  para other: _____ leave blank		1 2 3 4
2	Mi <u>meta</u> ___?___ ahora es <u>graduarme</u> . por  para other: _____ leave blank	goal; to graduate	1 2 3 4
3	Tienes que <u>relajarte</u> , ___?___ tu <u>salud</u> . por  para other: _____ leave blank	relax; health	1 2 3 4
4	No quiero <u>enviar el paquete</u> ___?___ FedEx porque cuesta mucho. por  para other: _____ leave blank	send the package	1 2 3 4
5	Solo 50 ___?___ ciento de <u>los ciudadanos</u> votan. por  para other: _____ leave blank	citizens	1 2 3 4
6	Él me pidió ___?___ el número de teléfono. por para other: _____  leave blank		1 2 3 4

Multiple choice test

	Items	English translation help with underlined words	My confidence (circle a number)
			
1	Para __?__, hace mucho calor.		1 2 3 4
a.	sol		
b.	ser invierno		
c.	<u>vientos</u>	<i>winds</i>	
d.	estamos en abril		
2	La mamá no tiene que ir al centro comercial por __?__. <u>Ir</u> á mañana.	<i>she will go</i>	1 2 3 4
a.	la semana		
b.	la vaca		
c.	obtener comida		
d.	ahora		
3	La <u>pareja se casa</u> por __?__.	<i>couple; is getting married</i>	1 2 3 4
a.	salmón		
b.	junio		
c.	amor		
d.	son padres		
4	La familia viaja a California por __?__.		1 2 3 4
a.	sus hijos viven allí		
b.	le gusta viajar		
c.	avión		
d.	pie		

Instructional Sequence

- 1/14 No preposition with *buscar, esperar, pedir*
- 1/28 Por: Path through container, Alongside, Time Elapsed
- 2/6 Por: Containment, Inclination
- 2/11 Por: Proportion, Multiplication, Units of measure
- 2/13 Por: Exchange
- 2/25 Por: Means, Motivation, Cause, Passive
- 3/13 Por: Review of network
- 4/1 Para: Destination, Deadline, Recipient, Employment
- 4/8 Para: Comparison, Judgment
- 4/15 Para: Desired outcome, Use.
- No preposition with impersonal expressions

Writing Tasks

- 1/11 Activities you do in the morning, afternoon, and evening (HW)
- 1/18 Personal ad (HW)
- 1/31 Profile (**Composition**)
- 2/1 What you do on a rainy weekend (HW)
- 2/6 What you do on the weekends (HW)
- 2/15 Biography of an actor (HW)
- 2/25 Twelve important life events (HW)
- 3/1 Five most important life events (HW)
- 3/24 Autobiography (**Composition**)
- 3/25 Suggestions for Laura (HW)
- 4/4 Describe your roommate and a Horrible day (**Midterm**)
- 4/22 Best or worst day (in class)
- 5/1 Letter to bad roommate and Best or worst vacation story (**Final**)

Coding for writing tasks

Accurate Use of Para

BUT unnatural

in place of por

in place of other

overuse

omission

Inaccurate Use of Para Sense of Para

Destination

Deadline

Recipient

Employment

Comparison

Judgement

Desired Outcome

Use

Para colmo

Para entonces

Sense not in PPT

Idiom not in PPT

Para que

Preliminary Results: Tests

Average Accuracy, Fill-in-blank and Multiple-choice Tests Averaged Together								
	+CL (n=21)				-CL (n=16)			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>para</i>	51.19	12.84	64.05	15.13	52.29	11.62	70.63	16.32
<i>por</i>	50.32	9.94	70.16	12.31	53.68	15.38	74.58	12.76

RMANOVA of Average Accuracy on Both Tests

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	η_p^2	<i>Power</i>
Time	11747.16	1	11747.16	114.481*	0.77	1.00
Time X Condition	97.09	1	97.09	0.95	0.03	0.16
Error (Time)	3591.43	35	102.61			
Preposition	254.42	1	254.42	2.56	0.07	0.34
Preposition X Condition	0.03	1	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.05
Error (Preposition)	3480.86	35	99.45			
Time X Preposition	207.16	1	207.16	1.91	0.05	0.27
Time X Preposition X Condition	44.20	1	44.20	0.41	0.01	0.10
Error (Time X Preposition)	3803.98	35	108.69			
Condition	543.08	1	543.07	1.36	0.04	0.21
Error (Condition)	14019.77	35	400.57			

Significant at * $p < .001$

With a Greenhouse-Geisser Correction

Items with <55% Pretest Accuracy

para

Destination	Recipient	Employment	Comparison	Para colmo	Para entonces
52.63%	52.63%	42.11%	46.15%	23.68%	35.90%

por

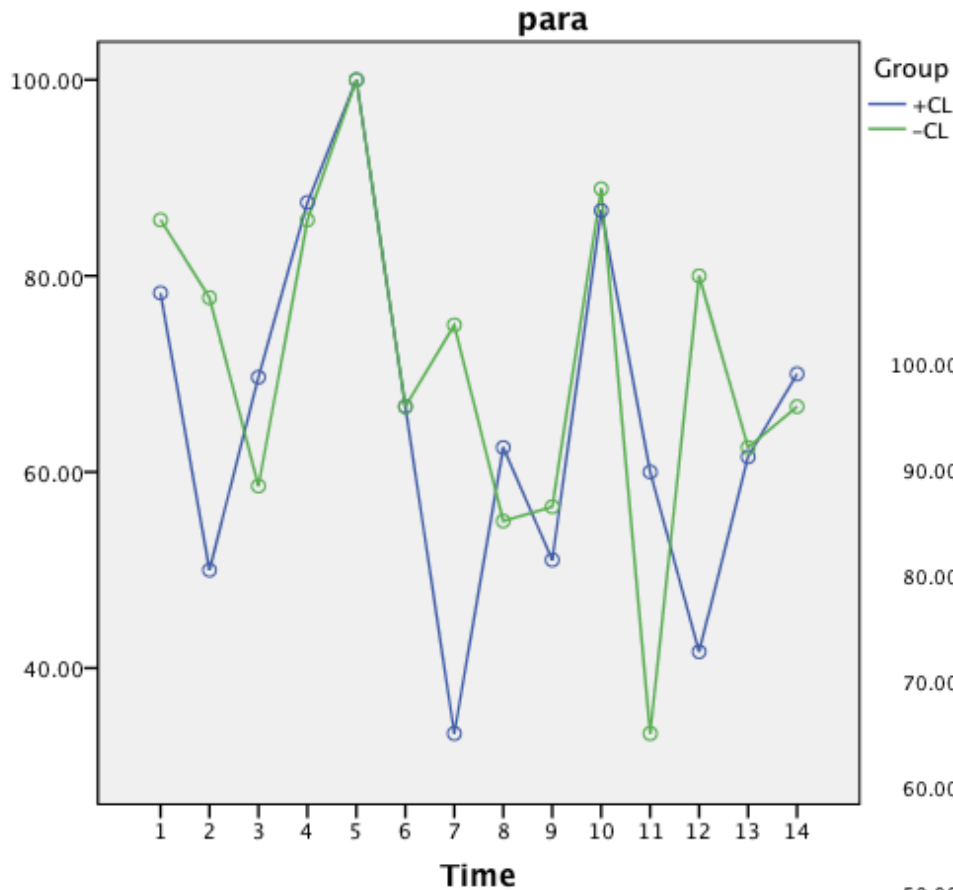
Path through container	Alongside	Containment	Inclination	Exchange	Motivation	Elapsed Time Cause	Passive	Por casualidad	
35.90%	52.63%	44.74%	42.11%	51.28%	41.03%	39.47%	63.16%	46.15%	43.59%

no preposition

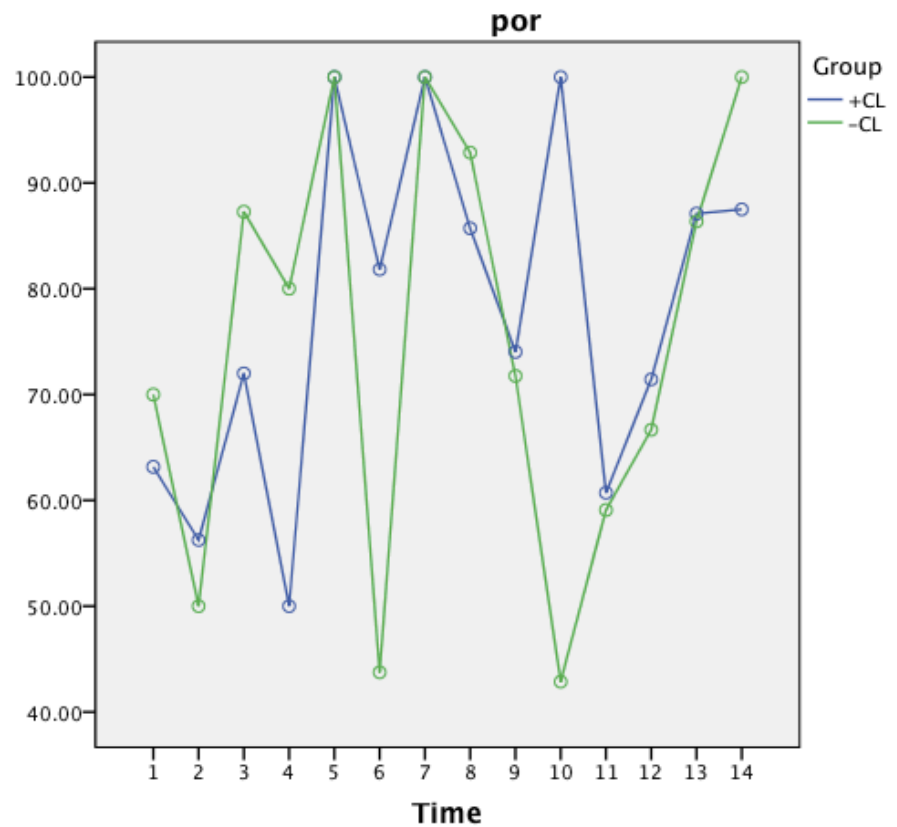
<i>buscar</i>	<i>pedir</i>	<i>esperar</i>	impersonal expression
5.13%	12.82%	10.26%	13.16%

Preliminary Results: Writing

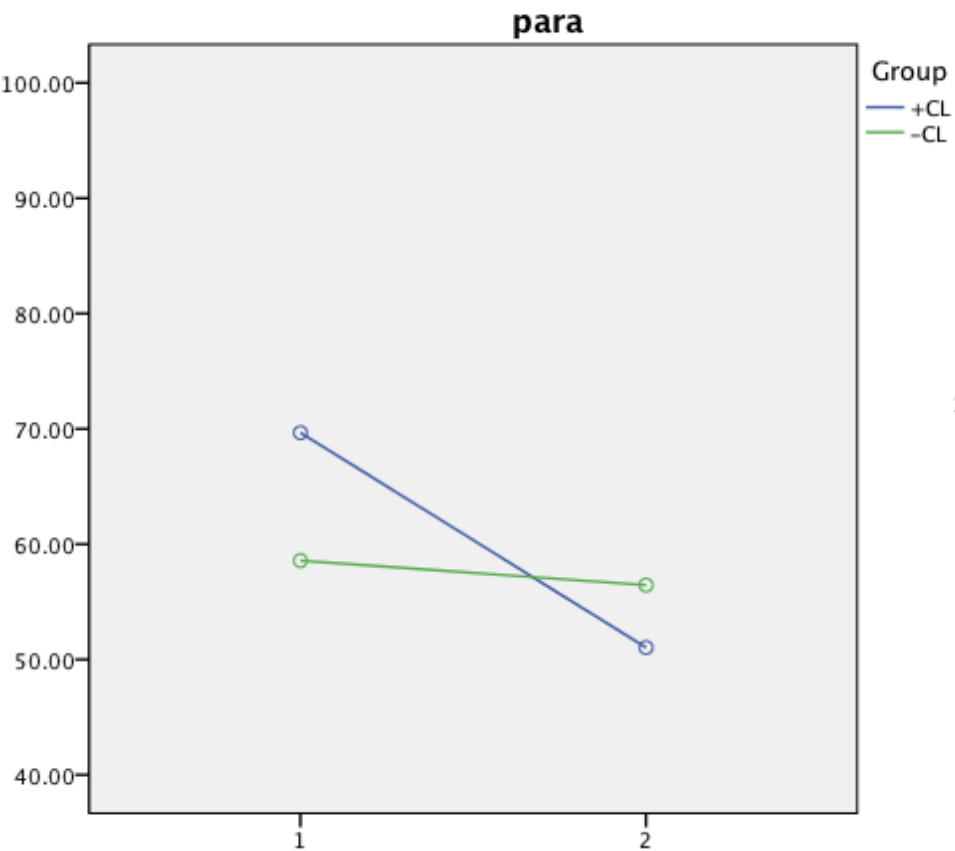
Average % Accuracy in Free Writing



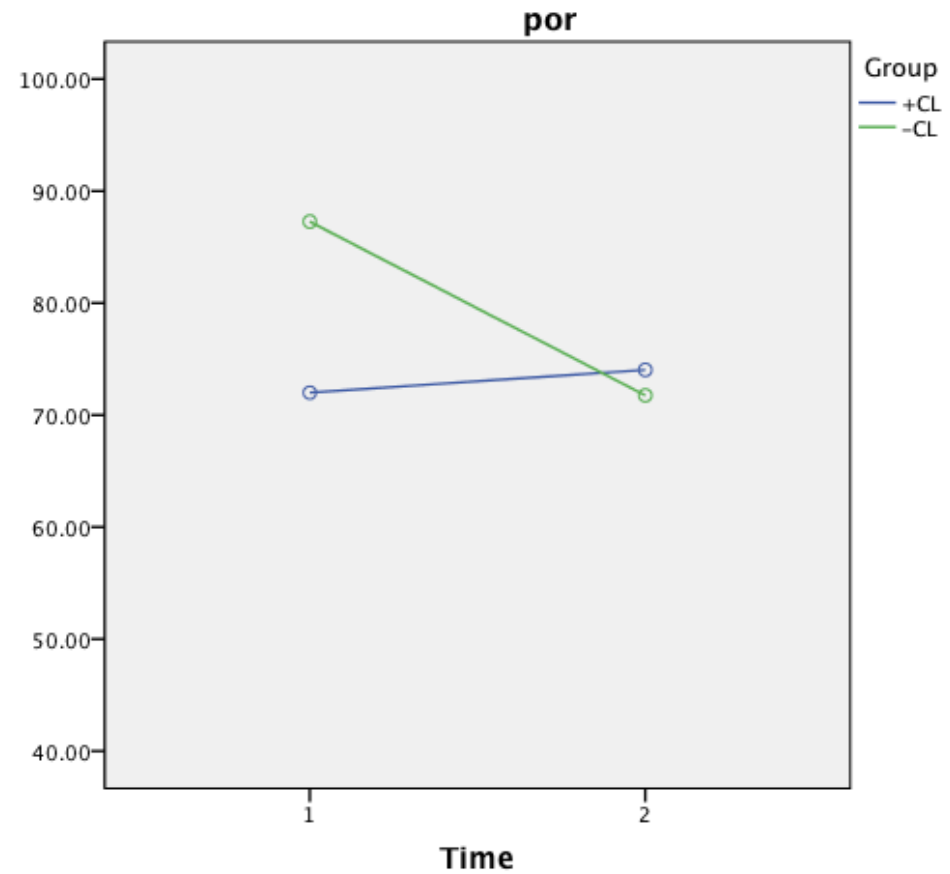
Average % Accuracy in Free Writing



Average % Accuracy in Compositions Written at Home



Average % Accuracy in Compositions Written at Home



Discussion

- +CL appeared to be about as equally beneficial as –CL
 - Equal groups?
 - Need more time to process?
 - Developmental readiness?
- Unique presentation lead to robust gains for both groups

Remaining Questions

- More fine-grained analysis of: results by individual, by item, and by unique sense
- Input data and analyze scores on delayed posttests, exit questionnaires, and confidence reports
- Analyze individual difference factors like grades, etc., and their predictive value for determining who is likely to benefit from either type of instruction

References

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