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TELICITY AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL ACQUISITION OF THE ENGLISH PRESENT PERFECT BY L1 SPANISH SPEAKERS

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TELICITY AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL ACQUISITION OF THE ENGLISH
PRESENT PERFECT BY L1 SPANISH SPEAKERS

by

Virginia Terán

B.A., Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 2000

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Department of Linguistics
In the Graduate School
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THESIS APPROVAL

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

VIRGINIA TERAN, for the Master's degree in APPLIED LINGUSITICS, presented on *MAY, 6TH 2014, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

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MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Krassimira Charkova

The Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) proposes that the inherent lexical aspect of verbs plays a major role in the acquisition of tense-aspect (TA) morphology in both first and second language. This has been attested in most studies on TA morphology conducted with past and present TA markers.

The present study examined the acquisition of Present Perfect, a rather insufficiently studied TA form from a Prototype Account, in two of its four functions, Experiential Past and Persistent Situation. The subjects were 85 L1-Spanish English language learners at intermediate and advanced levels. All participants had received formal instruction in English grammar as part of their curriculum. The data was collected through a forced-choice task with 16 situations equally distributed between the two Present Perfect functions and between telic and atelic verbs of four semantic categories: stative, activities, achievements, and accomplishments. Participants had to choose the correct verb form out of three options (Present, Past or Present Perfect) that would best complete the sentences given.

The results showed evidence of clear developmental stages in the acquisition of the Present Perfect. The stages were characterized by an important role of proficiency level and lexical aspect as the more proficient participants showed a more accurate use of the target form. In addition, both the intermediate and advanced groups showed a tendency towards employing Persistent Situation with atelic verb types, whereas they used Experiential Past with telic verbs.

Contrary to the predictions of the AH, the use that seemed to be first acquired and easier to learn was Persistent Situation, which obtained higher correctness rates in both groups than Experiential Past.

When the results were analyzed across each aspectual verb type, the pattern of acquisition was less clear and thereby partly met the claims of the AH. This irregular trend attested in the data encouraged the argument that the acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect may not be solely influenced by lexical aspect and verb prototypicality but several other factors may be at stake, such as sentence-type effect, input distribution, L1 transfer and rote-learned forms. Therefore, developmental stages in the acquisition of the Present Perfect should be examined in view of an interplay of "multiple factors" as already proposed by Sugaya and Shirai (2007), which work simultaneously and in a complementary fashion in the acquisitional process of TA morphology.

DEDICATION

As the symbol of the culmination of one of my dreams about studying abroad in order to develop professionally, this research study is dedicated to my parents in the first place for their constant support to pursue my dreams, to achieve my aims and to be the person who I really want to be. They have certainly taught me that there is no limit in life and that I can get as far as I intend to. For this far distance and long way that I have walked, I will always be grateful to them.

To my dearest brother, to my "nona", to my family and friends, who have always supported me in this American experience.

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

The acquisition of the Tense-Aspect (TA) system in second language (L2) English seems to present a great number of challenges to the L1 Spanish learner since encoding temporality is not an easy or simple task. As pointed out by numerous researchers in the area, the encoding of temporality entails a long, gradual process with several operative levels, starting from the pragmatic level, through the lexical level, and finalizing at the morphological level (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). This three-level acquisitional process regarding the expression of temporality in a learner's grammar makes it complex and difficult for students to understand and learn. This complexity increases as the learner moves into the next acquisitional stage, which is defined by the acquisition of form-meaning associations. Once the learner has associated the right meanings with the right forms and has reached an interlanguage stage in which he/she is able to master those associations in a native-like manner, full attainment of the TA system can be said to have been accomplished.

Students' performance in exams and written assignments has provided evidence for this intricate process of acquisition. Learners seem to experience problems at both morphological and semantic levels when they have to choose the appropriate TA marker in a given exercise or in spontaneous speech. The English Present Perfect seems to entail a greater challenge, as it is a more complex TA marker both morphologically (two verbs are required to express it) and semantically (two points in time are related). According to Bardovi-Harlig (1992, 2000), the Present Perfect (PP) holds two meanings, namely *anteriority* and *current relevance*. Anteriority refers to a situation that occurred at some specific time before the moment of speaking and which

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has no relation to the present. On the other hand, current relevance describes situations that are current, and thereby ascribed to the moment of speaking or present time.

Specifically, the PP emerges in the interlanguage once the Present and the Past markers have emerged, and it does it with the meanings of current relevance and anteriority respectively. Therefore, it is this dual semantic nature and its close relation to the other two TA markers with overlapping semantic properties that makes the PP acquisition even more difficult. Another difficulty of this TA marker is the two-fold nature of its functions, namely perfective-telic and imperfective-atelic, which makes the PP not truly a Perfective Past form, as is the Simple Past.

On the other hand, most learners' output in relation to the functions of the PP (and most errors) usually shows some kind of interference and/or influence from their L1 background over their use of L2. In the particular case of this study, reference is made to the influence of L1 Spanish over L2 English in cases where Spanish L2 learners of English instead of using PP, use a TA marker typically used in their L1. This can oftentimes be attributed to "transfer"; this phenomenon has been defined by Odlin (1989) as "the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired" (p. 27). The term "cross-linguistic influence" has been proposed as an alternative to "transfer" and is regarded as more appropriate because of its neutrality (Cook, 2000), even though "transfer" is "more widely used and has become accepted by convention" (Skehan, 2008, p. 412). It is important to note that *transfer* is directly related to *interlanguage* due to the L1 influences, which may have a major role on the learners' stage of the target language, or interlanguage (Skehan, 2008, p. 412).

At the same time, the learner's difficulty in producing an output containing the PP across its functions can also be related to the learner's cognitive predisposition towards associating

certain verb types with a certain TA form. Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (1981) proposes that there is an innate predisposition in human beings to associate punctual verbs with Past morphology and non-punctual ones with Present morphology. When applied to second-language acquisition, it is assumed that learners at beginner stages will acquire verb classes typically used with the Perfective aspect and Past morphology, and those verb classes which are not very typical appear at more advanced interlanguage levels. Therefore, the intermediate stage of acquisition, in which the learners have to move from an interlanguage with only typical verb types to an interlanguage with non-typical ones, might be a source of confusion. If the functions of the PP--the inherently Perfective ones and the inherently Imperfective ones--are considered, then acquisition of the PP becomes even more hazardous.

Taking into consideration the developmental acquisition of the Present Perfect TA marker, this present study aims to provide further empirical evidence about both this process and how the learner's L1 background and verb prototypicality manifest themselves at the different stages of acquisition. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify trends in the acquisition of the Present Perfect functions at different proficiency levels and to analyze them in terms of appropriateness of use of form-meaning associations and verb prototypicality.

Time, tense and aspect in English

The study of temporal expression or "time talk" (Smith, 1980) has had a long and extensive history in the field of first- and second-language acquisition. A great number of studies have been conducted about the means for expressing temporality, namely lexical, pragmatic and morphological temporality. As stated by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), this area of research has shifted from an earlier focus on accuracy orders of verb morphology in interlanguage to a later focus on the semantics supporting tense-aspect morphology. This change of focus has led to the

classification of research studies on the topic of temporal expression into two areas of inquiry: the meaning-oriented approach and the form-oriented approach. As explained by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), the former performs research on the means used to express temporality, such as the use of adverbs and adverbials, chronological order, and scaffolding, the last of which defines how a speaker may encode temporality based upon his interlocutor's discourse; the latter approach, the form-oriented approach, focuses on the emergent temporal morphology in interlanguage grammar and how it is influenced by lexical aspect and discourse structure.

Within the scope of this topic, two concepts are undoubtedly of great importance: *tense* and *aspect*. Bardovi-Harlig (2000) explains that *tense* places a situation in the line of time: past, present or future. Following this line of thought, Comrie (1985) defines *tense* as "grammaticalized location in time" (p. 9), i.e. as a grammatical concept that serves the purpose of connecting the time of an event to the moment of speaking (absolute tense) or to some other time or situation (relative tense). In this sense, according to Comrie (1976, 1985), *tense* is said to be deictic, since it relates a situation to a reference point or "deictic centre", which can be either the "here and now" of a situation or some other time and place different from the present (p. 5, p. 14).

With respect to aspect, *grammatical* and *lexical aspects* are basic distinctions in the literature (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Comrie, 1976; Dowty, 1986; Smith, 1991; Verkuyl, 1994). The former, also known as *viewpoint aspect*, is defined by Comrie (1976) as a grammatical category which can be expressed morphosyntactically by means of inflectional morphology or by a periphrasis. Comrie states that *grammatical aspect* refers to the internal temporal constituency of a situation and the different possible ways of viewing that constituency. Thus, *aspect* can look at the totality of an event and consider it as a single whole (with a clear beginning, middle and end),

or it can look at an internal portion of an event. The former type of aspect is called *perfective aspect*, the latter *imperfective aspect*. Both types are exemplified in (1) below.

(1) Tom was cooking when I arrived.

imperfective   perfective
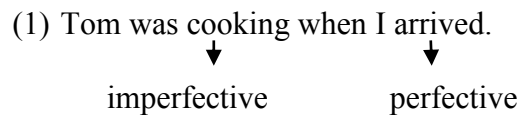
In this case, the arrival is looked at as a whole event with a clear beginning and a clear end, whereas the action of cooking constitutes an internal portion of the whole action of cooking.

Barlovi-Harlig (2000) argues that *lexical* (or *inherent*) aspect is related to the semantic characteristics of verbs and their internal and external arguments and adverbials referred to as "the verb constellation" (Salaberry & Shirai, 2002, p. 2), which help in the classification of verbs as states or actions. Research in this area has relied upon a four-way classification of lexical aspect first proposed by Vendler (1967), who provides a four-way distinction of the aspectual categories into which a verb may fall, namely *states, activities, accomplishments and achievements*.

According to Slabakova (2000), a *state* can be defined as "a stable condition of some entity for some period of time, where no change appears from time 1 to time 2", whereas *events* are considered as "dynamic situations where some change or changes obtain from time 1 to time 2" (p.742). The remaining verb classes (activities, accomplishments, and achievements) are all categorized as events. *Activities* make reference to "a homogeneous process going on in time with no inherent goal"; *accomplishments,* on the other hand, "denote a process going on in time and an inherent culmination, after which the event can no longer continue", whereas *achievements* "have an inherent endpoint, which is instantaneous" (Slabakova, 2000, p. 742). In accordance with the Vendlerian classification, states and activities are classified as *atelic*; i.e. they do not have an inherent endpoint, whereas accomplishments and achievements are classified

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as *telic,* as they denote situations with an inherent endpoint. Examples of the aspectual categories of verbs are presented in (2) through (5) below:

(2) He is a teacher. (state)

(3) He teaches Math at UCLA. (activity)

(4) He read the book in two hours. (accomplishment)

(5) He left the meeting unexpectedly. (achievement)

As explained by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), the four Vendlerian categories of verbs can be defined by three semantic features (see Table 1; Andersen 1991): [± punctual], [± telic], and [± dynamic] (p. 216). The feature *punctual* distinguishes instantaneous predicates (achievements) from those with duration (all other categories of verbs). The *telic* feature distinguishes predicates with an inherent endpoint (achievements and accomplishments) from those without (states and activities). Finally, the feature *dynamic* distinguishes between actions (activities, achievements and accomplishments) and states.

Table 1. *Semantic Features of Aspectual Classes.*

	States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
Punctual	-	-	-	+
Telic	-	-	+	+
Dynamic	-	+	+	+

Note. From Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2000). *Tense and Aspect in Second Language Acquisition: form, meaning, and use.* (Language Learning Monograph Series). USA: Blackwell Publishers. Adapted with permission from "Developmental Sequences: The Emergence of Aspect Marking in SLA," by R. W. Andersen, in T. Huebner and C.A. Ferguson (Eds.), *Crosscurrents in Second Language Acquisition* (p.311). (With permission by Bardovi-Harlig)

These semantic distinctions are represented graphically by Ayoun and Salaberry (2005) as is shown in Table 2 below. States are represented by a continuous unbroken line that can continue without interruption. Activities, considered as dynamic events, are represented by a continuous dotted line. Telic durative events (accomplishments) are represented by a dotted line with an x that signals an inherent endpoint. Finally, telic punctual events (achievements) are represented by just an x to signal an action with no duration and an instantaneous endpoint.

Table 2. *Schematization of semantic features.*

[+ static]	[+ dynamic]	[+telic, + durative]	[+ telic, + punctual]
_____	……………………..	…………………..x	x

Note. Adapted from Ayoun, D., & Salaberry, M.R. (Eds.). (2005). *Tense and Aspect in Romance Languages, Theoretical and applied perspectives.* (Vol. 29). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins B.V. (With permission by Salaberry)

The Present Perfect in English

Since this study involves L1 Spanish learners of English as a second language, it is necessary to provide some theoretical background about the status of the Present Perfect in both English and Spanish. In English, the Perfect has been explained by Comrie (1976) to be intimately related to the notion of "current relevance", since it "indicates the continuing present relevance of a past situation" (p. 52). In this sense, the Perfect aspect establishes a relation between two points in time—the time of the state that results from a previous situation and the time of the previous situation (Comrie, 1976), as exemplified in (6) below.

(6) I have finished my paper.

In example (6), the event of finishing the paper took place at some recent past time and is related to the present time (or time of utterance), by implying a resultative effect in the present: the paper is now finished.

Another important characteristic of the Perfect is that it cannot be used with an adverb or adverbial clause specifying the time of the past event, although specification of time is allowed as long as the time of the past event includes the present (Comrie, 1976). Thus, Bardovi-Harlig (2002, p. 221) claims that the Perfect will be found with" temporal adverbials which include a sense of the present" such as *today, at present, still, up until now, so far, since*, etc. This is exemplified in (7) below.

(7) I have finished my paper today.

It is worth pointing out that the above feature of the Perfect in English does not apply in Spanish, where it can be found with specification of time as an overlapping use with the Simple Past.

(8) El	Sr.	Smith	ha	muerto	ayer.
DEF.ART.	Mr.	Smith	has	died	yesterday.

"Mr. Smith died yesterday."

The meaning of the Present Perfect described in (8) above is distinguished from that of the Simple Past, the latter defined as "then time which is conceived of as separate from the present" (McCoard, 1978, p. 19). This definition is crucial in distinguishing these two tenses, because the Simple Past will be used to refer to past events with no relation to the present moment. According to Bardovi-Harlig the Present Perfect and the Simple Past share the feature [+anterior] but differ in the feature [+current relevance], with the Present Perfect being [+current

relevance] and the Simple Past being [- current relevance] (p. 107). Bardovi-Harlig also states that the shared feature of anteriority has caused the Present Perfect and the Simple Past to be considered "truth-functionally identical", as both tenses have the same truth value (p. 108). Aside from differing with regard to current relevance, Bardovi-Harlig (2000) points out that the Present Perfect and the Simple Past differ with regard to sequentiality, or chronological order. In general, the Simple Past is used to describe events in sequence, a characteristic absent in the Present Perfect.

Bardovi-Harlig (2002) also argues that, in language learning, the learner must associate certain meanings and uses with certain forms and must be able to distinguish among "semantically neighboring forms" (p. 218). The challenge of the Present Perfect lies in the fact that—as it appears later in the learner's IL—once the past and the present forms have been acquired, it entails a process of restructuring of (rather than addition to) the tense/aspect system of the learner's interlanguage, where adjustments must be made.

Types of Perfect. So far, the main semantics of the Present Perfect have been discussed in direct relation to other tense/aspect forms in English. The following is a discussion of the four basic meanings/uses associated with this TA form (Comrie, 1976).

a. *Perfect of result.* This use is found with states which result from a past event (Comrie, 1976).

(9) Paul has left.

From the example in (9), it can be concluded that Paul is no longer here, which is considered to be the present result of the past action of leaving.

b. *Experiential Perfect.* This use indicates that a given situation has taken place at least once in the past, up to the present (Comrie, 1976).

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> (10)   Laura has been abroad.

The Present Perfect in sentence (10) indicates that Laura went abroad at least on one occasion during a time leading up to the present.

c. ***Perfect of persistent situation.*** This is used to designate a past situation that continues into the present, as shown in (11).

> (11)   We've vacationed here since we were kids.

d. ***Perfect of recent past.*** This use of the Perfect is found with recent past situations whose results are also operative in the present (See example 12). Therefore, the typical adverbs for this use are *recently*, *just*, and their synonyms. In Spanish, this use of the Perfect is also found with a more-remote recentness characteristic of the Simple Past.

> (12)   I've just seen your brother.

Tense, time, and aspect in Spanish

Having discussed the major meanings and functions of the Present Perfect in English, it seems relevant to discuss those concepts in Spanish, in order to identify differences and similarities with English that will help understand the influence of L1 and verb prototypicality in relation to the acquisition of the English Present Perfect at different developmental stages.

The notion of *tense* in Spanish grammar is, as in English, a grammatical category that identifies the location of events with respect to the moment of speaking or time of utterance. It is also a deictic category in that it is referential, as it helps to relate a temporal interval/point to the time of utterance. The notions of "anteriority", "posteriority" and "simultaneity" provide evidence for the relational nature of tense.

On the other hand, *verbal aspect* in Spanish pertains to the internal structure of events, describing them as starting, finishing or continuing in time, considering them as a whole or as an

interval during their occurrence (*Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, 2010). Spanish verbal

aspect affects the internal time of a situation; in this sense it is identical to the notion of *aspect* in

English. According to its particular manifestation, verbal aspect can be divided into three types:

lexical aspect, *syntactic* (or *periphrastic*) *aspect,* and *morphological aspect*. The former, as in

English, is closely related to the meanings of verbs and predicates. Therefore, verbs are classified

into four classes, as in English:

- Actividades (activities)

- Realizaciones o efectuaciones (accomplishments)

- Conclusiones o logros (achievements)

- Estados (states)

Also as in English, these verbs are characterized according to 3 distinctive features:

duration, telicity and dynamism. *Duration* indicates whether an event takes place throughout a

period of time or whether or not that event is punctual. *Telicity* indicates whether or not the event

has a natural intrinsic limit or endpoint. *Dynamism* expresses the notion of development of an

action or the absence of movement in a state (*Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, 2010).

With regard to *morphological aspect*, known as *grammatical aspect* in English, this is

expressed through verbal inflections. Morphological aspect serves the purpose of classifying

tenses into perfect/perfective or imperfect/imperfective. The perfective aspect presents situations

as complete from beginning to end. In contrast, the imperfective aspect presents situations at

some point of their occurrence without reference to their beginning or end. (*Nueva gramática de

la lengua española*, 2010).

Syntactic or *periphrastic aspect* involves verbal periphrasis, which expresses a number of

temporal aspectual notions (which other languages express by means of different periphrastic

constructions, morphemes, adverbs, etc). These periphrastic expressions are classified--according to the meaning that the auxiliary verb within them provides--into *modal periphrasis* and *tempo aspectual periphrasis*: *-ir a cerrar* (going to close) *-ir cerrando* (start closing) *-ir cerrado* (go closed) (*Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, 2010).

The Present Perfect in Spanish

The Present Perfect in Spanish is known as *compound preterite perfect* or *antepresent*, as it indicates the anteriority of a given situation with respect to a point of reference situated in the present. In this sense, the situations start at an unspecific point in the past and continue up to the moment of speaking. This preterite is also used with a perfective meaning similar to that found with that of the preterite Simple Perfect or Simple Past, a common phenomenon typically found in Spanish dialects in the northern region of Argentina, from Tucumán to the Argentinian-Bolivian border.

(13)	Ha	muerto	hace	tres	meses.
	Has	died	three	months	ago.

"He has died three months ago."

The example in (13) may provide evidence for the possible existence of L1 Spanish transfer in reference with the acquisition of the L2 English functions of the Present Perfect, which may explain the learner's misuse of the Present Perfect in a context which would require the use of the Simple Past.

Types of perfect. The primary meanings of the Present Perfect are as follows:

a. Existential presupposition.

(14) Luis ha estado en Lima.

Luis   has   been   in   Lima.

"Luis has been in Lima".

The sentence in (14) tells about Luis's past experience in Lima, suggesting that he is alive and can therefore obtain more experiences in the future.

b.   The Experiential Perfect. This is used to express that a certain event happened one or more times during a temporal interval of variable duration, which can be expressed through a number of adverbs and adverbials (See example 15).

(15)   Ella   ha   viajado   a   Europa   dos   veces   en   el   último   mes.

She   has   travelled   to   Europe   two   times   in   the   last   month.

"She has travelled twice this month".

The interval of time can also refer to someone's entire life up to the speech time, such as is illustrated in (16) below.

(16)   Ella   ha   viajado   a   Europa   dos   veces   en   su   vida.

She   has   travelled   to   Europe   two   times   in   her   life.

"She has travelled to Europe twice in her life".

c.   Compound Continuous Perfect. This makes reference to a past situation, generally expressed through atelic predicates, which can be prolonged until the present and still continue in the future, as shown in (17) below.

(17) Toda   la   vida   ha   utilizado su   poder político

All   his   life   has   used   his   power political

para   comprar   la   prensa.

to   buy   the   press.

"All his life he has used his political power to buy the press".

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This meaning can also be found with telic predicates in negative contexts, as illustrated in (18) below.

(18) ¿Tomás   no   ha   llegado   aún?

      Tomas   not   has   arrived   yet?

      "Hasn't Tomas arrived yet?"

d. *Immediate past.* This designates events which take place in a time that includes the present. This period can be today, this week, or this year, as shown in (19).

(19) Mis   padres   han   llegado   hoy.

      My   parents   have   arrived   today.

      "My parents have arrived today."

e. *The perfect of recent news.* This is used in the first mention of immediate events, oftentimes followed by the simple preterite perfect (See example 20).

(20) El   accidente   ha   dejado un   saldo de   25   pasajeros

      The   accident   has   left   an   aftermath of   25   passengers

       severamente heridos.

       severely   injured.

        "The accident have left an aftermath of 25 severely injured passengers."

f. *The Resultative Perfect.* This implies the resulting state, in the present, of the past action in question, as illustrated in example (21) below.

(21)   La   inflación   ha   subido inesperadamente.

        The   Inflation   has   gone up   unexpectedly.

        "Inflation has gone up unexpectedly."

The past situation indicated above has caused prices to go up, whose result in the present is high inflation.

L1 transfer

After having discussed the main grammatical features of the Present Perfect in both English and Spanish, it is possible to present the most important predictions about L1 Spanish transfer over L2 English with regard to the meanings of the Present Perfect. As explained by Bardovi-Harlig (2002), the PP is learned in association with the Simple Past and the Simple Present. Therefore, many assumptions are made about learners' wrong usage of the Present Perfect or when students fail to use the PP and use a TA marker which would be correct in the L1 for the context provided. Corresponding meanings of the Present Perfect in both languages are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. *Meanings of the Present Perfect in English and Spanish.*

English	Spanish
Experiential perfect	Experiential perfect
Perfect of result	Perfect of result
Perfect of recent past	Perfect of recent events
Perfect of persistent situation	Compound continuous perfect

As can be seen in the summary above, there is direct correspondence in the uses of the PP in both Spanish and English. Therefore, it can be expected that no major problems should arise in the acquisition of this tense in English L2 from the semantic viewpoint; hence, there should only be positive transfer from the L1. This correspondence is illustrated by the examples in (22).

(22)   English   Spanish

        Perfect of persistent situation   Compound continuous perfect

        We have lived in this house since we   Hemos vivido en esta casa desde que

        got married.   nos casamos.

Given the examples in (22) above, it is not expected that the L2 English learner should

have any difficulties in the acquisition of the functions of the PP caused by his Spanish L1 due to

their semantic correspondence. Difficulties might arise if this meaning of the Perfect in Spanish

can also be indicated by another tense, such as the Simple Present. It is important to point out

that this is the case in Spanish, hence the compound continuous perfect is expressed by the

Present Perfect; however, it can also be expressed by the Simple Present, as shown in (23).

(23)   English   Spanish

        Perfect of persistent situation   Compound continuous perfect

        We *have lived* in this house since we   *Vivimos* (live) en esta casa desde que

        got married.   nos casamos. (present simple)

This can interfere in the learners' acquisition process and cause negative transfer in L2

English by making them use the wrong TA marker (instead of the Present Perfect) to indicate a

persistent situation; this is illustrated in the (24) below.

(24) L2 English – Spanish L1 learner's possible output

        We live in this house since we got married.

As discussed by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), the acquisition of the semantics of the Present

Perfect is directly associated with the semantics of the present and the past. Therefore, it is

predicted that the major difficulties that learners will face will be in relation to those meanings of

the Present Perfect in English which can be expressed by either the present or the past in L1

Spanish, besides the perfect itself, as can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4. *TA markers used in English and Spanish.*

	Experiential perfect	**Perfect of result**	**Perfect of recent events**	**Perfect of persistent situation**
ENGLISH	Present Perfect	Present Perfect	Present Perfect	Present Perfect
SPANISH	Present Perfect	Present Perfect	Present Perfect	Present Perfect
	Simple Present	Simple Past	Simple Past	Simple Present
	Simple Past			Simple Past

As summary, Table 5 below shows examples of the Present Perfect in English

with all its major uses, examples in Spanish of the possible TA forms which can be used as

alternatives to the Present Perfect, as well as examples of possible L1 Spanish learners'

output in L2 English as influenced by their mother tongue.

Table 5. *Examples of TA markers used to express the Present Perfect meanings in English, Spanish and L2 English mediated by transfer.*

	English	Spanish	Predicted transfer
Experiential perfect	She's *travelled* to Europe twice this month. (Perfect)	Ella ha *viajado / viajó* a Europa dos veces este mes. (Perfect and Simple Past)	She travelled to Europe twice this month. (Simple Past)
Perfect of result	He *has become* an icon among teenagers. (Perfect)	Se ha *convertido / convirtió* en un ícono entre los jóvenes. (Perfect and Simple Past)	He *became* an icon among teenagers. (Simple Past)
Perfect of recent events	Your kid *has grown* much in this last month. (Perfect)	Tu niño *ha crecido / creció* mucho en este último mes. (Perfect and Simple Past)	Your kid grew much this last month. (Simple Past)
Perfect of persistent situation	I'*ve known* Dr. Collins for a long time. (Perfect) This is the best book Cohelo *has published* up to now. (Perfect)	*Conozco* al Sr. Collins hace mucho tiempo. (Simple Present) Este libro es el mejor que Cohelo *ha publicado / publicó* hasta ahora. (Perfect and Simple Past)	I *know* Dr. Collins for a long time. (Simple Present) This is the best book Cohelo published up to now. (Simple Past)

The Present Perfect in the context of the present study

So far in this chapter, the most relevant concepts with regard to *aspect, tense* and *time* have been presented; a comparison of the Present Perfect in English and Spanish has also been made. This section focuses on the operationalization of Present Perfect for the purposes of the present study.

The functions of the Present Perfect can occur with each lexical aspectual class of verb (Vendler, 1957). Some of these verbs are more typical in one use than in the other; for instance, in the case of *Persistent Situation,* achievements and accomplishments can be used only in the negative or the interrogative forms.

For the purposes of this study, the four functions of the English Present Perfect presented above (Table 4) will be reduced to three by merging two functions. Specifically, the *Resultative past* and the *Recent past* will be considered as one. These two uses somehow overlap with each other, as a recent past action implies a later result in the present; this idea was argued for by Jacobs (1995), who claimed that the indefiniteness of the Present Perfect makes reference to "events that are new enough to be relevant in the present" (p. 202). Table 6 lists the three basic uses of the Present Perfect which were originally supposed to be the focus of this study.

Table 6. *Functions of the Present Perfect across lexical aspectual classes of verbs*

(Comrie, 1976).

	Persistent Situation	Resultative-Recent Past	Experiential Past
States	-He's **lived** in a trailer for months. -Does he like it? -He loves it.	He **has lived** abroad for years and he says that experience changed his life.	I've **been** abroad a couple of times.
Activities	-He **has sung** as an amateur all his life. -I don't think he makes much money.	She has **sung** as an amateur for just a year and now she's popular.	I've **travelled** a lot in my life.
Achievements	They **haven't read the book** I recommended yet.	She's just **written a novel** and she is already popular now.	I've **written two books** in my life.
Accomplishments	She **hasn't arrived.**	She **has finished** her dissertation and now she's free.	I've **arrived** late to class once this semester.

As exemplified in Table 6 above, the uses of the Present Perfect can occur with the four aspectual classes of verbs. According to the nature of the function of the PP, some classes of verbs will be more typical in one use than the other classes. In order to discuss the semantics of the PP in relation to lexical aspect, (that is to say, according to the inherent aspect of verbs), a

reference will be made about the relation between lexical aspect and the emergence of morphology of the PP.

This second analysis lies in the so-called Aspect Hypothesis or AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), the tenets of which will be described in detail in the following section. Its basic theoretical caveat is that perfective past marking starts with achievements and accomplishments eventually extending use to activities and states. This is supported by Andersen (2002), who claims that learners have "a cognitive predisposition to find real realized unitary bounded events encoded in the language and thus recognize that meaning of past perfective form and not the broader range of meanings the form has in adult native speaker use" (p. 81). In other words, the learner cognitively associates perfective TA markers with the most canonical meaning of a past event with a clear end and/or result.

Table 7 below shows developmental stages across three different proficiency levels regarding the emergence of the Present Perfect, according to the claims of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) with regard to perfective past marking.

Table 7. *Emergence of Present Perfect morphology across proficiency levels.*

Elementary level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Overuse of prototypical combinations	Emergence of non-prototypical combinations	Full mastery of non-prototypical combinations
Present Perfect with telic predicates (accomplishments & achievements)	Present Perfect with telic predicates but slowly spreading to activities and states.	Present Perfect occurs with all verb types.
Learning Predictions	**Learning Predictions**	**Learning Predictions**
Students are expected to use only achievements & accomplishments. They are also expected to present problems with using states & activities.	Students still continue using the Present Perfect with accomplishments and achievements but they will have already started using activities.	Students will use all the verb types with the Present Perfect.

The learning predictions stated in Table 7 are based on the theoretical principles underlying the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) for the emergence of perfective morphology. They are also related to the Prototype Account of TA marking (Shirai & Andersen, 1995), which, according to Rocca (2007), postulates that the acquisitional development of the TA system occurs on the basis of "principles of prototypical categorization", according to which three semantic features characterize the initial prototype: telicity, perfectivity and past time reference (p. 79). Therefore, those verbs which combine the features of punctuality and telicity will tend to receive a marker first when they refer to past situations, given that the prototypical pattern for the perfective is "a single punctual event that occurred in the past with a clear result or end state" (Dahl, 1985, p. 78). The formation of prototypes is further explained by Giacalone-Ramat (1995a) by means of the "Principle of Selective Association", based on the tendency to associate features that are "semantically congruent", such as telicity, perfectivity and pastness (p.

225). Corresponding to the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) and the Prototype Hypothesis (Shirai & Andersen, 1995), the acquisitional road for past morphology starts with telic verbs and then spreads to activities and thence to states (Rocca 2007, p.79).

Returning to Table 7 above, we are faced with a gradual progressive acquisition of perfective morphology across the different lexical aspectual classes of verbs, which has applied to the Simple Past in all the empirical studies conducted so far regarding the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). Even though we might feel tempted to apply this same progression to the acquisition of the Present Perfect, some caution should be taken given the nature of the PP as having a two-fold meaning (perfective and progressive/imperfective), as can be seen in the basic three functions presented above.

According to the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), as stated before, past perfective marking emerges with telic verbs. Let us elaborate our acquisitional predictions of the PP based on this hypothesis: accomplishments and achievements will appear first in relation to the Present Perfect functions in general. Specifically, this would thereby imply a prototypicality of these verbs with the *Resultative/Recent Past* and the *Experiential Past*. However, this telic prototypicality prediction does not seem to be viable with the *Persistent Situation* function due to its atelic nature.

On the contrary, what arises as prototypical in this atelic/imperfective function of Persistent Situation Present Perfect is the atelic category of states and activities. Based on this slight adjustment of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) with regard to the Present Perfect, we are able to provide some more specificity to the role of lexical aspect, and hence to the verb prototypical combinations, with this TA marker. With this being said, the PP is expected to emerge with accomplishments and achievements, and therefore only the Recent-Resultative Past

and the Experiential Past will be predicted to appear first in the learners' interlanguage. At a later stage, the Present Perfect is predicted to start incorporating more atelic situations, with less prototypical verbs, such as activities and (eventually) states. At a final stage of acquisition, it is predicted that Persistent Situation will appear first with its atelic partners (states and activities) and will eventually occur with the non-prototypical telic verbs, accomplishments and achievements.

This whole developmental picture provides a rough idea of the complexity of the Present Perfect marker of perfectivity, clearly depicted by its two-fold underlying semantics (perfective and imperfective meanings). Table 8 summarizes the possible stages of acquisition of PP form-meaning pairings through different proficiency levels.

Table 8. *Predicted stages of PP acquisition across proficiency levels.*

Stage 1: Elementary level	
Uses of PP with a telic nature	**Telic verbs (Acc. & Ach)**
Resultative-Recent Past	Prototypical
Experiential Past	Prototypical

Stage 2: Intermediate level	
Uses of PP with a telic nature	**Atelic verbs (Act. & states)**
Resultative-Recent Past	Non-Prototypical
Experiential Past	Non-Prototypical

Stage 3a: Advanced level	
Use of PP with an atelic nature	**Atelic verbs (act. & States)**
Persistent Situation	Prototypical

Stage 3b: Advanced level	
Use of PP with an atelic nature	**Telic verbs (acc. & ach.)**
Persistent Situation	Non-Prototypical

For the sake of simplicity and due to time constraints, this research study will focus on the role of the inherent lexical aspect of verbs in the acquisitional development of the perfective Experiential Past and the imperfective Persistent Situation, both of which are considered to be highly-popular functions in EFL contexts.

Let us now focus on the study itself by attempting to analyze the extent of the role of lexical aspect with regard to the acquisition of the PP functions. In order to do this, each function will be analyzed, taking into account its nature from a telicity perspective. Table 9 below shows the functions of the PP, both telic and atelic, as well as the lexical aspectual verb classes (also

categorized as telic and atelic, based on a Vendlerian classification). Based on Table 9, we can see the correspondence of the telic functions with the telic verbs or the atelic function with atelic verbs on the one hand, and the lack of correspondence between telic functions with atelic verbs (and vice versa).

Table 9. *Prototypicality combinations between lexical aspectual verb classes and functions of Present Perfect.*

	State (atelic)	Activity (atelic)	Accomplishment (telic)	Achievement (telic)
Persistent situation (atelic)	Prototypical	Prototypical	Non-prototypical	Non-prototypical
Experiential (telic)	Non-prototypical	Non-prototypical	Prototypical	Prototypical

As can be seen in Table 9, the prototypicality of the verbs in the Present Perfect is directly related with the telicity of the nature of its functions. This will result in some predictions about the process of acquisition of each function across proficiency levels. Bearing in mind some of the claims of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) on the one hand, and the nature of the PP as a perfective TA marker on the other, the function of Experiential Past will be considered as emerging first in the learner's IL if we regard it as a canonical function of the PP which complies with the prototypical value of perfective meaning. Persistent Situation, on the other hand, could be considered a non-canonical use of the Present Perfect, given its association with atelicity and imperfectivity; thus, it is predicted to emerge in the learners' interlanguage at a later stage.

On a second layer of analysis, further predictions will go in tandem with the nature of these functions. Therefore, it is expected that accomplishments and achievements as telic verb types will appear first with Experiential Past as a telic function, based on the prototypicality of

the verbs regarding this function. As with the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), prototypical

verbs in relation to the PP function in question are predicted to be acquired first. Table 10 shows

the predicted process of acquisition of the two selected functions of PP.

Table 10. *Developmental stage for the elementary level.*

Stage 1: Elementary level	
Uses of PP with a telic nature	**Telic verbs (Acc. & Ach)**
Experiential Past	Prototypical
Stage 2: Intermediate level (emergence of atelicity)	
Use of PP with an atelic nature	**Atelic verbs (activities & states)**
Persistent Situation	Prototypical
Stage 3a: Advanced level	
Uses of PP with a telic nature	**Atelic verbs (Activities & states)**
Experiential Past	Non-Prototypical
Stage 3b: Advanced level	
Use of PP with an atelic nature	**Telic verbs (achievements & accomplishments)**
Persistent Situation	Non- Prototypical

To sum up, the purpose of this study was to find developmental sequences of acquisition

of the functions of the Present Perfect. In addition to this, the goal will be to characterize those

sequences by means of their distinctive features in close relation with the Aspect Hypothesis

(Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). For instance, is the first developmental sequence (Elementary

level) characterized by the use of telic predicates in tandem with the telic function of the Perfect,

namely the Experiential Past? If atelic verbs emerge last in perfective marking, do they emerge

first to express the telic Experiential Past*?* Or do they emerge first to express Persistent

Situation*,* and then spread onto the telic perfective function? Does the atelic function of

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Persistent Situation appear last in the learners' IL? Finally, the ultimate goal will be to conclude whether lexical aspect has a major role in the acquisition of the PP functions and hence on the emergence of PP at the morphological level, as the AH would predict.

As previously explained, due to time constraints, only one prototypical function, Experiential Past, and the only atelic function of the PP, Persistent Situation, will be analyzed in the present study, with the goal to track the developmental stages in the learner's IL based on the premises of the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996).

Related theories

Three second-language acquisition theories have served as the framework of this research study: *The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis* (Lado, 1957), *The Aspect Hypothesis* (Andersen & Shirai, 1994), and *The Prototype Hypothesis* (Shirai, 1995).

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) originated from Lado's *Linguistics across cultures* (1957). According to CAH, second-language learning difficulties can be predicted through a systematic comparison of the L1 and L2 grammatical systems (1957:vii). In its origins, CAH was based on Structuralism, which poses that the structure of a given language can be documented and compared with the structure of another language (Esser, 1980). Moreover, CAH has two psychological bases, Associationism and Stimulus-Response theory, which hold that language is learnt through habit formation and reinforcement (James, 1985).

An important assumption under CAH is that L2 learners tend to transfer the formal features of their L1 to their L2 utterances. Under this view, "transfer" is considered the action of transferring the habits of one's L1 into the L2 (Corder, 1971). It is important to state that CAH has three different versions according to predictability: strong, moderate and weak. According to Wardhaugh (1970), the strong version claims that acquisition difficulties can be identified solely

through contrastive analysis of two languages even before learning has begun. This version also holds that "L1 interference" is the main obstacle in L2 acquisition and predicts that the greater the difference between L1 and L2, the greater the difficulty. On the other hand, the weak version of CAH moves from a priori predictive nature to the a posteriori explanatory power of observable errors in L2 production (Brown, 1987).

This present research follows the mild version of CAH as it sets out to identify developmental processes in the acquisition of the Present Perfect through analyses of learners' errors. These developmental errors might show evidence of developmental phases marked by the learner's relative accuracy in their use of certain structures (Odlin, 1989). Another sub-goal is to test the importance of transfer in each developmental sequence, if any, taking into account that studies by Dulay and Burt (1973/4) and by Krashen (1974) have held that transfer has very little influence over the acquisition of grammar (Odlin, 1989). Odlin (1989) also states that if the L1 does not play an important role with regard to the accuracy orders or developmental sequences, then some other factor must explain why a certain target language structure is relatively easy or difficult. The answer lies in the fact that the L2 structure is responsible for acquisition, which is in turn influenced by some universal cognitive mechanisms (Dulay & Burt, 1974).

Lastly, the present research study is based on the Aspect Hypothesis, which, according to Andersen and Shirai (1994), states that both L1 and L2 learners' use of verb morphology, especially in the early stages, shows the influence of the inherent semantic aspect of verbs and predicates. In other words, learners will initially use tense-aspect markers in direct correlation with the lexical aspect of the verbs used with these markers. Central to this theory are the previously-discussed concepts of grammatical aspect and lexical aspect. According to Bardovi-

Harlig (2000), the Aspect Hypothesis contains four claims formulated upon the relation between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect and the Vendlerian categories (p. 227):

1. Learners first use (perfective) past marking on achievements and accomplishments, eventually extending use to activities and statives.

2. In languages that encode the perfective/imperfective distinction, imperfective past appears later than perfective past and imperfect past marking begins with statives, extending then to activities, then to accomplishments, and finally to achievements.

3. In languages that have progressive aspect, progressive marking begins with activities, and then extends to accomplishments and achievements.

4. Progressive markings are not incorrectly overextended to statives.

Closely related to the Aspect Hypothesis is the Prototype Theory of Tense/Aspect acquisition proposed by Andersen and Shirai (1995) and Shirai (2002). The tenets of this theory are summarized by Hu (2002), who postulates that linguistic prototypicality is highly significant in learners' acquisition and use of the L2 grammar. An and Guan (2012) provide more information about this theory by further explaining that prototypical members in a category are acquired earlier and are easier than peripheral or non-prototypical ones (p.110). Under this frame, it can be said that the relationship between inherent aspect and verb morphology can account for the acquisitional sequences/stages from prototypical to less-prototypical members with respect to tense and aspect. The following are the prototypical combinations posed by the Prototype Theory: telic, perfective and past on one hand and atelic, imperfective, present on the other hand. This finds an explanation in the fact that in the acquisition of imperfective aspect, states share the most-prototypical features among the four aspectual classes with imperfective

aspect. This explains why the Aspect Hypothesis predicts that the imperfective marking starts with states before moving to other verb classes.

All in all, the purpose of this study is to look for significant trends with respect to adult second-language acquisition of tense-aspect morphology, verb prototypicality and transfer in L2 English across proficiency levels. The aim is then to identify acquisitional patterns of the functions of the Present Perfect and its relation to prototypical or less-prototypical verb type combinations by examining the effect of lexical aspect and the role of L1 influence.

In the following chapter, several research studies concerning the effect of lexical aspect and transfer with regard to TA marking in L2 English will be discussed, with a primary focus on the Present Perfect. The studies represent the research carried out thus far with learners from different L1s.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

This section will present some of the main research studies regarding the effect of lexical aspect in the acquisition of the TA markers and their appropriate use by L2 Learners of English and French from different L1 backgrounds. It is important to point out that only two studies have been carried out (at least to this researcher's knowledge) about the interrelation between lexical aspect and the English Present Perfect in second-language acquisition. Therefore, these will be presented first, along with one study concerning the acquisition of the English Present Perfect with no focus on lexical aspect. Finally, a discussion will be presented of those studies which have provided evidence in favor of the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai 1994, 1996) with respect to perfective and imperfective morphology, with the Simple Past and the progressive (respectively) at the heart of these investigations.

Studies with different L1 background learners of English

The Present Perfect and Lexical Aspect. Uno's study (2014) focuses on the acquisition and use of the Present Perfect in relation to the internal semantics of the verbal predicates, with the purpose of examining the effect of lexical aspect within the developmental acquisition of this non-researched TA marker. The data were gathered from a group of 29 Japanese learners of English, of different proficiency levels, who were given a cloze test. The test contained 4 passages, with slots for the participants to provide the correct TA forms. The passages targeted the present perfect form in contexts with and without an adverb. The target contexts of the cloze test were provided by 10 Native Speakers (NSs) of American, Australian and British English. Additionally, the instrument was pilot tested with 24 Japanese students (similar to the subjects of the study itself), who helped in the improvement of the test. The results of the actual study

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revealed that the participants performed in such a way that there was some effect of lexical

aspect over the use of the Present Perfect. Specifically, the participants tended to use atelic verbs

in contexts containing an adverb; however, this did not occur with telic verbs. Moreover, the

result showed no association between telic verbs and contexts without an adverb. These latter

sentences were filled in with alternative TA forms by the participants; these alternative forms

were regarded as correct by the NS control group. This being said, the conclusion drawn from

this study was that a context with no durative adverb does not always invite the learner to

produce the Present Perfect, as other TA markers might be grammatically suitable. Finally, Uno

concludes that the acquisition of the Present Perfect is best explained by a "multiple factors"

approach, with cognitive principles, perceptual saliency and prototype formation interacting

among one another in the developmental process.

Another study that examined the effect of lexical aspect in the acquisition of the Present

Perfect is that of Liszka (2002). Based on a paradigm task, Liszka's study gathered oral and

written data among Chinese, Japanese and German learners of L2 English; these subjects were of

intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. The findings provided evidence that both groups

had difficulties in associating the Present Perfect form with its semantic properties. Even the

advanced-level groups showed consistent difficulty in the use of the form. With regard to lexical

aspect, the advanced Chinese and Japanese learners showed some effect, tending to associate the

Present Perfect with telic verbs. With respect to the intermediate-level participants, Liszka's

findings showed that the present and preterite tenses were overgeneralized incorrectly in Present

Perfect contexts. The intermediate group seemed to show an effect of lexical aspect on the

preterite (found with telic verbs) and present/uninflected forms (found with stative verbs), but no

lexical aspect effect was attested regarding the Present Perfect. An additional relevant finding

concerned the production of Present Perfect forms in relation to sentence type. The data

demonstrated that the intermediate participants tended to use the target form with a typical

adverbial, or with an adverbial plus context. In this respect, the data revealed that the advanced

groups used the target form across the three different sentence types: with an adverbial, with

context alone, and with adverbial plus context.

Bardovi-Harlig's study (1992) on the emergence of the Present Perfect as an element of

the tense/aspect system in English is a longitudinal and functional research study of the

development of temporal expression. The participants of her study were 16 adult ESL learners in

the Center for English Language Learning at Indiana University; these represented four different

language backgrounds and had roughly the same proficiency level that coincided with the second

level of the 6-level program-instruction at the University. The data collection consisted of

observations of 1576 written texts and 175 oral texts over the course of more than nine months.

The data analysis was conducted in two stages; in the first, all the Present Perfect forms found in

both the written and oral samples were coded, while in the second stage, the uses of this tense

were coded and classified according to appropriate use: overgeneralizations (uses of the Present

Perfect where the NSs preferred another tense/aspect form) and undergeneralizations (uses of

another tense/aspect form where the NSs preferred the Present Perfect).

Participants' overgeneralizations and undergeneralizations provided evidence that

learners associate the Present Perfect with present and past time and non-sequentiality. This

association concerns the semantic features that normally characterize the verb tenses. The most-

common contexts for overgeneralization were the Simple Past tense, the past perfect tense and

the present tense. For instance, when the learner uses the Present Perfect in the Simple Past

environment, the [+anterior] feature is correct but not the [+current relevance] feature. In the

case of undergeneralizations, only one part of the meaning of the Present Perfect is encoded. Both over- and undergeneralizations result from an imperfect form-meaning association with regard to the target association (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002). Learners construct these form-meaning associations one feature at a time, associating one form with only one meaning in preference to other meanings. The author concludes that the present perfect morphology and meanings emerge in relation to other form-meaning associations available in the English tense/aspect system.

Form-meaning studies with other TA markers. Bardovi-Harlig (1992a) focused on the relationship of form and meaning in the interlanguage of L2 English learners. This was a cross-sectional study with 135 adult ESL learner participants from 14 different language backgrounds and six levels of proficiency (from beginning to advanced) enrolled in an intensive English program at a US University. The data was collected through a cloze test and a follow-up composition task on the same topic. A control group of 23 NSs (graduate students at the same university) were also tested for comparison. The target forms in the cloze passage included past tense, past progressive, past perfect, present perfect and present perfect progressive. The final results indicated that in the development of ESL interlanguage, formal accuracy precedes appropriate use. Generally, form-meaning associations in the target language tend to appear late in learner interlanguage. An important finding in this study was that even when formal accuracy is fairly high, interlanguage associations of form-meaning also take place. Form and meaning were associated through alternative hypotheses about the lexical aspect of the verb and discourse functions, especially when appropriate use did not match formal accuracy. These results seem to provide evidence for the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1996).

In another study by Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995), the effect of the AH was tested via data from 32 short passages by 182 ESL learners at six different levels of proficiency and

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with 15 different L1s. Subjects were asked to provide the appropriate TA form based on contextual information. The distributional-analysis results showed that lexical aspectual classes of verbs influence the acquisition of past temporality to such a point that learners go through three distinct developmental stages of simple past acquisitional process: first, telic verbs appear before atelic verbs; then, states start being used more than activities; and, finally, the use of the Simple Past shows to be undergeneralized (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2008).

Further research was conducted by Collins (2002), including two cross-sectional replication studies performed with Francophone ESL learners for the purpose of finding evidence for the Aspect Hypothesis and L1 influence in relation to TA morphology. The first of these was developed with 70 Francophone university students, of different ages and educational backgrounds, enrolled in a six-week intensive English program in Québec. Data were collected via a 32-passage rational cloze task used by Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995), which included 46 target simple past forms distributed across the four Vendlerian aspectual classes of verbs. The results were examined according to the overall use of the simple past forms, the use of the simple past with the four verb classes, and those alternative forms to the past which were provided by the participants. In relation to overall use, six different groups were identified, determined by their percentages of appropriate use of the simple past. With regard to the distribution of past morphology in relation to lexical aspectual verb classes, SPSS revealed a significant difference of simple past use across lexical aspect, but no effect was found between proficiency and lexical aspect. Finally, the results showed that with stative verbs, participants' most frequent alternative form was the simple present, with the progressive most frequently used for activities. As learners become more proficient, the use of alternative forms declines. With regard to achievements and accomplishments, the alternative form generally supplied was the

perfect. It is important to state that this alternative form was more frequently found among those groups with more-productive use of the simple past, which shows that L1 influence is constrained by L2 development. In contrast to the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), activities, rather than states, presented more challenges or the learners.

Collins' (2002) second study was performed with 108 Francophone L2 English university students, with a wider range of proficiency levels than the ones from the previous study, with 30 NSs providing baseline data. Two elicitation tasks were used to collect the data: a substantially revised cloze from the first study and a preference task. The former consisted of 25 passages with 56 target simple past forms and 14 items from each of the four aspectual verb classes. One of the major changes was the inclusion of five verbs that appeared in both activity and accomplishment situations. The preference task was designed so as to compare NS and NNS behavior regarding the past progressive in the activity category. It consisted of 11 passages with 40 pairs of forms (20 distractors and 20 contexts for either the simple past or the past progressive) for participants to indicate their preference for one, both, neither, or their uncertainty about use (by choosing "I don't know"). The cloze task resulted in the division of the participants into nine groups, according to their percentages of correct overall use of the simple past. The results also showed a significant difference of past tense use across the four aspectual classes; however, no interaction was found between group and lexical aspect. Learners also showed more-appropriate use of the simple past with telic verbs and less-appropriate use with atelic stative verbs. With regard to alternative forms based on the different aspectual verb classes, the most frequent form found with statives was the present, whereas the progressive was the common alternative for activities and the perfect was that of accomplishments and achievements.

Final conclusions were drawn based on the comparison between Collins' first and second studies (2002) and the Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds' (1995) study. First, a significant effect of lexical aspect was found to exist on the choice of the simple past. No major differences were found between the two Collins studies (2002) in relation to accomplishments and achievements in the use of the simple past. Contrary to Collins' first study and Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, Collins' second study found evidence that stative verbs were least likely to be used for the simple past. With regard to telic verbs, the most-common alternative was the perfect, which provided evidence that L1 influence occurs within lexical aspect. This influence seems to be mediated by proficiency, as the more-advanced levels, which demonstrated more-appropriate use of the simple past form, also showed an increased use of the perfect. The similarity between the L1 form and the L2 form exerts the greatest influence on the participants' performance.

A similar study to those of Collins (2002; 2004), as described above, is a cross-sectional study by Ayoun and Salaberry (2008), which analyzed data from a group of instructed learners: 21 high-school L1 French speakers learning English as a foreign language in France. The purpose of this study was to find evidence that supported the effect of both the AH and L1 transfer in the acquisition of past tense morphology in English. The participants performed two written elicitation tasks administered during a class session: a personal narrative and a cloze task. For the former task, participants were asked to write a personal narrative or a fairy tale; for the latter, they were instructed to fill in the blanks with an appropriate tense, given the base form of the verb in parentheses. The blanks mostly included the simple past across the four lexical aspectual classes of verbs. The results of both elicitation tasks revealed a strong lexical aspect effect associated with the use of past tense markers in L2 English. With regard to the cloze task, results showed that learners achieved high consistency scores for both stative and telic

predicates. These findings emphasize the effect of lexical aspect on the use of past tense markers, while suggesting a significant departure from the predicted developmental path of past tense marking: states are marked more consistently than telic events in the narrative. These findings are explained in light of task effects.

Chan, Finberg, Costello and Shirai's (2012) empirical longitudinal study aimed to examine the effects of lexical aspect, morphological regularity and transfer in the emergence of past and progressive morphology by using production data from four learners of English of Italian and Punjabi L1 backgrounds; data was taken from the European Science Foundation SLA Corpus (Purdue, 1993). The participants were adults learning English in a naturalistic environment in the United Kingdom, where they had been living for at least six months. The data were collected though conversational interviews and elicitation tasks during three cycles of ten-month span. The results of the study provided support for the tenets of the Andersen and Shirai studies (1994; 1996) by showing that the participants tended to use past forms with telic verbs and progressive forms with atelic verbs. Morphological regularity seemed to exert minimal influence on the production of telic verbs with past forms, leading to the authors' conclusion that there was no sign of regular/irregular dissociation. As to the effects of L1 influence, it was concluded that further research was necessary to attest the role of the participants' L1 in the emergence of morphology. According to Jarvis (2000), at least two types of L1 influence, out of the total possible 3, should be attested in learner's data--namely intra L1 group similarities, inter L1 group differences, and L1 interlanguage performance similarities. In light of this, Chan et al. found that L1 transfer was practically absent.

Comajoan's study (2006) aimed to investigate the role of aspect in relation to verbal morphology and appropriateness of use in Catalan, with the purpose of examining if the

aspectual characteristics of predicates can account for the emergence of morphology and appropriate use. Data were collected from three multilingual learners of Catalan as a foreign language through storytelling elicitation tasks. The aim was to elicit past verbal forms in narratives. In the second stage, these forms were coded for appropriateness of use, morphology, and lexical aspect. An aspectual analysis of the data provided evidence in favor of Anderson and Shirai's Aspect Hypothesis, as achievement and accomplishment predicates in general were inflected for the preterite more frequently than were activity and state predicates; the opposite was found for the emergence of imperfect morphology. Analysis of the appropriate use of preterite and imperfect forms showed that morphology was used appropriately in almost all contexts. Prototypical combinations of morphology and aspect tended to be used more appropriately than non-prototypical combinations.

Studies of L1 Spanish speakers

Only two studies with L1 Spanish learners have been identified in the process of searching for empirical research relevant to the purpose of the present study. The first of these was conducted by Izquierdo and Collins (2008) and, in fact, focused on the role of two L1s (English and Spanish) on tense/aspect marking in L2 French. This study investigated whether learners whose L1 marks the perfective/imperfective distinction would exhibit similar acquisition profiles. The data were collected from 17 Hispanophones and 15 Anglophones at similar levels of French L2 proficiency who had to complete a 68-item cloze task with equal numbers of perfective and imperfective contexts distributed across four semantic verb categories: stative, activity, accomplishment, and achievements. During 20-minute follow-up interviews, a subsample of participants commented on factors influencing their tense–aspect choices. An ANOVA of 1012 predicates revealed that unlike the Anglophones, the Hispanophones did not

prefer perfective over imperfective, and they were also less influenced by verb semantics. The learners' comments suggest that the Hispanophones made effective use of L1–L2 similarities, whereas the Anglophones appealed to verb semantics and partially-understood pedagogical rules, which were frequently associated with inappropriate uses of the forms.

A further study was conducted by Robison (1990), whose subject was a Spanish speaker learning English in a naturalistic setting. Robison carried out his study on binary categories: the stative-dynamic distinction and the punctual-durative distinction. As predicted by the AH, the distribution of progressive morphological marking was not equal for all verb classes. However, the data also showed that the L1 Spanish participant marked a higher proportion of stative verbs—rather than dynamic verbs—with the progressive marker. This result provides support for the AH regarding the punctual-durative distinction but not the stative-dynamic distinction.

Having presented the major empirical studies regarding the role of AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) in the acquisition of TA morphology and its appropriateness of use in L2 and foreign language settings, considering as many L1 language backgrounds as possible, it is now possible to proceed to the discussion of the Methodology of this present study. The procedures of data collection, data coding and data analysis will be discussed, and the participants of this research study will be described in detail, so as to provide an appropriate background that can justify this comprehensive work.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The present chapter provides a detailed account of the methodology of the present research, including statement of the problem, research questions and variables, the instrument of data collection, data coding, and data-analysis procedures.

Statement of the problem

The present study set out to examine the acquisition of the functions of the English present perfect by Spanish learners of English in three different proficiency levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. It also aims to investigate the postulations of the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) in the acquisitional process in order to be able to determine whether lexical aspect plays a major role in the acquisition of Present Perfect use by finding developmental stages.

Research methodology

The study falls into the paradigm of quantitative research, as it employed quantitative methods of data coding and analysis. The quantitative research methodology was deemed appropriate for the purpose of this study, which aims to examine interlanguage stages with respect to the acquisition of the Present Perfect TA marker in L2 English. Specifically, participants' responses were coded, quantified, and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential statistics were helpful in making inferences about systematic versus unsystematic differences between the two proficiency groups on different aspects of the acquisition of the Present Perfect.

Research questions

In view of the research problem, two specific research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Are there proficiency related developmental trends in the acquisition of the Present Perfect by Spanish EFL learners across functions, types of verbs (telic vs. atelic) and verb prototypicality (stative, activities, achievements, and accomplishments)?

2. Do these trends comply, in general, with the postulations of the Aspect Hypothesis?

Variables

The independent variable in this study was initially planned to include three levels of proficiency, elementary, intermediate and advanced. However, after the data collection was conducted, it was found that with the exception of 5 participants no other participants qualified to be identified as elementary level. Consequently, proficiency levels were reduced to two, intermediate and advanced. More detail about the reformulation of the groups will be given in the next chapter.

The dependent variable was measured by the accuracy of employing the Present Perfect in the context of a forced choice task used as the data gathering tool in this study. The dependent variable was examined as separate total scores in view of the following areas of interest:

1) Present Perfect Functions

- Persistent Situation

- Experiential Past

2) Telic vs. Atelic Verbs

- Telic Verbs in Persistent Situation

- Telic Verbs in Experiential Past

- Atelic Verbs in Persistent Situation

- Atelic Verbs in Experiential Past

3) Stative, Activity, Achievement, and Accomplishment Verbs

- Stative Verbs in Persistent Situation

- Stative Verbs in Experiential Past

- Activity Verbs in Persistent Situation

- Activity Verbs in Experiential Past

- Achievement Verbs in Persistent Situation

- Achievement Verbs in Experiential Past

- Accomplishment Verbs in Persistent Situation

- Accomplishement Verbs in Experiential Past

Participants

The participants in this study were male and female adults between 18 and 35 years of age who were enrolled in the first, second, and third year of the EFL Teacher Training Program/EFL Research Program at Facultad de Filosofia y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán in Argentina.

Initially, 30 participants were recruited from the first year students in an introductory English Grammar course, 30 second year students, taking English Syntax I, and 30 third year students, taking English Syntax II. However, after the collection of the data 5 participants were removed since they were the only ones who qualified for the elementary level of proficiency group. Thus, the final sample included 85 participants.

It is noteworthy to point out that the participants of the study were formally instructed in English, with a sound theoretical background in English grammar and English syntax.

Specifically, the intermediate-level group of 38 participants had 17 students doing the first English grammar course, 14 doing the second grammar course, and seven doing the third-year Grammar course. Among the advanced-level group, ten participants were doing the first grammar course, 14 the second grammar course, and 23 participants the third grammar course. These numbers indicate the kind of English grammar knowledge that most of the participants had, as well as how this knowledge correlates with proficiency level. In this sense, the results show that the majority of the intermediate participants were taking the first grammar course, whereas the advanced ones were taking the third grammar course.

For the purposes of this study, participants from the first year were considered to be elementary students, the participants in the second year were expected to be intermediate, and those in the third year were expected to be advanced. Therefore, participants in each level were selected from previous language backgrounds with an average percentage of English instruction at high school, from which they graduated with an Elementary level of proficiency in English. Students who attended a school with intensive English instruction were not selected to participate in the study. Ninety students were chosen for the study, but only 89 finally turned in the entire instrument (with demographics, proficiency test and forced-choice task).

Instrument

As mentioned earlier, the present study aimed to collect data regarding the Present Perfect in three proficiency levels; therefore, an independent measure of proficiency was administered in order to select the participants and categorize them according to their proficiency levels. For this purpose, a cloze test was used (see Appendices), which has been demonstrated in the L2 literature to have substantial concurrent validity as an integrative test of overall proficiency in L2 English (Slabakova, 2000). The scoring and proficiency-level assignment procedures described

below were carried out following Slabakova's test instructions, as specified in her unpublished

doctoral thesis (1997). The first sentence of the test was provided in toto so as to set the context

of the topic of the passage. There were 40 blanks altogether; these occurred every seven words.

Thus, the total possible score was 40 points. Even though Slabakova's method of scoring was the

exact-word method, the method of scoring for this present study was the acceptable-word

method, where not only the exact word from the original text but also synonyms relevant to the

context were counted as correct. For example, in blank number 8, the exact word was *dinner* but

lunch was counted as correct, as there is no clue in the text that makes the former the only

possible correct choice. Another example was blank number 19, which required the word

"better", but "good", "quiet", and "relaxed" were considered acceptable alternatives within the

context and were thus counted as correct. The word provided was assigned one point if it either

coincided with the word from the original text or was considered an appropriate synonym to the

original word. If an inappropriate word was provided, or no word was supplied, no point was

assigned.

 The subjects were divided into proficiency levels according to the following criterion:

"subjects whose scores fell in the same range as scores of native speakers were deemed to be

advanced and subjects below that range were considered intermediate" (Slabakova, 1997, p.

157). The cut-off point for the advanced learners group was 21, as that was the lowest native-

speaker score. Scores from 20 to 14 were taken to be high intermediate and scores from 0 and 13

were considered to be low intermediate. Slabakova (1997) admits that this is an "arbitrary

procedure for dividing subjects into proficiency levels" (p. 158). However, she justifies this by

means of a statistical procedure that "supports this division post hoc, namely, a regression test."

Slabakova explains her choice in the following way:

The best fit between groups and subjects is if we divide the 130 subjects into 130

groups (a fit of 100%), and the worst fit is when all the subjects are in one group (a fit of

0%). To establish how many groups and what cutoff points to use, I proceeded as

follows. First, I checked the fit with the subjects divided into two groups: raw scores 0 to

15 and 16 to 30. The R^2 value was 0.65. Second, I divided the subjects in three groups as

already described: 0-13, 14-20, 21-30 and the R^2 value jumped to 0.82. Finally, I divided

the subjects into four groups: 0-10, 11-17, 18-21, 22-30 with a roughly equal number of

subjects in each group. The R^2 value increased to 0.87, which was considered an

insufficient increase to justify the division into so many groups. Thus, I decided to retain

three levels of proficiency, with the Advanced group falling within native speaker range

(21-31), the High Intermediate group around the grand mean (14-20) and the Low

Intermediate learners scoring 13 and below. (1997, p. 158)

The cloze-test results in the present study were interpreted in view of Slabakova's

classification: elementary (0-13 points (0% to 30% success rate), intermediate (14 -20 points;

35% to 50% success rate), advanced (21 and above; 52% and above success rate). This

classification was also considered appropriate in view of Bormuth's (1967; 1971) research and a

number of other studies which suggested the following system for interpreting cloze test results:

- cloze scores from 0-34% associated with **frustration** level readers

  (different stages of beginning level L2 learners)

- cloze scores of 35-49% associated with **instruction** level readers

  (different stages of intermediate level L2 learners)

- cloze scores of 50% associated with **independent** level readers

  (different stages of advanced level L2 learners)

In order to measure the participants' acquisition of appropriateness of use of the Present Perfect and its occurrence with the four aspectual verb classes, a forced-choice task was used. Originally, this contained 24 situations with an incomplete last sentence (three sentences per lexical aspectual class of verb used across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past) which the participants had to complete by choosing an appropriate TA form among three options. These options included the target form, while the other two options were always the Simple Present and the Simple Past (to later account for possible effects of L1 transfer in the data). Five other sentences with other tenses were included as distractors to reduce participants' awareness of the target grammatical structure. The 24 situations for the test were devised by selecting three verbs for each aspectual verb class: state, activity, accomplishment, and achievement. The situations selected for each verb were adapted from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), in order to provide the test with more reliability by selecting those verbs authentically used by native speakers in the Present Perfect. The researcher of this study proceeded to the classification of the verbs into the Vendlerian class types. For this purpose, the operational test from Shirai (1991) was used, which consists of the following progressive steps as described by Ayoun and Salaberry (2008):

Step 1: Is it a state?

Ask: Does V have a habitual interpretation in simple present?

If no => V is a state.

If yes, go to step 2.

Example: *to love running* (state) ≠ *to buy running clothes* (nonstate)

Step 2: Is it an activity?

Ask: Does "X is V-*ing*" imply "X has V-*ed*" without an iterative/habitual meaning?

If yes => V is an activity.

Step 3: Is it an accomplishment or an achievement?

Ask: If "X V–*ed* in Y time", then "X was V–*ing* during that time"

If yes => V is an accomplishment.

If no => V is an achievement.

Example: *I ran a marathon in three hours* (accomplishment) ≠ *I entered a marathon* (achievement).

The test was piloted with 13 native speakers (NSs) in the Department of Linguistics at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) in order to test its reliability. For the pilot study, permission was granted by the Human Subjects Committee at SIUC. The pilot test results forced changes in the original test; therefore, only those situations that reached 92% or higher agreement among NSs regarding the Present Perfect as the appropriate target form were included in the final version of the test. Thus, only 16 situations (two sentences per Present Perfect function across each aspectual verb class) remained, as well as the five distractors, for a total number of 21 situations altogether.

Coding and scoring

The data were coded as follows: 1) appropriate TA marker, one point; and 2) inappropriate tense-aspect marker, zero points. Therefore, the maximum score was 16 and the minimum was 0 (zero). The distractors were not coded or scored. The results were interpreted in light of this scale, which determined the acquisitional stage of each participant in relation to Present Perfect appropriateness of use and verb prototypicality. For instance, those students who got a high score would be at a higher interlanguage stage of accuracy of form and meaning. Those participants who scored very low would be at an interlanguage stage characterized by

almost no mastery of either form or meaning. Once the scores were assigned, each participant's choice of appropriate TA marker was analyzed in view of verb prototypicality.

As a final step, after the 16 sentences containing the target form were coded for appropriate and inappropriate TA form, the researcher proceeded to the verb-prototypicality coding of the tokens. The aim of this was to determine the participants' interlanguage stage with respect to the acquisition of the Present Perfect in relation to the use of prototypical/non-prototypical verbs with each of the two functions of the Present Perfect.

Predictions were that the more-advanced participants would get higher scores. Given this, the other prediction was that the higher the score a participant received, the more accurate his Present Perfect morphology would seem to be, and therefore the more appropriate his use of the functions. By doing this, it could be concluded that this learner was very proficient, having reached a level in which he was able to use even the less-prototypical verbs in relation to the prototypical value of both functions of the Present Perfect. In order to rate this, the researcher correlated the TA forms of the sentences selected by the students with the type of verb the sentence used. The interpretation of the results was carried out according to the occurrence of telic verbs (achievements and accomplishments) and atelic verbs (states and activities) with Persistent Situation past and Experiential Past functions of the Present Perfect tense, the former use being atelic in nature and the latter being telic in nature. If the Experiential Past (telic in nature) was found only with telic verbs (prototypical combination), the interpretation was that there was very low appropriateness of use. If atelic verbs (less prototypical) were found in the data in relation with the Experiential Past, then it was concluded that the learner was in an advanced stage of development in relation to telicity marking and meaning appropriateness of the Present Perfect tense. On the other hand, if Persistent Situation (atelic in nature) was found

only with atelic verbs, the same conclusions were drawn regarding low appropriateness of use. The data results finally shed light on the predictions made with respect to the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) and its implications in this study.

After the data were collected, a reliability test of the instrument was run in order to measure the internal consistency of the items. A coefficient of internal consistency was established by means of the Cronbach's alpha (α) test, whose values were interpreted according to George and Mallery (2009). The reliability statistics showed an acceptable but rather low level of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha = .641, number of items = 16. The individual item statistics were examined too, but no items were removed since the reliability coefficient would not have been raised by removal of any of the items.

Considering the fact that a lot of effort was invested in developing the instrument, pilot testing it with native speakers and excluding all items below the 90% of agreement between native speakers, it can be assumed that the reliability of the instrument was adequate. Moreover, Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, and Barrett (2013, p. 1290) observe that while a desirable alpha coefficient should be at .70 or above, they also acknowledge that "it is common to see journal articles where one or more scales have somewhat lower alphas (e.g. in the .60 -.69 range)".

Procedure

Data were collected at Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Argentina, from participants recruited from the first, second, and third years of the five-year EFL Teacher Training Program. Both the proficiency test and the instrument were administered by one of the professors, who currently holds a position in this course and who completed the SIUC Tutorial online, being awarded the NIH certificate that accredited her as a data collector. Ninety students were asked to participate in this study, which was clearly explained to them by the

person collecting the data and by a letter from the researcher (who is completing an MA in Applied Linguistics at SIUC). Once the students agreed to participate, they signed the consent form (which was in Spanish, for intelligibility reasons). Upon this, the demographic section, as well as the independent measure of proficiency and the test itself (with the forced-choice task) were administered in written form. Each group of 30 participants took the test in their respective grammar class with the presence of the data collector. The participants were given a maximum of 50 minutes to complete the entire instrument.

Analyses of the data

Once the test was administered and scored, descriptive statistics were performed with the purpose of comparing the means and standard deviations of the groups, which helped to determine whether the assumption of normal distribution had been met. One-way ANOVAs were originally planned to be performed; because the results of the proficiency test left the researcher with only two proficiency levels (intermediate and advanced), the method of data analysis was changed. Specifically, due to the two-level independent variable of proficiency, multiple t-tests were performed in order to compare the two proficiency groups with respect to their overall performance on the two functions of the Present Perfect, telic vs. atelic verbs and the four types of verbs, states, activities, achievements, and accomplishments. The exact number of t-tests for each comparison is summarized below.

First, two independent t-tests were run in order to compare the proficiency groups on their performance on the two Present Perfect functions (Persistent Situation and Experiential Past) as a whole. Since two comparisons were involved, the alpha level was adjusted to .025 to control for Type I error.

Second, four t-tests were performed to compare the proficiency levels on their acquisition of telic and atelic verbs in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past. Each pair of t-tests within each function was considered a family of related tests and for this reason the alpha level was adjusted to .025.

Finally, eight independent t-tests were run in order to compare the two proficiency groups' performances with respect to the two functions of the Present Perfect and their relation to verb prototypicality, including states, activities, achievements, and accomplishments. Since the groups were compared on their performance on each of the 4 types of verbs across both functions, each of the 4 pairs of t-tests was considered a family of related tests and for this reason the alpha level was adjusted to .025 to control for Type one error. As it was expected the advanced group to demonstrate higher levels of accuracy in the employment of Present Perfect and thus provide evidence for a developmental trend, all 14 t-tests were directional, that is one-tailed.

In addition, following Cumming's (2012) claim that effect size is more important than p-values in interpreting statistical significance, effect size values for all 14 t-tests were calculated following Cohen's (1988) formula *Mean1-Mean2/SD pooled*. The values of the effect sizes were used in interpreting the practical importance of the observed differences between the two proficiency groups in view of Cohen's reference values of .2, .5, and .8 for small, medium and large effects, respectively. The results of these analyses are presented in the next chapter. In addition, the trends in the data were further summarized in tables and used in the interpretation of the results in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the research questions posed in Chapter 3 are restated and addressed through the analysis of the gathered data by means of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The reader should be reminded that the research questions that guided the process of data collection and analysis were as follows:

1. Are there proficiency related developmental trends in the acquisition of the Present Perfect by Spanish EFL learners across functions, types of verbs (telic vs. atelic) and verb prototypicality (stative, activities, achievements, and accomplishments)?

2. Do these trends comply, in general, with the postulations of the Aspect Hypothesis?

Some emergent changes to the independent variable of the study and the initially-planned statistical analysis are explained and justified in the respective sections of this chapter.

Dividing the sample into proficiency groups

Since this study was primarily interested in developmental trends in the acquisition of the Present Perfect, the first step in the analysis was to divide the sample into proficiency levels based on their cloze test results. At the start, the intention was to include three proficiency levels of participants (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) and statistically compare their use of the Present Perfect. The cloze test was a replication of the one used in Slabakova's unpublished doctoral dissertation (1997), whereas the scoring and interpretation procedures were based on Bormuth's (1967; 1971) cloze test interpretation system. Specifically, Bormuth identifies the following three levels: 1) Frustration level, with cloze test scores ranging between 0-34%; 2)

Instruction level, with scores of 35%-49%; and 3) Independent level, with scores of 50% and above.

After the participants' scores were rank-ordered, the results showed that only five participants obtained Bormuth's percentage (0%-34%) corresponding to the frustration level. Since this number was not statistically sufficient to make up an elementary-level group, it was deemed appropriate to exclude these five participants from the data sample and continue the analysis with only two proficiency groups.

The remaining 85 participants were then rank-ordered again and a cut-off point was set at the 50th percentile at the score of 22 (55% correctness), which divided the sample almost evenly into two groups following Bormuth's classification system. Specifically, the instruction-level group included participants with scores ranging between 14 and 22 (35%-55% correctness) and the independent-level group's scores ranged between 23 and 36 (57%-90% correctness). In order to comply with the research focus of this study, the instruction-level group was considered equivalent to an intermediate level of proficiency, because learners of intermediate level still depend greatly on the help and guidance of their teachers. On the other hand, the independent-level group was considered equivalent to an advanced level of proficiency, because advanced language speakers have reached a level of independence from their teachers. Table 11 shows the distribution of scores on the proficiency test after the five frustration-level participants were removed from the sample.

Table 11: *Distribution of scores on the proficiency test*

	Score	Frequency	Percent achievement
	7	1	18%
	10	1	25%
	13	2	33%
	14	3	35%
	15	4	38%
Intermediate	16	1	40%
	17	6	43%
	18	6	45%
	19	6	48%
	20	4	50%
	21	3	53%
	22	**5**	**55%**
	23	7	57%
	24	3	60%
	25	5	63%
	26	5	65%
	27	11	68%
	28	4	70%
Advanced	29	2	73%
	30	2	75%
	31	3	78%
	32	1	80%
	33	1	83%
	34	2	85%
	36	1	90%
	Total	89	

In order to assure that the designation of the two groups as intermediate and advanced was substantiated by statistical evidence, the two groups' test scores were examined by calculating descriptive statistics and performing an independent samples t-test.

Examination of the descriptive statistics showed that in both groups, the scores were distributed normally and within acceptable limits of skewness (between −1 and +1) with no extreme scores (George & Mallery, 2009), despite the fact that two subjects (21 and 23) in the

advanced groups performed at a slightly higher level of accuracy than their peers, these scores were not considered as outliers due to the normality of the distribution and their closeness to the upper whisker of the box plot. (see Figure 1). The t-test was thus performed without concerns for its validity.
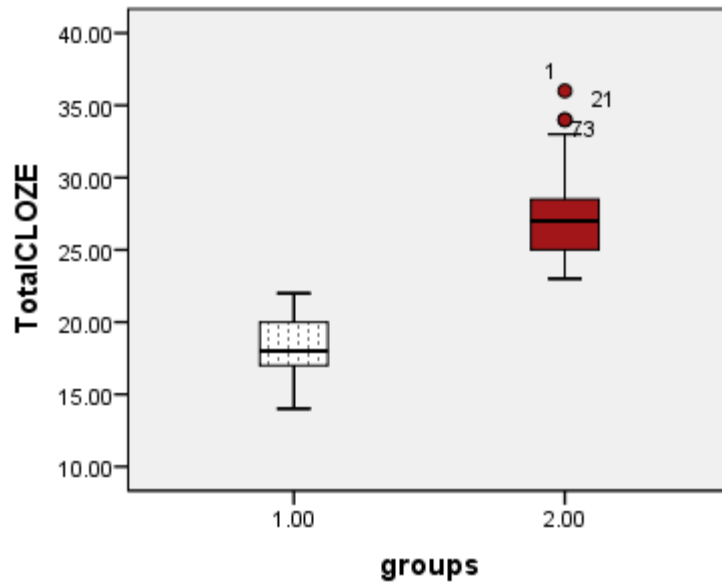
Figure 1: Box plots for intermediate and advanced groups' cloze scores

Prior to the t-test, Levene's test revealed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two groups was observed, $F_{(83)}$= 1.29, p= .259. This allowed the t-test results to be interpreted under the equal variance assumption. The results revealed that the intermediate-level group was significantly different from the advanced-level group, $t_{(83)}$ = -14.013, $p < .001$, *Cohen's d* = 3.10. This statistically-significant result, coupled with the very high value of the effect size = 3.10 (Cohen, 1988), provided confirmatory evidence that the grouping of the intermediate and advanced groups was supported by a systematic difference between the two groups in their test performance. The results of the t-test are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12: *Results of the independent t-test for proficiency level*

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. two tailed	Effect size
Intermediate	38	18.29	2.44	-14.01	83	.000*	3.10
Advanced	47	27.17	3.23				

Note: * = significant at alpha = .01, p < .001

Results for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past

In order to measure the participants' acquisition of the appropriateness of use of the Present Perfect across the four aspectual verb classes (states, activities, accomplishments and achievements), a forced-choice task was designed and pilot tested. After the pilot test, all items which received less than 90% agreement among native speakers were removed. The remaining 16 sentences were evenly distributed among the two uses (atelic and telic) of the target form, and across the four verb types. There were also five distractors, yielding a total of 21 sentences.

In order to investigate the effect of proficiency level on the two uses of the Present Perfect (Persistent Situation and Experiential Past), two independent samples t-tests were performed, one for each of the two functions. The alpha level was adjusted to .025 to control for Type I error.

Prior to the t-tests, the close values of the means, medians, and low values of skewness, provided evidence that in both the intermediate and advanced groups, the distributions of the forced-choice task scores met the assumption of normality. Levene's test for both functions of the perfect showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was observed between the two groups, which allowed the t-test to be interpreted under the equal variance assumed $F_{(83)}=$ .768, $p=$ .383 for Persistent Situation and $F_{(83)}=$ .045, $p=$.832 for Experiential Past (see Table 13).

Table 13: *Levene's tests for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past functions*

		F	Sig
Persistent use	Equal variances assumed	.768	.383
Experiential use	Equal variances assumed	.045	.832

The t-test results for Persistent Situation revealed that the advanced group performed significantly better than the intermediate group, $t_{(83)}$ = -2.28, p = .025, *Cohen's d* = .51. More specifically, the advanced-level group had a higher mean score (Mean 7.11), indicating 88% correct use of Present Perfect in Persistent Situation than the intermediate-level group, which achieved 77.63% accuracy (Mean=6.21). This statistically significant result was further reinforced by the value of the effect size = .51, which, according to Cohen (1988), shows moderate effect. The results of the t-test for Persistent Situation are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14: t-test *results for Persistent Situation*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	6.21	77.6%	1.28	-2.28	83	.025*	0.51
Advanced	47	7.11	88%	2.13				

Note: * = significant at alpha = .025, p = .025

The results of the t-test for Experiential Past provided evidence that the advanced group performed statistically better than the intermediate group $t_{(83)}$ = -2.92, p = .004, *Cohen's d*= .64. Specifically, the advanced group had a higher mean score (Mean 5.77), indicating 72.1% correct use of present perfect in experiential past than the intermediate group, which achieved 60% correctness (Mean=4.76). This statistically-significant result was further reinforced by the value of the effect size = .64, which indicates a value that falls between a large (.80) and a moderate

effect (.60), according to Cohen (1988). The results of the t-test for Experiential Past are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15: *Results for Experiential Past*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	4.76	60%	1.63	-2.92	83	.004**	.64
Advanced	47	5.77	72.1%	1.52				

Note: ** = significant at alpha = .01, p = .004

Results for Telic and Atelic Verbs across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past

With the purpose of investigating the effect of proficiency level on the acquisition of the two functions of the present perfect with telic and atelic verbs, four independent sample t-tests were performed, two for each type of verb. For this reason the alpha level of .05 was adjusted to .025 in order to control for Type I error as each pair of tests were considered to form a family of tests. The data screening showed that in both the advanced and intermediate groups, the scores were distributed normally and within the appropriate limits for skewness, showing no extreme scores.

The first pair of t-tests compared the performance of the advanced and intermediate groups regarding their accuracy in the use of Persistent Situation and Experiential Past with telic verbs. Prior to the t-test, the results of Levene's test showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance between proficiency levels was observed within both functions, $F_{(83)}= .024, p =. 878$ for Persistent Situation with telic verbs and $F_{(83)}= .002, p =.961$ for Experiential Past with telic verbs (see Table 16). This allowed the t-test results to be interpreted under the equal variance assumption.

Table 16: *Levene's test for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past with telic verbs*

		F	Sig
Persistent telic	Equal variances assumed	.024	.878
Experiential telic	Equal variances assumed	.002	.961

The t-test results regarding Persistent Situation with telic verbs revealed that even though the advanced group performed better (Mean 3.68) than the intermediate group (Mean 3.1), the difference was not statistically significant, $t_{(83)} = -1.89$, $p = .062$, *Cohen's d* = .42. The value of the effect size = .42 indicates less than moderate effect size. according to Cohen (1998). The t-test results are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17: *Results of t-test for Persistent Situation with telic verbs*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	Df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	3.11	78%	0.89	-1.89	83	.062	0.42
Advanced	47	3.68	92%	1.69				

The results of the t-test for Experiential Past with telic verbs showed a significant difference between the two proficiency groups at the adjusted alpha level of .025, $t_{(83)} = -2.35$, *p =.021*, *Cohen's d* = .51. According to Cohen (1998) the effect size reached moderate value which shows that the higher mean score of the advanced group, indicating 75% correct use vs. 65% by the intermediate-level group can be of practical importance. In other words, it can be interpreted to mean that the more accurate performance of the advanced group was rather systematic and not due to chance. The results of the t-test for telic verbs with Experiential Past are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18: *t-test results for Experiential Past with telic verbs*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	T	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	2.61	65%	0.92	-2.35	83	.021*	0.51
Advanced	47	3.1	75%	0.95				

Note: * = significant at alpha = .025, *p* =. 021

The third pair of t-tests was performed in order to investigate the effect of proficiency level on both functions of the Present Perfect with atelic verbs. Levene's tests showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two proficiency level groups was observed, $F_{(83)}$= .049, *p* = .825 for Persistent atelic and $F_{(83)}$= .618, *p* = .434 for Experiential atelic (see Table 19).

Table 19: *Levene's tests for Persistent and Experiential uses with atelic verbs*

		F	Sig
Persistent atelic	Equal variances assumed	.024	.825
Experiential atelic	Equal variances assumed	.002	.434

The t-test results with respect to Persistent Situation with atelic verbs showed no statistical significance in the performance between the advanced-level and the intermediate-level groups, $t_{(83)}$ = -1.71, *p* = .091, *Cohen's d* = .37. The results of the t- test for Persistent Situation with atelic verbs are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20: *Results for Persistent Situation with atelic verbs*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	3.11	78%	0.86	-1.71	83	.091	0.37
Advanced	47	3.43	86%	0.85				

Regarding the Experiential Past with atelic verbs, the advanced group performed significantly better than the intermediate group, $t_{(83)} = -2.59$, $p = .011$, *Cohen's d* = .56. The low p-value was supported by a moderate effect size value of .56, showing that these differences could be attributed to systematic rather than to unsystematic variations. Table 21 shows the *t*-test results for Experiential Past with atelic verbs.

Table 21: *t-test results for Experiential Past with atelic verbs*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	T	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	2.16	54%	1.0	-2.59	83	.011*	0.56
Advanced	47	2.68	67%*	0.86				

Note: * = significant at alpha = .025, *p* =.011

Results for Stative, Activity, Achievement and Accomplishment Verbs across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past

To address acquisitioned issues related to the semantics of the verbs in Present Perfect, eight independent t-tests were performed, one for each of the four types of verbs (stative, activities, achievements, and accomplishments) within each of the two functions, Persistent Situation and Experiential Past. Since the groups were compared on their performance on each type of verb across both functions, each of the 4 pairs of t-tests was considered a family of related tests and for this reason the alpha level was adjusted to .025.

The first pair of t-tests compared the intermediate and advanced groups on their employment of Present Perfect with stative verbs in Persistent and Experiential Past functions. Levene's results showed that for stative verbs in Persistent Situation, the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two groups was not observed, $F_{(83)} = 18.17$, p < .001 (See Table 22). Therefore, the *t*-test results had to be interpreted as equal variances assumption not

assumed. This was not the case for state verbs in Experiential Past, where Levene's test showed that the homogeneity of variances between the two proficiency groups was observed, $F_{(83)}$= 2.66, p= .10. (See Table 22).

Table 22: *Levene's tests for stative verbs in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past*

		F	Sig
State verbs in Persistent use	Equal variances not assumed	18.174	.000
State verbs in Experiential use	Equal variances assumed	2.667	.106

The *t*-test results for state verbs in Persistent Situation revealed that the advanced-level group performed significantly better than the intermediate-level group, $t_{(83)}$ = -2.45, p =. 008, *Cohen's d* = .66. Specifically, the advanced-level group achieved a higher level of accuracy (94%) than the intermediate-level group (82%). This statistically significant result is further reinforced by the value of the effect size = .66, which, according to Cohen (1988), shows moderate effect. The results of the t-test for state verbs in Persistent Situation are summarized in Table 23.

Table 23: *Results for state verbs in Persistent Situation*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	T	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.63	82%	0.48	-2.45	70.74	.008**	0.66
Advanced	47	1.87	94%	0.39				

Note: ** = significant at alpha = .01, p = .008

The results of the t- test for state verbs in Experiential Past almost reached significance at alpha = .025, with effect size close to moderate, $t_{(83)}$ = -1.90, p =.03, *Cohen's d* = .42. Specifically, the advanced-level group attained 83% correct use (Mean = 1.66), versus 70%

correct use by the intermediate group (Mean = 1.39). The results of the t- test for state verbs with Persistent Situation are summarized in Table 24.

Table 24: *Results of t-test for state verbs in Experiential Past*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.39	70%	0.68	-1.90	83	.03	0.42
Advanced	47	1.66	83%	0.59				

The second pair of t- tests examined the differences between the intermediate and advanced groups in the use of Present Perfect with activity verbs in Persistent and Experiential uses. Levene's results for both tests observed the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two proficiency-level groups, which allowed the t- test to be interpreted under the equal variance assumption: $F_{(83)} = .878$, $p = .351$ for Persistent Activity and $F_{(83)} = 2.66$, $p = .057$ for Experiential Activity (See Table 25).

Table 25: *Levene's tests for activity verbs in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past*

		F	Sig
Activity verbs in Persistent use	Equal variances assumed	.878	.351
Activity verbs in Experiential use	Equal variances assumed	3.726	.057

The results of this pair of t- tests showed no statistical significance between the advanced- and intermediate-level groups regarding activity verbs in Persistent Situation $t_{(83)} = -.56$, $p = .288$, *Cohen's d* = .12. Furthermore, the very low effect size, as well as the similar Mean scores and degree of correctness (intermediate =74% and advanced =77%) of both groups, provided further evidence that the performance of the two groups was similar. The results of the t- test for activity verbs in Persistent Situation are summarized in Table 26.

Table 26: *Results for activity verbs in Persistent Situation*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	T	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.47	74%	0.68	-.56	83	.28	0.12
Advanced	47	1.55	77%	0.62				

With regard to the t- test for activity verbs in Experiential Situation, the results showed a statistical significance in the performances between the two proficiency groups $t_{(83)} = -2.42$, $p = .009$, *Cohen's d* = .53. The low *p-value* and the medium effect size value (Cohen, 1988) provided evidence that the advanced-level group performed significantly better than the intermediate group with respect to activity verbs in Experiential Past. Specifically, the advanced level had a 51% correctness (Mean 1.02), vs. 38% correctness (Mean .76) for the intermediate group. The results of the t- test for activity verbs in Experiential Past are summarized in Table 27.

Table 27: *Results of t tests for activity verbs in Experiential Past*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	0.76	38%	0.49	-2.42	83	.009**	0.53
Advanced	47	1.02	51%	0.49				

Note: ** = significant at alpha .01, p = .009.

The third pair of t- tests examined the differences between the intermediate and advanced groups in the use of Present Perfect with accomplishment verbs in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past uses. Levene's results for both tests showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the two proficiency level groups was observed, which allowed the *t* test to be interpreted under the equal variance assumption: $F_{(83)}= .002$, $p= .962$ for

Persistent Accomplishment and $F_{(83)}= .649$, $p= .423$ for Experiential Accomplishment (see Table 28).

Table 28: *Levene's tests for accomplishment verbs in Persistent and Experiential uses*

		F	Sig
Activity verbs in Persistent use	Equal variances assumed	.002	.962
Activity verbs in Experiential use	Equal variances assumed	.649	.423

With respect to Persistent Situation with accomplishment verbs, the t-test results showed that there was no statistical significance in the performances between the advanced group and the intermediate group $t_{(83)} = -1.38$, $p = .086$, *Cohen's d* = .32. Although the advanced group had a higher Mean score (Mean = 2)—with 100% accuracy—than the intermediate group (Mean = 1.71), which achieved 86% correctness, the difference in performance was not large enough to reach statistical significance. Moreover, the low effect size (see Cohen, 1998) provided further evidence that the difference between the two groups was not of practical importance. The results of the t- test for accomplishment with Persistent Situation are summarized in Table 29.

Table 29: *Results of t tests for accomplishment verbs in Persistent Situation.*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.71	86%	0.46	-1.38	83	.086	0.32
Advanced	47	2.0	100%	1.50				

A similar finding was revealed regarding the use of accomplishment verbs in Experiential Past. That is, the results of the t- test showed a lack of significant differences between the advanced and intermediate groups $t_{(83)} = -.64$, $p = .26$, *Cohen's d* = .26. Despite the slightly-better performance of the advanced group, which achieved 72% correctness (Mean 1.43) vs. 67%

correctness (Mean 1.34) of the intermediate group, the difference was not of practical importance, as shown by the low effect size of .26 (see Cohen, 1988). The results of the t- test for accomplishments in Experiential Past are summarized in Table 30.

Table 30: *Results of t tests for accomplishment verbs in Experiential Past*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.34	67%	0.58	-0.64	83	.26	0.26
Advanced	47	1.42	72%	0.62				

The fourth pair of t- tests compared the advanced group and the intermediate group regarding the Persistent Situation and Experiential Past uses of the Present Perfect with achievement verbs. Levene's test results for Persistent Situation with achievements observed the assumption of the homogeneity of variances $F_{(83)}= 2.8$, $p = .098$. Therefore, the *t*-test results were interpreted under equal variances assumed. Conversely, for the Experiential Past with achievements, Levene's results showed a violation of the assumption of the homogeneity of variance, $F_{(83)}= 6.6$, $p = .012$. (see Table 31). Therefore, the *t*-test results had to be interpreted under equal variances not assumed.

Table 31: *Levene's results for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past with achievements*

		F	Sig
Activity verbs in Persistent use	Equal variances assumed	2.8	.098
Activity verbs in Experiential use	Equal variances not assumed	6.6	.012

The t-test results for achievement verbs in Persistent Situation revealed no significant differences at the reduced alpha level of .025, $t_{(83)} = -1.75$, $p = .04$, *Cohen's d = .4*. However, the effect size value (0.4) approaching moderate effect, signifies that the advanced group's 81% of

accuracy vs. the intermediate groups' 70% could be due to systematic rather than unsystematic variation associated with the higher level of proficiency. The results of the t- test for achievement verbs in Persistent Situation are summarized in Table 32.

Table 32: *Results for achievement verbs in Persistent Situation*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.4	70%	0.64	-1.75	83	.04	0.4
Advanced	47	1.62	81%	0.53				

With regard to achievement verbs in Experiential Past, the *t*-test results showed that the advanced-level group performed significantly better than the intermediate-level group $t_{(83)}$ = -2.68, p = .003, *Cohen's d* = .60. To be specific, the advanced level had a higher Mean score (1.66), which indicated 83% correctness in achievement verbs in Experiential Past use of the Present Perfect; the intermediate level had a lower Mean score (1.26), indicating 63% correctness. The value of the effect size (Cohen, 1998) supported the statistically significant differences between the two proficiency level groups, indicating a moderate effect (see Table 33).

Table 33: *results of t test for achievement verbs in Experiential Past*

Group	N	Mean	% correctness	SD	t	df	Sig.	Effect size
Intermediate	38	1.26	63%	0.76	-2.68	83	.003**	0.60
Advanced	47	1.66	83%	0.56				

Note: ** = significant at alpha .01, p = .003

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis, following the research questions. The two proficiency groups (intermediate and advanced) were compared in their use of the two

basic functions of the English Present Perfect (Persistent Situation and Experiential Past), first across both telic and atelic verb types as a whole, then across telic verbs and atelic verbs separately, and finally across each of the four aspectual verb types (state, activity, accomplishment, achievement).

The data analysis revealed the presence of a proficiency trend. First, proficiency was generally found to be a significant factor in the appropriate use of the two functions of the Present Perfect, Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, when considering both telic and atelic verbs as a whole. Secondly, the analysis also revealed that proficiency level played a major role in relation to Persistent Situation and Experiential Past when appropriate use was examined across telic verbs and atelic verbs. Specifically, each verb type (telic and atelic) in each Present Perfect function revealed that the advanced group always performed better than the intermediate group, even though in some cases their better performance was not statistically significant. The possible reasons for this kind of statistical finding will be discussed in the next chapter. Finally, the advanced group performed better in both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past across each type of telic verbs (accomplishment and achievement) and atelic verbs (state and activity), however, only two of the comparisons reached statistical significance at the reduced alpha level of .025.

On the whole, the data seemed to show that the advanced group achieved a higher percentage of correctness in both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, which could provide evidence for the Aspect Hypothesis (AH) (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). The advanced level mastered Persistent Situation and Experiential Past better than the intermediate level, which indicates that they attained these functions with both prototypical and non-prototypical verbs, as expected by the core predictions of the AH. Even though the intermediate group performed

considerably well, they did not reach full attainment of the Present Perfect functions; this probably indicates that their stage of development has not mapped all the meanings of the Present Perfect with both prototypical and non-prototypical verbs.

All in all, there is a clear pattern that would suggest that the more advanced the proficiency level, the more accurate are the uses of the functions of the Present Perfect across all verb categories. On the other hand, some data confirmed some of the tenets of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), which will be the subject of discussion of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a detailed account of the acquisition of the English Present Perfect by Spanish learners of English as a foreign language. The participants were students in a teacher-training program at a University in Tucumán, Argentina. The main goal of this research was to trace the process that learners of different proficiency levels go through in the acquisition of the two basic functions (Persistent Situation and Experiential Past) of the Present Perfect with atelic and telic verbs. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which verb prototypicality, proficiency level, and participants' L1 Spanish play roles in the acquisitional process.

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the findings of this research in light of the theoretical and empirical literature. It presents a discussion of the results, outlines some of the limitations, and suggests some areas for future research. Finally, it concludes with the main implications of the study for the areas of TESOL and Linguistics in general, and the pedagogical implications for the teachers in the Teacher Training Program at the Facultad de Filosfia y Letras, National University of Tucumán, Argentina.

Discussion

In taking a look back at the results, a number of patterns can be identified. These patterns are addressed and interpreted in this section in view of the two research questions postulated in Chapter 3. In each case, a summary table is included in order to illustrate the trends in a more-effective manner.

The Acquisition of Present Perfect in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past.

For the sake of clarity, and in order to provide an overall view of the main trends of the results, Table 34 summarizes the percentages of correct use for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past.

Table 34: *Percentages of appropriate use in the two basic functions of the English Present Perfect across proficiency levels.*

	PERSISTENT SITUATION	EXPERIENTIAL PAST
Intermediate	78%	60%
Advanced	**88%***	**72% **

Note: * = significant priority of the advanced group at alpha .025.

   ** = significant priority of the advanced group at alpha .01.

The Present Perfect and proficiency level. As shown in Table 34 above, a participant's level of proficiency is a significant factor in the aquisitional process of the two functions of the Present Perfect. Specifically, correct use increases as the level of proficiency improves. As students move up in their interlanguage grammar by becoming more-competent learners, their use of the functions of the present perfect becomes more appropriate. This developmental trend goes hand-in-hand with the original predictions about the findings of the current study, which claimed that the higher the proficiency level, the higher the appropriateness of use of the functions of the perfect. The important role of proficiency in the developmental acquisition of the TA system has been supported by the findings of a myriad of SLA studies (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1992a; Collins, 2002; Comajoan, 2006), all of which reported higher correctness of use of TA forms in higher levels of proficiency.

It is important to point out that the advanced-group performance in both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past was statistically significant (see Table 34) when compared to the performance of the intermediate group. It is this statistical significance of the advanced-group performance that undoubtedly supports the conclusion that proficiency level plays a key role in the acquisitional development of the Present Perfect and its functions. Therefore, the higher the proficiency level of the learner, the more appropriate the use of the Present Perfect TA form becomes.

Taking a look back at the basic predictions of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), presented in Chapter 2, they hold that as the learner becomes more and more proficient in the target language, he/she is able to use TA morphology in such a way that it resembles native speaker use. Specifically, the more proficient the learner is, the more non-prototypical pairings he/she will be able to use between verb type and TA morphology. In the context of the Present Perfect, the most general predictions were that the advanced level would be able to use both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past more accurately than the intermediate level. The results summarized in Table 34 above make it clear that there is a significant proficiency trend that complies with the original prediction about proficiency and its role in the developmental acquisition of the Present Perfect posed in Chapter 1.

The Present Perfect and developmental acquisition. Although the proficiency trend is similar for both functions of the Present Perfect, Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, there is also a difference in the rate at which these functions are acquired. If 80% correct use (Lakshmanan, 1994) is considered the lowest cut-off point for full attainment of the target form in second-language acquisition, then the Present Perfect in Persistent Situation has reached that point of mastery with the advanced group (88%) and is very close to it with the intermediate

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group (78%). On the other hand, the Present Perfect in Experiential Past has not been fully attained by either of the two levels, even though the advanced group showed a significantly-higher rate of correct use (72% for the advanced level vs. 60% for the intermediate level). In conclusion, although the advanced group showed a significant advantage in the acquisition of both functions, full attainment was observed only in Persistent Situation; in Experiential Past, the attainment level was still below the 80% cut-off point, even for the advanced group.

In view of this study's predictions based on the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) that Experiential Past should be acquired first because of its nature as a telic function with a perfective canonical value, the results showed contradictory evidence. As mentioned before, it was the Persistent Situation use, with its inherent atelic meaning and its non-canonical imperfective value, which revealed higher rates of acquisition in both proficiency levels and across both telic and atelic verb types.

Interpretation of findings. The majority of the studies (e.g. Andersen & Shirai 1995; Ayoun & Salaberry 2008, Bardovi-Harlig 1992a; Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds 1995; Collins 2002, 2004; Comajoan, 2006; Izquierdo & Collins, 2008; Shirai et al. 2012) conducted so far with the purpose of testing the effects of the AH on the acquisition of TA morphology have generally attested strong influences of lexical aspect in the developmental acquisitional stages of the past and progressive morphologies. Their findings have provided evidence that the perfective morphology emerges earlier than the imperfective in the learners' grammar. In addition, it has been found that perfective morphology emerges first with telic verbs and then extends its use to atelic verbs. As has been explained, most of the empirical studies cited above have been conducted with regard to the two basic TA forms, the past and progressive morphology, or the perfect and imperfect morphology (as in the case of the Romance languages) as the target forms

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and not the Present Perfect. In this sense, there has been almost no research which has investigated the acquisition of the Present Perfect in light of the Aspect Hypothesis, except for Liszka (2002) and Uno (2014). Consequently, given its pioneering nature, a limited number of comparisons can be established from the current study to these other two.

The two empirical research studies (Liszka, 2002; Uno, 2014) which have investigated similar problems to the present investigation have found that participants used the Present Perfect mostly when the sentences contained a durative adverbial (e.g. Since I moved back to my country, I *have lived* with my parents. I *have travelled* very little). It is worth noting that these two examples (adapted from Uno's study) are considered in the literature as illustrations of the function of Persistent Situation Present Perfect (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Comrie, 1976). All in all, Uno's study found that participants produced more instances of the Present Perfect in what has been considered the Persistent Situation function.

In the context of the present study, when the results for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past were compared, it was found that both proficiency groups used Persistent Situation more frequently and more accurately than Experiential Past (see Table 38). Considering the fact that all eight sentences in Present Perfect in Persistent Situation contained adverbials of duration such as *since*, *ever since*, *since then*, *yet* and *all their lives*, the findings of this study concur with those reported in Uno (2014). Specifically, the participants in the present study showed high percentages of appropriate use in Persistent Situation, where all sentences contained typical adverbs that collocate with the target form of the Present Perfect.

Furthermore, this study's results also corroborate Liszka's (2002) findings about proficiency-related development in the use of the Present Perfect. Specifically, in Liszka's study, the advanced group used more Present Perfect forms than the intermediate-level group.

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However, Liszka's study (2002) used a different instrument, one in which participants were asked to complete sentences with appropriate TA forms, so frequency of use of the Present Perfect was not always correlated with the accuracy of use, since often times the results showed instances of undergeneralization and/or overgeneralization of the target form.

In comparison, the present study examined the use of the functions of the Present Perfect within contextualized sentences specially devised for the target form-meaning pairings. Therefore, the only sentences that were coded were the ones that required the use of this target TA form. As a result, the frequency of use of the Present Perfect was positively correlated with accuracy and appropriateness of use. In this light, the present study provides a more-detailed view of participants' interlanguage stages of acquisition by examining both the frequency of use of the Present Perfect form and the form-meaning associations that the learners make.

With regard to proficiency level, Liszka's study (2002) found that the advanced participants performed better than the intermediate ones; she states that despite this difference, the advanced level did not reach full attainment of the Present Perfect form in view of the appropriateness of use. She observed that the advanced group's performance in form-meaning pairing of the Present Perfect did not reveal native-like appropriateness. This finding contradicts that in the present study, where the advanced group demonstrated a full mastery of Persistent Situation (88%) and a near-full mastery of Experiential Past (72%).

Moreover, Liszka's study (2002) made conclusions regarding the target form in collocation with typical adverbs. She reported that the participants supplied the PP form in three sentence categories of the original task: 1. Sentences with a temporal adverbial that collocates only with the PP, 2. Sentences that relied on context alone to target the PP and 3. Sentences with adverbials that can collocate with the Past Simple or the PP and which relied on context as well.

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Liszka argues that some participants in the intermediate level showed a higher percentage of the Present Perfect target form with two of the sentence categories mentioned above, a sentence with typical adverb or a typical adverb plus an appropriate context. Even though it had been hypothesized that this pattern would be reinforced in the advanced-level group due to the learners' longer exposure to the target form (and therefore to the typical contexts of occurrence), no such trend was attested. The advanced participants performed similarly across Present Perfect sentences containing a typical adverb, a typical adverb plus appropriate context, and appropriate context alone, according to Liszka (2002).

The results of this study recognize an acquisitional trend that meets Liszka's prediction about Present Perfect in collocation with adverbs. Given the fact that all the sentences of the present study targeted the Present Perfect functions and contained typical adverbs, and given that the advanced group has evidenced a better performance across both functions, it is possible to agree with Liszka's argument that "the adverb triggers an associative response to produce the target form" (Liszka, 2002, p. 113). Therefore, it can be speculated that the presence of typical adverbs in the target Present Perfect sentences of this study could have facilitated the correct use of the target form in both proficiency levels. In addition to this, and also following Liszka's ideas, it can be assumed that the advanced-level participants performed better due to their longer exposure to the target form through a larger amount of Present Perfect input.

The acquisition of Present Perfect in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past across atelic and telic verb types. This section of the chapter will discuss the findings of the present study with respect to the two basic functions of the Present Perfect, namely Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, and their interaction with atelic and telic verbs as two distinct

verb categories (See Table 35). Additionally, this section will establish further comparisons with both Liszka's (2002) study and Uno's (2014).

Table 35: *Percentages of telic verbs and atelic verbs across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past.*

| | PERSISTENT SITUATION | | EXPERIENTIAL PAST | |
	Atelic	Telic	Atelic	Telic
Intermediate	78%	78%	54%	65%
Advanced	86%	91%	**67%***	**75%***

Note: * = significant priority of the advanced group at alpha .025.

Present Perfect with atelic verbs. As stated above, Uno's study (2014) concludes that the participants tended to use the Present Perfect with a durative adverbial. In addition to this, when the data were tabulated for lexical aspect, the results provided evidence that the participants also used atelic verbs with the Present Perfect in collocation with durative adverbials. This means that atelic verbs were mostly found in Persistent Situation with a typical adverbial of duration. These findings correspond to those of this study, as both proficiency groups who participated in the investigation used a higher percentage of atelic verbs with Persistent Situation than with the Experiential Past (Table 35). More specifically, the intermediate level achieved 78% correctness rate in Persistent Situation with atelic verbs and 54% correctness rate in Experiential Past (also with atelic verbs). On the other hand, the advanced-level group achieved 86% accuracy in Persistent Situation with atelic verbs and 67% correctness with atelic verbs in Experiential Past. These results suggest that both proficiency groups had a tendency to associate Persistent Situation more closely with atelic than with telic verbs. With respect to proficiency level and their performance, the advanced-level group performed better than the intermediate group in both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past with atelic verbs, even though this difference did

not reach significant levels in the former function. This finding can be further explained in the light of prototypical associations.

These results confirm the main tenets of the AH from the view of prototypicality (Andersen & Shirai, 1995). Regarding atelic verbs in Persistent Situation, both intermediate and advanced levels were expected to have a better performance given the inherent prototypicality between atelic verbs and the atelicity of Persistent Situation. These results also comply with the core predictions of the AH, as the Experiential Past has a prototypical perfective value that does not naturally match with the imperfective meaning of atelic verbs. Therefore, atelic verbs in Experiential Past present a non-prototypical use for the learner, one more difficult to acquire at lower levels of proficiency. In the context of the present study, both proficiency groups scored higher in atelic Persistent Situation and lower in atelic Experiential Past, thereby partly meeting the claims of the AH.

On the other hand, contrary to the expectations of the AH, which predicts full mastery by the advanced level of all prototypical and non-prototypical combinations of the Present Perfect functions across both telic and atelic verbs, the advanced group's lower percentage of attainment (67%) in Experiential Past did not meet the 80% cut-off point of acquisition for full attainment of a target form.

Present Perfect with telic verbs. Regarding telic verbs in both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, the advanced group performed better in both, even though only the latter function revealed statistically-significant differences in performance. A deeper analysis of these results shows that the non-prototypical combination of Persistent Situation with telic verbs yielded a higher correctness percentage (in both proficiency levels) than the prototypical combination of telic verbs with Experiential Past. From an acquisitional standpoint, these

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correctness rates were high enough to conclude that both groups have fully mastered Persistent Situation with telic verbs (78%-91%), but they did not fully attain the Experiential Past with telic verbs (65%-75%). These findings clearly contradict the predictions of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), which hold that the telic Experiential Past would associate more easily with telic verbs, thus promoting higher correctness rates in both proficiency levels.

An important argument that will help explain the high correctness rate of Persistent Situation with telic verbs is posed by Copple (2009): "…negation of a telic predicate may express that the situation has not reached its end point (but still might), allowing the event to be viewed as atelic" (p. 97). It seems vital to point out that the sentences used to measure the appropriateness of use of Present Perfect in Persistent Situation with telic verbs were in the negative form, as this is the only possible form for these verbs in this function. Therefore, considering Copple's observation, it can be argued that both proficiency groups in this study performed very high in the Persistent Situation with telic verbs—probably because the participants perceived the target form to be used in an atelic imperfective way.

Atelic and telic verbs compared across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past. The participants within the intermediate group performed equally appropriately in Persistent Situation with atelic and telic verbs alike (78%), providing evidence that this function has been fully attained across both verb types, following the 80% correctness parameter of acquisition (Lakshmanan, 1994). With respect to the advanced group and their performance in Persistent Situation, the prediction was that--given their high proficiency in English--they should perform better with atelic verbs, given the semantic bias between them and the atelicity of Persistent Situation of the Present Perfect. Conversely, the results in Table 35 indicate that the advanced group performed slightly better with telic verbs, showing that they found the use of the

imperfective function of Persistent Situation in combination with a non-prototypical telic verb an easier combination, and thus providing evidence against the claims of the AH.

Trying to find an explanation to these findings, it may be presumed that the participants had perceived the combination of Persistent Situation with telic verbs as atelic or durative given the negative polarity of the sentences (Copple, 2009; Squartini, 1998). This would explain the similar correctness rates the advanced group achieved in Persistent Situation with telic and atelic verbs (92%-86%). However, this would not explain why the participants in this level did not achieve higher scores in Persistent Situation with atelic verbs. As for the intermediate group, Squartini's argument can also account for the similar correctness rate in Persistent Situation across both telic and atelic verbs. Specifically, the atelic meaning of negative telic verbs may explain why there was no significant difference between telic and atelic use in Persistent Situation in both proficiency levels.

With regard to Experiential Past, the AH predicted that both proficiency groups should perform better with telic verbs than with atelic verbs. The findings of this study entirely support these predictions, demonstrating higher percentages of use of Experiential Past with telic verbs across the intermediate and the advanced levels (Table 35). It becomes apparent from the data that both proficiency levels found the prototypical combination of the perfective Experiential Past with telic verbs to be easier to learn and utilize. Furthermore, the advanced level achieved a higher percentage when compared to the intermediate level, a finding that suggests an acquisitional trend in view of proficiency and corroborates the effect of lexical aspect in the acquisitional process.

It should be mentioned here, however, that the advanced-level group achieved percentages of correct use lower than those expected for full attainment (Experiential Past atelic=

67% and Experiential Past telic= 75%). Therefore, even though the data results show a significant difference in the two proficiency levels' performances, allowing for a clear developmental trend of the acquisition of the Experiential Past where telic verbs occur first and atelic verbs appear later in this function of the Present Perfect, the percentages are nonetheless lower than those compared with Persistent Situation across telic and atelic verbs. As previously noted, the Experiential Past was expected to yield higher percentages than Persistent Situation, given its perfective prototypical value in relation to the Present Perfect; however this prediction did not match the data results of this study.

Conclusions. A possible explanation of these findings may be found in input frequency or the premise of the Distributional Bias Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), which holds that there is a distributional bias or pattern in the learners' input that encourages the prototypical combinations between verb and form. This would imply that it is possible that the participants' exposure to the target language in the present study has not included enough tokens of the Present Perfect in the Experiential Past function, which might explain the lower accuracy rates. Another possible explanation may lie in what Sugaya and Shirai (2007) call "instructional factors" and "the order of presentation" (p. 8). This means that the participants could have been taught Persistent Situation first, thereby acquiring it earlier and yielding higher correctness percentages in the data.

Moreover, it can also be argued that the participants of this study had been exposed to English language input outside their classes through various online and off line multimedia English resources as well as printed materials. The apparently more-infrequent Experiential Past function may be a more infrequent use in authentic everyday English, available to the

participants through input from the various media. This assumption may be examined and (possibly) confirmed through future research.

The above suppositions are further supported by claims that Present Perfect is being replaced by the Simple Past in American English varieties, especially with regard to the Experiential Past function and the recent/resultative past (e.g. McCoard, 1978). This can explain the lower accuracy percentages in Experiential Past across atelic and telic verbs, if it is assumed that participants have had larger amounts of input from American English varieties.

It is the frequency of the input that might also explain the findings in relation to Persistent Situation with telic and atelic verbs. If we assume that American English is the source of most of the input outside the classroom, we may be able to draw important conclusions. For instance, it is known that the Persistent Situation function of the Present Perfect, which usually collocates with adverbs of duration, has not been exchanged with the Simple Past in some varieties of American English. It is Persistent Situation that is mostly used in these varieties instead of the Experiential Past; therefore, it is Persistent Situation with which the learners are more familiar, and which emerges in their interlanguage apparently earlier than the Experiential Past, in opposition to the predictions of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996).

Another possible explanation for the findings can be rooted in transfer issues. It is possible that the Spanish participants did not perform very well on those sentence types that would require another TA form different from the Present Perfect when translated to their L1 Spanish. Thus, in those cases, the participants could have chosen the wrong TA form in English. Due to time constraints, however, a detailed analysis of transfer problems will be left for a future study. Table 35 shows the percentages of telic verbs (accomplishments and achievements) and atelic verbs (states and activities) across the two functions of the Present Perfect.

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The acquisition of Present Perfect in Persistent Situation and Experiential Past within the four aspectual verb types. This section offers interpretation of the appropriateness of use of each function of the Present Perfect across each of the four verb types. The results of the statistical analysis from the previous chapter are summarized in Table 36.

Table 36: *Percentages of appropriate use of Persistent Situation and Experiential Past across proficiency and verb types.*

	PERSISTENT SITUATION (telic)				EXPERIENTIAL PAST (telic)			
	STATE (atelic)	ACT. (atelic)	ACCOM (telic)	ACH (telic)	STATE (atelic)	ACT. (atelic)	ACCOM (telic)	ACH (telic)
Intermediate	82%	74%	86%	70%	70%	38%	67%	63%
Advanced	94%**	77%	100%	81%	83%	51%**	72%	83%**

Note: * * = significant priority of the advanced group at alpha .01.

A closer look at the results in Table 36 shows that in all comparisons the advanced group reached a higher level of accuracy, however, only three of the eight comparisons were significant at the reduced alpha level of .025 (and more precisely at alpha = .01). Overall, these results suggest that there is a developmental trend in relation to proficiency across the four aspectual verb types and that this trend is obviously systematic in relation to atelic stative verbs, atelic activity verbs, telic accomplishment and telic achievement verbs. The trends for each type of verb across Persistent and Experiential Past are discussed for each proficiency group separately.

Performance of the advanced group with Persistent Situation. The percentages achieved across each verb type are revealing with regard to certain trends, and are in agreement with some predictions of the AH.

First of all, accomplishment verbs were achieved in the highest correctness rate (100%). This was not a prediction of the study according to the tenets of the AH, but a further analysis shows support for the claims of the Hypothesis itself. In previous sections, it was argued that

telic verbs in negative contexts of the Present Perfect are perceived as atelic verbs according to Squartini (1998), giving rise to a final "actional reclassification" of the telic verb type into a durative one (p. 169). Given the imperfective nature of Persistent Situation, both accomplishment and achievement verbs in the negative sentences of the elicitation task will be said to have mutated into the atelic category, which provides evidence for the advanced group's high level of correctness in Persistent Situation with accomplishment verbs. This also holds true for the data gathered with achievement verbs in Persistent Situation, which reached 81% correctness, a higher percentage than with activity verbs and lower than with stative verbs.

On the other hand, it could be claimed that the high rate of attainment of Persistent Situation with the telic accomplishments and achievements can be explained under the theory of input frequency (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). It can be assumed that these verbs in the negative form and in occurrence with the typical adverbs *yet* and *since* are highly found in the participants' input; this may have triggered a high percentage of correctness that equaled the correctness percentages achieved with the atelic verb categories.

Regarding stative verbs, the results revealed that the advanced group achieved the second-highest correctness rate with this verb type (after accomplishment verbs). This finding correlates with the predictions of the AH, because the high percentages obtained clearly reveal that there is a semantic bias between Persistent Situation and stative verbs which makes them a prototypical combination, one easy for students to produce. Moreover, taking into account Comajoan 's postulation (2006), we can also account for the high percentages of appropriate use of the verbs *live* and *be* by considering them typical tense carriers. In this light, such verbs should be removed from the data because they may provide confounding results (Bardovi-Harlig 2000).

Finally, the results for activity verbs in Persistent Situation show that the advanced-level group achieved the lowest percentage of correctness (77%). This finding is contrary to what was originally predicted according to the AH, as this combination is regarded as prototypical from a semantic-morphological viewpoint, and thus an easier one to learn and to produce. A deeper look at the descriptive statistics reveals that the advanced group attained 64% accuracy in the first sentence of the pair of Persistent Situation (Example 25) with an activity verb and 91% accuracy in the second sentence which appears in Example 26 below.

(25) Did you read the local news? A clerk who _____ for the city government since 2006 with access to important documents is accused of revealing letters and memos that apparently show corruption in the mayor's office.

a. has worked   b. worked   c. works

(26)   Three years ago a team of international scientists found strange pieces of rock. Since then, they _____ the pieces to find out more about their origins.

a. studied b. study   c. have studied

Error analysis of the responses in relation to the situation in (25) showed that the participants had been influenced by their L1 Spanish grammar and negative transfer was attested. Most of the participants transferred the wrong tense form into their use of English. It is important to note that the subjects evidently mapped the wrong TA marker to the double meanings (current relevance and anteriority) of the sentence by choosing the Simple Present instead, which is an acceptable and more-commonly used form in Spanish in Persistent Situation with activity verbs. This finding is supported by Collins' study (2002), which found that the effect of the L1 was stronger in higher levels of proficiency. Sugaya and Shirai (2007) found evidence against L1 influence in higher proficiency levels; they hold that L1 influence takes place when the subjects perform

difficult production tasks that require the participant's "automatized knowledge" (either their L1 knowledge or interlanguage knowledge).

When the advanced group is compared to the intermediate in this Persistent Situation function with activity verbs, the correctness percentages prove that there was no statistically different performance; both proficiency groups performed similarly (74% and 77%). The high rate of the intermediate group can be explained with an analysis of the adverbials (typically, the adverb *since*) that co-occurred in the sentences. It is possible that the intermediate group were complying with the rule about the Present Perfect in close association with adverbials of duration as a consequence of instructional factors and input frequency. Therefore, it might be said that the theoretical information about the target TA form played a key role at the learners' consciousness level. Conversely, the advanced group was supposed to be at an interlanguage stage in which they have internalized the Present Perfect, having already mastered its use. The data results could be evidence of L1 transfer as well. The advanced group's incorrect choices of tense could be evidence that they understood the right meaning (anteriority and current relevance) but expressed it through the acceptable Spanish TA marker, the Simple Present, which is incorrect in English.

Performance of the advanced group in Experiential Past across verb types. The results of this group show that correctness percentages generally ranged between 77%-100% for both Persistent Situation and Experiential Past across the four verb types, percentages which are indicative of full attainment—as expected of this proficiency level.

An exception to this trend is found with the Experiential Past across activity and accomplishment verbs, correctness rates of which fell unexpectedly under 72% (51% and 72%, respectively). Contrary to what was hypothesized and predicted according to the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), the results revealed that the Experiential Past with activity and

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accomplishment verbs have not met the 80% correctness percentage indicative of real

acquisition, and have therefore not been fully attained by the advanced group. However, the

accomplishment verbs seem to be less problematic than activity verbs in relation to Experiential

Past, as the percentage achieved with accomplishments is very close to the cut-off percentage

required for full mastery. As previously stated, accomplishment verbs have a perfective meaning

that should prototypically combine with the Experiential Past, whereas activity verbs have an

imperfective atelic meaning that is non-prototypical with this function of the Present Perfect,

according to the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). With these predictions, accomplishment

verbs should be achieved in higher correctness percentages than activity verbs in Experiential

Past, and this holds true when the percentages are compared (72%-51%). However, considering

that accomplishment in Experiential Past was a prototypical combination, and considering that

the Experiential Past is predicted to emerge first in the learners' interlanguage, this combination

was expected to reach higher rates than 72%. This percentage is even more surprising when

compared to the percentage achieved with stative verbs in Experiential Past (83%), which

according to the AH should be the most non-prototypical combination. Conversely, this type of

combination was achieved in higher percentages than the more-prototypical combination with

accomplishment verbs.

    The high percentages of the Experiential Past with stative verbs can be explained by the

nature of these verbs, and in view of the findings of a great body of research on the acquisition of

TA morphology. According to Comajoan (2006), stative verbs can be considered "wild card"

verbs that function as carriers of tense, and can therefore be inflected earlier than other verb

categories. Bardovi-Harlig (2000) argues that the high proportion of *be* tokens in a state category

may distort the pattern of inflections of stative verbs. These arguments may help account for the

high percentage of stative verbs in the Experiential Past, which may have been confounded by the presence of *be*. In addition to this, the other verb used in the stative category in the elicitation task was *live*, which is not a true stative verb—it can be used grammatically in both the simple and progressive aspects with respective differences in meaning.

Another concern about the data results in the advanced group seems to be the very low correctness rate regarding the Experiential Past with activity verbs, despite the lack of semantic bias between verb type and function of the perfect. The advanced level of proficiency, Comajoan (2006) argues, should be able to "disassociate verbal morphology from prototypical combinations approximating native speaker use" (p. 211), and therefore subjects should have achieved much higher accuracy rates in this function across the activity verb type. Given their advanced proficiency, and considering 80% as the cut-off rate for full attainment (Lakshmanan, 1994), this group should have acquired all the functions across all verb types. A possible explanation of these results can be found in what was referred to in the section above as "transfer issues". It is believed that sentence 16 in the forced-choice elicitation task could have been the cause for the overall lower rates of acquisition, due to the fact that it contains a structure that can be misleading to L1 Spanish learners of L2 English, as shown in example (27) below:

(27) Although Vicky, Jim and Rachel all live in the same town, this is the first time that they have spoken to one another about that tragic night 15 years ago.

a. spoke   b. have spoken   c. speak

The L1 Spanish participants clearly chose the Simple Present or the Simple Past in tandem with the verb form that this structure requires in their mother tongue. The data show that the low correctness percentages of this sentence lowered the percentages for the whole category of activity verbs. Specifically, the descriptive statistics evidenced that from a total of 47

participants within the advanced group, only seven answered correctly. When comparing these results with those of the intermediate group, the evidence is even stronger, as out of 38 participants, only three answered correctly. These numbers clearly indicate that there was a sentence-type effect which is the cause for the participants' low performance. It could be argued that the sentence structure "this is the first time…" acted as a confounding element and triggered both the participants' negative L1 influence and their association of the present reference of the construction "this is the first time" with the present simple form of the following clause "that they *speak* to one another…".

When analyzing these findings in the advanced group, it might be concluded that even at advanced proficiency levels, L1 transfer issues might be present. If L1 transfer is not attested, then it can be argued that even those of the high proficiency level have had difficulties in using the Present Perfect as "a recent past experience." Following this argument, we can further hold that sentence number 16 in the elicitation task should probably be a better example of the Recent/Resultative Past function rather than the Experiential Past, thus a review of this sentence is deemed necessary. All in all, the kind of sentence-type effect described above can provide the reason why the Experiential Past function might have been achieved in lower correctness rates by the advanced group than Persistent Situation in general.

Performance of the intermediate group with Persistent Situation. With regard to this proficiency group, the degrees of correctness ranged between 70% - 86% for Persistent Situation across all verb types. Specifically, this group seems to have fully acquired Persistent Situation with accomplishments (86%) and states (82%); however, these results only partially comply with the predictions of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). Inherently atelic and non-perfective, Persistent Situation was expected to yield higher correctness percentages in occurrence with

atelic verbs (states and activities) and lower percentages with telic verbs (accomplishments and achievements). Even more specifically, the intermediate group attained 74% correctness in activities, while this rate was expected to be higher than those of accomplishments and achievements.

The fact that accomplishments and achievements yielded high percentages among the intermediate learners can be explained by the negative contexts in which these verbs occur within the elicitation task sentences, just as with the advanced group. The four sentences in which these telic verbs appear require the negative Present Perfect form of the verbs, which, according to Squartini (1998) causes them to become atelic. Table 36 illustrates that the intermediate proficiency group achieved the same percentage (78%) in Persistent Situation with both telic and atelic verbs.

A closer look at the telic verb type shows that accomplishment verbs yielded 86% correctness, whereas achievements yielded 70% correctness. It has already been argued within the advanced group analysis that the very high percentage they attained (100%) in this category could have been caused by "input frequency" (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). Given that both groups achieved their best rates in this verb category, the same will be assumed for the intermediate group. Considering that they are formally-instructed grammar learners doing their first or second grammar courses in the teacher-training program at an Argentinian university, it is highly probable that Persistent Situation linguistic input has been exemplified to a great extent with accomplishment verbs in the negative form in co-existence with the typical adverbs of duration, as supported by Uno (2014).

A further step in the analysis of telic verbs concerns achievement verbs in Persistent Situation and the results provided by the descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that the

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intermediate group was highly influenced by sentence type. If we take into consideration example 28 (sentence 11 of the elicitation task), we are able to see that it contained a typical adverbial of duration (*since then*).

(28) Three years ago a team of international scientists found strange pieces of rock. Since then, they _____ the pieces to find out more about their origins.

a. studied b. study   c. have studied

Of the total number of intermediate participants (38), 34 performed appropriately; this suggests that the intermediate group may have been performing at advanced levels of proficiency, helped by the explicit clue in the sentence in question. The intermediate group is supposed to have learned that the Persistent Present Perfect normally collocates with adverbials of duration, and the learners applied this rule (similar to that of Uno (2014), who found more tokens of the Present Perfect with durative adverbs). Additionally, an even-more interesting finding is provided by the intermediate group's performance in sentence 9 of the task, example (29) below. This sentence was a "context alone" sentence, Liszka (2009, p. 112), which required learners to rely only on the linguistic context in choosing the Present Perfect form, as the sentence contained no adverb that would help them associate it with the target form.

(29) A new Washington Post poll today found that nearly 6 in 10 Americans have immediate family members who were hit with a job loss in the past year. They believe that the recession _____no matter what economists say.

a. hasn't ended   b. didn't end   c. doesn't end

The descriptive statistics run on this sentence reveal that only 50% of the group performed correctly, providing further evidence that at the intermediate level, the Present Perfect might only be a surface form (at times) with an incomplete association of all the spectrum of

meanings that this TA form can bear in different contexts with and without collocational adverbial expressions.

The arguments made so far offer some understanding about why stative and activity verbs yielded slightly-lower percentages than telic verbs. If we accept Squartini's (1998) assumption that telic verbs in the negative form become atelic verbs, we are confronted with a Persistent Situation function that prototypically occurs with perfective negative telic verbs and "telic adopted verbs". This way, it can be claimed that the predictions of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), in view of the acquisition of Present Perfect in Persistent Situation, have been met by the intermediate group. All in all, the high percentages of the intermediate group regarding Persistent Situation across the telic category of accomplishment and achievement verbs can be attributed to multiple factors such as instruction, input frequency and sentence type.

Performance of the intermediate group with Experiential Past. The percentages achieved by this proficiency group with respect to Experiential Past across the four verb types have shown that, as a whole, they are lower than the ones achieved in Persistent Situation, even with prototypical combinations in this proficiency level. Possible reasons that may account for these results are elaborated in this section.

The first analysis concerns telic verbs of accomplishment and achievement, given that they are prototypically related to the assumed perfective meaning of the Experiential Past. Based on the claims of the AH, it was expected that achievement verbs should get the highest correctness rate, as it is the verb type that is supposed to be acquired first with perfective TA forms. Table 36 on p. 85 shows that the intermediate group attained a slightly-lower percentage with achievement verbs than with accomplishment verbs (63% and 67%, respectively). A deeper understanding is provided by the descriptive statistics of the intermediate group with

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achievement verbs, which revealed that the participants had difficulties with the first sentence of the pair of sentences provided in the elicitation task within this verb category (See example (30) below).

> (30) One indicator of the decline of the quality of American education is that 13 percent of all 17 year-olds in the U.S. are considered functionally illiterate. As a matter of fact, the United States _____ first or second in student achievement test scores in any year so far.
>
> a. never finishes   b. has never finished   c. never finished

Specifically, out of 38 participants, only 19 performed appropriately. The problematic sentence contained a context sentence followed by the sentence with the target TA form, which in turn contained two adverbials that are considered to collocate with the Present Perfect of Experiential Past, namely *in any year* and *so far*. The reasons for the very low performance with these verbs might stem from an effect of sentence type, which ties in with other reasons. It is possible that the participants were not familiar with the adverbial *in any year* as a collocation with the Experiential Past use of the Present Perfect. As proposed by Liszka (2009), the adverbial in this case did not "trigger an associative response to produce the target form" (p. 113), probably because the students had not learned this adverbial as a collocation with the Present Perfect. As stated in the section above, the participants were formally-instructed grammar learners at the teacher-training program in an Argentinian university, so the type of instruction they had received, based on the course syllabus, would not usually include *in any year* as a typical adverbial collocation with the Present Perfect. Therefore, the lower rate of appropriate use with achievement verbs could have been caused by instructional constraints, input frequency and sentence type. Another possible explanation of the lower rate of accuracy

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regarding the sentence in question could be attributed to - information processing difficulties, caused by the fact that the adverbial was located at the end of the sentence. If the intermediate group had focused on the initial part of the sentence, then they could have ignored the adverbial and its grammatical connotation for the simple reason that it appeared only at the end of the sentence.

An analysis of the results of the intermediate group with accomplishments across Experiential Past also requires attention due to its similar percentages with achievements, even though the former resulted in a slightly-higher percentage of correctness. This trend is worth analyzing, as it does not meet the claims of the AH; it was expected that achievement verbs would occur at the highest percentage of appropriate use in Experiential Past. Reasons that could account for these results could also be related to sentence type, and also with grammar instruction and input frequency (as was the case with the low percentages with achievement verbs). The descriptive statistics results provided evidence that what lowered the percentage on the elicitation task was the first sentence of the pair of accomplishment verb sentences, as shown in example (31) below.

> (31) We each throw out our trash, and where does most of it go? The afterlife of our garbage is explained by Edward Humes, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who _____ more than 10 books.
>
> a. writes   b. wrote   c. has written

One possible explanation is that-because this sentence did not have an adverbial that collocates with the Experiential Past (that is to say, it was a bare sentence)-there was no associative clue that would help the participants choose the target form. This becomes even more meaningful if we consider that the intermediate-level learners have not fully mastered the TA

form, nor its association with all its possible meanings in contexts with or without adverbial collocations. This goes in tandem with the fact that these participants are formally-instructed grammar learners, who have taken at least one grammar course at the university. This grammar focus is very strong, and learners at this level are assumed to be seriously applying the major rules they have been taught, such as those regarding the Present Perfect in collocation with specific adverbs. The ability to use this form without specific adverbs is a challenge, and it is expected to happen only with more advanced levels.

Another possible explanation of the low percentage attained in this sentence could be the possibility of L1 influence. It could be the case that the participants chose the Simple Past form in accordance with their L1 Spanish, which accepts the Simple Past as a variant of the Present Perfect. There is yet another possible explanation of these results, which can be related to the fact that the Present Perfect has not been fully mastered in all its possible meanings and contexts of use. Therefore, the intermediate-level participants could have chosen the Simple Past if they understood that the incomplete task sentence required only one meaning, in this case [+anteriority], which is the meaning expressed by the Simple Past. This would clearly reveal the participants' incomplete form-meaning mapping of the Present Perfect, as opposed to the complete meaning mapping of [+current relevance] and [+anteriority]. This explanation would follow in tandem with Andersen's argument (1984) about the one-to-one principle, which states that learners tend to assign one meaning per form.

When comparing the telic verbs with the atelic verbs, it can be observed that both achievements and accomplishments were rendered in higher percentages than activity verbs, but lower percentages than stative verbs. With respect to the latter verb category and the learners' relatively high correctness rate in Experiential Past, it can be argued that the stative verbs used in

the elicitation task were high-frequency verbs, namely *be* and *live*; therefore, according to

Bardovi-Harlig (2000), they tend to emerge in the learner's grammar earlier than other verb

categories, as "wild-card verbs" carrying only tense. Shirai (2004) argues that these high-

frequency verbs can be rote-learned forms that emerge before any real form-meaning

relationship is acquired by the learners.

When comparing the correctness percentages within the atelic verb category, it can be

observed that activities dwindled sharply under 40%, whereas the statives yielded 70%. This

finding is surprising, considering that both verb types belong to the same class of atelic verbs. A

closer look at the descriptive statistics for activity verbs within the intermediate group provides

evidence about the difficulties experienced by this group regarding the second sentence of the

pair of activity verbs in Experiential Past (See example 32).

(32) Although Vicky, Jim and Rachel all live in the same small town, this

is the first time they _____ to one another about that tragic night 15 years

ago.

a. spoke b. have spoken   c. speak

Specifically, out of the 38 participants, only three answered correctly, which clearly

shows that there was a sentence-type effect at both proficiency levels. As already explained in

reference to the advanced group, the sentence structure "*this is the first time…*" was a

confounding structure that could have been perceived by the participants as denoting a present

situation. Therefore, the participants probably associated the construction "*this is the first time*"

with the Present Simple form of the following clause "*that they speak to one another…*" Since

the learners' L1 grammatically accepts the Simple Present in this construction, L1 negative

transfer could be claimed to have been at work. Another possible explanation can be found in the

lack of a typical adverbial to cause an associative Priming effect of the Present Perfect as suggested by Liszka (2002). In addition, the phrase "this is the first time", containing the Present Simple, could have produced a type of "garden path effect" (Frazier, 1989), triggering the use of the wrong TA form, that is the Simple Present vs. the Present Perfect. Moreover, from the perspective of participants' L1, the Simple Present is also perfectly grammatical in the corresponding construction in Spanish. Thus, the low accuracy rate in this sentence can be explained by an interplay of multiple factors, such as context effect, sentence-type effect, garden path effect and L1 transfer effect.

Summary of findings addressing research question 1: Are there developmental trends in the acquisition of the Present Perfect by Spanish EFL learners across functions and prototypical verbs?

In summary, the results of the study show that there are developmental trends in the acquisition of the two functions of the Present Perfect, and that these tendencies are related to proficiency level. The more proficient the learners, the more accurate they are in the use of the Persistent Situation and the Experiential Past. This conclusion is supported by the higher percentages of correctness obtained from the advanced group for both functions across each of the four aspectual verb types when compared to the intermediate group. Additionally, there are other developmental trends in the acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect in relation to verb prototypicality worth mentioning.

The main claim of the Prototype Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994) is that learners initially acquire the prototypes for each TA morpheme and then gradually extend their use to non-prototypical cases. In light of this claim, the original predictions of this study held that the advanced-level group would have fully attained the functions of the Present Perfect with both

prototypical and non-prototypical verbs. To help understand these trends, it is important to refer to the perfective and imperfective meanings of the Present Perfect as summarized in Chapter 1.

The results revealed interesting findings in each proficiency level across each function of the Present Perfect and verb prototypicality. With regard to the Experiential Past, the percentages of correctness comply with the claims about prototypicality, as participants in both the advanced and intermediate groups achieved higher percentages with telic verbs than with atelic verbs. As had been predicted, when comparing these percentages within proficiency level, the advanced group performed significantly better in every case. However, even though prototypical combinations were used by both groups in compliance with the Prototype Hypothesis, the advanced-level group attained percentages below the cut-off 80% proposed as the baseline for full attainment (Lakshamanan, 1994). These results lead to the conclusion that the acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect was not determined by verb prototypicality alone, but, as proposed by Sugaya and Shirai (2007, p.2), "multiple factors" have been involved in the acquisitional process.

When looking at each of the four verb types within the Experiential Past, the picture is not so clear; nor is it regular. For instance, the advanced group achieved the same correctness rate in achievements and states (83%), which are considered polar opposites from a prototypicality viewpoint. Additionally, activity verbs yielded a remarkably-low percentage (51%), whereas their atelic partners, stative verbs, yielded the highest rate (83%) among the four types. As for the intermediate group, they also achieved their highest score with stative verbs (70%) and the lowest score among the four verb types with activity verbs. Therefore, trends in both groups seem to weaken when each verb type is analyzed.

In conclusion, these results provide evidence that the acquisition of the Present Perfect by both proficiency-level groups was mediated by "multiple factors" (Sugaya & Shirai, 2007, p. 2), in which verb prototypicality seemed to be a minor contributor. A reason for these findings might have been found in "instructional factors" (Sugaya & Shirai, 2007, p. 8). The fact that the participants were formally-instructed grammar learners might provide some ground to conclude that they could have been biased by the input, and thereby by the intensive teaching of the grammatical form of the Present Perfect (Lightbown, 1987). This instructional bias is rooted in the Distributional Bias Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), which claimed that learners will form prototypes based on the type of input. Thus, the acquisitional process of the participants of the study could have been influenced by the input they had received, which possibly did not show evidence of containing prototypical verb type-TA form combinations. This interpretation can be supported by Sugaya and Shirai (2007), who claimed that the universal pattern of acquisition can be overridden by a much-skewed input. Regarding the participants of this study, it can be assumed that grammar instruction worked as the skewed input, which certainly followed no verb prototypicality patterns: Persistent Situation with atelic verbs and Experiential Past with telic ones was presumably not the trend of the instructional input.

This idea is further reinforced when we consider that fact that the participants were enrolled in a Teacher Training Program in which they are exposed to and taught, in this particular case, all the functions of the Present Perfect across all verb categories alike. Therefore, there is little room for a pattern of teaching and acquisition that will follow the universality of verb prototypicality.

With respect to Persistent Situation, the results in both groups represent some irregular trends. The imperfective Persistent Situation function should first emerge with atelic verbs and

later extend to telic ones. Thus, both proficiency groups should evidence better performance with the most prototypical verb types, stative and activity verbs. Conversely, performance rates should be lower with non-prototypical verbs of accomplishment and achievement. Considering atelic and telic verbs, the results also evidence strange trends. The advanced group attained a higher rate with the non-prototypical telic verbs (91%) and a lower rate with the prototypical atelic verbs (86%), whereas the intermediate group achieved 78% correctness across both telic and atelic verbs.

These results suggest that the acquisition of the Present Perfect in Persistent Situation may have been influenced by other factors, rather than only by verb prototypicality. Therefore, once again, the "multiple factors" argument proposed by Sugaya and Shirai (2007) may be able to explain these findings. An important factor discussed in previous sections was sentence-type effect, and an analysis of this factor could help in further understanding the trends in this acquisitional process. It has been proposed, based on Squartini (1998), that as the sentences for Persistent Situation with accomplishments and achievements contained those verbs in the negative and were used with a typical adverb, there was an "aspectual reclassification" from a telic verb to an atelic one. If this is the case, the percentages obtained for accomplishments and achievements (telic verbs) in both proficiency groups could be reconsidered as belonging to the atelic category. With this view, the high percentages each group attained in Persistent Situation across telic verbs, which would be reclassified as atelic, seem to provide an argument in favor of the predictions made about verb prototypicality.

Summary of findings addressing Research Question 2: Do these trends comply with the postulations of the Aspect Hypothesis?

In order to address this question, it is necessary to review the main claims and predictions posed by the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996):

1.   Learners will acquire the perfective before the imperfective.

2.   Learners will prefer to use the perfective with:

   a.   Telic verbs

   b.   Dynamic atelic verbs (activities)

   c.   Non-dynamic atelic verbs (states)

3.   Learners will then acquire the imperfective first with states, then with activities, accomplishments, and finally with achievements.

Analyzing the data in view of the first claim of the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) and relating it to the acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect, the results of the advanced and intermediate groups regarding Persistent Situation and Experiential Past provide evidence against the claim that perfective meanings emerge first in the learner's interlanguage. The correctness rates of both proficiency-level groups (78% and 88%) reveal that Persistent Situation, with its inherent imperfective meaning, appears to be easier and seems to be acquired first. It is clear that both proficiency-level groups fully attained Persistent Situation by having reached at least the cut-off 80% proposed for acquisition (Lakshmanan, 1994), which is surprising for the intermediate level.

A number of reasons can be proposed to explain the finding that the atelic imperfective Persistent Situation emerged as the first function in this group of participants. A combination of factors, such as instruction, input frequency, sentence-type effect, and rote-learning effect could

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be claimed to be the most-important causes of the findings. It is also possible that L1 transfer could have had a role in the acquisition; further research needs to be conducted to make sound conclusions. In a further research study, it is this author's intention to do an in-depth analysis of the results of the current study, with the purpose of finding whether it is sentence-type effect or L1 influence or a combination of both that was actually at play in the participants' performance in the elicitation task.

A closer look at the participants' data may show whether L1 influence is attested to a greater extent at earlier interlanguage stages and whether it arises when the L2 procedural knowledge, knowledge about how to use the language, is insufficient (Anderson, 1980; Sugaya & Shirai 2007). So far, the data analysis has supported this view, as the results revealed that—in every function across both telic and atelic verb types—the advanced level always performed better, suggesting that they have more procedural knowledge, knowledge of use about the Present Perfect. However, some data also evidenced that the advanced-group performance could have been influenced by their L1 Spanish in some sentences. Again, further detailed research is necessary to reach a more solid conclusion.

An analysis of the second claim posed by the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), in relation to the current study, provides more regular trends that comply with the theory of TA acquisition. As predicted by the AH, the perfective function of the Present Perfect, the Experiential Past, appears to be more-accurately used by the participants when combined with the prototypical telic verbs. Both proficiency-level groups performed better with verbs of accomplishment and achievement than with the atelic verbs.

When deconstructing the analysis into the four aspectual verb classes, the trends seem to weaken again and the predictions based on the AH (Andersen and Shirai, 1994; 1996) seem to be

less effective. Specifically, when considering the atelic category as a whole, it yielded lower correctness rates than the telic category. When looking at the two members of the atelic category (states and activities), extreme results in the data are found. Bearing in mind that the atelic verb type is non-prototypical with Experiential Past, both activities and states should have attained lower rates in general, due to being non-prototypical. Conversely, the data shows that stative verbs yielded the highest correctness rate among the four verb types, whereas activity verbs yielded the lowest rate. Even more surprising is that these patterns were observed in both groups, so the reasons discussed in the previous sections related to a possible sentence-type effect or an input effect or a rote-learning effect may have been at work and may have produced these extreme percentages within the same verb categories. These disparate percentages bring us back to the "multiple factors" argument for the acquisition of the TA form of this study (Sugaya & Shira, 2007).

The final claim proposed by the AH states that the imperfective meanings should emerge first with states, later with activities, then should gradually extend to accomplishments until the final stage is reached with achievements. A superficial look at the results of Persistent Situation will probably mislead us into arguing that the trends found with both proficiency level groups are against the 3rd claim of the AH. Both the advanced and intermediate groups achieved their highest correctness rates with the telic accomplishment verbs in Persistent Situation, as opposed to the original predictions. However, as already discussed in line with Squartini (1998), because the telic verbs used in the elicitation task in relation to Persistent Situation were in the negative form, they could be reclassified as atelic verbs. In doing this, both accomplishment and achievements are further reclassified as activity verbs, because they denote agentive dynamic processes in general. After this reclassification, the results will comply with the claim of the AH

(Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), as both the advanced and intermediate groups achieved higher rates with stative verbs. This would mean that the Persistent Situation function has first emerged with statives and was later extended to activities, as originally predicted by the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996).

In conclusion, putting together all of the results discussed so far, this study provides only partial support for the predictions of the AH . When grouping the four verb types into the atelic and the telic categories, trends in the acquisition of the Present Perfect are more visible and more traceable. As pointed out above, the basic predictions about verb prototypicality are attested— namely that the Experiential Past emerged with telic verbs, as it yielded higher percentages of correctness in both proficiency levels. Conversely, the atelic verbs proved to present more difficulties to the learners, thus corroborating that non-prototypical combinations are harder to acquire, even at the advanced levels.

These patterns are less clear when each of the four aspectual verb types is separately analyzed, but it should be considered that this might be attributed to sentence-type effect, which could have distorted the pattern for some verb types across both functions of the Present Perfect.

A final finding that remains to be considered is the fact that Persistent Situation, with its inherent imperfective meaning, appeared to be acquired first by both groups, followed by Experiential Past (which is inherently perfective in meaning and therefore regarded as prototypical with the Present Perfect form). The findings of this study are noteworthy to such an extent that it is imperative that we restate the original expectations.

It was assumed that the target TA form, the Present Perfect, had a perfective canonical value, as it was regarded as complying with Dahl's (1985) definition of perfective: "a single punctual event that occurred in the past with a clear result or end state" (p. 78). When the

Persistent Situation and Experiential Past are compared, it is clear that it is the latter function which appears to have a perfective value. Conversely, the former function denotes a situation that started occurring in the past, holds true in the present, and will probably hold true in the future. This marks Persistent Situation as being imperfective in meaning, and therefore as non-prototypical with the assumed perfective value of the Present Perfect.

The question that remains to be asked is whether the Present Perfect can have an absolute perfective value, given that its core meanings are "anteriority" and "current relevance" (Comrie, 1976; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000). If the situations denoted by the Present Perfect have both past and present validity, then we should claim that the prototypical canonical value of this TA form should be the imperfective. This would therefore change our predictions about the order of acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect; it should thus be claimed that the imperfective Persistent Situation is the prototypical function and that it should emerge first. With this view, the results of this study would gain a completely different meaning and would entirely meet the tenets of the AH.

Furthermore, a historical/diachronic look at the Present Perfect can provide evidence for this argument. It is widely assumed that the first meaning in the history of the Present Perfect was the resultative function, which can certainly be regarded as perfective in meaning by Dhal (1985). However, this function is regarded as a derivation of a previous adjectival construction with an imperfective meaning. In other words, the genesis of the perfective resultative use of the Present Perfect was the imperfective atelic adjectival construction. This is how this form emerged in the English language—as the perfect combination of past and present or anteriority and current relevance.

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When comparing the Present Perfect with the Simple Past, they can be seen to differ in their time reference. While the latter clearly has perfective meaning, denoting situations that took place in the past with no connection with the present time, the former denotes situations that took place in the past but either continue in the present or are somehow related to the present. In this view, the Present Perfect can be reclassified as having an imperfective atelic canonical value.

This reclassification of the Present Perfect as an imperfective TA form will certainly make other claims for the acquisition than those postulated in this study. Taking into account the functions of the perfect that were the focus of this study, namely Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, it will be proposed that the order of acquisition based on the AH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996) will be Persistent Situation first (with a prototypical imperfective value that matches the generally-assumed imperfective value of the Present Perfect) and the Experiential Past second.

Limitations

The present study has provided further empirical evidence about the acquisition of two of the functions of the Present Perfect, Persistent Situation and Experiential Past, according to the tenets of the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). This empirical data is of great significance in the field of TA acquisition, as there have been only two other studies (Liszka, 2009; Uno, 2014) conducted with regard to the acquisition of the Present Perfect within the frame of lexical aspect.

Although much attention was given to developing the instrument of this study through pilot testing and making sure that all instances of Present Perfect were found in the use of native speakers at the 90-100% level, a number of problems was observed in the process of the data analysis that needs to be brought to the attention of future researchers. A main limitation in most

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cases was shown by the context in which the target sentences occurred. Even though special care was given to devising the context of each situation that would best trigger a certain use of the Present Perfect across telic and atelic verbs, some inconsistencies were present, which could certainly be assumed to have influenced the results. For example, in the two sentences that were provided within the same verb category; in some cases, one of the sentences contained a typical adverbial and the other sentence did not. This difference in sentence structure caused participants to perform very differently in each sentence of the pair and therefore affected the average performance scores.

Another effect was observed in relation to the position of the adverbials in the target sentences, that is whether the adverbials preceded or followed the blanks requiring a particular verb tense. Generally, performance scores were higher when the adverbial was placed in initial position, preceding the blank, and lower when the adverbial was in middle or final position, following the blank. This difference is exemplified in examples (33) and (34) below. Example 33 contains a typical adverbial of duration after the blank requiring a verb tense, whereas example 34 has the adverbial in the beginning of the target verb tense sentence, preceding the blank.

(33) Did you read the local news? A clerk who _____ for the city government since 2006 with access to important documents is accused of revealing letters and memos that apparently show corruption in the mayor's office.

            a. has worked   b. worked   c. works

(34) Three years ago a team of international scientists found strange pieces of rock. Since then, they _____ the pieces to find out more about their origins.

            a. studied b. study c. have studied

The latter sentence, where the adverb preceded the blank, yielded higher accuracy in both proficiency levels, providing evidence of the learners' processing tendency to read the first part of the sentence more thoroughly and carefully focusing on the topic of the sentence. This tendency can be regarded to have produced a syntactic priming effect, priming the use of the Present Perfect.

As could be seen, context played a major role in the learners' performance by causing a number of difficulties in sentence comprehension and sentence processing. It is these difficulties which are assumed to have influenced the learners' performance in those problematic sentences that revealed low accuracy rates. Therefore, one possible explanation to learners' errors can be found in the so called "garden path effect" (Frazier & Rayner, 1982), a phenomenon regarded as being intimately linked to sentence misprocessing and syntactic parsing, by which the learner is automatically misled towards the wrong structure, wrong interpretation or wrong use of the target form. A good example of this type of effect was sentence 16 of the elicitation task, with the use of the construction "*this is the first time that they have spoken to each other*" (See example 35).

(35) Although Vicky, Jim and Rachel all live in the same small town, this

is the first time they _____ to one another about that tragic night 15 years ago.

a. spoke b. have spoken   c. speak

The descriptive statistics showed that this sentence yielded the lowest percentages of all the verb categories, and therefore, it lowered the correctness rate of the category of activity verbs within Experiential Past. Following the "garden path effect" argument, it could be stated that it was the first part of the sentence "this is the first time" which triggered the wrong TA form, which in the case of this study was the Present Simple. It is worth saying that this form would be

the correct one in Spanish, therefore, the data results can be assumed to have been influenced by the interaction of multiple factors (Sugaya & Shirai, 2007) such as the garden path effect, sentence type, and L1 transfer, as stated in the discussion section.

Another limitation was found within the stative verb category across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past. In both functions, the verbs chosen to gather the data were *be* and *live*, which are not good representatives of the verb category in question. On the one hand, *be* is the most popular stative verb in English, regarded as a high-frequency form according to Bardovi-Harlig (2000) and Comajoan (2006), who claimed that the high-frequency statives are used as "wild-card" verbs to mark tense when the participants are confronted with a difficult task. Shirai (2004) explained that these high-frequency forms, also called rote-learned forms, are typically produced even before there exists an actual form-meaning mapping in the participants.

Another limitation is related to the verb "be" which in the context of this study was used as an example of a stative verb in Experiential Past. However, a post hoc analysis of the instrument shows that its use was more as an active verb than a stative one, indicating movement as a synonym of *visit*. This is illustrated by example (36) below corresponding to sentence 14 of the elicitation task.

(36) Lara is 22 years old and has suffered from food allergies since she was a child. Because of her allergies, she is usually afraid to go on trips abroad but she _____ on trips to the UK before and has more planned this summer.

     a. is   b. has been   c. was

Therefore, a different non-frequent stative verb should have been chosen. In addition, the choice of the other stative verb (*live*) was not appropriate either, as this verb has a double meaning and can be used either as a state or as an activity, depending on the context in which it

occurs. Unlike most statives, *live* can occur in the progressive aspect, which demonstrates it to be not a true representative of the stative verb category. A further limitation regarding these verbs is that the same verbs were used for Persistent Situation and Experiential Past; they should have been different in order to avoid any possible negative bias or type of negative task effect.

Sentence-type effect was also evidenced within the telic verbs in Persistent Situation. In these cases, both accomplishment and achievement verbs were devised in the negative form, whereas the verbs in the other verb categories were used in the affirmative form. This fact acted as a confounding variable, as both proficiency-level groups performed highly, with telic verbs in Persistent Situation apparently throwing results against the AH due to the non-prototypicality of form-verb combination. Even though this is considered a limitation, it would not have been possible to provide polarity uniformity to all the sentences of the elicitation task, as the only grammatical option for telic verbs in Persistent Situation is for them to be used in negative polarity. Alternatively, in order to make sense of the data, it was argued that these verbs should be reclassified as atelic verbs, following Squartini (1998).

In addition, the findings of the present study should not be generalized to EFL learners who have different demographic characteristics from the participants of this study. These findings are only relevant to intermediate and advanced L1 Spanish learners of English in EFL instructional contexts who have received explicit instruction in English grammar.

Another limitation of the study could be found in the level of proficiency of the participants, intermediate and advanced. Given the acquisitional nature of the research study, the comparison of the original 3 levels including the elementary one, would have provided a better picture of the whole developmental process in the acquisition of the target form and a better

understanding of the actual role of lexical aspect and verb prototypicality across proficiency levels.

It is essential to also address the lack of participants at the elementary level, whose representatives in the sample data were excluded since they were not enough in number to form a representative sample group. Taking into consideration the main conclusions arrived at in this present study regarding the acquisition of the PP across the intermediate and advanced proficiency levels, it is deemed appropriate to link those to the predicted conclusions about the elementary level. It can be assumed that the acquisition of the PP in the elementary level will be mostly influenced by the lexical aspect, following the great number of studies about the AH, which have found that emergent past morphology arises with telic verbs. This prediction is supported not only by the core predictions of the AH but also by the assumption that a "multiple factors" approach (Sugaya & Shirai, 2007) is not a convincing explanation at the beginning stages of acquisition. The present study assumed that the intermediate and advanced levels' acquisitional process of the PP was mediated by factors such as sentence-type effect, proficiency level, input frequency and instructional factors. Given the elementary group's low level of proficiency, and thereby their very little exposure to the target form and to instruction itself, this proficiency level is predicted to present a path of acquisition of the PP in accordance to the lexical aspect: telic verbs with the Experiential Past and atelic verbs with Persistent Situation. As for the order of acquisition, further research is necessary to find whether it is the telic or the atelic function of the PP which emerges first. Based on the findings of the present study with regard to the intermediate and advanced groups, which showed higher accuracy rates with Persistent Situation, no concluding predictions could be made as for the elementary level. From a

more rigid viewpoint, this level is expected to perform better with Experiential Past, but further research is needed to make final conclusions.

A final limitation of the study concerns the focus on between- group comparisons, leaving out the within group variations across verb types and grammatical functions involved in the Present Perfect. Specifically, the between-group variations were examined for statistical significance, whereas the within-group variations were only looked at descriptively. This delimitation was imposed in order to shorten the already lengthy analyses and also in view of the primary interest of the study as stated in the research questions. However, the researcher is fully aware of the insights that would be brought through repeated measures comparisons and would consider this in future follow-up analyses.

Pedagogical implications

Despite some limitations, this study has offered a detailed investigation regarding the acquisition of a much-relegated TA form in the EFL classroom. This relegation is mostly due to the complexity of form and meaning of the Present Perfect, which thereby constitute a challenge for both teachers and learners.

The challenge in the acquisitional process of this TA form lies in its dual nature as an indicator of both anteriority and current relevance (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992), which complicates the learner's form-meaning mapping. For instance, with the Simple Past, the learner has to map anteriority, and with the Simple Present, the mapping is of current relevance. With the perfect, the mapping is more complex, it implies the association of two polar opposite temporal references, present and past.

Because the participants of this study were students attending a Teacher Training Program in an Argentinian University, the pedagogical implications that will be proposed will take this learning environment into close consideration. One of the characteristics of this environment is that students have long hours of exposure to English as a foreign language via three core courses from the first year to the third year (English Language, Phonetics and Phonology, and English Grammar). As was discussed in previous sections, these students have a strong background in English grammar, which certainly makes their acquisition of the English Present Perfect different from the acquisitional process of learners in regular EFL classrooms.

If the level of grammar instruction is considered across participants, as described in chapter 3, the following trend is found: the more proficient the student is, the more grammar courses he/she has taken. This means that the more-advanced learners in this study were usually more knowledgeable in English grammar.

The value of the present study is rooted not only in the in-depth analysis of the data results but also in the possible implications that these results can have for teachers at the university level. The first relevant finding of this study is related to proficiency level. It was found that the more proficient the learner is, the more accurate and appropriate his/her use of the functions of the Present Perfect is. This means that there is a clear developmental route of acquisition that the learner goes through before attaining full mastery of the Present Perfect at the advanced level, with percentages of 80% correctness and above (Lakshmanan, 1994). It is at this stage when an absolute TA form-meaning mapping is supposed to take place. Taking this into serious consideration, it is vital that the Present Perfect be introduced in its morphological and semantic dimensions in the first grammar course for the intermediate level class, and that the input be modified so as to correspond to the proficiency level. At this stage, the four basic functions of the Present Perfect can be taught in combination with prototypical and non-prototypical verbs, as well as with collocational adverbs; it is suggested that only simple sentence types be used as input examples.

In the second grammar course, learners can be presented with information adequate to an upper-intermediate level, in which learners are more prepared for different levels of complexity regarding the Present Perfect, such as more-complex sentence types containing subordination or adverbs that are atypical but grammatical, or sentence types containing no adverb at all. The learner should be taught that the Present Perfect can be required by the context of situation, even when certain typical adverbs are not present. In this way, learners' production of the Present Perfect will not be limited to contexts with certain adverbs, but will be extended to less-obvious contexts.

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In addition, it is important to contrast the functions of the Present Perfect with those of the Simple Past and Simple Present forms given their semantic similarity in many cases. It is vital that the contrast of different TA forms with the Present Perfect be conducted with meaningful and unambiguous exemplification that will trigger the learner's cognitive and metacognitive processes. Care should be taken in providing the right context for the right uses of the Present Perfect and avoiding ambiguity by allowing two grammatically-correct TA forms.

It is widely known that the focus of the English grammar courses in Teacher Training Programs is for the students to learn the basics of the grammatical system in English by gaining "declarative and procedural knowledge" (Sugaya & Shirai, 2007, p. 26), in this case about the Present Perfect. Therefore, the challenge is to maintain a balance between the theoretical information that is taught to the students and the practical exercises that they are allowed to do in class. If an imbalance between these two is produced, it is highly recommended that it is shown in the assessment part. Another implication is that this assessment should reflect the in-class practice exercises with which the students are provided, in order for them to gain more "procedural knowledge". Since the practice section in these grammar courses is highly focused and guided towards the target form, it oftentimes causes the learners to approach the practice exercises by relying on "automatized knowledge" (Shirai, 1992), defined as "either interlanguage knowledge which has become automatized or L1 knowledge" (Sugaya & Shirai, 2007, p. 27). More specifically, teachers should try to provide authentic contexts of use which assess learners' actual use (rather than their theoretical knowledge) of the Present Perfect. This will help avoid the learners' generalized use of the target form. Undeniably, a focus on authentic use will constitute a challenge to the traditional format and goals of the existing grammar courses, which do not allow for authentic student production. However, it will be worth the effort to face such a

challenge in order to foster students' meaningful acquisition of the form in question and full form-meaning mapping.

As a conclusion to the findings about proficiency, we might state that these grammar courses have a primary role in helping students build their own grammar little by little and step by step. As for the Present Perfect in particular, going from the simplest semantic dimensions to the most difficult semantic and pragmatic ones should be the goals achieved from the first grammar course to the last.

Another important value of this study is that it provided empirical evidence of how a certain group of formally-instructed grammar learners at university level acquired the functions of the Present Perfect in relation to the main claims of the Aspect Hypothesis and the Prototype Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996). The primary findings revealed that there was a trend in the acquisition of the target form that corroborated the main caveats of the above-mentioned hypotheses. One of those findings is that the participants performed better with atelic verbs in Persistent Situation, considered to be inherently atelic in meaning. Conversely, it was found that the participants performed better with telic verbs in the Experiential Past, regarded as inherently telic. Therefore, we can claim that there is an important effect of lexical aspect in the acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect, and that this effect is also observed at the advanced level. What can be pedagogically proposed from these findings?

This study apparently shows that, despite intensive teaching of the Present Perfect, there is an innate universal mechanism (Bickerton, 1981; Slobin, 1985) inside the learners that signals a predisposition to mark states and processes as well as telicity by means of specific morphemes. Due to the dual meaning of the Present Perfect, the imperfective function of the target form prototypically occurs with atelic verbs and the perfective function with telic verbs. Therefore, it

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is important that teachers know about the existence of this innate tendency, based on the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (Bickerton, 1981), which leads to the formation of natural prototypes of verb type and verb form that are easier to acquire because of their semantic similarity: telic verbs are first used with past morphology and atelic verbs with imperfective morphology. Specifically in the context of this study, the proposed students' innate tendency will be to use telic verbs with perfective meaning, as in the Experiential Past and atelic verbs with imperfective meaning, as in Persistent Situation. The implication of this natural tendency of verb type-meaning association of the Present Perfect is that teachers at the intermediate level should first present the functions of the perfect with the prototypical verbs. This inclusion must be made in the input the learners receive, both in the written form with exemplification and exercises, and in the oral form through teacher instruction. By doing so, teachers will comply with the Distributional Bias Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), which holds that the formation of prototypical combinations of lexical and grammatical aspects is primarily based on the input. This distributional bias may prove more helpful at the lower proficiency levels, as it is cognitively easier for the students to use a type of verb that is semantically congruent with the function of the target form. With this in mind, teachers in the first grammar course can introduce Experiential Past with telic verbs first and Persistent Situation with atelic verbs. Once these natural prototypical combinations are learned, the teacher can introduce less-prototypical combinations with the Experiential Past, extending its use to atelic verbs, first with activities and finally with stative verbs.

Another finding of the study was that both the intermediate and advanced levels performed statistically better in Persistent Situation rather than in Experiential Past. This indicates that students tend to find Persistent Situation easier to learn and use. It seems as though

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the Experiential Past is more difficult to use, probably because American English varieties have been replacing the Present Perfect with the Simple Past, mainly in the perfective functions of the perfect (McCoard, 1978). American English varieties are predominant outside the classroom, and this input type might have an effect on students' production of the target forms. An important implication of this finding is that teachers spend more time teaching and working on those (apparently more-infrequent) uses of the Present Perfect. At the same time, it is vital to teach that different varieties of the English language can allow for divided use in certain contexts, as explained above.

A final pedagogical implication can be made about the exemplars of each of the four verb categories. It is of vital importance that instruction in the Present Perfect includes enough good representatives of the aspectual verb classes that are typically used by native speakers. In addition, based on the findings regarding stative verbs across Persistent Situation and Experiential Past (which yielded very high correctness percentages by both proficiency groups), teachers should remember that there are very high frequency verbs, such as *be* and *have*, which can be regularly inflected in a certain TA form but might simply be rote-learned words which do not indicate actual acquisition of form-meaning associations. Therefore, teachers should include other stative verbs in their instructional input.

All in all, the trends described above in relation to the acquisition of the functions of the Present Perfect can be revealing to the university teacher, and can provide insightful information about the developmental process of the acquisition of the Present Perfect. Knowing about participants' rates of appropriate use gives the teacher a quantitative picture of the acquisitional process of this specific group of students, and allows for necessary adjustments in teaching

practice, in instructional input, and in teaching approaches that may prove more beneficial to the average learner.

Final considerations and recommendations for future research

The present study is one of the very few empirical investigations conducted so far in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) which examined the developmental acquisition of the Present Perfect in direct association to lexical aspect by formally-grammar instructed learners of English with an L1 Spanish background.

As was stated before, the great majority of the studies in the field of SLA tested the core predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis mostly with the acquisition of past and present morphology in diverse L1 backgrounds. In this historical trajectory of TA research in SLA, the acquisition of the Present Perfect has been generally ignored in studies of the Aspect Hypothesis, except for Liszka (2002) and Uno (2014). Therefore, it is in the hope of the author that this investigation shed light to the empirical research regarding a much forgotten TA marker, the Present Perfect.

Despite the pioneering contribution of this study, described above, and its valuable insights into the acquisition of the Present Perfect, there is an obvious need for further research on the same issues, and especially for longitudinal research studies that will allow for a clearer attestation of the emergence and mastery of the target form across proficiency levels. It is highly recommended that studies be conducted with the same target population, so as to track their development in relation to the acquisition of the Present Perfect throughout a longer period of learning, capturing the same participants at different proficiency levels. In this sense, a longitudinal study will provide a more comprehensive and more accurate picture of the path of acquisition and the stages the same learners go through during the learning process.

It is also important to conclude that proficiency played a major role in the accuracy and appropriate use of the target form, which obtained higher percentages in higher levels of proficiency. Another worthy conclusion is that the data results showed an important effect of lexical aspect in the developmental stages of acquisition of the PP, in which telic verbs tended to be used more accurately with the Experiential Past whereas atelic verbs were more correct with Persistent Situation, at both intermediate and advanced levels. This provides further evidence that the effect of lexical aspect was operative in both levels of proficiency, and therefore verb prototypicality was attested to be present as well. In this respect, it is possible to argue that, despite input and instruction, there is an internal tendency to mark telicity through TA markers. In the case of the current study, the data showed that participants had a tendency to mark the atelicity of Persistent Situation with atelic verbs and the telicity of the Experiential past with telic ones. Further research is deemed appropriate in order to gather further evidence about the interconnection of universal verb prototypicality and input distribution.

When conclusions are attempted with regard to the acquisition of the functions of the PP across each verb type (states, activities, accomplishments, achievements), a more unclear pattern of acquisition emerges. Possible explanations that can account for these patterns have been discussed above, examples of which are L1 transfer, input frequency and input bias, sentence-type effect, rote learning of forms, etc. Again further research is considered necessary to further argue in favor of any of these factors.

Summing up, and in tandem with the previous discussion of results, the present study found an interesting interplay of the roles of multiple factors in the acquisition of the Present Perfect in English. The path of the investigation of the acquisition of this TA marker with regard to the predictions made by the AH and the Prototype Theory has successfully started with Liszka

and Uno, and it continued through with this research. The investigative path is open for further enriching research necessary to enlighten the developmental route of acquisition of a much complex and relegated TA marker as the Present Perfect.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. A FORCED-CHOICE TASK (committee members format)

Persistent Situation

States	1. If you punish the employers of illegal immigrants, these immigrants won't be able to find work and will leave the country. Isn't that unfair to those 11 million that are here and _____ here all their lives? a. lived b. have lived c. live 2. My wife and I arrived at our grocery store at about 6:30 this morning, and we _____ here ever since. People come in and out of the store but nobody seems to notice us sitting here in this heat. a. are b. have been c. were
Activities	1. Did you read the local news? A clerk who _____ for the city government since 2006 with access to important documents is accused of revealing letters and memos that apparently show corruption in the mayor's office. a. has worked b. worked c. works 2. Three years ago a team of international scientists found strange pieces of rock. Since then, they _____ the pieces to find out more about their origins. a. studied b. study c. have studied

Accomplishments	1. I _____ the book yet. I only read the extracts that were presented last year.
	
	    a. didn't read b. haven't read c. don't read
	
	    2. The six oil plants in Mexico cannot now meet the nation's needs. Mexico has to import nearly a quarter of its gasoline from the United States. It _____ a new oil plant since the 1970's.
	
	    a. hasn't built b. didn't build c. doesn't build

Achievements	1. A new Washington Post poll today found that nearly 6 in 10 Americans have immediate family members who were hit with a job loss in the past year. They believe that the recession _____no matter what economists say.
	
	           a. hasn't ended b. didn't end c. doesn't end
	
	    2. When I was a teenager, I threw myself into dance and crazy musicals, and I _____ since then. In terms of retirement, I can't imagine not working.
	
	           a. don't stop b. haven't stopped c. didn't stop

Experiential Past

States	1. What to bring to college? Anyone who _____ in a dorm knows that even the simplest project can be impossible without basic tools.
	a. ever lives b. ever lived c. has ever lived
	2. Lara is 22 years old and has suffered from food allergies since she was a child. Because of her allergies, she is usually afraid to go on trips abroad but she _____ on trips to the UK before and has more planned this summer.
	a. is b. has been c. was
Activities	1. Christian Frederick Martin was born in Germany two hundred years ago. Today the Martin name is known by country musicians and by anyone who _____ a guitar.
	a. ever plays b. ever played c. has ever played
	2. Although Vicky, Jim and Rachel all live in the same small town, this is the first time they _____ to one another about that tragic night 15 years ago.
	a. spoke b. have spoken c. speak

Accomplishments	1. We each throw out our trash, and where does most of it go? The afterlife of our garbage is explained by Edward Humes, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who _____ more than 10 books.
	
	     a. writes b. wrote c. has written
	
	 2. The movie premiere last week was a total success. Nobody _____ a movie like this before.
	
	     a. ever saw b. ever sees c. has ever seen

Achievements	1. One indicator of the decline of the quality of American education is that 13 percent of all 17 year-olds in the U.S. are considered functionally illiterate. As a matter of fact, the United States _____ first or second in student achievement test scores in any year so far.
	
	       a. never finishes b. has never finished c. never finished
	
	 2. The director of the Baltimore Museum of Art, Mr. Lehman, plans to create a sculpture garden to attract visitors who _____ the museum before.
	
	       a. never entered b. have never entered c. never enter

Distractors

1.   Imagine our surprise when at a depth of 160 feet, we saw a skull and a bone that belonged to an elephant-like animal that _____ extinct as recently as 9,000 years ago.

a) has become   b) became   c) becomes

2.   "The coffee _____ good," Val said. "Want a cup?" Rose asked. "If it's no trouble", Val replied and Rose took a mug from the cupboard and filled it with coffee, then handed it to her guest.

a) smells   b) has smelled   c) smelled

3.   The organization's future is in the hands of the Financial Inspector who _____ a committee just a week ago to examine the budget and the expenses.

a) has appointed   b) appoints   c) appointed

4.   I think one of the problems is her own uncertainty about the situation. She _____ to speak about it now and it's clear that she is really suffering.

a) hasn't wanted   b) doesn't want   c) didn't want

5.   Every year on the day we legally adopted our son, we _____ with my parents, sister and nieces to celebrate that special event.

a) have eaten out   b) eat out   c) ate out

APPENDIX B. PROFICIENCY TEST: a cloze task.

- **Please fill in the blanks in the following passage with only one word.**

Joe came home from work on Friday. It was payday, but he wasn't *too* excited about it. He knew that *when* he sat down and paid his *bills* and set aside money for groceries, *some* for the car and a small *amount* in his savings account, there wasn't *too* much left over for a good *time*.

He thought about going out for *dinner* at his favorite restaurant, but he *just* wasn't in the mood. He wandered *about* his apartment and ate a sandwich. *For* a while, he couldn't stop himself *from* worrying about the money situation. Finally, *he* got into his car and started *driving*. He didn't have a destination in *mind*, but he knew that he wanted *to* be far away from the city *where* he lived.

He drove onto a quiet country *road*. The country sights made him feel *good*. His mind wandered as he drove *along* small farms and he began to *imagine* living on his own piece of *land* and becoming self-sufficient. It had always *been* a dream of his, but he *had* never done anything to make it *a* reality. Even as he was thinking, *his* logical side was scoffing at his *wild* imaginings.

He debated the advantages and *disadvantages* of living in the country and *growing* his own food. He imagined his *farmhouse* equipped with a solar energy panel *on* the roof to heat the house *in* winter and power a water heater. *He* envisioned fields of vegetables for canning *and* preserving to last through the winter. *If* the crops had a good yield, *then* he could sell the surplus and *buy* some farming equipment with the extra *cash*. Suddenly, Joe stopped thinking and laughed *out* loud, ''I'm really going to go *ahead* with all this?''

APPENDIX C. INSTRUMENT (participants format)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to complete the tasks that follow. Be assured that your answers will be used for scientific reasons only and NOT to evaluate you.

PART ONE: Demographic Information

- **Check or write the answer that best describes you.**

    1.   What is your gender?

    ○ Male   ○ Female   ○ Other

    2.   What is your age?

    3.   How long have you been studying English including University?

    (   ) years

    4.   Check (√) the grammar course you are taking this year.

    ○ Introduction to English Grammar

    ○ English Syntax I

    ○ English Syntax II

    5.   Check (√) **all** grammar courses you have taken more than once. If you have not taken them more than once, check the option None.

    ○ Introduction to English Grammar

    ○ English Syntax I

    ○ English Syntax II

    ○ None

    6.   Check (√) the tenses which have been the most difficult for you to use as a speaker/learner of English.

    ○ The present simple   ○ The perfect tenses   ○ The past progressive

    ○ The present progressive   ○ The past simple   ○ The future

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PART TWO

- **Read the passage and fill in the blanks. Each blank can have only one word**.

Joe came home from work on Friday. It was payday, but he wasn't 1) _____ excited about it. He knew that 2) _____ he sat down and paid his 3) _____ and set aside money for groceries, 4) _____ for the car and a small 5) _____ in his savings account, there wasn't 6) _____ much left over for a good 7) _____.

He thought about going out for 8) _____ at his favorite restaurant, but he 9) _____ wasn't in the mood. He wandered 10) _____ his apartment and ate a sandwich. 11) _____ a while, he couldn't stop himself 12) _____ worrying about the money situation. Finally, 13) _____ got into his car and started 14) _____. He didn't have a destination in 15) _____, but he knew that he wanted 16) _____ be far away from the city 17) _____ he lived.

He drove onto a quiet country 18) _____.The country sights made him feel 19) _____. His mind wandered as he drove 20) _____ small farms and he began to 21) _____ living on his own piece of 22) _____ and becoming self-sufficient. It had always 23) _____ a dream of his, but he 24) _____ never done anything to make it 25) _____ reality. Even as he was thinking, 26) _____ logical side was scoffing at his 27) _____ imaginings.

He debated the advantages and 28) _____ of living in the country and 29) _____ his own food. He imagined his 30) _____ equipped with a solar energy panel 31) _____ the roof to heat the house 32) _____ winter and power a water heater. 33) _____ envisioned fields of vegetables for canning 34) _____ preserving to last through the winter. 35) _____ the crops had a good yield, 36) _____ he could sell the surplus and 37) _____ some farming equipment with the extra 38) _____. Suddenly, Joe stopped thinking and laughed 39) _____ loud, ''I'm really going to go 40) _____ with all this?''

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PART THREE

- **Circle** **the best verb form for each blank.**

      1.   If you punish the employers of illegal immigrants, these immigrants won't be able to find work and will leave the country. Isn't that unfair to those 11 million that are here and _____ here all their lives?

      a) lived   b) have lived   c) live

      2.   Imagine our surprise when at a depth of 160 feet, we saw a skull and a bone that belonged to an elephant-like animal that _____ extinct as recently as 9,000 years ago.

      a) has become   b) became   c) becomes

      3.   My wife and I arrived at our grocery store at about 6:30 this morning, and we _____ here ever since. People come in and out of the store but nobody seems to notice us sitting here in this heat.

      a) are   b) have been   c) were

      4.   Did you read the local news? A clerk who_____ for the city government since 2006 with access to important documents is accused of revealing letters and memos that apparently show corruption in the mayor's office.

      a) has worked   b) worked   c) works

      5.   Three years ago a team of international scientists found strange pieces of rock. Since then, they _____ the pieces to find out more about their origins.

      a) studied   b) study   c) have studied

      6.   "The coffee _____ good," Val said. "Want a cup?" Rose asked. "If it's no trouble", Val replied and Rose took a mug from the cupboard and filled it with coffee, then handed it to her guest.

      a) smells   b) has smelled   c) smelled

      7.   I _____ the book yet. I only read the extracts that were presented last year.

      a) didn't read   b) haven't read   c) don't read

8.   The six oil plants in Mexico cannot now meet the nation's needs. Mexico has to import nearly a quarter of its gasoline from the United States. It _____ a new oil plant since the 1970's.

      a) hasn't built   b) didn't build   c) doesn't build

9.   A new Washington Post poll today found that nearly 6 in 10 Americans have immediate family members who were hit with a job loss in the past year. They believe that the recession _____ no matter what economists say.

    a) hasn't ended   b) didn't end   c) doesn't end

10.   The organization's future is in the hands of the Financial Inspector who _____ a committee just a week ago to examine the budget and the expenses.

      a) has appointed   b) appoints   c) appointed

11.   When I was a teenager, I threw myself into dance and crazy musicals, and I _____ since then. In terms of retirement, I can't imagine not working.

    a) don't stop   b) haven't stopped   c) didn't stop

12.   What to bring to college? Anyone who _____ in a dorm knows that even the simplest project can be impossible without basic tools.

    a) ever lives   b) ever lived   c) has ever lived

13.   I think one of the problems is her own uncertainty about the situation. She _____ to speak about it now and it's clear that she is really suffering.

      a) hasn't wanted   b) doesn't want   c) didn't want

14.   Lara is 22 years old and has suffered from food allergies since she was a child. Because of her allergies, she is usually afraid to go on trips abroad but she _____ on trips to the UK before and has more planned this summer.

      a) is   b) has been   c) was

15.   Christian Frederick Martin was born in Germany two hundred years ago. Today the Martin name is known by country musicians and by anyone who _____ a guitar.

a) ever plays   b) ever played   c) has ever played

16.   Although Vicky, Jim and Rachel all live in the same small town, this is the first time they _____ to one another about that tragic night 15 years ago.

a) spoke   b) have spoken   c) speak

17.   We each throw out our trash, and where does most of it go? The afterlife of our garbage is explained by Edward Humes, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who _____ more than 10 books.

a) writes   b) wrote   c) has written

18.   The movie premiere last week was a total success. Nobody _____ a movie like this before.

a) ever saw   b) ever sees   c) has ever seen

19.   One indicator of the decline of the quality of American education is that 13 percent of all 17 year-olds in the U.S. are considered functionally illiterate. As a matter of fact, the United States _____ first or second in student achievement test scores in any year so far.

a) never finishes   b) has never finished   c) never finished

20.   Every year on the day we legally adopted our son, we _____ with my parents, sister and nieces to celebrate that special event.

a) have eaten out   b) eat out   c) ate out

21.   The director of the Baltimore Museum of Art, Mr. Lehman, plans to create a sculpture garden to attract visitors who _____ the museum before.

a) never entered   b) have never entered   c) never enter

APPENDIX D. Cross tabulation of functions across verb type and across proficiency.

Table 37: *Persistent Situation activity verb, sentence 4.*

groups * ACTSent4 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACTSent4		Total
		.00	1.00	
groups	1.00	11	27	38
	2.00	17	30	47
Total		28	57	85

Table 38: *Persistent Situation activity verb, sentence 5.*

groups * ACTSent5 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACTSent5		Total
		.00	1.00	
groups	1.00	9	29	38
	2.00	4	43	47
Total		13	72	85

Table 39: *Persistent Situation achievement verb, sentence 9.*

groups * ACHSent9 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACHSent9		Total
		.00	1.00	
groups	1.00	19	19	38
	2.00	17	30	47
Total		36	49	85

Table 40: *Persistent Situation achievement verb, sentence 11.*

groups * ACHSent11 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACHSent11		Total
		.00	1.00	
groups	1.00	4	34	38
	2.00	1	46	47
Total		5	80	85

Table 41: *Experiential Past accomplishment verb, sentence 17.*

groups * ACCSent17 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACCSent17		
		.00	1.00	Total
groups	1.00	19	19	38
	2.00	16	31	47
Total		35	50	85

Table 42: *Experiential Past accomplishment verb, sentence 18.*

groups * ACCSent18 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACCSent18		
		.00	1.00	Total
groups	1.00	6	32	38
	2.00	11	36	47
Total		17	68	85

Table 43: *Experiential Past achievement verb, sentence 19.*

groups * ACHSent19 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACHSent19		
		.00	1.00	Total
groups	1.00	19	19	38
	2.00	6	41	47
Total		25	60	85

Table 44: *Experiential Past achievement verb, sentence 21.*

groups * ACHSent21 Crosstabulation

Count

		ACHSent21		
		.00	1.00	Total
groups	1.00	9	29	38
	2.00	10	37	47
Total		19	66	85

APPENDIX E. Cross tabulation for proficiency level across Grammar Course

Table 45: *Proficiency-level groups and Grammar Course*

groups * grammarcourse Crosstabulation

Count

		grammarcourse			
		Intro to EG	ES1	ES2	Total
groups	1.00	17	14	7	38
	2.00	10	14	23	47
Total		27	28	30	85

Note: Group 1 stands for the intermediate level and group 2 for advanced level.

Glossary:

Intro to EG

"Introduction to English Grammar"

ES1

"English Syntax I"

ES2

"English Syntax II"

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Major Professor: Krassimira Charkova

Publications:

- *English For All Tucumanitos*- Level 1 (Student's Book)- Tucumán, Argentina. 2007.

- *English For All Tucumanitos*- Level 1 (Activity Book)- Tucumán, Argentina. 2007. ISBN 978-987-24884-0-6

- *English For All Tucumanitos*- Level 1 (Teacher's Guide)- Tucumán, Argentina. 2007.

- *Curriculum Design for EFL Elementary School level.* Tucumán, Argentina. Año 2007.