# The Development of Past Tense Verbal Morphology in Classroom L2 Spanish

## M. RAFAEL SALABERRY

Penn State University

Previous research (e.g. Andersen 1986, 1991; Bardovi-Harlig and Bergström 1996; Robison 1990, 1995) has shown that the development of aspectual distinctions (inflectional morphology) among adult second language learners is associated with lexical aspect. The present study analyzed the development of Past tense verbal morphology in L2 Spanish among 20 college-level L1 English students. Four native speakers acted as a control group. The study was based on the analysis of oral movie narratives collected at two different times two months apart. The results of the study show that the lexical aspectual semantics of the verb phrase have an increasing influence on the selection of verbal endings throughout development of the L2. In contrast, for the lowest-level learners represented in this study the effect of lexical aspect is minimal compared to the effect of tense contrasts.

## INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the development of Past tense verbal morphology among natural learners (e.g. Dietrich, Klein and Noyau 1995; Klein and Perdue 1992; Meisel 1987; Robison 1990; Sato 1990; Schumann 1987; Trévise 1987) and tutored adult learners (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 1992, 1995; Bergström 1995; Harley 1989; Hasbún 1995; Kaplan 1987; Lafford 1996; Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Ramsay 1990; Robison 1995; Salaberry 1998a) has generated an intense debate on the acquisition of tense-aspect contrasts. Most studies on natural learners show little early use of verbal morphology and arguments have been made for the use of tense distinctions before aspectual marking. On the other hand, most studies on classroom-tutored learners show early development of verbal morphology and an apparent effect of lexical aspectual values on the selection of verbal morphology.

In this study I will analyze the acquisition of the Preterite–Imperfect distinction in L2 Spanish among classroom learners (L1 English speakers) based on the oral retellings of a silent movie. The purpose of the study is to investigate the potential role of lexical semantics in the selection of verbal morphology among instructed second language learners of different levels of proficiency in the target language.

#### ASPECT

Comrie (1976: 3) defines aspect as the 'way of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation' (beginning, middle and end). Aspectual

distinctions in a language can be marked overtly (grammatical aspect) or covertly (inherent lexical aspect). Grammatical aspect is normally represented in verbal endings. For instance, the Preterite-Imperfect contrast in Spanish is the realization of the Perfective-Imperfective aspectual distinction by means of inflectional morphology. In contrast, the inherent lexical meaning of the verb is determined by the temporal features intrinsic in the semantics of the predicate in its base form and associated arguments and adjuncts. Vendler (1967) classified verbs into four types: states (no input of energy), activities (arbitrary beginning and end point: processes), accomplishments (durative and inherent end point) and achievements (inherent end point, but non-durative). The following are examples of each category: statives (to be, to have, to want, etc.), activities (to run, to walk, to breathe, etc.), accomplishments (to write a novel, to build a house, to make a chair), and achievements (to notice something/someone, to realize something, to reach the peak, etc.). The Vendlerian classification of aspect is particularly important because it has been used as the framework of analysis of aspectual morphological marking in the studies of L2 Spanish by Andersen (1986, 1991) and subsequent researchers (e.g. Hasbún 1995; Ramsay 1990).

A more formal characterization of lexical aspectual classes of predicates has been provided by Dowty (1986: 42):

Stative: A sentence  $\varphi$  is a stative if it follows from the truth of  $\varphi$  at an interval I that  $\varphi$  is true at all subintervals of I.

Activity: A sentence  $\varphi$  is an activity if it follows from the truth of  $\varphi$  at an interval I that  $\varphi$  is true at all subintervals of I down to a certain limit in size.

Accomplishment/achievement: A sentence  $\varphi$  is an accomplishment/ achievement if it follows from the truth of  $\varphi$  at an interval I that  $\varphi$  is false at all subintervals of L.

Two important features of Dowty's definition are to be noted. First, Dowty does not distinguish between accomplishments and achievements: punctuality is not considered relevant (see also Klein 1994, Verkuyl 1994). Second, the value of lexical aspectual classes is determined by the inherent lexical semantics of verbal predicates, internal arguments, external arguments and adjuncts (see also Maingueneau 1994; Smith 1991; Verkuyl 1994). For the purpose of the present study, Dowty's classification of lexical aspect according to three categories (statives, activities and telic events) will be followed. Additional empirical evidence for the three-type classification will be discussed in the third section. The operational tests to classify lexical aspectual classes will also be presented in the third section.

#### THE LEXICAL ASPECT HYPOTHESIS

Several researchers have directly tied the inherent lexical value of the verb to the development of Past tense verbal morphology (e.g. Andersen 1986, 1991, 1994; Andersen and Shirai 1994, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig 1994; Bardovi-Harlig and Bergström 1996; Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds 1995; Robison 1990, 1995). The lexical aspect hypothesis claims that the learners' selection of verbal morphology is related to the inherent lexical semantics of the verb phrase: telic events (achievements and accomplishments), simultaneous processes (activities), and states. The lexical aspect hypothesis is based on theoretical principles and empirical data. The Relevance Principle (aspect is more relevant to the meaning of the verb than tense, mood or agreement) and the Congruence Principle (learners choose the morpheme whose aspectual meaning is most congruent with the aspectual meaning of the verb) represent the theoretical foundation of this hypothesis. On the other hand, empirical data from adolescent natural language learners (two siblings) learning Spanish in Puerto Rico constitute the original piece of evidence that led Andersen (1986, 1991) to first articulate the claim of the lexical aspect hypothesis for second language acquisition. Andersen (1991: 318) argued that L2 learners follow a particular sequence in the development of aspectual markers:  $\emptyset \to \text{punctual} \to \text{telic} \to \text{dynamic} \to \text{statives}$ . For the development of Past tense verbal morphology in Spanish, Andersen (1986, 1991) proposed the following sequence of stages: the use of Imperfect spreads from stative verbs to non-stative verbs, and the use of Preterite spreads from punctual verbs (achievement) to non-punctual verbs (up to statives). This gradual spread of the use of grammatical aspect according to verb type is argued to occur sequentially in time in eight stages (1991: 315). Andersen and Shirai (1994) have expanded the framework of analysis of the development of verbal morphology to incorporate factors such as distributional biases in the input and discursive factors. Their position does not necessarily contradict the basic claim made by Andersen (1986, 1991) about the role of the lexical semantics of the verb phrase in the use of inflectional morphology.

The development of verbal morphology in L2 Spanish among L1 English speakers is especially important due to the different ways in which tense and aspect are overtly represented in these two languages. In Spanish, the Preterite–Imperfect contrast (mapping of Perfective–Imperfective semantic distinction) is obligatorily marked by means of verbal endings (morphosyntactically). In contrast, English does not make such an overt grammatical distinction (i.e. limited inflectional system). To convey information about the aspectual 'contour' of a specific situation English uses (i) aspectual particles and (ii) the progressive.2 The most common means of conveying aspectual distinctions in Past tense English is the use of the progressive (Imperfective aspect). However, Bull (1965: 170) claims that, despite the fact that the -ing endings (and also the used to construction) in English signal the use of Imperfect in Spanish, the simple Past tense in English is 'completely ambivalent, and speakers of English, as a result, are not trained to observe aspectual differences'.

## PREVIOUS EMPIRICAL STUDIES

#### Previous studies of natural learners

In general, most studies on natural learners do not show any extended use of verbal morphology as usually reported in the case of classroom learners (e.g. Dietrich et al. 1995; Klein and Perdue 1992; Meisel 1987; Perdue and Klein 1993; Sato 1990; Schumann 1987; Trévise 1987; Véronique 1987), or they show that verbal morphology develops very slowly (e.g. Andersen 1986, Klein et al. 1995; Schumann 1987). And, in cases where there is extended use of verbal endings the claim of the lexical aspect hypothesis is only partially corroborated (e.g. Robison 1990; Rohde 1996). For instance, the data from Robison (1990) showed support for the aspect hypothesis for the punctualdurative distinction but not for the stative-dynamic distinction. That is to say, Robison's L1 Spanish subject marked a higher proportion of stative verbs instead of dynamic verbs as predicted by the aspect hypothesis—with the progressive marker (-ing inflection). Similarly, Rohde (1996: 1133) claims that his 'data do not suggest that the emerging inflections mark the lexical aspect of the verbs, as there are more achievements than activity verbs in Past contexts that remain uninflected'. The latter finding raises additional questions about the early use of Past tense verbal morphology that are not directly addressed by the lexical aspect hypothesis.

# Previous studies of tutored L2 Spanish learners

In this section I will analyze three empirical studies on the acquisition of L2 Spanish aspect among adult tutored learners: Ramsay (1990), Hasbún (1995) and Lafford (1996). These three studies share some similarities in data collection procedures with the one to be reported in this paper as well as some differences. On the one hand, all three studies are based on the analysis of elicited narratives (as opposed to personal narratives) in L2 Spanish among L1 English speakers. On the other hand, they differ in terms of the operationalization of the following constructs: planning time (e.g. number of times movie was shown, time alloted to produce narrative), functional requirements of the task (i.e. communicative pressure to fulfill the task), and mode of production (i.e. oral versus written).

Ramsay (1990) analyzed L2 Spanish guided oral production of 30 English native speakers (volunteers from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience with Spanish). The volunteers were ranked into five developmental groups of six subjects each. The elicitation procedure used by Ramsay was based on a series of pictures from a children's book (Disney's 'The Magic Stick'). The story was presented to the students as a series of ten episodes (ten pictures) with captions. The text associated with each picture included blank spaces that students had to complete with text. The first episode of the story did not have any blank spaces; it was all text. The amount of text in the remaining nine episodes decreased gradually. The inclusion of text with

each picture was used to prevent students and native speakers from using Present instead of Past marking in their narratives.3 The analysis of Ramsay's data has been interpreted in support of the lexical aspect hypothesis (e.g. Andersen and Shirai 1994: 143; Hasbún 1995: 143) based on the following features of the particular distribution of verbal morphology (stages 1 to 3 in Ramsay's data): (i) in general students do not mark statives with Past tense markers until stage 3. but some telic events are marked with Past tense since stage 1, (ii) at stage 3 learners mark statives (mostly) with the Imperfect, (iii) in contrast, approximately 25 per cent of all telic events at stage 2 and about 60 per cent of telic events at stage 3 are marked with the Preterite, and (iv) no telic event is marked with the Imperfect during stages 2 or 3.

Similarly, Hasbún (1995) analyzed written data from 80 L1 English speakers enrolled in four different levels of Spanish instruction: first to fourth year. The analysis of a written task was selected because it was assumed it would generate longer narratives (p. 98). The written narrative was based on an 8minute silent video which was an excerpt from the film *Modern Times*.<sup>4</sup> After the students watched the film twice they were asked to narrate it in writing. They were allotted 40 minutes to complete the task. The students were asked to start the story with the phrase 'Había una vez . . . ' (Once upon a time . . . ) to prevent 'advanced learners and native speakers of Spanish from shifting to the Historical Present'. 5 According to the experimental instructions, advanced non-native speakers rarely used Present. Native speakers were less affected by the instructions and used Present to a larger extent than advanced non-native

The results of Hasbún's study can be summarized as follows. First, the distribution of Preterite-Imperfect in the categories accomplishment and achievement among both natives and non-natives remained proportional in contrast with the distribution of grammatical marking of statives and activities: the hypothesized spread of use of Preterite marking from achievement to accomplishment verbs did not occur. Second, Hasbún's data did not show a spread of Past tense marking (Preterite) from telic to atelic events (activity verbs) and later to stative verbs. In contrast, the marking of tense distinction occurred in second year across all categories of aspectual class. In fact, the first uses of Past tense marking did not occur with achievements, but mostly with statives (followed by accomplishments and activities). The overall use of the Preterite in first year (10 instances) corresponded to four 'frequently used verbs:' ser (to be), tener (to have), hablar (to speak) and ir (to go). The first two are stative verbs. The only instance of an Imperfect corresponded to another stative verb estar (to be). In second year all events (atelic and telic) were marked with Preterite in roughly proportionally similar ways. On the other hand, statives in second year were mainly marked with the Imperfect. In fact, Hasbún (1995: 204) states that '(b) eginning at Level 2, the learners in this study are most likely using verbal morphology to establish tense differences. There is no definitive evidence to prove that they are only redundantly marking lexical aspect since the

grammatical markers are also tense aspects [sic].' In sum, Hasbún concluded that 'it was impossible to unequivocally place (the students) in any of the 8 stages posited by Andersen' (pp. 84-5, italics added).

Finally, Lafford (1996) asked thirteen L2 Spanish students from three different levels of proficiency (based on the ACTFL-OPI scale) to do an oral retell of a 10-minute silent video (The Sorcerer's Apprentice from Disney). She analyzed the data from two different perspectives: telicity (atelic versus telic verbs) and grounding (foreground versus background). A summary of the distribution of morphological markers in the data from that study is presented in Table 1.

The analysis of these data shows that: (i) the majority of verbs were atelic verbs (across all levels), (ii) among the subjects from the intermediate low and intermediate mid-levels the use of Past tense was represented with the Preterite, (iii) the only uses of the Imperfect among the students in the intermediate high level were associated with atelic verbs conveying background information, and (iv) the proportion of Past tense-Present tense was higher for telic verbs across all levels. In essence, among low or mid-learners the Imperfect is nonexistent, whereas the Preterite is the first Past tense form used irrespective of verb type. That is to say, the Preterite may be acting as a default marker of Past across lexical aspectual classes to the exclusion of the Imperfect. On the other hand, the use of the Preterite seems to be associated with telic verbs in proportional terms: for the intermediate low level 83 per cent of telic verbs are marked with Preterite versus 15 per cent for atelic verbs and for the intermediate mid-level 48 per cent of telic verbs are marked with Preterite versus 23 per cent for atelic verbs. However, the results of Lafford's study-even though suggestive-must be taken with caution due to the low number of tokens per cell (both within and across levels).

Table 1: Distribution of morphological marking of verbs by level: atelic/telic. (Adapted from Lafford, 1996)

	Interm. low	Interm. mid	Interm. high
Preterite	6/5	19/11	32/35
Imperfect	0/0	0/0	46/0
Progressive	1/0	1/0	9/0
Present	34/1	63/12	67/7
TOTAL	41/6	83/23	154/42

#### PRESENT STUDY

## **Hypothesis**

The overview of previous research from the previous section shows that there are theoretical as well as empirical reasons to investigate the relevance of the claim made by the lexical aspect hypothesis. More specifically, it is important to test the claim of the lexical aspect hypothesis with empirical data from classroom learners. The analysis of the findings from previous studies determined the operationalization of the following null hypotheses:

H<sub>0</sub>: The use of Past tense morphological marking in L2 Spanish of adult tutored learners is independent of the effect of inherent lexical aspectual value of verbal predicates.

The selected target language was Spanish as there is an overt marking of the Perfective-Imperfective distinction that is obligatorily encoded in Past tense verbal morphology (i.e. Preterite-Imperfect). English does not make such an overt grammatical distinction of aspect in Past tense.

## **Subjects**

The participants were 20 college-level adult native speakers of English and four native speakers of Spanish. Sixteen of the twenty L1 English students were enrolled in regular Spanish courses. The students were in four different levels of academic instruction (four students from each level): second semester (SPA112), third semester (SPA123), advanced third semester (SPA203) and an introductory literature course (SPA311). The students from the less advanced courses (SPA112 and SPA123) met five times a day (one hour of lecture and four hours of conversational practice). The students from the advanced courses (SPA203 and SPA311) met three times a week. All volunteers were offered a monetary retribution in exchange for their participation in the experimental tasks: \$10 for two hours of data collection per student.

All subjects were volunteers recruited from each level of instruction. However, to improve the discrimination among levels, learners from second to third semester levels (i.e. SPA112, SPA123 and SPA203) were also screened according to scores in two standardized discrete tests of Spanish. For instance, students from second semester had to be below a pre-specified cut-off score to be able to qualify for the study. It is important to mention that most students had taken Spanish as an academic subject in High School: from an average of 1.75 years among SPA112 students to an average of 3.75 years among SPA203 students. Finally, only two students from the advanced section (SPA311) had traveled to a Spanish-speaking country (with a minimum exposure of two weeks using Spanish). There was also a group of four near-native speakers of Spanish and a group of four native speakers of Spanish. The near-native speakers were graduate students who had had prolonged exposure to the

target language mainly through academic courses: two were studying Spanish literature, one was a linguistics student who taught Spanish and the fourth one was a student in Rural Sociology who had lived in several countries in Central America. The near-native speakers' group was important for determining the highest degree of control of the L2 verbal morphology among literate subjects whose exposure to the target language had been mainly through classroom instruction. The native speakers' group was used as a control group to ascertain the validity of the data collection procedure. As it turned out, the inclusion of the native and near-native speaker groups was very important for the analysis of the data from the classroom students (see analysis and discussion of results below).

#### Materials

Two short excerpts from the silent film *Modern Times* by Charlie Chaplin were selected for this study: Alone and Hungry (5 minutes and 20 seconds), and An Accident Occurred at the Store (6 minutes). A summary of the events depicted by each one of the Chaplin stories is presented in Appendix A. The selected films were chosen for four main reasons. First, both films show a series of discrete sequenced actions (foreground) as well as simultaneous actions which constitute the background of the story. Second, the use of a story whose content is known to both the researcher and the students makes the task of analyzing interlanguage data easier and more reliable (Bardovi-Harlig 1995). Third, the use of films analyzed in previous studies allows for the replication of findings from other languages or hypotheses on the analysis of the development of aspect. Excerpts from the film Modern Times have been used in previous empirical studies such as the European Science Foundation Project (e.g. Klein and Perdue 1992), and specific studies on the L2 acquisition of French (Bergström 1995), English (Bardovi-Harlig 1995), and Spanish (Hasbún 1995; Liskin-Gasparro 1997). Finally, narratives based on plots known to both interlocutors (e.g. movie narratives) allow for the control of avoidance mechanisms. On the other hand, personal narratives allow the speaker to elude the use of difficult constructions by means of avoidance mechanisms because the interlocutor cannot control the topic or direction of the narrative. The latter is a serious problem for the analysis of data from personal narratives of beginning and intermediate second language students with limited control of the target language.

#### Procedure of data collection

All the data were collected at two different times during the Fall academic semester: mid-September and mid-November. The interval of two months between the two times of data collection was considered to be appropriate to measure the degree of development of Past tense marking across time within each individual learner. 6 Native speakers and near-native speakers performed the same tasks in one single session. The order of the tasks administered in each session was the same for all groups. All participants were interviewed in pairs with other students from their same level. In previous studies (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 1994; Bergström 1995) the Chaplin films were shown twice. However, in this study the films were shown only once to minimize the effect of planning and monitoring (Ellis 1987; Ochs 1979; Tarone 1983, 1988).

To generate a narration in the Past tense students were asked to play the role of a witness who had seen all the events depicted in the specific movie. Subsequently, the witness was requested to narrate the story to another student who played the role of a detective in charge of taking the report from the witness. Finally the student who played the role of the detective was requested to narrate what happened (as narrated by the witness) to the chief of detectives. A native speaker or near-native speaker of Spanish played the role of chief. The role play was intended to create communicative pressure on the student who narrated the movie, since the speaker knew that the interlocutor had to rely on such narrative to tell the same story to another person (see Tarone 1983, 1985 for the importance of communicative pressure in second language data elicitation). The students received help with vocabulary during the narration task whenever they requested it. Help was provided by the researcher during the first narrative and by the native speaker or near-native speaker who played the role of the chief of detectives during the retelling of the film narrated by another student. All requests for help were included in the transcription of the protocols.

To avoid possible extraneous effects created by differences in the order and content of instruction given to each subject, the researcher wrote a text which was rehearsed and repeated (not read) almost verbatim to each participant before the task:

You are going to watch a silent movie of approximately five minutes. I would like to ask you to play the role of the witness who has seen the events that happened *yesterday* and tell what *happened* to the detective in charge of the investigation (the other student). Please remember to be as precise as possible because later the detective will have to tell what *happened yesterday* to the police commissioner.

After a student finished watching the movie in private, s/he joined a second student in the adjacent room. The researcher again repeated the instructions to both subjects, but this case in Spanish to make the transition to the narrative task in Spanish easier.

Tú fuiste testigo (witness) de lo que sucedió ayer en la calle/almacén. Cuéntale (tell) lo que pasó al detective. El detective le debe contar lo que pasó ayer al jefe de policía. Por eso debes ser lo más preciso posible en tu narración.

In the case of the beginning students the instructions were also given in English to ascertain that both students understood the task correctly. In both sets of instructions (English and Spanish) the words yesterday and happened (the latter most salient as a Past tense in Spanish: pasó versus pasa) were stressed (underlined words in text of instructions). Native and near-native speakers also received the same set of instructions but only in Spanish, since the language used with them during the interaction (e.g. greetings, small talk) was only Spanish. In sum, the selection of a role-play situation was important to maintain the highest possible degree of communicative relevance and meaningfulness of task (cf. Tarone 1983, 1985, 1995).<sup>7</sup>

## Classification of verbs: operational tests

For the analysis of the movie narrative all verbs were classified according to the actual marking of verbal morphology during the on-line task. Five different categories were considered for this analysis: Preterite, Imperfect, Present, Infinitive and Progressive. This type of classification was straightforward. Concomitantly, all verbs were classified according to their inherent lexical aspectual semantics. Three categories were considered for this second classificatory system: statives, atelic events, and telic events. The classification of each verb in terms of inherent semantic aspect was done by the researcher in accordance with two major criteria: telicity and stativity. Two operational tests were used to distinguish lexical aspectual classes:8

Test of stativity distinguished stative versus non-stative verbs: If the verb cannot have a habitual interpretation it is a stative verb.

Test of telicity distinguished telic versus atelic verbs: If you stop in the middle of V-ing have you done the act of V (entailment test)?9

The application of these tests was performed sequentially. The application of each test will be shown with the following examples based on the two sentences below:

(Ser) horrible su muerte = Her death (to be) horrible

Ella (salir) del cuarto = She (to leave) the room

First, we apply the test of stativity: can we use the verb *ser* in a habitual sense in the framework in which it has been embedded? No. Then the verb ser is a state verb. The second test becomes irrelevant in this case. The same procedure is applied to the second sentence; can we use the verb salir in a habitual sense in the framework in which it has been embedded? Yes. Then it is a non-stative verb. The second test needs to be applied: if you stop in the middle of leaving the room, have you left the room? (Si paras en el proceso de salir del cuarto, has salido?) No. Then, salir is a telic verb. To ensure impartiality, the classification of verbs was done with the verbs in their infinitive form to avoid the bias of the effect of the specific morphological marker selected by the subject (the preservation of the morphological marker used by the subjects entails circular results). In contrast, the effect of the context of the phrase or sentence in which the verbs were used (both arguments and adjuncts) was considered essential for the adequate classification of verb types (see section entitled 'Aspect').

The reliability of the classification system of lexical aspectual classes was assessed in two different ways: (i) interrater reliability and (ii) intrarater reliability. 10 First, the classification of verbs from a subset of the narratives (four students from four different levels) was compared with the classification made by two other raters on the same subset of verbs. The alternative raters were both native speakers of Spanish. One of the raters had some experience with the classification of lexical aspectual classes in Spanish through previous empirical research of her own. The second alternative rater was a linguistics student who specialized in Spanish syntax and semantics and who was familiar with the classification of lexical aspect. All three raters classified the verbs independently according to the specific operational tests reviewed above. The classification of verbs done by the researcher concurred on 85 per cent of the items classified by each one of the other two raters. The researcher then considered the use of specific criteria for the application of the operational tests based on the suggestions made by the alternative raters (see below). Subsequently, the classification of all verbs from the narrative was made within a month after the collection of the second set of data (mid-December). Four months after the first overall classification of verbs was finished a subset of verbs from the narratives (four students from four levels) was classified again by the researcher without access to the previous classification. The comparison of both sets of verb type classification (time 1 and time 2) showed a 96 per cent coefficient of intrarater reliability.

The most important criteria for the classification of verbal predicates according to lexical aspectual classes in the narrative task were based on the following broad categories: (i) aspectual verbs, (ii) inception of state versus state, (iii) modals and main lexical verbs, (iv) verbs following prepositions, and (v) negative clauses. First, aspectual verbs may be classified into inchoative verbs (e.g. empezar, to start), protractive verbs (e.g. quedarse, to remain), cumulative verbs (e.g. continuar, to continue) and completive verbs (e.g. acabar de, to finish) (see Fleischman 1990: 22; Sebastian and Slobin 1994: 257–8). In all cases the focus of the operational test was the aspectual verb rather than the main lexical verb. The use of inchoative and completive aspectual verbs generated in all cases—by definition—telic events. Protractive verbs were usually classified as telic events since they essentially refer to the inception of the protracted state. The lexical aspectual class associated with the use of cumulative verbs was indeterminate (high correlation to local context) because verbs such as *continuar* may refer to the actual continuation of an event or to the resumption of the specific activity. For example, continuar trabajando (to continue working) may sometimes refer to the beginning of work (after the lunch recess), in which case generates a telic event. Alternatively, continuar trabajando may refer to the actual continuation of the activity (atelic) while something else happened (e.g. the visit of the

inspector to the production plant while the workers continued their work oblivious to the arrival of the inspector).

Second, a major point of discrepancy among previous empirical studies was the status of states versus beginning or end of states (e.g. Bybee 1995; Comrie 1976; Dowty 1986; Guitart 1978; Klein 1994; Smith 1983; Studerus 1989). For example, Hasbún (1995) does not distinguish between inception or end of a state and the state itself, whereas Robison classifies the beginning of a state as a 'punctual stative'. For this study, the inceptive or completive value of stative verbs was classified as a telic event (beginning or completion of a state). For example, the following predicate was classified as a telic event and not as a stative verb due to the effect of the adverbial phrase that precedes the verb (inchoative meaning): después que (saber) la verdad (after that I (to know) the truth). Third, the use of modals, as expected, was extensive. *Poder* (to be able to), querer (to desire, to want) and deber (to have to, must) were among the most typical modals used by most subjects. The operational test of lexical aspectual class was applied to the modal verb and not the main lexical predicate. For instance, to steal (robar) is normally classified as a telic event, whereas to be able to steal (poder robar) will be classified as a stative verb (most contexts):

Chaplin (poder) robar

Chaplin (querer) robar

Chaplin (deber) robar

None of these examples entails the actual realization of the main event, but rather the state conveyed by the modal verb. Similarly, the verb to try (*tratar*) occurs with a main lexical verb. In the latter case, the operational tests determine that *tratar* is an activity verb in the majority of cases (event with no inherent end point).

Fourth, the selection of lexical aspectual class was not overridden in cases where there was an incorrect choice of preposition or the absence of the preposition as long as the reference was easily identifiable in the context of the narrative. For instance, in the following sentences the use of the preposition *por* entails that the characters wandered aimlessly around the store (activity verb), whereas the use of the intended preposition *para* (it is clear from the movie clip that the characters were going towards the store) generates a telic event.

Van por la tienda = (They) wander around the store

Van para la tienda = (They) go towards the store

Finally, the use of negative expressions was not considered different than affirmative statements for the classification of inherent lexical semantics as a matter of practicality. That is to say, there is a deep epistemological (or otherwise logical) problem created by the assumption of a non-existent

situation which would be difficult to classify within the constraints of the present operational tests. On the other hand, if we consider that the constellation of verbal predicate and associated arguments and adjuncts are the major determinants of lexical aspectual classes, we may assume that a negative expression will not necessarily change the lexical semantics of the expression.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Tables 2 and 3 display a summary of the results from the analysis of the protocols from the movie narratives. A total of 2,054 verb tokens were analyzed in the data from all four groups of students. Table 2 displays the raw counts of verb tokens across lexical aspectual classes by level. 11 The results from both native and near-native speakers were not included in Tables 2 and 3 because both groups of subjects narrated the movies using Present instead of Past tense.<sup>12</sup> This is because Spanish Present tense does not show any overt morphological marking of aspectual contrasts: Present tense is inherently Imperfective (Bybee 1995; Bybee and Dahl 1989). An extended discussion of this outcome will be presented in the discussion section below.

The analysis of Table 2 reveals the following: (i) the number of verb tokens increases with the level of experience of the students, (ii) the number of verb tokens per level remains almost unchanged from Time 1 to Time 2, (iii) the number of verb tokens is unequally distributed across lexical aspectual classes irrespective of level, and (iv) SPA112 is the only group which does not show a contrast of Past tense morphological marking by means of the use of both Preterite and Imperfect (with the exception of five tokens with Imperfective morphology out of a total of 316 tokens for both times). The absence of the Imperfect verbal ending among SPA112 students is particularly important at Time 2 because the Imperfect had been introduced as a formal grammatical topic—and had been practiced—during the two weeks prior to the collection of the movie narratives at Time 2. In contrast, the data from the other three groups of learners reveals that the Imperfect was used across all lexical aspectual classes. However, the distribution was not equally balanced for all groups. The comparison of total number of verb tokens with Past tense morphology shows that for the SPA123 group the use of Imperfect corresponds to 17 per cent (42 out of 245 tokens) and 16 per cent (29 out of 178 tokens) of all verbs used in Past tense at Times 1 and 2 respectively. For the SPA203 group the use of Imperfect corresponds to 32 per cent and 22 per cent of all verbs marked with Past tense morphology at Times 1 and 2 respectively. Finally, the use of the Imperfect among SPA311 students corresponds to 37 per cent and 35 per cent at Times 1 and 2 respectively. In sum, the use of the Imperfect increases according to level of experience with the target language from non-use of the Imperfect (SPA112) to employing the Imperfect with roughly 35 per cent of all verbs marked with Past tense morphology (SPA311). That is to say, while the use of Imperfect

Table 2: Raw counts of morphological marking by lexical class for Times 1 and 2 (movie retelling)

	TIME 1				TIME 2			
	Telic	Activ.	Stative	TOTAL	Telic	Activ.	Stative	TOTAL
SPA112 ( <i>n</i> =4)								
Preterite	28	12	7	47	61	5	9	75
Imperfect	0	0	1	1	2	0	2	4
Present	55	9	27	91	41	9	20	70
Infinitive	10	1	0	11	10	7	0	17
Progressive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	93	22	35	150	114	21	31	166
<b>SPA123</b> ( <i>n</i> =4)								
Preterite	150	24	29	203	124	13	12	149
Imperfect	14	8	20	42	10	0	19	29
Present	23	5	40	68	33	1	34	68
Infinitive	2	1	0	3	4	0	0	4
Progressive	1	13	2	16	6	5	0	11
TOTAL	190	51	91	332	177	19	65	261
<b>SPA203</b> ( <i>n</i> =4)								
Preterite	87	7	8	102	94	6	5	105
Imperfect	4	5	38	47	2	3	25	30
Present	9	2	26	37	12	11	21	44
Infinitive	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1
Progressive	0	5	1	6	1	2	1	4
TOTAL	101	20	73	194	110	22	52	184
<b>SPA311</b> ( <i>n</i> =3)								
Preterite	164	8	3	175	148	14	10	172
Imperfect	6	6	73	85	12	4	76	92
Present	59	14	39	112	42	7	27	76
Infinitive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Progressive	7	13	0	20	10	25	0	35
TOTAL	236	41	115	392	212	50	113	375

increases as a proportion of use of Past tense forms, the use of Preterite decreases as a proportion of Past tense marking.<sup>13</sup>

The raw counts of verb tokens from Table 2 were converted into percentages in Table 3: distribution of morphological markers across levels and across time (e.g. all verbs marked with Preterite across all lexical aspectual classes).

The analysis of Table 3 shows that the effect of lexical aspectual categories is associated with level of experience in the target language up to the point where the consequences of such an effect start to diminish. This is supported by the concurrent examination of both longitudinal and cross level analyses of the data. Of particular importance is the analysis of the cells that represent the strongest association of lexical aspect and grammatical aspect: Preterite with telic events and Imperfect with statives (i.e. the Congruence Principle). In fact, the increase in the use of the Preterite with telic events is consistent and gradual both across time within each group and across levels: we identify a change from 74 per cent (SPA123, Time 1) to 83 per cent (SPA123, Time 2) to 85 per cent (SPA203, Time 1) to 90 per cent (SPA203, Time 2), and finally to 94 per cent (SPA311, Time 1). However, in the movement from Time 1 to Time 2 within the SPA311 group the direction of change is reversed: 86 per cent of verbs marked with Preterite are telic events. This slight change may plausibly signal a tenuous attempt at marking viewpoint aspect (see Smith 1983, 1991). 14 That is to say, learners may begin to realize that the values of inherent lexical semantics may contradict the values of grammatical aspect. In fact, this reversal in the constant increase towards complete marking of verbal morphology according to lexical aspect was shown in previous studies on academic learning of L2 Spanish as well (e.g. Hasbún 1995; Ramsay 1990).

A similar trend is evident in the use of the Imperfect: a consistent and gradual increase both across time and across levels towards complete correspondence of Imperfective morphology with lexical aspect. In this case we identify a change of 48 per cent (SPA123, Time 1) to 66 per cent (SPA123, Time 2) to 81 per cent (SPA203, Time 1) to 83 per cent (SPA203, Time 2), and finally to 86 per cent (SPA311, Time 1). Once again we notice that in the movement from Time 1 to Time 2 within the SPA311 group the direction of change is reversed with the percentage moving slightly back to the mark of 83 per cent. In sum, the effect of lexical aspectual class with level of experience in the target language is substantiated with the analysis of both morphological markers of Past tense in parallel (concurrent effects).

#### Discussion

The analysis of the data from this study leads to the partial rejection of the null hypothesis. That is to say, for the beginning stages of acquisition (represented by the SPA112 learners) the use of Past tense verbal morphology in L2 Spanish among adult tutored learners is independent of the effect of inherent lexical aspectual value of verbal predicates. On the other hand, there is

Table 3: Distribution of lexical aspectual classes by verbal morphology (across time in percentages)

	TIME 1			TIME 2				
	Telic %	Activ.	State %	Tokens %	Telic %	Activ.	State %	Tokens %
SPA112								
Preterite	60	26	15	47	81	7	12	75
Imperfect	0	0	100	1	50	0	50	4
Present	60	10	30	91	59	13	29	70
Infinitive	91	9	0	11	59	41	0	17
Progressive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPA123								
Preterite	74	12	14	203	83	9	8	149
Imperfect	33	19	48	42	34	0	66	29
Present	34	7	59	68	49	1	50	68
Infinitive	67	33	0	3	100	0	0	4
Progressive	6	81	13	16	55	45	0	11
SPA203								
Preterite	85	7	8	102	90	6	5	105
Imperfect	9	11	81	47	7	10	83	30
Present	24	5	70	37	27	25	48	44
Infinitive	50	50	0	2	100	0	0	1
Progressive	0	83	17	6	25	50	25	4
SPA311								
Preterite	94	5	2	175	86	8	6	172
Imperfect	7	7	86	85	13	4	83	92
Present	53	13	35	112	55	9	36	76
Infinitive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Progressive	35	65	0	20	29	71	0	35

support for the claim that the inherent lexical semantics of the verbal predicate correlates with the use of Past tense verbal morphology for stages subsequent to the first period of instruction (SPA123 to SPA311). There are also signs of a further stage of development among the more advanced students (SPA311), possibly related to the marking of viewpoint aspect. In fact, the highest degree of association of atelic verbs and Imperfect and, on the other hand, telic verbs and Preterite in the use of Past tense verbal morphology occurs for SPA311 students at Time 1. However, such degree of association begins to subside after two months (Time 2, SPA311). In other words, at time 2 advanced learners have begun to mark some verbs according to viewpoint aspect. Even though the data on this proposed reversal effect is not particularly strong, it is important to point out that they corroborate the results from previous studies that included L2 Spanish students with more experience in the target language (e.g. Hasbún 1995; Ramsay 1990).

One of the most important findings of this study is the fact that the lowest level learners appear to be using a single marker of Past tense across lexical aspectual classes: a default Past tense marker. However, given that the results are not categorical with regards to the use of the Preterite (Present tense forms were also used), it is important to consider two potential criticisms as to the value of such claim. First, it is possible, as Shirai (1997) claims, that the use of Past tense morphology among SPA112 students did not reflect knowledge of such morphological marker: '[students were] trying their best to produce notyet-acquired Preterite forms using conscious effort'. Shirai adduces that this is the likely outcome of the demands of the task in terms of memory and communicative demands. In fact, the increased communicative demands of the task constituted an explicit feature of the research design of the present study. However, Shirai's assumption about the underlying nature of the cognitive process that led students to use Past tense marking with some verbs, but not others misses the point.<sup>15</sup> I will elaborate on an alternative interpretation of these data along the lines of the potential existence of a default marker of Past tense.

As Shirai argues, the use of Past tense in the narratives of the less proficient subjects signals that temporal relations are an important concept to mark in the use of the target language (whether learners are successful in marking them or not). And, as shown in the previous section, the data revealed that the SPA112 students were not capable of marking Past tense on all verb phrases. However, it is not the extent to which these learners failed to mark Past tense verbal morphology that matters, but the extent to which they succeeded. In other words, these students did mark Past tense with some verb phrases, and in so doing they relied on one single marker of Past (Preterite). Notice also that this happened despite the fact that instruction on the use of the alternative morphological marker of Past (Imperfect) was introduced (and practiced) during the two weeks prior to the second time of data collection. In sum, the requirements of the task (triggered by the conditions set by the data elicitation procedure) did not allow the SPA112 students to successfully use

Past marking with all verbs. And when they did use Past marking, it was in the form of a single Past form (Preterite). The latter is in accordance with the claim that these students used a default marker of Past tense. 16

A second potential counter-claim to the proposed existence of a default marker of Past tense refers to the theoretical nature of such construct. For instance, the notion of Preterite as a default marker of Past tense could be indistinguishable from Andersen and Shirai's (1994, 1996) notion of an overlap of the prototypes of Perfective and Past. Notice, however, that a default marker of Past tense (i.e. Preterite for Spanish) does not discriminate aspectual contrasts (it only marks tense contrasts). Hence, such a default marker of Past tense will be used with verb phrases of all lexical aspectual classes (from telic events to statives) when the learner wants to make reference to past time events. This is in fact verified in the analysis of the data from the SPA112 students (for similar results among bilingual children see Wiberg 1996, and for L2 Spanish learners see Hasbún 1995). In contrast, the overlap of the prototypes of Perfective and Past—as proposed in Andersen and Shirai (1994)—does not predict the use of Preterite with verbs that, according to the Congruence Principle, are associated with the Imperfect (typically stative verbs). This is the crucial factor that discriminates the claims made by either hypothesis and makes them empirically verifiable. Accordingly, the data from the present study show preliminary support for the notion of a default marker of Past tense.

Furthermore, the notion of a default marker of Past tense has been substantiated by both theoretical perspectives (e.g. Comrie 1976; Fleischman 1990; Guitart 1978) as well as empirical analyses of acquisition data (e.g. Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Wiberg 1996). For example, Comrie argues that in the Past tense, the Perfective aspect is the unmarked member of the dichotomy (p. 121). Similarly, Fleischman (1990) argues that in narratives the Perfective is the unmarked form and the Imperfective the marked form (for more details on the notion of markedness, see Waugh 1990). For Spanish in particular, Guitart (1978: 142) claims that the Preterite 'states that an occurrence took place before the moment of speaking,' whereas the Imperfect tells about an occurrence which happened before the time of speaking 'in which some other situation took place or was taking place'. That is to say, the Preterite acts as a default marker of Past tense, whereas the Imperfect fulfills an ancillary role. On the other hand, some recent empirical studies of the acquisition of Past tense verbal morphology have explicitly advanced the notion of a default marker of Past tense in both personal and movie narratives (Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Wiberg 1996). For instance, Wiberg (1996: 1100) specifically proposed the 'unmarked Past tense hypothesis' as an alternative to the lexical aspect hypothesis following the analysis of Italian personal narratives from twentyfour bilingual Swedish-Italian adolescents (the default marker of Past tense was the Passato Prossimo). Similarly, Liskin-Gasparro (1997) argues that the choice of verbal morphology in both personal and movie narratives among L2 Spanish learners is influenced by various factors: lexical semantics, discursive constraints, instructional effects, type of narrative task, use of individual processing strategies, and the use of the Preterite as a default marker of Past tense.

Finally, the analysis of these data also showed some unexpected findings not directly specified by the formal hypotheses, but which bear directly on the focus of inquiry of this study: the use of strictly Present tense by both native and near-native speakers of Spanish in their oral narratives. In the case of one native speaker the researcher probed the strength of the reliance on the use of Present by making an explicit request to use Past tense. The researcher stopped the native speaker twice to remind him of the instructions. The first time the reminder was subtle, but, the second time, the speaker was specifically requested to narrate the story in the Past tense (morphological marking) and not the Present tense. Despite the explicitness of the requests, the first time the native speaker did not realize that the researcher was asking him to use Past tense, and, the second time, he used Past tense for a number of instances, but immediately fell back on the use of Present tense. In fact, the native speaker who was present during this first exchange narrated her movie afterwards and did so exclusively in Present tense as well. In sum, the analysis of the data from native speakers and L2 learners showed that native speakers and students interpreted the task differently.<sup>17</sup>

It is possible that the distinct behavior of native speakers and students is an indirect consequence of the data collection procedure implemented for this study. In this respect, the research design of this study explicitly accounted for the operationalization of the concepts of communicative demands (Tarone 1983, 1985) and monitoring (Ellis 1989), especially important for the controlled production of the non-native speakers. In contrast, other studies have not controlled for the above mentioned constructs in their data collection procedure (e.g. Hasbún 1995; Ramsay 1990). As for potential reasons behind thecategorically—distinct response of native speakers and classroom learners to the procedure of data elicitation, one potential answer lies in the perception of these two groups about the genre of the narrative. It is likely that classroom learners approached this (laboratory) task as they dealt with any other classroom task: a language practice activity implemented as a role play. As such, it was not difficult for them to realize—despite the attempt to make it as real-life as possible—that the task required the narration of events that happened in past time; thereby, requiring Past tense marking. In contrast, it is possible that the distinct behavior of the native speakers (as well as near-native speakers) corresponds to a different assessment of the task: the retelling of a movie plot. And, as previous research has shown movie plots are not narrated in Past tense, but in Present tense (e.g. Chafe 1980; Fleischman 1989, 1990; Silva-Corvalán 1983; Wiberg 1996). 18

#### Further research

The findings of this study may lead to the reassessment of the present research agenda on the development of verbal morphology among L2 learners in general. I will elaborate on the relevance of two specific lines of empirical

research that could be incorporated to such revised research agenda: the role of lexical versus rule-like learning and the effect of learning environment on paths of development of inflectional morphology.

The lack of support for the hypothesis that lexical aspectual classes play a decisive role in the marking of Past tense verbal morphology during the beginning stages of acquisition has led previous researchers (e.g. Bergström 1995: Hasbún 1995) to suggest that future studies should collect more data of the transition from first to third semester of academic instruction. This is because the transition from tense to aspectual marking may be so rapid and transient that it may conceal the effect of tense constraints during the first stages of the development of verbal morphology. In fact, data from Bergström (1995) on the acquisition of classroom L2 French showed (i) that the expected emergence of the *Imparfait* with stative verbs was in competition with *Passé* Composé, and (ii) that the Imparfait was associated with a limited number of stative verbs: 81.3 per cent of uses of Imparfait corresponded to two verbs: to be and to have (p. 162). Bergström states that 'it may be that the acquisition of the Passé Composé is rather rapid and difficult to capture' (p. 155) (cf. data from SPA112 in present study). On the other hand, the association of the Imparfait with a restricted set of verbs may be indicative of lexical instead of system learning (e.g. N. Ellis 1996; R. Ellis 1997; Salaberry 1998b). Along the same lines, Leeman et al. (1995: 246) noticed that, following the effects of instruction on Past tense marking (i.e. focused attention on form), some of their sixth semester L2 Spanish students 'appear to have overgeneralized the (I)mperfect form, thus producing it consistently in obligatory contexts, and often in contexts requiring the (P)reterit' (italics added). If the Imperfect is first used with a limited number of verbs (e.g. to be, to have, to want) showing the potential effect of lexical learning (e.g. Ellis 1987; Kumpf 1982, Salaberry 1998b), it is possible that, eventually, the Imperfect will also be processed in an algorithmic fashion (i.e. rule-like) as is the case with the Preterite during the beginning stages of acquisition. If that is the case, it is likely that the use of the Imperfect will overgeneralize as shown in the study of Leeman et al.

A second research area that deserves a more focused analysis is the effect of learning environment: natural versus classroom learners. 19 This has been a contested area of research where specific theoretical positions and procedures of data collection and research design have led to contradictory positions. For instance, European researchers (e.g. Klein, Dietrich and Noyau 1995; Meisel 1987) have emphasized the importance of the learners' use of means other than verbal morphology to mark tense and aspect (Klein et al.'s claim of an 'inflectional paradigm bias' in previous empirical studies). This is not surprising because the preliminary stages of development of temporal relations among natural learners are characterized by the use of lexical (e.g. adverbials), implicit (e.g. sequencing), and discursive factors (e.g. interlocutor scaffolding), but not necessarily morphological factors (see, for instance, Dietrich et al. 1995; Schumann 1987, among others). In contrast, classroom learners rely, mostly, on the use of morphological in the marking of temporal relations (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 1995; Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds 1995; Bergström 1995; Hasbún 1995; Kaplan 1987; Ramsay 1990; Salaberry 1998a; Teutsch-Dwyer and Fathman 1997).

In a summary of the findings of previous studies of natural learners Klein et al. (1995) proposed a series of developmental stages for the acquisition of overt markers of temporality. In particular, Klein et al. claim that some natural learners do not evolve beyond what they call the basic variety (marked mostly by pragmatic principles). For the learners who develop their language beyond the basic variety, their language exhibits the following developmental traits: (i) acquisition is not driven by functional demands, (ii) development is slow, gradual and continuous (no sharp developmental stages), (iii) tense marking precedes aspect marking, and (iv) irregular morphology precedes regular morphology (inductive learning). It is interesting to note that the traits of the stage beyond the basic variety among natural learners—but not the basic variety—reflect the type of language learning prevalent in classroom learning: no functional demands, slow and gradual development, tense marking precedes aspect marking (SPA112) and inductive learning is essential for the incorporation of verbal morphology (SPA123 to SPA311). In essence, it appears that the developmental path of natural and classroom learners may differ as to the existence of the stage defined as the basic variety among natural learners. Further research along these lines may provide important evidence for the analysis of the effect of learning environment.

#### Conclusion

The preliminary evidence of this study shows support for the claim that the use of Past tense Spanish Preterite acts as a default marker of Past tense during the beginning stages of acquisition among classroom L2 learners. In this respect, it is important to point out that the results of this study are still preliminary due to (i) the small number of subjects who participated in this study and (ii) the reliance on a single source of data (movie narratives). Furthermore, no claim is made about other combinations of source and target language other than the one reported in this study. On the other hand, the data from the present study are important due to (i) the analysis of oral data from classroom learners (movie retellings), (ii) the type of data collection procedure: high degree of communicative relevance and meaningfulness of task, (iii) the use of longitudinal data from the same group of tutored learners, (iv) the use of a single native language: all learners were native speakers of English and (v) the control of planning time (the films were shown only once, subjects narrated the films immediately after they were shown). The consideration of the above features of the data elicitation procedure of the present study may be useful for the design of future empirical studies on the analysis of the development of verbal morphology among second language learners.

(Revised version received August 1998)

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Roger Andersen, Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig, Allard Jongman, James Lantolf, Judy Liskin-Gasparrd, Nuria López-Ortega, Yas Shirai, Linda Waugh and the four anonymous reviewers for their excellent comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

#### APPENDIX A

## Movie plots

## Alone and hungry

A young woman in ragged clothes walks by a bakery at the same time that a bakery worker is unloading bread from a truck. The young woman steals a loaf of bread and flees the scene. The employee pursues the lady until they bump into Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin says he was the thief and the police arrest him. Subsequently a lady who saw the events tells the police that the lady was the thief and not Chaplin. The police take the lady and Charlie is set free. Charlie goes to a cafeteria and eats two trays of food without paying. The police arrest him and he is taken by the police car. A few minutes later the police car stops to pick up the young lady Charlie had tried to save before. After Charlie and the young lady exchange smiles the police car has an accident and everyone is on the street. Charlie and the young lady escape while the policeman is unconscious on the floor.

# At the department store

Charlie Chaplin is hired as a night guardian at a department store. At night he brings a woman whom he has befriended in the previous film clip. They visit various sections of the store, they eat cake, and they smoke cigars. After a while the woman goes to sleep and Chaplin goes to check that the store is closed. In the meantime some thieves break into the store. They see Chaplin and they fire their guns. The shots hit a big barrel of rum above Chaplin. Charlie Chaplin ends up getting drunk because he drinks most of the liquid coming out of the barrel. The next morning Chaplin's friend wakes up and realizing how late it is flees the scene. In the meantime a customer in search of a piece of fabric discovers Charlie with a hangover under a huge piece of fabric. The police come in and arrest Charlie.

#### APPENDIX B

# Sample narratives

SPA112 student: Alone and Hungry (time 1)

NNS1: Ayer uh uh en el medio de la día un mujer necesita uhm necesita . . . uhm un comida . . . uhm así tom- uhm así tomá un uh how do you say bread?

R: pan

NNS1: toma un pan de una . . .

R: camión? truck?

NNS1: de un camión que fue uh uh que fue está dando . . . pan a la tienda uhm uhm . . . un otro mujer uhm uhm míro uhm uhm la mujer y uhm uhm apeló a un policía yeah un policía uhm la la mujer uhm co- corré y uhm . . .

R: eh tropezar es el verbo tropezar

NNS1: y tropezar tropezá en en un . . . hombre uhm ellos . . . (gesture)

R: caer?

NNS1: ellos caer caé uh y uhm la policía uh uh uhm la policía uh . . . (inaudible) la policía (inaudible) la policía le no la los busquéa uhm el hombre el hombre dice a la policía que uhm uhm él uh to-tomá el pan uhm uhm después el otro mujer uhm dice la policía no la mujer toma el pan uhm uhm la policía uhm to- tomá la tomá la tomá y después la . . . el hombre uh va a un va a un restaurante y . . . y comé comó un una muy grande comida y uh uhm no pagó Así un policía tomá el no tomá en el

R: camión

NNS1: camión de la policía la mujer y el y el hombre uhm uhm . . . y el hombre ni el de y el hombre se le cada otro cada otro uh fall out

R: caerse es el verbo

NNS1: caer uhm . . . ellos caén ellos caén el vehículo y cuan la policía (laugh) . . . la policía son

inconsciente por un poco tiempo y el hombre y uh la mujer corren.

# SPA311 student: Alone and hungry (time 1)

El cuento *empezó* en una panadería y *vino* un camión que con un hombre que *traía* la el pan para la panadería. Mientras él estaba por la tienda una mujer vino que y ella tenía mucha hambre y ella decidió robar uh un pedazo de pan del camión, entonces después de robar un pedazo de pan ella se *marchó* pero *había* una testiga uh y ella y ella *dijo* al hombre que que la mujer ro- robó un pedazo de pan de de su camión entonces el hombre uh corrió uh para para buscar la mujer que robó el el pan. mientras la mujer estaba corriendo ella se encontró con Ch.Ch. y él estaba caminando uh en la otra dirección y los dos se chocaron y y Ch. Ch. tomó el pedazo de pan de la mujer entonces mientras mientras las dos los dos estaban allí vinieron el hombre con uh con la policía y y . . . qué más? ah! el hombre *acusó* a uno de uno de los dos de robar un pedazo de pan. Entonces Ch. Ch. dijo a la policía que que que yo ten- uh yo tuvo la culpa, yo robó el pedazo de pan entonces uh uh la policía uh . . . uh se se detuvo a a Ch. Ch. y uh puso se puso lo puso en el camión de la policía, pero después vino la mujer que uh uh la testiga que vió todo y ella dijo al hombre que era la mujer que robó el pedazo de pan. Entonces, el hombre uh el chofer del camión corrió para encontrar la policía y él explicó a la policía que no era Ch. Ch. pero era la mujer, entonces la policía uhm regresaron para uh para detener a la la mujer uh . . . let's see mientras tanto Ch. Ch. se fue y uh fue a una cafetería y él estaba ahí comiendo todo lo que lo que quería uhm . . . pero después de comer descubrió que que no tenía mucha din- que no tenía ninguna dinero ningún dinero uh y entonces él *llamó*, él *gritó* uh para que viniera la policía y la policía vino y Ch. Ch. dijo al al empleado de la de la cafetería que la policía iba a pagar su su cuenta. Ah, entonces la policía uh estaba muy enfadado y uh . . . dijo que que sí pagaba la cuenta pero tenía que detenerse a Ch. Ch. Ah . . . entonces uh se detuvo a Ch. Ch. y uh uh lo puso en en el camión de la policía y . . . qué pasó? Oh! no no uh . . . la policía y Ch. Ch. salió uh . . . *sali*ó de la tien– de la cafetería y y la policía *fue* a buscar un teléfono para llamar al camión de policía para que viniera a recogar recoger Ch.Ch., entonces

mientras la policía estaba en el teléfono Ch. Ch. descubrió una tienda pequeña que tenían revistas y cigarros y él decidí comprar una revista y unos cigarros y decidió comprar un cigarro para un un niño que vió ahí uh uh y después cuando la policía terminó con su conversación en el en el teléfono descubrió que Ch. Ch. uh uh había comprado las cosas que uhm . . . que él no podía pagar porque (laugh) Ch. Ch. no podía pagar la cuenta de nuevo entonces la policía tenía que pa— pagar por todas las cosas que Ch. Ch, compró. Ah por fin, vinio el camión de policía y uh . . . uh lo lo puso a Ch. Ch. en el camión y había otros criminales ahí, uh un borracho y un viejo y unos ladrones y entonces se fueron de ahí y y procedieron a otra esquina donde recogió la mujer que originalmente robó el pedazo de pan del camión uhm . . . uhm entonces cuando la mujer entró en el camión los dos empezaron a discutir como podrian escapar y Ch. Ch,. le sugirió que había una manera en que podrían escapar y . . . uh . . . no sé exactamente pero el, . . . ah sí los dos uhm uh se se pusieron a a un lado de del camión entonces éste causó el camión a su lado en la calle uhm . . . y el el chofer del camión de policía se se se puso inconsciente R: Sí, perder la consciencia

NNS: Entonces uhm uh los dos *tenían* la oportunidad de escapar y y la mujer uh Ch. Ch. *dijo* a la mujer que que si tú puedes escapar vayate entonces la mujer *corrió* a la esquina pero ella *paró* y *gritó* a Ch. Ch. que tú puedes escapar conmigo entonces Ch. Ch, uh *se escapó* con ella y eso eso termina sí.

#### NOTES

- 1 However, neither the Relevance Principle, nor the Congruence Principle can explain the use of verbal morphology after the first four stages (i.e. when verbal morphology is not in congruence with the lexical semantics of the verb).
- 2 Aspectual particles (free morphemes) shift the telic nature of a particular predicate: from atelic to telic. Bybee and Dahl (1989: 85–6) refer to them as 'bounders' because they typically provide a limit and/or make the verb transitive: from unbounded to bounded. For example *to eat* (unbounded) differs aspectually from *to eat up* (bounded).
- 3 It is not unusual to find Present instead of Past marking in personal and movie narratives (e.g. Fleischman 1989: 15; Klein 1994: 133–41; Silva-Corvalán 1983). For instance, Fleischman claims that 'plots (e.g. of books, films, plays) are generally recounted in the PRESENT—a function of their 'atemporality'. Books can be re-read and films viewed on multiple occasions; their contents remain always accessible, hence, speakers' use of the 'timeless' tense to recount their plots' (p. 15).
- 4 The same excerpt has been used in previous studies based on data from

- tutored learners in the natural environment (Bardovi-Harlig 1995), classroom students (Bergström 1995), and natural learners (Klein and Perdue 1992).
- 5 For the purpose of this analysis the term Present will be used instead of Historical Present.
- 6 The two-month period was the longest period available within one semester of instruction in consideration of the fact that during the first weeks at the beginning and the last weeks at the end of the semester it is not feasible to conduct this type of experiment.
- 7 This procedure is comparable to the one implemented in Klein and Perdue (1992) where the researcher watched the first episode of a longer excerpt of the same Chaplin movie with the subject, then left the room before the second episode and later requested the subject to retell the end of the movie.
- 8 The present tests are based on Shirai (1991).
- 9 These two operational tests are among the most widely used in experimental studies (e.g. Dowty 1979; Hasbún 1995; Shirai 1991) due to their relative robust results compared to similar tests.

- 10 I am thankful to Yas Shirai for the suggestion about the use of the intrarater reliability procedure.
- 11 The use of the Chi-square procedure of statistical analysis is not valid because two of the five general assumptions of the Chisquare test were not met: (i) there is no independence of data within each cell, and (ii) a high percentage of expected cell frequencies falls below five (Hatch and Lazaraton 1991: 406-10). The first assumption was not met because some students contributed more data to some cells than other students (the combined data are not reflective of the data from any individual subject). The second assumption was not met because some students did not use all morphological markers to the same extent. This was particularly clear in some cases were students narrated the story using exclusively Preterite to the detriment of Imperfect (i.e. SPA112, Time
- 12 In addition, the data from one subject from the advanced group of students (subject 311.3) is also absent for the same reason.
- 13 The use of the Progressive was almost non-existent (0 per cent of all tokens from SPA112; 2–3 per cent of all tokens from SPA203 and 4-5 per cent of all tokens from SPA123) or was not associated with atelic events when used in a relatively higher proportion (i.e. data from SPA123, Time 2). Only the data from the most advanced group (i.e. SPA311) did show a relatively extended use of the progressive (5–9 per cent of all tokens) with an associated correlation with activity verbs (aproximately 70 per cent of all tokens of progressive).
- 14 Smith (1983, 1991) distinguishes between situation aspect (i.e. lexical aspect) and viewpoint aspect (i.e. grammatical aspect). Situation aspect reflects the compositional value of the inherent lexical semantics of verbal predicates, and associated internal arguments, external arguments and adjuncts. Conversely, viewpoint aspect may reaffirm or contradict the compositional value of lexical aspect as exemplified in the optional use of either Imperfect or Preterite with any type of verb phrase

- in Spanish (cf. Congruence Principle). Rispoli (1990) argues that the use of viewpoint aspect (non-standard if grammatical aspect contradicts the value of lexical aspect) can only appear after the standard choices of aspect have been learned (see also Coppieters 1987 for data on second language acquisition).
- In fact, Shirai's interpretation could also be unwarranted depending on the operationalization of the concept of 'knowledge' of morphological markers (e.g. is such operationalization based on a competence-performance distinction?).
  - It is possible to speculate that instruction has a delayed effect on learning. In that case, instruction on the use of the Imperfect would not be reflected in the learners' production of the target grammatical item until some time later than two weeks. However, current theoretical and empirical research on cognitive processes of language acquisition (e.g. Leeman et al. 1995; Harley 1989; Schmidt 1990, 1995; Schmidt and Frota 1986) may also lead us to speculate the opposite: that the explicit focus on a particular grammatical item will increase its production immediately following instruction (for extended discussion see 'Further research' in this paper). Further research including the analysis of delay effects for periods longer than two weeks would be necessary to empirically address this issue. Alternatively, one could also claim that there is task variation and that the Imperfect may first surface in relatively planned tasks rather than spontaneous production (e.g. written versus oral tasks). However, the findings of the present study were confirmed with data from a written task as well (unpublished manu-
- 17 It is important to emphasize that, as mentioned in the section on Procedure of Data Collection, all subjects received the same set of instructions irrespective of proficiency level or native language.
- Sebastian and Slobin (1994: 244) also show that adults favor the use of Present in narratives elicited by still pictures, in contrast with children below age five who favor the use of Past tense.

19 The term 'natural learner' refers to those learners who have access to an environment where there is normal social interaction in the target language (natural learners may also be tutored learners as is the case of many university students in the USA: ESL learners). In most cases, the access to the L2 environment is determined primarily by the region or country where the learner lives. However, this may be an inaccurate method to classify natural learners since, as is the case for many immigrant groups, access to the

target language is relatively limited or simply non-existent (e.g. Schumann 1987). Furthermore, different degrees of literacy (as reflected in formal tutoring) also have an effect on the tutored-untutored contrast. For instance, immigrant workers—compared to university students—will not normally have access to formal education other than limited on-the-job exposure to the target language (see also Birdsong 1989 for differences in grammaticality judgments among literates and illiterates).

#### REFERENCES

- Andersen, R. 1986. 'El desarrollo de la morfología verbal en el español como segundo idioma' in J. Meisel (ed.): Adquisición del Lenguaje—Aquisição da Linguagem. Frankfurt: Klaus-Dieter Vervuert Verlag.
- Andersen, R. 1991. 'Developmental sequences:
  The emergence of aspect marking in second language acquisition' in T. Huebner and C. A.
  Ferguson (eds.): Crosscurrents in Second Language Acquisition and Linguistic Theories.
  Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Andersen, R. 1994. 'The insider's advantage' in A. Giacalone-Ramat and M. Vedovelli (eds.): *Italiano lingua seconda/lingua straniera*. Rome: Bulzoni.
- Andersen, R., and Y. Shirai. 1994. 'Discourse motivations for some cognitive acquisition principles.' Studies in Second Language Acquisition 16: 133–56.
- Andersen, R., and Y. Shirai. 1996. 'The primacy of aspect in first and second language acquisition: The pidgin-creole connection' in B. Laufer and W. Ritchie (eds.): Handbook of Second Language Acquisition. Academic Press.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. 1992. 'The relationship of form and meaning: A cross-sectional study of tense and aspect in the interlanguage of learners of English as a second language.' *Applied Psycholinguistics* 13: 253–78.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. 1994. 'Anecdote or evidence? Evaluating support for hypotheses concerning the development of tense and aspect' in E. Tarone, S. Gass and A. Cohen (eds.): Research Methodology in Second-Language Acquisition. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

  Bardovi-Harlig, K. 1995. 'A narrative per-

- spective on the development of the tense/ aspect system in second language acquisition.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 17: 263–89.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., and A. Bergström. 1996. 'Acquisition of tense and aspect in second language and foreign language learning: Learner narratives in ESL and FFL.' Canadian Modern Language Review 52: 308–30.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., and D. Reynolds. 1995. 'The role of lexical aspect in the acquisition of tense and aspect.' *TESOL Quarterly* 29: 107–31.
- Bergström, A. 1995. The expression of Past temporal reference by English-speaking learners of French. Unpublished PhD dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University.
- Birdsong, D. 1989. Metalinguistic Performance and Interlinguistic Competence. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- Buczowska, E., and R. Weist. 1991. 'The effects of formal instruction on the second language acquisition of temporal location.' *Language Learning* 41: 535–54.
- Bybee, J. 1995. 'Spanish tense and aspect from a typological perspective' in P. Hashemipour, R. Maldonado and M. van Naerssen (eds.): Studies in Language Learning and Spanish Linguistics. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Bybee, J. L., and O. Dahl. 1989. 'The creation of tense and aspect systems in the languages of the world.' *Studies in Language* 13: 51–103.
- Chafe, W. (ed.) 1980. The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Comrie, B. 1976. Aspect. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Coppieters, R. 1987. 'Competence differences between native and near-native speakers.' Language 63: 544-73.
- Dietrich, R., W. Klein, and C. Noyau. 1995. The Acquisition of Temporality in a Second Language. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Dowty, D. 1979. Word Meaning and Montague Grammar. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Dowty, D. 1986. 'The effects of aspectual class on the temporal structure of discourse: Semantics or pragmatics?' Linguistics and Philosophy 9: 37-61.
- Ellis, N. 1996. 'Sequencing in SLA: phonological memory, chunking and points of order.' Studies in Second Language Acquisition 18: 91-126.
- Ellis, R. 1987. 'Interlanguage variability in narrative discourse: Style shifting in the use of the Past tense.' Studies in Second Language Acquisition 9: 1-20.
- Ellis, R. 1997. 'Item versus system learning: Explaining free variation.' Paper read at Annual Meeting of AAAL 1997, at Orlando,
- Fleischman, S. 1990. Tense and Narrativity. London: Routledge.
- Guitart, J. 1978. 'Aspects of Spanish aspect: A new look at the preterit/Imperfect distinction' in M. Suñer (ed.): Contemporary Studies in Romance Linguistics. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Harley, B. 1989. 'Functional grammar in French immersion: A classroom experiment.' Applied Linguistics 10: 331-59.
- Hasbún, L. 1995. The Role of Lexical Aspect in the Acquisition of the Tense/Aspect System in L2 Spanish. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Hatch, E., and A. Lazaraton. 1991. The Research Manual: Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics. New York: Newbury House.
- Kaplan, M. 1987. 'Developmental patterns of Past tense acquisition among foreign language learners of French' in B. VanPatten (ed.): Foreign Language Learning: A Research Perspective. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Klein, W. 1994. Time in Language. London: Routledge.
- Klein, W., R. Dietrich, and C. Noyau. 1995. 'Conclusions' in R. Dietrich, W. Klein and C. Noyau (eds.): The Acquisition of Temporality in a Second Language. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

- Klein, W., and C. Perdue. (eds.) 1992. Utterance Structure: Developing Grammars Again. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lafford, B. 1996. 'The development of tense/ aspect relations in L2 Spanish narratives: Evidence to test competing theories.' Paper read at SLRF 96, at Tucson, AZ.
- Leeman, J., I. Arteagoitia, B. Fridman, and C. Doughty. 1995. 'Integrating attention to form with meaning: Focus on form in content-based Spanish instruction' in R. Schmidt (ed.): Attention and Awareness in Foreign Language Learning. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i.
- Liskin-Gasparro, J. 1997. 'The acquisition of temporality in Spanish oral narratives: Exploring learners' perceptions.' Paper read at Annual Meeting of AAAL 97, at Orlando,
- Meisel, J. 1987. 'Reference to Past events and actions in the development of natural second language acquisition' in C. Pfaff (ed.): First and Second Language Acquisition. New York: Newbury House.
- Ochs, E. 1979. 'Planned and unplanned discourse' in T. Givón (ed.): Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 12: Discourse and Semantics. New York: Academic Press.
- Perdue, C. and W. Klein. 1992. 'Why does the production of some learners not grammaticalize?' Studies in Second Language Acquisition 14: 259-72.
- Ramsay, V. 1990. Developmental Stages in the Acquisition of the Perfective and the Imperfective Aspects by Classroom L2 Learners of Spanish. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Oregon.
- Rispoli, M. 1990. 'Lexical assignability and perspective switch: The acquisition of verb subcategorization for aspectual inflections.' Journal of Child Language 17: 375-92.
- Robison, R. 1990. 'The primacy of aspect: aspectual marking in English interlanguage.' Studies in Second Language Acquisition 12: 315-
- Robison, R. 1995. 'The aspect hypothesis revisited: A cross-sectional study of tense and aspect marking in interlanguage.' Applied Linguistics 16: 344-71.
- Rohde, A. 1996. 'The aspect hypothesis and the emergence of tense distinctions in naturalistic L2 acquisition.' Linguistics 34: 1115-37.

- Salaberry, R. 1998a. 'The development of aspectual distinctions in classroom L2 French.' Canadian Modern Language Review 54/4: 508–42.
- Salaberry, R. 1998b. 'The development of Past tense morphology among classroom learners.' Proceedings from the Third Pacific SLRF, Tokyo, Japan.
- Sato, C. 1990. The Syntax of Conversation in Interlanguage Development. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Schmidt, R. 1990. 'The role of consciousness in second language learning.' *Applied Linguistics* 11: 129–58.
- Schmidt, R. 1995. 'Consciousness and foreign language learning: A tutorial on the role of attention and awareness in learning' in R. Schmidt (ed.): Attention and Awareness in Foreign Language Learning. Manoa, HI: University of Hawai'i.
- Schmidt, R., and S. Frota. 1986. 'Developing basic conversational ability in a second language: A case study of an adult learner of Portuguese' in R. Day (ed.): *Talking to Learn: Conversation in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Schumann, J. 1987. 'The expression of temporality in basilang speech.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 9: 21–41.
- Sebastian, E., and D. Slobin. 1994. 'Development of linguistic forms: Spanish' in R. Berman and D. Slobin (eds.): *Relating Events in Narrative*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Shirai, Y. 1991. Primacy of Aspect in Language Acquisition: Simplified Input and Prototype. Unpublished PhD dissertation, UCLA, Los Angeles.
- Shirai, Y. 1997. 'Discussion, Colloquium on the Acquisition of Tense and Aspect among Natural and Academic Learners of Spanish' 17th SLRF Meeting. Michigan State University, MI.
- Shirai, Y., and R. Andersen. 1995. 'The acquisition of tense-aspect morphology: A prototype account.' *Language* 71/4: 743–62.

- Silva-Corvalán, C. 1983. 'Tense and aspect in oral Spanish narrative: Context and meaning.' *Language* 59: 760–80.
- Smith, C. S. 1983. 'A theory of aspectual choice.' *Language* 59: 479–501.
- Smith, C. 1991. *The Parameter of Aspect*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press.
- Studerus, L. 1989. 'On the role of Spanish meaning changing Preterites.' *Hispanic Linguistics* 3: 131–45.
- Tarone, E. 1983. 'On the variability of interlanguage systems.' *Applied Linguistics* 4: 142–63.
- Tarone, E. 1988. Variation in Interlanguage. London: Edward Arnold.
- Tarone, E. 1995. 'A variationist framework for SLA research: Examples and pedagogical insights' in F. Eckman, D. Highland, P. Lee, J. Mileham and R. Rutkowski (eds.): Second Language Acquisition Theory and Pedagogy. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Teutsch-Dwyer, M., and A. Fathman. 1997. 'Temporal reference in tutored and untutored learner varieties.' Paper read at Annual Meeting of AAAL 97, at Orlando, FL.
- Trévise, A. 1987. 'Toward an analysis of the (inter)language activity of referring to time in narratives' in C. Pfaff (ed.): First and Second Language Acquisition Processes. Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
- Vendler, Z. 1967. *Linguistics in Philosophy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Véronique, D. 1987. 'Reference to Past events and actions in narratives in L2: Insights from North African workers' French' in C. Pfaff (ed.): First and Second Language Acquisition Processes. Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
- Waugh, L. 1990. 'Discourse functions of tenseaspect in French: dynamic synchrony' in N. Thelin (ed.): *Verbal Aspect in Discourse*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wiberg, E. 1996. 'Reference to Past events in bilingual Italian–Swedish children of school age.' *Linguistics* 34: 1087–1114.