ACQUISITION OF TENSE-ASPECT MORPHOLOGY IN ENGLISH BY NATIVE SPEAKERS OF COSTA RICAN SPANISH: THE CASE OF SIMPLE PRESENT AND PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated whether native speakers of Costa Rican Spanish are capable of acquiring a series of typical and atypical meanings associated with the English Simple Present and Present Progressive. Given the similarities between these languages, this study also explored the role of the L1 in the acquisition properties that are similar in the L2. Two tasks were implemented in order to explore this issue. A Grammaticality Judgment Task tested learners' and natives' acceptability of English sentences with simple present and progressive morphology presented in isolation while an Interpretation Task tested acceptability of the same types of sentences but in the presence of a context provided by a preceding story. The stimuli designed for these tasks were organized in three experiments. The first experiment looked at activities like *Marcela writes/is writing poetry*. The second experiment tested acquisition of activities with a habitual meaning as in *Ana writes/is writing poetry now*. The third experiment tested futurates like *Carmen returns/is returning to Spain next week*. The results suggest that the L1 does not seem to play an important role in the acquisition of the L2 tense-aspect morphology. However, contextual information and the presence of adverbs proved to be a key element in access to the correct interpretation of less typical meanings associated with simple present and the progressive.

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1. Introduction

In the last decades, the issue of acquisition of tense-aspect morphology has been widely addressed by studies on first language acquisition. In more recent times, the interest in this topic has spread to second language acquisition (SLA) as well. The current study addresses two main issues concerning L2 acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. First, whether Spanish speakers can acquire typical and less typical meanings associated with English simple present and present progressive verbal morphology and the restrictions that may apply to their use. Secondly, this study explores the role of the L1 in modulating this acquisition process.

Two sets of theoretical accounts constitute the framework for this study. On the one hand, the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1995) and the Prototype Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996) propose that there is a universal path of development for the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. According to the Aspect Hypothesis, in early stages of acquisition, learners are restricted in their use of verbal morphology; for example, the progressive is restricted to verbs like *play*, which describe an activity. Along similar lines, the Prototype Hypothesis claims that the acquisition of a given morphology and the meanings associated with it follow a fixed pattern as well; with more prototypical form-meaning mappings acquired first and less prototypical ones acquired later. These two hypotheses share the prediction that learners of different L1 backgrounds will follow a similar pattern of development.

Unlike the prototype-based approaches mentioned above, the transfer-based accounts do claim that the L1 plays a significant role in the acquisition of an L2. For example, the Full Access / Full Transfer approach (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996) proposes that the L1 defines the initial state in the L2, but the differences that exist between both languages may be overcome at

advanced proficiency levels; thus, native-like attainment is possible under this account. This prediction contrasts with that of the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (Liszka 2006, Hawkins & Chan 1997, and Hawkins et al. 2008) which claims that if a feature –and its values- is not instantiated in the L1, it will not be available for the L2 adult learner to native-like standards. Thus, native-like attainment is expected for the areas in which the L1 shares features with the L2, but not for the instances in which they differ.

The present study focuses on the role of adverbs and the role of the L1 in the interpretation of English simple present and present progressive. These issues were previously addressed by Slabakova & Montrul (2008) who tested L2 acquisition of Spanish by native speakers of English. One interesting finding in this study was that that the learners highly rejected a sentence like (1b) despite the similarity with their L1 and their high proficiency level in the L2.

(1) a. El tren llegó tarde.
The train arrive-Past-3sg late
'The train arrived late.'

b. Por meses, el tren llegó tarde.
For months the train arrive-Past-3sg late
'For months, the train arrived late.'

(Slabakova & Montrul, 460)

Slabakova and Montrul explained that in both English and Spanish (1a) is interpreted as an event that occurred on a single occasion and in an instant. However, they proposed that the introduction of the adverbial *por meses* (for months) in (1b) triggers a shift in meaning to an event that happened repeatedly on several occasions (habitual event). They claimed that aspectual interpretations can change because lexical aspect interacts with grammatical aspect and pragmatic knowledge. Item (1a) illustrates a case in which there is a match between the verbal morphology (past) and the meaning it typically entails, i.e., a completed event that occurred on a single occasion. But, when the adverbial *por meses* (for months) is added, it evokes a repeated interpretation that does not match the verbal morphology (past). According to Slabakova and Montrul, in the presence of this "mismatch", the aspectual properties of the verb change from an event to a habitual activity. However, in their study, L2 learners failed to compute the type of shift in meaning illustrated in (1b) despite similarity in their L1, which lead Slabakova & Montrul to suggest that not all 'shifted' meanings may transfer.

Similar to Slabakova & Montrul, Gass and Ard (1984) focused on the role of adverbs in the derivation of meaning. In their study, they proposed that a given morphological form has one central meaning it is associated with; they called this, a core meaning. There are, however, other possible meanings that can be associated with the same form. These alternative meanings distance themselves from the core to different degrees and may differ across languages. The focus of Gass & Ard's study was the meanings associated with the simple present, the present progressive and the future. They proposed that the core meaning for the simple present is that of regular state, characteristic or property as in (2); for the progressive the core meaning is an ongoing activity with some duration as in (3) and for the future, the core meaning deals with states or events expected to happen, illustrated by (4).

(2) The new bridge connects Detroit and Windsor.

(3) John is smoking American cigarettes now.[1]

(4) John will travel to New York tomorrow.

In a Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT), Gass & Ard asked Spanish and Japanese L2 learners of English to judge sentences with either simple present or progressive morphology; some of these sentences contained temporal adverbs and others did not. They predicted that the sentences that described a situation whose interpretation was closer to the core meaning for the simple present, the progressive or the futurate will be more accepted than those whose interpretation was further away from the core. The results of the GJ Task indicated that both groups of learners behaved similarly. They highly accepted sentences like (5a-c) whose verb morphology agrees with the core meanings associated with the progressive (5a) and the simple present (5b). However, they wrongly rejected sentences like (6a-c) which have an adverb that does not match the prototypical meaning evoked by the verb morphology. The acceptance rates for sentences in (5) and (6) are provided in parentheses.

(5) a. John is smoking American cigarettes now. (88% Spanish, 77% Japanese)

b. Mary is in Chicago now. (88% Spanish, 92% Japanese)

c. Mary will travel to New York tomorrow. (86% Spanish, 81% Japanese)

[1] Gass & Ard consider that this sentence illustrates an ongoing activity. However, such interpretation would imply that the subject is actually smoking several cigarettes at the same time. In the present study, this type of sentence will be considered a habitual activity.

(6) a. Fred smokes American cigarettes now. (56% Spanish, 51% Japanese)

b. John travels to New York tomorrow. (8% Spanish, 19% Japanese)

c. John is traveling to New York tomorrow. (8% Spanish, 32% Japanese)

Gass & Ard claimed that in the case of the sentences that were correctly accepted by both groups of learners, two conditions helped them in their judgments; matching between the core meaning and the verb form, and matching of these two with other textual elements like the adverbs. This also explained why the sentences like the ones in (6) where highly rejected as the adverb disrupts the verb form - core meaning "match". For instance (6b) is similar in Spanish but the participants did not transfer it because it is far from the core meaning i.e. the Spanish natives think that it may apply only to Spanish. On the other hand, a sentence like (7) was highly accepted by Spanish natives (81%) while the Japanese group's acceptance rate was just 19% because it is also far from the core as in (6b) but the Spanish natives also believe that L1-L2 differences apply. This proposal is explained in more detail next.

(7) Dan is seeing better.

Gass & Ard adopt Kellerman's psychotypology hypothesis (1977, 1979, 1983) to explain this type of L1-based differences. The term psychotypology was coined by Kellerman to refer to how learners perceive their L1 to be different/similar from their L2. Kellerman's hypothesis proposes that the closer the perceived relationship between L1 and L2, the more likely the L1 is to affect the L2 use. Gass & Ard explained that a progressivized form of the verb "see" is not common to describe a present state in neither English nor Spanish. However, the Spanish

natives apparently believed that this restriction pertains only to Spanish (big perceived distance between L1 and L2) and thus the opposite should be true of English yielding their high acceptance of (7).

Based on the results of their study, the authors suggested, similar to Slabakova & Montrul, that learners are more likely to transfer core meanings than non-core ones and that despite similarities between a first and a second language, aspectual constraints are still difficult to acquire for L2 learners. It must be noted though, that the tasks in these two studies generally required learners to provide grammaticality judgments of English sentences in isolation. This may be a limitation in two ways. First, it is possible that the learners base their judgments solely on a matching of verb morphology and core-meanings which could lead to overgeneralized acceptance of a form; secondly, this type of task does not allow us to see if the learners are aware of restrictions that may come into play. The current study includes a grammaticality judgment task to see if it is possible to replicate the difficulty reported by Gass & Ard and Slabakova & Montrul; however, it also includes an Interpretation Task in which Simple Present and Present Progressive sentences some with, and some without adverbs, are accompanied by a context. This provides a basis for comparison between judgments in isolation and contextualized ones. The current study also explores transfer effects by looking at L2 acquisition of English by native speakers of Costa Rican Spanish. The wide range of meanings associated with simple present and present progressive shared by both languages and some differences between them will be addressed in the linguistics background section. For a better understanding of the information presented in that section, key terminology relevant to the current study is presented next.

2. Key Terminology for the Current Study

The first relevant terms to be defined are tense and aspect. Comrie (1976:2-3) explained that tense is a deictic category that locates a situation in relation to some other time which is usually the speech time; on the other hand, Comrie continued, aspect is non-deictic and deals with how a speaker sees a situation. This distinction is exemplified by Shirai & Andersen (1995). The sentences in (8) share progressive aspect which evokes an ongoing event, but the difference between them is that the event in (8a) is present, ongoing at speech time while the event in (8b) is past, ongoing activity which started before speech time. The sentences in (9) share past tense but the difference between them is that of aspect; while the event in (9a) has terminated in the past, the event in (9b) was ongoing in the past.

(8) a. He is eating (bread)

b. He was eating (bread)

(9) a. He ate bread.

b. He was eating bread.

(Examples from Andersen & Shirai, 743)

Bardovi-Harlig (2000) clarifies the distinction between two linguistic categories that are closely linked to each other, grammatical and lexical aspect. She explains that grammatical aspect, also called viewpoint aspect, is marked morphologically in many languages and that it "provides different ways of viewing situations" (205). For instance, even though (9a) and (9b)

presented previously describe the same event, the aspect in (9a) is perfective, which indicates that the action has an endpoint; on the other hand, in (9b) the imperfective aspect evokes an event that has no endpoint. On the other hand, Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 213) states that lexical aspect "refers to the inherent semantic properties of the linguistic expression used to refer to a situation" and it is not morphologically marked. Lexical aspect has also been called in the literature 'situation aspect' (Smith 1983, cited in Shirai & Andersen, 1995) or 'aktionsart', term that according to Fernández (1993) was introduced by the German grammarian G. Herbig in 1896 to refer to the 'kind of action' of the verb. For example, Bardovi-Harlig points out that the predicates in (10) are different ways of referring to the same situation; the lexical aspect remains constant in (10a and 10b) even if the grammatical aspect varies. In this example, at the semantic level, the verb 'run' implies some duration of an event (John + run) in both sentences.

(10) a. John ran.

b. John was running.

(Bardovi-Harlig, 211, 213)

Duration is one of the inherent lexical properties that have served to classify verbs. The most-referenced classification of the inherent aspect of verbs is the one proposed by Vendler (1967). Each verb type is described below along with its definition and some examples.

> State: that which continues without adding effort or energy, and has no dynamics (e.g. see, love want)
>
> Activity: that which has a duration, but without a clear endpoint, and is homogeneous in structure (e.g. run, play, walk)
>
> Accomplishment: that which was some duration, but has a single clear endpoint (e.g. make a chair, run a mile, write a letter)

Achievement: that which takes place instantaneously, and is reducible to a single point in time (e.g. break, drop, find)

Comrie (1976) proposed three semantic features that serve to define Vendler's categories: telic, punctual and dynamic. Andersen and Shirai explained that "telic denotes having an inherent endpoint, punctual denotes having no duration, and dynamic denotes that energy is required for the situation to exist or continue" (744). Andersen (1989) integrated Vendler and Comrie's proposals and came up with the classification provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Verb Types

	State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement
Punctual	-	-	-	+
Telic	-	-	+	+
Dynamic	-	+	+	+

The present study looks at Simple Present and Present Progressive tense-aspect morphology used with two of types of verbs presented in Table 1: activities and achievements. The next section will address the facts about English and Spanish relevant to this study.

3. Linguistic Background

This section will compare the simple present and the present progressive in English and Spanish. Being aware of the properties of both languages will be very relevant in the analysis of potential transfer effects in the present study, especially because as shown by Gass & Ard (1984)

and Slabakova and Montrul (2008), L2 learners have problems acquiring some interpretations associated with simple present and present progressive despite L1 & L2 similarities. The sentences in (11) illustrate the prototypical meanings associated with simple present and present progressive, i.e., the meanings that can be derived without having to appeal to contextual information or adverbs. The sentence in (11a) illustrates the prototypical meaning for the simple present, that is, a "law-like regular state or expectable event characteristic of a subject at the present time" (Gass & Ard, 1984). In this case, the sentence indicates that "Laura is a pianist". The same activity verb, *play*, appears in (11b) to illustrate the prototypical meaning for the progressive i.e. "an ongoing, witnessed activity which persists for an extended period of time" (Gass & Ard, idem), in this case, the ongoing event is "*playing music*".

(11) a. Laura plays the piano.

b. Laura is playing the piano.

As seen so far, the prototypical meanings associated with simple present and present progressive appear to be in complementary distribution. However, there are additional meanings associated with them that do not follow this pattern. For instance, the presence of the adverb *this week* can trigger a shift in meaning from an episodic event (which happens on a single occasion) to a habitual as in (12). This sentence indicates that the subject "Oscar" has performed the action of playing basketball on several occasions within the period of a week instead of just doing it one time.

(12) Oscar is playing basketball this week. (progressive habitual)

Besides looking at L2 acquisition of core and non-core meanings associated with simple present and present progressive with activity verbs, the current study also explores the acquisition of these verb forms and their core and non-core-meanings with achievement verbs. Hence, besides testing whether learners can acquire core meanings, the present study will challenge their knowledge about English by exploring whether 'shifted meanings' that deviate from the core may transfer. For example, in the case of the simple present with achievements, the meaning that deviates the most from the prototype is the narrative reading (simple present ongoing). According to Vanden Wyngaerd (2005), English simple present can be used with eventive verbs as long as they describe a situation unfolding on par with speech time. One such case is a sports commentary as in (13). If the participants are able to access this type of reading, they will accept a sentence like (14).

(13) a. Smith passes to Devaney, Devaney to Barnes, Barnes to Lucas – and Harris intercepts – Harris to Simms, nice ball – and Simms shoots!

(Swan, 1995 cited in Vanden Wyngaerd, 2005)

(14) Clara arrives at the station. (narrative reading)

(15) Clara is arriving at the station. (stages before completion of the event)

Sentence (15) exemplifies how the present progressive can be used with an achievement verb to refer to the instants right before the completion of an event. This is rather unusual given that achievements are + punctual, i.e., they are realized in an instant. This preliminary stage reading is possible with some achievement verbs like *arrive* as seen above, yet not with others like *notice*. English natives would not accept preliminary stages to "noticing" something; ergo,

even though both *arrive* and *notice* happen instantaneously, you can conceive some preliminary stages leading to the completion of an instantaneous event with *arrive* but not with *notice*.

Both simple present and present progressive can be used in English to evoke future events as in (15) and (16). However, to license the use of either form with a futurate meaning, the events being made reference to should be plannable (15,16) and not an implausible future event like the one presented in (17). Testing these meanings in English allow us to see if learners are aware of pragmatic constraints that may restrict the acceptance of simple present or progressive morphology when referring to future events.

(15) Carmen returns to Spain next week.

(16) Carmen is returning to Spain next week.

(17) ?Michael Phelps wins/is winning 5 gold medals in the next Olympic Games.

The language facts about Spanish are presented next. Similar to English, the prototypical meaning for simple present is habitual while the prototypical meaning associated with present progressive is ongoing. The sentence in (18) uses the simple present to describe an attribute of the subject *Pedro*, he is a meat eater. On the other hand, in (19), the present progressive entails what the person is doing at the moment. Moving away from prototypical meanings, the Spanish simple present, unlike English, also allows an ongoing reading. Therefore, the sentence in (18) can also be interpreted as *Pedro eats meat* or *Pedro is eating meat*.

(18) Pedro come carne.

Pedro eat-Present-3sg meat

'Pedro eats meat' or 'Pedro is eating meat.'

(19) Pedro está comiendo carne.
Pedro be-Present-3sg eat-Gerund meat.
'Pedro is eating meat.'

Similarly to English, in Spanish, activities can undergo a shift in meaning from an episodic reading to a habitual one as in (20). In this case, the attribute of being a "meat eater" is true for *Pedro* during the current week.

(20) Pedro está comiendo carne esta semana.
Pedro be-Present-3sg eat-Gerund meat this week.
'Pedro is eating meat this week.'

Similar to English, Spanish also allows the narrative simple present. The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (2009) assures that simple present to narrate an ongoing event is possible in some cases. For instance, the narration in (21) accompanied images from a soccer match that took place early on a given day, but whose briefing is being presented a few hours later in the sports news. Notice that in (21) the underlined verbs are activities marked with simple present morphology. Sentence (22) illustrates a simple present narrative with an achievement verb.

(21) Saca un corner Juanito. Pirri remata de media vuelta
serves a corner kick Juanito Pirri kick-Present-3sg of half spin

sin jugar peligrosamente, y Rivas instintivamente,
without play-Infinitive dangerously and Rivas instinctively

para proteger la cara, rechaza el balón con las manos.
to protect-Infinitve the face hit-Present-3sg the ball with the hands

'Juanito throws the ball from the corner. Pirri shoots sideways without taking any chances, and Rivas instinctively, to protect his face, hits the ball with the hands.'[2]

(Real Academia de la Lengua Española, 1718)

(22) Clara llega a la estación.
Clara arrive-Present-3sg to the station
'Clara arrives to the station' or 'Clara is arriving to the station'

(23) Clara está llegando a la estación.
Clara be-Present-3sg arrive-Gerund to the station
'Clara is arriving to the station'

Sentence (23) shows that in Spanish, as in English, present progressive can be used with an achievement to relate to the instants before the completion on an event (preliminary stage

[2] Sample translated by the author.

reading). Notice that in Spanish, the progressive is a periphrastic construction made up of verbs like *estar* and the gerund form of the main verb. (De Bruyne, 1995).

Concerning the futurate, a key difference between English and Spanish is that Spanish does not allow the present progressive to have a futurate reading[3]. Therefore, if L1 plays a role, Spanish natives will reject a sentence like (24). Yet, they will have no problem accepting simple present morphology evoking a futurate meaning as in (25).

(24) *Clara está regresando a Madrid la próxima semana.
Clara be-Present-3sg return-Gerund to Madrid ø next week.
'Clara is returning to Madrid next week.'

(25) Clara regresa a Madrid la próxima semana.
Clara return-Present-3sg to Madrid ø next week.
'Clara returns to Madrid next week.'

As seen above, most of the meanings associated with simple present and progressive morphology are shared by English and Spanish. This is highly relevant to the current study because we can test if L1-L2 similarities facilitate L2 acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. There are, however, areas of disagreement. For example, simple present ongoing (Marcela writes poetry at the moment) is fine in Spanish, but not acceptable in English. Also, present progressive with a futurate meaning (Clara is returning to Madrid next week) is fine in English, but not acceptable by native speakers of Costa Rican Spanish. The information provided in

[3] This claim is true for speakers of Costa Rican Spanish, however, some dialects of Spanish appear to allow the progressive to have a futurate reference.

Tables 2 constitutes a summary of Linguistic Properties of the two languages included in this study. After having clarified the important concepts for this study and having looked at the parametric differences between English and Spanish, the next section will outline the key findings of previous studies that have looked at simple present and present progressive.

Table 2. Meanings associated with the Simple Present and Present Progressive

	Example	English	Spanish
Simple Present			
Habitual	Elena writes poetry for a newspaper.	✔	✔
Ongoing	Marcela writes poetry. (at the moment)	X	✔
*Narrative	Clara returns to Madrid. (at the moment)	✔	✔
Futurate	Carmen returns to Spain next week.	✔	✔
Present Progressive			
Ongoing (activities)	Elena is writing poetry.	✔	✔
*Ongoing (achievements)	Clara is returning to Madrid.	✔	✔
Habitual Shift	Ana is writing poetry now / this week.	✔	✔
Futurate	Sara is returning home next week.	✔	X

*These meanings are not addressed in this report of the current study.

4. Literature Review

This section compiles the findings of a series of L2 studies on acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. The studies that have looked at acquisition of the core-meanings for the simple present and present progressive in are addressed first. One such study is Slabakova (2003) in which the author addresses the question of whether learners can acquire formal features of functional categories not present in their L1. This question is framed around two theoretical accounts. On the one hand, the Full Functional Representation account predicts that learners can acquire the features, feature strength and semantics associated with the functional category AspP (aspectual phrase). According to this account, if some errors are detected, they will be due to difficulty retrieving the correct morphological realization of the functional category and not to a deficit in the syntax. On the other hand, the Impaired Functional Representation (e.g. Hawkins and Chan (1997), Liceras et al. (1997) and Beck (1998) , predicts that adult learners will only have access to the features –and their values- available in their L1.

Slabakova's study tested 112 speakers of Bulgarian who started learning English post critical period. Bulgarian differs significantly from English in that it does not have a present progressive form. In addition, the simple present can entail an ongoing event (26), a habit as in (27) or a state than can be either be characteristic as in (28a) or temporary as in (28b). The author points out that this ambiguity for the simple present can only be solved by context or the presence of an adverbial.

(26) Maria sega jade jab lka.

Maria now eat-PRES apple

'Mary is eating an apple right now.'

(27) Maria jade jab lka vseki den.
Maria eat-PRES apple every day.
'Mary eats an apple every day.'

(28) a. Maria e m rzeliva.
Maria is-PRES lazy
'Mary is lazy.'

b. Maria v momenta e m rzeliva.
Maria at this moment is-PRES lazy.
'Mary is being lazy.'

(Slabakova 2003, 49)

Slabakova's study included an elicited production task (written description of pictures) and a truth value judgment task. In the TVJT, the participants were asked to read stories that were biased towards a habitual or an ongoing reading. Then, they were given a sentence with either simple present or progressive morphology and they had to judge whether the sentence was true or false based on the information provided in the story that preceded it. The target response was to accept the simple present exclusively with the habitual context as in (29a) and the progressive exclusively with the ongoing context as in (29b).

Habitual Context

(29) a. Whenever I decide to go to the seaside, my car breaks down. This happened last year, and the previous one, too. It is such a pain to start fixing the car in the middle of the trip. But I don't like calling for road assistance, I am a self- help guy. Will I be unlucky this year, too?

I am fixing my own car.	True	False ✔
I fix my own car.	True ✔	False

Ongoing Context

b. Tony is a good mechanic. However, he rarely gets the chance to show his skills. His mother's car broke down yesterday. He has decided to fix it before school this morning. Look, he is almost late for school.

Tony is fixing his mother's car.	True ✔	False
Tony fixes his mother's car.	True	False ✔

(Slabakova 2003, 56)

The results for beginning learners showed 80% accuracy mapping simple present to a habitual context and 65% accuracy mapping progressive to ongoing contexts. Slabakova assumed that the learners were more accurate with the simple present because in both Bulgarian and English, the simple present can be associated with a habitual context . Advanced and high intermediate learners successfully associated progressive with an ongoing meaning and simple present with a habitual reading with eventive predicates. An unexpected finding was the English natives' high acceptance rate of simple present in an event-in-progress context (50%).

Slabakova suggested that it was possible that the natives were accessing a restricted reading that has been called 'reportive present/commentator present' and that is used when describing a sequence of events simultaneous with speech time. However, this type of reading was not accessed by the learners to the same extent; the acceptance rate for learners ranged from 15% to 26%. This also shows that the learners did not transfer that reading from their L1, otherwise, they would have accepted it more. This reading has also been called narrative reading. Under a prototype view, Bardovi-Harlig (2000), based on the work of Noyau, Dorriots et al. (1995), points out that the narrative reading is the last reading to be acquired in the sequence for the development of the simple present as illustrated in (30).

(30) Present → generic → narrative present

Taken together, these results show that the features associated with the functional category AspP are acquirable and unimpaired for the learners, which supports the Full Functional Representation Account.

Along similar lines as Slabakova, Liszka (2006) studied the acquisition of English progressive and simple present by advanced learners whose L1 is French. The key parametric differences between these two languages are presented next. In English, as I outlined above in examples (29 a,b) the core meanings associated with the simple present and progressive morphology are in complementary distribution. Simple present entails a habitual reading and the progressive entails an ongoing interpretation. However, French *Présent* can entail both a habitual or an ongoing reading (similar to Bulgarian simple present). For instance, the French sentence in (31) can have a habitual interpretation or an ongoing one.

(31) Elle ronfle

She Present/Progressive

'She snores. / She is snoring.'

(Liszka, 81)

Liszka (2006) adopts an analysis that argues that these differences in the interpretation of the simple present and present progressive in English and French are tied to the presence or absence of verb raising (following Enç's, 1987; Al-Hamad et al., 2002). French, a verb-raising language, requires that the thematic verb raise overtly from v to T (tense) position in order to value a 'strong' uninterpretable V-feature value. Once in T position, it is possible to establish "a deictic connection between Speech Time and verb's event structure." (Al-Hamad et al., 2002:55, cited in Liszka 2006). This connection allows the ongoing or the habitual readings for the simple present.

On the other hand, in English, thematic verbs do not raise because the uninterpretable V-feature value is 'weak' and thus, it cannot trigger movement to T. Therefore, "an English present simple verb form is left deictically unlinked" (Liszka, 2006, p. 82) and only the habitual/stative interpretation is possible.

One of the key questions in this study is whether L1 French learners of English know that, contrary to French, thematic verbs do not raise in English and thus can rule out an ongoing reading for the simple present. According to Liszka, an affirmative answer to this question would imply that learners can assign target-like meanings to overt forms, but a negative answer would indicate that learners will fail at doing so due to syntactic deficits. By addressing these questions, Liszka also intended to test the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (Hawkins &

Chan, 1997) which claims that the native language influences the acquisition of a second one. Thus, in the areas in which the L2 shares a feature with the L1, the L2 learners are expected to perform native-like but in the cases in which the L2 features differ from the L1, learners will show some deficiencies due to their inability to reset the L1 parameters to the target language standards.

To answer the question presented above, Liszka implemented two oral tasks (picture and video description) and a written task (contextualized dialogue). The results of the picture task showed that in a habitual context, the learners used simple present morphology 100% of the time; in the ongoing context, the progressive was used 93.7% of the time and the simple present the remaining 6.3%. The video task showed similar results for the simple present context (97.3% accuracy) but in the ongoing context there is an unexpected overgeneralization of simple present morphology (progressive was used 45.1 % while simple present was used 54.9%). This finding for the learners in Liszka's study coincided with the results for the natives in Slabakova (2003) who also accepted the simple present in an ongoing context in 50% of the stimuli contrasting with the learners who accepted it only 15-26%. The results for Liszka's study should be interpreted carefully because unlike Slabakova's, it did not include a native control group. It is possible that in Liszka's study, this finding constitutes a task effect. Liszka herself acknowledges that a sequence of events such as the one in her video task, is reported in English as a narrative (using simple present). She tried to neutralize this interpretation by using the progressive repeatedly in the instructions for the task and by asking the subjects to describe what was happening on the screen as they were watching the video clip. Liszka's idea was to "prime the learners towards the temporal context" (89), however, the results suggest that this attempt

may have failed. In the written task, learners used simple present correctly 93.1% of the time while the progressive was used correctly 66.1% of the time.

The results can also be analyzed in terms of correct use of morphology by verb type. In the picture task, the progressive was used accurately 95.9% with activities, 100% with accomplishments and 69.2% with achievements. In the video task, the progressive was used accurately 65.3% with activities, 31.6% with accomplishments and 48.1% with achievements. According to the author, this data suggested a connection between inherent aspect and the use of a verb form. In the case of the progressive, the results for the picture and the video task indicated a distributional bias for the correct use of the progressive mainly with activities. However, Liszka pointed out that in the case of the picture description task, the bias could be a task effect because most of the actions depicted in the pictures prompt the use of activities. In the case of the simple present, the results roughly indicated native-like use across tasks, in other words, it was highly rejected with dynamic verbs, yet more accepted with copula "be" and statives. Liszka concluded that in general terms, the learners performed well, but the overuse of simple present in ongoing contexts indicated that the French natives did not know that thematic verbs in English do not raise. She argued that this evidence suggests representational deficits in their grammars even at advanced proficiency levels.

Similar to Liszka, Hawkins et al. (2008) also adopted an account that links crosslinguistic differences in the interpretation of the simple present and present progressive to the presence or absence of verb raising. Their study tested command of simple present/past and progressive in natives, and in two groups of learners. One group was made up of native speakers of verb-raising languages (Arabic, French, German and Spanish). In these languages, raising of the thematic verb allows the simple present to have both an ongoing and a habitual interpretation.

Progressive, on the other hand, only entails an ongoing reading. The other group or learners was made up of native speakers of non-raising languages (Chinese and Japanese). In these languages, similar to English, thematic verbs do not raise from v to T, and the simple present can only have a habitual/generic interpretation. Hawkins et al. used an acceptability judgment task (AJT) to test knowledge of the difference between raised and non-raised verbs in English. Each item was made up of a story biased towards a habitual interpretation as in (32) or an ongoing interpretation as in (33) and two possible continuations, one with progressive and the other one with simple present morphology. Each item also included a five-point acceptability scale. The target answers are indicated in bold and underlined in the examples below.

(32) Whenever Mary and Alan meet… (Habitual Context)

a. they talk about Linguistics until late. -2 -1 0 +1 **+2**

b. they are talking about Linguistics until late. **-2** -1 0 +1 +2

(33) Bob can't contact Julie at the moment… (Ongoing Context)

a. apparently she runs on the beach. **-2** -1 0 +1 +2

b. apparently she is running on the beach. -2 -1 0 +1 **+2**

(Hawkins et al., 340)

Hawkins et al. believe that knowing about the interaction of syntactic features and their semantic consequences (as opposed to just looking at surface inflections in learners' productions) is a better indicator of the learner's acquisition of the L2 representations of interpretable and uninterpretable features. Therefore, they predicted that if learners can identify the correct

continuations in the AJT, it is because they have learned the English syntactic representations associated with simple present and progressive.[4]

According to the Hawkins et al., the overall results seemed to indicate that all learners can distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate interpretations for the simple present/past and the progressive. However, a closer look at the data revealed significant differences between learners of English whose L1 is a verb-raising language and those whose L1 is a non-raising language. Chinese and Japanese speakers did well with the simple present – progressive distinction with activity verbs but failed to establish this distinction with achievement verbs especially in the ongoing context. Also, surprisingly, the learners from the verb-raising group did not reject the progressive morphology wrongly associated with a habitual reading as accurately as the natives or the non-raising group. In other words, in an item like (32) above, they wrongly favored option (b.) over option (a.) as a possible continuation. Based on these results, the authors concluded that even though the L2ers seem to be able to distinguish between the simple present and the progressive, their grammatical representations are different from those of the natives. Even though the results mentioned above seem to agree with their proposal, Hawkins et al.'s account does not predict differences based on verb type. Therefore, they cannot explain, under this view, why the non-raising group (Chinese and Japanese) did poorly on achievements but were very accurate with activity verbs. Similarly, this account cannot explain

[4] Hawkins et al. follow an account by Adger (2003), which proposes that between v and T there is an agreement relationship that involves the interpretable features [present], [past] and [progressive] and an uninterpretable feature [uInfl:] that is associated with v. Raising languages need to value [uInfl:] locally while non-raising languages like English do not need to value [uInfl:] locally. According to Adger, agreement blocks any possible interpretations based on lexical properties of v. This renders only a generic/habitual interpretation for the simple present. On the other hand, the progressive is considered an independent aspectual head with one interpretable feature [Prog] that values the [uInfl:] of v, yet it also has a strong uninterpretable [uInfl:*] that can be valued at T level triggering an ongoing reading only. No habitual reading can be associated with Prog because, as indicated, [Prog] already valued the [uInfl:] of v.

why the verb-raising group did not behave English-like judging the appropriateness of a habitual reading with the progressive. Additionally, Hawkins et al. argued that the differences across groups might be due to L1 effects. This could explain the over acceptance of progressive habitual in the verb-raising group and the poor performance of the non-raising group with achievements verbs despite their good performance with activity verbs.

There are significant differences in the conclusions reached by the studies of Slabakova (2003), Liszka (2006), and Hawkins et al. (2008). Slabakova concluded that features associated with the functional category AspP are acquirable and unimpaired for learners. Liszka assumed that the learners' grammar, even at advanced levels, is deficient (yet her study is missing a control group). Finally, Hawkins et al. concluded that even though learners appear to know the distinction of simple present and progressive, their syntactic representations are different. However, their results seem to deviate from their original proposal that v-to-T raising can successfully account for the learners' English interpretations.

While several studies, like the ones mentioned above, have explored the acquisition of core-meanings for the simple present and the progressive, few have looked at the acquisition of extended or non-core meanings for these forms. One of the most influential works that has looked at extended meanings for simple present and progressive morphology is Shirai & Andersen (1995). In this study, the issue of acquisition of tense-aspect morphology was addressed within two sets of closely related theories. They first framed the interpretation of their results around what they call the Aspect Hypothesis and the Distributional Bias Hypothesis (Andersen, 1988, 1993). Then, they took their analysis a step further by proposing the Prototype Hypothesis to better account for the results of their study.

Shirai and Andersen used the label Aspect Hypothesis to refer to a developmental pattern observed across several languages in relation to the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology in an L1. The premise of this hypothesis is that in early stages of language acquisition, children use verbal morphology to mark lexical aspect instead of grammatical aspect. The tenets of this hypothesis have been found to hold true for both L1 and L2 acquisition. They are described next in terms of the learners because the current project deals with second language acquisition.

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 next to activities, then to accomplishments, and finally to achievements.
3. In languages that have progressive aspect, progressive marking begins with activities, then extends to accomplishments and achievements.
4. Progressive markings are not incorrectly overextended to statives.

(Bardovi-Harlig, 227)

Along similar lines of the Aspect Hypothesis, the Distributional Bias Hypothesis (idem) proposed that adult natives use past/perfective morphology more with accomplishments and achievements than with statives or activities and progressive mainly with activities. The authors focused their study on testing whether these two hypotheses were on the right track. If so, it was expected that the pattern observed in children would reflect the bias in their parents' speech.

Shirai & Andersen's study included data from CHILDES (Child Language Exchange System; MacWhinney & Snow 1990) corresponding to 3 children (Adam, Naomi and Eve), who are native acquirers of English. The data was collected at 4 stages of development determined by the children's MLU (mean length of utterance). Concerning the mothers' speech, the results indicated that past inflection was mainly used with achievements (58-64%) and progressive mostly with activities (53-61%). This agreed with the prediction of the Distribution Bias Hypothesis. In addition, the mothers' use of past and progressive also appeared to follow the Aspect Hypothesis. The data showed that past inflection used more with accomplishments and achievements than with activities or states and the progressive was used mainly with activity verbs.

In relation to the children's speech, the results for the past coincided with the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis; in early stages, children used past mainly with achievements and later they extended it to other verb types. However, the authors pointed out that the interpretation of the results for the progressive was a bit challenging. The children's use of progressive with activities was not as robust as their use of past with achievements. At stage 1, the children's use of progressive followed the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis, but at stages two through four, the results across subjects varied to a great extent. Given this variation, the authors decided to look at the results in more detail. They discovered that Naomi's early used of progressive was with activities and also with iterative achievements like *jumping*. Eve followed a similar pattern using progressive with activities but also with some achievements like *banging* and *coming*. On the other hand, Adam used progressive with an iterative achievement just once. Yet, the authors indicate that towards the end of stage 1, he started using progressive with accomplishments and also with noniterative achievements like *putting it back.* In sum, past and progressive

morphology is initially restricted to a type of verb but it is later extended to others. The findings mentioned above allowed Shirai & Andersen to formulate a prototype account to solve some problems interpreting the results of their study. For example, it was not initially clear why in the case of punctual verbs like *jump* children preferred to use progressive morphology instead of past. The authors noticed that a semantic feature like punctuality or resultativity could not by itself guarantee past marking. Hence, they proposed that the prototype for the past should encompasses the semantic features [+telic], [+punctual] and [+result]. In the case of the progressive, the authors observed that children did not seem to be able to distinguish the difference between verbs like cry and jump and marked both with progressive morphology. The proposed explanation, following Smith (1991), was that children considered them activities and thus, marked them in agreement with the prototype proposed for progressive, i.e. an event that is [-telic] and [+durative] and entails an event-in-progress interpretation.

Shirai & Andersen explained that the prototype account was borrowed by linguists from cognitive psychology. Originally developed by Eleanor Rosch in the 1970s (e.g. Rosch 1973, 1978, Rosch & Mervis 1975), it proposed that for a given category, humans identify a "best exemplar" (758) that is called the prototype and other members that vary to different degrees from the prototype. In the case of language acquisition, the claim is that children first associate a given morphology to a prototypical meaning and in later stages of development they can expand the use of a form to other less-prototypical cases. The prototypical meaning associated with the progressive is ongoing which was correctly used by the children in this study. Recall that they used progressive with activities and iterative achievements that entail an ongoing meaning. On the other hand, the past was prototypically linked to verbs with the features [+result], [+punctual] and [+telic], following the pattern predicted by the prototype account. The authors concluded

that in early stages of L1 acquisition, tense-aspect morphology is highly influenced by the inherent aspect of the verbs, their acquisition of prototypes and the caretaker's input.

Bardovi-Harlig (2000) reported that several studies seem to support the notion that the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis apply to second language acquisition as well. A study on second language acquisition of Italian by Giacalone Ramat (1995, 1997) reported that 63% of the learners' progressives were activities, 22% statives, 8% accomplishments and 4% achievements. Robison (1995), cited by Bardovi-Harlig added that in the case of learners of English, as proficiency increases so does the marking of progressive on activities. Shirai's (1995) study on acquisition of L2 Japanese by 3 Chinese natives showed also a high use of the progressive marker –te i- with activities (55%). These results contrasted significantly with the almost absent use of progressive with statives (less than 3%) attested by studies mentioned in Bardovi-Harlig (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Bergbström, 1996; Robison, 1995). This agreed with the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis that L2 learners do not incorrectly overextend progressive morphology to statives.

Huang (1999) explored acquisition of tense-aspect morphology in English as a second language. Her study went beyond studying inherent lexical aspect as it explored another aspectual feature: the distinction between unitary and repeated situation types and how it affects the use of tense-aspect morphology. Brinton (1988) cited by Huang, considers that "repetition" constitutes a 5th aspectual category (adding up to the four proposed by Vendler, 1967). Huang added, citing Smith (1997) that unlike the four verb categories proposed by Vendler, repetition is related to "situation type shifts triggered by adverbials or other information from the context" (115). Also relevant to Huang's study was the distinction between a unitary event as in (34a) and a repeated event as in (34b). Notice that while the lexical aspect is the same in (34a) and

(34b), the progressive inflection in (34b) is what makes the distinction. Repeated events can be further divided into iterative, which indicates a repetition on a single occasion as in (35a) and habitual, which indicates a repetition on different occasions as in (35b).

(34) a. He jumped. (unitary)

b. He was jumping. (repeated)

(35) a. He was jumping. (iterative repeated event)

b. He rode his bicycle on Fridays. (habitual repeated event)

(Huang, 116)

Huang's study attempted to answer two questions concerning learners and natives: How do they use verb morphology in regard to inherent lexical aspect and how do they use verb morphology in regard to the unitary/repeated distinction? The data analyzed came from a series of audio taped interviews corresponding to 3 native speakers of English, and 5 L1 Mandarin speakers, L2 learners of English with an age range of 25-35 and 6-12 months of residence in the United States.

Past morphology was used by natives and learners mainly with achievements and progressive mainly with activities, yet this pattern was more robust for the learners. These results support the Primacy of Aspect and the Distributional Bias Hypothesis.

The results for the relationship between verb morphology and the unitary/repeated situation distinction showed that for the past, both natives and learners associated it mostly with unitary situations. Interestingly, the natives were more likely to also allow the past to be used

with repeated situations. In the case of the progressive, natives and learners showed an opposite pattern. Natives used progressive mainly with repeated situations as in (36) while the learners used it mainly with unitary situations as in (37).

(36) …and ah they're always talking about crimes

(37) …he's working at this factory

(the learner was telling the interviewer that his wife was working at the factory at the moment of the interview)

(Huang, 124,125)

Huang concluded that the similar patterns in the use of verb morphology found for natives and learners are a clear indication of the influence of inherent lexical aspect, her results then support the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis and the Distributional Bias Hypothesis. However, concerning his additional parameter, repetition, the results indicated that natives and learners use progressive morphology differently, and this was interpreted by Huang as evidence that the acquisition patterns of learner's are not exclusively determined by the native input. She believes that other factors may, not only influence L2 acquisition but also, in some cases, "override" the influence of the native input (127). Among these factors, the preponderant role corresponds to the influence of the L1, which was also suggested by Shirai (1995). For example, Bardovi-Harlig pointed out that in Chinese there is a progressive marker *zai* that the subjects in her study may equate to the English progressive marker to signal the ongoing nature of an event. However, in English, unlike Chinese, the progressive marker can also be used with an ongoing meaning in a unitary situation. This may mislead the Chinese natives into associating

progressive morphology with unitary situations instead of with repeated situations which is more common in English.

Finally, Huang believes that her results can be clearly interpreted under a prototype account. According to the prototype, habitual/iterative past is less prototypical than unitary past and habitual/iterative progressive is less prototypical than unitary (continuous) progressive. Thus, the learners first use past and progressive morphology with unitary situations and later expand it to repeated situations.

A study that assesses the English progressive within a prototype approach is Bardovi-Harlig (in press). She points out, as other authors, that the progressive is commonly associated with activities, used to a lesser degree with achievements and ruled out with statives as in (38).

(38) *John is knowing the answer.

Bardovi-Harlig claimed that her study compared two previous prototype accounts for the progressive. The first one is Gass & Ard (1984) which proposed that the progressive is more associated with and ongoing reading that with a futurate one. The second prototype account is Andersen and Shirai (1996:558) which proposed that the acquisition of progressive morphology follows the sequence seen in (39).

(39) Process (activity > accomplishment) > iterative > habitual or futurate > stative progressive

Bardovi-Harlig's study looked at instances of prototypical use of the progressive, i.e. ongoing interpretation. In addition, it focused on less prototypical meanings like repeated (40)

and future readings (41) associated with progressive and the contribution of adverbs to their interpretation.

(40) Nobody is waking me up in the morning. (repeated)

(41) I am not coming here anymore. (futurate)

(Bardovi-Harlig, in press)

The data in her study was a collection of oral and written texts from 16 adult low-level learners of English (native speakers of Arabic, Japanese, Korean, or Spanish). The results concerning adverbials are provided first. Out of a total of 1,096 tokens, 92% were prototypical progressives with an ongoing reading, 3% corresponded to repeated progressives and 4.9% to futurate progressives. Interestingly, adverbs appeared in 88% of the repeated interpretation progressives and 74% of the futurate interpretation ones. Bardovi-Harlig highlighted that these elevated numbers for adverbs associated with repeated and futurate progressives contrasted significantly with the adverbs used in progressives in general. She backed up her claim by estimating the adverb-to-verb ratio, which for repeated readings was 0.94, for futurate 0.74 and for the progressive tokens in general just 0.37. According to Bardovi-Harlig, these results indicated that adverbials ensure nonprototypical readings of the progressive. She also mentioned that in the case of the repeated progressives with telic predicates, it is possible for the progressive to trigger a repeated reading without an explicit adverb as in (42); nevertheless, this is rare. It was also found that progressive futurates are more common than repeated ones.

(42) "At last the bicycle toke the balles then play alon or juggle alon… he was throwing and receiving the balles by its pedals" (learner's written sample)

(Bardovi-Harlig, in press)

Bardovi-Harlig also reported that some of the learners did not use progressive inflection at all with repeated and futurate meanings. In the case of the ones who did use it, it was not clear which appeared first in their L2 grammar. In relation to inherent lexical aspect, progressive was mainly used with activities with an ongoing reading and used less with repeated and futurate. The author claimed that these results seem to agree with the Aspect Hypotheses of Shirai & Andersen and Gass & Ard in terms of the internal structure of the progressive. However, Bardovi-Harlig emphasized that even though the progressive expands in second language acquisition in the way predicted by the prototype accounts, it does not do it in exactly the way predicted by the Aspect Hypothesis. She alternatively proposed that the progressive spreads from an ongoing reading (prototype) to a repeated reading, which in most cases is associated with activities, but which is less frequently associated with accomplishments and even less with achievements. Finally, given that her data did not show a clear distinction between iterative and habitual, she suggested a small update to the sequence of acquisition proposed by Shirai & Andersen. She changed the second stage in the sequence of acquisition from iterative to repeated (iterative or habitual). The reformulation proposed by Bardovi-Harlig is illustrated in (43).

(43) Process (activity > accomplishment) > repeated (iterative/habitual) > futurate > stative progressive

In summary, Shirai & Andersen (1995) reported that, as proposed by the Distributional Bias Hypothesis, L1 children and adults more commonly associate past morphology with accomplishments and achievements while progressive morphology is more commonly associated with activities. Also, in line with the Aspect Hypothesis, past and progressive morphology is

initially restricted to a verb type, but in can be expanded to others in later stages of acquisition. In terms of their prototypical account for L1 acquisition, the progressive is expected to be initially associated with an ongoing interpretation and used mainly with activity verbs; yet, in later stages of development progressive marking can be used with other verb types and convey other meanings. Following on Shirai & Andersen's work, Bardovi-Harlig provided evidence from different sources that supports the notion that tense-aspect morphology is highly influenced the inherent aspect of verbs in L2 acquisition as well. In the case of progressive, not only did she report successful mapping of progressive to an ongoing reading, but also she pointed out that learners did not incorrectly overextended the use of progressive morphology to stative verbs.

Huang's study evidenced similar patterns in the use of verb morphology for both natives and learners which suggest a clear influence of inherent lexical aspect of the verb. However, by adding a new variable to the equation of tense-aspect morphology acquisition, repetition, she was able to identify a key difference. While natives use progressive mainly with repeated situations, learners use it mainly with unitary situations. She explains these results by proposing that habitual iterative past is less prototypical than unitary past and that habitual progressive is less prototypical than unitary progressive. According to Huang, this finding implies that the acquisition patterns of the learners' are not exclusively determined by native input. Huang, as Shirai et al., believes that in some cases the L1 may play a bigger role than the native input in L2 acquisition.

Bardovi-Harlig (in press) looked at non-protoypical/non core meanings associated with the progressive under a prototype account, i.e., repeated and futurate meanings. She pointed out that when used correctly, most of the instances of progressive repeated and futurate contained

adverbs. This suggests that adverbs play a key role in the correct interpretation of these non core progressive meanings.

The present study builds on the issues raised in this literature review. First, it further examines whether features not present in the L1 can be acquired. For instance, the simple present differs in English and Spanish in a similar fashion as Bulgarian (studied by Slabakova) and French (studied by Liszka) differ from English. A comparison of these results with those of the current study will shed light on the issue of target language features's acquisition. Secondly, the current study goes beyond exploring core meanings associated with simple present and present progressive morphology as it focuses on acquisition of non-core meanings. In some cases, it will focus on areas of L1-L2 similarity to further explore the issues raised by Gass & Ard and Slabakova & Montrul (mentioned previously) in order to test whether the non-core meanings for the simple present and the progressive can transfer. Lastly, the current study also improves the methodology used by Gass & Ard and Slabakova & Montrul in two ways. First, it includes a Grammaticality Judgment Task that presents sentences in isolation and also an Interpretation Task that provides a context for the participants' interpretations. These two tasks provide a baseline to compare the role that elements like adverbs and additional contextual information play in the interpretation of core and non-core meanings. Secondly, to my knowledge, previous studies have not tested if learners are aware of pragmatic constraints that apply to their form to meaning mappings. For example, in both Spanish and English, it is necessary that an event be plannable in order for the futurate reading to be possible. In other words, a sentence like "*Mary is winning the lottery next week*" should not be acceptable because it is not possible to plan an event like "winning the lottery" and the sentence should be considered wrong for pragmatic reasons despite the correct use of verb morphology.

5. The Present Study

As indicated above, this study explores L2 acquisition of English Simple Present and Present Progressive by Spanish natives. It looks at acquisition of both core meanings and non-core meanings associated with these forms as well as pragmatic constraints that can limit their use. This study looks at comprehension data gathered by means of a Grammaticality Judgment Task and an Interpretation in an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of the L1 in acquisition of L2 tense-aspect morphology?
2. Are the "shifts" in meaning that yield non-core meanings associated with simple present and present progressive acquirable in L2?
3. Are learners aware of pragmatic constraints that play a role in the interpretation of shifts in meanings?

5.1 Participants

The learner group included eighty-one native speakers of Costa Rican Spanish (52 females and 29 males). They were students at a university in Costa Rica. They were enrolled in the program for English or Teaching of English as a Second Language. The mean age for the group was 21. They were undergraduate students with a varied background in terms of knowledge of English. This motivated the inclusion of a proficiency test. This test was an excerpt from the ECPE (Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English) 2003-04 designed by the Testing and Certification Division of the English Language Institute at the

University of Michigan. The test given to the participants was worth 50 points; it included 30 vocabulary items and 20 grammar items from the ECPE. The mean score was 29; learners who scored above the mean were classified as advanced and the ones who scored below the mean were considered intermediate.

Of the 81 participants in the experimental group, a total of 7 subjects were excluded from the study because they scored less than 85% in the fillers included in the tasks. Of the remaining subjects (74), 48 completed an interpretation task (22 intermediate and 26 advanced) and the other 26 Costa Ricans carried out a grammaticality judgment task (13 intermediate and 13 advanced). This study also included a control group made up of 76 native speakers of English (mean age 20); 46 of them completed the interpretation task and 30 took the grammaticality judgment task. All the participants in the control group were students at the University of Kansas.

5.2 Tasks: General Procedure

Before taking the tasks, the participants were asked to read and sign a consent form in their native language. All the experiments were given in a single testing session. The learners were also asked to complete a background information questionnaire and a proficiency test before taking the experimental tasks. This took them approximately 30 minutes. The members of the control group were tested in small groups (no more than 5 at a time) in the Second Language Acquisition lab at the University of Kansas while the learners were tested in 4 groups (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors) in a computer lab at their university in Costa Rica.

Each participant took only one of the tasks, either the Interpretation Task or the Grammaticality Judgment Task. These tasks were administered on a personal computer using *Paradigm*© (Tagliaferri, 2005). All the subjects received extra credit in one of their classes for participating in the study.

5.2.1 Grammaticality Judgment Task

In this task, the participants were asked to judge whether a series of English sentences containing simple present or present progressive morphology were acceptable or not. Some of the sentences contained time adverbials as (44) and some did not (45). This task was made up of a total of 120 items organized in three experiments (activities, habituals, and futurates). The details about each experiment will be provided separately in the Experiments section.

(44) Ana writes poetry now.
(45) Elena is writing poetry.

The sentences used as stimuli included a subset of the same sentences used in the Interpretation Task plus 20 new sentences and 25 fillers, all these items were presented in random order. The fillers followed a similar format to the experimental items, yet they contained some mistakes that were expected to be noticed by the subjects and prevent them from over accepting sentences without paying attention. The mistake in each sentence is underlined.

(46) a. Karen <u>go</u> to the supermarket every Saturday.

b. My father is wash the dinner dishes right now.

The results of this task will be compared to those of Gass & Ard (1984) and Slabakova and Montrul (2008) to see if the reported difficulty in accepting shifted meanings licensed by adverbs can be replicated in the present study.

5.2.1.1 Procedure for the Grammaticality Judgment Task

The first screen welcomed the participants to the experiment and explained the generalities of it. Then, they were presented the instructions for the task in their native language. After this explanation, two practice items were introduced and automatic feedback was given to them. At this point, the researcher made sure that the instructions were clear and that the subjects were ready to start taking the task. The actual item analysis was carried out in the following fashion. A sentence would appear on screen and underneath there were two boxes. One of the boxes said "This is a good sentence" and the other once said "This is a bad sentence." The participants were asked to click on either one of the boxes to decide whether or not the sentence was acceptable in English. After that, they pressed the space bar and a new sentence would be displayed until they completed the task. The time allotted to respond to each trial was 20 seconds. It took the participants about 25 minutes to complete this task.

5.2.2 Interpretation Task

Similar to the GJ Task, the stimuli of the interpretation task also looked at activities, habituals, and futurates. The details of each category will be given in the Experiments section. For this task, 96 stories were created, 16 of which were fillers. Two presentation lists were developed using a Latin Square design. Each participant read all 96 stories, but was asked to judge only one sentence with either with progressive or simple present morphology. The sentences to be judged by the subjects were the same as the ones in the GJ Task with the key difference that they were to be interpreted within the context of the stories that preceded them instead of being judged in isolation as in (47). Moreover, the stories and instructions were designed so that they would not bias the participants to accept either a simple present or a progressive sentence. The progressive was not used in the context of the stories and the simple present was only used with stative verbs. If non-stative verbs were used in the stories, they were not inflected with simple present nor progressive morphology.

(47) Isabel has been a Music student since she was five. She wants to be a great pianist, so she has to practice 8 hours a day Monday through Saturday. Today is Sunday, so she has gone to the movies with her parents.
Description: Isabel plays the piano.

The fillers were designed so that they would be rejected because of a mismatch between the information in the story and the information in the sentence that described it; however, the context provided did match the core meaning associated with the verb form in the sentence. In

other words, half of the fillers presented an ongoing context followed by a sentence with progressive morphology as in (48) and the other half of the fillers presented a habitual context followed by a simple present sentence. This design encourages the participants to pay close attention to the trials and prevents them from accepting the sentences just because they contain simple present or present progressive morphology. The target items and the fillers were presented in random order.

(48) Joseph is an office clerk. He works from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. He always has lunch at 11:45 am. Right now, it is 11:50 am and he is already in the cafeteria with his lunch.
Description: Joseph is sending e-mails.

5.2.2.1 Procedure for the Interpretation Task

Participants received instructions in their native language to get acquainted with the format of the test and to know what the task required them to do. After the instructions, two practice items were introduced and automatic feedback was given to them. For each trail, a story would appear on screen. The subjects did not have a time limit to read the story. Once they were done reading, then they pressed the space bar to move on to the next screen. On the next screen, the same story appeared again along with two more elements, a sentence containing either progressive or simple present morphology and two boxes. One of the boxes read "*This is a good description*" and the other one "*This is a bad description*." The participants were given 25 seconds to decide whether or not the sentence adequately described the story by clicking with

the mouse on either one of the boxes. It took the participants around 45 minutes to complete this task. [5]

6. Experiments

6.1 Experiment 1: Activity Verbs

6.1.1. Stimuli

This experiment tested activity verbs in the simple present and present progressive. The verb phrases used in the eight stories of the interpretation task were: *write poetry, play the piano, smoke cigarettes, bake pies, play basketball, drink wine, eat meat and ride a bike.* There were eight of these stories that were presented in an ongoing context (49) and an additional eight sentences that were presented in a habitual context as in (50). After every story, the participants had to judge only one sentence, either with progressive or simple present morphology.[6]

Activity: Ongoing

(49) Marcela is a Math student. She has never written a poem in her life. However, she has to take an English class and by tomorrow, she has to write a 15-verse poem about love. At the moment, she is on verse 10. This is miserable!

a. Marcela writes poetry.

b. Marcela is writing poetry. ✔

[5] Both the GJ Task and the Interpretation Task also included experimental conditions that targeted statives with present progressive such as *Kyle is believing in ghosts* and achievements like *Clara returns/is returning to Madrid*; however, they will not be discussed here.

[6] The (✔) symbol indicates the expected correct response for English natives.

Activity: Habitual

(50) Elena is a writer. Her job is to write poetry for children Monday through Friday. Today is Sunday, so she is at the movies with some friends.

a. Elena writes poetry. ✔

b. Elena is writing poetry.

In the ongoing condition, natives were expected to reject simple present morphology (49a) and accept present progressive (49b) because in English an ongoing event is associated only with progressive morphology; on the other hand, since in Spanish both (49a) and (49b) are possible constructions associated with an ongoing context, learners are expected to wrongly accept a sentence like (49a) (*Marcela writes poetry*) and correctly accept a sentence like (49b) (*Marcela is writing poetry*) if the L1 plays a role. In the habitual condition both natives and learners were predicted to accepted only simple present. The GJ task tested a subset of the sentences used in the Interpretation Task. In this experiment, the GJ Task tested 10 sentences, fire of the type exemplified by (50a.) and five by (50b.).

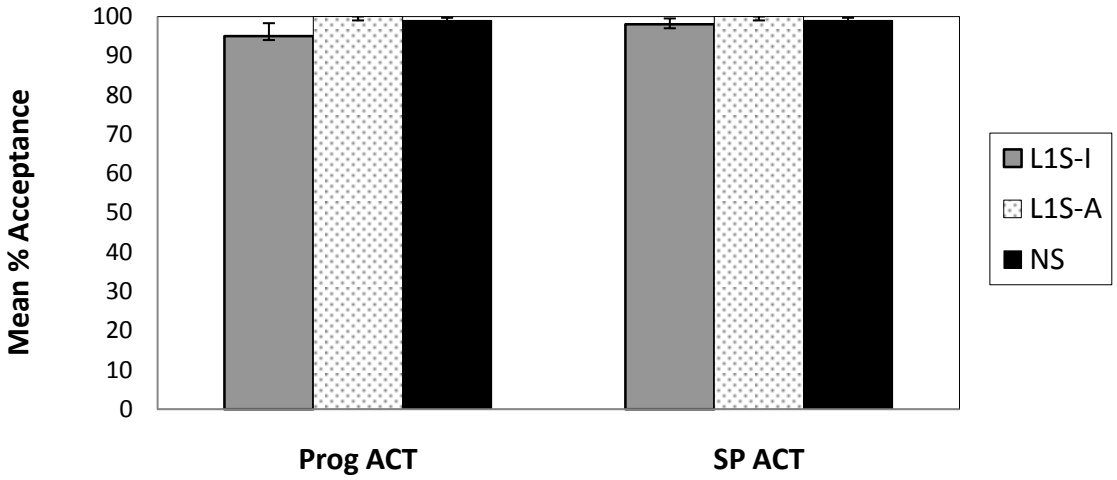
6.1.2 GJ Task Analysis

The results of the GJ Task in all experiments were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance with post hoc Bonferroni to compare the acceptance of the sentences by learners and natives. In the figures provided, the graph bars represent the mean percent acceptance for a given condition(s) for each of the three participant groups (intermediate Spanish, advanced Spanish and English natives). In the analysis of the results, $p < 0.05$ is interpreted as significant.

6.1.3 GJ Results

Figure 1. summarizes the results for the GJ task for the acceptance of activity verbs in simple present sentences (*Marcela writes poetry*) and progressive sentences (*Marcela is writing poetry*).

Figure 1. Experiment 1 GJ Task: Mean % Acceptance of activity verbs in present progressive and simple present



The ANOVAs run did not reveal significant differences in acceptance rates between the natives and the learners for neither the simple present nor the present progressive. This shows that the learners did not have any difficulty accepting these English sentences.

6.1.4 Interpretation Task Analysis

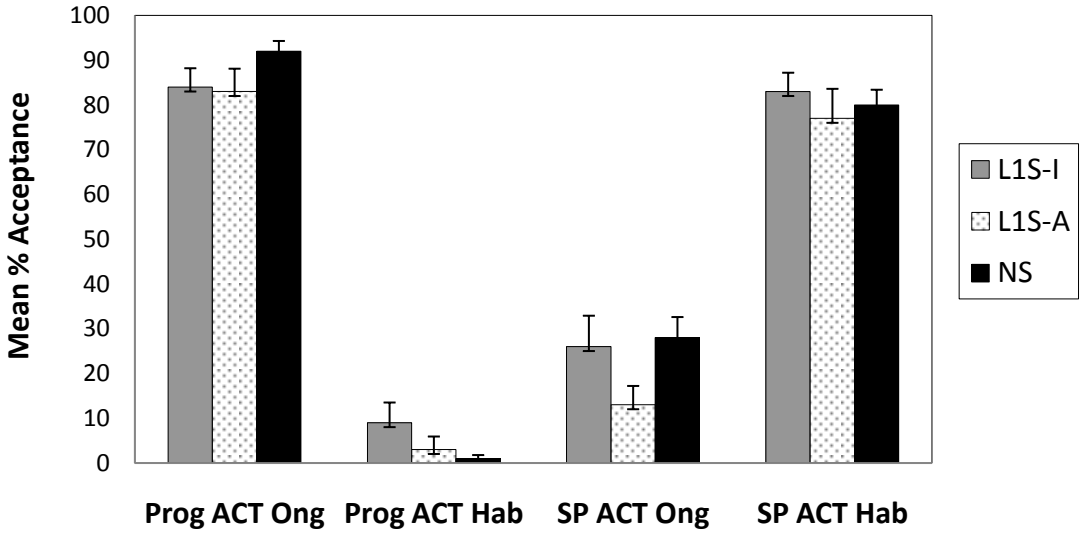
The results of the Interpretation Task in all experiments were analyzed using a series of 2x2 factorial repeated-measures analyses of variance with context (ongoing or habitual) and

aspect (simple present or present progressive) as the within subjects factors and proficiency level (Spanish Intermediate, Spanish Advanced or English Natives) as the between-subjects factor. Post hoc comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment were also carried out. In the analysis of the results, $p < 0.05$ is interpreted as significant.

6.1.5 Interpretation Task Results

The results for this task were analyzed to see if the participants were capable of correctly distinguishing between the use of activity verbs in the simple present and the present progressive in an ongoing context vs. a habitual context. The results for this task are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Experiment 1 Interpretation Task: Mean % acceptance of activity verbs in present progressive and simple present with habitual and ongoing contexts



The repeated-measures ANOVAs showed a significant main effect for context ($F(2,91) = 25.298$, $p < .001$ and aspect ($F(2,91) = 8.893$, $p = .004$. The interaction between context and proficiency level was not significant ($p = .066$) and neither was the interaction between aspect and proficiency level ($p = .463$); however, a significant interaction between aspect and context ($F(2,91) = 570.206$, $p < .001$ was found. These statistics show that both learners and natives strongly distinguish between simple present and present progressive and between habitual and ongoing contexts. Moreover, the interaction between aspect and context shows that the difference in acceptability between simple present and present progressive depends on context. Specifically, the progressive was strongly accepted in the ongoing context and rejected in the habitual one (1 to 9% acceptance rate). On the other hand, the simple present was strongly accepted in the habitual context and rejected in the ongoing one (13-28% acceptance rate).

6.1.6 Discussion

The results of the GJ task indicated that the learners behaved like English natives in their acceptance of simple present and present progressive with activity verbs. The results of the interpretation task showed that the learners behaved like the natives in their interpretations of the meanings associated with simple present and present progressive with activity verbs. In the habitual context both learners and natives mainly favored simple present and strongly rejected progressive morphology. This contrasts with the learners from the verb-raising group in Hawkins et al. (2008) who overused the progressive in the habitual context.

This means that all the participants correctly associate the core meanings for the simple present and present progressive with their corresponding verbal morphology. On a side note, it is interesting to notice that for all groups, the use of simple present was slightly less restrictive than the use of the progressive, i.e. simple present was also accepted in the ongoing context to a greater extent than progressive was accepted in the habitual context. In relation to transfer, if the L1 played a role, the Spanish speakers would have accepted simple present in addition to progressive in the ongoing context, but that was not the case, therefore, no evidence for transfer was found. In general terms, the learners in this study seem to have acquired the core meanings associated with the simple present and the present progressive with activity verbs (in agreement with Slabakova, 2003 but contra Liszka, 2006).

6.2 Experiment 2: Habitual Shifts with Activity Verbs

6.2.1 Stimuli

Experiment 1 tested acquisition of core meanings associated with simple present and present progressive. The results showed that learners can correctly rule out progressive activities in habitual contexts. However, in experiment 2, we test whether the participants would accept the progressive in habitual contexts due to the presence of adverbs which license a shift in meaning. This experiment tested the same eight activity verbs used in Experiment 1. In the first condition, the adverb *now* allows for a shift in meaning from an event-in-progress, which is usually associated with the progressive, to a habitual. In this environment, the change is

perceived as permanent. For instance, in (51) below, *Ana* did not use to write poetry in the past, however, now she does like it, and this change is a permanent one, i.e., it becomes a new characteristic associated with her.

Habitual Shift: Permanent

(51) Ana used to hate Literature. However, two months ago she started to write poetry for her boyfriend and she realized that she loves it. Poetry is her new favorite hobby.

a. Ana writes poetry now. ✔

b. Ana is writing poetry now. ✔

Habitual Shift: Temporary

(52) Javier is a journalist. He usually has to write the horoscopes, but he has been asked to write poetry for the arts section of his newspaper for a few days. Next week, he will get to write horoscopes again.

a. Javier writes poetry this week. ✔

b. Javier is writing poetry this week. ✔

In the second condition, the adverbial *this week* signals a characteristic that is temporarily true of somebody. This temporary shift is illustrated in (52), in which *Javier* is performing an activity atypical for him and only for a week.

Regarding simple present, these two conditions allow us to check if the participants in this study also showed the same difficulties found in Gass & Ard (1984). In that study, English learners had a hard time accepting simple present sentences that contained a time adverb not

compatible with the typical habitual interpretation (*Fred smokes American cigarettes now*). The results of the GJ task will be compared to those of the Interpretation Task to see if when the sentences are presented in context, learners' performance improves or not.

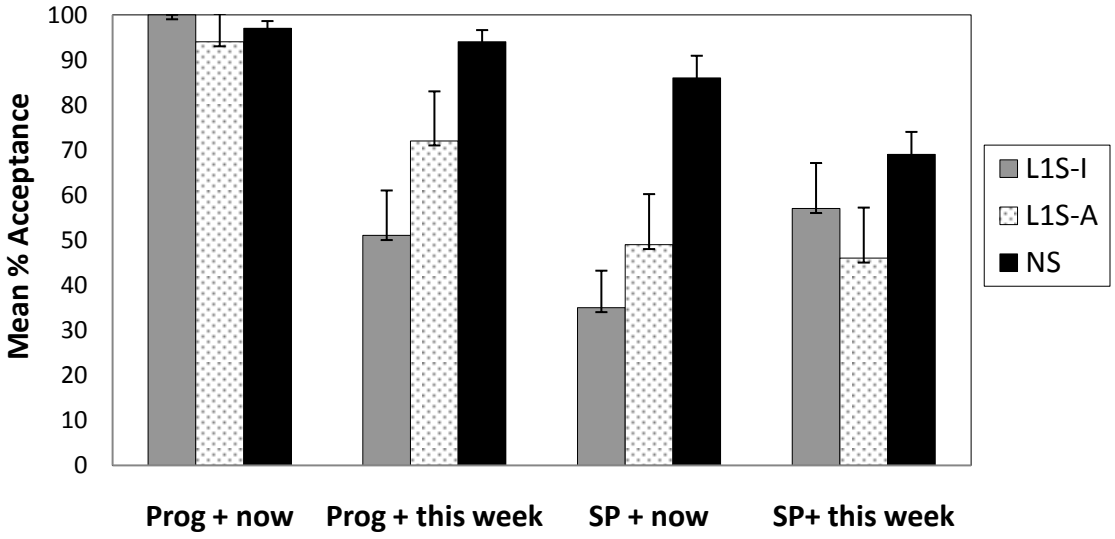
For the permanent habitual shift condition, it was predicted that English natives would accept both simple present and progressive morphology, but they would prefer simple present o because it evokes a permanent attribute of the person. In the temporary change condition, natives were also expected to accept both verb forms, but to prefer progressive over simple present because a temporary change is less likely to be considered a distinctive characteristic of a person. The shifts in meaning for the progressive allowed in these conditions are allowed assuming that they make reference to a characteristic of a person instead of an ongoing event. In the case of the learners, it was predicted that if the L1 plays a role, they would behave similar to the natives because (51a/b) and (52a/b) roughly translate as Spanish equivalents. In sum, based on transfer both habitual shifts in this experiment were expected to be accepted; on the other hand, the prototype account predicted that none of the shifts should be accepted by learners at low proficiency levels. The GJ task for this experiment included five items for each of the four sentence types illustrated in (51 a/b) and (52 a/b) for a total of 20 sentences.

6.2.2 GJ Task Results

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to explore the participants' acceptability of activity verbs in simple present and present progressive sentences with the adverbs *now* and *this week.* The results for this task are summarized in Figure 3. The results for the present

progressive + *now* sentences (*Ana is writing poetry now*) showed no significant differences for proficiency level. On the other hand, present progressive + this week sentences (*Javier is writing poetry this week*) showed a significant difference for proficiency level ($F(2,53) = 11.651$, $p < .001$). Post Hoc Bonferroni revealed that there was no significant difference between the L2 learners ($p = .154$) or between the Advanced learners and the English natives ($p = .064$). The source of the difference was then between the Intermediate learners and the natives ($p < .001$). Therefore, concerning the progressive, learners behaved native-like accepting the sentences with *now*, but in the case of the sentences with *this week*, only the advanced learners resembled the natives.

Figure 3. Experiment 2 GJ Task: Mean % acceptance of activity verbs in present progressive and simple present with the adverbs *now* and *this week*

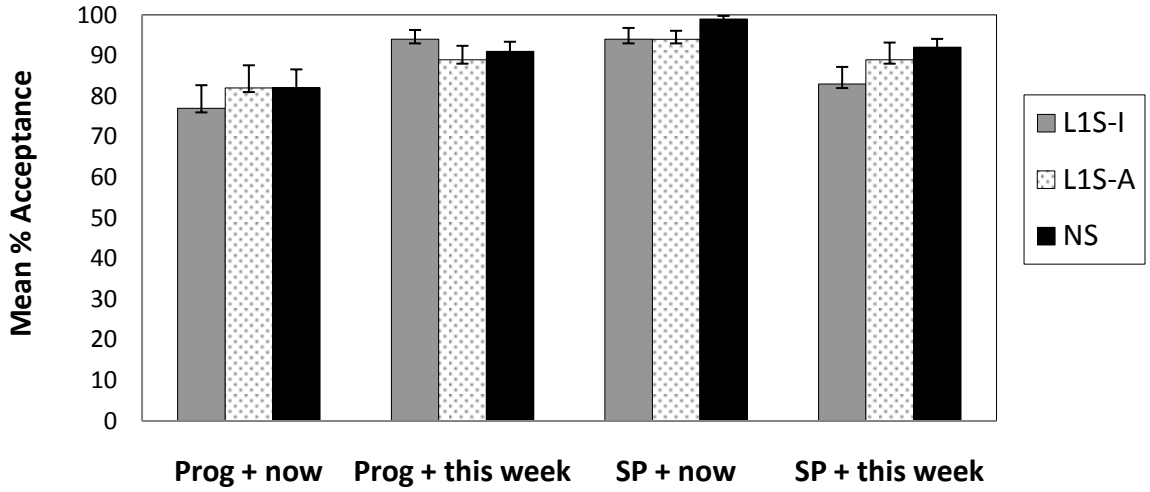


The results for the simple present + *now* sentences (*Ana writes poetry now*) showed a significant main effect for proficiency level ($F(2,53) = 14.426$, $p < .001$). Post Hoc Bonferroni revealed no significant difference between the two groups of learners ($p = .783$). However, both groups of learners accepted simple present + *now* sentences significantly less than the natives, Intermediate learners ($p < .001$) and Advanced learners ($p = .002$). On the other hand, there were no significant differences in the acceptance of simple present + *this week* sentences (*Javier writes poetry this week*) due to proficiency level. In sum, regarding simple present, learners accepted the present + now sentences a lot less than natives, but in the case of sentences with *this week*, they behaved native-like. Notice though, that in this type of sentence, the natives' acceptance was a lot lower than for the other three conditions in this experiment.

6.2.3 Interpretation Task Results

The results for this task were analyzed to determine the participants' acceptability of habitual shifts signaled by the adverb *now* (permanent shift) and the adverb *this week* (temporary shift) in sentences with simple present and present progressive morphology. A series of 2x2 factorial repeated-measures ANOVAs with context (permanent or temporary shift) and aspect (simple present or present progressive) as within-subjects factors and proficiency level as the between-subjects factor were run for this task. The results are summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Experiment 2 Interpretation Task: Mean % acceptance of activity verbs in present progressive simple present with the adverb *now* (permanent habitual context) and the adverb *this week* (temporary habitual context)



The results showed a significant main effect for aspect ($F(2,91) = 10.982$, $p = .001$; the acceptance for the simple present was a little bit higher (92%) than the acceptance for the progressive (86%). On the other hand, there was no significant main effect for context ($p = .392$).

There was no significant interaction between aspect and proficiency level ($p = .368$) which indicates that the participants treated the simple present and present progressive sentences similarly across proficiency levels. Also, there was no significant interaction between context and proficiency level ($p = .957$) which indicates that the acceptance rates for habitual permanent shifts and habitual temporary shifts were virtually the same across participants.

There was a significant interaction between aspect and context ($F(2,91) = 25.093$, $p < .001$) which shows that acceptance of simple present and progressive was different depending on whether the habitual shift occurred in a permanent (*now*) or temporary (*this week*) context. The present progressive is accepted more in sentences with *this week* than in sentences with *now*,

indicating that the progressive is more easily associated with a temporary change. On the other hand, simple present is accepted more in sentences with *now* than with *this week*, indicating that simple present is more easily associated with a permanent change.

6.2.4 Discussion

All the sentences included in the GJ Task were expected to be acceptable in English. However, learners in the Intermediate group had trouble accepting present progressive + *this week* sentences. Similarly, both groups of learners had trouble accepting simple present + *now* sentences. These results replicate the difficulty in judging out-of-context sentences with the adverbs *now* and *this week* found in Gass & Ard (1984). These results also shed some light on the issue of transfer. The Spanish equivalent to the sentences used in the GJ Task were supposed to be acceptable in Spanish as; however, the difficulty reported above shows no transfer effects for three out of four conditions (progressive + *now* condition showed very high acceptability for all participants). It is also important to point out that even though the native speakers accepted most sentences at least 85% of the time, in the case of the simple present + *this week* sentences, the acceptance rate dropped to 69%; in the same condition, the learners' acceptance was below that of the natives.

The overall results for the Interpretation Task showed that the simple present was accepted more than the progressive when activities suffered a change in interpretation from an episodic event to a habit due to either the adverb *now* or *this week*. It was also found that the acceptance of present progressive and simple present depended on context. The results indicate that the progressive is more easily associated with a temporary change while the simple present

is more easily associated with a permanent change which agrees with the preferences that had been predicted.

In the design of this experiment, the GJ Task looked at how the presence of the adverbs *now* and *this week* affect acceptability of simple present and present progressive sentences. As seen above, learners had trouble accepting some of the sentences. The Interpretation Task, added to the design by presenting the same type of sentences accompanied by a context. By comparing the results of both tasks, it was noticed that the acceptability rates increased significantly in three out of four conditions in the Interpretation Task. This indicates that even though the learners had ruled out present progressive in a habitual context in experiment 1, they allow it in experiment two in the presence of adverbs. This supports the prediction that both types of shifts in meaning (licensed by *this week* and *now*) should be accepted by learners if the properties of the L1 matter. Hence, unlike the GJ Task where no transfer effects were found yielding rejection of several sentences, in the Interpretation task there is positive transfer as evidenced by higher acceptability rates. A more detailed description of this improvement in acceptability is provided next. The mean percent acceptability rates for all conditions in both tasks are provided in Table 3.

In the progressive + *this week* condition, learner's acceptability rate improved while the natives remained almost the same. In the simple present + *now* and the simple present + *this week* conditions natives, and even more so learners, showed a major increase in their acceptability rates. The only condition in which all participants did better in the GJ Task than in the Interpretation Task was the progressive + *now* condition.

Table 3.

Acceptance rates for simple present and present progressive + *now / this week*. GJ and Interpretation Tasks, Experiment 2

GROUP	GJ TASK	INTERP. TASK
Condition 1: Prog + now		
Spanish Intermediate	100	77
Spanish Advanced	94	82
English Natives	97	82
Condition 2: Prog + this week		
Spanish Intermediate	51	94
Spanish Advanced	72	89
English Natives	94	91
Condition 3: SP + now		
Spanish Intermediate	35	94
Spanish Advanced	49	94
English Natives	86	99
Condition 4: SP + this week		
Spanish Intermediate	57	83
Spanish Advanced	46	89
English Natives	69	92

Speculatively speaking, natives and learners may have had more trouble accepting progressive + now sentences because they contain two elements that are typically associated with an event-in-progress interpretation, progressive morphology and also the adverb *now*, and these two pieces of information conflict with the shift in meaning from episodic to habitual triggered by the contextual information provided in the stories. The difficulties in interpreting the sentences from the GJ Task and the great improvement seen in the Interpretation Task indicate that learners are able to integrate syntactic and contextual information in order to process and license extended meanings associated with simple present and present progressive morphology successfully.

6.3. Experiment 3: Futurates

6.3.1 Stimuli

This experiment targets simple present and progressive morphology being used to entail a future interpretation. As indicated earlier, the English futurate can only be used with events that can be planned. Therefore, this experiment tests whether the learners are aware of this pragmatic constraint.

In this experiment there were two conditions. In the first one, as seen in (53), the stories described situations that can be planned and the verbs used were: *return, achieve, leave, come, find out, reach the top of the mountain, land and take off.* The natives were expected to accept both simple present and progressive sentences since these situations are plannable. On the other hand, if the L1 plays a role, Spanish speakers were to accept the simple present and reject the progressive because in Spanish the progressive cannot entail a future interpretation.

In the second condition, illustrated in (54), the verbs used are incompatible with an event that can be planned like *winning the lottery*, for example. The verbs used in this context were: *sink, win, break down, lose, do poorly, do well, defeat* and *get a job.* In this experiment there were 16 stories, eight with plannable verbs and eight with non plannable verbs. Similar to the other experiments, participants were asked to judge only one sentence (either simple present or progressive) per story. In this type of context, both natives and learners were expected to reject both simple present and progressive sentences because both English and Spanish require that a futurate verb involves planning.

Futurate Achievements Allowed

(53) Carmen is Spanish, but she is a student at the University of Costa Rica. Tomorrow is the last day of classes, so she has bought a ticket to go back to Spain next Monday.

a. Carmen returns to Spain next week.✔

b. Carmen is returning to Spain next week.✔

Futurate Achievements not allowed

(54) "Neptune" is a British boat which can accommodate 3000 passengers. Its next destination is New York and its departure is scheduled for next Saturday. According to the weather forecast, there will be a severe storm off the coast of New York. However, the Captain of the Neptune decided to ignore the warnings and will navigate straight through the storm.

a. The Neptune sinks next week. **X**

b. The Neptune is sinking next week. **X**

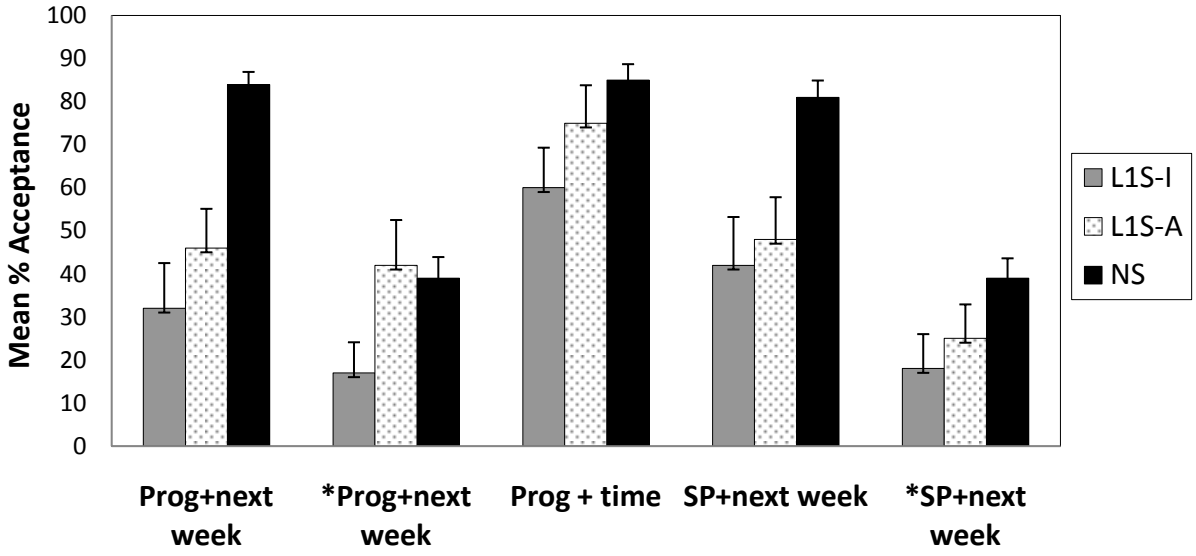
The GJ task for this experiment included five items following the model of (53a/b) and (54a/b). In addition to these items, five sentences like *Sara is returning home around 5:00 pm* were also included because this type of construction with progressive morphology and an adverbial entail a futurate reading.

6.3.2 GJ Task Results

The results for this task were analyzed to determine if the participants were able to distinguish between simple present and present progressive sentences with achievements that are acceptable in the future (*Carmen returns/is returning to Spain next week*) from those that are not

(*The Neptune sinks/is sinking next week*). In addition, the progressive achievement sentences from Experiment 3 (*Sara is returning home at/around 5 pm*) are analyzed here in conjunction with the other sentences in this task because they all convey a futurate meaning in English. The results for these conditions are summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Experiment 3 GJ Task: Mean % acceptance of achievement verbs in present progressive and simple present with futurate adverbs



A repeated-measures ANOVA with aspect and grammaticality as the within-subjects factors and proficiency level as the between-subjects factor was run in order to test if the participants were capable of distinguishing simple present and present progressive achievements that were acceptable in the future from those that are not. The results showed a significant main effect for grammaticality ($F(2,53) = 87.625$, $p < .001$). There was also a significant interaction between grammaticality and proficiency level ($F(2,53) = 14.311$, $p < .001$). This indicates that the participants were able to distinguish between acceptable and non acceptable futurate achievements, but that there were acceptability differences across groups. Post Hoc Bonferroni

revealed that the difference was significant between natives and Spanish Intermediates ($p < .001$) and also between natives and Spanish Advanced ($p = .017$). It was noticed that the higher the proficiency, the higher the acceptance of the grammatical futurate achievements and the higher the rejection of the ungrammatical ones. No other tests reached significance. In general, in this experiment there was very low acceptance for the progressive and the simple present. In the *SP + next week* condition, there is clearly no advantage for the Spanish natives based on the properties of their L1 given that the equivalent sentences in Spanish should be acceptable, yet they highly rejected them in English.

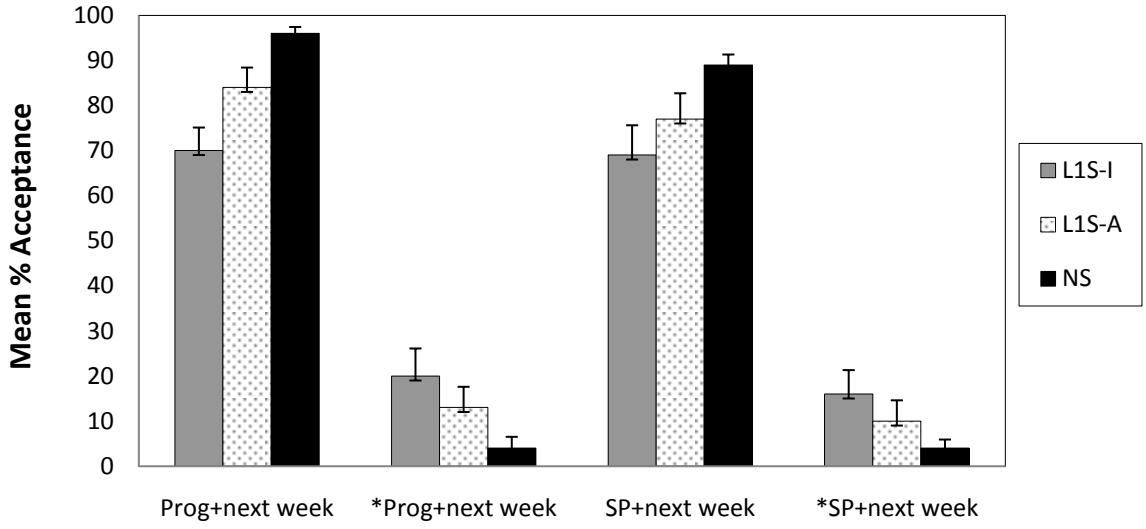
Concerning the progressive achievement sentences (Prog + time on Figure 5), a one-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect for proficiency level ($F(2,53) = 4.132$, $p = .022$) which means that acceptance rates for these sentences varied across groups. Post Hoc Bonferroni showed that the difference in acceptance was only significant between the Spanish Intermediates and the natives ($p = .018$). Spanish Intermediates accepted these sentences significantly less than the other two groups.

6.3.3 Interpretation Task Results

The results for this task were examined to test whether the participants were able to tell apart simple present and present progressive achievements acceptable in the future from those that are not acceptable. A series of 2x2 factorial repeated-measure ANOVAs with aspect (simple present or present progressive) and acceptability (acceptable or non acceptable) as within-

subjects factors and proficiency level as the between-subjects factor were fun for this task. The results are summarized in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Experiment 3 Interpretation Task: Mean % acceptance of present progressive and simple present in context that allow and disallow futurate achievements



The results revealed a significant main effect for aspect ($F(2,91) = 6.489$, $p = .013$ and grammaticality ($F(2,91) = 737.204$, $p < .001$. There was no significant interaction between aspect and proficiency level indicating that all the participants were able to tell apart simple present from present progressive achievements to the same degree. There was a significant interaction between grammaticality and proficiency level ($p < .001$); however, Post Hoc Bonferroni rendered this interaction not significant. This means that all participants were able to distinguish acceptable from not-acceptable futurate achievements to the same degree. Acceptable achievements were correctly perceived as so 81% of the time while the non-acceptable achievements were accepted only about 11% of the time.

As in the case of the GJ task, there seems to be no advantage for the *simple present + next week* condition based on L1-L2 similarities. As indicated before, the Spanish equivalents to the

sentences in our experiment should be acceptable, yet the results of the Interpretation Task showed that the Spanish natives accepted them less than the English speakers.

6.3.4 Discussion

The results for the GJ Task showed that both learners and natives were highly accurate distinguishing acceptable from non acceptable futurate achievements; however, the natives performed better than the learners rejecting the unacceptable achievements and accepting the acceptable ones. The progressive sentences with a futurate meaning from experiment 3 (*Sara is returning home at/around 5 pm*) were accepted most of the time by all 3 groups, Spanish Intermediate 60%, Spanish Advanced 75% and natives 85%. The Spanish advanced learners behaved native-like but the Spanish Intermediates' acceptance rates were a bit lower. These results rule out transfer effects for the learners because progressive morphology with a futurate interpretation is out in Spanish, yet the learners had no problem accepting the progressive achievements with a futurate meaning.

The results for the Interpretation Task indicated that aspect does not seem to influence acceptability of futurate achievements for any of the three groups. Learners behaved native-like highly accepting grammatical achievements (81% combined rate). As in the GJ Task, this rules out the prediction that if L1 played a role, Spanish speakers would reject progressive achievements associated with a futurate meaning. Therefore, no transfer effect was found. On the other hand, learners also behaved native-like highly rejecting ungrammatical achievements (89% rejection rate). This data suggests that learners do not just accept all achievements. They

are actually aware of semantic constraints that forbid verbs that cannot be "plannable" from being used to refer to future situations.

7. General Discussion

The current study aimed at assessing acquisition of core and non-core meanings associated with English simple present and present progressive tense-aspect morphology by native speakers of Costa Rican Spanish. Two different sets of theoretical proposals were put forward in order to see which one of them would better account for the results of this study . On the one hand, transfer based approaches like the Full Access / Full Transfer approach (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996) and the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (Liszka 2006, Hawkins & Chan 1997, and Hawkins et al. 2008) shared the notion that L2 learners' grammars will remain deficient even at advanced proficiency levels due to representational deficits and L1 transfer. On the other hand, prototype-based approaches like the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1995) and the Prototype Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996) predicted that L1 would not play a significant role in the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. Instead, they propose that in early acquisition, verbal morphology is used to mark aspect. Also, the development of the tense-aspect morphology and the meanings associated with it follow a predictable pattern, from more prototypical interpretations to less prototypical ones, in both L1 and L2 acquisition.

The first key question addressed by the current study was whether features not present in the L1 are acquirable. By looking at acceptance of conditions in the simple present we can find evidence that help answer this question. The simple present varies significantly in English and

Spanish as it can entail an ongoing and a habitual reading in Spanish but only a habitual reading is possible in English.

Previous studies had reported some difficulty in restricting the use of these verb forms to their corresponding core meaning. Over acceptance of the simple present in an ongoing context was reported in the case of English natives by Slabakova (2003) and in the case of learners by Liszka (2006). While Slabakova proposed that the over acceptance was due to the natives' access to a non-core meaning, i.e. simple present narrative (ongoing interpretation), Liszka proposed that over acceptance of simple present in an ongoing context constitutes evidence against acquisition. Along similar lines, Hawkins reported that the subjects whose L1s were verb raising languages (as in the case of Spanish) over accepted the progressive in a habitual context also suggesting differences in the mental representations associated with simple present and present progressive which hinder native-like acquisition. However, the results from our study showed that learners are capable of correctly limiting their acceptance of the simple present to a habitual interpretation ruling out the ongoing interpretation that is available in their L1. This supports the Full Access/Full Transfer account while rejecting the Failed Functional Features account which had predicted that representational deficits should remain even at advanced proficiency levels.

The second key area explored in the current study was the role of transfer in L2 acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. Transfer was tested to look at similar and also different form-meaning mappings in English and Spanish. Concerning the areas of agreement between these two languages, it is important to recall that the core-meanings associated with simple present and present progressive are shared by both languages. The learners performed as the natives in categorically associating the simple present with a habitual interpretation and the

present progressive with an ongoing interpretation. However, it is difficult to tell whether they behaved native-like because they were transferring from their L1 (same structure and interpretation) or because they had acquired the properties of the L2.

Despite the apparent advantage that L1-L2 similarities may provide, the learners did not perform well in all the experimental conditions which call into question whether all extended meanings associated with the simple present and the present progressive transfer. The results from the GJ Task suggest that not all extended meanings transfer. For example, in the GJ Task for experiment 2 (habitual), the learners had trouble accepting sentences with progressive and simple present morphology with temporal adverbs. As indicated in the methods section, the presence of temporal adverbs in these sentences allows a shift in meaning from episodic to habitual. The results showed that Intermediate learners accepted progressive + this week sentences (Javier writes/is writing poetry this week) less than natives and both L2 groups had some trouble accepting simple present + now sentences (*Ana writes/is writing poetry now*). These results replicate the difficulty reported by Gass & Ard (1984) in judging out-of-context sentences. However, when contextual support was provided in the Interpretation Task, the learners improved significantly in the three out of four conditions that were problematic in the GJ Task. This improvements shows that L2 learners integrate syntactic and contextual information, as the one added by adverbs, in order to license new interpretations for simple present and present progressive. It is important to point out that even native speakers had a bit of trouble accepting sentences out of context, yet they also benefited from the presence of a context in the Interpretation Task. Going back to the learners, the only condition in which they did better in the GJ task than in the Interpretation one was progressive + now sentences. In this condition, acceptance rates for all three groups approached ceiling. Surprisingly, though, in the

interpretation of the same sentences in the Interpretation Task, the acceptance rate of both natives and learners went down a little bit. This may evidence that the integration of different sources of information increases the processing burden. The sentences in experiment two have two important pieces of information, i.e., progressive morphology and the adverb *now* that support the progressive prototypical interpretation (ongoing) conflicting with a new interpretation (habitual). This difficulty reinforces the idea that information outside the grammar is incorporated into the interpretation process natives and learners go through. As seen above, in relation to activity verbs, the learners in this study, unlike the ones in Slabakova & Montrul (2008) accepted habitual activities triggered by the presence of temporal adverbs.

Let us turn the discussion now to the areas in which the properties of the L1 and the L2 differ to see what the role of the L1 is. For example, if the L1 had really played a role in acquisition, it would have been expected that the Spanish speakers would have wrongly accepted simple present morphology with an activity verb in an ongoing context as in *Marcela writes poetry (at the moment)*. This is because in Spanish, both simple present and the present progressive can be used to refer to an event in progress. Also, under the influence of the L1, Spanish natives would have wrongly rejected a progressive achievement with a futurate reference like *Carmen is returning to Spain next week* because in Spanish the simple present cannot be used to signal a futurate event. However, these two mistakes, predicted based upon parametric differences, were not found to a significant level in either of the Spanish groups. This evidences no significant role for transfer and shows (contra Liszka, 1996; but pro Slabakova, 2003) that features associated with tense aspect marking are acquirable in L2. However, there is a question of whether we would be able to find the same results if he had other language pairings. Huang (1999) noticed an L1 effect due to the interpretation of the Chinese progressive

marker –zai which the learners equated to the English unitary ongoing reading, instead of associating it with the more typical repeated meaning interpretation. Even though, we did not find a significant effect of transfer, it was stated above that in areas of L1-L2 similarity it is difficult to determine whether native-like acceptance is due to the L1 facilitation effect or acquisition of the L2 norms. Therefore, in future studies, exploring new language pairings which differ in their tense-aspect properties will help begin to answer this open question.

A final question the current study addressed was whether learners are capable of acquiring pragmatic constraints that play a role in acquisition of tense-aspect morphology. The results of this study suggest that they can. For instance, the results from Experiment 3 attested that the learners are aware of the plannability constraint needed to license a futurate meaning with either simple present or present progressive. It is not the case that they just accept all the verbs inflicted with either simple present or progressive morphology regardless of pragmatic information available to them.

As a conclusion, the results of this study show that learners are capable of acquiring core and non-core meanings associated with English simple present and present progressive along with pragmatic constraints that may regulate them in some situations. In addition, transfer did not play a significant role as there was no interference from the L1 in the acquisition of these form-meaning mappings. Whenever the L1 seemed to play a role, it seemed to be a positive one but it was hard to tell in the areas of L1-L2 similarity. Finally, it was noticed that when interpreting simple present or progressive morphology, there is integration of information from different sources e.g. grammar, pragmatics and other elements like adverbs which facilitate the correct interpretation of a wide range of non- core meanings associated with these verb forms.

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Appendix A

Stimuli used in the Grammaticality Judgment Task

The sentences used in this task constitute a subset of the same sentences used in the Interpretation Task.

Experiment 1:

Marcela writes poetry.
Elena is writing poetry.
Laura plays the piano.
Isabel is playing the piano.
Andrés smokes cigarettes.
Roberto is smoking cigarettes.
Cristóbal eats meat.
Pedro is eating meat.
Juan rides a bike.
Luz is riding a bike.

Experiment 2:

Ana writes poetry now.
Javier is writing poetry now.
Claire writes poetry this week.
Teresa is writing poetry this week.
Martha plays the piano now.
Clara is playing the piano now.
Irene plays the piano this week.
Thomas is playing the piano this week.
Héctor smokes cigarettes now.
Paco is smoking cigarettes now.
Beatriz smokes cigarettes this week.
Fernando is smoking cigarettes this week.
Sonia eats meat now.
Mercedes is eating meat now.
Claudia eats meat this week.

Óscar is eating meat this week.
Guillermo rides a bike now.
Margarita is riding a bike now.
Victor rides a bike this week.
Victor is riding a bike this week.

Experiment 3:

Carmen returns to Spain next week.
Carmen is returning to Spain next week.
Carlo arrives in Spain next week.
Diego arrives in Spain next week.
Araceli finds out the sex of her baby next week.
Alicia is finding out the sex of her baby next week.
Victoria reaches the top of Mount Everest tomorrow.
Mario is reaching the top of Mount Everest tomorrow.
The cruise ship sinks next week.
Javier defeats his adversary next week.
Joseph gets a job next week.
Spain wins an important game next week.
Gabriela loses the match next week.
The cruise ship is sinking next week.
Pablo is defeating his adversary next week.
Manuela is getting a job next week.
Italy is winning an important game next week.
Jason is losing the match next week.

Appendix B

Stimuli for the Interpretation Task

The stories in this task were organized in two presentation lists developed using a Latin Square design. Each participant read all the stories, but was asked to judge only one sentence with either simple present (a.) or present progressive morphology (b.) as a good or bad description of the story.

Experiment 1

Elena is a writer. Her job is to write poetry for children Monday through Friday. Today is Sunday, so she is at the movies with some friends.

a. Elena writes poetry. b. Elena is writing poetry.

Roberto likes coffee and tobacco. Every morning, he goes to the cafeteria to smoke a few cigarettes. Today, Roberto is with his kids at home, so he prefers not to smoke.

a. Roberto smokes cigarettes. b. Roberto is smoking cigarettes.

Sergio loves basketball. When he grows up, he wants to be an NBA player. That is why he has to train every single day Monday through Saturday. Today is Sunday, so he is at the park with his dog.

a. Sergio plays basketball. b. Sergio is playing basketball.

Pedro is an athlete and needs a lot of protein. His favorite food is meat so he includes it in his diet every day. However, he is sick today, so he decides to eat only rice and vegetables.

a. Pedro eats meat. b. Pedro is eating meat.

Isabel has been a Music student since she was five. She wants to be a great pianist, so she has to practice 8 hours a day Monday through Saturday. Today is Sunday, so she is has gone to the movies with her parents.

a. Isabel plays the piano. b. Isabel is playing the piano.

Fernando loves wine. Everyday, at dinner, he likes to have a glass of white wine. However, today he has to take medicine, so he cannot drink any alcohol.

a. Fernando drinks wine. b. Fernando is drinking wine.

Teresa has a bakery. Monday through Friday, she has to make pies for several restaurants. It is hard work, but today is Sunday so Teresa can relax at home.

a. Teresa bakes pies. b. Teresa is baking pies.

Luz is a cyclist. She wants to compete at the Olympic Games, so she has to train everyday. However, she is sick today and the doctor has advised her not to train.

a. Luz rides a bike. b. Luz is riding a bike.

Laura is an engineer and she has never learned how to play the piano. However, her father loves to listen to piano music. She decided to give him a surprise. Tomorrow, she will try to play the piano for his birthday. Right now, she is at the piano. She will try to learn how to play Happy Birthday. It is really hard!

a. Laura plays the piano. b. Laura is playing the piano.

Beatriz has never tried wine before in her life. Her doctor told her that she shouldn't drink alcoholic beverages. But today is her 21st birthday and she has decided to celebrate it with her friends at a restaurant. She has ordered seafood and white wine. The wine is delicious! Her friends cannot believe that Beatriz ordered wine!

a. Beatriz drinks wine. b. Beatriz is drinking wine.

María is a pharmacist. She hates to cook and bake. She often has frozen meals. However, today she has made an exception. She offered to help her friend bake 10 pies by 2:00 pm for a charity event. Right now, she is busy with the last pie. She will never do this again!

a. María bakes pies. b. María is baking pies.

Juan is an elementary school student. He likes to take the bus to school. But today, he got up late and missed the bus. He has to ride his brother's bike to school. This is horrible because Juan still really doesn't know how to ride a bike. His friends will make fun of him. But Juan does not care. He will try to do his best. He does not want to be late for school!

a. Juan rides a bike. b. Juan is riding a bike.

Marcela is a Math student. She has never written a poem before in her life. However, she had to take an English class and by tomorrow, she has to write a 15-verse poem about love. At the moment, she is on verse 10. This is miserable!

a. Marcela writes poetry. b. Marcela is writing poetry.

Andrés is a Math student. He has never smoked in his life. But right now, he is very nervous because he has a very important exam in 2 minutes. His friend Mike offered him a cigarette to help him relax. Andrés is so nervous that he decided to smoke two cigarettes at once! This is so unusual!

a. Andrés smokes cigarettes. b. Andrés is smoking cigarettes.

Víctor is a very busy lawyer. He has never liked to play basketball. However, his two best friends from high school are professional basketball players. They came to visit him today and they organized a basketball match. At the moment, he is on the basketball court! He is such a terrible player. It is really embarrassing!

a. Víctor plays basketball. b. Víctor is playing basketball.

Cristóbal is a vegetarian. However, his neighbors invited him to a barbecue and offered him a hamburger. He does not want to be rude so he has to take at least a few bites. Cristóbal is miserable!

a. Cristóbal eats meat. b. Cristóbal is eating meat.

Experiment 2

Marta never liked music as a child. She only cared about sports. However, her parents gave her a piano for her 17th birthday and she discovered that she really likes it. Piano is her new passion!

a. Marta plays the piano now. b. Marta is playing the piano now.

Lucia never liked alcoholic beverages. She used to drink Coca-Cola all the time. However, yesterday she went to a restaurant with her boyfriend and she tried a great wine. She loved it! Lucia has decided to drink more wine because it is delicious and sophisticated.

a. Lucia drinks wine now. b. Lucia is drinking wine now.

Irene never liked to bake because she burned herself once when she was a child. However, last week her husband convinced her to bake him a pie for his birthday. She baked the pie and it was so delicious! She decided that she will try to bake at least one pie every week. She may even enter a contest because her pies are so good!

a. Irene bakes pies now. b. Irene is baking pies now.

Guillermo used to drive his car all the time. However, the gas prices are very high now. He decided to save money and just ride his bike everywhere. He even joined a club for bikers.

a. Guillermo rides his bike now. b. Guillermo is riding his bike now.

Ana used to hate poetry. She thought that poetry was for losers and she did not believe in love. However, two months ago she met a great man and fell in love. She started to write poetry for him and she realized that she loves it. Poetry is her new favorite hobby.

a. Ana writes poetry now. b. Ana is writing poetry now.

Héctor used to smoke a pipe, but never cigarettes. However, he went to a party yesterday and smoked a few cigarettes. He loved them. He has decided to give up his pipe and switch to cigarettes.

a. Héctor smokes cigarettes now. b. Héctor is smoking cigarettes now.

Claudia used to be very lazy. The only sport that she liked was chess. However, last month her doctor told her that she was very overweight. So, she started to play basketball and she realized that basketball is good way to lose weight and it is pretty fun. She decided that she will try to play all the time.

a. Claudia plays basketball now. b. Claudia is playing basketball now.

Until yesterday, Sonia was a vegetarian. Yesterday, Sonia had a hamburger and she loved it! She has decided to include meat in her diet.

a. Sonia eats meat now. b. Sonia is eating meat now.

Javier is a journalist. He usually has to write the horoscopes, but he has been asked to write poetry for the arts section of his newspaper for a few days. Next week, he will get to write horoscopes again.

a. Javier writes poetry this week. b. Javier is writing poetry this week.

Paco is very disciplined. He likes to eat healthy food and to exercise and he usually does not drink or smoke. However, he has been at the local festival for the past couple of days and he has had about 2 packs of cigarettes each night! Next week, he will try to be healthy again.

a. Paco smokes cigarettes this week. b. Paco is smoking cigarettes this week.

Óscar is a swimmer. But his coach has advised him to play basketball for a few days to strengthen his legs. Óscar hates basketball so he cannot wait until next week when he can swim again.

a. Óscar plays basketball this week. b. Óscar is playing basketball this week.

Mercedes is a Green Peace activist. Due to ideological reasons, she is a vegetarian. However, the doctor diagnosed her with anemia, so she has to eat meat for a week. She wants the week to be over soon. She hates meat!

a. Mercedes eats meat this week. b. Mercedes is eating meat this week.

Clara is a violinist. Next week, her orchestra has a very important concert. Because the pianist is sick, Clara has to play the piano in the concert. She is terrified, so she has been at the piano all week.

a. Clara plays the piano this week. b. Clara is playing the piano this week.

Sebastián likes vodka. However, his doctor said that he cannot drink vodka for a week because he has problems with his heart. He can only drink wine. He likes wine as well, but not as much as vodka, so he hopes that he will recover soon.

a. Sebastián drinks wine this week. b. Sebastián is drinking wine this week.

Tomás is a janitor at Maria's bakery. All of a sudden María got very sick, so Tomás will have to bake all the pies for a week. He does not even know how to cook. He is terrified! He cannot wait until next week to be a janitor again.

a. Tomás bakes pies this week. b. Tomás is baking pies this week.

Margarita's apartment is far away from her workplace. Therefore, she has to drive to work everyday. However, her car broke down and it will take the mechanic a week to fix it. In the meantime, she has to ride a bike to work. Her whole body is sore!

a. Margarita rides her bike this week. b. Margarita is riding her bike this week.

Experiment 3

Enrique is Italian but right now he is in Paris because he wants to learn how to speak French. His friend Antonella has decided to visit him in France next Wednesday. Enrique is excited.

a. Antonella comes to France next week.
b. Antonella is coming to France next week.

Celia is very happy. Her Italian friend, Carlo, has decided to visit her in Spain next Tuesday. She cannot wait to see him.

a. Carlo arrives in Spain next week.
b. Carlos is arriving in Spain next week.

Gabriel is an astronaut for NASA. Pretty soon, he will go to the Moon for the first time. The launch is scheduled for next Thursday at 9:00 am. Gabriel is really excited.

a. Gabriel's spaceship takes off to the Moon next week.
b. Gabriel's spaceship is taking off to the Moon next week.

Victoria is a professional climber. She is with her team at Mount Everest. They have been there for 3 weeks already. They are just a few meters away from the top of the mountain but they are tired. They prefer to rest tonight and finish the climb first thing in the morning. That way, they will have some energy left to celebrate. Victoria is so excited!

a. Victoria reaches the top of Mount Everest tomorrow.
b. Victoria is reaching the top of Mount Everest tomorrow.

Carmen is Spanish, but she is a student at the University of Costa Rica. Tomorrow is the last day of classes, so she has bought a ticket to go back to Spain next Monday.

a. Carmen returns to Spain next week.
b. Carmen is returning to Spain next week.

María has decided to go to the United States to visit her friend Emilio next Saturday. She has never been to the United States. She is very excited!

a. María leaves for the United States next week.
b. María is leaving for the United States next week.

Araceli is 5 months pregnant. She and her husband have five boys and now they want a girl. According to the gynecologist, they will be able to know the sex of the baby during their appointment next Monday. She is really excited.

a. Araceli finds out the sex of her baby next week.
b. Araceli is finding out the sex of her baby next week.

Mario is an astronaut at NASA. At the moment, he is on a spaceship to Jupiter. They are scheduled to land next Sunday. Mario can't wait!

a. Mario lands in Jupiter next week.
b. Mario is landing in Jupiter next week.

Pablo has a race car that is very old. He wants to participate in a very long race next Saturday so he has decided to take the car to be inspected at a garage.

a. Pablo's car breaks down next week.
b. Pablo's car is breaking down next week.

Gabriela has a plan to play cards with her friends next Friday night. She is very nervous about it because she does not like to bet money. She also does not know how to play cards very well.

a. Gabriela loses the game next week.
b. Gabriela is losing the fame next week.

Manuela is a Geology student. Next Tuesday, she will take the Organic Chemistry final exam. It is a lot of material to study. She is a very smart student, but she is a bit stressed out.

a. Manuela does well on her exam next week.
b. Manuela is doing well on her exam next week.

Jonás does not have a job. He has a lot of bills to pay, so he needs to find a job soon. Luckily, next Monday, he has several interviews for highly competitive positions. He has a good resume but he still needs good luck.

a. Jonás gets a job next week.
b. Jonás is getting a job next week.

Neptune is a British boat which can accommodate 3000 passengers. Its next destination is New York and its departure is scheduled for next Saturday. According to the weather forecast, there will be a severe storm off the coast of New York. However, the Captain of the Neptune decided to ignore the warnings and will navigate straight through the storm.

a. The Neptune sinks next week.
b. The Neptune is sinking next week.

Next Sunday, the Spanish soccer team will play a very important game in Madrid against Italy. Spain has a new star player so everyone is very excited.

a. Spain wins a very important game next week.
b. Spain is winning a very important game next week.

Jason is a Philosophy student at the University of Costa Rica. Next Friday, he will take a very hard exam on Aristotle, so he has to study a lot. However, he decided to accept his friends' invitation to go to the beach.

a. Jason does poorly on his Philosophy exam next week.
b. Jason is doing poorly on his Philosophy exam next week.

Javier Pérez is the National Party Presidential Nominee. The elections are very soon, so Javier has a lot of work to do on his campaign. Last week the polls indicated that he and his adversary were virtually tied. But today the newspaper announced that Javier Pérez is two points ahead in the polls.

a. Javier Pérez defeats his adversary next week.
b. Javier Pérez is defeating his adversary next week.