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**The marking of aspect in the past tense in French: The role of languaging
abstract grammatical concepts**

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Abstract

Current second language (L2) learning research indicates a positive relationship between producing language to mediate cognitive activity, or ‘linguaging’ (Swain, 2006a), and a deeper understanding of abstract grammatical concepts (e.g., Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi & Brooks, 2009; Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, 2010). Abstract grammatical concepts (e.g., aspect, mood, voice) are scientific concepts, relating specifically to language, which “represent the generalisations of the experience of humankind” (Karpov, 2003, p. 66). This thesis aims to add to the current research by firstly exploring the relationship between linguaging and learners’ understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect in French and English. Secondly, it will investigate the role of grammatical concepts in L2 development to determine how learners use concepts to mediate L2 production and how it influences their ability to communicate meaning in an L2. In this longitudinal study, five English speakers enrolled in an advanced-intermediate French course at an Australian university attended four one-on-one sessions with the researcher over seven weeks. Participants were given information about the grammatical concept of aspect in French and English as part of the linguaging task (Swain et al, 2009) in the second session and their explanations of the concept at each stage of the study were analysed to determine their level of understanding. A spontaneous written production task was also completed by the participants in three of the four sessions followed by discussion with the researcher. During the discussions participants explained their choice of verb forms in their written responses and these explanations were coded to determine if the choice was based on prior instruction, knowledge of the grammatical concept or the meaning they wanted to communicate. Findings suggest that linguaging about aspect led learners to a deeper understanding of the concept and that they used their developing understanding of aspect to mediate their choice of verb forms when communicating meaning in the L2. There was also evidence that, over time, an understanding of aspect transformed the way participants thought about communicating meaning in French.

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'Nothing clears up a case so much as stating it to another person.'

- Sherlock Holmes

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why Concepts?

The aim of this thesis is to investigate learner languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect and the effect an understanding of aspect has on communication of meaning in French, their second language (L2). Languaging is a term adopted by Swain and colleagues defining it as both “the use of speaking and writing to mediate cognitively complex activities” (Swain & Deters, 2007, p. 822) and “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (Swain, 2006, p. 89). Recent studies in SLA have specifically explored the relationship between the process of languaging and learning abstract grammatical concepts (e.g., Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi & Brooks, 2009; Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, & Knouzi, 2010). Abstract grammatical concepts (e.g., aspect, mood, voice) are scientific concepts, relating specifically to language, which “represent the generalisations of the experience of humankind” (Karpov, 2003, p. 66). The grammatical concept of aspect is the focus of this study. Aspect relates specifically to temporal perspective and denotes “the resources provided by a language (such as verbal auxiliaries, prefixes and suffixes) to encode different perspectives taken by a speaker towards activities, events or states.” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 34).

In English there are two grammatical aspects: ‘progressive’ to describe ongoing actions and ‘perfect’ to describe completed actions. An understanding of how to describe actions as ongoing or completed is particularly useful when describing actions in the past. For instance, if a person were telling a friend where they went yesterday, they could adopt a perfect aspect and say ‘I went to the beach’ to indicate that the action was completed, i.e., that they arrived at the beach and then left at some point. On the other hand, if they were on the way to the beach and this was the background for something else that occurred, for example ‘I was going to the beach but it started raining’ the action would be ongoing and would constitute a progressive aspect. In the second example we know the person was on his way to the beach but do not know if he ever made it there or not. The perfect and progressive aspects also exist in French and are linked to verb morphology. Specifically, there are two French past tenses relating directly to the two types of actions that they describe, being the *passé composé* to describe completed actions in the past and the *imparfait* to describe ongoing actions. To illustrate, reproducing the first of the previous two examples with a perfect aspect in French would require use of the *passé composé*: *Je suis allé(e) à la plage* [I went to the beach]. To communicate the ongoing aspect of the second example in French, however, would require use of

the *imparfait*: *J'allais à la plage* [I was going to the beach]. The grammatical concept of aspect was chosen for the present study because research has shown that Anglophone learners of French often have trouble using the *passé composé* and *imparfait* to appropriately describe actions or events in the past, including learners with an otherwise impressive level of communicative competence (Harley, 1992; Harley & Swain, 1978).

An understanding of the abstract grammatical concepts (e.g., voice, aspect, mood) that describe how meaning is communicated in a language, however, is not often the point of departure for beginner learners of an L2. This is not surprising given that an understanding of the link between meaning and form that these concepts seek to explain is something that will likely emerge over time. The question, however, is not whether understanding of these concepts will emerge at all, but rather whether or not we should wait for it to emerge as it could be useful for learners to have this knowledge before it develops organically. As many L2 learners will attest, those sporadic epiphanies that herald the emergence of new understanding ('Now I get it!') often evoke frenzied reflection on all the moments when it could have helped avoid potentially embarrassing situations ('If only I'd known that earlier!'). The way an L2 is learnt in the classroom rarely reflects the way it is learnt in a setting where the language is naturally spoken, so why should learners wait for an understanding of grammatical concepts to emerge when many other elements of language are taught? This question is especially poignant for teachers who employ analytical, meaning-focused, communicative approaches to L2 learning in the classroom, as these concepts can serve to bridge the gap between form and meaning. Knowledge and application of these concepts can also foster the higher order thinking skills, such as analysis and deduction, which learners require to give them independence as users and analysers of language (Svalberg, 2007).

Emphasising the relationship between form and meaning is particularly important for language learners in instructional settings because they will almost certainly be taught grammar and vocabulary at some point. The importance of form-meaning connections and the insufficiency of grammar alone have previously been explored in relation to second language processes (Van Patten, 2007), but are of equal importance from a social perspective. As Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) explain:

If language is a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation, then it is not enough for language learners just to know grammar and vocabulary. They also need to know how that language is used to create and represent meanings and how to communicate with others and to engage with the communication of others (p. 17).

The grammatical concept of aspect is a good example of a concept that highlights the link between form and meaning. When deciding between different verb forms in an L2, knowledge of aspect can be used to mediate learners' choice of tense by presenting them with the different meanings available to describe an action. Learners can then deduce the meaning they want to communicate before deciding on the appropriate tense rather than the other way around, i.e., choosing a tense first and then trying to put it into a sentence. This meaning focus impresses upon learners the understanding that language is a tool for communication rather than an abstract intellectual pursuit. For instance, if a learner wanted to describe something that they did in the past they would have the choice between describing actions as ongoing (progressive aspect) or completed (perfect aspect). It would be quite easy to communicate a list of completed actions, e.g., 'I went to the shop, I saw my friend, I bought a juice, we sat down in front of the shop, I drank the juice and spoke to my friend'. This may not correctly communicate the order of events however as some of these actions may have occurred simultaneously. This could be communicated by assigning a progressive aspect to some of the actions, e.g., 'I saw my friend as I was walking to the shop. I bought a juice and drank it while we were sitting in front of the shop talking'. An understanding of aspect makes learners aware of the different possible meanings, directing their attention to what they want to say before they consider how it should be communicated (more information on aspect can be found in Appendix A and Figure 3).

Aspect has been the subject of sustained scrutiny in SLA research and the problems that L2 learners of English encounter with the tense-aspect system are well documented (e.g., Ayoun, 2001, 2004; Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996; Harley, 1992; Harley & Swain, 1978; Izquierdo & Collins, 2008; Kaplan, 1987; Salaberry, 1998) and can even persist up to advanced levels of proficiency (Housen, 2002; Kennedy, 2003). Although it has received less attention, there is also substantial evidence that English speakers learning French struggle with the tense-aspect system in French, including learners with an otherwise impressive level of communicative competence (Harley, 1992; Harley & Swain, 1978). The researchers (Harley & Swain, 1978) concluded that the problem is not always grammatical proficiency, however, as at advanced levels learners tend to have mastered the morphology of the various tenses. Instead, what they lack is the ability to identify the appropriate tense to convey a particular meaning. For native speakers meaning and tense are intuitively linked, but for learners of an L2 identifying the appropriate tense involves a much broader range of thinking skills, for example analysis and deduction, as well as relevant knowledge that can be used as a framework to apply these skills to the problem. To this end, a holistic understanding of a grammatical concept is arguably the ideal tool for learners to apply to the problem of choosing a verb form to communicate their intended meaning in an L2. The term

'holistic' refers to a complete understanding of the grammatical concept. Partial knowledge of a concept may be useful in some instances, but it is only when an individual has knowledge of all the semantic possibilities available that they can accurately and consistently deduce the most appropriate option. Equally, the ability to operationalise conceptual knowledge, or an operational understanding, is integral. An operational understanding of the concept is an understanding of which verb form is used to communicate each of the available meanings so that once the appropriate meaning has been chosen it can be successfully communicated. If the learner wanted to communicate in French that an action was ongoing, for example, they would firstly need to be aware of their intention to communicate a progressive aspect rather than a perfect aspect. They would then need to know that the *imparfait* describes an ongoing action in the past in French to communicate this meaning.

Learners, therefore, need not only learn the concept itself, but just like any other tool they need to learn how to use it practically and effectively. Sociocultural theory (SCT) and its central notion of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne; 2006) provide a good framework for the exploration of how to develop a more profound understanding of concepts and investigate how they are employed by learners to mediate L2 production. Mediation is the key concept underlying SCT and is used to explain the relationship between the human mind and its environment. Vygotsky (1978) argues that the human mind relies on mediational tools, for example language, to organise, or mediate, the taking in of any new information.

There is an abundance of recent research from a sociocultural perspective exploring the use of languaging to mediate the learning of concepts (e.g., Brooks et al, 2010; Gànem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin & Brooks, 2010; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, Suzuki & Brooks, 2009), and the findings indicate a positive relationship between languaging, spoken or written, and learning. Yet while the role languaging plays in the development of a deeper understanding of concepts has received a lot of scrutiny, there has been relatively little research of a longitudinal nature to determine how knowledge of concepts mediates L2 production. Nor has there been an exploration of how learners' ability to use the concept as a tool evolves over time. This constitutes a noticeable gap in the literature as the findings of such research could have both practical and theoretical ramifications. Practically there would be little point for L2 learners to develop their understanding of a concept if this did not lead to an improved ability to communicate meaning in the L2. Theoretically, the lack of longitudinal research is arguably due to the emerging nature of research into languaging and the learning of grammatical concepts rather than a lack of significance. This is because SCT is concerned primarily with what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the genesis of learning, which is essentially the process of learning as it occurs over time.

Longitudinal research provides more opportunities for observing the learning process and the evolution of understanding to help explain learning outcomes.

1.2 Purpose Statement

In order to determine the practical and theoretical ramifications of a longitudinal investigation into languaging and abstract grammatical concepts, the questions that motivate this thesis are both practical and theoretical in nature. The practical questions, firstly, emerge from a pedagogical concern, namely the role of languaging about abstract grammatical concepts in L2 development. Abstract concepts are generally associated with higher-order thinking, a domain that encompasses such cognitive skills as analysis, evaluation and creation of new knowledge (Bloom, 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). An individual's knowledge of an abstract concept, however, does not necessarily guarantee that he will have the ability to apply, or operationalise, his knowledge of the concept in practical situations. This uncertainty, therefore, gives rise to the following questions: Does languaging about an abstract grammatical concept deepen understanding of the concept? Does a deeper understanding of a concept encourage higher-order thinking such as analysis and deduction? Do more developed higher-order thinking processes ultimately lead to an improvement in an individual's ability to communicate meaning in an L2? The answers to these questions will inform practitioners as to the potential value of teaching grammatical concepts in instructional settings.

The theoretical question concerns the role of abstract concepts and how they are incorporated into and transform individuals' thinking processes. SCT describes abstract concepts as psychological tools that can be used to mediate the way an individual thinks about a given problem (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Mediation tools, according to SCT, initially play an interventionist role in thinking, requiring conscious use of the tool to mediate thought processes, but over time they are internalised and transform internal mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Galperin (1992) sees mediation as a means of orientation, and he builds on this idea by proposing that the process of development is separated into two parts: an orienting part (a concept) and an executing part (a task) which requires the information provided by the concept to be achieved. Over time and as more tasks are accomplished with the aid of the concept, the two parts become increasingly united to the point where the concept shifts to the mental level. At this point both parts, orienting and executing, are "so fused into a single process that they are almost indistinguishable by the 'naked eye'" (Galperin, 1992, p. 62). If we follow this theory we can infer that while mediation initially occurs consciously, as a concept is internalised it will unconsciously shape the way an individual thinks, thereby transforming the way he or she approaches a given problem over time. Given this theoretical perspective, the following questions arise: Does use of a concept as a mediational tool over time

change the way individuals think about communication of meaning in an L2? Does the concept transform individuals' internal thinking processes over time to the point where conscious mediation is no longer necessary or observable?

1.3 Thesis Overview

The following chapter begins with an explanation of the key notions and concepts of sociocultural theory relevant to this study. The second half of the chapter is then dedicated to a review of the literature that informs the current research and identifies the contribution that the present study hopes to make to the existing body of literature. The chapter then concludes by presenting the research questions that guide the present study.

Chapter three explains the methodology of the study, which entails a detailed overview of the study design including a description of the participants, context, data collection and data analysis.

The findings are presented in chapters four and five. Chapter four provides the analysis of the data relevant to learners' developing understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect, while chapter five focuses on how participants used their understanding of the concept to mediate their L2 production.

Chapter six provides a discussion of the findings with reference to the research questions presented at the end of chapter two. Other relevant findings that emerged over the course of the study will also be discussed.

Finally, Chapter seven closes the thesis by providing a summary of the conclusions based on the findings of the research along with some recommendations and implications for pedagogy and future research.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As explained in the previous chapter, the present study was designed and conducted within a sociocultural theoretical (SCT) framework. To better explain the reasoning behind this choice of perspective, the first half of this chapter begins with an exploration of the relevant notions that comprise SCT, most notably mediation which is its core tenet. This is followed by an explanation of the role of the concept as a tool for L2 development, some different types of concepts, the concept of aspect and the theoretical claims that underpin the use of concepts in instructional settings. The latter half of this chapter begins with an exploration of the empirical research into languaging and its value as both an intrapersonal (individual) and interpersonal (social) process for L2 development. The gap in the literature this study aims to address is identified and the research questions are presented. The chapter then ends with a brief description of the present study and how it intends to address the gap in the literature.

2.2 Mediation

The last 20 years has seen a marked increase in research conducted from an SCT perspective across a variety of disciplines. This theory was initially the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986) who advocated the incorporation of the study of human culture and history into attempts to understand the development of the human mind. This belief was adopted and further developed by Vygotsky's colleagues and students, for example Galperin (1969), Leont'ev (1978), and Luria (1982), and also more recently by scholars in fields such as education, anthropology and psychology (e.g., Cole, 1996; Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Ratner, 1991; Robbins, 2003; Rogoff, 1990; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1991, 1998), as well as in second language acquisition (e.g., Brooks et al, 2010; Donato, 1994; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lapkin, Swain & Knouzi, 2008; Swain, 2000, 2006a, 2006c; Swain, 2007).

As mentioned briefly in the introduction chapter, the central concept of SCT is mediation (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Vygotsky (1978) argues that all human activity is mediated by physical (e.g., books, charts, diagrams, pencils, computers, hammers, shovels) and psychological tools (e.g., concepts, rules, language) and that rather than interact with the physical and social world in a direct, unmediated way, human contact with the world is indirect and mediated. Wertsch (2007) argues that, given that

all human activity is mediated, understanding the emergence and the definition of higher mental processes must be grounded in the notion of mediation. When attempting to explain mediation, it is helpful to make the distinction between mediational processes, like languaging, which is the use of language to externalise and shape thinking processes, and what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as ‘signs’ and Galperin (1992) interprets as means of orientation that he calls functional concepts (e.g., grammatical concepts such as aspect, voice or mood). To avoid confusion, the term functional concepts will not be employed in this thesis and they will instead be referred to as grammatical concepts. As stated in the introduction chapter grammatical concepts are a type of scientific concept and what is meant by this will be illustrated in the following section.

2.3 The Concept as a Tool for L2 Development

Sociocultural theorists make the distinction between and everyday (spontaneous) and scientific concepts. Everyday concepts are specific to certain individuals or contexts and are formed during concrete practical experience. They develop over time and are based on personal experience, usually formed on the basis of “an immediate observable property of an object” (Kozulin, 1995, p. 123). In contrast, scientific concepts are much more general and “represent the generalisations of the experience of humankind that is fixed in science, understood in the broadest sense of the term to include natural and social science as well as the humanities” (Karpov, 2003, p. 66). Vygotsky (1978) argues that when learners enter a classroom and begin to participate in formally organised educational activity they are exposed to scientific concepts with the aim of learning “the essential characteristics of objects in the form of symbolic and graphic models” (Karpov, 2003, p. 71). Poehner (2008) provides a concise explanation of the developmental value of scientific concepts with the following explanation: “The developmental value of scientific concepts is that because of their abstract and generalised nature, they liberate us from the constraints of context specific everyday experiences and allow us to function appropriately in any concrete circumstance in which the concept may be relevant” (pp. 11-12).

Rather than be tied to a specific context as is the case with everyday concepts, scientific concepts can be relevant and applied to practical situations across various contexts. Poehner (2008) explains that scientific concepts develop in properly organised formal education settings, that mastery of scientific concepts “takes place through explicit and systematic instruction”, and that they lead to “a deeper understanding of and control over the object of study” (p. 12). Vygotsky (1978) cautions, however, that the memorisation of verbal definitions of a scientific concept does not constitute mastery of the concept. Individuals must also be able to link conceptual definitions with specific concrete practical activity in order to ascend “from the abstract to the concrete” (Poehner, 2008, p. 12).

Researchers (Poehner, 2008; Negueruela & Lantolf, 2006; Negueruela, 2003) also warn against the dangers of simplifying scientific concepts and applying them as ‘rules of thumb’. Rules of thumb are simplifications often based on a part of a scientific concept, rather than the whole, and are linked to specific concrete examples. Use of these rules is a common practice in the classroom and often stems from the belief that beginning level students will not be able to cope with the complexity of the whole concept. Rules of thumb may also be seen as an expedient way to encourage learners to attempt a task or, when there are time constraints, to address questions that would otherwise require a long and detailed explanation of the scientific concept. The major disadvantage with rules of thumb however, is that while they may give learners the confidence to work within a specific context, they lack the generalisability of scientific concepts.

The concept of aspect, for instance, generates numerous rules of thumb in the classroom designed to help learners establish the link between verb form and certain characteristics of actions. One such rule of thumb employed by some participants in this study is that ‘details’ in the past in French are communicated using the *imparfait* verb form. Although meant to help students, this rule is very ambiguous and the term ‘detail’ is open to interpretation. For example, the weather might be considered a detail that, according to this rule, should always be communicated with the *imparfait*, e.g., *Il faisait chaud* [It was hot]. In the case of French, however, aspect bridges the gap between verb form and meaning with clearly defined terminology. It attempts to provide an explanation for all foreseeable semantic possibilities rather than leaving room for any such interpretation. In the case of the weather, for instance, rather than always see it as a detail, the concept of aspect assigns it either a progressive or perfect aspect. If the hot weather was viewed as ongoing at the time described, a progressive aspect and therefore the *imparfait* would be appropriate, i.e., *Il faisait chaud* [It was hot]. The weather is dynamic, however, so if a description of a sudden change in weather was called for it could be assigned a perfect aspect to show that the change in weather was completed. While in English the verb ‘became’ or ‘got’ could be used to indicate the change, e.g., It suddenly got very hot, in French a perfect aspect can be communicated by the *passé composé*, e.g., *Tout d’un coup, il a fait très chaud* [Suddenly, it got very hot]. The advantage an understanding of aspect has over the original rule of thumb, that weather is usually a detail but sometimes it is not, is that it provides learners with the different ways of describing the weather for comparison. Learners are then able to select the most appropriate meaning for their communicative intent without the need to determine whether or not the rule of thumb applies in a given situation.

2.4 Scientific vs. Everyday Concepts – Associated Terminology

At the beginning of the previous section (2.3) a distinction was made between scientific and everyday concepts (for further information on this distinction, see Poehner, 2008). There are many different terms used to describe concepts but most can be grouped into one of these two categories. Scientific concepts can also be referred to as functional concepts, abstract concepts, abstract grammatical concepts, theoretical concepts, abstract theoretical concepts or even just concepts. Everyday concepts have been variously referred to as concrete concepts, rules of thumb, general rules, simplified rules, context-specific rules, spontaneous concepts or simplifications of a concept. In order to limit the confusion and better orient the reader the figure below (Figure 1) has been provided as a reference. For consistency, not all of the terminology presented in Figure 1 will be used in the present study. Given that the primary concern is the scientific concept of aspect, which is grammatical in nature, the term grammatical concept will be used when referring to it (as stated in section 2.2).

Scientific concepts	Everyday concepts
Concepts	General rules
Abstract concepts	Rules of thumb
Functional concepts	Simplified rules
Theoretical concepts	Concrete concepts
Abstract theoretical concepts	Context-specific rules
Grammatical concepts	Spontaneous concepts
Abstract grammatical concepts	Simplifications of a concept

Figure 1. Scientific vs. everyday concepts

2.5 The Concept of Aspect

An understanding of aspect may be of particular use to learners of many languages, for example Spanish, French and Japanese, due to the close relationship between aspect and verb morphology in these languages. According to Negueruela and Lantolf (2006) when justifying the value of the concept of aspect to language users and learners of Spanish:

Aspect allows the user to adopt a range of temporal perspectives, which are formally signalled through a set of morphological suffixes. The key task for the learner is not so much to master the suffixes as to understand the meaning potential made available by the concept of aspect and to learn to manipulate this in accordance with particular communicative intentions. (p. 82)

This statement is also partly true for French, with the key point being the focus that aspect places on the relationship between temporal perspectives and morphological suffixes. In the case of French, however, the morphology of the whole verb is altered rather than just the suffix. Understanding the relationship between verb morphology and temporal perspective allows individuals to not only describe actions, but also the order in which they occur, which is integral for the logical communication of any series of events. For instance, if someone were to describe the events of a car accident in detail, he would need to explain what happened before, at the moment of and after the accident. It would also be necessary to explain in what order the events occurred and whether or not some occurred simultaneously. For example, the driver might want to describe what was happening leading up to the moment of impact, e.g., *Je tapais un SMS quand le chien s'est élancé devant ma voiture* [I was typing an SMS when the dog jumped in front of my car]. This would require him to describe what he was doing leading up to the accident as ongoing (I was typing) which would require the *imparfait* in French (*je tapais*). To describe what occurred at the moment of impact as completed (the dog jumped) he would then use the *passé composé* (*le chien s'est élancé*) to show that it was sudden and that it interrupted (hopefully) the typing of the SMS. Native speakers have no need to think about morphology or verb form to logically construct the order of events described above as, for them, morphology is intrinsically linked to meaning. For learners of an L2, however, the intuitive link between the choice of verb form and the meaning communicated needs to be developed and, consequently, learners require psychological tools like the concept of aspect to mediate their understanding of how to reconstruct a series of events in the L2.

2.6 Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI) & Concept-Based Instruction (CBI)

While the value of grammatical concepts like aspect is clear from a theoretical standpoint as explained above, the method of organising instruction around grammatical concepts is less so (Lantolf & Negueruela, 2006). In L2 learning, where there exists a seemingly endless amount of content for possible inclusion in a curriculum, the case for the teaching of grammatical concepts often loses out to other elements of language. Nevertheless, there are certain grammatical concepts that have been investigated in recent empirical research, such as the grammatical concept of voice in French and English (Lapkin et al, 2008; Swain, 2007; Swain et al, 2009), mood and aspect in Spanish (Negueruela, 2003) and aspect in English (Ganém Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011) to determine the value and practicality of teaching such grammatical concepts to L2 learners. Given that current teaching methodology advocates analytical, meaning-focused approaches to teaching and learning in the L2 classroom (Burns & Richards, 2012), the argument for the inclusion of grammatical concepts is compelling. Grammatical concepts give learners an awareness of semantic possibilities

rather than simply a choice of verb form as well as the ability to associate meaning with tense, something that can be problematic even for L2 learners with a high level of communicative ability (Harley, 1992; Harley & Swain, 1998; Housen, 2002; Kennedy, 2003).

Galperin (1992), and more recently Negueruela (2008), argue that the difficulties learners encounter associating meaning and tense stem from a lack of understanding of the concepts that orient communication. As explained in Chapter 1, aspect is one such concept that can mediate learners' awareness of the semantic implications inherent in their choice of verb form, as an understanding of verb morphology alone is not necessarily sufficient for learners to communicate a desired meaning. Ganém Gutiérrez & Harun (2011) agree, explaining that even though some L2 learners at intermediate and advanced level have mastered verb morphology associated with the tense-aspect system, their understanding of the semantic implications of their choice of verb form is still developing and they encounter difficulties communicating their intended meaning. The problem, therefore, is not learners' ability to communicate meaning in their L2, but rather their ability to communicate the meaning that they want to communicate. For example, an individual might produce a sentence in the L2 that is grammatically correct with regard to tense and morphology and is also semantically plausible, but that is not consistent with the meaning that he wanted to convey or a true representation of events. To illustrate this, we can compare two different explanations that a learner might give to his friends in French for not meeting them at the cinema the previous evening:

(i) *Je suis allé au cinéma hier soir mais j'ai eu un accident de vélo en route ; ou*

[I went to the cinema last night but crashed my bicycle on the way; or]

(ii) *J'allais au cinéma hier soir mais j'ai eu un accident de vélo en route*

[I was going to the cinema last night but crashed my bicycle on the way]

Although the *passé composé* verb '*suis allé*' [went] in the first example is grammatically correct, it communicates a perfect aspect. Semantically, this implies that the act of going to the cinema was achieved and that the speaker arrived at the cinema at some point. This is plausible because he may have arrived late as a result of the accident and missed his friends. The choice of perfect aspect, however, does not make sense if the speaker never actually arrived at the cinema. If the crash prevented the speaker from making it to the cinema the more appropriate explanation would be the latter, as in the second example the speaker's use of the *imparfait* denotes a progressive aspect and communicates the ongoing nature of the act of going to the cinema, i.e., '*j'allais*' [I was going]. It is implied, therefore, that the act of crashing the bicycle while going to

the cinema prevented the speaker from arriving at all. As this example demonstrates, both scenarios are possible but only one would provide a true representation of what actually happened.

The neglect of grammatical concepts in instructional contexts is an issue that Galperin (1989, 1992) sought to address with the development of a pedagogical approach he called Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI). This method of instruction proposes not only the inclusion of concepts in teaching content, but to make concepts the central feature around which all instruction is organised. With this in mind, Galperin included some specific recommendations on how to implement STI and increase learners' chances of successfully learning new concepts. These were: (i) scientific theoretical concepts (including grammatical concepts) should take preference over everyday concepts (i.e., rules of thumb or simplified versions of a concept learnt from past experience); (ii) didactic models (e.g., flow charts, diagrams, charts) need to be provided to learners that visually represent the grammatical concept; (iii) learners must verbalise their understanding of the grammatical concept as a means of externalising the thinking process; and (iv) learners must execute tasks that require operationalisation of the conceptual content being learnt in order to accomplish them.

Recent empirical SLA research has revived interest in the role of functional concepts in pedagogy, referring to this approach as Concept-Based Instruction (CBI) (Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Negueruela & Lantolf, 2006). It is important to make the distinction between Galperin's STI and CBI because while STI constitutes a pedagogical approach, CBI is a theoretical claim that advocates concepts as the central object of instruction in any educational setting (Negueruela & Lantolf, 2006). Consequently, although some researchers have followed the specific requirements of STI (Negueruela, 2003), others have opted for more flexible approaches to CBI (Ganém Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011). From a CBI perspective, rather than being viewed as more gratuitous grammar instruction, grammatical concepts are in fact being put forward as a remedy for an excessive focus on explicit grammar instruction and are instead regarded as a means of encouraging greater attention to meaning. This greater attention to meaning is seen as complementary to the explicit teaching of grammar, which is often pursued by general pedagogical grammars at the expense of helping students "realise the meaningfulness of grammatical constructions" (Niemeier & Reif, 2008, p. 326).

Recent research into the learning of grammatical concepts has paid particular attention to the role of verbalising understanding of the concept (languaging) as a means of externalising the thinking process. Specifically, a number of methodological approaches have been devised to observe the process of languaging and its role in deepening individuals understanding of concepts

(e.g., Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain et al, 2009; Brooks et al, 2010). The following section explores the role of both languaging as a means of externalisation and functional concepts – and how the former facilitates the internalisation of the latter.

2.7 Mediation to Internalisation – The Role of Languaging

Grammatical concepts are a good example of how the shift from mediation to internalisation can occur. From an SCT perspective, when individuals learn a new grammatical concept, they use it as a framework or series of rules that they can consciously refer to for guidance on how to communicate meaning in the L2. After using the concept for an extended period of time they feel more comfortable using it, as is the case with any tool. It begins to shape the way they approach the problem of communicating meaning in the L2 and use of the concept to mediate decisions becomes second nature to them as their understanding of it deepens. They begin to refer to their explicit knowledge of the concept less frequently, relying instead on the different meanings outlined by the concept and intuitively linking them to verb form. At this point there is little evidence that they are using the concept to mediate thinking, but rather the concept appears to have been incorporated into their thinking process. To describe this transformation of the thinking process, sociocultural theorists say that the concept is no longer a mediational tool because it no longer mediates thinking (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Instead it has been internalised and is now a core part of the thinking process. As explained earlier in the purpose statement (section 1.2), Galperin (1992) would view this as the seamless fusing of an understanding of the concept into how a task is executed.

If internalisation of a grammatical concept is the ultimate goal, then using language to mediate understanding of the concept is crucial. This is because before thinking processes can be transformed by the concept they need to be brought under voluntary control. Speaking and writing play an indispensable role in transforming thinking as they externalise thinking processes. This gives the learner more control over their own subjective thinking processes by making them available for observation and modification. The practicability of bringing unconscious processes under voluntary control with the aid of externalisation was demonstrated by Zinchenko (2002) with a simple experiment. In his study participants were tasked with gaining control over their body's involuntary vascular reactions resulting from various movements. An instrument similar to a lie detector was employed to record these involuntary reactions as participants performed each new movement. It was found that eventually, with the aid of the lie detector, participants were able to bring their involuntary reactions under some measure of voluntary control. Zinchenko (2002) explained that this was possible because the participants linked the sensations they experienced as a

consequence of the body's involuntary reactions with the external representation of these sensations provided by the measuring instrument. He described this process as learning the "sensation from within" (p. 14). Awareness of internal sensations is not limited to control of involuntary reactions, however, and was in fact an extension of the theory that in order to learn a new movement of the body it must first be sensed from within (Bernstein, 1990). While Zinchenko was concerned with creating an awareness of sensations resulting from involuntary bodily reactions, Bernstein instead considered the learning of new bodily sensations in order to voluntarily copy movements performed by another. Nevertheless, in both cases the importance of having both an external representation and the internal sensation that it provokes is necessary for a bodily movement or reaction to be understood. According to Bernstein (1990), in order to understand how to perform an action individuals first need to know what it feels like to perform the action, to understand "the sensory connections that control them" (p. 172). Furthermore, the findings of Zinchenko (2002) suggest that an external representation is just as important as understanding the internal sensation as it mediates understanding and awareness of these sensations.

Zinchenko's research focused on externalisation as a means of creating awareness of internal sensations, but its implications can also be extended to thinking processes and internalising functional concepts. When equating thought processes with internal physical sensations, however, it is clear that they cannot be observed and measured in the same way. Rather than employ a lie detector to externalise thought processes, language, spoken or written, is the most appropriate medium. Negueruela and Lantolf (2006) argue that language, which they refer to as verbalisation, "is an instructional tool for attention focusing, selection analysis and synthesis and thus is directly connected with internalisation and concept formation" (p. 86). According to this argument, one of the roles of language is to focus attention and thereby create awareness. Much like the data produced by a lie detector makes an individual aware of internal sensations, language focuses the individual's attention on the internal thought processes that culminate in the language produced. This is particularly important for the internalisation of a new concept because before it can transform an individual's thinking, he must first be aware of how he currently thinks about information that can be explained by the concept. Once his thinking processes are before him in the form of written or spoken language, he is then able to compare and potentially replace them with the functional concept.

Of equal importance is the need for learners to sense or feel what it is like to apply the concept to analysis and production of language, to experience the sensation of using the concept "from within" (Zinchenko, 2002, p. 14). Therefore, the opportunity to not only externalise thinking processes and replace them with a functional concept, but also the opportunity to practically apply

this new understanding is vital to the concept transforming thinking processes. Improvement in learners' ability to apply the concept to communication can then be observed not only through the language they produce to externalise thinking processes, but also their ability to communicate their intended meaning. This is in keeping with Galperin's approach which, according to Hanen (1996) advocates that "both understanding and ability are basically inseparable, they are conceived as a unity" (p. 149).

To this end, from a sociocultural perspective, successful internalisation of a grammatical concept requires three essential components: (a) a grammatical concept to be used as a tool to mediate thinking processes; (b) spoken or written language to externalise thinking processes and render them available for observation and transformation; and (c) opportunities for learners to apply the concept in order to experience the internal sensation of using the concept. The following sections provide an explanation of the value of an understanding of aspect for L2 learners and a brief explanation of the terminology used to describe concepts. This is followed by an exploration of recent empirical studies into the relationship between the process of languaging and the learning of grammatical concepts.

2.8 Empirical Studies in Languaging

In this section some empirical studies in languaging and their associated methodologies will be explored. Many studies in languaging have been conducted within an SCT framework (e.g., Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain et al, 2009; Brooks et al, 2010) and there are various approaches to observing the process of L2 development from a sociocultural perspective. Researchers have come up with a number of novel approaches to analysing languaging that seek to identify occasions where learning is potentially taking place and/or explain how learners solve linguistic problems in an L2. One such unit of analysis, the language-related episode (LRE), was developed by Swain and Lapkin (1998) and is defined as the parts of dialogue where learners "talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others" (p. 326). This unit of analysis identifies what Samuda and Rounds (1993) labelled 'critical episodes', and LREs built on this idea by providing a practical framework by which researchers could systematically categorise moments in learner language where they address problematic or recently learnt features of the L2. LREs also tended to focus on language produced in the L2. In more recent studies Swain and her colleagues have further developed LREs as a unit of analysis, calling the evolved product the 'languaging unit' (LU) and employing it to categorise instances of 'languaging' in learner dialogue in both the L1 and L2.

The term ‘*linguaging*’, as briefly explained in Chapter 1, was developed by Swain (2006a) and was seen as a way of differentiating the process described by *linguaging* from ‘*output*’. Swain explains that the word ‘*output*’ evokes “an image of language as a conveyor of a fixed message (what exists as thought)” (2006a, p. 95) and does not sufficiently address the important role of producing language in L2 learning. Rather than merely communicating an existing thought, she was searching for a word that would describe language as an activity performed by learners to represent the cognitive activity (thinking) in which they engage. The key difference with *linguaging* is that the language produced is not viewed as the product of thinking, but rather an externalisation of the process of thinking. A tool that not only externalises thought, but that also mediates and shapes thinking in real time. *Linguaging* therefore does not describe language as merely a vehicle for the communication of meaning, but rather an agent in the making of meaning and problem-solving. Swain finished her explanation of the role of *linguaging* with the affirmation that “*linguaging* about language is one of the ways we learn a second language to an advanced level” (2006a, p. 96).

While the term *linguaging* is relatively new, research in the use of language as a tool to mediate thinking, also referred to as ‘*self-explanation*’, has been the subject of scrutiny for the past two decades in fields other than SLA. This includes research in the fields of physics, biology, computer programming and mathematics (e.g., Chi, Bassok, Lewis, Reimann, & Glaser, 1989; Pirolli & Bielaczyc, 1989; Pirolli & Recker, 1994; Bielaczyc, Pirolli & Brown, 1995). Swain’s (2007) review of the empirical research on the correlation between *linguaging* and learning in other fields paid particular attention to the findings of research in biology (Chi et al, 1989; Chi, de Leeuw, Chiu, & La Vancher, 1994) that involved participants learning the human circulatory system. These studies were conducted in the first language (L1) and found that participants that self-explained aloud the information that they were given demonstrated a deeper understanding of the material than those in the control group, who read the information silently to themselves twice. It was also found that participants that provided more explanations, labelled ‘*high-explainers*’, learned with greater understanding than ‘*low-explainers*’, participants that provided relatively fewer explanations (Chi et al, 1994). The quantity of *linguaging* produced by participants was not the only relevant variable, however, as the researchers found that the self-explanations of successful learners were not only more frequent but also qualitatively different to those produced by their less successful peers. A qualitative analysis of learner self-explanations revealed several different types of explanation (Chi et al, 1989). These were: making inferences, monitoring comprehension, justifying actions and establishing connections between new and prior knowledge. With regard to the type of *linguaging* produced, participants were once again divided into two groups, being ‘*good*’ and ‘*poor*’ self-explainers, and one of the clear differences between good and poor self-explainers was

the production of inferences. Making inferences was described as establishing connections between the information being explained with other pieces of information that had been presented earlier in the lesson. The researchers found that the making of inferences was typical of good self-explainers and that they were much less likely to be produced by poor self-explainers. This was of particular interest to the researchers because learners that made inferences attempted to explain how each new piece of information fit into the concept (being the human circulatory system) as a whole, and this was indicative of a developing holistic understanding of how the circulatory system worked rather than just its component parts. The other notable finding was that the components present in the self-explanations of good self-explainers were not limited to the points covered in the pre-test where they were asked to respond to questions about their knowledge of the concept. In fact, three of the 5.5 components present in the explanations of good self-explainers were not present in their responses before self-explaining the information about the circulatory system. Poor self-explainers, in contrast, hardly included any components in their self-explanations that had not previously been stated in the pre-test. Chi et al (1989) concluded that this was an indication that good self-explainers had the ability to learn from examples and that the explanations helped them to learn and encode new knowledge. Poor self-explainers, on the other hand, did not learn from the same examples, potentially as a result of their inability to use language effectively as a tool to mediate their understanding of the new information. Essentially, the findings showed that it was a case of how language is used as a tool to mediate thinking, not just how often, but that the two are often connected. The conclusion was that 'high' self-explainers were more likely to be 'good' self-explainers than 'low' self-explainers, who typically provided fewer explanations and were more likely to produce fewer inferences making them 'poor' self-explainers.

Encouraged by the aforementioned findings, researchers in SLA began exploring the role of languaging in L2 learning. Early studies indicated the positive impact of using language to mediate learners' writing (Negueruela, 2003; Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2002) and speaking (Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005, 2007) but these studies did not employ the term languaging. The term languaging does appear, however, in Swain et al's (2009) study that aimed to investigate languaging as a source of learning by establishing a relationship between the quantity and the type of languaging produced by participants and their performance on immediate and delayed post-tests.

In Swain et al's (2009) study, nine participants recruited from an intermediate French course at a major Canadian university were required to learn about the grammatical concept of voice. The overarching question posed by the researchers was whether languaging about the grammatical concept of voice would lead participants to a deeper understanding of the concept. This was

followed by two related questions, namely whether the (i) quantity and (ii) type of languaging correlated with participants' performance on immediate and delayed post-tests designed to evaluate participants' understanding of the concept. The main hypotheses behind this study were formulated on the basis of Chi et al's (1989, 1994) research into languaging that found that learners that languaged more tended to produce more inferencing and developed a better understanding of the concept being learnt. To this end, Swain et al (2009) hypothesised (i) that learners who language most, learn the most; and (ii) that learners who produce a lot of languaging, both relative to other languagers and in absolute terms, will produce more inferences than those that language less frequently. Rather than simply identifying a connection between high-languagers and inferencing, however, they aimed to observe the relationship between learning and the quantity of languaging, as well as learning and the type of languaging separately. In keeping with previous research (Chi et al, 1994, 1999) the information about the concept of voice was presented to participants in 'chunks', each chunk consisting of a single sentence and printed in a large typeface on its own card. This was called the languaging task and it comprised 36 cards in total. To perform the languaging task participants were required to read each card aloud and then explain aloud their understanding of what they had just read. A pre-test was administered to measure participants' understanding of voice before performing the languaging task. The task was then followed by a post-test and a delayed post-test to measure participants understanding of voice after performing the languaging task.

With regard to the quantity of languaging produced, the unit of analysis was languaging units (LUs), and these denoted the occasions where participants explained their understanding of the concept. The three major categories of LU identified were: 1) paraphrasing, 2) inferencing and 3) analysing. Inferencing was further broken down into the three subcategories of (a) integration, (b) elaboration and (c) hypothesis formation, and two other categories that emerged from the data but were not directly related to any conceptual unit were (i) self-assessment and (ii) re-reading. As for the quantity of LUs, some participants had more to say than others and they were divided accordingly into three groups based on the number of LUs they produced, these being 'high-languagers', 'middle-languagers' and 'low-languagers'. The two high-languagers produced the most LUs relative to the other participants, while the two low-languagers produced the least and the five middle-languagers produced a number of LUs that put them somewhere between high and low. Learning was measured based on learners' ability to correctly identify the voice of an example sentence and explain their response in the immediate and delayed post-tests compared with the pre-test. The findings suggested a positive relationship between the quantity of languaging produced and learning. The findings also showed that high languagers made inferences at a rate that was two

times higher than mid and low language learners. These findings supported those of previous research (Chi et al, 1989, 1994) which also discovered a relationship between the quantity of languaging and the number of inferences produced by learners and the positive impact this had on learning. Although the results illustrated a compelling picture that both met the expectations and confirmed the hypotheses of the researchers, there were nevertheless two cases in the middle-language learner grouping that warranted further investigation.

Swain et al (2009) observed that, despite attaining almost-perfect scores on the written post-test, two of the middle-language learners, Marnie and Michelle, were unable to identify the type of voice they had used, justify their responses or explain the thought process that led to their choice of verb form with accurate reference to the concept. Their good post-test scores suggested that they were both able to successfully communicate their intended meaning in the L2, but their explanations did not demonstrate that they were relying on knowledge of the concept to mediate communication in the L2. This was despite the fact that over the course of the study both participants deepened their understanding of the concept of voice and improved their ability to communicate meaning in the L2, arguably on the basis of their more profound understanding of the concept.

Building upon Swain et al (2009), Brooks et al (2010) further examined the performance of the two participants (Marnie and Michelle). Using the same data as Swain et al (2009), a distinction was made between 'scientific concepts' and 'spontaneous (everyday) concepts' in the analysis of Marnie and Michelle's responses. The scientific concept in this case was the grammatical concept of voice and the everyday concepts were those employed by the participants that were based on past experiences including prior instruction and intuition about French and English grammar. In this study conceptual development was viewed not only as an improving ability to define the concept of voice, but also as a shift from spontaneous concepts to the scientific concept to explain the choice of verb form to communicate meaning. As stated previously, the researchers further examined the case of these two participants because although their conceptual development was "uneven and unstable" (p. 106) they still demonstrated progress in their ability to communicate meaning in the L2 when post-test scores were compared with those of the pre-test. The role of the concept in the learners' progress was not clear, as both participants frequently referred to their inability to recall conceptual definitions when justifying their choice of verb form, with one mentioning that she had "forgotten the rules" (p. 105). While this made it difficult to demonstrate that understanding of the scientific concept played a role in their decision making, it did put the learners' evolving understanding of the concept firmly under the spotlight. These findings raise the question of whether a complete understanding of conceptual definitions is indicative of ultimate conceptual development, or if in

fact the process of internalising this concept does not always require the ability to explain decisions in conceptual terms. This finding appears to echo Vygotsky's (1978) warning that the mastery of concepts entails much more than merely memorising verbal definitions of the concept, which does not necessarily confer the ability to connect the concept to specific concrete practical activity. Given that this is the case it could therefore be argued that the ability to verbalise definitions should not be the only criteria for measuring understanding, but also the ability to link knowledge of the concepts to production of meaning in an L2.

Although Swain et al (2009), and Brooks et al (2010) which used the same data, did provide participants with opportunities to use their understanding of the concept of voice to analyse examples in the L2, the participants did not produce the L2 themselves and then language about their own production. This was done, however, in Negueruela's (2003) study in which participants languaged not only about grammatical concepts but also their own L2 production. The aim of his study was to apply systemic theoretical instruction (STI), a pedagogic approach for implementing CBI (see section 2.6 for an explanation of STI and CBI), to L2 teaching at university level. It was conducted in an intermediate-level Spanish course at university and there were twelve participants recruited for the research over a 16 week semester. The three research questions that Negueruela sought to answer were:

1. How can we apply Galperin's STI to L2 teaching-learning in an adult classroom in a university setting?
2. How should we define, understand and study L2 development from a sociocultural perspective?
3. How does L2 development proceed in the learners under study?

To respond to these research questions two types of data, personal data and conceptual development data, were collected over the course of the study. Conceptual development data comprised three subsets:

- Definition data: Participants' definitions of grammatical concepts, presumably in the form of verbal recordings and/or written responses (although the researcher does not clarify this);
- Spontaneous performance data: Spoken and written responses collected from oral and written tasks; and
- Verbalisation data: Home recordings in which participants explain aloud to themselves their understanding of specific grammatical concepts with the aid of charts provided by the instructor. Verbalisation data also included recordings of participants' analysis of their own

L2 production and justification for their choice of verb form in discussions with the researcher.

Definition data were collected before each concept was introduced to participants and then again at the conclusion of the study to measure any change in the depth of participants' explicit understanding of the concept. Verbalisation data in the form of voice recordings was sourced from six homework assignments carried out by each participant individually. In the recordings, participants languaged to themselves in their L1 about their written responses in the L2 generated at various points during the study and collected as performance data. These recordings were then later revisited in discussions with the researcher. The homework assignments initially focused on individual sentences but moved towards a broader focus on discourse and the overall meaning being conveyed. The aim of this discourse-level focus was to encourage participants to reflect on the meaning they created in specific concrete communicative scenarios.

Negueruela found that by the end of the study all participants had a deeper understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect and improved performance in the L2, yet development was not uniform and none developed a complete and systematic understanding of aspect. He identified the critical point where complete understanding is achieved as when learners "establish the connection between visible explicit knowledge and its functionality in performance" (Negueruela & Lantolf, 2006, p. 98) and the concept begins to influence L2 production. This is an important definition because it does not place the emphasis on explicit knowledge of the concept, but rather the point when individuals use their understanding of the concept to mediate L2 production.

While Negueruela understands the need for communicative activities to develop understanding of concepts, he has a narrower definition of languaging (what he calls 'verbalisation'). In his view verbalisation needs to occur in the L1, is intrapersonal and should not be used socially (interpersonally). He defines it as "the intentional use of overt self-directed speech (i.e., private speech) to explain concepts to the self" (Negueruela & Lantolf, 2006, p. 86). According to this definition, verbalisation is a tool for uniquely intrapersonal use and, consequently, his methodology did not offer participants the opportunity to work in cooperation with a third party. From a sociocultural perspective, this restriction could potentially slow development as working in collaboration with another learner can be a source of learning that has the potential to enrich the quality of verbalisation produced. Prohibiting interpersonal interaction also appears to defy the core understanding of SCT, that learning is a social process. Vygotsky's (1978) theories stressed the fundamental role of social interaction in development, being that social interaction precedes development. Methodologies that exclude opportunities for social interaction, therefore, seem at odds with the core tenets of SCT.

Studies into verbalisation that followed the work of Negueruela (2003) replaced the term ‘verbalisation’ with ‘languaging’, a term whose definition did not exclude the possibility of working in collaboration with another. Languaging with a collaborator occurred in Swain et al’s (2009) study, which concluded that the quantity and quality of assistance provided by the research assistants (RAs) to participants during a languaging task did affect the languaging produced. The researchers observed, however, that there appeared to be a lack of consistency when it came to the assistance provided by the RAs and determined that this may have limited the frequency and quality of participants’ responses in some instances. They believed that had the mediatory role of the RAs been less restricted, then more opportunities for learning could have been presented to participants. The role of the RA as a collaborator during languaging tasks was further explored by Brooks et al (2010) to determine its influence on the languaging produced by learners and their study will be outlined in the following section.

2.9 Interactionist Mediation – The Role of the Collaborator

When determining the pedagogical implications of their findings, Brooks et al (2010) scrutinised the role of the RAs and the mediation that they provided to participants in the study. The RAs were permitted to provide assistance in the form of content-free prompts (Chi, Siler, Jeong, Yamanouchi, & Hausmann, 2001), for example: ‘Can you explain what you are thinking?’; ‘Could you be a little bit more specific?’; ‘Could you elaborate on what you have just said?’. This type of prompt was employed because it pushes learners to expand on their responses without giving them any new information. The authors questioned how well this reflected the interaction between teacher and students in a classroom setting, however, as teachers could offer more guidance to learners as they identify gaps in their understanding and take advantage of “teachable moments” (Brooks, et al, 2010, p. 107). These moments are opportunities in which teachers can interact with learners and offer appropriate mediation to reinforce or correct their understanding of the information they are learning.

Making use of such teachable moments is entirely appropriate from a sociocultural perspective. As Vygotsky (1986) explains, mediation should target the range of what learners are not yet able to do independently but can already do in cooperation with another person. He argues that this provides not only an indication of learners’ present development, but also an indication of the direction of future development. Working in collaboration with another person is referred to as operating within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). What an individual is able to do in cooperation with another person of a similar or more advanced level, but not yet able to do without assistance, is said to fall within the individual’s ZPD. The understanding is that what an individual can achieve with assistance today can be achieved without assistance tomorrow. If a learner is not

yet able to do something with assistance, it is said to fall outside the learner's ZPD. If the aim, therefore, is to both encourage and evaluate conceptual development while operating within the ZPD, an appropriate approach can be found in the domain of dynamic assessment (DA) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Poehner, 2008).

Although teaching and assessment are often seen as two sides of a dichotomy, DA blurs the line that separates the two in order to create a development-oriented approach that is attuned to learners' ever changing (dynamic) level of development (Poehner, 2008). According to this approach teachers should offer assistance to learners when assessing their understanding rather than denying assistance in the fear that it will distort the measurement of learners' current level of development. Poehner (2008) refers to this type of assistance as interactionist mediation and it denotes any assistance provided by the teacher that directly responds to difficulties encountered by individual learners. Not all learners take advantage of assistance in the same way, however, as two learners whose independent abilities are quite similar may demonstrate vastly different levels of ability when working in cooperation with an expert or more advanced learner (Vygotsky, 1956; Wertsch, 1985). Therefore, with or without assistance, the level of performance is still specific to the individual.

The concern with limiting researchers to content-free prompts during the languaging task is that fewer learning opportunities are created and teachable moments are not addressed. When considering the role of the researcher in the languaging task, an interactionist approach allows them to act as both collaborator and teacher. The collaboration is important because it allows the researcher to ask participants' to further clarify their explanations without the implication that they are incorrect. Consequently, participants do not feel the need to change their potentially flawed explanations and instead focus on justifying what they have said. This justification then provides insight into participants' understanding and teachable moments can occur when a gap in their understanding is identified through discussion. In this way, participants' level of understanding can be determined and further developed with assistance from the researcher that immediately addresses any misunderstandings.

2.10 Summary

Mediation is the central notion of sociocultural theory (SCT) and Vygotsky (1978) argues that all human activity is mediated by physical (e.g., books, charts, diagrams, pencils, computers, hammers, shovels) and psychological tools (e.g., concepts, rules, language). Grammatical concepts, like aspect, are a psychological tool used to mediate understanding of language. The developmental value of grammatical concepts lies in their “abstract and generalisable nature” that allows us to “function appropriately in any concrete circumstance in which the concept may be relevant” (Poehner, 2008, pp. 11-12). This is as opposed to everyday concepts that are inseparable from context and everyday experiences.

Pedagogical approaches that organise instruction around grammatical concepts are referred to as concept-based instruction (CBI). Recent empirical studies in CBI also explored the relationship between languaging and L2 development (Brooks et al, 2010; Gànem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Knouzi et al, 2010; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain et al, 2009). Of particular interest to the present study was the work of Negueruela (2003), Swain et al (2009) and Brooks et al (2010), which found a positive relationship between languaging and L2 development. Negueruela’s (2003) definition of languaging, however, differed from that of Swain et al (2009) and Brooks et al (2010) in that he viewed it as a mediational tool for intrapersonal use. The other studies, in contrast, made no distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal use of languaging.

While there is a growing body of research into languaging and learning, there has to date been no research that does not limit the assistance provided by the researcher or research assistants to participants as they language. In addition, with the exception of Negueruela (2003), there is no research into how learners use their developing understanding of grammatical concepts to mediate the communication of meaning in the L2. Further investigation into whether or not learners actually apply their understanding of grammatical concepts when generating meaning in the L2 is required to validate the pursuit of a deeper understanding of such concepts. Additionally, in order to advance the sociocultural theoretical claims that underpin this research regarding the shift from mediation to internalisation, more evidence is required to determine whether conceptual understanding transforms thinking processes over time. The way learners use the concept to mediate their L2 production should, theoretically, be dynamic and evolve over time as understanding develops, yet the reality of this claim remains to be determined.

2.11 Research Questions

As stated in Chapter one (Section 1.1), the aim of this thesis is to investigate the use of languaging to mediate understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect and the subsequent use of the concept to mediate communication in French. In order to achieve this aim, the present research responds to the following research questions:

1. How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect?
2. Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept?
3. Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2?
4. Does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time?

The first two research questions are related, in that they are both concerned with understanding and developing an understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect. Similarly, research questions three and four are also related in that they both assume that learners already possess a developing understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect. These questions are more concerned with whether or not learners use the concept to mediate their L2 communication and if this changes over time than determining the level of conceptual understanding.

2.12 Justification for the present study

The present study is a longitudinal multiple case study and the decision for this format was based on the design, findings and conclusions of the empirical research described in the above sections as well as theoretical considerations. It seeks to make a constructive contribution to the current literature by combining and building on both Swain et al (2009) and Negueruela's (2003) studies. As was the case in both Negueruela and Swain et al's studies, participants are encouraged to language about their understanding of the concept of aspect in their L1. The internalisation of grammatical concepts requires profound understanding and, as Negueruela and Lantolf (2006) argue, it is unlikely that learners "will have the ability to simultaneously learn the new language and use the same language as a psychological tool to mediate their learning of the language" (p. 86). With this in mind, it is appropriate for learners to use their L1 to mediate the learning of grammatical concepts pertinent to an L2.

Negueruela's (2003) recommendation on when the L1 should mediate conceptual orientation, however, is very specific. According to his definition of verbalisation, the L1 is used exclusively as an intrapersonal (psychological) tool and, therefore, interpersonal (social) communication does not constitute verbalisation. While the design of the present study affords learners the opportunity to use both the L1 and L2 to mediate their understanding of aspect, its understanding of when the L1 should be used is guided by Swain et al's (2009) more inclusive definition of languaging that extends to both intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. Rather than have participants work with the new conceptual information independently and record their explanations (as was the case in Negueruela, 2003), the present study requires participants to explain their understanding to another person. The purpose of this approach is to provide them with not only the chance to externalise and observe their own understanding of the concept, but also to create opportunities for other-regulation, or 'teachable moments' (Brooks et al, 2010), as they move towards self-regulation and, ultimately, internalisation. To take fullest advantage of teachable moments, the type of assistance provided by the researcher in the present study is not limited to content-free prompts as was the case in Swain et al (2009). Although this means that participants will receive different levels of assistance, it is a better reflection of the discourse encountered in both instructional and natural settings.

With the aim of further building on Swain et al's (2009) research, this investigation follows Negueruela's example by requiring participants to language about examples of the L2 that they have produced themselves in communicative activities. The positive relationship between languaging and an improved understanding of concepts has been explored in the research presented above, but learning an L2 is not simply a matter of understanding the concepts or linguistics of a language. Furthermore, if performance and understanding are to be viewed as being synonymous, then languaging about conceptual definitions alone is insufficient for the development of a deeper understanding of a concept. Languaging about conceptual definitions must therefore be coupled with communicative tasks and opportunities to language about instances in the L2 where conceptual definitions have been used to mediate the communication of meaning. Through communication learners begin to comprehend that the concept does not arbitrarily prescribe correct use of language, but rather that it exists as a framework to guide the communication of meaning in the L2. As Lantolf and Negueruela (2006) explain,

It is through communicative activities—spoken as well as written—that learners come to realise that they can express construct meaning through the conceptual properties of the new language rather than behaving as if there were right or wrong ways of saying things in this language. (p. 82)

Communicative activities also encourage learners with an understanding of a concept to engage in a higher order mental process that is a central component of CBI, being that of deduction. During communication learners reflect on the possible meanings that the concept affords and then deduce the most appropriate for their communicative intentions. To this end, participants in the present study are asked to explain the meaning they wish to communicate in their responses in the L2 and why they chose a particular verb form to communicate this meaning. This approach advances Negueruela's (2003) research by focusing not just on how learners think about communicating meaning, but also on the evolution of learners' explanations over time to ascertain whether understanding of a concept transforms thinking as it develops.

Investigating the evolution of participant's thinking processes over time was not the express intention of Negueruela (2003) or Swain et al (2009). Brooks et al (2010), however, touched on it when they highlighted the anomalous performance of two middle-linguists that participated in Swain et al's (2009) study. The interesting thing about these two participants was that despite the "uneven and unstable" (Brooks et al, 2008, p.107) nature of their developing knowledge of conceptual definitions, their ability to communicate meaning in the L2 improved. This was despite the fact that one of the participants even confessed to having 'forgotten the rules', by which one assumes that she could no longer recall conceptual definitions. The present study explores the link between the ability to recall conceptual definitions and the ability to communicate meaning over time. To achieve this it examines what mediates participants' choice of verb form to communicate meaning in the L2, be it past experience, conceptual definitions or intuition, at different stages over a period of seven weeks. It then determines whether declining evidence of conceptual definitions in learner languaging is necessarily indicative of a deteriorating understanding of the concept, which is measured by learners' ability to communicate meaning in the L2. Understanding of the concept will therefore be measured by both the ability to communicate meaning in the L2 and the ability to reproduce conceptual definitions in explanations.

In summary, this thesis will add to the current body of research in a number of ways. Firstly, it will attempt to find evidence to support the findings of previous studies regarding the relationship between languaging and the learning of grammatical concepts. It will then build on previous research by allowing participants to language about the concept of aspect in collaboration with a researcher that is allowed to provide unrestricted assistance. Participants will also perform communicative tasks and be required to language about their L2 production. The explanations participants provide for their responses will then be evaluated to determine whether communication of meaning in the L2 is mediated by prior instruction or experience, understanding of the concept or intuition. The communication of meaning and what mediates it will then be monitored at different

stages to determine whether participants' thinking processes are transformed over the course of the study. This tracking of participants' evolving thinking processes represents the most important addition to the current literature, as this has not previously been the focus of research.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The present study is a longitudinal multiple case study that aims to explore learners' use of languaging to mediate their developing understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect and investigate how they use the concept to mediate communication in the L2. To achieve this aim, the methodology was designed to monitor participants' developing understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect over time by determining the depth of their understanding at each stage of the study. As participants' understanding of aspect developed, the way they used their knowledge of aspect to mediate L2 production was also scrutinised. This chapter presents a detailed explanation of the methodology employed in the present study with reference to the research questions that guide it.

With the inclusion of the introduction here in section one, this chapter is organised into eight sections. Section two provides a justification for the study design and then section three describes the course in which the participants are currently enrolled and the assumed background of students taking the course. Section four begins with an overview of the study design and then explains what each session of the study involved. Section five gives a detailed description of the instruments employed in the study to instruct participants on the concept of aspect and elicit L2 production. Section six offers an outline of the data collection schedule and elaborates the data collection procedures. Finally, section seven outlines the procedures for data analysis that have been developed for this study before the conclusion in section eight.

3.2 Longitudinal Multiple Case Study

The longitudinal nature of this multiple case study was considered appropriate for an investigation into L2 development from a sociocultural perspective. As explained in section 2.12, this was due primarily to the opportunities an investigation over an extended period of time provides for observing the process of development. While short term experimental investigations are useful for observing the outcomes of an intervention, they do not provide much insight into the learning process. From a sociocultural perspective, an investigation over time is more appropriate as it affords participants the time to learn how to use the mediational tools at their disposal and researchers the opportunity to observe learning as it occurs. According to Vygotsky (1978), focusing on the process rather than the product was imperative to understanding internal mental processes. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) outline Vygotsky's position, explaining:

Vygotsky thus argued that the only appropriate way of understanding and explaining higher, culturally organised, forms of human mental functioning, was by studying the process and not the outcome of development. Studying a mental function that has already become automatic and 'fossilised' as in the case of reaction time or introspective procedures misses the genetic relationship between the elementary and higher forms of mental activity (p. 28).

The value of a longitudinal study lies, therefore, in the opportunity it affords to observe participants at various stages of development and follow the genesis of their learning. Investigating cases individually also provides context to the data collected. Background data collected on each participant serves as non-performance data that, when combined with performance data, can potentially explain any individual case that may contradict patterns that emerge from the data. This is also in keeping with the recommendations of previous researchers in this domain (Swain et al, 2009) who call for an investigation on a case-by-case basis to better explain anomalous cases.

3.3 Participants and Research Context

The participants were five students, one male and four female, enrolled in an advanced-intermediate French course at a large Australian university. The French program at this university has a good reputation and students who enrol in this course typically achieve above average tertiary entrance scores. All participants spoke English as their L1 and were aged between 18 and 22. They were recruited from the same class in semester 1, 2010. Students enrolled in this course were required to attend two classes per week, each lasting one hour and twenty minutes, for a total of two hours and forty minutes of contact per week. The course description is below:

FREN3112 builds on the four basic language competencies--listening, speaking, reading and writing--developed at secondary school, though with an emphasis on reading and writing. The course involves a basic grammar revision as well as the detailed study of authentic written and audio-visual French-language texts whose linguistic structures students examine and re-use in order to create new texts. The authentic material studied is chosen with a view to deepening students' intercultural awareness. (FREN3112 course profile, 2010, p. 1)

FREN3112 is designed primarily for post-secondary school students wanting to continue French studies at university. To enrol in this course students are required to have completed five years of French study at secondary school or complete four semesters of French language courses at university (approximately 160 hours of French). In some cases students may be deemed as having the appropriate level to enrol in this course without having studied French in secondary school or for less than the required four semesters at university. This is determined by the course coordinator

and depends on many factors, although time spent in a French-speaking country is the most common substitute for secondary school study.

Students enrolled in this course were considered to have a good knowledge of French grammar and were assumed to have an understanding of the majority of French verb forms. One hour a week was dedicated to revision of French grammar with the rest of the time spent working on authentic documents, for example film and book reviews from French publications. These authentic documents were sourced by the course coordinator and compiled in a dossier that was used as a substitute for a textbook. The emphasis was on developing a deeper awareness of French culture and students were encouraged to develop a corpus of authentic French language that they could reuse in their own L2 production.

The decision to recruit students from FREN3112 was made because of their good understanding of French verbal morphology. The fact that they had already been working with the verb forms used in the present study for at least two years meant that the participants were less concerned with how to spell and conjugate verbs and more focused on the meaning they intended to communicate when they used them. This emphasis on meaning, or semantics, rather than morphology, which is habitually the focus of learners at beginner and intermediate level, meant that advanced learners were the most likely to benefit from an understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect. The fact that the course had little emphasis on teaching or practising grammar also meant that those students who still desired a better understanding of the relationship between verb form and aspect would find what they learnt in the study complemented rather than repeated what they were doing in class.

Participation in the study was voluntary and there was no compulsion for students to participate in the study and they were able to drop out of the study at any stage. In accordance with the ethical requirements of the university, participation and performance in the study was not linked to assessment and classmates of the participants were not unfairly disadvantaged. The confidentiality of all participants was ensured and all signed a consent form after reading an information sheet on the study indicating their desire to take part in the study.

3.4 Study Design

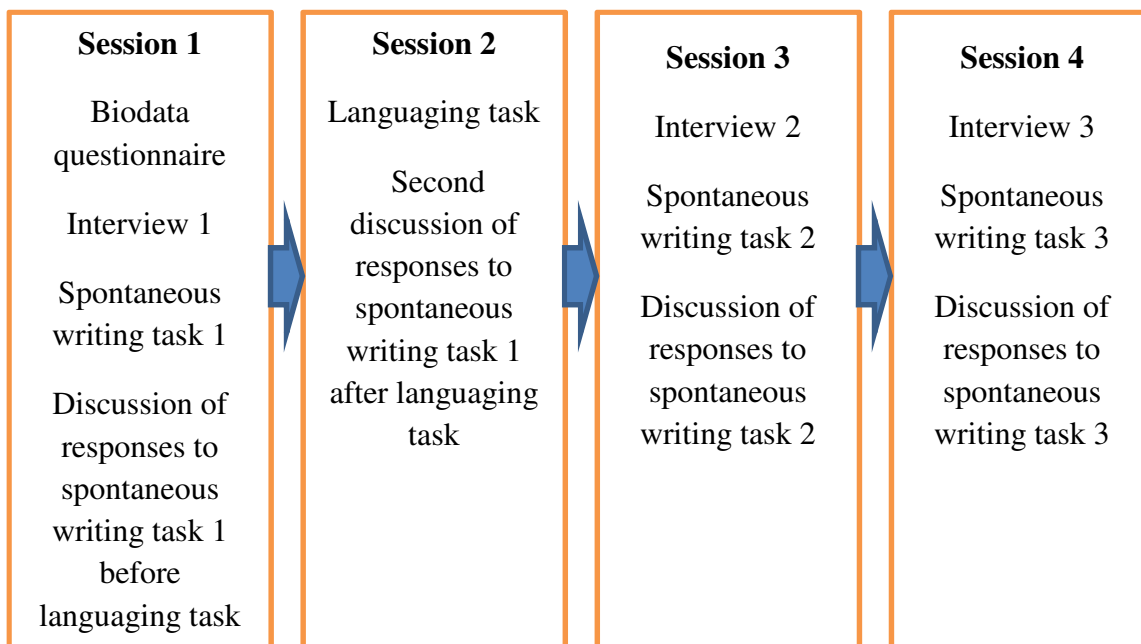


Figure 2. Study design

An overview of the current study is summarised above in Figure 2. The study called for participants to meet with the researcher on four occasions outside of normal classes. These four sessions were over a seven-week period and there was a two week break between sessions. This meant that the first session was in week one of the study, session two was in week three, session three in week five and the final session, session four, was in week seven of the study. Each session lasted approximately one hour and data were collected using a combination of methods. These were interviews, a questionnaire, a languaging task (Swain et al, 2009), spontaneous written production tasks and discussions of participants' written responses with the researcher. Apart from the questionnaire at the beginning of session one, the format of sessions one, three and four was identical. These three sessions comprised an interview and a spontaneous writing task followed by a discussion of the participants' responses solicited by the writing task. The format of session two was unique in that the majority of the session was dedicated to a languaging task based on the grammatical concept of aspect. The responses collected by the written task in session one were then revisited and discussed again immediately after the lesson on aspect. The reason for revisiting the responses to the first written task in session two was to determine whether participants would begin to use the concept to mediate decision making immediately after the languaging task. To this end it was possible to compare the same decisions, once with no knowledge of aspect and then with a

developing knowledge, and whether or not the process that led to participants' choice of verb form was mediated by their developing understanding of the concept in session two.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure and Materials

The materials employed in this study were the languaging task, didactic model and DVD content for the written task. Information on materials is provided in the following sections along with an explanation of each of the data collection tools and the type of data they collected as explained in Figure 1 of the previous section.

3.5.1 Questionnaire. (Session one only)

The questionnaire (Appendix C) was administered at the beginning of session one and served to collect biodata and information relevant to participants' learning experience in the L2 up to enrolling in their present course of study. Data collected by the questionnaires was regarded as personal background data unique to each participant. Information collected by the questionnaire included participants' first language, country of birth, language spoken at home, record of formal L2 study at secondary school and university, marks received for the last L2 subject studied, time spent in countries where the L2 is spoken, number of visits to countries where the L2 is spoken, other languages spoken and the context in which they were learnt, the language (other than English) in which they consider themselves most proficient and reasons for learning French. Most of the questions were short answer, however the question about their reasons for learning the L2 was open and participants were free to write as much or as little as they liked in their response.

3.5.2 Interview. (Sessions one, three and four)

In each interview participants were asked to explain their understanding of the concept of aspect and its relationship to two French past tenses, the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*. The timing of the interview, that is, at the beginning of the session, was important because it reminded participants of the impending writing task and the discussion of their responses that would follow (Ellis, 2003). The questions asked during the interview pushed students to think about the grammatical concept of aspect and its role in communication in the L2. It also served to remind participants of the tools at their disposal to mediate choice of verb form in the ensuing writing task. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.5.3 Spontaneous writing task (Session one, three and four).

After the interview in which participants were asked to elaborate on their understanding of the concept of aspect, they were required to complete a spontaneous writing task. The stimuli for the writing task were DVD excerpts and these excerpts provided the inspiration for participant

responses. Rather than passing the responsibility of generating the content of the task onto participants by asking them to invent a story to write about, the content was pre-specified by the researcher. The use of pre-specified content (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) meant that learners spent less time generating ideas and more time on communicating what was happening in the content provided to them. Supplying the content also ensured that participants' production was spontaneous and that they were pushed to transform the events of the pre-specified scenario into meaning in the L2.

The pre-specified content chosen for the writing tasks were short DVD excerpts of between two to three minutes. These excerpts were taken from the popular British comedy series 'Mr Bean' (Bennett-Jones & Vertue, 1991, 1992). The protagonist, Mr Bean, is a fictional character known for the extraordinary solutions he devises to extricate himself from the bizarre situations in which he has a tendency to find himself. The primary advantage of Mr Bean as a source of content for the study was that he relies very little on dialogue to communicate. Participants were therefore restricted to describing his actions and their context rather than what he was saying to communicate what was happening in the excerpt. Three different DVD excerpts were required for the study, with the same excerpt being used in sessions one and two and different excerpts used in sessions three and four. To avoid any potential task effects on the results, participants worked on different excerpts at each stage of the study. For example, had all participants watched the same excerpt in each session and the events of the first excerpt been more difficult to describe than the events of the last, the data could potentially give the false impression of development or exaggerate the extent of development. The three excerpts selected for use in the study were labelled A, B and C, and below is the schedule (Table 1) of DVD excerpts watched by each participant in each session of the study (See Appendix B for description of DVD excerpt content).

Table 1

DVD excerpts watched by participants in each session

Participant (P)	Session 1 excerpt	Session 3 excerpt	Session 4 excerpt
P1	A	B	C
P2	A	B	C
P3	B	C	A
P4	B	C	A
P5	C	A	B

Participants watched a short Mr Bean video and were then required to write three sentences describing the context of the DVD excerpt. This included describing the characters depicted in the scenes and who they were, as well as their surroundings and where the events of the DVD excerpt took place. Participants were asked to describe the context as though the events had happened in the past rather than describing them in the present tense. They were asked to use two French past tenses in their descriptions, namely the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*. Once the context had been described participants then wrote ten sentences recounting the events depicted in the DVD excerpt and the actions of the protagonist and any other characters. Once again, participants were asked to describe the events in the past tense. The third and final section of the written task asked participants to produce another five sentences about what they assumed happened after the events of the DVD. The content for these last five sentences was not pre-specified by the researcher but came directly from participants. Nevertheless, they were still pushed to describe events that would logically follow those of the DVD while successfully describing these events in the past tense. Below are the instructions that participants received before and had access to during the task:

Monsieur Bean!

1. What did you see? Who were the characters? Where were they?
2. Write down ten (10) sentences describing what happened in the movie using the *passé composé* and *l'imparfait*. You should describe the surroundings and the characters and any events that took place.
3. Now write down five (5) sentences about what you think happened next.

This type of task was chosen for the study because it created a need for participants to consider the aspectual nature of the actions and events of the DVD at the time they were occurring,

which in this case was in the past. Participants were required to focus on the meaning of what they were writing and whether or not their choice of verb form and the meaning they were conveying was a faithful representation of the setting and events of the DVD.

3.5.4 Discussion of responses (All sessions).

Discussion of the responses was in a mixture of the L1 and L2, but most participants preferred to use the L1 most, if not all, of the time. During the discussion participants' written responses to the writing task were examined and their choice of verb form was identified. To this end, participants were firstly required to go through all of the sentences they had written and to underline the verb in each sentence. Once all of the verbs were underlined, participants were asked by the researcher to read each sentence aloud. They were then asked to identify the verb form used, either *passé composé* or *imparfait* and to explain why they chose it. To determine the meaning that participants wanted to convey for comparison with the meaning actually communicated by their choice of verb form, the researcher also asked questions about the aspectual nature of the actions being described. Although there were no set questions to elicit an explanation of the intended meaning of a sentence, the researcher often posed such questions as 'Do you want to present this action as being completed at the time?' or 'Is this something he was doing at the time you're talking about or something that he did?' Questions of this nature were intended to not only gain insight into the meaning that participants wanted to communicate at the time of writing, but to also prompt participants to consider the alternative meaning available to them and which of the two was the most appropriate. In keeping with what Poehner (2008) describes as an 'interactionist' approach to mediation, the choices that participants made were questioned regardless of whether they were deemed by the researcher as accurately communicating participants' intended meaning or not. That is to say that even if participants' choice of verb form was viewed by the researcher as successfully communicating their interpretation of the action being described, they were still asked to justify their choice of verb form and to explain the process they followed to arrive at their decision. This approach was taken primarily as a means of ensuring that participants viewed the choice of verb form as being inescapably linked to meaning and that there is no correct or incorrect way of describing an action, but rather that there are different ways of describing it. By constantly reflecting on these choices participants were able to choose the verb form and meaning that appropriately reflected the action or context they were describing.

In session two, immediately after the languaging task, participants were not required to perform a spontaneous writing task. Instead, they discussed the responses from the writing task in session one a second time. The purpose of this was to give participants the opportunity after the languaging task to revisit their responses to the writing task they performed in session one before

the languaging task. To this end, it was possible to observe any changes they made once they possessed a more developed understanding of aspect.

3.5.5 Languaging task (Session two).

The languaging task on the grammatical concept of aspect took place in session two. This task was the vehicle for introducing information about the grammatical concept of aspect and was based on a task developed by Swain and her colleagues (Swain et al, 2009) for use in a study into the relationship between languaging and learning the grammatical concept of voice. In the present study, the information about the concept was broken down into manageable segments of information, or ‘chunks’, and each of these chunks was presented on its own card. There were a total of ten cards and as each card was presented participants read the information aloud. Participants were then prompted to language in the L1 about their understanding of the information presented on each card immediately after reading it. Participant languaging during the task was recorded and later transcribed.

The content of the languaging task was taken from a combination of sources in both French and English, including the “Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002), “*L’aspect verbal*” [verbal aspect] (Cohen, 1989), “*Grammaire méthodique du français*” [Methodical French Grammar] (Riegel, Pellat & Rioul, R., 2009) and contextual examples developed by the researcher based on a powerpoint slideshow found on a Canadian website (Halifax regional school board website, 2010). The labels used to describe the two different aspects in English, ‘perfect’ and ‘progressive’, were chosen because these were the terms used on the Longman Dictionary or Applied Linguistics (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). In French, the terms ‘*accompli*’ and ‘*inaccompli*’ were employed because these terms are specific to grammatical aspect (whereas *perfectif/imperfectif* are terms specific to lexical aspect).

The information presented on each card about the grammatical concept of aspect was generally one or two sentences in length. Each card was presented to participants one after the other. The information was presented in a logical order with new chunks of information building on information presented on previous cards. There were a variety of ways for participants to approach this activity so the researcher initially prompted them to explain their understanding of each piece of information with questions such as: ‘Can you explain what that means?’ or ‘Do you understand what that card is describing?’ The materials for the languaging task used in the study can be found in Appendix A.

To complement the information on the concept of aspect there were a series of contextual examples presented for discussion on the final three cards of the languaging activity. These

contextual examples involved the application of conceptual knowledge to concrete examples in the L1 and L2 that demonstrated the different meanings that could be communicated by altering the aspectual nature of an action or event. Below is one of the examples presented to demonstrate how to identify a completed action:

EXAMPLE CARD

1. Has the event stopped?

It's **completed** if we know the event has stopped, e.g., *Hier, il a plu chez-moi*. (Yesterday it RAINED at my place).

It's **ongoing** if we know the event happened in the past but **we don't know when it stopped**, e.g., *Il pleuvait chez-moi quand je suis parti hier*. (It WAS RAINING at my place when I left yesterday) *we don't know when it stopped raining, just that it was raining at the time we are talking about.

Both the *passé composé* and *imparfait* verb forms were used in the examples and the intended meaning associated with the use of each tense was discussed in conceptual terms. The verb form used, however, was not explicitly mentioned so it was left to participants to integrate each example into the information that had been shown on previous cards. The examples were also an opportunity to discuss how to identify completed and ongoing actions. This was deemed an important exercise because while participants may have a good theoretical understanding of aspect and which tense to use to describe a certain type of action, this does not imply that they have a comprehensive understanding of what practically constitutes a completed or ongoing action. Participant languaging during the languaging task was recorded and later transcribed.

Although participants were languaging in both the discussion and languaging task, the type of languaging produced was qualitatively different. The principal use of languaging in the languaging task in session two was to mediate thinking about the concept and included definitions of the concept, how the concept affected choice of verb form and identifying the influence of the concept in contextual examples. During the discussion, however, languaging was not used to talk specifically about the concept and how it operates, but rather to externalise participants' thinking as they communicate in the L2. So while languaging about the concept during the languaging task was a means of deepening understanding of the concept, languaging during the discussion was more concerned with participants' languaging to solve communicative problems. The concept is one of the mediational tools available to participants but not necessarily the one they will use to mediate their decision making when attempting to communicate a given meaning. To this end, the

linguaging produced by participants during the discussion makes it possible to determine whether or not the concept was being used by learners to mediate L2 communication.

To further explain, the difference is essentially as follows: Talking about a concept and how it works in order to improve your understanding of it is not the same as talking about how you solved a problem (which may or may not have involved use of the concept). The fact that the concept is not always used was of particular interest to Negueruela (2003), who found that when participants explained their responses they reported that they based their decision making on three sources in particular. The three types of explanations provided were: 1) perceptual explanations - that were based on prior personal experience including everyday concepts and rules of thumb; 2) Conceptual explanations – that were based on understanding of the concept; and 3) Semantic explanations – these were occasions where the participants referred to the meaning that they wanted to communicate and made choices based on intuition about the appropriate verb form to convey a given meaning. These three types of explanation will also be used to code data in the present study and will be further explained in section 3.6.2 of this chapter. Participant-researcher discussions were recorded and later transcribed.

3.5.6 Didactic model.

Participants were afforded the use of a didactic model (Figure 2) during the languaging task and during interviews and discussions in subsequent sessions. The model served as a framework for decision making pertaining to the use of either of the two French verb forms, the *passé composé* or the *imparfait*. The didactic model was essentially a flow chart that gave participants a visual representation of the decision making process they should follow when choosing one of these verb forms to describe an action. The design of the model was based on that used by Negueruela (2003) in his study of Spanish learners and the content was linked to that of the languaging task performed in session two. The role of the didactic model was to act as a mediational tool to bridge the gap between the abstract conceptual knowledge of aspect that participants developed in the languaging task and practical use of the L2. It did this by outlining a series of steps in the decision making process that the participant should take when considering the action they wish to describe in the past in the L2. These decisions then ultimately led to a recommendation of the appropriate verb form to communicate the desired action. The didactic model was presented after the languaging activity and was consulted by participants while they were discussing the examples presented in the final section of the languaging task. While use of the model was optional over the course of the study, participants were encouraged to refer back to the model whenever they were unsure of their choice of verb form in later sessions. This meant that from session two onwards participants were able to mediate their production with the aid of the model while collaborating with the researcher.

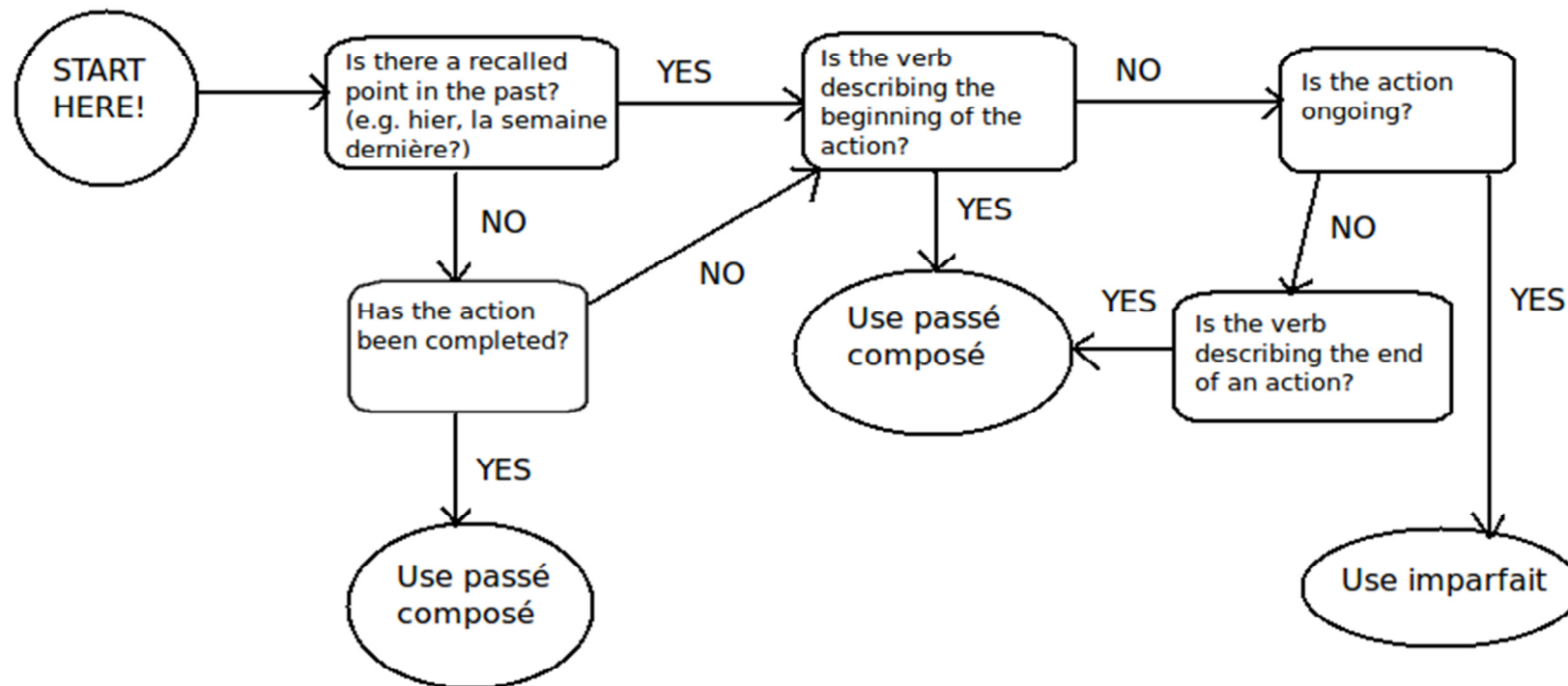


Figure 3. Didactic model

Table 2

Summary of database

Data Collection Period	Instruments	Data
Session 1 (Week 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background questionnaire. • Interview 1. • Spontaneous writing task 1. • Discussion of written responses to pre-specified content written task 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed questionnaires detailing participant's French learning background. • Transcript of interview 1 on participant understanding of aspect and French past tense. • Written sentences in the L2 describing the events that took place in a DVD excerpt. • Transcript of researcher-participant discussion on the written responses to spontaneous writing task 1.
Session 2 (Week 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linguaging task on grammatical concept of aspect. • Discussion of written responses to pre-specified content written task 1 (post lesson on aspect). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcript of discussion on participants' understanding of the content of the lesson on aspect with researcher. • Transcript of researcher-participant discussion on the written responses to spontaneous writing task 1.
Session 3 (Week 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview 2. • Spontaneous writing task 2. • Discussion of written responses to pre-specified content written task 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcript of interview 2 on participant understanding of aspect and French past tense. • Written sentences in the L2 describing the events that took place in a DVD excerpt. • Transcript of researcher-participant discussion on the written responses to spontaneous writing task 2.
Session 4 (Week 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview 3. • Spontaneous writing task 3. • Discussion of written responses to pre-specified content written task 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcript of interview 3 on participant understanding of aspect and French past tense. • Written sentences in the L2 describing the events that took place in a DVD excerpt. • Transcript of researcher-participant discussion on the written responses to spontaneous writing task 3.

Notes: All interview, discussion and languaging activity were audio-recorded and transcribed using the standard orthography.

3.6 Data Analysis

The following sections outline the data analysis procedures with respect to the four research questions that guide the study. For each research question there is an explanation of the data that were used, how they were coded and then how they were analysed in order to respond to the questions.

3.6.1 RQ1: How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect?

To determine how participants languaged about aspect in the languaging task, and thereby respond to the first research question, participant languaging was segmented into languaging units (LUs) and coded according to the type of languaging that it represented. The categories employed for the coding of the LUs emerging from the data collected in the languaging task in session two are based on those identified by Swain et al (2009). For the present study LUs are identified as belonging primarily to one of four of the categories outlined by Swain et al's (2009) methodology. These categories are (i) paraphrasing, (ii) integration, (iii) elaboration and (iv) hypothesis formation. As was the case in Swain et al (2009), participants in the present study also commented on their perceived understanding of the information about the concept of aspect. For this reason occasions where participants engage in (v) self-assessment of their understanding, both positive and negative, will also be included in the analysis even though they do not relate directly to any of the conceptual units presented in the languaging task. What follows is a detailed explanation of each type of languaging and self-explanation mentioned above accompanied by examples.

(i) Paraphrasing is the most basic form of languaging unit. As the name suggests, paraphrasing constitutes a participant explanation that summarises the chunk of conceptual information that has just been presented by merely repeating the information and terminology without adding any personal insight. Below is an example of a student paraphrasing.

Table 3

Example of paraphrasing

Information on card	Participant languaging
Aspect is a grammatical concept that deals with how the event described by a verb is viewed at the time the event occurred, such as whether it is in progress, habitual, repeated, completed momentary, etc.	P1: So, yeah, basically aspect is just whether it has already occurred or it's still occurring. Or...yeah. And whether it's long lasting or, basically the things that you said [on the card].

In the above example we see that P1 stated in her own words her understanding of the information that she had just read off a card. This is seen as paraphrasing because although the participant has explained in her own words what she has understood from the information presented, she has not included any information from her personal experience with the L2 or personal understanding of the concept.

The second category, (ii) integration, is observed in languaging units produced by participants that demonstrate an attempt to incorporate the information they have just read into their understanding of the concept as a whole. Participants achieve this by combining the information on the card that they are explaining with information or terminology presented on a previous card. Examples of integration may involve the paraphrasing of the information that they have just read aloud but the participant goes beyond the information on the card by integrating what they have just read into their developing understanding of the concept. It also demonstrates an attempt by the participant to integrate the current information into their current understanding of the concept. Below is an example of integration.

Table 4

Example of integration

Previous card	Present card	Participant languaging
The PROGRESSIVE or <i>INACCOMPLI</i> is a grammatical ASPECT which indicates that an action is incomplete, in progress or developing at the time it occurs.	The progressive in English is formed with the auxiliary verb BE and the <i>-ing</i> form of the verb. Here are two (2) examples: (i) <i>She <u>is wearing</u> contact lenses.</i> (ii) <i>They <u>were crossing</u> the road when the accident occurred.</i>	P1: So that's an extension of what we were just saying. That the progressive, I guess the word describes it. It is progressive, it hasn't been completely accomplished or it's not completed. Like, she didn't wear them and take them off. She was just continually wearing them.

In the above example we see that P1 adopts the ideas on the previous card to explain her understanding of the information on the present card. She does not refer to the main idea on the

present card, which concerns the structure of the progressive in English, but instead focuses on the examples and tries to integrate them into her developing understanding of progressive aspect.

(iii) Elaboration is the third category of analysis and is present in languaging units that demonstrate that the participant has gone beyond the information that has been presented in the languaging activity. The participant elaborates on their understanding of the information that they have just read aloud by relying on their own understanding of the concept. This can be done through the provision of examples from their own existing knowledge or personal experience with the L2 to explain how the conceptual information that has just been presented functions in relation to the L2 or fits into the concept as a whole. Elaboration can be seen as a move by the participant to fit the new information being learnt into his/her existing language system (Swain et al, 2009).

Table 5

Example of elaboration

Information on card	Participant languaging
Progressive or <i>inaccompli</i> . The progressive or <i>inaccompli</i> is a grammatical aspect which indicates that an action is incomplete, in progress or developing at the time that it occurs.	<p>P1: So that's like the <i>imparfait</i>?</p> <p>R: Yeah.</p> <p>P1: So that was like, ongoing. That I couldn't explain last week.</p> <p>R: So you associate that idea of ongoing with the <i>imparfait</i> in French?</p> <p>P1: Yeah it reminds me of what my teacher said, that it's still in progress. It just clicked then.</p>

P1's explanation of the information on the present card is not a summary of what she has just read, but rather the information on the card has reminded her of something she has learnt in a previous instructional setting. She immediately links the idea of describing an action that is still in progress with the *imparfait* in French, even though there has not yet been any mention of the *imparfait* in the content of the languaging activity. She then goes on to state that she associates the *imparfait* with actions that are in progress because that was what she had previously been taught. By elaborating on the information provided with information from her own experiences the participant is attempting to include it into her understanding of how the concept applies to production of the L2. It has also reminded her of an occasion where she has previously heard this explicit piece of information or something very similar in an instructional setting.

The fourth category of languaging unit comprising the qualitative analysis is (iv) hypothesis formation. This type of languaging unit is where the participant forms hypotheses about how the concept works or how the concept can be applied to the L2. Hypothesis formation manifests itself in a similar way to elaboration and generally takes the form of examples that demonstrate the concept in use in the participants' L1 or L2. The difference between elaboration and hypothesis formation however, is that hypotheses produced by participants are not based on existing knowledge of or personal experience with the L2. The hypotheses are rather an attempt by participants to add to their existing understanding by using it to mediate their L2 production and generating examples. In the present study, examples of hypothesis formation can be spontaneous but are sometimes generated as a result of prompting by the researcher. Prompting often occurs when the participant does not make an attempt to operationalise the conceptual information provided or makes an incorrect attempt.

Table 6

Example of hypothesis formation

Information on card	Participant languaging
A state of mind or being such as thoughts or feelings is often seen as being ongoing, e.g., <i>Quand j'étais enfant, j'avais peur des chiens.</i>	P1: OK, so. Yeah, it's a similar thing again, but, it's like... oh no, so it's the beginning. I was just going to say it's like locating the time of when it happened, but...
When I was a child I was scared of dogs. But be aware you can use the <i>passé composé</i> to express a state of mind or being that began at a certain time, making it completed, e.g., <i>quand j'ai vu le chien, j'ai eu peur.</i> I got scared when I saw the dog.	R: I guess that makes sense. P1: Kind of. R: So what do they mean by stressing the beginning of the event? P1: Well, I guess this one would be stressing the end, the "I was scared of dogs" part. I might be wrong but the "when I was a child" is more, less precise. And that's why it was ongoing because it was throughout his whole childhood, it didn't end at a particular age or whatever, but he remembers being scared of dogs. He or she. And this one is, like a one-off event it sounds like. They saw a dog and got scared.

In the above example we see the participant hypothesising about what would constitute a completed action. Although the participant is now familiar with the terminology associated with the concept and is able to describe actions as being either completed or ongoing, she is not yet able to easily identify the aspectual nature of actions in all situations. One of the indicators that the participant is presenting a hypothesis is her statement "I might be wrong but [...]". This is a clear indication that she is unsure of whether or not what she is saying will satisfy the concept, but that nevertheless she has generated a hypothesis based on her current conceptual understanding.

The fifth and final category of the analysis is (v) self-analysis. Throughout the languaging activity all participants commented aloud at some stage on their understanding of one or more elements of the concept. Each example of self-assessment generated by participants inevitably fell into one of two categories, namely positive or negative self-analysis. Participants' positive and negative self-analysis often applied directly to participants' understanding of the conceptual information, for example 'Oh my God, it just clicked' (positive) or 'I don't get it' (negative). Some examples of self-analysis taken from the data, however, also pertained to how participants perceived the information itself, making comments such as 'that makes sense' (positive) or 'that doesn't make sense' (negative). Participants' comments on whether the information made sense or not was seen as a reflection of participants' perceived understanding of the information. Therefore if participants commented that part of the information did not make sense, for example, it was seen as a negative self-analysis. The act of self-analysis is arguably qualitatively different to the other categories, in that it is evaluating rather than mediating participants' understanding of the concept. Nevertheless, its inclusion is justified by the role it plays in potentially drawing participants' and the researcher's attention to parts of the concept they are finding easy or difficult to understand.

Once the LUs had been placed into categories, it was possible to respond to the first research question by determining whether the participants paraphrased, integrated, elaborated, formed hypotheses and/or self analysed when they executed the languaging task in Session two. To further illustrate how they languaged, the frequency of each different type of languaging was recorded and compared across sessions. The definitions of the types of languaging used in the analysis are summarised below in Table 7.

Table 7

Coding of Language Units (LUs)

Type of Languageing Unit (LU)	Description
Paraphrasing	Repetition or reorganisation of the chunk of information on the card that has just been read.
Integration	The participant attempts to explain the most recent chunk of information by positioning it within the concept. This is often done by integrating more than one chunk of the information presented.
Elaboration	Participant goes beyond the information presented on the cards by giving examples from personal experience.
Hypothesis formation	Participant attempts to apply the conceptual information he/she read to L2 production, hypothesising how the concept would affect the L2.
Self-analysis	Participant comments on whether they understand the information or whether they feel that the information makes sense. Can be positive or negative.

After segmenting the transcripts of participant languageing during the languageing task into LUs and categorising them, each type of LU produced by participants was then linked to the part of the concept that elicited it. The purpose of this next step in the analysis was to go beyond simply recording the type of languageing produced by participants and attempt to identify any relationship between the languageing they produced and the part of the concept that prompted the languageing. When responding to the first research question, identifying relationships between the types of languageing generated for each part of the concept and then comparing the findings across participants provided insight into the potential reasons for the type of languageing produced.

In order to identify the different parts of the information about aspect presented to participants during the languageing task, the information on the cards was divided up into conceptual units (CUs). Each CU represented a distinct 'chunk' of information about the concept of aspect and was placed into one of three categories depending on the nature of the information that it represented. The three types of CU were (i) explicit (E), (ii) operational (O) and (iii) contextual (T). The purpose of this was to determine whether or not the type of conceptual information, explicit, operational or contextual, played a role in the type of LUs produced. The type of LU produced for each CU was recorded, but only once. Therefore, if there were more than one instance of

paraphrasing for a single CU, for example, it would just be recorded that paraphrasing occurred when explaining that particular CU rather than the number of paraphrasing LUs.

Explicit CUs, as their name suggests, presented explicit information about the concept of aspect itself and their role was to define the concept. They were not linked to any specific information regarding how the concept could be used to mediate L2 production, i.e., no link established between tense and aspect. Instead they focused on the abstract elements of the concept and the semantic implications of each aspect for the actions that they describe. This was presented to participants in the expectation that it would aid them in identifying the different semantic possibilities available to them when describing an action.

Operational CUs, on the other hand, focused on the relationship between tense and aspect in both the L1 and L2. Applying abstract conceptual knowledge to practical examples is described as ‘operationalising’ the conceptual knowledge and linking the abstract to the concrete, hence the term ‘operational CU’. Once the aspectual nature of an action had been determined, this type of CU served to identify the appropriate verb form to convey the intended meaning. Operational CUs were less abstract than explicit CUs in that they attempted to link the abstract elements of the concept to specific concrete examples of communication in the L2.

The final category of CU presented at the end of the languaging task was contextual CUs. The presentation of these CUs relied heavily on contextual examples and their primary purpose was to facilitate the distinction between complete and incomplete actions. Contextual CUs were presented at the end of the languaging task because they gave participants the opportunity to analyse practical situations in which the concept applied. They also presented the alternative meanings communicated by use of each verb form and explained them with reference to the explicit and operational CUs presented in the earlier stages of the task.

There were 14 CUs in total: 4 explicit, 5 operational and 4 contextual. They are presented in the table below (Table 8). The CUs are derived from the information presented on the cards during the languaging task, with the majority being presented on their own card. In some cases, however, there were two related CUs presented on the same card. For this reason there are 14 CUs while there were only 10 cards presented in the languaging task.

While the extra step in the analysis to link the type of languaging with a CU was not entirely necessary to respond to the first research question, it was nevertheless important for the discussion that followed. Given that the information on aspect can be about the concept (explicit CUs), how the concept is applied to L2 production (operational CUs) or an example in the L2 to demonstrate

application of the concept (contextual CUs), it was deemed appropriate to investigate the relationship between the type of CU and type of languaging. To this end, once the way participants languaged about aspect had been determined, the link between CUs and languaging was used to further explore the reasons for the type of languaging produced.

Table 8

Conceptual units presented in languaging task

Explicit knowledge of grammatical concept of aspect (explicit conceptual units)	
E1	Aspect describes how an action/event described by a verb is viewed at the time it occurred (e.g., in progress, habitual, repeated, momentary, etc.)
E2	There are two types of aspect, perfect (<i>accompli</i>) and progressive (<i>inaccompli</i>).
E3	The progressive or <i>inaccompli</i> indicates that an action is incomplete, in progress or developing at the time it occurs.
E4	The perfect or <i>accompli</i> aspect indicates that an action has been completed.
Operationalisation of conceptual knowledge (operational conceptual units)	
O5	The progressive in English is formed with the auxiliary verb BE and the <i>-ing</i> form of the verb.
O6	In French the progressive or <i>inaccompli</i> is characterised by verb conjugations with no auxiliary verb like <i>le présent</i> and <i>l'imparfait</i> .
O7	In English the perfect aspect is formed from the auxiliary verb <i>have</i> and the past participle.
O8	In French any verb conjugation that uses an auxiliary verb like <i>avoir</i> or <i>être</i> (for example <i>le passé composé</i>) demonstrates a perfect or <i>accompli</i> aspect.
O9	Although the <i>perfect aspect</i> and the <i>past tense</i> are not exactly the same thing, in French the <i>passé composé</i> is used to describe both.
Contextualisation of terminology (contextual conceptual units)	
T10	An action is completed if we know the action has stopped.
T11	An action is ongoing if we know the event happened in the past but we do not know when it stopped.
T12	There will often be a time restriction (e.g., <i>Hier, l'an dernier</i>) to show that an event only happened once, which would make it completed.
T13	An event is considered ongoing if the event happened many times or was repeated over the period of time mentioned.
T14	If the beginning or end of an action/event is emphasised, the action is seen as completed.

3.6.2 RQ2: Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept?

Responding to the second question required the interview data taken at the start of sessions one, three and four. Participants' responses in the interview were analysed to determine which of the CUs identified in Table 8 of the previous section were present in their explanations. The quality, rather than the quantity, of conceptual units covered in the languaging activity that were reproduced by participants during the interviews was seen as indicative of participants' level of understanding of the concept.

The assessment scheme used in this study to determine the level of participants' conceptual understanding was based on that used by Gánem-Gutiérrez and Harun (2011) in their study into the role of languaging in the learning of the grammatical concept of aspect. Rather than assessing participants' understanding of the concept for each question they were asked, the scheme gave participants a global rating based on the quality of the conceptual units that they reproduced in the interviews at each stage of the study. As shown in the assessment scheme in Table 9 below, the variety of CUs produced by participants, namely explicit (E), operational (O) and contextual (T) (see Table 8), as well as the coherence of participants' explanations are considered when determining participants' understanding of the concept.

Another important consideration was whether or not participants were developing a holistic understanding of the concept. If they focused on certain parts of the concept and began to overgeneralise they were essentially creating new rules of thumb. A holistic understanding, in contrast, lends equal weight to all parts of the concept and shows that the whole concept is being used to mediate decision making. Another important marker of a holistic understanding of aspect is the understanding that the aspectual nature of an action is not absolute but relative to other actions that occur in the same time frame. For example, if a man spoke to a woman in the past, it could simply be said that 'he spoke to her'. But if we add in another action it can change the way the act of speaking is viewed. If he spoke to her before or at the same time as a door was closed, for instance, it would change how the action of speaking was viewed relative to one of them closing the door. If, for instance, they had finished speaking before the door was closed the act of speaking would be completed and would take a perfect aspect, i.e., 'He spoke to her and she closed the door'. If, on the other hand, they were still speaking when she closed the door, the act of speaking would be ongoing and take a progressive aspect, i.e., 'He was speaking to her and she closed the door'. The aspectual nature of the act of speaking, therefore, can change depending on other actions that occur in the same time frame and the meaning that an individual wants to communicate. For this

reason the other actions being described in their responses needed to be considered when determining the most appropriate aspect to assign to a particular action or event.

Participants were assigned a score between zero and three for each of the three interviews conducted. Although the marking scheme did not refer to the explicit, operational and contextual CUs that comprised the conceptual information presented to them, it does refer to participants' demonstrated explicit (E) and operational (O) knowledge as well as the provision of contextual examples (T). To this end, participants that reproduced explicit, operational or contextual CUs in the interview would be seen as respectively demonstrating an explicit, operational or contextual understanding of aspect. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, whether or not participants demonstrated a holistic understanding of aspect was also a consideration. For instance, if participants fixated on certain parts of the concept and overgeneralised them, essentially turning them into rules of thumb, they were seen as not yet having achieved a holistic understanding of the concept. A holistic understanding, on the other hand, was demonstrated if participants explored a variety of the possible meanings available to them. This was often done with reference to other actions or events occurring in the same time frame before selecting the meaning that best represents their communicative intention.

Table 9

Criteria for assessing participant understanding of aspect.

Score	Explicit knowledge of aspect and how to operationalise the concept
0	No evidence of explicit knowledge of the concept, no contextual examples provided that demonstrate an understanding of how to operationalise conceptual understanding for communication in the L2 or completely inaccurate answer.
1	Minimal evidence of explicit knowledge of the concept and/or minimal use of conceptual terminology and/or vague or incomplete contextual examples of how to operationalise conceptual understanding for communication in the L2. Descriptions/explanations not necessarily entirely accurate.
2	Evidence of explicit knowledge of the concept and/or contextual examples of how to operationalise conceptual understanding for communication in the L2 expressed coherently even if descriptions/explanations are not fully accurate. Participant tends to simplify concept and focus on certain parts of it rather than demonstrating a holistic understanding of the concept.
3	Evidence of comprehensive explicit knowledge of the concept and clear contextual examples provided on how to operationalise conceptual understanding for communication in the L2. Explanations provided are coherent, fully accurate and are indicative of a holistic understanding of the concept.

For a score of three, the explanation needs to demonstrate a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the concept of aspect. To this end, the explanation should include the viewing of an action in different ways and comparing how the meaning would be affected by a change of verb form. The ability to produce unique examples rather than relying solely on those presented in the languaging task is also an indication of a more holistic understanding of the concept. The explanation also needs to be fully accurate. The following is an example of an explanation that would score a three:

P3: Ok. Well we had a French lecture the other day and we were debating whether we should use the *imparfait* or *passé composé*. It was talking about a tradition that we had experienced in the past and Julie was wanting to say that her, that they would go to her father's, a beach that was her father's favourite. She's saying "well do I use *passé composé* or *imparfait*?" And myself and another girl, I can't remember her name, who has also worked with you, we were saying, we looked at each other and said "well, did we see his liking begin? Then and there at the beach?" Like she wasn't saying that he realised then that he liked that beach or it was his favourite beach. Or did we see him finish liking it? No, we saw the middle of him liking it or it was continuing to be liked, or to be his favourite I should say. Therefore it's the *imparfait*.

R: Ok then, so that's a very good example, that story, so explain to me now if you wanted to indicate that the action was beginning or ending at a certain time, what would you use? And how would you view the action?

P3: Well you have to see it as, you have to create it such that she wanted to change it. So if you want to say he started to like the beach, it would need to be a direct point in time so I'd have to say at that moment there, or he then realised, or he realised then that this was his favourite beach.

R: Yeah, so you would use what?

P3: *Passé composé*. But if you wanted to say that he then realised that it wasn't his favourite beach, which is the negative so it's *passé composé* again, in the sense that we saw him not, no longer, the end of his liking or his favouriteness of it. Does that work? It's the timing. Like we have to say it's a set point in time. At that point he realised that he liked that beach. It wasn't over a, sort of, it wasn't a thing that just happened. We know when he started to like that beach as opposed to, sort of, we know he likes the beach but we don't know where he started to like the beach and we certainly don't know when he's going to stop liking the beach.

For a score of two, although explanations may not be entirely accurate they are still very clear and logical. This score indicates a good understanding of aspect but a tendency to focus on certain parts of the concept. There may also be some terminology that is not consistent with the concept that may have been appropriated from everyday concepts that the learner has used in the past. Below is an example of an explanation that would score a two:

P4, Session 4, Interview 3

P4: Well basically what I remember is that it's just kind of like a system of...not a system, just like a kind of way of remembering when to use the *passé composé* and when to use *l'imparfait*. The one thing that stands out is like, I think it was the last thing that I read, that's probably why I remember it, was like in relation to feelings and things like that. So it just kind of like went through the system of like all of the different, um, contexts kind of. Of when to use the *imparfait* and when to use *passé composé*.

R: So about the concept of aspect itself; do you remember what sorts of aspect we have?

P4: Well, some of the examples were like, when to use *passé composé* and *imparfait* were like, if it went for like, if there was no specific time limit or if it didn't have an ending and a beginning. One of the examples was “when I was younger I was afraid of dogs”, or “when I saw a dog I was afraid”, kind of. If that makes sense.

R: So which of the French past tenses would we use to describe those sorts of actions?

P4: Ok, well one that doesn't have the beginning or the end you would use the *imparfait*, and one that has a clear defining point you use the *passé composé*.

R: At what times could you maybe use *passé composé* for feelings?

P4: If you were describing like, if you were really, really angry at one point because something happened at that exact moment I'd probably use *passé composé*. If you were just like, “yeah, I was feeling really good that day” I'd use *imparfait*.

To receive a score of one, the participant will provide inaccurate, incomplete or vague explanations that show some understanding of the concept or its application in the L2 but are not clear. There may also be some simplifications of the concept (rules of thumb) present in the explanation. Below is an example of an explanation of aspect that would receive a score of one:

P5, Interview 2, Session 3

P5: I don't remember what aspect stands for but it was the difference between terminating verbs and continuous verbs. So if a verb terminates you use the *passé composé* because you know it happened, whereas if it's something that's continuing then you use *imparfait*. But if something isn't a direct reaction to a terminating verb then you use, you can use *passé composé*. That's what I remember.

To receive a score of zero, the response given by a participant when asked what they know about the concept of aspect would look like the following:

P2, Session 1, Interview 1

P2: Not a clue. Not a clue, I've never heard of it.

It was also possible to award scores with an extra half a point (e.g. 0.5, 1.5, 2.5) if participants' explanations of the concept were considered to lie somewhere between the descriptions given for each score. To respond to the second research question and determine whether languaging led to a deeper understanding of aspect, participants' scores in each session before and after the languaging task were compared. Participants with a higher score in the sessions following the languaging task were considered to have deepened their understanding of aspect.

3.6.3 RQ3: Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2?

Responding to the third research question required an examination of the recorded discussions that followed the writing task in each session. During discussions, participants identified their choice of verb form, either *passé composé* or *imparfait* and then justified it with an explanation. The recordings were transcribed and participant explanations for their choice of verb form in French were identified. Each explanation was then placed into one of three categories developed based on Negueruela's (2003) findings.

In his study Negueruela (2003) adopted what Newman and Holzman (1993) refer to as a 'tool-and-result' procedure to identify instances where the tool, in Negueruela's case the concepts of aspect and mood, was used by participants and then observing the result. What Negueruela found, however, was that participants did not always rely on the concepts to mediate their decision making and he identified three different types of explanation that emerged from participants' responses when asked to explain their L2 production. The three types of explanation that he identified were perceptual, conceptual and semantic. The participants' explanations given during discussions after the writing tasks in the present study were also grouped them into these three categories.

Table 10

Categories of participant explanation for choice of verb form

Explanation type	Description
Perceptual explanation	Explanation based on prior instruction, usually a general rule of usage learnt prior to taking part in the study.
Conceptual explanation	Explanation based on developing understanding of the concept, contains conceptual definitions/terminology.
Semantic explanation	Explanation based on meaning, participants use their intuition to choose the most appropriate verb form to communicate a given meaning.

Perceptual explanations are those based on past instruction that the participants have received manifesting as general rules that guide decision making. As a result, there is no need for the student to have an understanding of the underlying conceptual reasons for their decisions or their effect on meaning. While functional, and not always incorrect, these general rules inevitably give rise to exceptions and offer no insight into the reasons for these exceptions. In the excerpt below, we see an example of a perceptual explanation from a participant that relies on a rule learnt prior to taking part in the study:

P5, Session 1, Discussion Excerpt 1

R : Excellent, so *il était très content, ça c'est passé composé ou imparfait ?* [He was very happy, is that *passé composé* or *imparfait*?]

P5 : *Imparfait.*

R : *Et pourquoi ?* [Why ?]

P5 : *Euh, il* est un sentiment.* [Um, it's how he's feeling.]

R: *Ah, un sentiment. Il était très content, c'est un verbe qui décrit un sentiment, c'est ça?* [Ah, a feeling. He was very happy, it's a verb that describes a feeling, right?]

P5: *Oui.* [Yes.]

The explanation provided by P5 for her choice of verb form in the above example is based on a rule that she has learnt previously. The rule that she has learnt, and that she is relying on to

guide her decision in this explanation, is that the verb form used to describe feelings in the past tense is the *imparfait*. While this is not always incorrect, it is misleading and only loosely based on the grammatical concept of aspect due to the fact that feelings described in the past are often ongoing rather than instantaneous. It is possible for feelings to begin or end suddenly in a given moment, however, and this rule does not provide any insight into the aspectual nature of the emotion but is simply a tool for arbitrary decision making.

Conceptual explanations, on the other hand, were viewed as instances where the concept was being used to mediate decision making. They denote a participant's shift away from the use of context specific rules learnt through prior instruction or experience to a greater dependence on their developing understanding of aspect. Evidence of this type of explanation responds directly to the question of whether or not learners use the concept to mediate decision making, as they show that the concept was used in the decision making process. Conceptual explanations often contain conceptual terminology that was presented in the languaging task. The following is an example of a conceptual explanation from P1:

P1, Session 2, Discussion Excerpt 1

P1: I think that could probably be *imparfait* now that I look at it.

R: So that's *il a visité*? [he visited] So, yeah, go on.

P1: Well because the visiting of the park wasn't a completed action. Everything happened in the park, so they stayed there.

In this example we see P1 describe an action as not being completed. For this reason it is determined that she was relying on her understanding of the concept of aspect to mediate her choice of verb form.

Semantic explanations are those that do not rely on either general rules or the concept, but instead on participants' feel or intuition for the most appropriate verb form to communicate their intended meaning. This type of explanation also includes instances where participants make comparisons between the meaning that they want to communicate and what the meaning would be if they had chosen a different verb form. These explanations often take the form of a translation of what the participant is communicating in the L2 back into the L1. Below is an example of a semantic explanation in which P3 provides a comparison as well as a translation in the L1 of what he wants to communicate in the L2:

P3, Session 4, Discussion Excerpt 1

P3 : *M. Bean essayait prendre une photo avec les objets d'art sans succès.* [Mr Bean was trying unsuccessfully to take a photo with the artworks]

R : *Sans succès, très bien. D'accord.* [Unsuccessfully, very good. Ok.] So what verb have you used here?

P3: *L'imparfait. Essayait* [was trying].

R: And why *l'imparfait*?

P3: Because he, I wanted to have the sense of him, he was, we as the audience find Mr Bean trying to take a photo of himself. We're not seeing him starting to take, well he could have, you could have interpreted it as being that, but...

R: So you think you could interpret it either way?

P3: You could see him saying, yeah, he started to take, he tried to take a photo of himself but I wanted to think of it in the sense that he was trying to take a photo of himself with the...

R: Camera.

P3: Camera.

In the above example P3 bases his choice of verb form on the meaning that he wants to communicate and explains this meaning in the L1. He makes no explicit reference to the concept of aspect or any general rules in his explanation but instead explains the meaning that he wants to communicate as justification for his choice of verb form.

The second question asked whether the way in which participants use their understanding of aspect to mediate their choice of verb form evolved over time. Responding to this question required a comparison of the type of explanations provided by participants in the discussions at the end of each session. In this way the conceptual explanations as a proportion of total explanations were observed over time as participants continued to develop their understanding of aspect.

Although not directly responding to research question three but of relevance to the discussion, participant responses to the written task were also assessed as either successfully conveying their intended meaning or not. The purpose of this step in the analysis was to ensure that the meaning communicated by participants in their responses was the meaning that they wanted to communicate. It is possible, for instance, that a response could be both grammatically correct and semantically plausible, yet not appropriately communicate what the participant wanted to say. By combining an understanding of how participants mediated their choice of verb form with whether or not they successfully communicated their intended meaning, it is possible to observe the effect that mediational tools have on their ability to communicate meaning in the L2. The researcher also had

access to his own interpretation of events and might feel that participants' responses are not an accurate portrayal of what actually happened. To record when this occurred, the analysis determined not only whether the choice of verb form agreed with what the participant wanted to communicate, but also whether the researcher agreed with that interpretation. The reason for the inclusion of the researcher's interpretation in the analysis is to highlight when there are differences between the researcher's and participants' interpretations. Without knowledge of what participants intended to communicate these instances could potentially be viewed as occasions where the participant has failed to communicate their intended meaning. This is not the case, however, as what they have in fact done is successfully communicated an inaccurate interpretation of the event they are describing. Another important reason to include the researcher's interpretation in the analysis is to identify responses where participants may be avoiding use of a particular verb form and skewing their interpretation to suit their preference for one tense over the other. For example, if a participant is more comfortable with the *passé composé* they may interpret an ongoing action as being completed in order to avoid using the *imparfait*. Below is an example of written discourse data and the researcher's ensuing discussion with the participant to determine how she viewed the event she was describing in her written response:

Table 11

Example of a description that agrees with P1's, but not researcher's, interpretation.

Researcher's interpretation of event	Participant's written response	Discussion	Successful description of event (as interpreted by researcher)	Successful communication of interpretation
<i>Il visitait un parc.</i> (He <u>was visiting</u> a park.)	<i>Il a visité un parc.</i> (He <u>visited</u> a park.)	R: And what were you trying to say here? " <i>Il a visité un parc</i> " (He visited a park). P1: He visited. R: Yeah, so... P1: He has visited, I guess. R: Alright then.	No.	Yes.

The events of the DVD excerpt that P1 is describing in the above example take place in a park. Given that the events portrayed in the DVD and the actions of the protagonist all take place in the park, the researcher viewed visiting the park as an ongoing action that served as a backdrop to all the other events that took place in the DVD. To communicate the idea that the character was in the park and did not leave for the duration of the excerpt the participant should use a progressive

aspect. For this reason, to agree with the researcher's interpretation of the event, the participant would need to say 'he was visiting a park' or 'he was in a park', as opposed to 'he visited a park' which would imply that he went to the park but did not necessarily remain there for the events that followed. In the above example we see that the participant's interpretation of the event does not accurately describe the event as it is viewed by the researcher. She sees the event as completed rather than ongoing, an interpretation that she has successfully described in French by using the *passé composé*, the verb form which is used to describe completed events. This example highlights the importance of verifying participants' interpretation of each event because although her response could be deemed inappropriate because it does not agree with the researcher's interpretation, it does successfully convey her own interpretation of the event she is describing.

Participants' choice of the appropriate verb form to communicate their intended meaning does not correspond directly to the question of whether or not they use their understanding of aspect to mediate communication. Nevertheless, it is relevant because it establishes the link between use of aspect to mediate communication and the successful communication of meaning. A simple quantitative analysis of participants' explanations in researcher-participant discussions was employed to determine how often participants chose the verb form that communicated their intended meaning. These results were then placed in a table with the type of explanation (perceptual, conceptual or semantic) given by the participant to determine if there was a link between the type of explanation for their choice of verb form and the successful communication of meaning.

Identifying occasions where participants' use their understanding of aspect to mediate their choice of verb form directly responds to RQ3: Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2? The presence of conceptual explanations was viewed as an indication that participants were using their developing understanding of aspect to mediate their choice of verb form in the L2. Furthermore, and as explained above, ascertaining whether or not the concept promoted more instances of participants' accurately communicating their intended meaning in the L2 was also deemed relevant. For this reason the analysis also included the assessment of whether or not the choice of verb form mediated by an improved understanding of aspect accurately communicated participants' intended meaning.

3.6.4 RQ4: Does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time?

To respond to the fourth research question, the total number of explanations provided by participants for their choice of verb form in researcher-participant discussions was calculated and the type of explanation, perceptual, conceptual or semantic, as a percentage of total explanations was then determined in each session. The purpose of this was to show the proportion of each type of explanation in each session and to see if the proportions varied at different stages in the study. For example, while a participant can produce a large proportion of perceptual explanations in the first session before learning about aspect, after learning about aspect in session two there may be a larger proportion of conceptual explanations and a relatively lower proportion of perceptual explanations. It was also possible to determine whether or not the proportion of conceptual explanations increased over time as learners understanding of aspect developed. Responding to the fourth research question and whether or not there has been an evolution in participant's thinking was determined by the proportion of explanation types and whether these proportions remain unchanged over time or were dynamic.

3.6.5 Summary of analysis and intercoder reliability.

The coding and analysis of the data to examine the four research questions is summarised below in Table 12.

Table 12

Summary of the examination of each research question

RQ	Data	Coding and analysis	
1	How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect?	Audiorecorded data from languaging task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment LUs and then categorise into five types: paraphrasing, integration, elaboration, hypothesis formation and self-analysis (positive and negative). • Identify the types of LU produced with reference to the CU that prompted them. • Count frequency of each type of LU produced during languaging task.
2	Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept?	Audiorecorded data from interviews in sessions one, three and four.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify occasions in the interviews where participants reproduce CUs presented in languaging task. • Evaluate participants' explanations according to the criteria outlined in Table 9 (section 3.6.2) to determine their level of understanding of aspect.
3	Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2?	Audiorecorded data from researcher-participant discussions in all four sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify participants' explanations for choice of verb form and then categorise into three types: perceptual, conceptual and semantic explanations. • Conceptual explanations indicate that an understanding of aspect is being used to mediate choice of verb form.
4	Does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept	Audiorecorded data from researcher-participant discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculate the type of explanation, perceptual, conceptual and semantic, as a proportion of total explanations

of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time?	in all four sessions.	for each session. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine whether or not the mix of explanation types is different in each session and changes over time.
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Intercoder reliability.

To respond to RQ1 and ensure the reliability of the coding scheme employed in the qualitative analysis, all of the data collected during the languaging task was checked by a second coder. The coder and researcher independently went through transcripts of the languaging task and identified occasions where languaging was taking place and then categorised each instance according to the types of languaging identified in Table 3. For RQ2, both coders then read through the transcripts of the interviews at the start of sessions one, three and four and identified the CUs present in participants’ explanations of the concept. Specifically, the coders were tasked with identifying the CUs in Table 8 that were reproduced in participant responses. After working independently, both coders met to compare and discuss their findings. The coding scheme was deemed to be reliable after returning an intercoder reliability rating of 97%. For RQ3 and RQ4, to ensure the reliability of the coding scheme employed in the qualitative analysis of participant explanations, 20% of the data was checked by a second coder. The coder and researcher independently went through transcripts of the researcher-participant discussion of participants’ written responses generated during the writing task. Both coders identified occasions where participants were explaining their choice of verb form and categorised each instance as one of the types of explanation identified in table Table 10. After working independently, both coders met to compare and discuss their findings. The coding scheme was deemed to be reliable after returning and intercoder reliability rating of 98%.

3.7 Summary and Conclusion

The present study aims to explore learners’ use of languaging to mediate their developing understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect and investigate how they use the concept to mediate communication in the L2. This chapter presented preliminary details of the participants and their current program of L2 study, the study design, the procedures for data collection, materials used for data collection and how data were coded and analysed. This study views L2 development as more than simply a developing understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect, but also participants’ developing ability to communicate meaning in the L2 as a result of deeper understanding of the concept. To reflect this view, the methodology developed for the present study proposed, firstly, to explore the role of languaging in participants' developing understanding of

aspect and the depth of their understanding of the concept. This exploration responded directly to the first two research questions, which sought to understand how learners languaged about aspect and whether or not it led them to a deeper understanding of the concept.

Secondly, once the level of participants' understanding of the concept had been established, the analysis investigated use of the concept to mediate their choice of verb form in the L2. In this way it was possible to respond to the third research questions into whether or not participants used their developing understanding of the concept to mediate L2 production. The longitudinal nature of the study also made it possible to respond to the fourth research question, which asked if use of the concept as a mediational tool evolved over time.

The following chapters, four and five, present the findings of the analysis. Chapter four presents the findings relevant to the first research question by investigating how participants languaged about aspect during the languaging task. It also responds to the second research question by evaluating participants understanding of the concept in each of the four sessions of the study. Chapter five then presents the findings relevant to the third and fourth research questions, offering an examination of the explanations for choice of verb form in participants' written responses. It also presents the mix of explanation types provided at each stage of the study to determine whether the proportion of the types of explanation changes over time.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS – CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings to research questions one and two. The data relevant to the first research question (RQ1: How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect?) was collected during the languaging task in session two. The types of Languaging Units (LUs) produced by participants are identified and organised into the categories of LU presented in Table 7. Each LU is also linked to the conceptual unit (CU) that prompted it (see Table 8) in the individual analysis of each participant. The second part of the chapter then analyses data collected from the interviews in sessions one, three and four to respond to the second research question (RQ2: Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept?). Participants are assigned a score between zero and three (see Table 9) for each interview to indicate their level of understanding of aspect in different sessions.

4.2 Participant languaging (RQ1).

Figure 4 below provides a summary of the LUs produced by all participants during the languaging task. For all participants paraphrasing was the most frequent type of languaging employed when explaining their understanding of the information presented during the languaging task. As shown in Figure 4, integration and hypothesis formation were the next most common forms of languaging, although P5 demonstrated markedly less integration than the other four participants. All participants produced at least one elaboration LU, using prior knowledge to elaborate on the information presented about the concept. The participants that produced self-analysis LUs did so principally in a positive way, with P1 providing the sole example of a negative self-analysis LU. P4 and P5 did not engage in any form of self-analysis and produced more paraphrasing than the other participants. A more detailed analysis of the languaging of each participant is presented in the following sections.

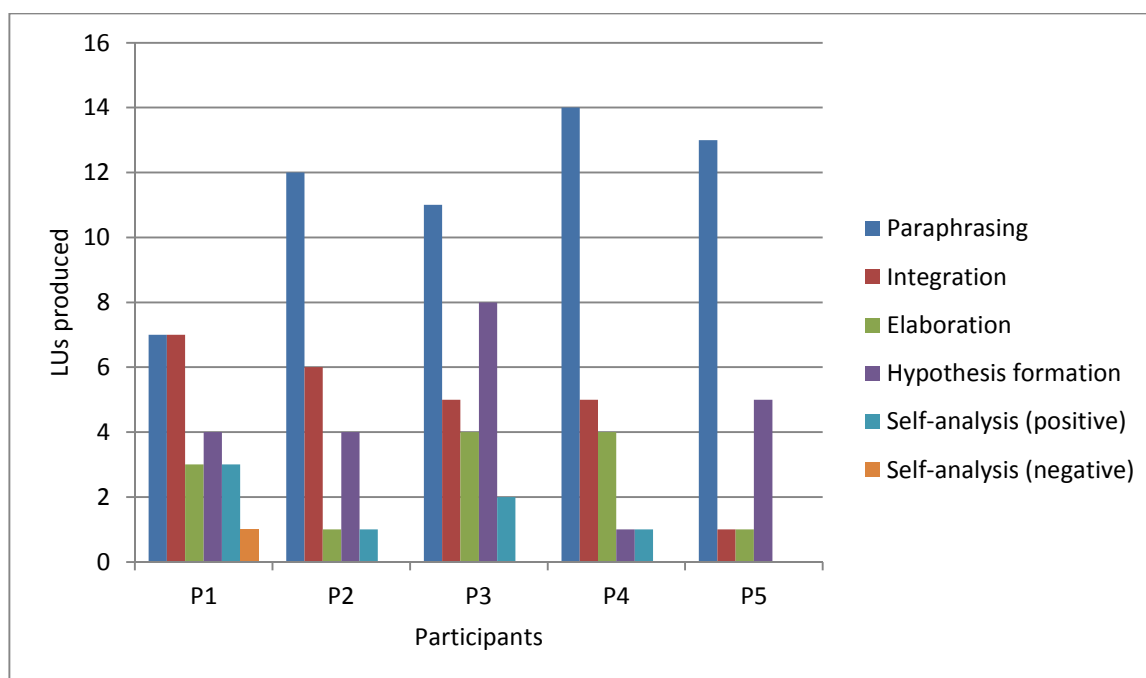


Figure 4. LUs produced in languaging task (All participants).

4.2.1 Participant 1 (P1).

The LUs P1 produced during the languaging task included all five types (Table 13). Explicit information about the concept itself was presented at the beginning of the task and P1's languaging consisted of paraphrasing, integration, elaboration and positive self-analysis when explaining her understanding of the explicit CUs (E1-E4, see Table 8). The example of elaboration was produced when P1 explained E3, which she linked to her own past experience with the L2 and then followed up with a positive self-analysis. P1's languaging about CUs dealing with operationalisation of the concept (O5-O9) did not go beyond paraphrasing apart from her languaging about O5, which comprised integration and hypothesis formation. As can be seen in Table 13, P1 also produced a much richer variety of LUs, including integration and hypothesis formation, when explaining the contextual CUs (T10-T14). Below is an example in which P1 is languaging about the information on the final card of the languaging task, card 10. The CU on this card, T14, states that if the beginning or end of an action/event is emphasised, the action is seen as completed:

P1 Languaging Task, Excerpt 1

- 1 P1: Yeah that's a similar thing again, but it's like...oh no it's not because it's the beginning.
- 2 I was going to say it's like locating the time of when it happened but...
- 3 R: I guess that sort of makes sense.
- 4 P1: Kind of.

5 R: So what do they mean by stressing the beginning of the event, for example?

6 P1: Well, I guess this one will be stressing the end, the “I was scared of dogs” part. I might

7 be wrong but the “when I was a child” is more, um, less precise. That’s why it was ongoing

8 because it was throughout his whole childhood and didn’t end at a particular age or

9 whatever. But he remembers being scared of dogs. He or she. And this one is like a one-off

10 event, it sounds like. They saw a dog and got scared.

In the above example P1 begins by integrating the new information into her understanding of the concept. This is demonstrated by her statement ‘it’s a similar thing again’ (line 1) before changing her mind (‘oh no it’s not’), referring to the information on the previous card. She then forms some hypotheses about the reasons for the ongoing or completed nature of actions, stating that the action in the first example was ongoing because ‘it was throughout his whole childhood and didn’t end at a particular age’ (line 8). She then hypothesised that the reason the second example presented a completed action was because it was a “one-off event” (lines 9-10). As shown in Table 13, the contextual CUs (T10-T14) elicited the whole gamut of categories, being paraphrasing, integration, elaboration, hypothesis formation and both positive and negative self-analysis. Integration was present in the languaging about all of the CUs relating to context (T10-T14).

Table 13

Types of LU produced for each CU during the languaging activity (P1)

Conceptual Unit (CU)	Languaging Unit (LU)
E1	Paraphrasing
E2	Paraphrasing
E3	Elaboration; Self-analysis (positive)
E4	Integration
O5	Integration; Hypothesis formation
O6	Paraphrasing
O7	Paraphrasing
O8	Paraphrasing
O9	Paraphrasing
T10	Elaboration; Integration; Self-analysis (positive)
T11	Elaboration; Integration; Self-analysis (positive)
T12	Integration; Hypothesis formation

T13	Integration; Hypothesis formation
T14	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation; Self-analysis (negative)

4.2.2 Participant 2 (P2).

As shown in Table 14, P2 produced five types of LU during the task with paraphrasing being the most frequent, employed when languaging about all but two of the CUs presented, and with no instances of negative self-analysis. When languaging about the explicit CUs (E1-E4) P2 produced a combination of paraphrasing, integration and hypothesis formation. Below is an example of a hypothesis formed by P2 after reading the information on the first card:

P2 Languaging Task, Excerpt 1

P2: Right, so aspect is sort of like, instead of focusing on what event happened, more how the verb relates to the event?

In this example, P2 is defining aspect and has formed a hypothesis about the role of the concept. Information provided about operational CUs mainly elicited paraphrasing with some elaboration, hypothesis formation and positive self-analysis. P2 seemed to find these CUs particularly useful, as evidenced by her positive self-analysis when explaining card 5 in the following example:

P2 Languaging Task, Excerpt 2

P2: Oh my God, it just clicked! I never got how or when you had to use *imparfait*. It was just like a general rule.

The above positive self-analysis suggests that P2 had previously been using the *imparfait* without an awareness of ‘how or when’ it should be used. Instead, she was using a ‘general rule’ to mediate her choice of verb form. This sort of self-analysis potentially indicates that her developing understanding of the concept has replaced the understanding that she had relied on previously to mediate use of the *imparfait*.

When languaging about the CUs that employed conceptual information to explain contextual examples, P2 paraphrased the information but also integrated it into her understanding of the concept as well as made hypotheses about the conceptual information. The following example is of a hypothesis she formed while explaining the information on card 10:

P2 Languaging Task, Excerpt 3

P2: Emotions are expressed in the imperfect (*imparfait*) because emotions can be continual. Like for the example, ‘*quand j’étais enfant j’avais peur des chiens*’ (when I was a child I was scared of dogs), you don’t know if the speaker is still scared of dogs.

The hypothesis that P2 has generated is that the *imparfait* is used if ‘you don’t know’ whether or not the action you are describing in the past continues in the present. This hypothesis is not a logical extrapolation of the information presented on the card as the fact that an action continues in the present is not relevant when choosing a verb form to describe a past action. Consequently, this hypothesis has the potential to cause problems for P2 if she employs this understanding to mediate her L2 production. The role of hypothesis formation in developing a more profound understanding of aspect is discussed in depth towards the end of section 6.2.

Table 14

Types of LU produced for each CU during the languaging activity (P2)

Conceptual Unit (CU)	Languaging Unit (LU)
E1	Hypothesis formation
E2	Paraphrasing
E3	Paraphrasing
E4	Integration
O5	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
O6	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation; self-analysis (positive)
O7	Paraphrasing
O8	Paraphrasing
O9	Paraphrasing
T10	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation
T11	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation
T12	Paraphrasing; Integration
T13	Paraphrasing; Integration
T14	Paraphrasing ; Integration; Hypothesis formation

4.2.3 Participant 3 (P3).

P3 produced five of the available types of LU over the course of the languaging task (Table 15). The most frequently observed types of LU that he produced were paraphrasing, integration and hypothesis formation with some elaboration and positive self-analysis. In addition to the variety of LUs, P3 often produced three different types of LU for many of the CUs. The CUs at the beginning of the task prompted similar languaging to those at the end, namely paraphrasing, integration and hypothesis formation. P3 regularly began by paraphrasing or integrating the new information presented on each card and then followed it with his own hypotheses about how the concept works. Below are excerpts from a transcript of P3 languaging about the information on card 3. He begins by paraphrasing the information on the card:

P3 Languaging Task, Excerpt 1

P3: So we've got the aspect of progressive that shows that the action is incomplete, in progress or developing at the time that it occurs.

This is then followed by hypothesis formation:

P3 Languaging Task, Excerpt 2

P3: Developing at the time it occurs. It's not sort of a, it's happening at the same time as something else? No? [...] Does the action then become incomplete? [...] So in progress, something develops then it's incomplete or that's not, are they separate things?

P3 often phrased his hypotheses as questions and discussed their validity with the researcher. This led to regular opportunities for the researcher to provide assistance and comment on whether or not the hypotheses were consistent with the information about the concept being presented.

Table 15

Types of LU produced for each CU during the languaging activity (P3)

Conceptual Unit (CU)	Languaging Unit (LU)
E1	Elaboration; Hypothesis formation
E2	Integration
E3	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation
E4	Paraphrasing
O5	Paraphrasing
O6	Integration; Hypothesis formation
O7	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
O8	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
O9	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
T10	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation; Self-analysis (positive)
T11	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation; Self-analysis (positive)
T12	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation
T13	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation
T14	Paraphrasing; Integration; Hypothesis formation

4.2.4 Participant 4 (P4).

P4 provided primarily paraphrasing, integration and elaboration throughout the languaging task with one example of hypothesis formation. Interestingly, the CUs at the beginning of the task that presented explicit information about the concept itself elicited only one type of LU, being paraphrasing. Below is an example of P2 paraphrasing the information on card 2 of the languaging task:

P4 Linguaging Task, Excerpt 1

P4: So, yes, there are two grammatical concepts, sorry aspects, and they are progressive and perfect, and in French they are *inaccompli* and *accompli*.

Similarly, the languaging about information pertaining to the operationalization of the conceptual consisted uniquely of a combination of paraphrasing and elaboration. The trend continued with the remaining CUs prompting a combination of paraphrasing and integration with a single instance of hypothesis formation when explaining T14. Before forming the hypothesis, P4 integrated the information on card 10 with that of card 8 in a way that demonstrated an inaccurate understanding of how the progressive works:

P4 Linguaging Task, Excerpt 2

P4: It's saying, for example, if I saw a dog I was scared, which says that it happened at a certain time and therefore it ended at a certain time as well.

After a brief discussion and referring back to the information presented on card 10, P4 presented the following hypothesis that demonstrated an accurate understanding of how the progressive aspect would apply in a given situation:

P4 Linguaging Task, Excerpt 3

P4: With the progressive it is ongoing, like so it's ongoing, '*quand j'étais enfant j'avais peur des chiens*', when I was a child I was scared of dogs. So I was pretty much scared of dogs for the whole of my childhood.

She then integrated the information on cards 8 and 10 and expanded on her hypothesis to include her understanding of how a perfect aspect would be communicated:

P4 Linguaging Task, Excerpt 4

P4: And then with the *passé composé* it's expressing a feeling that had a beginning and has an end as well. So I wasn't scared of dogs throughout the whole of my childhood but I was scared of a dog when I saw a dog.

In the case of P4 there appears to be a link between the type of information she languaged about, i.e. explicit, operational and contextual, and the type of languaging she produced.

Table 16

Types of LU produced for each CU during the languaging activity (P4)

Conceptual Unit (CU)	Languaging Unit (LU)
E1	Paraphrasing
E2	Paraphrasing
E3	Paraphrasing
E4	Paraphrasing
O5	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
O6	Paraphrasing
O7	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
O8	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
O9	Paraphrasing; Elaboration
T10	Paraphrasing ; Integration
T11	Paraphrasing ; Integration
T12	Paraphrasing; Integration
T13	Paraphrasing; Integration
T14	Paraphrasing ; Integration; Hypothesis formation

4.2.5 Participant 5 (P5).

P5 produced minimal LUs throughout the languaging task, in most cases briefly paraphrasing the information presented before moving on. There was one occasion where P5 did not language at all, simply stating ‘like what I said before’ in reference to what she had said about the information on the previous card. As she did not explain her understanding the information on either the previous card or the one she had just read, it was seen as neither paraphrasing nor integration and no languaging was recorded for E2 (Table 17).

The contextual CUs in the final stage of the languaging task (T10-T14) elicited some hypothesis formation from P5, yet her hypotheses were not always consistent with the information presented. When explaining the information on card 8, for example, P5 generated the following hypothesis:

P5 Languaging Task, Excerpt 1

P5: So if you’re uncertain then it’s progressive, whereas if you absolutely know something has stopped because there’s something in the sentence that says “it is finished” then you use perfect.

This hypothesis is very specific and its inflexibility leaves it open to exceptions. She begins by stating that ‘if you’re uncertain’ (it is assumed she means uncertain about the complete or ongoing nature of an action) then the action is progressive. Furthermore, according to P5’s interpretation, unless there is something in the sentence to explicitly indicate that an action is finished then it must be in progress. This hypothesis is indicative of a superficial understanding of the information presented on the card and would not assist decision making except in very specific circumstances. The way in which P5’s hypotheses mediate her understanding of aspect will be discussed further in section 6.2.

Table 17

Types of LU produced for each CU during the languaging activity (P5)

Conceptual Unit (CU)	Languaging Unit (LU)
E1	Paraphrasing
E2	N/A
E3	Paraphrasing
E4	Paraphrasing; Integration
O5	Paraphrasing
O6	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation
O7	Paraphrasing
O8	Paraphrasing
O9	Paraphrasing
T10	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation
T11	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation
T12	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation
T13	Paraphrasing; Hypothesis formation
T14	Paraphrasing; Elaboration

4.3 Understanding the Grammatical Concept of Aspect (RQ2)

Data collected during the interviews in sessions one, three and four were analysed to respond to the second research question which sought to determine whether or not languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect led to a deeper understanding of the concept. The first interview took place in the session before the languaging activity. The purpose of the first interview was to ascertain whether participants already had knowledge of aspect and, if so, the depth of their pre-existing knowledge of the concept. The first interview took place in session one before the

linguaging task in session two and most participants reported no prior knowledge of aspect. For those that did show some understanding of aspect the 14 CUs (see Table 8 in Chapter 3) presented during the task were used as a guide to determine what participants knew about the grammatical concept of aspect. To this end it was possible to establish which CUs the participants already had knowledge of prior to taking part in the study. Likewise, the 14 CUs presented in the linguaging task were used as a guide to determine which elements of the concept of aspect participants recalled in sessions three and four. Participants were then allocated a score according to the criteria set out in Table 9 on the previous chapter. The range of scores that it was possible for participants to achieve was from 0 to 3 and went from no knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect (0) to explicit knowledge and a holistic understanding of the concept combined with evidence of an ability to operationalise explicit conceptual knowledge (3). The principal role of this general score was to be an indicator of the level of understanding of the concept at each stage of the study.

In the next section the findings regarding the conceptual development of all participants are presented. These are then followed by the findings for each individual participant in sessions one, three and four. Participants' levels of conceptual understanding at each stage are scored and accompanied by comments on the findings. Full transcripts of participant interviews can be found in Appendix D.

4.3.1 Conceptual development of all participants.

As shown in Figure 5 below, two of the five participants (P1, and P4) demonstrated no knowledge of aspect in session one. P3, P4 and P5, on the other hand, demonstrated and/or reported some operational understanding of aspect in session one before the linguaging task. Evidence of a developing understanding of the concept was present in the responses of all five participants in session three, which was the session that followed the linguaging task on aspect, with P1, P3 and P4 scoring a two and P2 and P5 scoring a one (see Figure 5). Three of the five participants (P2, P3, and P5) continued to develop their conceptual knowledge, and displayed a deeper understanding of aspect in session four than in session three. For the remaining two participants (P1 and P4), while the scores they received did not suggest that their understanding of the concept deepened from session three to four, their understanding of the concept was stable and did not deteriorate. A comparison of scores in the first session with those of the final session suggests that all participants developed their understanding of the concept of aspect over the course of the study.

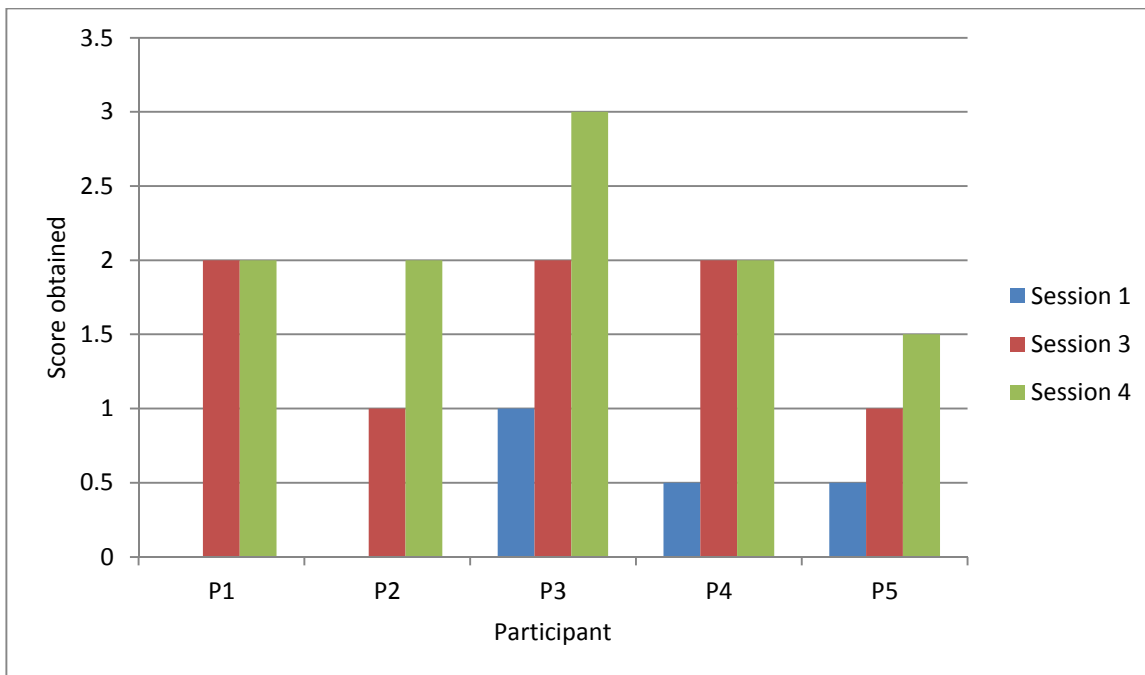


Figure 5. Participant understanding of concept by session (All participants).

4.3.2 Participant 1.

Session 1.

P1 did not provide evidence of explicit knowledge of the concept of aspect before the languaging activity. The researcher also asked her about her understanding of when to use either the *passé composé* or the *imparfait*. Below is the transcript of P1's interview in session one:

P1, Session 1, Interview 1

1 R: How do you decide, between them (the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*), which one to
2 use?

3 P1: I think it's, the *passé composé* is... I'm just trying to get it right in my head.

4 R: That's ok.

5 P1: Um, one of them is like, more immediate. Like you, you did it yesterday or something
6 and the other one is like, maybe, I went on... I visited France like last year or something like
7 that. I think.

8 R: Ok, so which one would be the immediate one do you think?

9 P1: Um, the *composé*.

- 10 R: The *passé composé*?
- 11 P1: Yeah and imperfect is further away I think.
- 12 R: Further back in the past?
- 13 P1: Yeah I think so.

The explanations provided by P1 concerning when to use each of the two French verb forms did not appear to be based on an understanding of aspect. She associated use of the *passé composé* with ‘more immediate’ actions, or actions that happened in the recent past (line 5), while stating the *imparfait* was employed for actions ‘further away’ in the past (line 11). This may in fact indicate an understanding of the difference between the *passé composé* and the *passé simple*, another French past tense, rather than the *imparfait*. This explanation is at odds with the conceptual units in the languaging activity, which prescribe use of the *passé composé* for completed actions and the *imparfait* for ongoing actions in the past.

Table 18

Interview session 1 – P1’s understanding of aspect

CUs	Score
Nil	0

Session 3.

At this stage P1 demonstrated knowledge of eight of the conceptual units covered in the languaging task (Table 19, column two). Her explanations demonstrated an accurate understanding of explicit conceptual units (Examples 1, 2 and 3 in Table 19) and she provided clear and concise explanations of how to operationalise her conceptual knowledge in the L2 (Examples 2 and 3 in Table 19). Examples were also provided that demonstrated her ability to identify the aspectual nature of an action in a given context (Example 4, Table 19). It was not clear from the examples that she provided, however, that she had developed a holistic understanding of when to use the *passé composé*. Although she referred to the momentary nature of the fear she described in her example, i.e., ‘he was afraid but he’s not anymore’ (Appendix D, line 23), she did not explain that the fear was a direct result of seeing the dog, emphasising the beginning of the fear. For this reason it was deemed that the explanation was not fully accurate as it focused on the nature of one action rather than the relationship between the two actions and she received a score of two.

Table 19

Interview session 3 – P1's understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E1, E3, E4	... I guess it just relates to whether the action was ongoing or completed.	2
2.	E4, O8, T14	If you began and completed an action then you use the <i>passé composé</i> .	
3.	E3, O6, T11	And if the action was ongoing or, yeah, it is still ongoing and you don't actually know when it finished then you use <i>imparfait</i> .	
4.	T12	R: Ok. So he was afraid of a certain dog at a certain time. P1: Yeah, like yesterday.	

Session 4.

P1 produced seven CUs in session four (see column two in Table 20). She successfully communicated how to operationalise the concept and also provided clear and concise explanations of how to identify different types of actions. She received a score of two, partially due to her explanation of a completed action as 'something that you have started and finished in the time frame' (Example 2 in Table 20). The problem lies essentially with the explanation that a completed action must start *and* finish in the time frame, which is partially correct but not complete. In fact an action could start *or* finish in the time frame, because if the beginning is stressed, then the beginning itself is viewed as being complete and the action can continue beyond the time frame.

The opposite is also true; being that an action that began before the time frame in which it is described can finish during that time and be considered a completed action.

Table 20

Interview session 4 – P1’s understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E3, E4, O6, O8	<i>Imparfait</i> is an ongoing action and <i>passé composé</i> is completed.	2
2.	T10, T14	So a completed action is something that you have started and finished in the time frame that you’re talking about.	
3.	T11	An incomplete action would be something that you’ve started and you don’t know when it’s going to end or it hasn’t finished yet in the time that you’re speaking.	

Participant 1 conceptual development summary.

On completion of the study P1 demonstrated an improved understanding of the grammatical concept of aspect when compared with her understanding at the beginning as shown in Table 21 below. In session one she reported no knowledge of the concept but by the final session had developed an understanding of aspect and how it is operationalised for communication in the L2. Although her explanations of the concept in sessions three and four were concise and accurate, there was insufficient detail to determine whether or not P1 fully understood how to operationalise her understanding of the concept in all situations. Specifically, her explanations tended to focus on individual actions and how they behaved within a certain time frame, rather than how they were viewed relative to other actions. This was evidenced by the observation that P1 did not in any of the

interviews explain or show an awareness of how the aspectual nature of an action is relative to the actions occurring around it. For this reason it was not possible to determine whether she had developed a holistic understanding of the concept.

Table 21

P1 – Summary of CUs reproduced in interviews

Session 1		Session 3		Session 4	
CUs	Score	CUs	Score	CUs	Score
Nil	0	E1, E3, E4, O6, O8, T11, T12, T14	2	E3, E4, O6, O8, T10, T11, T14.	2

4.3.3 Participant 2.

Session 1.

In session one, P2 reported no prior knowledge of the concept of aspect, providing the following response when asked if she knew anything about the concept of aspect:

P2, Session 1, Interview 1

P2: Not a clue. Not a clue, I've never heard of it.

As a result, she scored a zero in session one.

Table 22

Interview session 1 – P2's understanding of aspect

CUs	Score
Nil	0

Session 3.

P2 provided four CUs in session three (Table 23, column two) although not all of her explanations accurately reflected the conceptual information presented in the languaging task.

Specifically, her explanations of O6 and O8 were the exact opposite of what had been presented to her in the previous session. Rather than associating a progressive aspect with the *imparfait*, as prescribed by the concept, she associated it with the *passé composé*. She also erroneously explained that a perfect aspect was communicated by the *imparfait* (Example 2, Table 23). P2 was assigned a score of one for her explanation as it did provide minimal evidence of explicit knowledge and, albeit inaccurate, an understanding of how to operationalise her conceptual knowledge.

Table 23

Interview session 3 – P2’s understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E3, E4	that it’s all to do with finished actions and actions that are still continuing	1
2.	O6*, O8*	And I think “was doing” corresponds with the <i>passé composé</i> , and the <i>imparfait</i> corresponds with, like, just the “did” or um, like the past	

Note. *Explanation is an inaccurate reproduction of information taken from the CU

Session 4.

As in session three, P2 was confused in session four about when to use each of the verb forms to communicate a particular aspect. P2 mixed information taken from O6 and O8 and initially assigned the wrong verb form to the type of action she wanted to describe (Example 2, Table 23). On this occasion, however, after intervention from the researcher, i.e., ‘What are we sort of stressing when they see the dog?’ and referring her to the didactic model (Appendix D, lines 115-119), she made a second attempt and successfully explained the verb forms to communicate both a perfect and progressive aspect (Appendix D, lines 122-123). She also provided explicit CUs and gave some examples that outlined how she identified whether an action was finished or not. The examples provided by P2 of what she considered a complete or ongoing action, however, tended to focus on parts of the concept and did not necessarily demonstrate an awareness of the whole concept. For instance, she offered the example ‘I went to school last year’ (Example 5, Table 24) as

an example of a completed action and explained that it was due to the time marker ‘last year’. This was based on information taken from T12 which stated that a time marker was often used to indicate that there was a time restriction and that an event had finished in that time. Although ‘last year’ is inarguably a time marker, P2 demonstrated no awareness that the action she described was recurring over the time period and that there were other CUs that would more appropriately explain what was happening in the given example. In this particular case, ‘last year’ provided the period of time in which the action was recurring, so going to school would have been an ongoing action at the time. For this reason T13 (Table 8) would have been a more appropriate choice of CU to guide her identification of the ongoing or completed nature of the action.

Table 24

Interview session 4 – P2’s understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E4, O6*, T12	I know that the imperfect (<i>imparfait</i>) with aspects is when the, there’s a time marker and the action’s finished.	2
2.	E3, O8*	And <i>passé composé</i> , um, is the action’s not finished or it’s continual. No? It’s usually the opposite way when I do it.	
3.	O6, E3	Ok, so the imperfect (<i>imparfait</i>) is the one where the action’s continual	
4.	O8, E4, T10	And the <i>passé composé</i> is for when the action’s finished	
5.	T10, T12	Yeah, like “I went to school last year”. Like for me it’s a finished action but it’s still the notion of continuity. I don’t know... Because I use a time marker, but...	

6.	E2, O6, T13	You'd use the imperfect (<i>imparfait</i>) because it's a repeated action
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Note. *Explanation is an inaccurate reproduction of information taken from the CU

Participant 2 conceptual development summary.

At the beginning of the study P2 reported no understanding of the concept of aspect. In the two sessions following the languaging task she developed her understanding of aspect receiving a score of one in session three and a score of two in session four (Table 25). Her understanding of the concept was not complete by the end of the study, however, and she had not yet attained a holistic understanding of the concept. By a holistic understanding, it is meant that she showed an understanding of the whole concept and explored all of the different meanings available to her. Instead, she demonstrated a tendency to focus on certain parts of the concept while neglecting others.

Table 25

P2 – Summary of CUs reproduced in interviews

Session 1		Session 3		Session 4	
CUs	Score	CUs	Score	CUs	Score
Nil	0	E3, E4, O6, O8	1	E2, E3, E4, O6, O8, T10, T12, T13	2

4.3.4 Participant 3.

Session 1.

Before the languaging task P3 reported no knowledge of the concept of aspect yet he still received a score of one. This is because, while no explicit knowledge of aspect was reported in the interview, he did demonstrate an understanding of the concept in the researcher-participant discussion that followed in session one. Below is an example of a response that demonstrated an understanding of O6, O8 and T10 (lines 5-8):

P3, Session 1, Discussion Excerpt 1

- 1 P3: *'Il a regardé la télé'* [He watched TV]. It's *passé composé*.
- 2 R: So what are you trying to say here?
- 3 P3: He watched the television.
- 4 R: How come you've used *passé composé* there?
- 5 P3: Well, I suppose if he was continuing to watch the television when he heard the
- 6 choristers singing I would have used *l'imparfait*, but he watched it and then turned it off so
- 7 that's an action that's finished and he sort of, he watched the television and then turned it
- 8 off.

As elements of his responses in session one corresponded with various CUs, notably O6, O8, T10 and T11, that were to be presented in the languaging task in the following session, it was deemed appropriate to credit him with an understanding of these CUs prior to the languaging task and he was awarded a score of one.

Table 26

Interview session 1 – P3's understanding of aspect

CUs	Score
O6, O8, T10, T11	1

Session 3.

P3's responses in session three demonstrated an understanding of eight of the CUs presented in the languaging task (Table 27, column two). The CUs produced were a mix of explicit knowledge of the concept, how to operationalise conceptual knowledge and how to identify the different types of actions outlined in the concept, namely completed and ongoing. While he demonstrated a seemingly comprehensive understanding of the concept, P3's understanding of T11 was incomplete. T11 states that an action is ongoing if we know it happened in the past but we do not know 'when' it stopped. P3 made a subtle change, substituting the word 'when' with 'whether' (Example 2, Table 27). This could be problematic because the word 'whether' implies that if an action has stopped, even after the time frame in which the action is being described has ended, it cannot be an ongoing action. P3 also had some trouble determining what constituted a habitual action, stating that an action that occurred twice was habitual (Example 4, Table 27). Although it is

difficult to argue with this assertion, as it is not easy to determine at which point a repeated action becomes habitual (and incited much reflection on the part of the researcher!), it was nevertheless a cause of confusion for P3 and affected his ability to successfully communicate his intended meaning in the L2. For these reasons P3 was attributed a score of two in session three.

Table 27

Interview session 3 – P3’s understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E1	What I remember about it was two sides to <i>aspect</i> , or <i>aspect</i> . <i>Imparfait</i> , oh sorry, <i>compli* et inaccompli</i> (perfect and progressive).	2
2.	T11	And <i>inaccompli</i> is when you’re saying ‘it was raining’ but you don’t know whether it’s finished or not.	
3.	T14	So it's kind of like the raining one in the sense that you don't know when it started.	
4.	T13	... if it was habitual in the sense of, so he went to Sydney two times.	
5.	T12	That would be <i>inaccompli</i> because you don’t know when he was going.	
6.	T13, E3	Because it was something about duration, and it was over the space of a year, um, and maybe it was habitual? I don’t know.	

7.	O6, O8, T11, T14	<p>If you wanted to say <i>passé composé</i> you have to say “I watched the movie, then I was afraid” or “I was scared by it.” You know what I mean? It’s got to be following each other. But if you don’t know at what point you were scared through the movie or scared by something, it’d be <i>l’imparfait</i> because you don’t know where it starts or ends.</p>
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Session 4.

P3 demonstrated an understanding of eight CUs covered in the languaging task in session four (Table 28 column two). He provided a very clear and comprehensive response that was consistent with an explicit, operational and holistic understanding of the concept and was scored a three. His understanding of the concept appeared to be based almost entirely on the meaning that he wanted to communicate and he confidently identified the appropriate verb form to convey his intended meaning. It should also be noted that the example that he provided in the final session to illustrate his understanding of aspect was derived from a specific communication dilemma that he encountered in the classroom and resolved with his understanding of aspect (Appendix D, lines 243-250). P3 rarely referred explicitly to the concept to explain his choice of verb form, yet he clearly has an understanding of aspect and the ways in which to describe an action. This conveyed a holistic understanding of the concept as he did not appear to be relying on any particular part of the concept to guide his choice of verb form, but rather an understanding of the whole concept. He also often compared and contrasted the aspectual nature of actions he was describing.

Table 28

Interview session 4 – P3's understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E3, O6, T11, T14	<p>P3: Well, did we see his liking begin? Then and there at the beach? Like she wasn't say that he realised then that he liked that beach or it was his favourite beach. Or did we see him finish liking it? No, we saw the middle of him liking it or it was continuing to be liked, or to be his favourite I should say. Therefore it's the <i>imparfait</i>.</p>	3
2.	E4, O8, T12, T14	<p>P3: So if you want to say he started to like the beach, it would need to be a direct point in time so I'd have to say at that moment there, or he then realised, or he realised then that this was his favourite beach.</p> <p>R: Yeah, so you would use what?</p> <p>P3: <i>Passé composé</i>.</p>	
3.	E4, O8, T10, T14.	<p>P3: But if you wanted to say that he then realised that it wasn't his favourite beach, which is the negative so it's <i>passé</i></p>	

composé again, in the
sense that we saw him not,
no longer, the end of his
liking or his favouriteness
of it. Does that work?

Participant 3 conceptual development summary.

In session one, P3 reported that he had no knowledge of the concept of aspect. It was revealed in the discussion that followed the interview, however, that he was in fact able to clearly communicate his reasons for his choice of verb form when describing certain actions. He was therefore assigned a score of one before completing the languaging task. In the sessions following the languaging task he continued to develop his understanding of the concept, achieving a score of two in session three following the languaging task and a three in the final session of the study (Table 29). Upon completion of the study P3 appeared to have developed a holistic understanding of the concept and was able to confidently operationalise his conceptual understanding.

Table 29

P3 – Summary of CUs reproduced in interviews

Session 1		Session 3		Session 4	
CUs	Score	CUs	Score	CUs	Score
O6,	1	E1, E3,	2	E3, E4,	3
O8,		O6, O8,		O6, O8,	
T10,		T11,		T10, T11,	
T11		T12,		T12, T14	
		T13, T14			

4.3.5 Participant 4.

Session 1.

P4 stated that she did not have any prior knowledge of the concept of aspect and could not explain the concept when prompted to do so by the researcher. When asked how she knew when to use the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* she gave the following explanation:

P4, Session 1, Interview 1

1 P4: Ok, well the *passé composé*, I just use it for the past tense. So if I was going to say ‘I
2 went’, or ‘we went’, I’d use *passé composé*. With the *l’imparfait*, I think it, it would be like
3 um, actually I’m not sure how I would use that one.

Although she explained her understanding of when to use the *passé composé* to communicate a particular meaning (lines 1-2), it did not correspond with any of the conceptual units to be covered in the languaging activity. In her discussion of her responses to the first writing task, however, she did demonstrate an understanding of when to use the *imparfait* that corresponded with O6. She was therefore given a score of 0.5 (Table 30) before the languaging task.

Table 30

Interview session 1 – P4’s understanding of aspect

CUs	Score
O6	0.5

Session 3.

In session three, P4’s responses during the interview indicated an understanding of six of the CUs covered in the languaging task (Table 31, column two). Although she showed a good understanding of how to operationalise her conceptual knowledge, some of the examples she gave were not fully developed or entirely clear. For example, she explained that in the sentence ‘he went to Sydney often last year’ (Appendix D, lines 298-300), the action of going to Sydney was ongoing at the time specified. However she does not explain why this was the case with reference to the relevant CUs covered in the languaging activity, namely T13. Therefore her explanations, although accurate, were seen as incomplete and she was scored a two.

Table 31

Interview session 3 – P4’s understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E4, O8, T10, T14	...the <i>passé composé</i> is... if it's describing the beginning of the action. So	2

		if you open a door, like the beginning of that. Um it's describing the end of the action. It's describing if it has an end point...
2.	E3, E4, O6, O8	...like so you use the <i>imparfait</i> if it's ongoing but you use the <i>passé composé</i> if it ended.

Session 4.

The explanation of the concept provided by P4 in the final session included explicit, operational and contextual CUs (Table 32, column two). Although she demonstrated explicit and operational knowledge of the concept, she focused primarily on the contextual examples that had been discussed in the final part of the languaging task. These examples were included to help participants identify the different types of actions referred to in the concept (i.e., ongoing or completed) and were intended to be complementary rather than the primary focus. Although her understanding of the concept itself was not comprehensive, she seemed to have a clear understanding of how to operationalise her conceptual knowledge. Her responses at times also included elements indicative of a holistic understanding of the concept, for example when she stated 'If you were describing like, if you were really, really angry at one point because something happened at that exact moment I'd probably use *passé composé*.' (Example 2, Table 32) This response indicated that she understands that the nature of an action is not absolute, but in fact relative to the actions that are happening within the same time frame. Specifically that if an action or a state is the immediate result of another action, she explained, this relationship will be expressed by use of a particular verb form, the *passé composé* (Example 2, Table 32). For these reasons P4 was given a score of two in session four.

Table 32

Interview session 4 – P4's understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Example	Score
1.	E3, E4, O6, O8, T12, T14	When it doesn't have the beginning or the end you would use the <i>imparfait</i> , and when there's a clear defining point you use the <i>passé composé</i>	2
2.	E3, E4, O6, O8, T12	If you were describing like, if you were really, really angry at one point because something happened at that exact moment I'd probably use <i>passé composé</i> . If you were just like, 'yeah, I was feeling really good that day' I'd use <i>imparfait</i> .	

Participant 4 conceptual development summary.

P4 had a very limited operational understanding of aspect at the beginning of the study. In the session following the languaging task, however, her responses contained evidence of an explicit and operational understanding of the concept and she was given a score of two. Her responses in the final session showed that her understanding of aspect was stable and had neither developed further nor deteriorated according to the criteria and she was again assigned a score of two (Table 33). Although she did not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the concept in the final session, her responses did hint at an understanding that the aspectual nature of an action is not absolute. That is, she was also able to infer how the meaning of a given example would differ if the verb form was changed, as she did when discussing the feeling of anger at the end of the last interview (Example 2, Table 32).

Table 33

P4 – Summary of CUs reproduced in interviews

Session 1		Session 3		Session 4	
CUs	Score	CUs	Score	CUs	Score
O6	0.5	E3, E4, O6, O8, T10, T14	2	E3, E4, O6, O8, T12, T14	2

4.3.6 Participant 5.

Session 1.

In the first session P5 stated that she knew nothing about the concept of aspect. The researcher then elaborated, asking her what she knew about the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* and when to use them. She gave the following response:

P5, Session 1, Interview 1

P5: *Passé composé* is something that happened once whereas *passé composé* was a continuing action in the past. *Imparfait*, sorry.

This response indicated a basic operational understanding of aspect that bore some resemblance to two CUs, O6 and O8, to be presented in the languaging task. She was therefore scored 0.5 in the first session (Table 34).

Table 34

Interview session 1 – P5's understanding of aspect

CUs	Score
O6, O8	0.5

Session 3.

P5's understanding of aspect in session three comprised explicit, operational and contextual CUs (Table 35, column two). At times it was difficult to link P5's responses to an explicit understanding of the concept because she consistently referred to 'verbs' rather than 'actions' and it

was not always clear what she meant in her explanation or whether the terms ‘action’ and ‘verb’ were synonymous. She also slightly misunderstood T11, which stated that an action is viewed as ongoing if we do not know ‘when’ it stopped. Rather than focusing on ‘when’ the action stopped, however, P5 was instead concerned with ‘if’ the action had stopped, hence her response: ‘Because it’s, you don’t know if it’s terminated or not. You don’t know, you could theoretically still be scared.’ (Example 3, Table 35) Use of the word ‘when’ in the CU indicates that the action ended at some point before the present moment, just not in the relevant time frame. P5’s use of the word ‘if’, however, implies that knowing an action has stopped at any point, even outside of the time in which it is described, could mean it is complete even if you do not know when it stopped. Although she successfully communicated her intended meaning in this instance, her interpretation of T11 could prove problematic in other situations if her understanding of an ongoing action is that it needs to be continuing in the present for it to be ongoing in the past. For these reasons P5 was scored a one in session three.

Table 35

Interview session 3 – P5’s understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Examples	Score
1.	O6, O8, E3	I don't remember what aspect stands for but it was the difference between terminating verbs and continuous verbs. So if a verb terminates you use the <i>passé composé</i> because you know it happened, whereas if it's something that's continuing then you use <i>imparfait</i> . But if something isn't a direct reaction to a terminating verb then you use, you can use <i>passé composé</i> [P5 most likely means	1

		<i>imparfait</i>]. That's what I remember.
2.	O8, T12	Um, it's highlighting the fact that if something was a reaction to a terminating event in a set time you can use the <i>passé composé</i> .
3.	T11 (says if rather than when)	Because it's, you don't know if it's terminated or not. You don't know, you could theoretically still be scared.

Session 4.

In the final session, P5's responses indicated an explicit and operational understanding of the concept. She was also able to give examples of different types of actions and to justify her choice of verb form (Table 36). Her explanation of the concept was not very detailed, however, and was not indicative of a comprehensive or holistic understanding of the concept. She explained parts of the concept but did not provide enough information on how the concept works as a whole; the result being that she seemed to be using parts of the concept as simplified rules of thumb rather than as part of a conceptual framework. She also used terminology that was different to that presented in the languaging activity which, although not necessarily a problem because she is paraphrasing, meant that it was not always easy to infer which CU formed the basis of her explanation. P5 uses the term 'verb' for example, rather than 'action' (Example 1, Table 35), which engenders a strong grammatical rather than semantic focus. She also uses words like 'it' (Example 2, Table 35) rather than 'action', which sometimes made her explanations seem vague. For these reasons P5 scored 1.5 in the final session (Table 36).

Table 36

Interview session 4 – P5's understanding of aspect

Example no.	CUs	Examples	Score
1.	E4, O6, O8, T14	The focus on whether a verb terminates or begins is what defines it as <i>passé composé</i> , whereas if there isn't the focus on one of those two, a sort of ambiguous focus, then it's <i>imparfait</i> . That's pretty much it.	1.5
2.	T12	Because I'm saying 'yesterday I did this' and, so there is a termination of it.	
3.	T14	Like, there is no, I haven't stressed when I stopped being little and started being an adult or anything like that.	

Participant 5 conceptual development summary.

Throughout the study P5 demonstrated an operational understanding of the concept, namely how to identify the appropriate verb form for completed and ongoing actions in the past. Over the course of the study she added to this an explicit knowledge of the concept. It was difficult to determine to what extent she developed her ability to identify different types of actions as she often used the word 'verbs' or 'it' rather than 'actions' in her explanations for her choice of verb form. To this end, it was not always clear that she was linking her abstract conceptual knowledge to specific concrete actions, but rather maintaining a separation between the two. While her understanding of parts of the concept was evident in her responses throughout the study, she tended to focus on these parts rather than incorporate them into a broader conceptual framework. She used parts of the concept as an authority for usage rather than evaluating them with reference to other relevant parts

of the concept. This simplified approach was at odds with a holistic understanding of the concept and P5 scored 1.5 in the final session of the study (Table 37). This was an improvement on her understanding of the concept at the beginning of the study but her understanding of the concept was still in development when the study was completed.

Table 37

P5 – Summary of CUs reproduced in interviews

Session 1		Session 3		Session 4	
CUs	Score	CUs	Score	CUs	Score
O6, O8	.5	E3, O6, O8, T11, T12	1	E4, O6, O8, T12, T14	1.5

4.4 Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present the findings of the investigation into participant languaging and conceptual development. Specifically, it sought to respond to the first two research questions: (RQ1) How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect? and (RQ2) Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept? To respond to the first research question of how learners language, participant languaging during the languaging task was coded according to how they languaged about the new information presented to them, be it paraphrasing, integration, elaboration or hypothesis formation. Occasions where participants engaged in self-analysis were also recorded and included in the findings to gauge participant awareness of their understanding of the new information. Paraphrasing was the most frequent form of languaging produced by all participants. For P1, P2 and P4 this was followed by integration, hypothesis formation and elaboration respectively. For P3 and P5, however, there was more hypothesis formation than integration (see Figure 4 at the beginning of this chapter). In addition, all participants but P5 engaged in some form of self-analysis, positive and/or negative.

To respond to the second research question (Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept?) participants' understanding of aspect was evaluated in sessions one, three and four. They were assigned a score of between zero and three based on their performance in interviews in each of these sessions where they were asked to explain their understanding of aspect. The findings showed that all participants scored higher in

the final session than they did in the first session (see Figure 5 in section 4.3.1), suggesting that they had a deeper understanding of aspect at the end of the study than they did at the beginning.

Although the relationship between the type of languaging produced and developing understanding of aspect will be discussed in depth in Chapter six a brief comparison of the participant with the deepest understanding of the concept, P3, and the participant with the most superficial understanding of the concept, P5, already reveals some differences in the way they languaged. While both participants produced similar levels of paraphrasing, with P3 producing 11 and P5 producing 13 instances, that is where the similarities end. P3 produced significantly more integration (5 to 1) and elaboration (4 to 1) than P5. P3 also engaged in positive self-analysis on two occasions while P5 did not provide any instances of self-analysis. Regarding hypothesis formation, however, the difference is less striking, with P3 forming eight hypotheses and P5 forming five. Although P3 has produced more hypotheses than all other participants, P5 still produced the second highest number of hypotheses when compared to the other participants. The relationship between hypothesis formation and conceptual development, therefore, is not clear and will be further discussed in Chapter six.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS – COMMUNICATIVE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the examination of research questions three and four: (RQ3) Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2?; and (RQ4) does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time? The first half of this chapter addresses research question three by presenting the findings on whether or not participants used their developing understanding of aspect to mediate communication in French. During researcher-participant discussions at the end of each session, participants explained their choice of verb form for each response in the writing task. These explanations were grouped into three categories: (i) perceptual explanations to indicate decisions based on prior instruction, (ii) conceptual explanations to signal use of an understanding of aspect and (iii) semantic explanations to indicate decisions based on intuition (see Table 10 in Chapter three). The presence of conceptual explanations, being where participants explain their choice of verb form with reference to aspect, was taken as evidence of learners using their understanding of aspect to mediate communication.

The latter half of this chapter responds to research question four by exploring the proportion of the type of explanation (perceptual, conceptual and semantic) produced in each session to establish whether or not the way participants used their understanding of aspect to mediate communication in French evolved over the course of the study. As with research question three, the data analysed were transcripts of researcher-participant discussions in which participants explained their choice of verb form in their written responses. The proportions of each explanation type are presented in the summaries of participant explanations over all four sessions (sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.5 under the heading ‘summary’ at the end of each section). The graphs provided show how the composition of explanations changed over the four sessions.

The findings show that all participants provided substantially more conceptual explanations in sessions two, three and four following the languaging task (Figure 6) than in session one before the languaging task. This suggests that, in response to research question three, participants used their developing understanding of aspect to mediate communication in the L2.

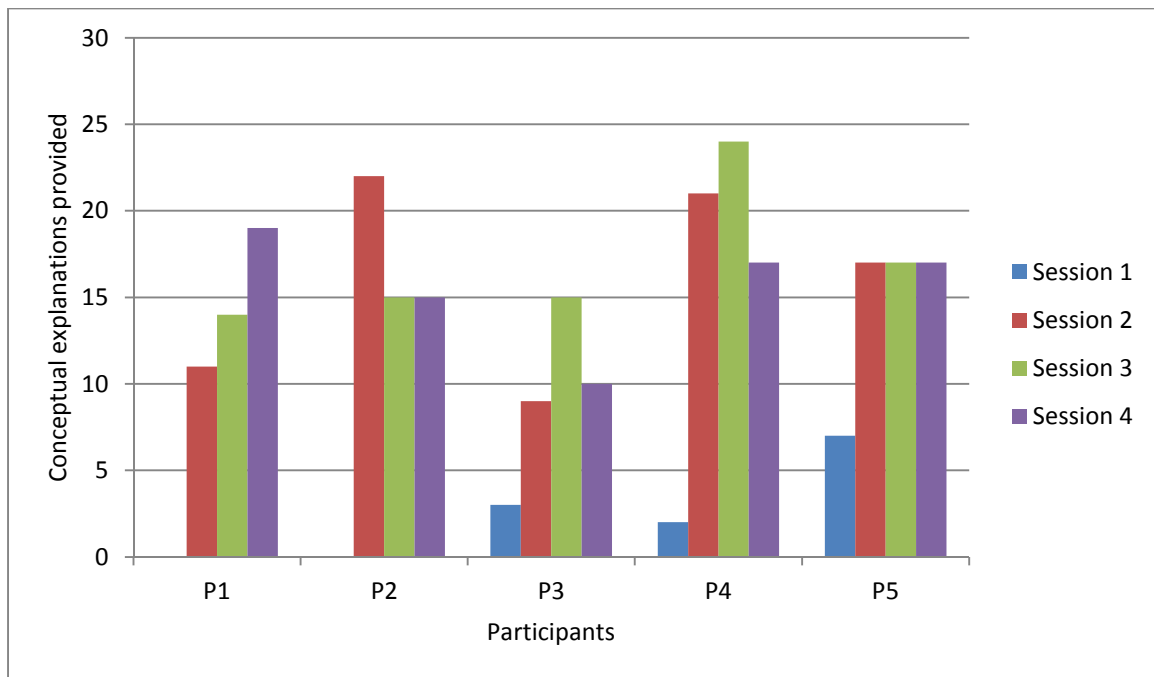


Figure 6. Conceptual explanations provided by participants in each session

In response to research question four, there was evidence to suggest that the way participants used the concept to mediate communication in the L2 did evolve over the course of the study for some participants. This was observed in the steadily increasing proportion of semantic explanations provided by three out of five participants (P3, P4, P5) and decreasing proportion of conceptual explanations in sessions three and four (see Figures 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12). This increasing focus on meaning could potentially indicate a shift from using an understanding of aspect as a mediational tool to an internalisation of this understanding that transforms thinking processes.

The following section provides an explanation of how the findings are presented in this chapter. Data relevant to the analysis is then presented for each participant in the four sessions of the study and a summary of the findings pertinent to each individual participant is provided

5.2 Analysis of Participants' Explanations and Written Responses

The findings relevant to each participant are presented separately and session by session in the following sections. The results of the analysis are summarised in tables at the end of each section (Tables 38-58) and these tables are referred to in each section as results are presented.

5.2.1 Participant 1.

P1 – session 1 – before languaging task.

In the first session of the study P1 produced no conceptual explanations as shown in the second column of Table 38. Instead she provided only semantic explanations based on the meaning she wished to communicate and gave no explanation beyond that she felt that the chosen verb form most adequately communicated her meaning. On several occasions she stated that she chose a particular verb form because ‘it felt right’ or ‘it could just be a habit’. For the majority of explanations she provided a translation in her L1 of what she wanted to say, which was considered to be meaning focused and therefore a semantic explanation. Below is an example of an occasion where she provides a translation in the L1 of her response to explain the meaning she wanted to communicate and to justify her choice of verb form:

P1, session 1, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 R: So that's *passé composé* or *imparfait* ?
- 2 P1: That's *passé composé*.
- 3 R: Excellent, so why did you use *passé composé* there?
- 4 P1: I was wanting to say ‘took a photo’.

In the above example the participant had accurately chosen the verb form that best communicated her interpretation of the event that she described. Her description of what the character in the DVD had done, i.e., he ‘took a photo’ (line 4) is in agreement with her choice of verb form (*passé composé*), which communicates the idea that the action was momentary and is now completed rather than ongoing (e.g., he ‘was taking’ a photo). This example is indicative of most of her explanations at this point in that it is essentially a translation from the L2 to the L1 of her response. The participant’s feel for the verb form to use to communicate a particular meaning was not always accurate however. As shown in column three in Table 38, of the 17 written responses provided by the participant her feeling for which verb form to use did not accurately communicate her meaning on five occasions and no further explanation was given nor was there any awareness on her part that her choice of verb form was not appropriate. This suggests that she lacks the ability to question her decisions in a constructive way when she is not sure if her feeling is right or not. Below is an example of an occasion where the meaning communicated by her response in the L2 is different to that of her translation into the L1, which is the meaning she intended to communicate:

P1, session 1, discussion excerpt 2

1 P1: 'L'homme a connu déjà...' does that work? '...utiliser le Polaroid.' [The man already
2 knew how to use the Polaroid.]

3 R: Yes. [...] So that's *passé composé* or *imparfait* ?

4 P1: *Passé composé*.

5 R: And what were you trying to say here?

6 P1: That the man knew already how to use the Polaroid.

In this example P1 chose the *passé composé* to communicate the idea that the man being described already knew how to use the Polaroid. She also chose the incorrect verb (she uses *connaître*, which is used for knowing people or places, instead of *savoir*, which is used for knowing how to do something like use a camera for example) as well as the inappropriate verb form. The verb form she has chosen is strange because it gives the impression that the man's knowledge of how to use the camera is momentary or has just begun, rather than being something ongoing that he knew how to do in the past. To correctly communicate her meaning she would need to use the *imparfait* which is used to describe actions, events or situations that are ongoing in the past.

P1 used the *passé composé* much more often than the *imparfait*, only using the latter in three of her 17 responses (see column five in Table 38). The participant makes little attempt to view the actions or events she is describing in relation to each other, that is whether some of the events she described were happening simultaneously or ongoing on the background, throughout the DVD excerpt.

Table 38

P1 before languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	S	Y	Y	IMP
2	S	Y	N	PC
3	S	Y	Y	PC
4	S	Y	Y	IMP
5	S	Y	Y	PC
6	S	N	N	PC
7	S	Y	Y	PC
8	S	N	N	PC
9	S	Y	Y	IMP
10	S	N	N	PC
11	S	N	N	PC
12	S	N	N	PC
13	S	Y	Y	PC
14	S	Y	Y	PC
15	S	Y	Y	PC
16	S	Y	Y	PC
17	S	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 0 S = 17	Y = 12 N = 5	Y = 11 N = 6	PC = 14 IMP = 3

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait*

P1 – session 2 – immediately after languaging task.

In the second session of the study participants performed the languaging task and were presented with information about the grammatical concept of aspect. Upon completing the languaging task participants were asked to revisit their responses to the written task performed in the first session and given the opportunity to re-evaluate and explain their choice of verb form for each of their written responses. In session two we see that P1 provided a mix of both conceptual and semantic explanations for her choice of verb form. The second column in Table 40 at the end of this section shows that, in session two, she used conceptual explanations to explain 11 of her responses to the writing task completed in session one and 15 semantic explanations. This can be compared to the first session where she explained the same choices of verb form with semantic explanations alone (see column two in Table 38). P1 also successfully communicated her interpretation of all of the events she described without exception (column three in Table 40). This is in contrast to session one where she failed to communicate her interpretation of events on five occasions due to an inappropriate choice of verb form.

In session two the participant began to operationalise her understanding of the concept of aspect and used it as a tool to mediate her L2 production. This is evidenced by her decision to change her choice of verb form in five of her responses from session one (see Table 39 below). What is even more compelling is the fact that the responses that she modified in session two were the same five responses identified in session one that did not successfully communicate her interpretation of events.. After completing the languaging task she was able to modify her responses to communicate her intended meaning and explain why she had changed her mind. She used either exclusively conceptual or a mix of conceptual and semantic explanations to explain why she changed her choice of verb form for four of the five changes (see column two in Table 40).

Table 39 is a comparison of P1's explanations in session one and session two for her choice of verb form in the five responses that she modified in session two. There are occasionally errors in the examples provided by P1 presented in Table 39 to do with her choice of verb or syntax. These errors are marked with an asterisk to indicate that it is not a native-like use of French.

Table 39

P1 comparison of explanations for modified responses in sessions 1 and 2

Session 1		Session 2	
Response (a)	Explanation	Response (b)	Explanation
1 a. <i>Il a visité un parc.</i> [He visited a park.]	Semantic explanation R: So what were you trying to say here? P1: 'He visited'. 'He has visited', I guess. R: All right. P1: So maybe, I don't know. Maybe that's wrong.	b. <i>Il visitait un parc.</i> [He was visiting a park.]	Conceptual explanation P1: I think that could probably be imparfait now that I look at it. R: So that's 'il a visité'? [he visited] So, yeah, go on. P1: Well because the visiting of the park wasn't a completed action. Everything happened in the park, so they stayed there.
2 a. <i>L'homme a connu déjà utiliser la Polaroid.*</i> [The man already knew how to use the Polaroid.]	Semantic explanation R: What were you trying to say here? P1: That the man knew already how to use the Polaroid.	b. <i>L'homme connaît déjà utiliser le Polaroid.*</i> [The man already knew how to use the Polaroid.]	Semantic explanation P1: So that is the <i>passé composé</i> again with 'a connu' [knew]. Um, that could probably change to <i>imparfait</i> because it's something that he knows how to do.
3 a. <i>Mr Bean a cherché pour lui.*</i> [Mr Bean looked for him.]	Semantic explanation R: So 'a cherché', what's that one? P1: 'A cherché' is <i>passé composé</i> . R: And what were you trying to say there? P1: 'He searched', 'he looked for.'	b. <i>Mr Bean cherchait pour lui.*</i> [Mr Bean was looking for him.]	Conceptual and semantic explanation P1: So, um, that should really be <i>imparfait</i> again because he was continuing to search for him and he hadn't found him yet.

4	<p>a. <i>Mr Bean a admiré la statue.</i> [Mr Bean admired the statue.]</p>	<p>Semantic explanation P1: It's <i>passé composé</i>. R: And what did you want to say? P1: To say that, just 'he was admiring'.</p>	<p>b. <i>Mr Bean admirait la statue.</i> [Mr Bean was admiring the statue.]</p>	<p>Conceptual and semantic explanation P1: That's the same as the other one, it could really be either, but, um. R: So what would the difference in meaning be? P1: Well it would be like, he admired or he looked at, he liked the statue... R: Yeah. P1: ...and then moved on or that he continued to admire it so probably, yeah. Probably <i>imparfait</i> would be better.</p>
<hr/>				
5	<p>a. <i>Les oiseaux ont nagé dans le lac.</i> [The birds swam in the lake.]</p>	<p>Semantic explanation R: What did you want to say with that one? P1: "The birds swam in the lake".</p>	<p>b. <i>Les oiseaux nageaient dans le lac.</i> [The birds were swimming in the lake.]</p>	<p>Conceptual and semantic explanation. P1: That could be <i>imparfait</i> because they kept swimming in the lake it wasn't... R: So, sorry keep going. P1: I was just saying it wasn't completed, it wasn't 'they swam' and stopped. R: So you want to say 'they were swimming'. P1: 'They were swimming', yeah.</p>
<hr/>				

In the first example we see that in session one the participant explained her choice of verb form by recounting in the L1 what she meant by the response (1a) '*il a visité*' [He visited]. She stated that she meant to communicate the idea that 'he visited' or 'he has visited'. From her brief explanation it appears that her choice of verb form in session one accurately communicated the fact that the character in the DVD excerpt visited a park. Her interpretation of the event is different to that of the researcher, however, as her choice of verb form viewed the character visiting the park as merely one in a series of events that occurred in the DVD excerpt. In contrast, the researcher viewed the park as the setting for everything else that happened during the DVD excerpt and that it would be more appropriate to assign the event a progressive aspect to indicate that it was ongoing at the time everything else happened (see response two in columns three and four in Table 38 show the difference in interpretation).

In session two we observed the P1 take a different view of Mr Bean's visit to the park (response 1b in Table 39) that agreed with the researcher's interpretation. Rather than describing his visit as an isolated action that was not connected with all of the other events that occurred in the DVD excerpt, she stated that 'visiting the park wasn't a completed event'. She then explained her reasoning for her new interpretation of the event by saying that 'everything happened in the park' and that 'they stayed there'. In this explanation in session two we see the beginning of a holistic understanding of the concept of aspect. Specifically, P1 is developing the understanding that the aspectual nature of an action is dependent on the way that she would like it viewed in relation to other actions that she describes. In this case, she appeared to want all of the other actions that she described to be taking place while the character was visiting the park, rather than just viewing the visit to the park as one in a series of actions or events.

In the fourth example it is clear from the participant's semantic explanation in session one, where she stated that the character (explanation for response 4a) 'was admiring' a sculpture, that she wanted to describe the character in the act of admiring the statue. Her choice of *passé composé*, however, gives the listener the impression that it was something that he did and then had stopped doing at the time rather than describing him in the action of admiring the statue. In the second session she re-evaluates her decision and states that she could have used either verb form to describe what was happening. She explored the two different meanings associated with each of the two verb forms, explaining that she could say that 'he liked the statue and then moved on or that he continued to admire it'. She then changed her choice of verb form to *imparfait* and explained that it would better describe the event. The decision to change her choice of verb form also means that she described the event the way she originally intended by emphasising that Mr Bean was in the process of admiring the statue at the time.

The 11 conceptual explanations provided by P1 in session two (column two in Table 40) indicated that P1 was using her understanding of aspect to mediate her decision making in the L2 immediately after the languaging task. The changes made to the five responses presented in Table 39 further suggest that P1's use of the concept to mediate her choice of verb form led to more accurate communication of her intended meaning than relying on her intuition alone.

Table 40

P1 immediately after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
2	C, S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
3	C, S	Y	Y	PC
4	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
5	S	Y	Y	PC
6	S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
7	C, S	Y	Y	PC
8	C, S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
9	C	Y	Y	IMP
10	S	Y	N	PC
11	C, S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
12	C, S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
13	S	Y	Y	PC
14	S	Y	Y	PC
15	S	Y	Y	PC
16	C, S	Y	Y	PC
17	C, S	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 11 S = 15	Y = 17 N = 0	Y = 16 N = 1	PC = 9 IMP = 8

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait**

P1 – session 3 – two weeks after languaging task.

As in session two the explanations provided by P1 in session three to explain her choice of verb form comprised both conceptual and semantic explanations. Column one in Table 41 shows that 14 of the 32 explanations generated in session three were conceptual explanations and the remaining 18 were semantic explanations. As shown in column three in Table 41, she successfully communicated her interpretation of events on all but one occasion in which her interpretation of the event required the use of a verb form that was neither *passé composé* nor *imparfait*. She chose the

passé composé on this occasion and when evaluating her written response there was no a problem with the grammar. In the discussion of her response that followed shown in the excerpt below, however, we see that the meaning she intended to communicate was different to the one that she actually communicated:

P1, session 3, discussion excerpt 1

1 P1: *M. Bean a décoré son appartement pour la fête.* [Mr Bean decorated his apartment for
2 the party.]

3 R: *Oui.* [Yes.] You've used which tense here?

4 P1: That's *passé composé*.

5 R: *Passé composé.* And why *passé composé*?

6 P1: Because he did decorate it at some point and it is decorated now.

P1 stated in her explanation that Mr Bean had decorated his apartment prior to the scene depicted in the DVD excerpt (line 6). Her choice of verb form, however, communicates the idea that Mr Bean decorated the apartment at the time being described (line 1). To describe the action of decorating the apartment before the time we are talking about would necessitate the use of the *plus-que-parfait* in French. The *plus-que-parfait* would be used to describe something that the protagonist 'had done' previously rather than something he 'did' or 'was doing' at the time. The participant could have used the *imparfait* in this instance to describe the state of the apartment itself, e.g., '*l'appartement était décoré pour la fête*' [the apartment was decorated for the party], rather than describing the action of decorating that had occurred prior to the events of the DVD.

In session three the participant avoided favouring one of the available verb forms over the other. She makes 20 different verb choices, deciding to use the *passé composé* 11 times and the *imparfait* for the remaining 9 (column 5 in Table 41). This is worth noting because her approach to use of both verb forms in session three is in stark contrast to her choice of verb form in her responses in session one where she used the *passé composé* for the vast majority of her responses. As reported in column five of Table 38, out of 17 responses in session one she only chose the *imparfait* on three occasions demonstrating a clear preference for using the *passé composé* to describe past actions or events. This preference is no longer apparent in session three however which took place two weeks after she undertook the languaging task on the grammatical concept of aspect.

Another interesting phenomenon that differentiates P1's responses in session three from those of the previous two sessions is that in four of her responses she uses two verbs to describe the events of the DVD excerpt rather than just one. Rather than listing each event that she is describing one after the other she makes an attempt to describe certain actions or events in contrast to other events taking place in the DVD excerpt. P1 successfully communicates her interpretation of the events in all four of the responses in which she has used more than one verb. The following example is one of her responses that contained more than one verb where she successfully communicates her interpretation of the two events described:

P1, session 3, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P1: *M. Bean a ouvert la porte et...* [Mr Bean opened the door and...] I wanted to say
2 'welcomed', ...*un petit groupe des enfants* [...a small group of children]. So um, *bienvenue*
3 [welcome], I wasn't sure how to make it...
- 4 R: What tense did you want to use for that one, did you want to use *passé composé* or
5 *imparfait*?
- 6 P1: Um, *composé*.
- 7 R: *Passé composé*. And why *passé composé*?
- 8 P1: Because he like opened it and sort of smiled at them and that was his welcome, and then he
9 left and sat down so it was completed.
- 10 R: Alright and 'opened the door' as well? '*A ouvert*' [opened]?
- 11 P1: Yep, that was completed too because he opened it and that was it.

In the above example we see that the participant has relied on her understanding of aspect to identify that the actions she is describing are completed (lines 8-9). She has used her operational understanding of aspect to choose the appropriate verb form, *passé composé*, to describe completed actions. Although P1 has successfully communicated the idea that both of the actions that she is describing were completed she does not explicitly refer to the relationship between the two actions even though they are in the same response. In her explanation we see that her intention was to communicate the idea that the door was opened before Mr Bean welcomed the group of children, and that he was not, for example, welcoming them as he opened the door. The fact that she does not specifically mention the relationship between the actions does not affect her ability to describe the actions appropriately in this example.

Table 41

P1 two weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	S	Y	Y	IMP
2	C; C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C, S; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
4	C	Y	Y	IMP
5	S	N	N	PC
6	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
7	C, S	Y	Y	PC
8	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
9	C, S	Y	Y	PC
10	S	Y	Y	PC
11	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
12	C, S; C, S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
13	C, S; C, S	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
14	S; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
15	C, S	Y	Y	IMP to PC
16	S	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 14 S = 18	Y = 19 N = 1	Y = 19 N = 1	PC = 11 IMP = 10

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N = No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait**

P1 – session 4 – four weeks after languaging task.

Column 3 of Table 42 shows that P1 successfully communicated her interpretation of events in all but one of her responses in session four (see response no. 12, Table 42). Although she changed her mind during the discussion that followed, it is interesting to note that on the one occasion where she did not successfully communicate her meaning she initially tried to explain her choice with a semantic rather than conceptual explanation as she did with all of her other responses in session four. The following example contains the semantic explanation that P1 provided for her initial choice of verb form:

P1, session 4, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P1: *Elle a porté aussi des lunettes* [she also wore glasses]. So I did *passé composé* to show
 2 that it could be either for those because it could be 'she was wearing glasses' or 'she wore
 3 glasses'. No?
 4 R: Can it?
 5 P1: I don't know. It sounds right in English, but maybe...

- 6 R: Yeah. I think that's the danger is if you translate it, because if you translate it 'was
7 wearing' or 'wore' it doesn't necessarily translate to...
- 8 P1: Maybe she took them off.
- 9 R: If we just look at the chart here, was there a recalled point in the past? Like did you say
10 yesterday or last week or anything like that?
- 11 P1: No.
- 12 R: Has the action been completed?
- 13 P1: No.
- 14 R: Okay, so is it describing the beginning of her wearing glasses?
- 15 P1: No.
- 16 R: Is the action ongoing?
- 17 P1: Yes.
- 18 R: So we use *imparfait*.
- 19 P1: But maybe you could say '*pendant le dîner*' [during dinner], during their dinner or
20 during the scene.
- 21 R: okay.
- 22 P1: She wore glasses. But she probably wears them all the time so...
- 23 R: That's it, even if you're describing the fact that she was wearing glasses during dinner
24 would it be describing the start of her wearing glasses? Was she wearing glasses before she
25 sat down to dinner?
- 26 P1: Before, yeah. It's just going to have to be the same as the last sentence.

At the beginning of her explanation P1 explained that the reason she chose to use *passé composé* in her response is because she had used the same verb in the previous response '*porter*' [to wear] using one of the verb forms and wanted to demonstrate that she could describe what someone was wearing using either of the two verb forms (lines 1-3). She based this understanding on the fact that in English you could say that the woman in the DVD excerpt 'was wearing glasses' or 'wore glasses' at the time being described and they could potentially both have the same meaning regardless of which option you chose. In French however this is not the case as only one of the verb forms, the *imparfait*, communicates the idea that she was wearing or wore glasses for the duration of the time being described. After talking through the concept with the researcher she realised that

this is the case although she does still hypothesise about situations in which it would be possible to use the *passé composé* instead of the *imparfait*.

In session three it was noted that P1 was starting to describe more than one action or event in some of her responses (see P1, Session 3, Discussion Excerpt 2). In these responses she demonstrated an ability to identify the aspectual nature of the actions or events that she was describing, being either completed or ongoing, but she did not explicitly mention the relationship between the actions, that is whether they were happening one after the other or simultaneously. In session four we see P1 explain her choice of verb form in terms of other actions or events occurring after or at the same time as the action she is describing. Below is an example of an explanation for her choice of verb form that is based on how she viewed the action she described in relation to the other actions or events of the DVD excerpt:

P1, session 4, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P1: '*Ils étaient dans l'appartement de M. Bean et ils mangeaient un sandwich.*' [they were
2 in Mr Bean's apartment and they were eating a sandwich]
- 3 R: Excellent, so you've used '*étaient*' [they were] and '*mangeaient*' [they were eating] and
4 they're both...
- 5 P1: *Imparfait* again.
- 6 R: And why have you used *imparfait* for '*étaient*?' [they were]
- 7 P1: That's the same as before, they're still in the apartment. And for '*mangeaient*' [were
8 eating], they didn't finish eating it in the scene; they stopped and did something else. So
9 'they were eating.'
- 10 R: Excellent, so they were in the process of dinner when other things started happening.
- 11 P1: Yeah.

In her explanation she stated that although the characters in the DVD stopped eating dinner she still views eating dinner as an ongoing action at the time she is describing. She explained that 'they stopped and did something else' but 'they didn't finish eating it in the scene' (lines 7-9). This demonstrates a holistic view of the concept because she goes beyond her perceptual understanding of a completed action, i.e., that it has stopped, and focuses instead on the relationship between the action she is describing and the other actions portrayed in the DVD. Immediately after this example P1 was prompted to use the other possible verb form to describe the action of eating dinner and explain the difference in meaning as shown below:

R: So if you had said in the *passé composé* 'ils ont mangé leur dîner' [they ate their dinner] what would that imply?

P1: That they 'ate' it before doing other things.

Given that the question asked by the researcher is how the meaning would be altered if a different verb form was used it is logical that the participant supplied a semantic explanation, referring to what the meaning would be in her L1. The difference between this semantic explanation and the semantic explanations given by P1 in previous sessions, however, is that she not only gives a translation in the L1, 'they ate it', but she also adds 'before doing other things'. The participant now appears to understand that a translation of the phrase into the L1 is not sufficient to explain the difference in meaning and that she must also describe the action within the context of the other actions and events surrounding it. This reinforces the observation that she is developing a more holistic understanding of aspect.

Table 42

P1 four weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C; C,S	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
3	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
4	C	Y	Y	IMP
5	C, S	Y	Y	PC
6	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
7	C, S; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
8	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
9	C, S	Y	Y	PC
10	C, S	Y	Y	PC
11	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
12	S, C	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
13	C, S	Y	Y	PC
14	C, S	Y	Y	PC
15	C, S	Y	Y	PC
16	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
17	C, S	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 19 S = 15	Y = 19 N = 0	Y = 19 N = 0	PC = 9 IMP = 11

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait*

P1 – summary.

The findings regarding the types of explanations provided by P1 in researcher-participant discussions are presented below in Figure 7. P1 did not rely on rules of thumb learnt through prior instruction to mediate L2 production as she produced no perceptual explanations (see session 1 in Figure 7). She instead relied exclusively on semantic explanations in the first session and then a combination of semantic and conceptual explanations in the following three sessions. Her semantic explanations were most often in the form of translations of her response in the L2 to what she wanted to communicate in the L1. This type of explanation was used primarily in session one and as she progressed through the study she demonstrated a greater reliance on the concept, with conceptual explanations accounting for all but one of her explanations in the final session. Her explanations clearly demonstrated that she was using her understanding of the concept to mediate her choice of verb form.

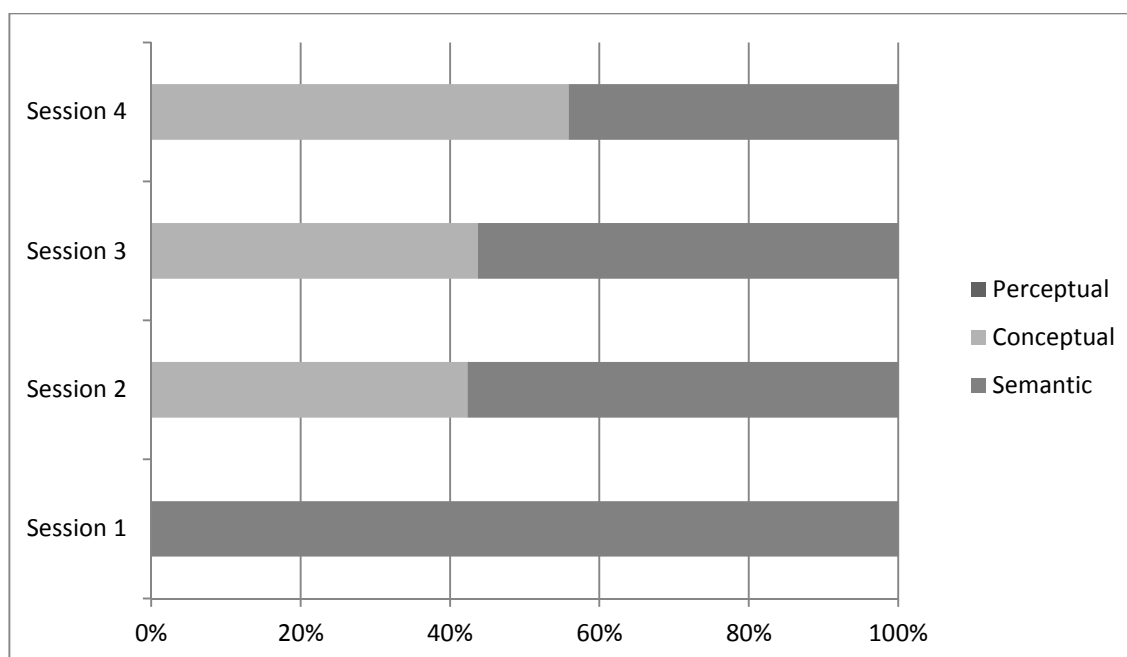


Figure 7. P1 proportion of explanation type by session

As her understanding of aspect developed, P1 maintained her focus on the meaning communicated by her choice of verb form. In the first session P1 only provided semantic explanations but over the course of the following three sessions she started to rely increasingly on a combination of conceptual and semantic explanations to justify her choice of verb form. In the final session almost all of her explanations contained both semantic and conceptual elements.

Her developing understanding of the concept also seems to have influenced P1's ability to communicate meaning in the L2. In session one she rarely used the *imparfait* (in only three out of 17 responses as shown in Table 38), whereas in session two she used the *imparfait* for almost half

of her responses (eight out of 17 responses as shown in Table 40). In session two we also see P1 change her choice of verb form in five of her responses to the written production task in session one from *passé composé* to *imparfait*. Her use of the *imparfait* increases further in session three and is again employed in almost half of her responses (10 out of 21 as shown in Table 41). Finally, in session four she uses slightly more *imparfait* (eleven times) than *passé composé* (nine times). After completing the languaging task P1 appears to be much more flexible about her choice of verb form and does not demonstrate a preference for one over the other.

In session four of the study P1 was also more inclined to experiment with meaning and actively attempted to use her understanding of the concept to hypothesise about how she would communicate different meanings. Her generating these hypotheses suggests that she was testing the limits of her understanding of aspect and appeared to be much more comfortable evaluating her choices and experimenting with her production to generate different meanings.

After the languaging task on aspect P1 had little trouble choosing the appropriate verb form to communicate her intended meaning. In session one she chose a verb form in the L2 that was inappropriate for communicating her intended meaning on five occasions. Before being provided with information on the concept of aspect she was unable to choose the appropriate verb form even after discussion with the researcher. By contrast in session four she only chooses the inappropriate verb form once and changes her mind after discussing her choice with the researcher.

There is also some evidence to indicate that as early as session two, immediately after the languaging task, the participant was developing an awareness of the importance of context when explaining the aspectual nature of an action. Some of her explanations indicate that rather than just considering the action that she wanted to describe in isolation, she also considered actions that were occurring around it and how she wanted the action viewed in relation to the other actions and events in the DVD.

5.2.2 Participant 2.

P2 – session 1 – before languaging task.

The explanations provided by P2 for her choice of verb form in session one were primarily perceptual explanations (column two in Table 43). Perceptual explanations account for fifteen of the nineteen explanations provided by the participant with semantic explanations accounting for the remaining four. Although P2 relied heavily on the rules that she remembered from prior instruction in session one she struggled to accurately communicate her intended meaning in the L2. The meaning she communicated in the L2 was not represented by her interpretation of the events based

on her explanations for 14 of her 19 responses (column three in Table 43). This means she only successfully communicated her intended meaning in the L2 on five out of 19 occasions.

Although she failed to successfully communicate in the L2 her interpretation of events in the majority of her responses, the meaning that she actually communicated in the L2 was in agreement with the researcher's interpretation of the events in 14 of her 19 responses (column four in Table 43). It could be inferred that P2's difficulties did not arise from her inability to successfully communicate a given meaning, but rather that she is unable to adequately explain the meaning she wanted to communicate.

The perceptual explanations that P2 relied on in her explanations appeared to be derived from the concept but she shows very little ability to operationalise her conceptual understanding. This is demonstrated by her explanations in which she has chosen a particular verb form based on reasoning that should have led her to choose the alternative verb form. The excerpt below was taken from the discussion of her written responses and provides an example of the perceptual rules that P2 relied on in her explanations:

P2, session 1, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 R: What is that, is it the *passé composé* or the *imparfait*?
- 2 P2: It's the *passé composé*.
- 3 R: Why did you use the *passé composé*?
- 4 P2: Because it's an action that lasts for a long time.
- 5 R: Okay, yeah. And why did you use the *imparfait* here?
- 6 P2: Because it's a definite action, it's an action that has a beginning and has already
7 finished.
- 8 R: Okay, so that's what you use the *imparfait* for and the *passé composé* is for actions that
9 don't end?
- 10 P2: I think so. Or it's for actions that haven't finished yet.

In the above example we see that P2 bases her decision to use the *passé composé* on whether she thinks the action or actions 'lasts a long time' (line 4) or 'haven't finished yet' (line 10). She then justifies her use of the *imparfait* by explaining that she used it to describe an action that 'has finished', which she refers to as a 'definite action' with a 'beginning' and that 'has already finished' (lines 6-7). It appears that the perceptual rules she has used to explain her use of each verb form derive from the grammatical concept of aspect. While the information that she has provided about

the types of actions being described is consistent with the concept, however, she has unfortunately associated each type of action with the verb form that communicates the opposite meaning. In other words, she has used the *passé composé* to describe ongoing actions when it actually describes completed actions. The same is true for her understanding of the *imparfait* which is used to describe actions that are ongoing but that she uses to describe completed actions. P2 has demonstrated that she does have some explicit knowledge of the concept of aspect but that she is unable to operationalise her current conceptual understanding.

The confusion of the meaning communicated by the two verb forms persisted throughout the first session. There were two occasions, however, where P2 did not rely on the perceptual rules that she had learnt in secondary school but instead said that she just thought or felt that it was the right verb form to communicate her meaning. The excerpt below shows an example of one of these occasions:

P2, session 1, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 R: Okay so is that the *imparfait* or *passé composé*?
- 2 P2: The *passé composé*.
- 3 R: Why the *passé composé* ?
- 4 P2: I don't know.
- 5 R: You don't know?
- 6 P2: Yeah I don't know. I just think it's '*a fermé*' [he closed].

In the above example we see P2 abandon the perceptual rules that she has used to explain her choice of verb form in previous responses. Previously she has explained her choice to use the *passé composé* by saying that she wanted to communicate the idea that the action was ongoing. In this example she uses the *passé composé* to say that Mr Bean closed a door, an action that she has successfully communicated as being completed through her choice of verb form. The problem that arises for the participant is that, if she tries to explain this according to the perceptual rules she has been using to explain previous responses, she will have to provide an explanation that is inconsistent with other explanations to justify her use of the *passé composé*. This is because in this response she has used the *passé composé* to describe a completed action but she has previously explained that she uses it to describe ongoing actions. To avoid any contradiction with previous explanations she decides to instead explain it by saying 'I just think it's '*a fermé*' [he closed]' (line 6) and makes no reference to any perceptual rules.

In session one, P2 does not show any obvious preference for using either of the two past tenses, using the *passé composé* eleven times and the *imparfait* nine times in her responses. Even in the very first session we see her generating responses that describe more than one of the events in the DVD and require the use of two verbs in a single response. At this stage she is still describing each of the events in these responses in isolation and does not refer to the relationship between them, namely whether they are happening simultaneously or one after the other.

Table 43

P2 before languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	P	N	Y	PC
2	P	N	Y	IMP
3	S; P	Y; N	Y; N	IMP; PC
4	P; P	N; N	N; Y	PC; IMP
5	P	Y	Y	IMP
6	P	N	Y	PC
7	S	N	N	PC
8	P	N	N	PC
9	P	Y	Y	IMP
10	P	N	N	PC
11	P	Y	Y	IMP
12	P	Y	Y	IMP
13	S	N	Y	PC
14	P	N	N	IMP
15	P	N	Y	PC
16	S	Y	Y	PC
17	P	N	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 15 C = 0 S = 4	Y = 6 N = 13	Y = 13 N = 6	PC = 11 IMP = 8

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = Passé composé, IMP = imparfait

P2 – session 2 – immediately after languaging task.

In session two, her developing understanding of the concept led P2 to change her choice of verb form in session one on six occasions. This combined with the fact that she had a much clearer understanding of the concept and did not confuse her understanding of which verb form described a completed or ongoing action meant that her interpretation of events was reflected in the meaning communicated by her L2 production in all of her responses.

The participant relied far less on perceptual explanations in session two than she did in session one with the vast majority of her explanations after the languaging task now relying on her

understanding of the concept of aspect (column two in Table 44). On the occasions where she did offer a perceptual explanation for her choice of verb form she questioned it by referring to her understanding of the concept, effectively explaining her decision in terms of both the concept and the perceptual rule that she has learnt through prior instruction. The example below shows P2 beginning with a perceptual explanation and then following it up with a conceptual explanation:

P2, session 2, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 R: Would you put “ennuyer” (to bore) in *passé composé* or *imparfait*?
- 2 P2: Um, I don’t know because it’s a state of mind so it’s generally imperfect, but because
3 the action of watching television is terminated I’m not sure if the state of mind would
4 continue.
- 5 R: Alright, so think about it. If we’re, we’ve got the chart here.
- 6 P2: Yeah.
- 7 R: I think we’ll look here. So is it describing the beginning of an action?
- 8 P2: Um, no?
- 9 R: Not really?
- 10 P2: No.
- 11 R: Is the action ongoing? Does it keep going do you think?
- 12 P2: Well yeah, whilst he’s watching TV.
- 13 R: Alright so if we say yes it’s the *imparfait*. If we say no, is the verb describing the end of
14 an action?
- 15 P2: No?
- 16 R: Not really?
- 17 P2: No.
- 18 R: Alright. What do you think we should do then?
- 19 P2: I’m going to put imperfect (*imparfait*).

In the above example P2 initially explained her choice of verb form by saying that ‘it’s a state of mind so it’s generally imperfect (*imparfait*)’ (line 2). She then questioned this perceptual rule, i.e., that a state of mind is described by the *imparfait*, with an explanation based on her understanding of aspect by saying ‘but because the action of watching television is terminated I’m

not sure if the state of mind would continue' (lines 2-4). After questioning her perceptual understanding with the help of the concept she is prompted by the researcher to refer to the didactic model (line 7) as the problem seems to be her ability to identify whether the action is ongoing or completed. After consulting the didactic model she arrives at her original choice of verb form, the *imparfait* (line 19), but is much more certain of her choice and able to explain with reference to the concept how she arrived at her decision.

While she still used some perceptual rules to explain her choice of verb form the concept appears to have replaced some perceptual rules that she referred to in her explanations in session one. One perceptual rule in particular, that the *imparfait* is used for 'descriptions', was mentioned in three of her explanations in session one but was not used at all in session two. Below is an example of her explanation from session one where she is explaining her choice of verb form to describe the Christmas tree in the DVD. This is then followed by her explanation in session two for comparison.

P2, session 1, discussion excerpt 3

- 1 R: Ok, so why the *imparfait* here?
- 2 P2: Because it's a description of the tree.
- 3 R: Ok, yes. It's a description. So you use the *imparfait* for descriptions?
- 4 P2: I think so, yeah.

P2, session 2, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P2: *Le sapin de Noël était bien allumé.* (The Christmas tree was all lit up)
- 2 R: Yeah.
- 3 P2: It's a continuous action so use the imperfect (*imparfait*).

After learning about the concept instead of saying that something was a description (P2, session 1, discussion excerpt 3, line 2) she said that it was 'continuous' to explain her decision to use the *imparfait* (P2, session 2, discussion excerpt 2, line 3). She stopped using descriptions as a reason for choosing the *imparfait*, yet she still described 'definitive' actions as taking the *passé composé* and used the *imparfait* to describe a 'state of mind' in session two, but much less frequently than in session one.

In session two, the participant also started to explain her choice of verb form for certain actions with reference to other actions that she described. In the example below (P2, Session 2, Excerpt 3) she is talking about two actions: 'The singers asked for chocolates' and 'Mr Bean gave the singers chocolates'. She was prompted by the researcher to explain the relationship between

these two actions and the different meanings generated by different combinations of verb forms. After considering her alternatives she decided that she would use the same verb form, *passé composé*, because the actions were not happening simultaneously but one after the other as shown in the excerpt below.

P2, session 2, discussion excerpt 3

P2: I think that for both times you could use *passé composé* because it would be like the carollers asked for chocolates and Mr Bean gave them chocolates.

The participant is still not quite at the point where she understands clearly that the aspectual nature of an action often depends on other surrounding actions or events that give it context. She has trouble explaining her choice of verb form even with the aid of the concept when it conflicts with what she feels is the correct choice to accurately communicate her intended meaning. Below is an example of an explanation where her choice of verb form does not agree with her understanding of aspect. Nevertheless, she still felt that her choice accurately described what happened in the DVD but cannot explain why.

P2, session 2, discussion excerpt 4

- 1 P2: '*Les chanteurs de Noël ont chanté une hymne spirituelle.*' [The Christmas singers sang a
2 spiritual hymn]
- 3 R: Ok. So what have you used there?
- 4 P2: *Passé composé.*
- 5 R: And is that the idea you wanted to convey?
- 6 P2: I think it is. Even though in the clip you didn't see them actually finish.
- 7 R: Ok, that's interesting. Alright so you could describe it a couple of ways then.
- 8 P2: Yeah.
- 9 R: So the way you've said it, what are you implying?
- 10 P2: That they've finished, that they've moved on.
- 11 R: That they did what?
- 12 P2: That they sang their song and that was it.

In the example we can see that P2 understands that although the singers did not finish the song in the DVD she still felt that she could describe the action as something the singers started and finished doing at the time (line 6). This is perfectly acceptable as long as she is describing the action

in isolation without mentioning any other actions or events that take place in the DVD. The researcher attempts to develop her understanding of describing actions relative to other actions by prompting her to consider an alternative in the following example:

P2, session 2, discussion excerpt 5

- 1 R: If you're just describing it you could stick with "ont chanté" [they sang]. But if
 2 something happened while they were doing it what would you do?
 3 P2: Put the imperfect [*imparfait*]?
 4 R: Yeah, and why is that?
 5 P2: Because it was continuous and you didn't see the end of it. You weren't sure if they
 6 finished.
 7 R: Yeah, for sure. It was continuous in relation to the other actions that were happening.

When asked what which verb form would be appropriate if something happened while they were singing (lines 1-2), P2 responded that the *imparfait* would be more appropriate to describe the action of singing (line 7). Although a prompt was necessary, this suggests that P2 does have an awareness that the aspectual nature of actions is relative to other actions being described.

Table 44

P2 immediately after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	Verb form used in response PC or IMP
1	C; P, C; P, C; C; C, P; C; C.	Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y.	Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y	PC; PC; IMP; IMP; PC; PC; IMP
2	S	Y	Y	IMP
3	S; S	Y; Y	Y; N	IMP; PC
4	C; P, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC to IMP; IMP
5	C	Y	Y	IMP
6	C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
7	C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
8	C	Y	N	PC
9	C	Y	Y	IMP
10	C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
11	C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
12	C	Y	Y	IMP
13	C	Y	Y	PC
14	C	Y	Y	IMP to PC
15	C	Y	Y	PC to IMP

16	C	Y	Y	PC
17	C	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 4 C = 22 S = 3	Y = 25 N = 0	Y = 23 N = 2	PC = 10 IMP = 15

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = imparfait

P2 – session 3 – two weeks after languaging task.

In session three P3's interpretation of the events described in her responses is identical to the researcher's interpretation without exception (columns three and four in Table 45). She successfully communicated her interpretation of events in all but two of her responses where the verb form she chose did not match her interpretation of events. Once given the opportunity during discussion to reflect on her responses with the aid of the concept, however, she changed her choice of verb form in the two responses where she did not correctly communicate her intended meaning with little or no prompting from the researcher. As shown in the excerpt below, P2 chose the inappropriate verb form to convey her meaning in her very first response:

P2, session 3, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P2: 'M. Bean a essayé de prendre un photo de lui-même.' [Mr Bean tried to take a photo of
2 himself].
- 3 R: So which tense have you gone with there?
- 4 P2: The *passé composé*?
- 5 R: That's correct, yeah, *passé composé*. And, um, why? So what were you wanting to say
6 there?
- 7 P2: He 'was trying' to take a photo of himself.
- 8 R: Ok then.
- 9 P2: Like, without being successful.
- 10 R: Alright so implying that he was doing it, that he was trying it a few times. Or he just tried
11 once?
- 12 P2: I think I've done them all back to front.
- 13 R: That's ok.
- 14 P2: Yeah he was trying, I think it was just once? But it was still, in English you can say 'was
15 trying' to take a photo, just for once.
- 16 R: So he had the intention, his intention was to take a photo of himself.

- 17 P2: Yeah.
- 18 R: Alright then, so I guess what you've done, since you've used 'trying' here and you want
19 to give that impression that he 'was trying', do you think *passé composé* was the right
20 choice?
- 21 P2: No. Don't think so. I think it's the *imparfait*.

In the above example the participant realised that the way she wanted to describe the action was not communicated by her choice of verb form. Although she wanted to communicate the idea that the character was trying to take a photo of himself at the time (line 7), she actually communicated the idea that he just took one unsuccessful photo. Once she had clearly established her interpretation of the event, however, she decided to change the verb form to the *imparfait* (line 21) which appropriately communicated her interpretation of the action.

In the second response in which P2 changed her choice of verb form to more appropriately communicate her interpretation she required more discussion before she was willing to consider changing her response:

P2, session 3, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P2: 'M. Bean a eu son appareil de photo.' [Mr Bean had his camera]
- 2 R: So what was the verb?
- 3 P2: 'eu' [had] so 'avoir' [to have].
- 4 R: So you've used which tense?
- 5 P2: *Passé composé*. Because 'he had' his camera. It was taken away from him.
- 6 R: Ok then, so you were trying to give the idea that he had it and...
- 7 P2: Yeah it's not a continuous action, it was like a momentary action of having. Like he no
8 longer has.
- 9 R: Ok, um that's...
- 10 P2: I think you'd probably need another clause after that. I think that's a bit of a dependent
11 one.
- 12 R: Do we have the model here? The first box we looked at was is there a marker in time
13 outlining a period like yesterday the day before.
- 14 P2: Yeah.
- 15 R: Do we have one of those there?

- 16 P2: No.
- 17 R: Alright, now I like what you've said actually, you've said the action was finished because
18 he didn't actually have the camera anymore.
- 19 P2: Yeah.
- 20 R: At the point in time you are describing Mr Bean, does he have his camera?
- 21 P2: Yeah, so '*M. Bean avait son appareil de photo.*' [Mr Bean had his camera]
- 22 R: Yeah so I think at the time you're describing him. Like, what you've said is really in line
23 with the concept as well, when he doesn't have the camera anymore it's like the action has
24 finished. But at the time we're describing we're not really talking about when he loses it,
25 we're more talking about what he has in his hands at the time.

As shown in the excerpt above, the participant initially justified her choice of verb form with a conceptual explanation, explaining that Mr Bean had his camera with him in the park but, because it was taken away from him, it was not a continuous action (line 5). This demonstrated that she viewed the action of having the camera in relation to other actions that occur during the DVD. In this response however she has not mentioned that the camera was stolen and is merely describing him as having the camera before it was stolen which she acknowledges by saying 'I think you'd probably need another clause after that. I think that's a bit of a dependent one' (lines 10-11). In other words, the participant appears to understand that in order to describe the moment in which Mr Bean loses his camera she will need to describe what happened at the time to make him lose it, rather than the action of him having it which was continuous up until the point it was stolen.

There was little evidence of a reliance on perceptual rules for decision making in the participant's explanations in session three. On the two occasions where explanations were provided containing a perceptual element, it was complemented by conceptual and/or semantic explanations to validate the perceptual rule that had been mentioned. Below is an example of an explanation that started out relying on a perceptual rule but then introduced an understanding of the concept and how the choice of verb form affects the meaning communicated:

P2, session 3, discussion excerpt 3

- 1 P2: '*Un monsieur a volé l'appareil de photo de M. Bean*' [A man stole Mr Bean's camera].
- 2 R: Excellent. So '*a volé*' [stole].
- 3 P2: Yes.

- 4 R: And you've used...
- 5 P2: The *passé composé*.
- 6 R: And why is that?
- 7 P2: Because it was like a definitive action and it's finished. He 'stole' the camera, not 'he is
- 8 stealing'.

This explanation, although short, contained perceptual, conceptual and semantic elements. The initial perceptual terminology that she had relied on in past sessions by describing actions as 'definitive' as a reason for using the *passé composé* was used again (line 7). It is unclear exactly what is meant by definitive but it is assumed that she used it as a synonym for 'completed' or 'finished'. She then stated that the action was 'finished' (line 7), which was viewed by the researcher as referring to an operationalisation of her understanding of the concept, being that the *passé composé* is used to describe finished or completed actions. Finally she compared the two meanings generated by the two verb forms and used the comparison to state clearly that her intention was to say that the man 'stole' the camera and not to describe him in the act of stealing it (lines 7-8).

Table 45

P2 two weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	Verb form used in response PC or IMP
1	S	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
2	P; C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C	Y	Y	IMP
4	S; C	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
5	C	Y	Y	IMP
6	P, C; S	Y	Y	PC
7	C	Y	Y	IMP
8	C	Y	Y	IMP
9	C	Y	Y	PC
10	C, S	Y	Y	PC
11	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
12	C	Y	Y	IMP
13	C	Y	Y	IMP
14	S, C, P	Y	Y	PC
15	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
16	C, S	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 3 C = 15 S = 8	Y = 16 N = 0	Y = 16 N = 0	PC = 5 IMP = 11

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = Passé composé,

IMP = imparfait

P2 – session 4 – four weeks after languaging task.

In the final session P2 employed her understanding of the concept to explain the majority of her choices of verb form providing fifteen conceptual explanations, five semantic explanations and one perceptual explanation (column two in Table 46). At this stage she had an explicit understanding of the concept but did not always successfully operationalise this knowledge to identify complete or incomplete actions. Her ability to operationalise her conceptual understanding had not yet developed to the point where she could successfully mediate her L2 production for every choice of verb form with the concept alone. The researcher often prompted her to consider whether her choice of verb form accurately represented what she was describing and, as a result, she changed her choice of verb form after assistance from the researcher on two occasions. In the following explanation, which included both conceptual and semantic elements, she changed her choice of verb form from *passé composé* to *imparfait* after discussion with the researcher:

P2, session 4, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P2 : ‘*M. Bean a mangé un sandwich.*’ [Mr Bean ate a sandwich]
- 2 R: Excellent. Ok, so you’ve used ‘*a mangé*’ [ate] here. Is that *passé composé* or *imparfait*?
- 3 P2: *Passé composé.*
- 4 R: Alright and why? What sort of meaning are you trying to convey here?
- 5 P2: Because ‘he ate’ the sandwich. It was a finished action, supposedly.
- 6 R: So did he finish the sandwich?
- 7 P2: Not completely.
- 8 R: No? So would you say that it was a completed action or would you say that it was
- 9 developing?
- 10 P2: I thought it was a completed action until I watched it again and he ate more of his
- 11 sandwich.
- 12 R: So is that the meaning you wanted to convey?
- 13 P2: Yeah, ‘he ate’ a sandwich, or part thereof it.
- 14 R: Ok so what you’re saying, is that reflecting what happened in the video?
- 15 P2: Not really. It can be *mangeait* [was eating] too.

16 R: Why would you use *mangeait* [was eating] instead?

17 P2: Because he wasn't finished with his sandwich.

Although her explanation revealed that she had seen the character eating a sandwich throughout the scene she identified it as a complete action (lines 10-11). When described in isolation the eating of the sandwich could be viewed as complete but it was not considered an accurate interpretation when viewed in the context of the other actions and events portrayed in the DVD. The participant accepted that both interpretations were possible but made no reference to the relationship between this action and the other actions performed by the character in the DVD. For this reason it is not clear if she understands that the action of eating the sandwich was incomplete because it was ongoing while other actions took place or merely because he did not finish eating the sandwich at the time to which she was referring.

Table 46

P2 four weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	Verb form used in response PC or IMP
1	C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C, S	Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
4	C	Y	Y	IMP
5	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
6	C, S	Y	Y	PC
7	C	Y	Y	IMP
8	C	Y	Y	PC
9	S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
10	C	Y	Y	IMP
11	P, C	Y	Y	PC
12	C	Y	Y	IMP
13	C	Y	Y	PC
14	C	Y	Y	PC
15	C	Y	Y	PC
16	C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
17	S	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 1 C = 15 S = 5	Y = 17 N = 0	Y = 17 N = 0	PC = 8 IMP = 9

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = imparfait*

P2 –summary.

The findings regarding the types of explanations provided by P2 in researcher-participant discussions have been summarised at the end of this section in Figure 8. Before the languaging task

P2 had a lot of difficulty not only communicating her intended meaning in the L2 but she also struggled to explain her choice of verb form (column three in Table 43). Although not always communicating her own interpretation, the meaning that she actually communicated in many of her responses agreed with the researcher's interpretation of events in fourteen out of nineteen responses (column four in Table 43). Her use of perceptual explanations, fifteen out of a total of nineteen explanations (column two in Table 43), suggests that she was relying heavily on prior instruction and experience to mediate her L2 production before the languaging task.

After the languaging activity on aspect in session two the participant did not immediately abandon the everyday concepts that she had learnt prior to the study and replace them with her understanding of aspect. In her initial explanations she applied both the everyday concepts and her understanding of aspect and used them both to explain her choice of verb form (column two in Table 44). In some cases the everyday concept and the scientific concept offered conflicting solutions and, in these cases, she always accepted the decision recommended by the scientific concept, i.e., aspect. As she used her understanding of aspect and gained confidence with applying it to the L2, she came to rely exclusively on it to explain her choice of verb form. She relied solely on her understanding of aspect to explain her choice of verb form in her final thirteen responses. This shift towards using her understanding of aspect suggests that she no longer needed to use the everyday concepts she previously relied on to mediate L2 production. There is evidence that the participant did not completely abandon her reliance on perceptual explanations in favour of the concept, however, as she provided three perceptual explanations in session three and one perceptual explanation in session four (Figure 8 below). If we compare this to session one where she provided fifteen perceptual explanations, however, we can see that while an understanding of the concept did not eliminate altogether the use of perceptual rules as a mediational tool it appears to have lessened her reliance on them. On the other hand, it also appears that conceptual definitions can sometimes be a source of confusion for P2, particularly when it comes to verb form. In her explanations she often cannot remember which tense is appropriate to communicate each aspect.

It is not clear whether P2 developed a greater awareness of the meaning that she was communicating as she developed her understanding of aspect. Although she successfully communicated her interpretation of events without exception in sessions three and four, she tended to provide conceptual rather than semantic explanations (columns two and three in Tables 45 and 46). On the occasions where a semantic explanation was provided it was usually accompanied by a conceptual explanation. We see that in session three she provided eight semantic explanations of which five were accompanied by conceptual explanations. In session four she then provided five semantic explanations and three of these came with a conceptual explanation.

Over the four sessions of the study P2 displayed no preference for either one of the two verb forms and used both frequently. An improved understanding of the concept, therefore, did not lead to more equitable use of the two verb forms as was the case with some other participants.

There is some evidence to suggest that the participant was developing a more holistic understanding of aspect towards the end of the study. In session three she provided some explanations that made reference to actions that were occurring at or around the time of the actions that she described in her responses. In her holistic explanations she was not considering the aspectual nature of individual actions in isolation, but rather how they would be viewed in relation to the other actions or events of the DVD. In session four, however, she did not continue this trend, making almost no reference to the relationship between other actions or events of the DVD and the action she was describing when determining which verb form to use.

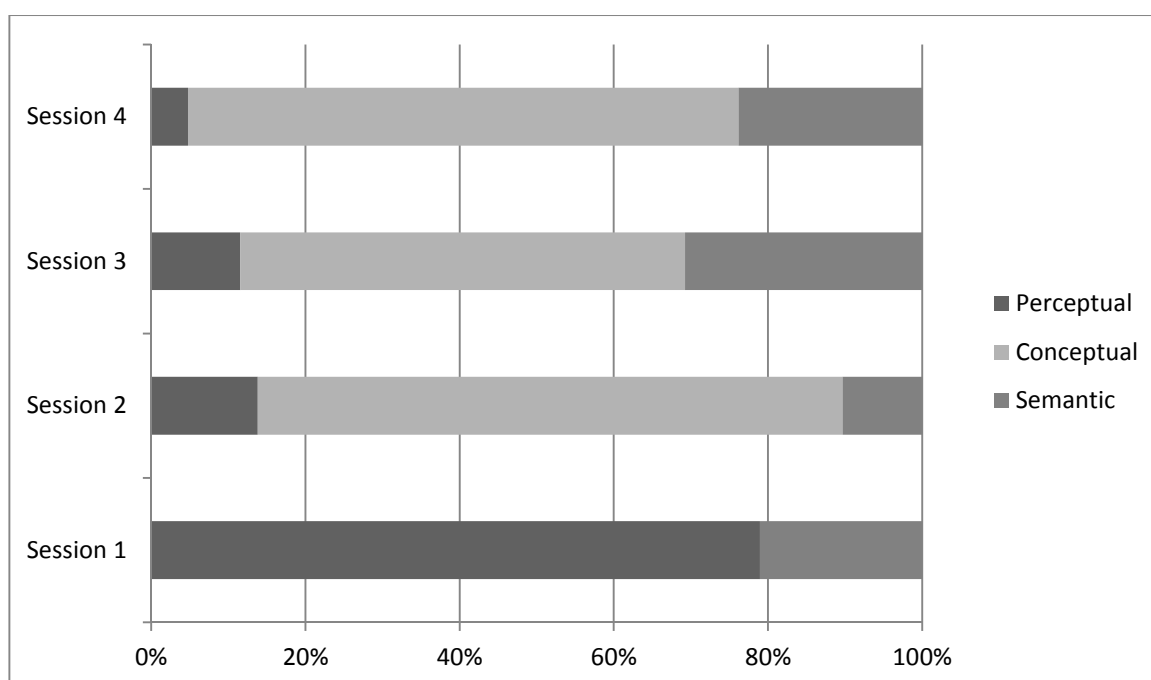


Figure 8. P2 proportion of explanation type by session

5.2.3 Participant 3.

P3 – session 1 – before languaging task.

In the first session of the study P3 already demonstrated some knowledge of the concept of aspect and an understanding of how apply it to communication in the L2. As a result he provided conceptual explanations for his choice of verb form in three of his responses, also providing five perceptual and ten semantic explanations (column two in Table 47). The perceptual rule that P3 relied on consistently throughout session one to explain his use of the *imparfait* was that it was the

verb form used to describe ‘details’. This was in contrast with ‘actions’ which were described using the *passé composé*. There were variations on this perceptual rule that the participant relied on less frequently to explain use of the *imparfait*, for example that it was used when describing a state or an emotion, but these were also seen by the participant as types of details. The excerpt below is a good example of the perceptual explanations provided by P3 in session one:

P3, session 1, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P3: ‘*M. Bean était content*’ [Mr Bean was happy]. ‘*Était,*’ [was] is *l’imparfait* and that was a
2 state, or an emotion in terms of it being a detail.
- 3 R: Ok, so a detail again. You would use the *imparfait* for that?
- 4 P3: I think because...yeah. And also the fact that I think it’s happening, he was content at
5 that time. As opposed to, like you can’t sort of say he was, I don’t know, you can’t be
6 content for, it’s not an action. Like ‘he contented himself’ and then it’s done and dusted.
7 You know what I mean?

Although P3 provided a perceptual explanation in the above example, it also shows him making an attempt to explore the meaning communicated by his choice of verb form and the alternative meaning he could have presented. He confirms his choice by saying that the character was ‘content at that time’ (lines 4-5), demonstrating an understanding that the action was in progress at the time he is describing rather than being completed or ‘done and dusted’ (line 6) as he puts it.

P3 used perceptual explanations for five of his verb choices and he successfully communicated his intended meaning for all five (columns two and three in Table 47). On the three occasions where his choice of verb form failed to communicate his interpretation of the event he tried to explain his choice with semantic explanations. In the below example he compares the two possible meanings available to him and he realises that he has made the inappropriate choice when given the opportunity to reflect on the idea that he wants to convey:

P3, session 1, discussion excerpt 3

- 1 P3: ‘*Ils ont frappé à la porte*’ [They knocked on the door]. This is *passé composé*.
- 2 R: Ok. So what were you trying to say?
- 3 P3: They were knocking on the door as opposed to I’ve said they knocked politely on the
4 door.

- 5 R: Well, I mean they both work actually so you could have said they knocked on the door,
 6 they might have just knocked once and left. If you want to give the impression that they
 7 were knocking on the door, sort of, that they kept knocking. Were you wanting to give the
 8 impression that they just knocked once?
- 9 P3: No, no. Well because what I wanted to say next was is that because they were knocking
 10 on the door...
- 11 R: And they weren't leaving.
- 12 P3: Mr Bean had to sate them, and give them their bonbons.

In the example we see that the participant viewed the action he was describing within the context of other actions that occurred in the DVD excerpt. When given the choice of two meanings he chose one based on the next action that he wants to describe, that is Mr Bean giving the singers 'bonbons', which would stop them knocking at the door (lines 9-12). He realised that the choice he made did not give the idea that the singers were knocking repeatedly on the door but that they knocked and then stopped before the next action, giving them bonbons, occurred.

Even before the lesson on aspect it was clear that P3 had some ability to apply his limited understanding of the concept to communication in the L2. This was demonstrated by his ability to explain and compare the different meanings communicated by each of the verb forms and his awareness of how each of the actions he describes relates to the other actions in the DVD excerpt. He even did this with perceptual rules, for instance in the first example above (P3, Session 1, Discussion Excerpt 2) when describing an emotion he justified his choice with the perceptual rule but then explained how the alternative meaning would not be appropriate (lines 4-7).

Table 47

P3 before languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	P	Y	Y	IMP
2	P	Y	Y	PC
3	C	Y	Y	PC
4	P	Y	N	IMP
5	S	Y	Y	PC
6	S, C	Y	Y	PC
7	P, S	Y	Y	IMP
8	P, S	Y	Y	IMP
9	S	Y	Y	PC
10	S	N	N	PC

11	S, C	Y	Y	PC
12	S	Y	N	PC
13	S	N	Y	PC
14	S	N	N	PC
TOTAL	P = 5 C = 3 S = 10	Y = 11 N = 3	Y = 10 N = 4	PC = 10 IMP = 4

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = imparfait

P3 – session 2 – immediately after languaging task.

In session two there were three fewer perceptual explanations when compared with session one, however the participant began by trying to incorporate a perceptual rule that he previously relied on in session one into his developing understanding of the concept (column two in Table 48,). In the excerpt below, he attempted to explain his choice of verb form by using the concept rather than the perceptual rule but admitted that he had relied on the perceptual rule to make his original decision.

P3, session 2, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P3: *‘Il y avait M. Bean et son teddy, son peluche, sa peluche, la souris et les choristes.*
2 *C’était le Noël.’* [There was Mr Bean, his teddy bear, the mouse and the singers. It was
3 Christmas.]
- 4 R: Ok, so which tense have you used there?
- 5 P3: *L’imparfait.*
- 6 R: Alright. Why have you used the *imparfait*?
- 7 P3: Why would I have chosen if I was to rewrite? Ok, I’m thinking of one, two and three, to
8 identify. So that’s saying it’s progressive.
- 9 R: Uh huh.
- 10 P3: Yeah. It’s past progressive. Um, I’m just trying to think of the... So we’ve got the ‘it
11 was raining’ one. It’s not a habitual or repetitive action. I think it’s the first one in the sense
12 that we, in that place there, there was Mr Bean, his teddy bear and the people. As opposed to
13 saying they still might be there. So does that work?
- 14 R: Yeah, I guess...
- 15 P3: Is that why I chose it?
- 16 R: Well why did you choose it in the beginning?

17 P3: Well I chose it in the beginning because the original rule, because I always thought that
18 it was details, people. Or details, *imparfait*. But I'm trying to make sense of it with the...

In the above example the participant has not yet abandoned the idea that the *imparfait* is used to describe 'details' in the past tense (lines 17-18). What he has done, however, is take the choice that he would usually make in accordance with this perceptual rule, i.e., use *imparfait* if he is describing a detail, and attempted to explain it in conceptual terms. What is also apparent is that he was consciously aware that he was attempting to use his understanding of aspect to justify his choice of verb form, as he explained 'but I'm trying to make sense of it with the...' (line 18). Although he trails off at the end without saying aloud the word 'concept' it was assumed to be implied. It appears that the original choice of *imparfait* was based on the fact that he was describing a detail, but he then tried to explain why it worked in this situation with reference to aspect, thereby integrating his understanding of aspect into his thinking process. Immediately after this example he was given the didactic model (Figure 3 in section 3.5.6, Chapter 3) to help him explain the decision making process:

P3, session 2, discussion excerpt 2

1 R: So if you start here, I'll just get you to read the first box.

2 P3: Is there a recalled point in the past? E.g., *hier, la semaine dernière* [yesterday, last
3 week].

4 R: So have you got a recalled point in the past?

5 P3: No.

6 R: Ok, so we go to 'no'.

7 P3: Has the action been completed? No?

8 R: Ok, so there were Mr Bean, the mouse and stuff. So is that really a completed action? In
9 the film at the time?

10 P3: No, it continued.

11 R: Did they stop being in the film? So has it been completed?

12 P3: No. Is the verb describing the beginning of the action? No?

13 R: Not really? Why not?

14 P3: Is the verb describing the beginning of the action? No I don't think, because I don't
15 think there's, there's no really action happening? The action of being?

- 16 R: So it's not like Mr Bean just coming into being.
- 17 P3: Yes he wasn't born there. He didn't sort of happen.
- 18 R: Yeah.
- 19 P3: He was sort of there and continued to be there. Is the action ongoing? Yes it is. Use the
- 20 *imparfait*.
- 21 R: Ok.
- 22 P3: So that's why I should use it.

With the help of the model the participant was able to explain why he should use the *imparfait*. It also prompts him to consider the difference between actions and states (lines 14-15). In the next discussion excerpt, which came immediately after the previous excerpt, he explained his choice of the same verb form much more quickly. Interestingly he did not initially offer a conceptual explanation but rather a semantic explanation for his choice of the *imparfait*, saying that 'Christmas didn't happen, it was happening' (line 2), explaining that Christmas was ongoing. He was then prompted by the researcher to once again consider his choice with reference to the conceptual information in the didactic model (line 5):

P3, session 2, discussion excerpt 3

- 1 R: '*C'était le Noël*' [It was Christmas] is the other one. So you've used?
- 2 P3: Christmas didn't happen, it was happening.
- 3 R: Is it stressing the beginning of Christmas?
- 4 P3: No.
- 5 R: Is it stressing the end of Christmas?
- 6 P3: No, it's not stressing the end of Christmas either.
- 7 R: Alright, so you're happy with that decision?
- 8 P3: I am.

P3 used the concept to explain some of his responses that followed. While he was successful at communicating his interpretation of the events he did not always consider how the action he was describing was viewed in relation to the other actions he had described. This was particularly salient in responses where he described more than one action. To help the participant to further develop his ability to describe actions in relation to each other the researcher prompted him to consider the effect that changing the aspectual nature of an action had on meaning. In the following discussion

excerpt the participant links two actions with ‘*mais*’ [but] (line 12) and is prompted to reconsider his choice of verb form to alter the aspectual relationship between the two actions (lines 13-14). He initially uses the concept to explain his choice of verb form (lines 15-16) and then ends by focusing on the semantics of his response (lines 24-25):

P3, session 2, discussion excerpt 4

- 1 P3: ‘*Et puis il a regardé la télé*’ [And then he watched the television]. Ok, so ‘*a regardé*’
2 [watched] is *passé composé*. Why did I choose that? He, it’s the beginning of an action. He
3 watched the television? No, I’m not saying he started to watch television. He watched. So he
4 ended, he started and finished watching the television after he sat down. Is that what this is
5 saying?
- 6 R: Ok. So I guess what you’ve presented here is a list of events.
- 7 P3: Yes. So he sat down, watched television.
- 8 R: He sat down and he watched television. So implying that he watched it and now he’s
9 going to do something else.
- 10 P3: Yeah.
- 11 R: Ok so your next sentence is...
- 12 P3: ‘*Mais il n’y avait pas de bonnes émissions*’ [But there were no good shows on].
- 13 R: Ok, so the fact that there are no good shows on the TV, is that implying that he’s still
14 watching TV?
- 15 P3: No. Oh yes there is because he’s saying that there continues to be no...so therefore it’s
16 still on. Does that?
- 17 R: I guess if you’re presenting it like a list of events. He sat down. He watched television
18 then he stopped. But there was nothing good on TV. Wouldn’t you say he watched, he was
19 watching television but there was nothing good on so then he stopped?
- 20 P3: That’s what I was about to say, I should have said that, shouldn’t I? So what I should
21 have done is saying ‘*Il regardait la télé mais il n’y avait pas de bonnes émissions donc il a*
22 *arrêté.*’ [He was watching TV but there was nothing good on so he stopped]
- 23 R: So you think, in the context of...
- 24 P3: That would be a better sense because I’m saying that he sat down, watched television.
25 Oh by the way there was no good television shows on.

Following this discussion P3 was much more aware of the relationship between the actions that he was describing and used semantic explanations to explain his choice of verb form. In the following example he used the term ‘cause and effect’ (line 10) to explain the relationship between two actions.

P3, session 2, discussion excerpt 5

- 1 P3: ‘*Donc Il a ouvert la porte.*’ [So he opened the door]
- 2 R: So again, what have you used there?
- 3 P3: *Passé composé.*
- 4 R: And you’re happy with that?
- 5 P3: Yes, because if I made it *l’imparfait* it would be the sense that he was opening the door
- 6 in a continuous...he just happened to be opening the door as well.
- 7 R: Yeah, that’s it. That’s good. So the sense would be different in the sense that he was
- 8 opening the door, you know, continuously and then something, or maybe that action was
- 9 developing when something else happened.
- 10 P3: It’s almost like a cause and effect. He heard the chorale and then he opened the door.
- 11 But if I was to say he was opening the door it doesn’t relate to him hearing the choir.

The participant’s explanation shows that he viewed the action of Mr Bean opening the door as the result of Mr Bean hearing the choir. He has chosen the appropriate verb form for both actions to communicate his intended meaning and explained that, had he chosen the alternative verb form, he would not have adequately communicated the relationship between the two actions (line 11).

Table 48

P3 immediately after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C, P	Y	Y	IMP
2	P, S, C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C	Y	Y	PC
4	C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
5	C	Y	Y	IMP
6	S	Y	Y	PC
7	S, C	Y	Y	PC
8	C	Y	Y	IMP
9	C	Y	Y	IMP
10	S	Y	Y	PC
11	S, C	Y	Y	PC
12	C	Y	Y	PC
13	S	Y	Y	PC to IMP
14	S	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
15	S	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
TOTAL	P = 2 C = 9 S = 8	Y = 15 N = 0	Y = 15 N = 0	PC = 6 IMP = 9

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait*

P3 – session 3 – two weeks after languaging task.

In contrast with the previous two sessions the participant provides no perceptual explanations in session three and relies much more on the concept to explain his choice of verb form. In fact, without exception, every explanation provided in this session involved some mention of the concept with explanations for all responses being either conceptual or a mixture of conceptual and semantic in nature (column two in Table 49).

At the start of session one the participant explained that he used the *imparfait* to describe a 'state or an emotion in terms of it being a detail.' He then attempted to use his developing conceptual understanding to evaluate this perceptual rule in session two, trying unsuccessfully to use the concept to explain the answer that he arrived at through use of the rule (see P3, Session 2, Discussion Excerpt 1). In session three when describing an emotion in the past tense he chose the same verb form as in previous sessions, the *imparfait*, however, he made no reference to the perceptual rule. In the excerpt below, we see that P3 relied exclusively on the concept and meaning to explain his choice of verb form (lines 4-5):

P3, session 3, discussion excerpt 1

1 R: So what's the verb?

2 P3: *Être* [to be], in *passé*, ah, *l'imparfait*.

3 R: Yeah, and why have you used *imparfait* there.

4 P3: Because she continued, we have not seen the end of it in this sense. I want to give the
5 sense that she continues to be unhappy. Not content.

6 R: Definitely.

After using the concept to explain his choice of verb form he understood that his choice of verb form was appropriate for the meaning he initially wanted to communicate. However as the discussion continued he was not sure if that meaning was an accurate reflection of what he saw in the DVD. The excerpt below shows P3 focusing on the meaning that would best communicate what he saw in the DVD (lines 1-3) before using his understanding of aspect to determine the appropriate verb form (lines 8-9):

P3, session 3, discussion excerpt 2

1 P3: I don't know if, we've seen her become not content.

2 R: So if you...

3 P3: We've seen the beginning of her being unhappy, so...

4 R: Ok, well at the moment you're sort of just describing in isolation how she's feeling.

5 P3: Yeah.

6 R: About her present. What about if you started the sentence with 'when she saw her
7 present.' *Quand elle a vu son cadeau* [when she saw her present].

8 P3: It would have been *imparfait*. Oh sorry, *passé composé*. After she saw it because we've
9 seen the beginning of the action, so *elle a, elle a été, elle n'a été pas?* No. *Elle n'a pas été*
10 *contente*. [She was not happy]

His final choice of verb form, the *passé composé*, is the best choice for communicating his meaning and he uses the concept to explain his decision (line 8-9). This choice suggests a move by the participant away from relying on the perceptual rule he previously employed that stated the *imparfait* is used to describe emotions in the past tense.

In many of his explanations the participant explored his understanding of the concept by not only explaining the meaning he wanted to communicate but also what the meaning would have

been had he chosen the alternative verb form. He used the concept to explain the aspectual nature of the actions that he described but while he used his conceptual understanding to easily explain his verb choice in some responses he had difficulty in others. Below are two examples of responses where the justification for his choice of verb form should have been the same for both responses. While he had no trouble with the first explanation he did not use the concept as successfully to justify his choice of verb form or explain the alternative in the second example.

P3, session 3, discussion excerpt 3

1 R: 'Elle le lui a donné.' [She gave it to him] Ok so she gave it to him. Which tense have you
2 used there?

3 P3: *Passé composé*.

4 R: *Passé composé*, yeah. A *donné* (gave). And why is that?

5 P3: Because she gave it to him and it's ended. We saw the beginning and then end of the
6 giving. If I wanted to say 'she was giving it to him when she took it back' or something that
7 would have been *l'imparfait* because we've seen that it wasn't quite finished.

In this explanation the participant initially explained his choice with reference to his understanding of the concept. He stated that he wanted to communicate the idea that the action both began and ended at the time it is being described (lines 5-6). He then demonstrated an understanding of the alternative meaning that he could have communicated by explaining that he would have used the other possible verb form, the *imparfait*, if he wanted to convey the idea that the action 'wasn't quite finished' (lines 6-7). This demonstrates a good understanding of how to operationalise the concept but he was not able to explain his choice as successfully for all of the responses in which he chose the same verb form. The following example is the participant's explanation of his choice of verb form in the response that followed that of the previous example.

P3, Session 3, Discussion Excerpt 4

1 P3: *Passé composé*.

2 R: A *dechiré* [tore up] is *passé composé*. So why *passé composé* here?

3 P3: Because he ripped it all off.

4 R: So you want to give the impression that he tore off the paper.

5 P3: Everything was torn off, yeah. And then something else happened.

6 R: Ok, so that's like the event. He tore it off and then something else happened.

7 P3: Yeah, that's it.

- 8 R: What if you had have used the *imparfait* there, what would that be?
- 9 P3: That would be sort of saying he...we don't, we're leading us on to something else that
10 might happen when, yeah. Does that make sense? No? I really haven't said much.
- 11 R: Alright, so if it was '*M. Bean déchirait l'emballage*' [Mr Bean was tearing up the
12 wrapping paper] what would that, how would you translate that?
- 13 P3: He was tearing it and was ripping the paper off. Then you really want to say 'when' ...

The action being described in this response is Mr Bean taking the wrapping paper off a present. The participant offered a semantic explanation for his choice of verb form saying that the character in the DVD 'ripped it all off' (lines 3-5) to give the impression that the action was completed. Unlike in the previous example he did not offer an explanation of what the meaning would have been had he used the other verb form. The researcher therefore prompts him to consider an alternative (line 8) and, although he accurately describes the meaning in the end, he requires more assistance than in the previous discussion that happened only moments earlier. The fact that the participant offered a semantic explanation, as opposed to a conceptual one, could explain the need for more assistance. Nevertheless, P3 successfully communicated his ideas regardless of the nature of the explanation, semantic or conceptual, and still demonstrated an awareness of context. This was evidenced by his observation that 'you really want to say when' to signal that something else happens if the action was in progress (line 13).

At this stage P3 had a very good understanding of how to operationalise the concept. On the two occasions in this session where he used the inappropriate verb form to communicate his interpretation of an action in his response he changed his mind without being prompted to do so when given the opportunity to reflect on his response (responses 13 and 14 in column four Table 49). Nevertheless it seems that the concept alone was still not sufficient for him to be certain about his choice. He sometimes presented his choice as a hypothesis followed by a question, e.g., 'Does that make sense?', seeking reassurance from the researcher before he was confident of his choice of verb form.

Table 49

P3 two weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C	Y	Y	IMP
4	C; S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
5	S, C	Y	Y	PC
6	C, S	Y	Y	PC
7	S, C	Y	Y	PC
8	C; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
9	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
10	C	Y	Y	IMP
11	C	Y	Y	PC
12	S, C	Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
13	S, C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
14	C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 15 S = 8	Y = 16 N = 0	Y = 16 N = 0	PC = 9 IMP = 7

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = imparfait

P3 – session 4 – four weeks after languaging task.

In the final session P3 provided an even mix of the two verb forms in his responses with eight instances of the *imparfait* and eight *passé composé* (column five in Table 50). He also successfully communicated his meaning in all sixteen responses (column three in Table 50), although for one response he initially chose the inappropriate verb form and only changed it to accurately reflect his interpretation after discussion with the researcher. The explanations provided for his responses revolved around his understanding of the concept and the meaning he wanted to communicate, offering ten conceptual and fifteen semantic explanations (column two in Table 50).

The explanations provided by the participant in this session focused primarily on the meaning that he wanted to communicate. In the explanation below the participant referred to the 'audience' and the 'sense' that he wanted to communicate to them (lines 7-8). This indicated a strong communication focus and awareness that the goal of communication is to convey meaning to a third party. He also demonstrated his awareness of the meaning associated with the use of each verb form by frequently outlining the meaning that each verb form would communicate.

P3, session 4, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P3: '*M. Bean essayait prendre une photo avec les objets d'art sans succès.*' [Mr Bean was
2 trying unsuccessfully to take a photo with the artworks]
- 3 R: *Sans succès, très bien. D'accord.* [Unsuccessfully, very good. Ok.] So what verb have
4 you used here?
- 5 P3: *L'imparfait. 'Essayait'* [was trying].
- 6 R: And why *l'imparfait*?
- 7 P3: Because he, I wanted to have the sense of him, he was, we as the audience find Mr Bean
8 trying to take a photo of himself. We're not seeing him starting to take, well he could have,
9 you could have interpreted it as being that, but...
- 10 R: So you think you could interpret it either way?
- 11 P3: You could see him saying, yeah, he started to take, he tried to take a photo of himself
12 but I wanted to think of it in the sense that he was trying to take a photo of himself with
13 the...
- 14 R: Camera.
- 15 P3: Camera.
- 16 R: Alright then so that's the sense that he's, um, his ultimate goal is to get a photo of himself
17 and he's going to keep trying until he gets it.
- 18 P3: Yeah.
- 19 R: As opposed to just trying once.
- 20 P3: Yeah trying once and without any success.

In addition, the participant demonstrated a holistic understanding of aspect and how actions could be described in relation to one another in the example below. In the response he described two actions, Mr Bean asking a question and a man passing by. He explained clearly that his reasons for his choice of verb form for both actions was to convey the idea that both actions were occurring simultaneously in the moment being described (lines 5-8).

P3, session 4, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P3: '*Il a demandé à un homme qui passait.*' [he asked a man who was passing]
- 2 R: *Parfait* (perfect), so ok '*il a demandé*' [he asked], what have you used there?
- 3 P3: *Passé composé.*
- 4 R: And why?

- 5 P3: Because we see him asking somebody. He wasn't taking a photo as he was asking
6 somebody to help him. So, he sort of, he was trying to take a photo but while he was sort of
7 in the sense of taking a photo, he wasn't clicking the camera the whole time, but while he
8 was still in the process of taking a photo he, we see him ask somebody so *passé composé*.
- 9 R: Excellent, so he just asked them?
- 10 P3: Yes.
- 11 R: He wasn't continuously asking them.
- 12 P3: Exactly, he wasn't in the process of asking.
- 13 R: Excellent, he just did it. '*Un homme qui passait*.' [A man who was passing] Alright this
14 is good so '*passait*' [was passing], what have you used here?
- 15 P3: *L'imparfait*.
- 16 R: Excellent, and why?
- 17 P3: Because he was passing by. He didn't pass by and then Mr, well he didn't, sorry, well in
18 this sense I've got him saying Mr Bean asked him after he passed by, I wanted to have the
19 sense that he was passing by when Mr Bean asked him.
- 20 R: That's excellent. So you're right, you've caught him in the action of passing by and
21 asking the question rather than he passed and then Mr Bean ran after him and asked.
- 22 P3: Yeah exactly.

When asked about his choice of *passé composé* to describe Mr Bean asking a question he responded by explaining that Mr Bean asked the question while he was in the process of trying to take a photo. He then refers to the meaning that he did not want to communicate, saying 'he wasn't in the process of asking' (line 12). He then went on to state that his reason for choosing the *imparfait* and assigning an ongoing aspect to the action of the man passing by was that he 'wanted to have the sense that he was passing by when Mr Bean asked him' (lines 18-19). This explanation is an excellent demonstration of P3's understanding of how the verb form that he chooses will have an effect on the timing of the actions in his description.

Table 50

P3 four weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C	Y	Y	IMP
3	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
4	S; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
5	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
6	S, C; S, C	Y; N to Y	Y; N to Y	PC; PC to IMP
7	S, C	Y	Y	PC
8	S; S; S	Y; Y; Y	Y; Y; Y	PC; PC; IMP
9	S, C; S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
10	S, C; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 10 S = 15	Y = 16 N = 0	Y = 16 N = 0	PC = 8 IMP = 8

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = imparfait*

P3 –summary.

The findings regarding the types of explanations provided by P3 in researcher-participant discussions are summarised in Figure 9. In the case of P3 perceptual explanations accounted for approximately a quarter of all of the explanations that he provided before the languaging task (session one in Figure 9). Before the languaging task he also had a limited understanding of the concept of aspect. Nevertheless he only used the concept to explain his choice of verb form for three of his responses (column two in Table 47, column two). Most of the explanations provided by P3 in session one were semantic and based on the meaning that the participant believed he was communicating with his choice of verb form.

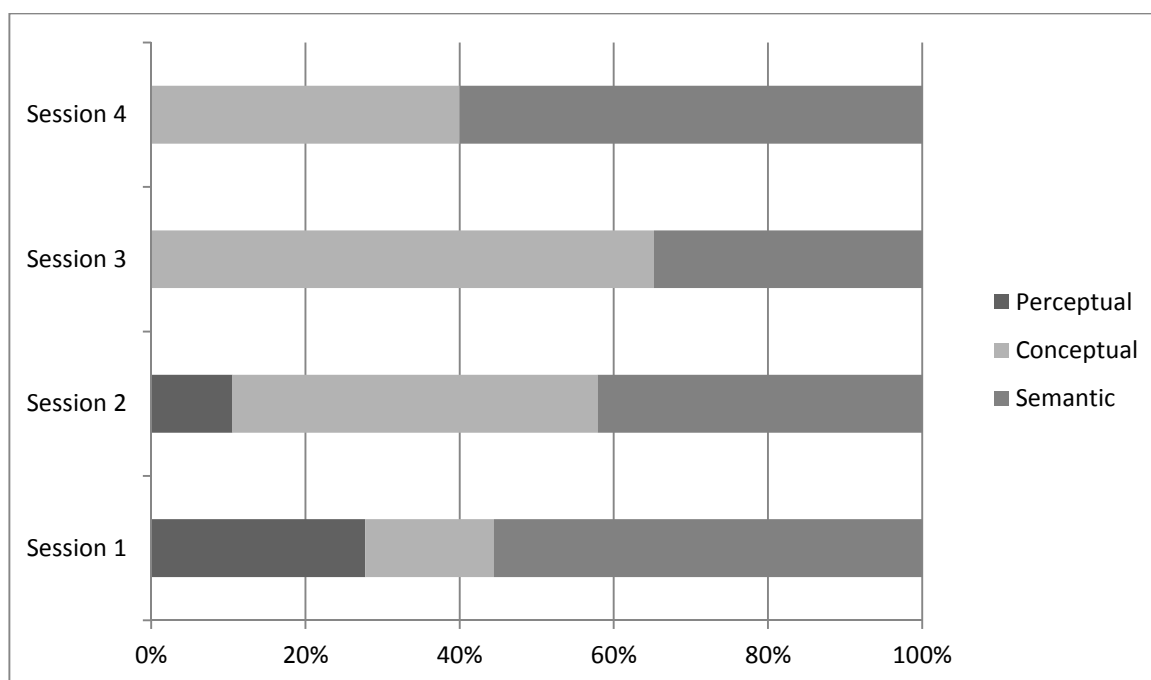


Figure 9. P3 proportion of explanation type by session

After the languaging activity the participant provided more conceptual explanations, with explanations based on his understanding of aspect making up nine of the 19 explanations. This was only slightly more than the eight semantic explanations while perceptual explanations only accounted for the remaining two (column two in Table 48). P3 appeared to be assessing his understanding of how to operationalise the concept in his early explanations in session two, stating that he had relied on a perceptual rule to decide which verb form to use in his first response and then used the concept to determine whether it would lead him to the same decision. The drop in perceptual explanations immediately after the languaging activity and their absence in the sessions that followed could be explained by the increase in conceptual explanations and a deeper understanding of the concept (sessions two, three and four in Figure 9,).

The explanations provided by P3 in the final session relied exclusively on either the concept or the meaning that he wanted to communicate. Semantic explanations accounted for around 60% of the explanations, a much greater percentage than in the previous session (session four in Figure 9). This was indicative of an increased focus on meaning on behalf of the participant and a shift away from relying on perceptual and conceptual explanations to justify his choice of verb form.

Furthermore, P3 appeared to prefer using one verb form over the other in the first session, with the *passé composé* being used in ten responses while the *imparfait* appeared in only four (column five in Table 47). His choice of verb form became more balanced over the course of the study however and in the final session the participant produced an equal number of each verb form in his responses (Table 50, column five).

In the final two sessions of the study, P3 provided some explanations that demonstrated a developing holistic understanding of the concept. These explanations often made reference to more than one action and how these actions were viewed in relation to each other. Specifically the participant was aware that his choice of verb form would determine whether the actions he described were happening simultaneously, in a certain order or if one interrupted the other.

5.2.4 Participant 4.

P4 – session 1 – before languaging task.

As shown in column two in Table 51, P4 did not produce any perceptual explanations in session one. In fact, all of the explanations that she provided in this session were either semantic or based on a combination of semantic and conceptual explanations. She also demonstrated a clear preference for using the *passé composé* as she chose this verb form in 15 of her 20 responses in this session (column five in Table 51). The reasons for this preference for one verb form over the other could not be explained by the written responses alone and in all but two responses she communicated what the researcher deemed a valid interpretation of the events depicted in the DVD (column four in Table 51). As the participant explained her interpretation of the events and why she chose certain verb forms, however, it became clear that she was not always successfully communicating her intended meaning. Below is the discussion of a response that was seen by the researcher as a reasonable interpretation of an action shown in the DVD, but that did not successfully communicate the participant's interpretation. While the participant was initially satisfied with her written response, she changed her mind without prompting from the researcher when given the opportunity to reflect on her choice of verb form.

P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 R: Ok so you used *passé composé* here. So why have you used...
- 2 P4: I would have used *imparfait* actually now that I think about that.
- 3 R: You would have actually used *imparfait*? Why would you have used *imparfait*?
- 4 P4: Because he was sitting in it for like quite a while.
- 5 R: Ok then.
- 6 P4: He did not just sit in the chair, he was sitting in it.
- 7 R: Oh ok then, so rather than saying 'he sat down' you were trying to say 'he was sitting in a
- 8 chair'.
- 9 P4: Yeah.

In her written response in the L2 the participant described the action of the protagonist by saying that 'he sat down'. Discussion revealed, however, that she actually wanted to describe the fact that he was seated, i.e., 'he was sitting down', rather than the moment when he sat (line 6). Upon reflection she understood that to communicate her interpretation she should have used the *imparfait* so it was not immediately clear why she chose to use the *passé composé* instead. Her reasons for doing so were explained later on in the discussion, presented in the example below, when she revealed that she was more comfortable with the *passé composé* (line 6) and used it as her default verb form for describing actions in the past when she was not sure of which tense to use.

P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 3

1 R: So 'ont visité' [they visited] is *passé composé* or *imparfait*?

2 P4: *Passé composé*.

3 R: And why did you use that instead of *imparfait*?

4 P4: Probably because I was more familiar with it to be honest.

5 R: Yeah?

6 P4: So I felt more comfortable using it.

Below is part of a discussion in which the participant is not sure about which verb form to use (line 11) so has chosen the *passé composé* and is reluctant to change her mind as a result of her uncertainty.

P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 2

1 R: So why did you use the *passé composé* here?

2 P4: Because he was listening to them.

3 R: He was listening to them?

4 P4: So...yeah. Actually now when I think about it that would make sense more in the
5 *imparfait*, but I wouldn't, I'm just...

6 R: So what were you wanting to say? In English.

7 P4: He was listening or he... Actually I'm not sure how I could say it in English. Like, um.
8 No, he was listening to the singers.

9 R: So you wanted to say he was listening and so you're doubting your choice of *passé*
10 *composé* now.

11 P4: Yeah but I'm not entirely sure.

Although she demonstrated a clear preference for the *passé composé* in session one, she still used the *imparfait* in five out of her 20 responses with what could be seen as a degree of confidence as shown in Table 51 (column five). Even though she had difficulty explaining her reasons for using the *imparfait* the first time she did so, she was nevertheless sure of her decision as shown in the discussion below, saying that ‘it just made sense’ (line 5):

P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 4

1 R: So why have you used the *imparfait* here?

2 P4: Um, because it was ‘they were’. Like Mr Bean and the singers. That’s all I can really
3 say.

4 R: Ok.

5 P4: Yeah I can’t really say why I used it. It just made sense.

6 R: Alright. So why would you use that instead of the *passé composé*?

7 P4: Because for me the *passé composé* is like, they, I always think of it in terms as like they
8 have done something. But that’s just for me. I’m not sure.

On two occasions when explaining her use of *imparfait* the participant also demonstrated some awareness of aspect. In the excerpt below she explained that something was occurring ‘in’ the room and that it ‘wasn’t done’ in the room (line 4). It could be argued that she was referring to an action that was ongoing at the time she was describing but without reference to explicit terminology associated with the concept.

P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 5

1 R: Ok so ‘*c’était*’ [it was], *imparfait* or *passé composé*?

2 P4: *Imparfait*.

3 R: *Imparfait*, and why did you use *imparfait* there?

4 P4: Because it was, it was in the room. It wasn’t done in the room, kind of

The following example is similar but her explanation also hinted at knowledge of terminology associated with the concept. In this example she referred to ‘duration’, saying that what she is describing, i.e., the character being unhappy, lasted for ‘the whole duration of the time’ (lines 4-5).

P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 6

1 R: So would you use *passé composé* or *imparfait* for that one do you think?

- 2 P4: I would use *imparfait*.
- 3 R: You would use *imparfait*. And why would you use *imparfait* for that one?
- 4 P4: Because he wasn't. It wasn't like he was just discontent once. He kind of was really not
- 5 happy with the whole thing. So he wasn't at all for the whole duration of the time.

P4 gave the impression that her reluctance to use the *imparfait* was more a result of her being unsure of how to conjugate verbs in this tense rather than understanding when to use it appropriately to communicate a particular meaning. Her explanations indicate that she understands in some cases when it is appropriate to use the *imparfait* but she avoids using it due to a fear of making errors of a morphological rather than semantic nature. At first, on four occasions in the first session, she even used the present tense to give a progressive aspect to actions or events that she described to avoid using the *imparfait* before she was asked to change them.

Table 51

P4 before languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	S	Y	Y	IMP
2	S	Y	Y	PC
3	S	N	N	PC
4	S	Y	Y	PC
5	S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
6	S	N	Y	PC
7	S	Y	Y	PC
8	S	N	N	PC
9	S	Y	Y	PC
10	S	Y	Y	PC
11	S	Y	Y	IMP
12	S	Y	Y	PC
13	S	N	Y	PC to IMP
14	S	Y	Y	PC
15	S, C	Y	Y	PC
16	S	Y	Y	PC
17	S	Y	Y	PC
18	S	Y; N	Y; Y	PC ; PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 2 S = 18	Y = 15 N = 5	Y = 18 N = 2	PC = 15 IMP = 5

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait*

P4 – session 2 – immediately after languaging task.

To explain her choice of verb form in the majority of her responses in session two P4 referred to her knowledge of the concept of aspect, providing 21 conceptual explanations. She also provided 10 semantic explanations and no perceptual explanations were provided (column two in Table 52). She stated in session one that she was more comfortable with the *passé composé* and this is supported by her choice of the *imparfait* in very few of her responses (column five in Table 51). In session two we see more examples of the *imparfait* as she changes her choice of verb form from *passé composé* to *imparfait* in three of her responses (column five in Table 52). Despite the fact that participants were told to use only the *imparfait* and *passé composé* there were also three verbs that she initially conjugated in the present tense. In this session she changed these three verbs conjugated in present tense to *imparfait*.

A developing understanding of the different meanings communicated by the two verb forms can be observed in P4's responses in session two. In the following discussion excerpt, P4 changed her choice of verb form from *passé composé* to *imparfait* and justified her decision based on the meaning that she wanted to communicate. She stated that her original choice of verb form would mean that the character 'has listened, or had listened to the singers' but that she would change it because 'he didn't stop listening to the singers' (lines 1-3) in the DVD.

P4, session 2, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P4: '*Il a écouté des chanteurs.*' [He listened to the singers] So he has listened, or he had
2 listened to the singers, which I would change to *imparfait* because he didn't stop listening to
3 the singers.
4 R: Ok then. So you want to say he was listening to the singers?
5 P4: Yeah.

Although in the above example she changed her choice of verb form without prompting or assistance from the researcher, she sometimes required more discussion with the researcher when she was not sure about her choice. In the following example she questioned her choice of verb form but was talked through the decision making process by the researcher before changing her choice of verb form (lines 8-18).

P4, session 2, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P4: '*Il a changé la chaine.*' [He changed the channel] The channel? Is that it? What was
2 that?
3 R: '*Il a changé la chaine.*' [He changed the channel]

- 4 P4: Yeah.
- 5 R: Alright then, so you're happy with that one?
- 6 P4: Yes. He has changed the channel.
- 7 R: Alright, remember when...
- 8 P4: Or he did it more than once though.
- 9 R: Did he do it more than once?
- 10 P4: Yeah.
- 11 R: So it was something that he did sort of repeatedly?
- 12 P4: Yeah.
- 13 R: So what would we maybe do, if it was a repeated action would we class that as, sort of,
14 ongoing at the time?
- 15 P4: Yes.
- 16 R: Or is it finished?
- 17 P4: So I'd probably make that *imparfait* because it was repetitive, it was a repetitive and
18 habitual action. So '*il changeait la chaine*' [He was changing the channel].
- 19 R: Yeah.

P4 also started to make reference to the relationship between the actions that she described in order to explain her choice of verb form. In the below example she explained that she chose the *passé composé* because the action described, 'he went to bed', needed to be completed before the next action, 'he slept', could occur (lines 5-6).

P4, session 2, discussion excerpt 3

- 1 P4: '*Il s'est couché.*' He went to bed.
- 2 R: And again you've used?
- 3 P4: *Passé composé.*
- 4 R: And why have you used that?
- 5 P4: Um, because he wasn't continuously putting himself to bed. He put him, like, he went to
6 bed and then he slept, kind of. So he completed that. The action wasn't ongoing

Table 52

P4 after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C; S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
3	S, C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
4	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; PC
5	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
6	C	Y	N	PC
7	C	Y	Y	PC
8	C	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
9	S, C	Y	Y	PC
10	S, C	Y	Y	PC
11	C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP
12	S, C	Y	Y	PC
13	S, C	Y	Y	PC to IMP
14	C, S	Y	Y	PC
15	C	Y	Y	PC
16	C, S	Y	Y	PC
17	S	Y	Y	PC
18	S, C; S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 21 S = 10	Y = 22 N = 0	Y = 21 N = 1	PC = 13 IMP = 9

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait*

P4 – session 3 – two weeks after languaging task.

As was the case in session two, in this session we saw the participant providing conceptual and/or semantic explanations for her choice of verb form in all of her responses (column two in Table 53). She also provided many responses that contain more than one verb in this session than in the previous two sessions. Her discussions in this session focused more on the relationship between actions that she described in order to highlight the aspectual nature of each action and explain her choice of verb form.

In session one the participant also demonstrated a clear preference for using the *passé composé* when describing the actions or events that occurred in the past, even commenting to the researcher that she was 'more familiar with' the *passé composé* and 'felt more comfortable' using it (see P4, session 1, discussion excerpt 3). In contrast, her choice of verb form in session three suggested a familiarity with the *imparfait*, which accounted for 20 of the verbs used in her responses with *passé composé* only being used for the remaining nine verbs (column five in Table 53). Moreover, her explanations of why she used the *imparfait* in her responses demonstrated a very

good understanding of when to use the *imparfait* to communicate a given meaning in the L2. Her first response contained three verbs and she used the *imparfait* for all three. She provided three conceptual explanations to explain her use of *imparfait* and an example of one of these can be seen below:

P4, session 3, discussion excerpt 1

1 R: So ok, '*ils mangeaient*' [they were eating], and why *imparfait* here as well?

2 P4: Um, because they didn't really end, like, finish their sandwiches. Well that's how I saw
3 it anyway. So I thought they were going to go back to them anyway.

P4 explains that 'they didn't really end' (line 2), demonstrating her understanding that the action was ongoing. She was then prompted to consider how the meaning would change if she used the *passé composé* instead of the *imparfait* as shown in the excerpt below:

P4, session 3, discussion excerpt 2

1 R: So if you had have said '*ils ont mangé des sandwiches*' [they ate some sandwiches], what
2 would that imply to you, do you think?

3 P4: That they ate a sandwich and they finished a sandwich. Like they finished the action.

With this explanation P4 shows that she has a clear understanding of the meaning that would be communicated by use of each verb form and that she has made a choice based on these two meanings. She also uses her understanding of aspect to explain the different meanings, concluding her explanation by stating that 'they finished the action' (line 3).

Although P4 can explain clearly her reasons for choosing each verb form in most cases, her ability to operationalise the concept is still not fully developed as she focuses solely on whether an action has ended or not to determine whether it was completed at the time. This works for her the majority of the time but in some cases where she has included more than one action or event in a single response she finds it more difficult to explain her decisions. Below is an excerpt of the discussion of a response in which she has described two actions, one using the *passé composé* and the other using the *imparfait*:

P4, session 3, discussion excerpt 3

1 R: So '*il a volé*' [he stole], so which conjugation is that?

2 P4: *Passé composé*.

3 R: And why *passé composé*?

4 P4: Because he stole it. He completed the action.

5 R: Excellent, and you've used '*cachait*' [she was hiding], you've used *imparfait*, um and
6 why is that?

7 P4: Because, uh, this one was hard to, this one took me a while to explain in my head. Um,
8 she didn't really finish stealing it, because he took it back off her, kind of. Like, I mean not
9 stealing but hiding it.

10 R: So if we, sort of, look at it in relation with the act of stealing it, would that help make it
11 more of an ongoing sort of idea?

12 P4: Well yeah, but if I look at it in that point she kind of did stop hiding it because he took it
13 off her.

Although she had no trouble explaining her decision to use the *passé composé* for the act of theft (lines 1-4), saying that the character 'completed the action' (line 4) to explain that the action was finished, she did encounter some difficulty when she tried to explain her decision to use the *imparfait* for the act of hiding the gift (lines 5-13). She initially attributed her choice of the *imparfait* to the fact that the character 'didn't really finish' hiding the gift (lines 7-9), but didn't seem certain of her choice. The researcher prompted her to consider both the action of hiding the gift and the gift being stolen together. This was to emphasise that the act of hiding the gift was in progress when the theft occurred and to encourage the participant to explain her choice of verb form with reference to another action that happened at the time. After applying her understanding of the concept, however, the participant viewed the moment where the gift was stolen as the point at which the character stopped hiding it and considered the action to be completed. This meant that, although she initially chose the appropriate verb form, when she applied her understanding of the concept it actually led her to the inappropriate conclusion that she had chosen the wrong verb form. This suggests that, at this point, P4 is yet to develop a holistic understanding of the concept and the relationship between actions.

Table 53

P4 two weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C; C; C	Y; Y; Y	Y; Y; Y	IMP ; IMP; IMP
2	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
3	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
4	S, C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
5	C, S; S, C	Y; N to Y	Y; N to Y	IMP; PC to IMP
6	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
7	C, S; C; C, S	Y; Y; Y	Y; Y; Y	PC; IMP; IMP
8	S, C; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
9	C	Y	Y	IMP
10	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
11	S, C	Y	Y	PC
12	S; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
13	S, C; S	Y; N to Y	Y; N to Y	PC; IMP to PC
14	S, C	Y	Y	PC
15	S	Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
16	S, C; S	Y; N to Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 24 S = 15	Y = 29 N = 0	Y = 29 N = 0	PC = 9 IMP = 20

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait**

P4 – session 4 – four weeks after languaging task.

In the final session P4 successfully communicated her interpretation of all of the events she described in the DVD (column three in Table 54). She explained her choice of verb form for each response with semantic and conceptual explanations and did not rely on any perceptual rules for decision making (column two in Table 54). As was the case in session three, however, her explanations in session four suggest that she does not always consider her interpretation of actions within the context of other actions that she has described. When describing two actions in one response, for example, rather than explaining that one action is continuous because it was in progress at the time the next action occurred, she will explain her decision for each action separately. An example of this is the discussion of the participant's written response 'Mr Bean was trying to follow the man, but he didn't find him' as shown below:

P4, session 4, discussion excerpt 1

1 R: 'M. Bean essayait,' [Mr Bean was trying] so you've used *imparfait* here. So why
2 *imparfait*?

3 P4: Because he's still trying. Like he's trying to follow the man but he doesn't know where
4 he went. He didn't follow it, follow him and then stop following him. So it's continuous.

The conceptual explanation provided by the participant for the first action, 'Mr Bean was trying to follow the man', is clear and consistent with the meaning that she has communicated in the L2. She views Mr Bean's attempt to follow the man as 'continuous' (line 4) and uses the *imparfait* to communicate this idea. Her choice of verb form to describe the second action, 'but he didn't find him', was then explained:

P4, session 4, discussion excerpt 2

5 R: Alright, and so why have you used *passé composé* here?

6 P4: Oh um. Not because he didn't find him. Like um, in this context I'm just assuming he
7 didn't find him and that's the end of it, kind of.

The semantic explanation for the second action described in this response is also consistent with the meaning that she has communicated in the L2. She supports her choice of verb form by saying 'in this context' (line 6) but it is not clear whether she is referring to the previous action (trying to follow) as she does not elaborate on what she means by context. This may not necessarily be a problem for communication in the L2 because in session three, when she was prompted to consider her description of two actions according to their relationship, she changed her choice of verb form to one that did not appropriately communicate her interpretation of the action (see P4, session 3, discussion excerpt 3). Given that from discussions it appears that the participant views actions that have 'ended' as being completed at the time they are being described, it is possible that she would have questioned her initial choice of verb form to describe the continuous action of Mr Bean trying to follow the man. This would be due to the fact that, according to this logic, once he did not find the man the action of trying to follow him would have ended.

Table 54

P4 four weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C	Y	Y	IMP
4	S, C	Y	Y	PC
5	S, C; S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
6	C, S; S, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
7	C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP to PC
8	C, S; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; PC
9	S; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP to PC; IMP
10	C	Y	Y	IMP
11	C	Y	Y	IMP
12	C	Y	Y	IMP
13	C	Y	Y	IMP
14	S, C; S, C	Y	Y	PC; IMP to PC
15	S	Y	Y	PC
16	C	Y	Y	PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 17 S = 12	Y = 21 N = 0	Y = 21 N = 0	PC = 9 IMP = 12

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait**

P4 –summary.

The findings regarding the types of explanations provided by P4 in researcher-participant discussions have been summarised at the end of this section in Figure 11. P4 demonstrated a clear focus on meaning in the first session by providing semantic explanations for all of her responses (column two in Table 51). While a focus on meaning is desirable, the participant's intuition did not always lead her to the appropriate verb form to communicate her intended meaning. In fact five of her eighteen semantic explanations demonstrated that the meaning that she communicated in the L2 was not the meaning that she had intended to communicate (column three in Table 51).

Immediately after the languaging task there was a substantial increase in the number and proportion of conceptual explanations provided by the participant (Figure 11). This suggests that her choice of verb form was no longer mediated entirely by the meaning that she wanted to communicate but also by her developing understanding of aspect. After the initial spike in conceptual explanations immediately after the languaging task, the number of conceptual explanations as a percentage of the total number of explanations declined slightly in sessions three and four. In contrast the number of semantic explanations as a percentage increased over the same

two sessions (Figure 11). Moreover, in the sessions following the languaging task the participant demonstrated an improved ability to relate the meaning that she wanted to communicate directly to her choice of verb form. While she chose the inappropriate verb form to communicate her meaning in session one in almost a third of the responses for which she provided semantic explanations, she chose the appropriate verb form in all responses in the following three sessions.

In the first session P4 also demonstrated a clear bias for the *passé composé*, choosing this verb form to communicate her interpretation of events in 75% of her responses (column five in Table 51). Immediately following the languaging task this was no longer the case, with her demonstrating only a slight preference for the *passé composé*. In contrast, there was a clear tendency towards use of the *imparfait* in session three (column five in Table 53) before returning to roughly equal use of each verb form in her responses in session four (Table 54, column five). The findings suggest that for this participant a deeper understanding of the concept is linked to richer L2 production in terms of variety of verb form. Figure 10 provides a visual representation of her choice of verb form in each session.

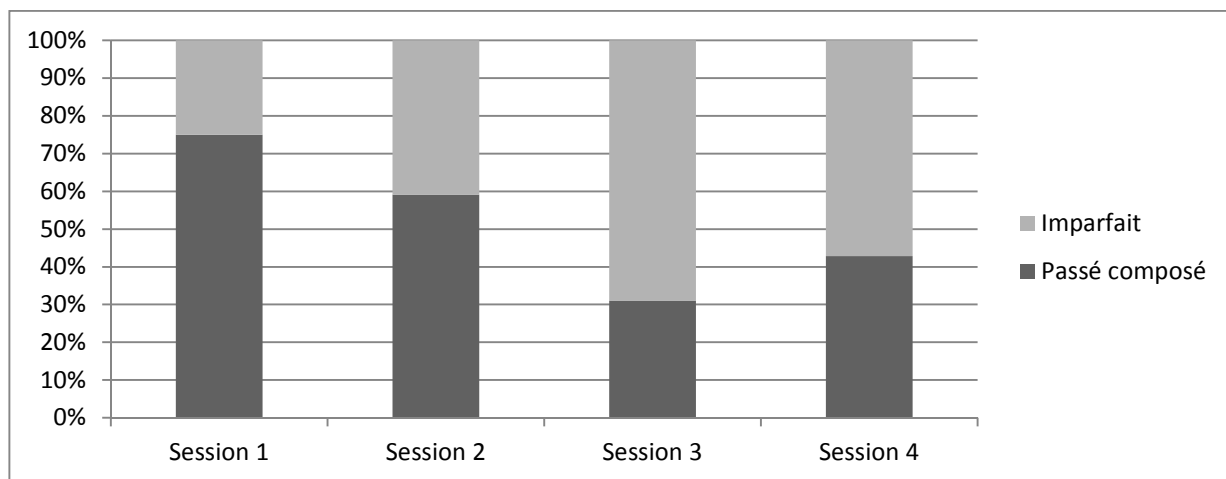


Figure 10. P4 choice of verb form by session

Explanations provided by P4 in the last session of the study suggest that she had still not developed a holistic understanding of the concept. She rarely referred to context or the aspectual nature of other actions that she described to justify her choice of verb form in a given response.

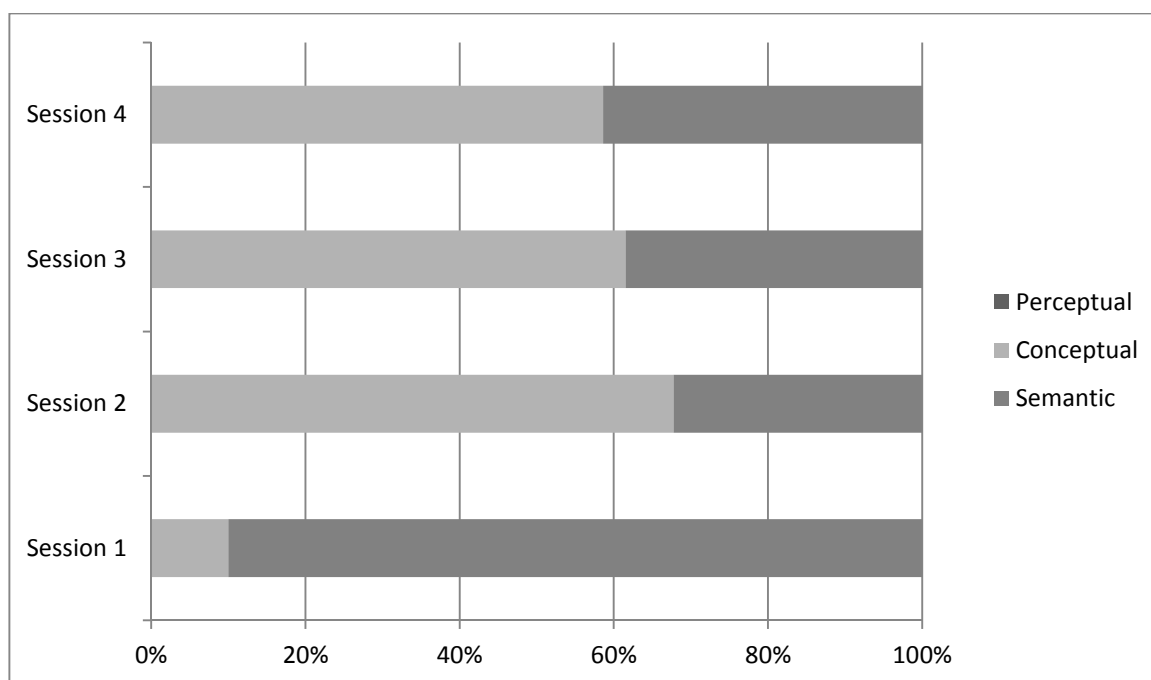


Figure 11. P4 proportion of explanation type by session

5.2.5 Participant 5.

P5 – session 1 – before languaging task.

P5 reported and demonstrated knowledge of aspect in the interview (Section 4.3.6 in Chapter 4) and discussion (column two in Table 55) in the first session. She was very good at communicating meaning in the L2 and successfully communicated her intended meaning in all of her 17 responses in the first session. When choosing between the two verb forms she relied primarily on four rules of thumb that she had learnt through prior instruction, providing 11 perceptual explanations that made reference to these rules in session one as shown below in Table 55 (column two). Two of these perceptual rules prescribed the use the *imparfait* and the other two were concerned with when to use the *passé composé*. To justify her use of the *imparfait* she explained that it was the verb form used to describe (i) feelings and emotions, or (ii) actions that were interrupted by another action. She also used her understanding of aspect, sometimes referring to continuous actions to justify her choice of *imparfait* and finished actions for her choice of *passé composé*. Below is an example in which P5 uses the *imparfait* twice and justifies her decision with a conceptual (line 7-8) and then a perceptual explanation (line 10):

P5, session 1, discussion excerpt 2

- 1 P5: *‘Il était content à cause de il avait un bateau.’* [He was happy because he had a boat]
 2 R: *Il avait un bateau. Et ‘avait’?* [He had a boat. And ‘had’?]

- 3 P5: 'Avait'. *Oui*. ['Had'. Yes.]
- 4 R: *C'est quel temps verbal?* [It's which verb form?]
- 5 P5: *L'imparfait*. [The *imparfait*.]
- 6 R: *Oui l'imparfait. Pourquoi*. [Yes the *imparfait*. Why?]
- 7 P5: *Continué, c'est continue. C'est une action continue*. [Continuous, it's continuous. It's a
8 continuous action.]
- 9 R: *Oui*. [Yes.]
- 10 P5: *Et 'était' à cause de c'est un sentiment*. [And 'was' because it was a feeling.]

The remaining two perceptual rules were employed by the participant to explain her choice of the *passé composé*. These rules stated that the *passé composé* is used to describe actions in the past that (i) interrupt another action and (ii) only happen once. Although these rules were simplifications of the concept they led the participant to the appropriate choice of verb form on every occasion they were implemented.

Table 55

P5 before languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
2	S	Y	Y	IMP
3	P	Y	Y	PC
4	P, C	Y	Y	IMP
5	P	Y	Y	IMP
6	P	Y	Y	PC
7	P	Y	Y	IMP
8	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
9	S, P	Y	Y	PC
10	C	Y	Y	IMP
11	P, S	Y	Y	PC
12	P	Y	N	PC
13	P	Y	Y	IMP
14	C	Y	Y	PC
15	P	Y	Y	IMP
16	C	Y	Y	PC
17	P; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
TOTAL	P = 11 C = 7 S = 5	Y = 18 N = 0	Y = 17 N = 1	PC = 7 IMP = 11

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = Passé composé, IMP = imparfait

P5 – session 2 – immediately after languaging task.

The majority of the explanations provided by P5 in session two were conceptual but she also explored the different semantic possibilities available to her when explaining her choice of verb form on a few occasions (column two in Table 56). Although in session one the participant seemed to use perceptual rules to successfully communicate her interpretation of the events in the DVD, her discussion of some of her responses in session two revealed that this was not always the case. Below are two examples taken from discussions with the researcher of responses in which the participant described emotions or feelings. Rather than rely on the perceptual rule that she used in the first session, however, she used the concept to explain her choice of verb form.

P5, session 2, discussion excerpt 1

1 P5: '*Il était très content.*' [He was very happy.] It's, again, the *imparfait* because while it
2 was an emotion and while we did go that emotions could be both, in this case it's something
3 that he was for a bit. You could rephrase it to be, um, '*quand il a reçu le bateau il a été*
4 *content.*' [When he received the boat he was happy.]

5 R: Alright and why could you do that then?

6 P5: Um, because it's, we know what it was started by. It was started, it was started by him
7 receiving the boat and so it's a specific reaction that has an end, sort of, point. Because he's
8 happy when he's gotten it but he's not going to be happy for the rest of his life because he
9 got a boat.

In this first example the participant confirms that the perceptual rule that she used in session one had led her to the appropriate choice of verb form for the meaning that she wanted to communicate (lines 1-3). To further confirm her choice she also explained the meaning that would have been communicated had she chosen the alternative verb form (lines 3-9). In the second example the participant changes her choice of verb form after considering the two different meanings available.

P5, session 2, discussion excerpt 2

1 P5: '*Elle n'était pas contente.*' [She wasn't happy.] This one I probably would have changed
2 to '*quand elle a reçu la photographie elle n'a pas été contente.*' [when she received the
3 photograph she wasn't happy.] Because it was a reaction, she wasn't generally miserable,
4 she was unhappy because she got this.

5 R: Oh, ok that's really good. So before she received it did she look happy?

6 P5: She was happy, yeah, she looked very happy.

Upon reflection and after applying her understanding of the concept to her choice of verb form, the participant decided that she had not chosen the verb form that appropriately communicated her interpretation of the action (lines 1-4). She explained the two different meanings available before choosing the one that she deemed most appropriate and did not explicitly refer to the concept in this explanation.

P5 displays a good ability to operationalise her understanding of the concept in session two but sometimes has trouble identifying continuous actions in the past. When explaining her use of the *imparfait* for continuous actions she appears to view them as needing to be continuing indefinitely up to the present rather than only ongoing at the time they occurred in the past. To this end many of her explanations refer to knowledge of whether an action has finished or not and not knowing means that it is continuous because it could still be ongoing at the present moment. This seldom adversely affects her ability to communicate her desired meaning in the L2, but it still demonstrates an incomplete understanding of the concept. Below is an example of a conceptual explanation provided by the participant to explain her use of the *imparfait* in which she refers to the possibility that the action is still continuing in the present to justify her choice of verb form:

P5, session 2, discussion excerpt 3

- 1 P5: '*Il était content, il avait un bateau.*' [He was happy, he had a boat.] And it's because,
- 2 um, it is an ongoing action. He is possibly still happy, we don't really know so we say he is.
- 3 And because he has a boat and we're assuming he still has a boat so it's continuous.

Table 56

P5 immediately after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
2	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C, S; P, C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; PC
4	P, C	Y	Y	IMP
5	C	Y	Y	PC
6	S, C	Y	Y	IMP to PC
7	C, S; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
8	C	Y	Y	IMP
9	C	Y	Y	PC
10	C	Y	Y	IMP
11	C	Y	Y	PC
12	C	Y	Y	IMP
13	C, S	Y	Y	PC
14	C, S; C, S	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; IMP
TOTAL	P = 2 C = 17 S = 8	Y = 17 N = 0	Y = 17 N = 0	PC = 8 IMP = 9

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait**

P5 – session 3 – two weeks after languaging task.

In session three P5 provided 17 conceptual, eight semantic and no perceptual explanations (column two in Table 57). In the previous session, session two, P5's understanding of what constituted a continuous action in the past was scrutinised and it appeared that her understanding of how to operationalise the concept was incomplete. This was because on several occasions she based her decision to use the *imparfait* on the possibility that the action was still continuing in the present because we did not see it end in the past. In session three we observe that the participant has a much clearer understanding of what constitutes a continuous action. In the example below she explained that even though she knows that an action ended at some point that is not what she was describing, but rather a moment when the action was in progress (line 3).

P5, session 3, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P5: 'M. Bean se détendait avec un boire de sherry.' [Mr Bean was relaxing with a glass of
 2 sherry] 'Se détendait' is the verb and it's in *imparfait* because I didn't stress the beginning
 3 or the end and, while it did terminate, I'm not talking about the termination at this time.

Although P5 knew that the character stopped relaxing at some point in the DVD, and that there was no doubt that the action had terminated, she explained that she wanted to describe him at the time when he was relaxing.

In this session P5 also continued to apply her understanding of aspect to describe emotions in the past tense and made no reference to the perceptual rule that she used in session one that stated that the *imparfait* is used to describe emotions in the past. In fact, her choice of *passé composé* for one of the emotions she described in the following example directly contradicts this perceptual rule.

P5, session 3, discussion excerpt 2

1 P5: '*Quand M. Bean a commencé regarder un autre film de guerre il n'a pas été content.*'
2 [When Mr Bean started to watch another war film he wasn't happy.]

3 R: Alright.

4 P5: And again, it stresses he started watching another film and that's what made him
5 unhappy. So, because it stressed the beginning, I used *passé composé* in both.

The participant explained that she used *passé composé* to describe the emotion, i.e., Mr Bean not being happy, because she wanted to communicate the idea that he was unhappy because of the film (lines 4-5). She stated that she wanted to 'stress the beginning' (line 5) of the emotion and this was accurately communicated by her choice of verb form. Her explanation also demonstrated a holistic understanding of the concept because she considered the relationship between the two actions that she described and the effect of that relationship on the aspectual nature of each action, explaining that 'he started watching another film and that's what made him unhappy.'

Evidence of the participant's focus on the way an action is viewed in the context of other actions was much more prevalent in her explanations in session three than in previous sessions. In the example below she explained the meaning that she wanted to communicate and discussed the alternative meanings that would have been communicated by a different choice of verb form.

P5, session 3, discussion excerpt 3

1 P5: '*Quand les enfants finissaient 'Silent Night', M. Bean a fermé la porte.*' [When the c
2 hildren were finishing 'Silent Night', Mr Bean closed the door.] Um, the reason I used the
3 *imparfait*, '*finissaient*' [were finishing], despite the fact that you could have had *passé*
4 *composé*, I was trying to use it as a catalyst for him shutting the door.

5 R: Yeah.

6 P5: So even though it did have a defined, a defined end. So you could have said it. I think I
7 just wanted to put some contrast between the two and, yeah. They are still finished so you
8 could say there was a defined end.

9 R: But as he slammed the door had they actually finished? Or were they just finishing?

10 P5: Yeah they were just finishing. They had just finished it. Does that still make sense?

In her explanation the participant spoke about her desire to ‘put some contrast between’ the two actions (line 7) to justify her choice of verb form. She seemed to doubt her choice after consulting her understanding of the concept, saying that the action had a ‘defined end’, but sought reassurance from the researcher, asking ‘does that still make sense?’ (line 10). This is most likely because part of the concept dictated that actions that terminate are complete and should take the *passé composé*. Her understanding of aspect, however, led her to the appropriate choice of verb form because, although she was referring the end of the song, she wanted to communicate the idea that the door was closed as the song was finishing (lines 9-10).

P5’s explanation of her final two verb choices revealed that her ability to operationalise her conceptual knowledge was still incomplete. Her explanations indicated that her choice of verb form did not reflect the meaning that she intended to communicate. Below is a transcript of one of her explanations and the ensuing discussion with the researcher:

P5, session 3, discussion excerpt 4

1 P5: ‘*Alors ils chantaient très fort.*’ [So they were singing very loudly.] Um here I’ve used
2 the *imparfait* of *chanter* [to sing], and I’ve done it because they’ve, I haven’t stressed that
3 they’ve stopped doing it at any point. So therefore they can do it.

4 R: Um, have you stressed that they began doing it then?

5 P5: I suppose, yeah I have stressed that they began doing it, so it probably should be...

6 R: So maybe he was ignoring them. They asked for lollies, was one of the things they did,
7 and then maybe they sang really loudly, they started singing as opposed to they were singing
8 very loudly.

9 P5: Ok.

In this example P5 seemingly wanted to communicate that the Mr Bean was ignoring the singers so they started singing very loudly as a result, but her choice of verb form, the *imparfait*, did not communicate this interpretation. After discussion with the researcher (lines 4-9) she appeared to accept that the *passé composé* would be more the more appropriate choice but her ability to

operationalise her understanding of the concept was insufficient for her to arrive at this conclusion independently.

Table 57

P5 two weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	C	Y	Y	IMP
2	C	Y	Y	IMP
3	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
4	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
5	S	N to Y	N to Y	PC to IMP
6	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
7	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
8	C	Y	Y	PC
9	C	Y	Y	PC
10	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
11	C; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	IMP; PC
12	S; S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC
13	C, S; C, S	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; IMP
14	C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
15	C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
TOTAL	P = 0 C = 17 S = 8	Y = 20 N = 0	Y = 20 N = 0	PC = 11 IMP = 9

Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait*

P5 – session 4 – four weeks after languaging task.

In session four P5 once again provided semantic and conceptual explanations for her choices of verb form in her responses. She also provided a single perceptual explanation based on a rule that she relied on in session one which stipulated that the *passé composé* be used to describe actions that ‘happened once’ (column two in Table 58). In this case however she did not rely solely on the rule when making her decision but also explained her choice with reference to other conceptual information and the meaning that she wanted to communicate. The example below shows P5 employing both a perceptual and conceptual explanation for her choice of verb form:

P5, session 4, discussion excerpt 1

- 1 P5: ‘*M. Bean a essayé se prendre en photo.*’ [Mr Bean tried to take a photo of himself.]
- 2 Which is Mr Bean attempted to take, or tried to take, his own photo. I put this in *passé*
- 3 *composé* because I wanted to stress that this happened once. It had a defined finish and a
- 4 defined end.

Although P5 initially uses the rule that ‘it happened once’ to justify her choice of *passé composé* (line 4), she immediately follows it with a conceptual explanation, stating that ‘it had a defined finish and a defined end’ (lines 3-4).

Table 58

P5 four weeks after languaging task: Explanation type, interpretation of events and verb form used

Response no.	Explanation P, C or S	Description matches		Verb form used in response PC or IMP
		participant's interpretation Y or N	researcher's interpretation Y or N	
1	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
2	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
3	P, S, C	Y	Y	PC
4	S, C	Y	Y	IMP
5	C, S	Y	Y	PC
6	C, S	Y	Y	PC
7	C	Y	Y	PC
8	C, S	Y	Y	PC
9	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
10	C	N to Y	N to Y	IMP to PC
11	C, S; C	Y; Y	Y; Y	PC; PC
12	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
13	C	Y	Y	PC
14	C, S	Y	Y	IMP
15	C	Y	Y	PC
16	C	Y	Y	IMP
TOTAL	P = 1 C = 17 S = 11	Y = 17 N = 0	Y = 17 N = 0	PC = 10 IMP = 7

*Note: P = Perceptual, C = Conceptual, S = Semantic; Y = Yes, N= No; PC = *Passé composé*, IMP = *imparfait**

P5 –summary.

The findings regarding the types of explanations provided by P5 in researcher participant discussions are summarised at the end of this section in Figure 12. In session one P5 relied heavily on rules of thumb, with perceptual explanations accounting for almost 50% of all explanations provided in session one (session one in Figure 12). Over the course of the three sessions following the languaging task, however, we see very little evidence that the participant is relying on everyday concepts to mediate her L2 production due to the lack of perceptual explanations (sessions two, three and four in Figure 12). Immediately after the languaging task a dramatic decrease in the number of perceptual explanations was observed, with her two perceptual explanations in this session accounting for less than 5% of all explanations provided. In session three there were no perceptual explanations at all while a single perceptual explanation was observed in session four (Figure 12). In the final session the presence of a perceptual explanation indicated that the

participant's conceptual understanding had not yet completely replaced the perceptual rules that she used to mediate her choice of verb form. It could be argued, however, that while the replacement of perceptual rules with an understanding of the concept was not absolute at the end of this study for this participant, the drastically reduced reliance on perceptual rules had all but rendered them inconsequential to the decision making process.

P5's focus on the meaning communicated by her choice of verb form steadily increased over the course of the study. In the final session semantic explanations accounted for almost 40% of all explanations provided while in the first session they accounted for just over 20% (Figure 12).

Either intentionally or otherwise, P5 produced both verb forms without any particular preference for use of one over the other in each session of the study. Furthermore, although she appeared to have developed her understanding of aspect there was evidence to suggest that she was not applying it in a holistic way by the end of the study. This was apparent in her explanations in which she only rarely referred to the context surrounding the action that she was describing. Rather than justify her choice of verb form by referring to other actions that were occurring at the time, she preferred to isolate the action and determine its aspectual nature with reference to her explicit understanding of the concept and without reference to context.

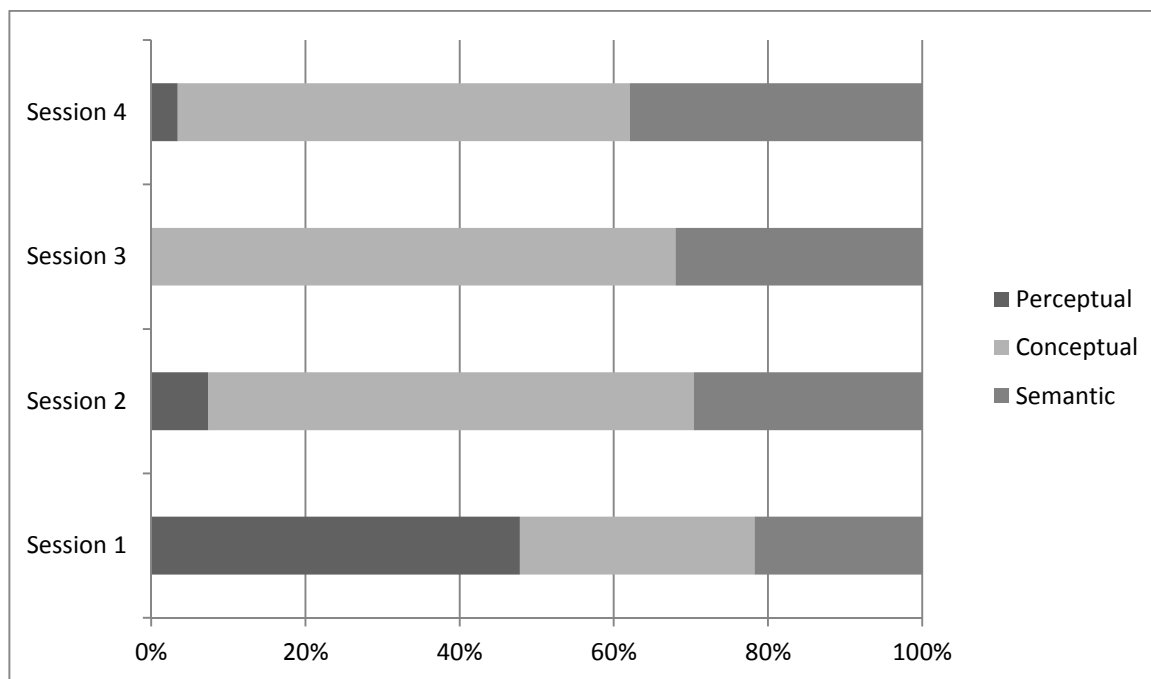


Figure 12. P5 proportion of explanation type by session

5.3 Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present the findings of the investigation into how participants mediated their L2 production. Specifically it sought to respond to the third and fourth research questions: (RQ3) Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2?; and (RQ4) Does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time? To respond to the third research question, participant explanations for their choice of verb form in their responses to the written task were coded as perceptual explanations based on prior instruction or experience, conceptual explanations guided by participants' understanding of aspect or semantic explanations that demonstrated participants' intuition for the meaning being communicated. Conceptual explanations were put forward as evidence that participants were using their understanding of aspect to mediate communication in the L2. In session two, immediately after the languaging task, the explanations of all participants contained a much greater proportion of conceptual explanations than in session one. This finding directly responds to research question three, suggesting that the participants did in fact use their understanding of aspect to mediate communication in the L2.

For three of the participants, P2, P3 and P5, their perceptual explanations suggested that, at times, they relied on rules of thumb learnt through prior instruction and experience to make arbitrary decisions about verb form when communicating in the L2. In the two cases in which participants did not provide perceptual explanations for their choice of verb form, they relied heavily on their understanding of the meaning that they wanted to communicate in the L2 which they expressed in the L1. Although participants' understanding of the relationship between meaning and choice of verb form was undoubtedly based on prior instruction or experience with L2, there was no evidence of any rules of thumb being used to mediate choice of verb form.

As participants developed their understanding of aspect they used it to mediate their L2 production and, in the case of P2, P3 and P5, it replaced the everyday concepts they had previously relied on. This was evidenced by the fall in perceptual explanations and the rise in conceptual explanations that they provided after the languaging task. In the case of P2 and P5, their reliance on everyday concepts was markedly diminished by the final session of the study (only one perceptual explanation in the final session in both cases), there was still evidence that they had not yet been entirely replaced by an understanding of the concept. In the case of P3 there were no perceptual explanations in session four.

In the final session participant explanations tended overwhelmingly towards a combination of the meaning that they wanted to communicate and their understanding of the concept in four of

the five cases. In these four cases (P1, P3, P4 and P5) participants often began by explaining the meaning that they wanted to communicate and then used their understanding of the concept to justify their choice of verb form. P2, however, did not demonstrate an improved awareness of the meaning generated by use of each of the two verb forms by the final session. While P2's explanations demonstrated a strong focus on how the actions she described were viewed in conceptual terms, she did not expand on this by explaining the meaning that she wanted to communicate. On the majority of occasions in which P2 did provide semantic explanations she provided them along with conceptual explanations. The provision of both semantic and conceptual explanations for the same choice of verb form was viewed as indicative of a developing understanding of the semantic choices presented by understanding of aspect. Nevertheless, this did not happen frequently enough in P2's case to demonstrate a clear understanding of the semantic choices presented by aspect.

Other findings emerging from the data were the improved variety of verb form in the L2 production of some participants and evidence of a developing holistic understanding of the concept. Prior to learning about the concept of aspect some participants demonstrated preference, or aversion, for one of the two verb forms. An improved understanding of the concept, however, encouraged these participants to provide more variety in their choice of verb form and by the final session all participants provided an almost even mix of both verb forms. Figure 13 below provides a visual representation of participants' choice of verb form in the final session of the study.

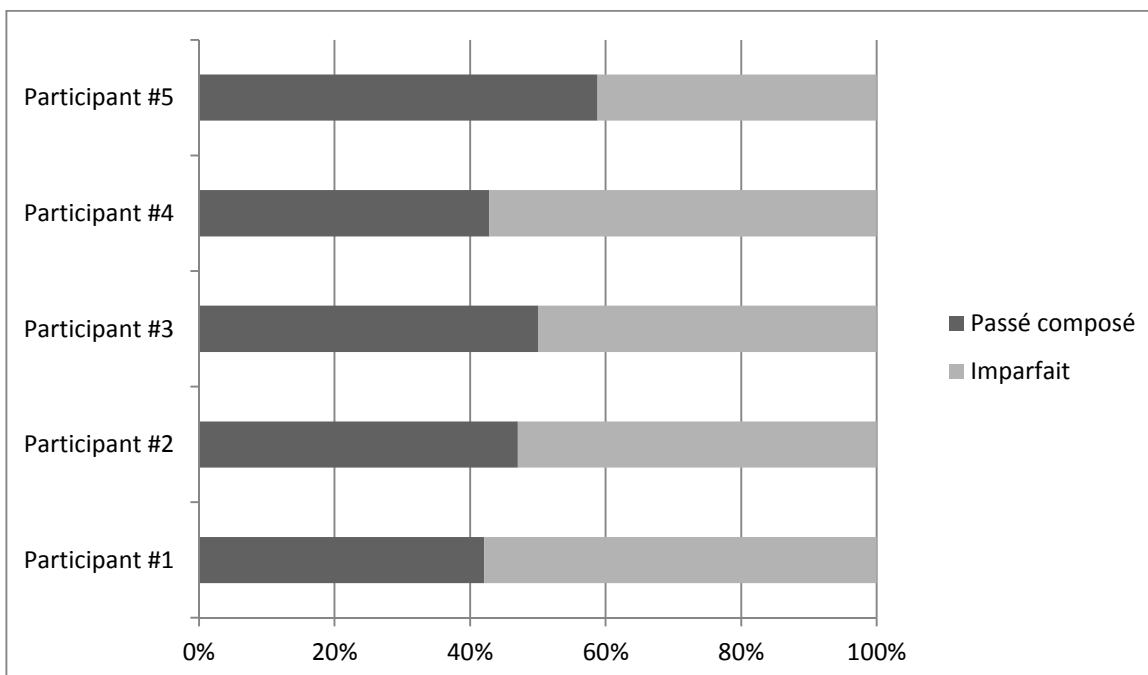


Figure 13. Participant and choice of verb form in final session

The findings also suggest that over the course of the study some participants developed an improved understanding of the importance of context when deciding which verb form to use. This is of particular interest because an awareness of the aspectual nature of actions that are occurring at or around the same time as the action being described is seen by the researcher as indicative of a holistic understanding of the concept of aspect. Explanations provided by participants in various sessions of the study referred to how the action they were describing was interpreted by the listener in relation to other actions that they had described, for example, if they were happening simultaneously or in a particular order. The development of a holistic understanding of the concept and its relevance for decision making in the L2 will be discussed further in the discussion that follows in Chapter six.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings with reference to the research questions posed in Section 2.11. The results presented in Chapters 4 and 5 revealed a number of noteworthy findings. Audio recordings of participants' performing the languaging task in session two (as described in Section 3.5) were transcribed and analysed to respond to the first research question: How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect? Participant languaging was coded according to the different types of languaging unit (LU) outlined in Table 7 (Section 3.6.1), namely paraphrasing, integration, elaboration, hypothesis formation or self-analysis. It was found that paraphrasing new information about the concept was the most frequent type of LU but that those with the deepest understanding of aspect by the end of the study also tended to integrate new information into their existing understanding of the concept.

The interviews in sessions one, three and four of the study (Section 3.5.2) were also audio recorded and the transcripts were analysed to respond to the second research question: Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept? All participants developed a deeper understanding of the grammatical concepts they languaged about over the course of the study. Development was not uniform across all participants, yet it did appear to be stable. This was evidenced by participants' explanations of aspect that, according to the measurement scheme employed (Table 9, Section 3.6.3), indicated that their understanding of aspect either deepened or remained unchanged when compared to previous sessions.

In each of the four sessions, participants discussed their responses to the spontaneous written tasks performed in sessions one, three and four (Section 3.5.4). Audio recordings of these discussions were transcribed and analysed to respond to the third research question: Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2? Their explanations were categorised as perceptual, conceptual or semantic (Table 10, Section 3.6.3) with conceptual explanations indicating that participants' understanding of aspect was mediating their choice of verb form. After performing the languaging task, conceptual explanations accounted for a large proportion of the total number of explanations given by participants for their choice of verb form.

The proportion of each type of explanation, perceptual, conceptual or semantic, given by participants in each session of the study was then analysed to respond to the third research question: Does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time? The findings revealed that the proportion of explanations provided by participants was dynamic and changed from session to session. Immediately after the languaging task there was a spike in the proportion of conceptual explanations but for some participants this was replaced by a greater proportion of semantic explanations in sessions three and four (P3, P4 and P5).

In the following sections, each research question is discussed with reference to the noteworthy findings mentioned above. The performance of individual participants will be used to highlight these findings and they will be interpreted from a sociocultural perspective.

6.2 RQ1: How do learners language about the grammatical concept of aspect?

The analysis grouped the languaging units (LUs) produced by participants into five categories (see Table 7 in Chapter 3) and linked each LU to the conceptual unit (CU) that prompted it. For all five participants the most frequent form of languaging unit (LU) was paraphrasing the information presented on the cards during the languaging task. Paraphrasing took place when participants languaged about the new information by saying it aloud in their own words and was employed by participants at all stages of the languaging task. Although other types of LU usually followed, paraphrasing was often the first step for participants. It seems that paraphrasing developed participants' understanding to a point where they were confident enough to form hypotheses, integrate it into other information or elaborate on their understanding with examples from prior experience. To this end, while paraphrasing appears to be the simplest form of languaging, the findings suggest that it is nevertheless a necessary step for all participants in the development of a deeper understanding of the concept.

Of particular interest is that all participants except for the least successful participant, P5, used integration when languaging about the contextual CUs (T10-T14) presented at the end of the languaging task (see Section 4.2 for a detailed breakdown of languaging by conceptual unit for each participant). Integration occurred when participants combined the information on the card that they had just read with information on previous cards (see Table 7 in Chapter 3). P5 only produced one example of integration throughout the languaging task compared to all other participants who produced at least five instances of integration each. Participants' performance lends support to previous research that has shown that languagers who integrate new information into existing knowledge often develop a deeper understanding of the concept being learnt (Chi et al, 1989; Swain

et al, 2009). Participants that do not integrate concrete examples into their understanding of the concept may also learn from these examples but they will not deepen their understanding of the concept. Instead, learners like P5 are in danger of learning everyday concepts or rules of thumb as a result of being exposed to concrete examples, rather than using them to develop and enhance their understanding of the scientific concept.

The frequency of hypothesis formation LUs did not appear to correlate with the depth of participants' understanding of the concept, measured on a scale of zero to three (see Table 9 in Section 3.6.2), in the sessions following the languaging task. Hypothesis formation was observed when participants applied their understanding of the concept to communication in the L2 as they languaged, hypothesising how it might affect their L2 production. The participant at the end of the study with the deepest understanding of the concept, P3 (see Figure 5 in Section 4.3.1), scored a three and produced the most hypotheses formation LUs during the languaging task (see Figure 4 in Section 4.2), but this finding was contradicted by the number of hypothesis formation LUs generated by P5, the least successful participant in terms of depth of understanding with a score of 1.5 in the final session. While P5 had the most superficial understanding of the concept in the final session relative to her fellow participants, she provided the second highest number of hypotheses during the languaging activity (see Figure 4 in Section 4.2). Another participant, P2, provides some insight into the potential for hypotheses to detract from a holistic understanding of the concept. More specifically, one of the hypotheses generated by P2 during the languaging task was not logically supported by the information upon which it was based:

P2 languaging task, excerpt 3

P2: Emotions are expressed in the imperfect [*imparfait*] because emotions can be continual. Like for the example, '*quand j'étais enfant j'avais peur des chiens*' [when I was a child I was scared of dogs], you don't know if the speaker is still scared of dogs.

The understanding that the *imparfait* should be employed if 'you don't know if the speaker is still scared of dogs' implies that choice of verb form to describe an action in the past is dependent upon whether or not the action continues in the present. This hypothesis is not consistent with an accurate understanding of aspect and would not necessarily lead to an accurate communication of meaning in the L2 if it were used to mediate choice of verb form.

Another possible reason for different levels of understanding of aspect, despite forming a similar number of hypotheses, is the way hypotheses are presented. If we compare P3 and P5, the participants with the highest frequency of hypothesis formation LUs, we can see that the way they

presented hypotheses during the languaging task differed in one clear way, being that one presented hypotheses as a question while the other presented them as a statement. P3 had the deepest level of understanding of aspect by the end of the study relative to the other participants and tended to present his hypotheses as a question. Below is an example of P3 forming hypotheses about the information on card three of the languaging task which he presents as a series of questions:

P3 languaging task, excerpt 2

P3: Developing at the time it occurs. It's not sort of a, it's happening at the same time as something else? No? [...] Does the action then become incomplete? [...] So in progress, something develops then it's incomplete or that's not, are they separate things?

P5, on the other hand, had a relatively shallow understanding of aspect when compared to the other participants and presented her hypotheses as a statement. Below is an example of P5 presenting a hypothesis as a statement about the information on card eight of the languaging task:

P5 languaging task, excerpt 1

P5: So if you're uncertain then it's progressive, whereas if you absolutely know something has stopped because there's something in the sentence that says 'it is finished' then you use perfect.

During the languaging task, when hypotheses were presented as a question they encouraged collaboration with the researcher and discussion of each hypothesis. When hypotheses were presented as statements and the participant continued languaging immediately after it, the moment for collaboration passed and the opportunity to discuss the hypothesis was missed. As a result of presenting her hypotheses as statements, P5 received much less assistance from the researcher when it came to discussing them. P3, on the other hand, discussed every hypothesis he presented with the researcher because, by phrasing them as questions, he created opportunities for the researcher to intervene. The performance of these two participants and the way they present hypotheses is also suggestive of a differing understanding of the purpose of the languaging task. P3 saw the languaging task as an opportunity to develop his understanding of the concept and frequently asked questions and sought clarification. P5, in contrast, saw the languaging task as a form of assessment in which her understanding of aspect was to be evaluated rather than developed, asking far fewer questions as a result and generating fewer learning opportunities.

The next type of LU, elaboration, was observed when participants went beyond the information on the cards presented in the languaging task, elaborating on it with examples from past

experience (see Table 7 in Chapter 3). The role of elaboration was not clear as, even though all participants provided some elaboration, there did not appear to be a clear link between elaboration and the depth of their understanding of aspect. Positive and negative self-analysis did not appear to be connected to performance either, with four of the five participants generating a small amount of self-analysis.

Self-analysis was the final category of LU and comprised participant comments on whether or not they understood the information about aspect and could be positive or negative. Much like elaboration, the findings did not suggest a link between the quantity or type of self-analysis, positive or negative, and a deeper understanding of aspect.

In some cases there also appeared to be a relationship between the type of information being presented to participants and the type of LU that participants produced. While this was common to all participants to varying degrees, the most striking example is that of P4, who tended to use a different type of languaging for each of the types of conceptual unit (CU) presented (see Table 16 in Section 4.2.4.). For the CUs that defined the concept (E1-E4), for example, she produced exclusively paraphrasing. For the CUs relating to operationalisation of the conceptual information (O5-O9) she provided a combination of paraphrasing and elaboration. The final part of the languaging task that introduced the contextual examples (T10-T14) elicited a combination of paraphrasing and integration. While striking, upon closer inspection there does appear to be a certain logic to the link between the type of languaging and the information being learnt. With regard to explicit conceptual definitions, paraphrasing is arguably the most appropriate choice given that explicit information is, in itself, an explanation. Participants seem to respond to this by merely transforming that explanation into their own words. The use of elaboration when explaining how to operationalise the concept, on the other hand, can be explained by the level of participants' language proficiency. Given that they are currently at a level where they have had experience using the two French verb forms mentioned in the language task, it stands to reason that they would be able to refer to their own prior knowledge or experience with these tenses when explaining the tense-aspect relationship. Finally, the contextual examples at the end of the languaging task were effectively an opportunity for participants to assess how well they had understood the information presented to them earlier in the languaging activity. These examples provided an opportunity for participants to analyse specific concrete examples of the L2 in aspectual terms. The integration of the new information into their developing understanding of aspect by referring to what they have recently learnt about the concept could therefore be considered a likely outcome.

6.3 RQ2: Does languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept?

To respond to the second research question participants' scores in the sessions before and after the languaging task were compared. These scores were determined based on the assessment of participants' understanding of aspect according to the criteria outlined in Table 9 (Section 3.6.2). Figure 5 in Section 4.3.1 provides a summary of the scores obtained by participants in session one before the languaging task and in sessions three and four after the languaging task.

Examining the scores of the five participants over the course of the study we can see that all participants progressed from either no knowledge or very limited knowledge of the concept of aspect in French and English in the first session to a developing understanding of the concept by the final session. In the first session, two of the five participants had no knowledge of the concept and the remaining three possessed a limited understanding. In comparison, by the end of the study in session four, all five of the participants demonstrated an understanding of the concept and how to use it as a tool to mediate L2 production. When comparing the scores in session one with those of session three, the greater scores in session three indicate that all participants deepened their understanding of the concept and it can be argued that this was a direct result of the languaging task in session two. From the available evidence we can therefore determine that the response to the question of whether or not languaging about aspect leads to a deeper understanding of the concept is yes. This finding supports those of previous research into the role of language as a mediational tool in the learning of abstract grammatical concepts which found a positive relationship between languaging and learning (e.g., Brooks et al, 2010; Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Swain et al, 2009).

Although all participants showed evidence of a developing understanding of the concept it was only P3, however, that applied his understanding of the concept to decision making in a holistic way by the final session. That is to say that the other four participants tended to privilege certain parts of the concept over others, leading them to construct their own rules of thumb to guide decision making. These rules of thumb generated and relied on by participants were simplifications of the whole concept, focusing on the parts of the concept they had successfully applied to L2 production in the past to communicate their intended meaning. Unfortunately, these simplified rules tended to be overgeneralised and dominated decision making, so in some situations more appropriate parts of the concepts that were used less often were overlooked. P3 on the other hand, tended to assess each situation with reference to the whole concept rather than merely finding a part of the concept that could be applicable and stopping there. Evidence of this can be seen in the way he evaluates the use of each verb form and its semantic implications to deduce which would be the

most appropriate. The following explanation given in the interview at the beginning of session four is a good example of him comparing the semantic implications of each verb form:

P3, session 4, interview 3, excerpt 1

1 P3: And Julie was wanting to say that her, that they would go to her father's, a beach that
2 was her father's favourite. She's saying 'well do I use *passé composé* or *imparfait*?' And
3 myself and another girl, I can't remember her name, who has also worked with you, we
4 were saying, we looked at each other and said 'well, did we see his liking begin? Then and
5 there at the beach?' Like she wasn't saying that he realised then that he liked that beach or it
6 was his favourite beach. Or did we see him finish liking it? No, we saw the middle of him
7 liking it or it was continuing to be liked, or to be his favourite I should say. Therefore it's
8 the *imparfait*.

This explanation reveals P3's developing holistic understanding of aspect because he is assessing the situation in terms of the semantic possibilities afforded by the concept (lines 4-7). It also demonstrates his understanding of what constitutes a perfect or progressive aspect, even though he does not explicitly refer to the terminology, with his explanation that it was neither the beginning nor the end of the action, but rather the 'middle' (line 6). This can be compared with the following response from another participant, P5, in the final session:

P5, session 4, interview 3, excerpt 1

1 P5: The focus on whether a verb terminates or begins is what defines it as *passé composé*,
2 whereas if there isn't the focus on one of those two, a sort of ambiguous focus, then it's
3 *imparfait*. That's pretty much it. Is there anything else?

This response from P5 is arguably a good example of what Vygotsky (1978) would refer to as 'verbalism'. The participant demonstrates an understanding of the conceptual definitions but there is no real evidence of mastery of the concept or the ability to apply that conceptual knowledge to L2 production. Instead, P5 appears to rely on two simplified rules based on the concept, one of those rules being that one verb form, the *imparfait*, is used for anything that was not covered by the first rule (lines 1-3). She then ends with the rather telling question 'Is there anything else?' (line 3), which is potentially a negative assessment of the usefulness of the other conceptual information that was presented in the languaging activity. Also, in session three, despite the fact that the word 'action' appears many times in the languaging task, P5 keeps referring to 'verbs'. This could indicate that she is mired in the abstractness of the concept and does not seem to be linking it

directly to meaning. She fails to link conceptual definitions with specific concrete practical activity and ascend “from the abstract to the concrete” (Poehner, 2008, p. 12).

The content of participants’ explanations of the concept can also indicate whether a shift from the abstract to the concrete is occurring. The contextual conceptual units (CUs) at the end of the languaging task (T10-T14) provided examples of how to identify whether an action is completed (perfect aspect) or in progress (progressive aspect). While the theoretical distinction between perfect and progressive aspect is clear, the ability to identify the aspectual nature of an action in practice is often a source of difficulty for learners. The inclusion of these concrete examples in the languaging task goes against the recommendations of some theorists (e.g., Galperin, 1989, 1992; Negueruela, 2003) because it takes away from the abstractness and therefore generalizability of the scientific concept. The researcher agrees that there is a danger that these examples will be internalised by learners and used as everyday concepts. Nevertheless, if the goal is to move from abstract understanding to practical application of the concept learners require not only the concept to use as a tool to mediate L2 production, but also some guidance on how the tool can be used in this way. The inclusion of examples that compare and contrast the perfect and progressive aspect and the semantic implications of each is therefore a valuable addition to the content presented to learners. The findings of the present study reinforce the value of providing the participants with a practical demonstration of the difference between perfect and progressive aspect. In their explanations participants often referred to the CUs provided by the examples in their explanations of the concept, but not in isolation. That is to say that although they referred to the CUs from the examples, they tended to integrate them into their understanding of other parts of the concept. We can see that P3 for example, provided four of the five contextual CUs (T10, T11, T12, T14) that were presented in the examples (see Section 4.3.4) and P3 had the deepest understanding of the concept in the final session relative to the other participants. When we compare him with P5, the participant with the most superficial understanding of the concept relative to the others, we see evidence of only two of the five contextual CUs (T12 and T14) presented in the examples in her explanations (see Section 4.3.6). With regard to the rest of the CUs in her explanations, there was little difference between P5 and P3, with P3 only providing evidence of one more explicit CU than P5. These findings seem to at least partly contradict the belief that when it comes to learning scientific concepts, the more abstract the information presented to learners the better. On the surface it also appears to reinforce Vygotsky’s (1978) position on the importance of context, a position neatly illustrated by Miller with the simile: “To think of contexts as existing in addition to or apart from practices is like imagining alongside or beside faces” (Miller, 1993, p. 370). The inclusion of

practical examples is therefore a way to give context to abstract information, but these examples need to be accompanied by scientific concepts and should not be the only resource for learners.

In conclusion, languaging about the concept of aspect does lead learners to a deeper understanding of the concept. When investigating the way participants language about aspect there appears to be a link between the generation of inferences, or integration, and a deeper understanding of the concept, as was the case in previous research (Chi et al, 1989; Swain et al, 2009). A lack of integration when exposed to concrete examples may also be characteristic of learners that rely on everyday concepts rather than scientific concepts. The type of languaging produced in some cases also appears to be dependent on the type of information being learnt. Specifically, explicit information tends to elicit paraphrasing while information on how to operationalise the concept generates a combination of paraphrasing and elaboration. Specific concrete examples, on the other hand, encourage a combination of paraphrasing and integration. There is also theoretical support for the inclusion of specific concrete examples at the end of the languaging task and the findings validated this position. The findings indicated that learners that had been exposed to practical examples and integrated them into their understanding of the concept developed a more profound understanding of the concept and its application to L2 production. The question of whether or not participants used their deeper understanding of aspect to mediate their L2 production is discussed in the following section.

6.3 RQ3: Do learners use knowledge of the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2?

The explanations provided by participants for their choice of verb form in their written responses before and after the languaging task clearly indicate that once participants had developed their understanding of the concept of aspect they then used it to mediate their L2 production (see Figure 6 in Section 5.1). This finding is encouraging for advocates of pedagogic approaches that employ scientific concepts as their central organising feature. Although clear evidence of the use of the concept as a tool for mediation did tend to reduce over time in three of the five cases (P3, P4 and P5, see Figures 9, 11 and 12 in Section 5.2), it is possible that the concept was still being used to mediate thinking even when it could not be detected in responses. From a sociocultural perspective, use of the concept as a mediational tool over time should lead to it becoming internalised and transforming thinking. Galperin (1992) explained mediation in terms of orientation, dividing the developmental process into two parts: an orienting part (concept) and an executing part (task). Over time and as more tasks are accomplished with the aid of the concept, the two parts become increasingly united to the point where the concept shifts to the mental level. At this point both parts, orienting and executing, are “so fused into a single process that they are almost

indistinguishable by the ‘naked eye’” (Galperin, 1992, p. 62). It could be argued that the findings provide support for this theoretical position. Before the languaging task, participants tended to base their decision-making either on rules of thumb or intuition about which tense would communicate their intended meaning. After the languaging task there was a marked increase in decisions based on understanding of aspect. In the final session four weeks after the languaging task, however, when compared with session two there were fewer explanations (as a percentage of total explanations) based on the concept (conceptual explanations) and an increase in decisions based on intuition about the appropriate verb form to communicate a given meaning (semantic explanations) for three out of the five participants (P3, P4, P5). This raises the question of whether an increase in semantic explanations in the final session should be viewed as a regression to the way participants made decisions before learning the concept, or if it is indicative of an evolving understanding of aspect and internalisation of the concept. A decision-making approach based on meaning does reflect a more natural approach to language production, so it should arguably be the ultimate goal of conceptual development. With this in mind, comparing the meaning that participants wanted to communicate and their subsequent choice of verb form in the very first session with that of the last session potentially provides insight into whether the concept is helping participants to successfully communicate their intended meaning in the L2.

P1 is an example of a participant that appeared to base her choice of verb form exclusively on the meaning that she wanted to communicate in the first session, but with mixed results. When the researcher queried her choice of verb form and the meaning that she wanted to communicate, it was revealed that she had failed to convey her intended meaning on five occasions out of a total of 17 (see column three in Table 38, Section 5.2.1.). In general terms this indicated that approximately one third of the time P1 failed to communicate her intended meaning. In the final session the explanations given by P1 for her choice of verb form were most often a combination of semantic and conceptual, indicating that she based her decisions on meaning and an understanding of the concept rather than meaning alone (column two in Table 42, Section 5.2.1). We also note that of her 17 responses in the last session, she only failed to communicate her intended meaning on one occasion (column three in Table 42 Section 5.2.1). The progress from the failure to communicate her intended meaning one third of the time in the first session to successfully communicating her meaning in all but one response in the final session indicates that P1’s use of the concept as a mediational tool led to more accurate communication. In response to research question three, it appears that not only was P1 using her understanding of aspect to mediate communication of meaning in the L2, but it was also helping her to successfully communicate her intended meaning more frequently. In the case of P1, however, it seems that her understanding of aspect was still

being used to mediate her choice of verb form, as indicated by the increasing proportion of conceptual explanations in each session (Figure 7 in Section 5.2.1). To this end, the concept was still mediating her thinking processes rather than transforming them. For other participants, however, the proportion of conceptual explanations was lower in session four compared to session two (P3, P4 and P5). This could potentially indicate a shift from using the concept to mediate thinking to internalisation of the concept and transformation of thinking processes. This evolution in the role of the concept is explored in the following section in response to research question four.

6.4 RQ4: Does the way in which learners use the grammatical concept of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolve over time?

The findings of the present study suggest that, for each participant, the way in which they used their understanding of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 evolved in one of two directions. The first possible direction was a growing reliance on an understanding of aspect to mediate communication of meaning in the L2, which was observed in the increasing proportion of conceptual explanations that participants provided as the study progressed (P1 and P2, see Figures 7 and 8). The second evolutionary path for their understanding of aspect was a reduced emphasis on the concept to directly mediate decision-making in the L2. Rather than using the concept to mediate the link between meaning and form, there was an increased focus on the meanings provided for by the concept without any reference to the concept itself. This was observed in a decreasing proportion of conceptual explanations and a growing proportion of semantic explanations in the later stages of the study (P3, P4 and P5, see Figures 9, 11 and 12 in Section 5.2). It could be argued that those participants with a greater focus on meaning no longer needed the concept to mediate their thinking processes, as it had already transformed their thinking.

Furthermore, this argument potentially goes some way towards explaining the anomalous performance of two participants in Swain et al (2009), further investigated by Brooks et al (2010), who showed very little understanding of the concept of voice when explaining examples, but were nevertheless able to provide correct written forms on the delayed post-test. Over time although explicit recall of conceptual definitions can fade, their mediational purpose, being to transform thinking, may already have been achieved. If this is the case then their mediational role has been fulfilled, the concept is internalised and it now exists as a part of thinking processes rather than mediating them. This idea is explored in the following paragraphs with a comparison of P1, a participant who displayed a growing reliance on the concept, and P3, a participant who relied less on the concept as the study progressed and more on the meaning that he wanted to communicate to guide his choice of verb form.

Although P1 produced a growing proportion of conceptual explanations over the study, this may not necessarily indicate that she would be less successful if she was relying solely on her intuition to establish a link between meaning and tense. Yet on the single occasion where she failed to successfully convey her meaning in the final session, P1 provided a semantic explanation without any reference to the concept. During discussion with the researcher she applied her understanding of the concept to the situation and realised that her choice of verb form did not appropriately communicate her interpretation of what she was describing. From a theoretical perspective, this potentially indicates that P1 has not yet internalised the concept because her intuition for the appropriate verb form to communicate her meaning was not always accurate. This suggests that the concept is yet to transform her thinking and that she still requires her understanding of aspect to mediate her thinking processes to ensure the successful communication of her intended meaning on every occasion.

To demonstrate that internalisation is possible, we can compare P1's performance to that of P3 as the findings suggest that P3's developing understanding of aspect is relatively more internalised. This is evidenced primarily by the quantity and type of explanations that both participants provided in researcher-participant discussions in the two sessions following the languaging task. In the case of P1, she provided 14 conceptual and 18 semantic explanations in session three (column two in Table 41, Section 5.2.1). In the following and final session (column two in Table 42, Section 5.2.1), we see her number of conceptual explanations increase to 19 and the semantic explanations decrease to 15. This shift to a greater use of the concept as a mediational tool indicates P1's increased confidence with the use of the concept, but that it is still being used as a framework to mediate decision-making and is yet to transform her thinking. P3 on the other hand generated 15 conceptual and eight semantic explanations in session three (column two in Table 49 Section 5.2.3) and then decreased the number of conceptual explanations to 10 and roughly doubled his semantic explanations to 15 in the following session (column two in Table 50). Although P3 relied less on the concept to explain his choice of verb form in the final session it did not affect his ability to communicate meaning. As with P1, he successfully conveyed his intended meaning on all but one occasion in the final session, and even on that occasion he was able to discuss the semantic possibilities available to him and re-evaluate his choice. His clear understanding of the appropriate verb form to communicate a given meaning seems to reside at this stage more at the level of intuition rather than relying on an explicit understanding of the concept as a guide. Moreover, P3's thinking has arguably undergone a transformation from the first session in which he chose the inappropriate verb form to communicate his meaning on four out of 14 occasions, roughly one third of the time, which is comparable to P1's performance in the first session. Three out of P3's four

inappropriate choices in session one were justified with a semantic explanation and one was the result of a rule of thumb that was revealed by way of a perceptual explanation. Even though P1 and P3 appear to have started with approximately the same ability to communicate meaning and achieved similar outcomes in the final session, the findings demonstrate that the way in which they use their understanding of the aspect has evolved in different ways.

P3 made reference to his greater focus on meaning and waning reliance on the concept in the final session as he explained what he had taken from the study. He gave the following appraisal of his understanding of the concept:

P3, session 4, interview 3, excerpt 2

1 P3: No that's sort of the thing that stuck, I think that's what the idea is when you keep on
2 asking me what I remember of aspect and I don't know if it's degenerating but I like to think
3 that this is what I've taken out of it.

P3 suggested the possibility that his understanding of the concept was 'degenerating' (line 2) because he was focusing on the relationship between meaning and verb form, rather than explicit information about the concept itself to mediate the link between the two. The reverse could be argued, however, and the shift to this focus on meaning could instead be seen as an evolution of P3's understanding of aspect. While a comprehensive explicit understanding of aspect is the goal when it is being used as a mediational tool, this should not be the measure of ultimate mastery of the concept. Theoretically, mastery is achieved once the concept has been internalised and transformed thinking and the concept is no longer necessary to consciously regulate thinking. This agrees with Galperin's (1992) view of how a concept is mastered, when the orienting concept and the execution of a task become fused and indistinguishable from one another. Wertsch (2007) also offers an explanation by differentiating between explicit and implicit mediation. The shift from obvious explicit mediation to a more implicit and less detectable form of mediation could also be indicative of the process of internalisation.

The findings suggest that learners tend to rely less on explicit definitions of concepts and develop a greater focus on meaning as they internalise the concept. Specifically, an examination of CUs present in participants' explanations of aspect in interviews in the last two sessions indicates an understanding of two explicit CUs in particular, E3 and E4, but participants rarely refer to them directly. For this reason it was sometimes difficult to determine which CUs were present in participants' explanation of aspect. An understanding of E3 and E4 was uncovered, however, because although participants did not explicitly reference these CUs in their responses, it was

nonetheless implicit in their explanations. This can be explained by the necessity to integrate knowledge of E3 and E4 into their understanding of O6 and O8 in order to operationalise their understanding of the concept. If we look at O6, for example:

O6: In French the progressive or *inaccompli* is characterised by verb conjugations with no auxiliary verb like *le présent* and *l'imparfait*.

There are three elements to this chunk of information, being the 'progressive aspect', the '*présent*' (present tense) and the '*imparfait*' (imperfect past tense). For the participants, they were primarily concerned with the past tense, *imparfait*, and this CU explains the link between the progressive aspect and the *imparfait*, being:

O6: Progressive aspect = *imparfait*.

This is a fairly clear connection, but in order for learners to use the *imparfait* appropriately it assumes that they know what the progressive aspect is and how to identify it. Hence an understanding of E3 is imperative:

E3: The progressive or *inaccompli* indicates that an action is incomplete, in progress or developing at the time it occurs.

In this case the 'progressive aspect' is described as indicating that an action is 'incomplete, in progress or developing at the time it occurs'. These elements can also be presented formulaically:

E3: Progressive aspect = incomplete or ongoing action.

The integration of the two formulas that represent O6 and E3 therefore reveals a common element, being the progressive aspect. If we were to put these formulas together, without repeating progressive aspect but using it to link the other elements, we are left with the following:

E3 + O6: Incomplete or ongoing action = progressive aspect = *imparfait*

One can then take the next logical step, in which the central element, the progressive aspect, is omitted:

E3 + O6: Incomplete or ongoing action = *imparfait*

In the case of the participants in this study this is precisely what happened. Explicit mention of the progressive aspect was systematically omitted from their explanations in almost every case and they have instead made the direct link between the type of action they want to describe, e.g., incomplete or ongoing, and the appropriate tense. Below is a concise example of this:

P4:[...] like so you use the *imparfait* if it's ongoing...

In this example P4 has made the link between an ongoing action and the *imparfait* verb form without referring to the piece of information that links these two elements together and is common to both O6 and E3, being the progressive aspect. Since no single CU presented to participants directly linked the *imparfait* to incomplete or ongoing actions, it must be assumed that participants' integrated their understanding of E3 into O6. What is clear, however, is that participants no longer need the conceptual terminology, 'progressive aspect', which links the type of action and verb form. This is perfectly logical given that knowing explicit conceptual terminology has no practical application for communication. The concept itself is only ever there to play a mediational role, meaning that it is merely a middleman that exists to facilitate the making of connections between meaning and form.

To further expand on the analogy of a concept operating as a middleman, it can be compared to another type of middlemen, for example an agent that connects sellers of a product with buyers. For every product there is a buyer and a seller, but it takes the agent to bring the two together. Once the buyer and the seller know each other, however, there is no longer any need for the agent to make the connection between the two. The agent, or middleman, is therefore no longer required and, as such, is promptly dropped from the process (after a fee of course). Yet despite not being useful any longer, the agent was initially an integral part of the process. Certainly the buyer and seller may have found each other eventually without his help, but there is no question that the agent expedited the process. Knowledge of aspect and its terminology is much like the agent described in the analogy. Although it is initially an invaluable mediational tool for expediting the connection between the aspectual nature of an action and the appropriate verb form, it is not meant to be relied on forever. Once the connection is made, reliance on knowledge of aspect to consciously mediate this connection should no longer be necessary.

An understanding of the concept changed the way participants used the L2 in another significant respect, namely the variety of verb forms that they provided in their responses. In French, the *passé composé* is the tense used to communicate a perfect aspect and the *imparfait* is the tense that communicates a progressive aspect. For P1, P2, P3 and P4, their responses showed a marked preference for using the *passé composé* over the *imparfait* in the first session. On the occasions where the *imparfait* was used it involved only two verbs, being either *avoir* (to have) or *être* (to be). This was also the case for P5 who, despite her preference for the *imparfait* in session one, only used the aforementioned two verbs in all of her responses. Participants' preference for the

passé composé supports previous findings that an understanding of perfect aspect tends to emerge before an understanding of progressive aspect in Anglophone learners of French. The research has also shown that Anglophones have a tendency to use a progressive aspect with certain verbs, including *avoir* (to have) and *être* (to be) (e.g., Ayoun, 2001, 2004; Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996; Harley, 1992; Harley & Swain, 1978; Izquierdo & Collins, 2008; Kaplan, 1987; Salaberry, 1998).

In the final session of the study, however, participants' tendency towards use of the *passé composé* is no longer apparent. In fact, for P1, P2 and P4 the trend was reversed and the number of *imparfait* in their responses was greater than the number of *passé composé*. P3 provided an equal amount of both tenses while P5 defied the trend, providing slightly more *passé composé* than *imparfait* (see column five in Table 58, Section 5.2.5). Furthermore, use of the *imparfait* in the final session was not restricted to the verbs *être* (to be) and *avoir* (to have) as was the case for all participants in session one. These findings are at odds with what would normally be expected of Anglophones learning French, possibly indicating that using the concept as a mediational tool allowed the participants to overcome the influence of their L1, or perhaps even enhance the effectiveness of the L1 as a mediational tool. This is further supported by the strong indication that participants' intuition for the appropriate verb form to communicate a given meaning in the first session appeared to be mediated by their L1. In the case of P1 this is almost definitely the case as the majority of her explanations for her choice of verb form in the first session were merely translations into the L1 of what she wanted to say in the L2. Her improved ability to communicate her intended meaning in the final session combined with her deeper understanding of the concept suggests, therefore, that an understanding of aspect combined with the L1 is a more effective mediational tool than the L1 alone.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that learners of French do use their developing understanding of aspect to mediate communication in their L2. The more interesting finding, however, is how their use of their understanding of aspect as a mediational tool evolves over time. Initially learners rely on their explicit understanding of aspect to mediate their choice of verb form but, with time, for some this tends to shift towards a greater focus on meaning. This shift is indicative of progress along a continuum from conscious use of the concept as a tool for mediation at one end, to internalisation of an understanding of aspect and the transformation of thinking processes at the other. Learning about aspect is the beginning of this process from mediation to internalisation, and although it is merely a tool for transition to a greater understanding of how to produce meaning in the L2, it is nonetheless an integral one. The findings also hinted at the

facilitative role scientific concepts can play in potentially enhancing the mediational role of the L1 when it alone is not the most appropriate tool to mediate decisions made in the L2.

6.5 Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the findings of the study with reference to the research questions presented in Section 2.11. The discussion of the findings related to how learners language about aspect (RQ1) revealed that paraphrasing was a necessary step for all participants (Section 6.2). Paraphrasing was the most common form of LU and often preceded integration and hypothesis formation. The role of hypothesis formation in the development of deeper understanding of aspect was also discussed. Specifically, the findings suggested that participants who phrased their hypotheses as a question (e.g., P3) developed a deeper understanding of aspect than those who phrased them as a statement (e.g., P5). This finding applied to languaging as an interpersonal tool, as phrasing hypotheses as questions tended to encourage more assistance from the researcher, and may not have the same implications for intrapersonal languaging. There also appeared to be a link between different CUs and the type of LU they elicited from some participants. Using the example of P4, it was shown that she primarily used paraphrasing to language about explicit CUs (E1-E4), paraphrasing and elaboration for operational CUs (O5-O9) and paraphrasing and integration for contextual CUs (T10-T14). Some possible reasons for the relationship between CUs and LUs were also presented (Section 6.2).

Whether or not languaging about aspect led to a deeper understanding of the concept (RQ2) was discussed in Section 6.3. The findings suggested a positive relationship between languaging and understanding of aspect with all participants receiving a higher score for their explanations in the sessions following the languaging task than the session before it. However, participant explanations also revealed that not all of them were developing a holistic understanding of aspect. Some participants tended to focus on parts of the concept without regard to where they fit into an understanding of the whole concept, which could potentially lead to overgeneralisation of some parts of the concept and participants using them as rules of thumb. Despite the danger of participants overgeneralising parts of the concept, concrete examples demonstrating how to apply an understanding of aspect to L2 communication were still seen as an integral addition to the languaging task content. It was argued that concrete examples lend context to the abstract information being learnt and validate the entire purpose of learning about aspect, being to improve L2 communication. This finding should be of particular interest to teachers and those designing languaging tasks as it suggests that abstract information about the concept alone is insufficient for L2 development and needs to be combined with concrete examples for learners to analyse.

The question of whether or not participants used their understanding of aspect to mediate communication in the L2 (RQ3) was discussed in Section 6.3. The findings demonstrated that once participants had developed their understanding of aspect they then used it to mediate their L2 production. This was evidenced by the large number of conceptual explanations produced by participants for their choice of verb form in the discussion in session two immediately following the languaging task (see Figure 6 in Section 5.1). In the last two sessions of the study, however, the number of conceptual explanations produced by some participant was in decline and was replaced by a larger proportion of semantic explanations. This suggested that participants were focusing less on the concept to mediate their L2 communication and relying more on intuition as the study progressed. Nevertheless, this reduced reliance on the concept did not appear to diminish participants' ability to communicate meaning in the L2. A comparison of the number of occasions on which participants successfully communicated their intended meaning in session one to that of session four revealed that all participants demonstrated a stable or improved ability to communicate their intended meaning in session four. This finding presented the possibility that conceptual explanations may not be the best indication of an understanding of the concept, as once it has transformed thinking it becomes part of the thinking process and encourages a greater focus on meaning.

The evolving way in which participants apply their understanding of aspect to communication in the L2 over time (RQ4) was discussed in Section 6.4. The findings suggested that, following the languaging task, all participants initially relied heavily on their understanding of aspect to mediate communication in the L2. Over time, however, reliance on an understanding of aspect, measured by the number of conceptual explanations provided by participants, either increased or decreased depending on the participant. It was argued that those participants that provided a decreasing number of conceptual explanations in the final two sessions were closer to internalising the concept than those participants who were providing an increasing number of conceptual explanations. The reason put forward for this argument was that once an understanding of aspect is internalised, individuals no longer require conceptual definitions to bridge the gap between form and meaning. Instead, the understanding of which form to use to communicate a given meaning is intuitive and therefore does not require mediation. The role the concept played in the transformation of thinking processes, however, should not be ignored. The next chapter, Chapter seven, will explore the practical implications of the findings discussed in this chapter for L2 teaching and learning as well as the theoretical support they provide for concept-based instruction (CBI).

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate learner languaging about the grammatical concept of aspect and the role an understanding of aspect played in the communication of meaning in French, their L2. This was achieved by requiring participants to perform a languaging task in order to learn about the grammatical concept of aspect. After the languaging task they were then asked to write sentences in French that required them to choose between two verb forms, the *passé composé* and *imparfait*, to communicate meaning. To determine whether or not the concept was used to mediate decision making, participants were subsequently asked to justify their choice of verb form and explain the thinking processes that led to their choice. The findings revealed that languaging about aspect led to a deeper understanding of the concept and that participants used their developing understanding of aspect to mediate L2 production. This is an important finding as, apart from Negueruela (2003), there have been no studies that require learners to perform communicative tasks once a concept has been presented to them. The fact that learners do use their understanding of aspect to deduce the appropriate form to communicate their intended meaning validates the purpose of learning grammatical concepts. In the following sections the practical and theoretical implications of these findings will be presented. These implications are organised with reference to the practical and theoretical questions posed in the purpose statement at the beginning of this thesis (Section 1.2) that motivated the research. The responses to these questions are then followed by an explanation of the limitations of the present study and recommendations for practitioners and researchers interested in concept-based instruction (CBI).

7.2 Pedagogical Implications

When determining the practical and pedagogical implications of the findings it would be convenient if it was as simple as responding ‘yes’ to the three practical questions presented in the purpose statement. These questions were: (i) Does languaging about an abstract grammatical concept deepen understanding of the concept? (ii) Does a deeper understanding of the concept encourage higher-order thinking such as analysis and deduction?; and (iii) Do more developed higher-order thinking processes ultimately lead to an improvement in an individual’s ability to communicate meaning in an L2? Rather than settle for that simple ‘yes’, however, the following paragraphs will address these questions in detail and highlight some considerations for practitioners intending to employ CBI and use abstract grammatical concepts as the central organising feature of their lessons.

The first practical question asks: Does languaging about an abstract grammatical concept deepen understanding of the concept? The findings of the present study suggest that languaging about aspect does lead to a deeper understanding of it, which reinforces the findings of previous research that identified a positive relationship between languaging and learning grammatical concepts (Brooks et al, 2010; Gànem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2011; Knouzi et al, 2010; Negueruela, 2003; Swain, 2007; Swain et al, 2009). Swain & Deters (2007) define languaging as “the use of speaking and writing to mediate cognitively complex activities” (p. 822), and it would be hard to imagine an L2 classroom, or any classroom for that matter, where speaking and writing do not already occur. It could be argued, therefore, that it is possible to encourage L2 learners in instructional settings to continue to language about new information that they encounter in a systematic way. Encouraging and generating awareness of languaging is a good first step, yet it must also be combined with a culture of collaboration if learners are to receive the full benefits of the languaging process. Learners need to view languaging as a process for developing their understanding of new ideas in collaboration with their peers and teacher, rather than simply a presentation of their current understanding for evaluation. This understanding of languaging as a collaborative process, therefore, should be encouraged by teachers by providing opportunities for learners to discuss their thinking processes and how new information can be integrated into them. To this end, the focus of classroom languaging should be on how learners arrive at a given outcome rather than simply an evaluation of the outcome itself. In this way, learners can benefit from the explanations of others, guided by the teacher, to refine and transform their individual thinking processes. The promotion of languaging in the L2 classroom is therefore recommended, but the question of what should be the focus of learner languaging, particularly grammatical concepts, has wider ramifications for teaching methodology. It is important to remember that deeper understanding of grammatical concepts is not the ultimate goal of L2 learners and that, while their value as a mediational tool to promote L2 development merits consideration, it should not be assumed.

The second question, therefore, asked: Does a deeper understanding of a concept encourage higher-order thinking such as analysis and deduction? An examination of the two different components of higher-order thinking mentioned, analysis and deduction, with reference to participant performance during the study provides some insight into whether or not an understanding of aspect promoted such higher-order thinking. There was evidence that participants in the present study employed their understanding of aspect to engage in both analysis and deduction. Information on aspect presented to participants in the languaging task highlighted the semantic implications of each verb form. The contextual examples on the final three cards of the

linguaging task (see Appendix A) then gave participants a model for how to analyse sentences in French with reference to aspect. They were not immediately given further opportunities to apply their understanding of aspect to the analysis of sentences in French beyond these examples. Instead, they were required to produce sentences in French and use their understanding of aspect to deduce the appropriate meaning for their own communicative intentions. It was clear from participant explanations in discussion with the researcher that communication did encourage deduction of meaning. Furthermore, it was the concept that guided this deduction with participants relying on their understanding of aspect to deduce their intended meaning and the appropriate verb form to communicate it. Researcher-participant discussions following the communicative tasks then gave participants another opportunity to analyse their sentences in the L2 in collaboration with the researcher. In these discussions participants once again relied on their understanding of aspect to guide their analyses.

An understanding of aspect combined with communicative activities and discussion did foster both analysis and deduction. It is important to understand, however, that the concept alone, without communicative activities and discussion, would not have achieved this. The concept of aspect is a tool, and a very complex one. Without the proper guidance and practical experience individuals will hesitate before applying their understanding of aspect to communication in an L2. Use of the concept to guide analysis and deduction, however, is of the utmost importance as it constitutes the stage where the concept is being used to mediate communication. If learner development stalls at the stage of mediation, then there is little chance that it will ultimately be internalised and transform thinking.

Participants' understanding of aspect was used to deduce meaning and analyse sentences in the L2, but: Do more developed higher-order thinking processes ultimately lead to an improvement in an individual's ability to communicate meaning in an L2? When comparing the performance of participants in the first session with that of the last session in terms of their ability to successfully communicate their intended meaning, the findings showed that all participants improved. For one participant in particular, P2, the difference was quite dramatic. P2 failed to communicate her intended meaning in 13 of her 19 responses in session one, yet in session four she successfully communicated her meaning in all 17 of her responses. These findings suggest that more developed higher-order thinking processes do lead to an improved ability to communicate meaning in an L2.

7.3 Theoretical implications

The exploration of the theoretical implications of the findings is guided by the two theoretical questions outlined in the purpose statement: (i) Does use of a concept as a mediational tool over

time change the way individuals think about communication of meaning in an L2?; and (ii) Does the concept transform individuals' internal thinking processes over time to the point where conscious mediation is no longer necessary or observable?

This section will begin by addressing the first theoretical question: Does use of a concept as a mediational tool over time change the way individuals think about communication of meaning in an L2? The findings of the present study suggest that learners' developing understanding of aspect influenced their decision making both immediately after the languaging task and in the four weeks that followed (see Figure 6). Nevertheless, the question of whether or not it changed learners' thinking processes is a tricky one. The answer appears to be that it depends on learners' existing thinking processes before developing their understanding of aspect. One way for learners to communicate meaning in the L2, for instance, is to focus on meaning and use their L1 to mediate their choice of verb form, e.g., directly translating from the L1 to L2 and using their intuition to determine the appropriate verb form to communicate their intended meaning (as was the case with P1 in the present study, see Section 5.2.1). If this is the case, then an understanding of aspect will undoubtedly change the way these learners think about how to communicate their intended meaning in the L2. Instead of relying on their intuition to determine the appropriate verb form, they will have an understanding of aspect to guide such decisions.

On the other hand, if learners rely primarily on rules of thumb to determine the appropriate verb form to communicate their intended meaning, an understanding of aspect may replace these rules in the thinking process rather than changing the process altogether. While a grammatical concept like aspect is more generalisable, it is still a mediational tool that can be applied to L2 production in much the same way as an everyday concept or rule of thumb. It may arguably be a better tool, but whether or not it changes the actual process of how these tools are used by learners is a different matter. The fact that concepts are essentially a mental framework of abstract rules much like any other rule learnt in the classroom, however, is not necessarily an argument against them being taught. On the contrary, given that abstract grammatical concepts closely resemble what is already taught in the classroom potentially works in their favour as it will mean that learners are already accustomed to learning similar content. The theoretical question, therefore, leads to a practical conclusion being that, given the similarities between grammatical concepts like aspect and what is already taught in the classroom, organising lessons around them is possible. Yet aspect is a complex concept and, if it does not change the way learners think about communication in an L2, then it begs the question as to why they should be taught instead of something else.

The response to this question from a sociocultural perspective would be that while the concept is being used as a mediational tool, learners' thinking processes will follow the same pattern as when they use any other psychological tool to mediate thinking. The purpose of abstract grammatical concepts such as aspect, however, is not to mediate thinking indefinitely. The role of these concepts is initially, but not only, mediational. It is also transformational and over time, as an understanding of concepts like aspect is internalised, learners no longer need to use them to consciously mediate thinking. Instead, an understanding of them begins to unconsciously shape thinking.

While such a transformation of thinking processes over time is theoretically plausible from a sociocultural perspective, it leads to the second theoretical question: Does the concept transform individuals' internal thinking processes over time to the point where conscious mediation is no longer necessary or observable? If learners are no longer consciously using the concept to shape their thinking, this should logically be observable in a lack of reference to the concept when they explain the choices they make to communicate meaning in an L2. It was revealed over the course of the present study that for three participants (P3, P4, P5) the proportion of conceptual explanations that they provided for their choice of verb form decreased in the weeks following the languaging task (see Figures 9, 11 and 12). This was in contrast to a growing proportion of semantic explanations, yet participants' success at communicating their intended meaning in their L2 did not diminish. The lack of reference to aspect in their explanations could arguably be the result of an evolution of thinking from a focus on conceptual definitions to an understanding of the link between meaning and form that was previously consciously mediated by the concept. The declining proportion of conceptual explanations suggest that the mediatory role of the concept was becoming less important and a focus on the meaning that these participants wanted to communicate was now largely guiding their decision making in the L2. Yet, even if it was only temporarily used to consciously mediate thinking, the role of the concept is an integral one. Despite conceptual definitions being less evident in participant responses, there is little doubt that an understanding of aspect mediated the initial connection between meaning and form (see middleman analogy towards the end of section 6.4). To this end, even though evidence of an understanding of aspect in learners' explanations may diminish, this is no indication that understanding of the concept is slipping rather than continuing to develop. It is possible that with more time the other participants, P1 and P2, would have also produced fewer conceptual explanations and a greater proportion of semantic explanations.

7.4 Limitations of the study

The potential limitations of the present study were the information provided about the concept of aspect as part of the languaging task, the timing of interviews and the role of the researcher. Firstly, this section addresses the problem of finding information about the concept of aspect. This is then followed by a discussion of the timing of interviews and the dual role of the researcher as both a teacher and collaborator.

The quality of the conceptual information is of principal concern given that it is the central organising feature of concept-based instruction (CBI). The abundance of information about the grammatical concept of aspect available, however, meant that it was difficult to find a clear, unified definition. For this reason development of the languaging task relied on a combination of sources in both French and English, including the “Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002), “*L’aspect verbal*” [verbal aspect] (Cohen, 1989), “*Grammaire méthodique du français*” [Methodical French Grammar] (Riegel, Pellat & Rioul, R., 2009) and contextual examples developed by the researcher based on a powerpoint slideshow found on a Canadian website (Halifax regional school board website, 2010). While linguists agree on the major points there is still some variation in the details. To this end it was felt that using multiple sources was helpful in developing a clearer understanding of aspect and identifying the central elements of the description of aspect for inclusion in the task.

Another particularly defining element that emerged from participant responses was the way participants viewed actions, whether in the context of the actions that surrounded them or in isolation. The relationship between actions and the effect the aspectual nature had on the timing of actions, e.g. whether they were happening at the same time or in sequence, turned out to be representative of a holistic understanding of the concept. Unfortunately this was not explicitly taught in the languaging task, but would have been a very useful inclusion. More emphasis should have been placed on the relative nature of aspect and how it can change depending on the other actions being described in the same period of time, for instance whether they were happening simultaneously or one after the other.

With regard to the interviews, these were conducted at the beginning of sessions one, three and four. The decision was taken to conduct interviews at the start of the session because they were seen not only as a means of measuring participants’ understanding of the concept, but also as an opportunity for participants to refresh their understanding of aspect. With two weeks between sessions it was possible to identify the more enduring elements of the concept, but without an interview at the end of the session it was not always clear whether performing the written tasks and

engaging in discussion deepened their understanding of aspect over the course of the session. To this end, it would have been a good idea to interview participants again at the end of each session to determine whether any specific issues had been resolved. It would have also offered participants the opportunity to revise the explanation of their understanding of aspect that they had offered at the beginning of the interview while it was still clear in their memory. From a theoretical standpoint an interview at the end would also help to highlight the genesis of learning, being the moments where learning occurred. This would be done by illustrating participants' understanding of aspect at the beginning and end of the session for comparison. This comparison could then highlight any differences in the two explanations and these could be linked to moments in the session where learning may have occurred and led to these changes.

One final point on the interviews concerns the way in which they were conducted. The interviews in this study were unstructured (Dörnyei, 2007) in that the questions were not prearranged. This meant that some participants gave much more information than others and if more information was given it often prompted more questions from the researcher. Rather than an unstructured interview led by the participants it would have been better to have semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007) where at least the same themes were covered if not the same questions. Of particular interest would be exploring the different meanings presented by the different verb forms and how changes in the way actions are viewed in relation to each other would result in a change of verb form. The limitations outlined in this section give rise to some recommendations for future research in CBI that will be presented in the following section.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

This section presents some recommendations for future research based on the practical and theoretical implications of the findings as well as the limitation of the present study. For future research, it is important to explore what constitutes a holistic understanding of aspect. In the present study a holistic understanding of aspect was considered to be the understanding that the aspectual nature of an action is not absolute but relative to other actions that are occurring in the same time period. This finding emerged from the data rather than being something that the researcher set out to teach participants in the study. Further research should focus on the relative aspectual nature of actions because it highlights the fact that meaning is dynamic and learners have semantic options when they communicate in an L2 rather than thinking in terms of right and wrong. The question that needs to be asked is whether or not learners are able to successfully communicate their intended meaning and the challenge for researchers, then, is determining whether or not the intended meaning and the meaning communicated by learners are the same thing and that they are aware of it.

Given the variation in definitions of the grammatical concept of aspect, the information about grammatical concepts in future studies should ideally come from a single source and this should be explained. This should markedly reduce the frustration experienced by any linguist that may happen upon the research while providing guidance to other applied linguists on how to go about designing a task around a grammatical concept.

Timing of any interviews should also be considered very carefully in the context of what the study is trying to achieve. From a sociocultural perspective, the goal should be to observe the genesis of learning through process rather than product-oriented methodologies. This is not to say that the product should be ignored, however, as outcomes can often be used to justify and highlight the value of research. Interviews before and after any intervention, communicative task or discussion, therefore, could potentially generate awareness of instances where learning has taken place. This combined with the data gathered on the process could provide clearer insight into individuals' development.

Finally, it is recommended that any research on the way abstract grammatical concepts transform thinking processes should be observed over time. The transformation of thinking processes is rarely instantaneous, so future researchers in CBI should perform longitudinal studies that allow time for learners' thinking processes to evolve. Furthermore, mastery of a concept should not be assessed solely on an understanding of conceptual definitions and the ability to reproduce them in explanations. Learners need to understand that being able to define concepts is not the ultimate goal. Concepts should be presented as part of a process to transform thinking, an intermediary in the transition from flawed or inefficient to more effective thinking processes. Essentially, the purpose of learning an L2, being to communicate in the language, should not be forgotten.

7.6 Summary and conclusion

For the Anglophone learners of French at advanced-intermediate level in the present study, languaging about aspect led to a deeper understanding of the concept. This in turn encouraged higher-order thinking in the form of analysis and deduction which improved learners' ability to communicate meaning in French. Teachers planning on implementing CBI, however, must remember that simply languaging about aspect is not sufficient. Communicative activities also need to be provided that prompt learners to use their understanding of aspect to mediate communication. To communicate their intended meaning, learners require an explanation of how to use their understanding of aspect to identify the semantic implications of each verb form in the L2. To this end, although the information on aspect presented needs to be abstract and generalisable across

contexts, there also need to be specific concrete examples for them to analyse with the aid of their understanding of aspect and opportunities to apply it to their own L2 production. Grammatical concepts like aspect are valued for their abstract and generalisable nature, but without opportunities to apply understanding of these concepts to the analysis of examples it is difficult for learners to see how such abstract information can be of practical use to them. Providing examples for analysis and opportunities to deduce meaning also serves to alleviate the problem of verbalism (Vygotsky, 1978), meaning the ability to define a concept without the ability to practically apply it. When including concrete examples of usage, however, care must be taken to reinforce the understanding that this is only one context to which the concept applies and that the example is precisely and only that, an example to demonstrate the concept in operation rather than a rule of usage in itself. If this understanding is not reinforced with practice there is a danger that learners will not integrate examples into their developing understanding of the concept and will overgeneralise them, relying on them as rules of thumb.

Furthermore, future research in CBI should be longitudinal and explore the role of abstract grammatical concepts as they evolve. The ultimate goal of learning grammatical concepts is to internalise them and transform thinking processes. The present study showed some evidence that this may be occurring but more time and more research is needed to determine whether the shift towards internalisation would have continued. The shift from mediation to internalisation should also be explored in other contexts to advance the current understanding of sociocultural theory.

The findings and conclusions of the present study with regard to languaging echo those of Swain et al (2009), finding that languaging is a key component of the learning process that can be introduced in a systematic way in the L2 classroom. Like Negueruela (2003), this study went beyond learning concepts alone by including communicative tasks in the study design. The findings demonstrate that languaging about grammatical concepts combined with communicative tasks develop learners' higher order thinking skills and encourages L2 development. The present study was also unique in that it attempted to observe the transformation of learners' thinking processes over time by following participants' from their initial use of an understanding of aspect as a mediational tool to its internalisation. This has made a contribution to research conducted from an SCT perspective by advancing our current understanding of the role languaging and grammatical concepts play in mediating cognition and transforming thinking processes over time.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Linguaging task content

INSTRUCTIONS

The following activity is designed to teach you something about the concept of ASPECT in English and French. There is research to suggest that explaining grammatical *concepts* rather than focusing on “rules of thumb” leads to a deeper understanding of the grammar of a language. This process is more effective when the learners get the chance to “think aloud” about the concept. The information below is about the concept of ASPECT. It is in small “chunks” so you will have time to think about each piece of information and explain it aloud.

CARD 1

The concept of ASPECT in English and French.

ASPECT is a grammatical category which deals with how the event described by a verb is viewed at the time the event occurred, such as whether it is in progress, habitual, repeated, momentary, etc.

CARD 2

English and French have two grammatical aspects: PROGRESSIVE and PERFECT. These are known as *inaccompli* and *accompli* respectively in French.

CARD 3

PROGRESSIVE or *INACCOMPLI*

The PROGRESSIVE or *INACCOMPLI* is a grammatical ASPECT which indicates that an action is incomplete, in progress or developing at the time it occurs.

CARD 4

The progressive in English is formed with the auxiliary verb BE and the *-ing* form of the verb. Here are two (2) examples:

- (i) *She is wearing contact lenses.*
- (ii) *They were crossing the road when the accident occurred.*

In French the PROGRESSIVE or *INACCOMPLI* is characterised by verb conjugations with no auxiliary verb like *le présent* and *l'imparfait*. Here are the previous two (2) examples in French:

- (i) Elle porte des lentilles de contact.
- (ii) Ils traversaient la rue quand l'accident s'est produit.

CARD 5

The progressive aspect may be used (a) with the present tense (*Today I am wearing glasses*) – this is called the **present continuous**.

In French the **present continuous** is the verb conjugated in the present (*Aujourd'hui je porte des lunettes*).

It may also be used (b) with the past tense (*Yesterday I was wearing glasses: past tense*) – this is called the **past continuous**.

In French the **past continuous** is the verb conjugated in the *imparfait* (*Hier je portais des lunettes*).

CARD 6

PERFECT or ACCOMPLI

(in grammar) an ASPECT which shows a relationship between one state or event and a later state, event or time. It indicates that an action has been completed.

In English the PERFECT aspect is formed from the auxiliary verb *have* and the past participle. For example:

- (i) *I have finished.*
- (ii) *She has always loved animals.*

CARD 7

In French any verb conjugation that uses an auxiliary verb like *avoir* or *être* (for example *le passé composé*) demonstrates a PERFECT or ACCOMPLI aspect. For example:

- (i) *J'ai terminé.*
- (ii) *Elle a toujours aimé les animaux.*

Although the *perfect aspect* and the *past tense* aren't exactly the same thing, in French the *passé composé* is used to describe both. Therefore, the previous examples could also be translated as (i) I finished; and (ii) She always loved animals.

CARD 8

How do you tell if an action is **progressive** (ongoing) or **perfect** (completed)?

1. Has the event stopped?

It's **completed** if we know the event has stopped, e.g., *Hier, il a plu chez-moi.* (It rained at my place YESTERDAY).

It's **ongoing** if we know the event happened in the past but **we don't know when it stopped**, e.g., *Il pleuvait chez-moi quand je suis parti.* (It was raining at my place when I left) *we don't know if or when it stopped raining.

CARD 9

2. Did the event **occur once** or was it **habitual** or **repetitive**?

There will often be a **time restriction** (e.g., *Hier, l'an dernier*) to show that an event only **happened once**, which would make it completed, e.g., *L'an dernier, il est allé à Sydney.* (He went to Sydney last year).

However, the event is considered **ongoing** if the event **happened many times** or was **repetitive** over the period of time mentioned, e.g., *L'an dernier, il allait souvent à Sydney.* (Last year, he often went to Sydney) *we don't know how many times he went, he was going continuously over the course of the year.

CARD 10

3. Is the **beginning** or **end of an event** emphasised?

A state of mind or being (such as thoughts or feelings) is often seen as being **ongoing**, e.g., *Quand j'étais enfant, j'avais peur des chiens*. (When I was a child, I was scared of dogs).

But be aware! You can use *passé composé* to express a state of mind or being that **began** at a certain time, making it **completed**, e.g., *Quand j'ai vu le chien, j'ai eu peur*. (I GOT scared WHEN I saw the dog).

Appendix B – Content of Mr Bean DVD excerpts

Excerpt A – Mr Bean goes to the park (Bennett-Jones, Vertue, Weiland & Birkin, 1991).

Mr Bean tries out his new Polaroid camera in a park, but it is stolen by a thief when he asks him to take his photo with some statues. Although Mr Bean chases down and stops the thief by putting a rubbish bin over his head and poking him with a pencil, he gets away again as Mr Bean tries to alert a passing police officer.

Excerpt B – Carol singers (Bennett-Jones, Vertue, Weiland & Birkin, 1991).

It is Christmas Eve and Mr Bean tries to watch TV but after trying every channel cannot find anything to watch and turns it off. He hears a knocking at the door and is greeted by young carol singers. He listens to them sing but then shuts the door rather rudely without giving them anything, even though he brings a box of chocolates to the door.

Excerpt C – Christmas dinner (Bennett-Jones, Vertue & Birkin, J., 1992)

Mr Bean and his girlfriend are having Christmas dinner (sandwiches and raw carrots). His girlfriend gives Mr Bean a present and wants a kiss first but Mr Bean outsmarts her and rudely grabs it. He opens it to find a model ship. Mr Bean gives his girlfriend her present: not the engagement ring she wanted, but the portrait used as part of the shop's window advertising the ring, which he believed is what she was pointing to. She is unimpressed and starts to cry.

Appendix C – Questionnaire

Participant Information Form

CONFIDENTIAL

1. Gender M/F 2. Age

3. Mark for French in the previous semester
.....%

5. Country of birth

6. If not born in Australia, age of the first arrival in Australia

7. What is your record of formal study of French?

Context (e.g., university, language school, high school etc.)

How long?

.....,
.....,
.....,
.....,

8. Have you travelled to any French speaking countries (e.g., New Caledonia) before?
Yes / No

9. If yes, how much time did you spend there (on each trip)?

	Country	Year visited	Years	Months	Weeks
trip 1:
trip 2:
trip 3:

10. What is your first (native) language?

11. What language(s) do you speak at home?

12. Have you studied or do you understand any other languages? Yes / No

13. If yes, what languages, for how long, and in what context (e.g., high school, university, abroad, with family)?

Language:
How long?
Context

14. In what language (besides English) do you consider yourself most proficient?

.....

15. Why do you learn French? (e.g., fun, travel, work, etc.)

.....

Appendix D – Interview transcripts for all participants

P1, Session 1, Interview 1

1 R: How do you decide, between them (the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*), which one to
2 use?

3 P1: I think it's, the *passé composé* is... I'm just trying to get it right in my head.

4 R: That's ok.

5 P1: Um, one of them is like, more immediate. Like you, you did it yesterday or something
6 and the other one is like, maybe, I went on... I visited France like last year or something like
7 that. I think.

8 R: Ok, so which one would be the immediate one do you think?

9 P1: Um, the *composé*.

10 R: The *passé composé*?

11 P1: Yeah and imperfect is further away I think.

12 R: Further back in the past?

13 P1: Yeah I think so.

P1, Session 3, Interview 2

14 P1: Aspect is... I can't remember what aspect actually was. It's such an abstract word, you
15 can't like link it to... I guess it just relates to whether the action was ongoing or completed.

16 R: So how does that affect the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*?

17 P1: Um well if you began and completed an action then you use the *passé composé*. And if
18 the action was ongoing or, yeah, it is still ongoing and you don't actually know when it
19 finished then you use *imparfait*.

20 R: Excellent. Can you think of any examples?

21 P1: Well, we did like being afraid, he was afraid of the dog. So that was *passé composé*
22 because he was afraid but he's not anymore. Whereas if it was "he is afraid of dogs" it
23 would be *imparfait*.

24 R: Ok. So he was afraid of a certain dog at a certain time.

25 P1: Yeah, like yesterday.

26 R: Ok. But if you just use the *imparfait* that would imply what? That he...

27 P1: He's afraid of dogs in general.

28 R: Or he was in the past, yeah.

P1, Session 4, Interview 3

29 P1: I think it's helped to really cement it that um, *imparfait* is an ongoing action and *passé*
30 *composé* is completed, and now I have that sort of like, firm idea in my mind of how to
31 determine which one to use.

32 R: Excellent. So how do you identify a completed action or an ongoing action?

33 P1: Um, so a completed action is something that you have started and finished in the time
34 frame that you're talking about. And an incomplete action would be something that you've
35 started and you don't know when it's going to end or it hasn't finished yet in the time that
36 you're speaking. Or something that started in the past and is still relevant, or... yeah or
37 some, yeah an action that continues after you finish speaking, after the time you're talking
38 about.

P2, Session 1, Interview 1

39 P2: Not a clue. Not a clue, I've never heard of it.

P2, Session 3, Interview 2

40 P2: Ok. My understanding so far is that it's all to do with finished actions and actions that
41 are still continuing. So it's like in English, like um, the 'was doing' and 'did'. And I think
42 'was doing' corresponds with the *passé composé*, and the *imparfait* corresponds with, like,
43 just the 'did' or um, like the past... I forget what it's called but, yeah. So, yeah, that's my
44 understanding of it.

45 R: So you say that, so the *imparfait* you use with 'did' and the *passé composé* you use with
46 'was doing'.

47 P2: Yeah.

48 R: In fact it's the opposite.

49 P2: I knew I'd do something like that. Whatever I picked I thought it would be the opposite.

50 R: So yeah, so the *imparfait* is like for continuing actions in the past whereas the *passé*
51 *composé* is...

52 P2: Yeah. That makes sense now.

53 R: Is that, sort of the way you remembered it?

54 P2: Yeah.

P2, Session 4, Interview 3

55 P2: I don't really remember.

56 R: You don't remember?

57 P2: No, it's been a while. Um...

58 R: It has been a long time.

59 P2: I know that the imperfect (*imparfait*) with aspects is when there's a time marker and
60 the action's finished.

61 R: Yeah.

62 P2: And *passé composé*, um, is the action's not finished or it's continual. No? It's usually
63 the opposite way when I do it.

64 R: Uh, yeah. So it's usually the other way? Because it is in fact the opposite.

65 P2: Damn it!

66 R: So say it again?

67 P2: Ok, so the imperfect (*imparfait*) is the one where the action's continual.

68 R: Yeah.

69 P2: And the *passé composé* is for when the action's finished.

70 R: Yeah, that's right. So what would you use the, so um, we talk about finished actions, um
71 what sort of things do you think of?

72 P2: Actions...

73 R: Like any examples or anything like that. This is a tricky question.

74 P2: Yeah. I can think of the ones that could be finished and could be continual.

75 R: Yeah that'd be...

76 P2: Yeah, like 'I went to school last year'. Like for me it's a finished action but it's still the
77 notion of continuity. I don't know.

78 R: Ok, that's very good. So yeah, so when you're saying 'I went to school last year', so
79 what's the idea you're trying to give there?

80 P2: That I've finished school.

81 R: Yeah.

82 P2: Because I use a time marker, but...

83 R: Ok then. So if you... No no no, that's really good. So you went to school last year so
84 you're trying to give the impression that you went to school last year, that was what you did.
85 If you wanted to give the impression that you went to school every day last year...

86 P2: You'd use the imperfect (*imparfait*) because it's a repeated action.

87 R: Alright, that's excellent. Anything else you'd like to add?

88 P2: Um, oh imperfect (*imparfait*) is when you're like trying to display emotions and feelings
89 and wishes in the past.

90 R: Yeah, and why would you use the imperfect (*imparfait*) to talk about those things.

91 P2: Because it's like a state of mind, and a state of mind isn't a definitive action. It happens
92 over time.

93 R: That's excellent. So it's used for those because they're sort of perceived as being
94 continuous actions.

95 P2: Yeah.

96 R: Is there any occasion where you could use the *passé composé* with an emotion or
97 something like that?

98 P2: Like when you, if you change, changed emotions. Like you were sad back then and now
99 you're happy now, or...

100 R: Yeah.

101 P2: Because the action, the action of being has finished.

102 R: Ok, that's good, that is because that makes sense. A little bit more specific though, so if
103 you were saying like, um, I think the example we saw was '*quand j'ai vu le chien j'ai eu*
104 *peur*' (when I saw the dog I got scared).

105 P2: Yeah.

106 R: So what about that, what is it, what are we stressing in that sentence when we talk about
107 '*j'ai eu peur*' (I got scared).

108 P2: Um, like 'I was scared'?

109 R: Yeah?

110 P2: Not 'I...'. In English isn't it of like 'when I saw the dog I was scared' and then...

111 R: In English you can't...

112 P2: Yeah, it's... That one sort of demonstrates that when they see a dog now they're no
113 longer scared? No?

114 R: Ok, not so much now. If we go back to the time when they saw the dog and they say '*J'ai*
115 *eu peur quand j'ai vu le chien*' (I got scared when I saw the dog). What are we sort of
116 stressing when they see the dog?

117 P2: Like the immediate fear?

118 R: Yeah, so that's it. So if you have a look at this one (refers to didactic model). So is the
119 verb describing the beginning of an action?

120 P2: Yeah.

121 R: So would that be seen as the beginning of feeling scared when they see the dog?

122 P2: I think so because it's like, 'I was scared when I saw the dog' so it's where the action
123 started.

124 R: That's right, so does that imply that in general you were scared of dogs or just that dog in
125 particular?

126 P2: I think it's just that one in particular.

P3, Session 3, Interview 2

127 P3: I was thinking about this as I was walking over this morning. Sadly I was walking very
128 fast so there wasn't much time to think.

129 R: That's ok. So it's been playing on your mind.

130 P3: Yes it has, like a bad dream. No, no. What I remember about it was two sides to *aspect*,
131 or *aspect*. *Imparfait*, oh sorry, *compli* et inaccompli* (perfect and progressive).

132 R: *Accompli* (Perfect).

133 P3: *Accompli* yeah, sorry. Finished and non-finished or accomplished and not accomplished.
134 And *aspect*, you can, what I remember is from the *inaccompli*, there were three identifiers
135 for making it a— using the *imparfait* in French. So I remember from that part, um...

136 R: What were those identifiers that you mention? So you're talking here about how to
137 identify whether an action is completed or not. Is that right?

138 P3: Yes.

139 R: Yeah.

140 P3: Um, the first one was about rain.

141 R: Ok yeah, the example?

142 P3: And when it was raining. And *inaccompli* is when you're saying 'it was raining' but you
143 don't know whether it's finished or not.

144 R: Yeah.

145 P3: That was the first one. The second one, what was the little example? I remember... um, it
146 was something about fear? I think it was like 'when I was a child I was afraid', or, and the
147 opposite to that is 'when I watched the movie I was afraid'. So it's kind of like the raining
148 one in the sense that you don't know when it started.

149 R: Ok, that's good. So if you don't know when it started would it be more of a completed
150 thing or an incomplete...

151 P3: No incompleted. Yeah these are all for incompleted.

152 R: Excellent.

153 P3: And the third one was... oh going to Sydney! That's right. Um so, if you wanted to, over
154 a space of time, um... if it was habitual in the sense of, so he went to Sydney two times,
155 um... oh so he, last year he went to Sydney. He was, he, I think, you don't know how many,
156 when he went to Sydney, but he was going to Sydney. Yeah. Last year he was going to
157 Sydney three times, he was going to Sydney three times a year and so that's, that would be
158 *inaccompli* because you don't know when he was going. Like you don't, 'on Tuesday he
159 went to Sydney,' or 'Wednesday he went to Sydney.' It was 'he went to Sydney three times
160 last year.'

161 R: The thing is, maybe if you said 'three times' though. If you specified that it was three
162 times.

163 P3: Yeah, ok.

164 R: Would that still be *inaccompli* (progressive) or would that now become *accompli*
165 (perfect)?

166 P3: Depends on the duration of the time or something like that because I remember asking
167 this question last time. It has something to do with...If I wanted to say like he went, like 'he
168 went to Sydney three times last year.'

169 R: Yeah, so would you use *passé composé* or *imparfait* for that?

170 P3: he went to Sydney three times last year. Ah, I'd use *imparfait*.

171 R: You would use the *imparfait*.

172 P3: Um. I think? Um...

173 R: Why would you use the *imparfait* there?

174 P3: He went to Sydney three times last year. Because it was something about duration, and it
175 was over the space of a year, um, and maybe it was habitual? I don't know.

176 R: Yeah.

177 P3: I'm thinking...yeah I think.

178 R: I like the idea of habitual.

179 P3: Yes. 'He was going to Sydney three times a year.' Maybe it would be *l'imparfait*. 'He
180 was going' as opposed to 'he went' to Sydney three times last year. It's something to do
181 with the duration of the time, I know it's, is it?

182 R: It's not so much the duration it's the defined time.

183 P3: The marker, yeah.

184 R: So if you have a defined time marker, what does that generally lead to?

185 P3: *Passé composé*.

186 R: Yeah, a completed action. So if you said he went to Sydney three times would that be a
187 defined number of times or would that be an undefined number of times?

188 P3: That's defined.

189 R: That's defined, yeah.

190 P3: But if he went to Sydney three times *last year*, is it, that's undefined.

191 R: Is it undefined, or...?

192 P3: Because it's over the space of a year so, I don't...

193 R: Um, if they specify three times I think you would have to say it's defined.

194 P3: It's *passé composé*.

195 R: So you're thinking of the time period, and that is the last year, so that would immediately
196 make us think *passé composé*. So if you said three times, that would also make us think
197 *passé composé*.

198 P3: Yeah.

199 R: But if you just say, 'he went to Sydney often.'

200 P3: Last year.

201 R: Last year, yeah. So you've got the 'last year' that makes us think *passé composé*, but
202 you've also got the 'he was going to Sydney often.' So we don't know how many times he
203 went. It was sort of a repetitive or habitual action over the course of that year.

204 P3: Ok.

205 R: So does that make sense?

206 P3: Yeah, I think so.

207 R: So explain it to me.

208 P3: So if you specifically say 'he was going three times', or 'he was going...' If, yeah, if
209 you've defined how many times you went in that time period, that marker of time, um, then
210 it's *passé composé*. But if it, if you're wanting to suggest that he went *plusieurs fois*, lots of
211 times.

212 R: *Oui, plusieurs fois*. (Yes, several times.) Or *il allait souvent* (he often went).

213 P3: *Oui*, yes. You would use *l'imparfait* because that would give the suggestion that it's
214 either habitual or you didn't know how many times he went but you know he was going.

215 R: So yeah, so it's undefined.

216 P3: All following on to the rain and the afraid thing, you know what I mean?

217 R: Yeah, that's good.

218 P3: I'm trying, sorry.

219 R: No, you're doing very well. There was just a little bit of confusion on that one because
220 you've got two things to look at there. You've got the defined time period but also the
221 defined number of times so they're two separate things that can both have an effect on it. So
222 with the dog and being scared, so when you were young you were scared. When would you
223 use that as a completed action? How could you change that to a completed action? Like, use
224 the idea of being scared, if you can give remember the example.

225 P3: I think 'when I was a child I was afraid,' it isn't really describe like 'I was a child, then I
226 was...' Like it wasn't a cause and effect kind of, whereas if you wanted to say *passé*
227 *composé* you have to say 'I watched the movie, then I was afraid' or 'I was scared by it.'
228 You know what I mean? It's got to be following each other. But if you don't know at what

229 point you were scared through the movie or scared by something, it'd be *l'imparfait* because
230 you don't know where it starts or ends.

231 R: So you're saying that by using the *passé composé* with the film you're sort of showing
232 there's something that makes you scared at a certain point.

233 P3: Yeah, or you have a sort of, it's defined. As in like a start and a finish.

234 R: Yeah so you could say I saw something in the film, like a murderer, and you could say 'I
235 got scared when I saw the murderer.'

236 P3: Yeah.

P3, Session 4, Interview 3

237 P3: Ok. Well we had a French lecture the other day and we were debating whether we
238 should use the *imparfait* or *passé composé*. It was talking about a tradition that we had
239 experienced in the past.

240 R: Yeah? Did you pull out my model?

241 P3: Well I did, this is my story you see. You're interrupting my story.

242 R: Sorry.

243 P3: And Julie was wanting to say that her, that they would go to her father's, a beach that
244 was her father's favourite. She's saying 'well do I use *passé composé* or *imparfait*?' And
245 myself and another girl, I can't remember her name, who has also worked with you, we were
246 saying, we looked at each other and said 'well, did we see his liking begin? Then and there
247 at the beach?' Like she wasn't saying that he realised then that he liked that beach or it was
248 his favourite beach. Or did we see him finish liking it? No, we saw the middle of him liking
249 it or it was continuing to be liked, or to be his favourite I should say. Therefore it's the
250 *imparfait*.

251 R: That's excellent.

252 P3: So that's my story.

253 R: And did the teacher look at it and say it was right?

254 P3: Ah we haven't, we didn't get to that showing part but we're pretty sure that we were
255 right.

256 R: Yeah, I think that you're safe there. You're right. Ok then, so that's a very good example,
257 that story, so explain to me now if you wanted to indicate that the action was beginning or
258 ending at a certain time, what would you use? And how would you view the action?

259 P3: Well you have to see it as, you have to create it such that she wanted to change it. So if
260 you want to say he started to like the beach, it would need to be a direct point in time so I'd
261 have to say at that moment there, or he then realised, or he realised then that this was his
262 favourite beach.

263 R: Yeah, so you would use what?

264 P3: *Passé composé*.

265 R: Excellent.

266 P3: But if you wanted to say that he then realised that it wasn't his favourite beach, which is
267 the negative so it's *passé composé* again, in the sense that we saw him not, no longer, the
268 end of his liking or his favouriteness of it. Does that work?

269 R: Yeah, that, ah, I think so. I think I understand.

270 P3: You know what I mean?

271 R: There were parts of it that were a bit...

272 P3: It's the timing. Like we have to say it's a set point in time. At that point he realised that
273 he liked that beach. It wasn't over a, sort of, it wasn't a thing that just happened.

274 R: Yeah, that's very good. Like in that very moment he realised that he liked this beach.

275 P3: We know when he started to like that beach as opposed to, sort of, we know he likes the
276 beach but we don't know where he started to like the beach and we certainly don't know
277 when he's going to stop liking the beach.

278 R: All right. Well, look, I'm glad that you're applying what you're learning here to practical
279 situations.

280 P3: So am I!

281 R: That's good, see, we're all learning! Anything else that you'd like to add?

282 P3: No that's sort of the thing that stuck, I think that's what the idea is when you keep on
283 asking me what I remember of aspect and I don't know if it's degenerating but I like to think
284 that this is what I've taken out of it.

P4, Session 1, Interview 1

285 P4: Ok, well the *passé composé*, I just use it for the past tense. So if I was going to say 'I
286 went', or 'we went', I'd use *passé composé*. With the *l'imparfait*, I think it, it would be like
287 um, actually I'm not sure how I would use that one.

P4, Session 3, Interview 2

288 P4: Alright, so um, basically what we did was, do you want me to describe actually what
289 actually we did or what I learned?

290 R: What you learned, what your idea is now of...

291 P4: Ok, so looking at the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* and when to use it. So basically
292 what I remember, is the *passé composé* is um, if the action, like if it was, if the action was at
293 the beginning...sorry. I'll just restart that sentence. Um if the action, um if it's describing the
294 beginning of the action. So if you open a door, like the beginning of that. Um it's describing
295 the end of the action. It's describing if it has an end point, like so you use the *imparfait* if it's
296 ongoing but you use the *passé composé* if it ended. So he definitely closed the door, he's not
297 closing the door. Basically the *imparfait* is if it's ongoing or if you're like um, describing
298 something that happened more than once. So I think the example they gave was 'he went to
299 Sydney often last year', instead of saying 'he did go to Sydney', like, yeah, 'he went to
300 Sydney once last year'. And yes, that's pretty much it.

P4, Session 4, Interview 3

301 P4: Well basically what I remember is that it's just kind of like a system of...not a system,
302 just like a kind of way of remembering when to use the *passé composé* and when to use
303 *l'imparfait*. The one thing that stands out is like, I think it was the last thing that I read, that's
304 probably why I remember it, was like in relation to feelings and things like that. So it just
305 kind of like went through the system of like all of the different, um, contexts kind of. Of
306 when to use the *imparfait* and when to use *passé composé*.

307 R: So about the concept of aspect itself; do you remember what sorts of aspect we have?

308 P4: Um, what do you mean?

309 R: Ok, so we're talking about actions.

310 P4: Oh yeah, ok. So, um do you mean kind of like with the model as well?

311 R: Yeah, definitely.

312 P4: Well, some of the examples were like, when to use *passé composé* and *imparfait* were
313 like, if it went for like, if there was no specific time limit or if it didn't have an ending and a
314 beginning. One of the examples was 'when I was younger I was afraid of dogs', or 'when I
315 saw a dog I was afraid', kind of. If that makes sense.

316 R: That makes perfect sense, actually. I'll just need a little bit more detail. So, yeah, what
317 you said was one is to describe actions that don't really stress the beginning or the end.

318 P4: Yeah.

319 R: So which of the French past tenses would we use to describe those sorts of actions?

320 P4: Ok, well one that doesn't have the beginning or the end you would use the *imparfait*, and
321 one that has a clear defining point you use the *passé composé*.

322 R: That's perfect. And so you used the example about feelings, so feelings in general, which
323 one would they be, *imparfait* or *passé composé*?

324 P4: I'd say *imparfait*.

325 R: At what times could you maybe use *passé composé* for feelings?

326 P4: If you were describing like, if you were really, really angry at one point because
327 something happened at that exact moment I'd probably use *passé composé*. If you were just
328 like, yeah, 'I was feeling really good that day' I'd use *imparfait*.

P5, Session 1, Interview 1

329 P5: *Passé composé* is something that happened once whereas *passé composé* was a
330 continuing action in the past. *Imparfait*, sorry.

P5, Interview 2, Session 3

331 P5: I don't remember what aspect stands for but it was the difference between terminating
332 verbs and continuous verbs. So if a verb terminates you use the *passé composé* because you
333 know it happened, whereas if it's something that's continuing then you use *imparfait*. But if

334 something isn't a direct reaction to a terminating verb then you use, you can use *passé*
335 *composé*. That's what I remember.

336 R: An example?

337 P5: Um, I think one of the things was '*quand j'ai vu le chien j'ai eu peur*', 'when I saw the
338 dog I was scared'.

339 R: And so what's that one highlighting?

340 P5: Um, it's highlighting the fact that if something was a reaction to a terminating event in a
341 set time you can use the *passé composé*.

342 R: Excellent, and so with '*avoir peur*', 'being scared', would you usually use that with the
343 *passé composé*?

344 P5: Well not if you were just saying 'I was scared', but because this is directly tied to a
345 terminating situation you can.

346 R: Excellent, and so if you wanted to say 'I was scared' you would use the *imparfait*?

347 P5: *Oui, c'est 'j'avais peur'* [Yes, it's 'I was scared'].

348 R: Why would you use the *imparfait*?

349 P5: Because it's, you don't know if it's terminated or not. You don't know, you could
350 theoretically still be scared.

351 R: That's very good. I guess the other idea is that it wasn't stressing the beginning or the end
352 of the action.

353 P5: Oh yes, stressing the beginning or the end.

354 R: So that's a good one to remember.

P5, Session 4, Interview 3

355 P5: The focus on whether a verb terminates or begins is what defines it as *passé composé*,
356 whereas if there isn't the focus on one of those two, a sort of ambiguous focus, then it's
357 *imparfait*. That's pretty much it. Is there anything else?

358 R: I think you've got the crux of it. That's very good. So when you say a verb terminates,
359 could you give me an example? What do you mean there?

360 P5: *Par exemple, 'hier je suis allée au magasin'*. [For example, 'yesterday I went to the
361 shop']. Because I'm saying 'yesterday I did this' and, so there is a termination of it. That's
362 perhaps a bit ambiguous.

363 R: No, that was quite a good example. So give me an example now of something that isn't
364 completed, or isn't terminated.

365 P5: *Une phrase, par exemple, [a sentence, for example] 'quand j'étais petite'*, 'when I was
366 little'. Like, there is no, I haven't stressed when I stopped being little and started being an
367 adult or anything like that.