

The Development of Aspectual Distinctions in L2 French Classroom Learning¹

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Abstract: The present study analyzes the development of aspectual markers (i.e., *passé composé* / *imparfait*) in French as a second language (French L2) among college-level students. Thirty-nine English-speaking students enrolled in a second semester course in French and 30 native speakers performed two tasks: a cloze test and a written narration of a short film. Students' use of grammatical aspect was examined in terms of the inherent semantic aspect of each verb phrase (e.g., Dowty, 1979; Vendler, 1967). Analysis of the narrative reveals that learners marked verb endings according to the telic or atelic nature of the verbal phrase. Findings from the cloze test indicate that learners showed native-like judgements in the use of prototypical grammatical aspect (i.e., correspondence of lexical and grammatical aspect) but avoided the use of non-prototypical grammatical aspect with stative verbs. This study shows that (1) classroom instruction may increase the rate at which learners develop past tense aspectual marking (prototypical value); and (2) lack of access to L2 discursive-pragmatic conditions may prevent learners from achieving an adequate grasp of the target-language value of aspectual viewpoints.

Résumé : Cet article analyse le développement de la morphologie aspectuelle (c'est-à-dire le passé composé/l'imparfait) en français langue seconde chez des étudiants universitaires. Trente-neuf étudiants inscrits dans un cours universitaire de deuxième semestre et trente francophones ont effectué deux tâches : un test de closure et une narration écrite d'un court film. L'usage de l'aspect grammatical a été examiné selon la valeur aspectuelle sémantique de chaque phrase verbale (par exemple, Dowty, 1979 ; Vendler, 1967). L'analyse des narrations montre que les étudiants sélectionnent des terminaisons verbales selon le facteur conclusif/non-conclusif de la phrase verbale. Les résultats du test de closure indiquent que les sélections des étudiants ressemblent à celles des francophones pour ce qui est de l'usage de l'aspect grammatical prototypique (c'est-à-dire la correspondance entre l'aspect lexical et grammatical), mais ils évitent

l'utilisation de l'aspect grammatical non-prototypique. Cette étude montre que (1) l'enseignement académique peut accélérer le régime de développement de l'usage des terminaisons verbales de temps passé (prototypique), et (2) le manque d'accès aux conditions discursives-pragmatiques peut affecter l'apprentissage des valeurs subjectives et des valeurs aspectuelles d'une langue seconde.

Introduction

The accurate use of the tense-aspect system of the Romance languages is notoriously difficult for English-speaking learners (cf. Andersen, 1986; Hasbún, 1995; Ramsay, 1990; Salaberry, 1997 for L2 Spanish; and Bergström, 1995; Harley, 1989; Kaplan, 1987 for L2 French).² English-speaking students generally view the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* in French as random or arbitrary, despite the fact that English also marks aspect in past tense. For example, the English phrases *I was baking a cake* and *I baked a cake* convey progressive and perfective aspect respectively. English does not mark past-tense aspect by means of inflectional morphology (verbal endings) like the Romance languages, but rather by means of periphrastics.³ In contrast, the following sentences in French mark past-tense aspectual distinctions with the use of *passé simple* or *imparfait* (overt morphological marking of aspect on verbal endings):

1. Il régna pendant trente ans.
2. Il régnait pendant trente ans. (Comrie, 1976, p. 13)

Both of these sentences may equally be translated in English as 'He reigned for 30 years.' Hence, (1) how does the L1 English speaker develop the notion of aspectual distinction exemplified in examples 1 and 2?; and (2) how is the evolution of such a process affected by academic instruction? This paper presents the results of a study analyzing the selection and use of past-tense aspectual markers in L2 French by L1 English speakers enrolled in a second semester academic course, including a discussion of the results of this study in the context of previous research findings.

Aspect

Aspect is the relation between a situation and its associated interval on the time line (e.g., Binnick, 1991; Comrie, 1976; Dowty, 1979, 1986; Smith, 1991). Aspect, unlike tense, is not a deictic category because it is

not relative to the time of the utterance (but see Chung & Timberlake, 1985, and Klein, 1994, for an alternative position). Comrie (1976, p. 5) points out that aspect is concerned with situation-internal time, whereas tense is relative to situation-external time. As shown in Table 1, aspectual distinctions can be marked explicitly (grammatical aspect) or not (inherent aspect).

The inherent meaning of the verb is determined by the temporal features intrinsic in the semantics of the predicate in its unmarked, lexical form. Vendler (1967) classified verbs into four types according to inherent lexical aspect: states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. Table 2 presents a list of prototypical verbs within each category.

States have no input of energy (e.g., *to be*, *to have*); activities are processes and have arbitrary beginning and end points (e.g., *to run*, *to paint*); accomplishments are durative and have inherent end points (e.g., *to run a mile*, *to paint a painting*); and achievements have inherent end points but are punctual (e.g., *to reach the top*, *to break a leg*). The classification of types of verbs can also be made in terms of three basic semantic features: dynamicity, telicity, and durativity. Dynamicity contrasts stative (non-dynamic) verbs with non-stative verbs (activities, accomplishments, and achievements). Telic events have an inherent end point; hence, telicity separates states and activities (atelic) from accomplishments and achievements (telic). Finally, only achievements are non-durative (punctual). It is important to point out that lexical aspectual

TABLE 1
Classification of aspectual distinctions in French (based on Binnick, 1991:170-71)

| Grammatical Aspect | Aristotelian Aspect |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| grammaticalized | lexical |
| systematic | unsystematic |
| obligatory | obligatory |

TABLE 2
Classification of some verbs according to lexical aspectual class (from Andersen, 1991)

| States | Activities | Accomplishments | Achievements |
|---------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| have | Run | paint a picture | recognize (sth) |
| possess | walk | make a chair | realize (sth) |
| desire | swim | build a house | find (sth) |
| like | breathe | write a novel | win the race |
| want | pull | grow up | lose (sth) |

classes are determined not only by the verb itself but also by its subcategorization grid (internal and external arguments) and adjuncts.

Grammatical aspect is obligatorily encoded in the form of auxiliaries plus participles (*passé composé*), inflectional morphology (*imparfait*), periphrastics (progressive), etc. In French, the perfective past tense (*passé composé*) presents the temporal situation as a single unanalyzable whole, with beginning, middle, and end together, whereas the past tense imperfective (*imparfait*) presents the internal temporal structure of the same situation (Comrie, 1976). Grammatical aspect may alter the inherent semantic contour of each verb (Smith, 1991). The prototypical value of past-tense aspect is determined by cases in which the lexical aspectual value of the verb and the grammatical encoding of aspect coincide: Andersen's congruence principle. The non-prototypical value is represented by cases in which the aspectual inflection is in direct contradiction with lexical aspect (see Taylor, 1989, for an analysis of prototypes in linguistic theory).⁴

The development of aspectual distinctions in the L2

From pragmatic to morpho-syntactic marking of aspect

The data from several studies on natural language learners reveal that most learners mark temporality by means of linguistic and extralinguistic devices during the beginning stages of acquisition (approximately two years) (Dietrich, Klein, & Noyau, 1995; Meisel, 1987; Perdue & Klein, 1992; Sato, 1990; Schumann, 1987; Trévisé, 1987; Véronique, 1987). For example, Schumann argues that during the first stages of acquisition (Schumann's 'basilang stage') L2 speakers do not mark aspectual distinctions morphologically in their interlanguage. Schumann analyzed the interlanguage of five speakers of three different languages (one Chinese, one Japanese, and three Spanish) who had been living in the United States for at least 10 years at the time of the study. The subjects had learned English without formal instruction.⁵ In spite of their length of residence in the United States, the interlanguage of these non-native speakers was quite marginal, if comprehensible at all (data samples from pp. 30-37). Schumann argues that basilang speech 'is acquired through the pragmatic functions of the mind's general cognitive mechanisms and therefore does not attain morpho-syntactic regularity' (p. 39). Basilang speech constitutes a system of communication: the formal linguistic features of the interlanguage will develop to the extent that communication does not break down. For instance, morpho-syntactic aspectual markers will not be a

necessary feature of this type of interlanguage insofar as other temporal markers fulfil the function of marking aspect in some other way. Schumann argues that basilectal learners mark temporal reference with four basic linguistic tools: adverbials, serialization (sequence of utterances reflects actual temporal order of events), calendric reference, and implicit reference (temporal reference is inferred from context). Schumann's data show that ten or more years of residence in the United States are not enough to enable a natural learner to learn to use past-tense inflectional morphology in English. In relative terms, classroom learners learn faster than natural learners.

Classroom learners also use alternative means of temporal reference instead of tense or aspect morphology. For example, Ramsay (1990, p. 202) argues that during the beginning stages of instruction, students use a process of relexification of their native language to communicate in the L2. What is interesting is that classroom students eventually incorporate past-tense aspectual distinctions into their interlanguage system by sheer pressure to comply with target language norms (e.g., Bergström, 1995; Hasbún, 1995; Ramsay 1990). In other words, it is not the pressure to communicate, per se, that forces learners to incorporate morpho-syntactic markers of aspect to their system (e.g., Dietrich et al., 1995; Sato, 1990; Schumann, 1987). If what distinguishes basilectal speakers (from two to ten years of exposure to the L2) from classroom learners (from two to four semesters of instruction on average) is the type of linguistic environment, we have to conclude that classroom instruction is quite successful. So how do classroom students learn to redundantly mark temporality (tense and aspect) in the verb?

The lexical aspect hypothesis

The development of past-tense verbal morphology has been tied to the inherent lexical value of the verb (e.g., Andersen, 1986, 1991, 1994; Andersen & Shirai, 1994; Robison, 1990, 1995). The lexical aspect hypothesis is based on the assumption that learners distinguish completed events (achievements and accomplishments) from simultaneous processes (activities) and both from states. The lexical aspect hypothesis was originally proposed by Andersen (1986), based on data collected from adolescent natural language learners (two siblings). For example, Anthony, an English-speaking adolescent in Puerto Rico, learned L2 Spanish outside of school with his friends; his schooling was in English. Two samples of Anthony's speech were collected in 1978 and 1980 respectively. In 1978 Anthony had already spent two years in Puerto Rico and had no difficulty in interacting with his

Spanish-speaking friends. At that time, Andersen notes, 50% of the verbs used by Anthony in contexts requiring obligatory past tense/perfective aspect were marked as such. On the other hand, none of the verbs requiring imperfective carried any mark of grammatical aspect. In 1980 Anthony used the preterite in 88% of all cases requiring perfective aspect, whereas the imperfect was used in only 43% of all obligatory cases. Most verbs describing punctual events were marked with the perfective aspect, whereas verbs marking states or durative events were not marked in 1978 and were marked only to a certain extent in 1980.

Andersen (1986, 1991) proposed a stable sequence of developmental stages for the acquisition of aspectual marking among L2 learners: the use of imperfective markers spreads from stative verbs to non-stative verbs, and the use of perfective markers spreads from punctual verbs (achievements) to non-punctual verbs. This gradual spread of the use of grammatical aspect according to verb type occurs sequentially in time in eight stages (1991, p. 315). At stage 1, learners mark neither past tense nor aspect; at stage 2 the use of the preterite is encoded in punctual verbs only; at stage 3, prototypical stative verbs appear in imperfect forms. At stage 4 the preterite spreads to accomplishment verbs, while the imperfect spreads to activity verbs: all verbs are now marked by inherent aspect in past tense. At stage 5 the use of verbal morphology begins to overlap within each verb type: accomplishments (telic events) can now be marked by imperfect or preterite. At stage 6 activities can be used with perfective or imperfective aspect, and at stage 7, punctual events can be marked by either imperfect or preterite. Stage 8 constitutes the end of the sequence: stative verbs can be encoded in perfective aspect.

The discourse hypothesis

If the sequential development of aspect in French is determined by the natural use of *passé composé* or *imparfait* in normal discourse (contextualized), it is not clear why classroom learners would follow the same developmental sequences as natural learners. If students do not have access to natural pieces of discourse, it is unlikely that the normal distribution of aspectual markers in the target language will guide learners in their use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* in French (cf. Andersen, 1994; Wiberg, 1996). Few empirical studies have addressed the nature of a possible distributional bias in the use of aspectual distinctions in classroom instruction, and of those few Kaplan's (1987) data were based on a single class meeting, while Swain (1992) investi-

gated data from an immersion program for adolescents. Alternatively, it is possible to maintain the hypothesis that classroom learners mark verbal morphology endings according to lexical aspect, if we assume that telic and atelic events are correlated with narrative structure (foreground versus background).

Several researchers have investigated the use of aspectual distinctions in the past tense from the perspective of narrative structure as a powerful predictor of aspectual use. Reid (1980) argues that aspect can be better understood from the perspective of *high* and *low focus* on the particular situations that comprise the narration (textual structure). Wallace (1982) makes a similar argument based on the distinction of *figure* and *ground*, and claims that this psychological distinction is part of an innate, universal perceptual distinction. Givón (1982) argues that the semantic characterization of aspectual markers may also be associated with discourse-pragmatic functions. Vet and Veters (1994, p. 1) argue that the meaning of tense and aspect forms 'strongly depends on contextual factors and probably on the type of text as well, so that tense and aspect cannot be properly studied if their contribution to text cohesion is not taken into account.' Finally, Hopper (1982, p. 16) argues that the nature of aspectual distinctions in languages like French cannot be characterized by semantics in a consistent way; the adequate reference may only come from a global discourse function (see also García & van Putte, 1988, for the analysis of Spanish data).

However, there is an inherent overlap between the prediction offered by the discourse-based approach and that offered by the account based on the lexical semantic value of the predicate, since completed events and punctual events sometimes define the notion of foreground (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Lafford; 1996; Reinhart, 1984). Reinhart lists the temporal and textual criteria that mark the notion of foreground: narrativity (only textual/narrative units can serve as foreground); punctuality (punctual events serve more easily as foreground); and completeness (completed events serve more easily as foreground). Bardovi-Harlig also considers the feature of 'newness' (new information is more relevant for the foreground).⁶

The role of conventional aspectual values

The recent account offered by Andersen and Shirai (1994) of the development of aspectual distinctions in L2 learning points in the direction of discursive-pragmatic factors (as opposed to discursive structure only) as the ultimate determinant of the acquisition of aspect in an L2. Andersen and Shirai argue that the 'relevance principle' (i.e.,

aspect is more relevant to the meaning of the verb than tense, mood, or agreement) and the 'congruence principle' (i.e., learners choose the morpheme whose aspectual meaning is most congruent with the aspectual meaning of the verb) 'are especially sensitive to discourse-pragmatic function. Verbs and inflections are chosen to fulfil the needs of the speaker in ongoing discourse ...' (p. 147). Furthermore, according to the distributional bias hypothesis (DBH), native speakers and learners have a 'communicative need to distinguish reference to the main point/goal of talk from supporting information' (p. 152). However, the nature of communication is inherently tied to cultural conventions – and so is the choice of the marked values of aspect. As Binnick (1991) puts it, 'the problem comes when we try to understand what it is that the speaker of a language with aspectual oppositions knows which a non-speaker does not know, and consider how to model this knowledge in the grammar' (p. 209). In essence, we want to find out how the native speaker conventionally prefers certain marked choices of verbal morphology over unmarked ones.

The problem faced by classroom learners, then, is not necessarily whether they will distinguish foreground from background information, or whether they will pay attention to verbal morphology (e.g., contrast *passé composé* and *imparfait*), but, rather, whether they will be able to acquire the conventional values associated with morphological marking in the target language. Wallace (1982, p. 217) has identified this problem in the following way: 'Gestalt theory makes strong claims about universal innate perceptual mechanisms, while *acquired individual, social, and cultural dispositions clearly play a role in determining, among other things, perceived figures and grounds* (emphasis added).' Specific evidence for this phenomenon comes from Coppieters (1987), who presented native and non-native speakers of French with decontextualized sentences of the following type:

1. *J'ai très souvent mangé/Je mangeais très souvent.*
(I ate very often/I would eat very often)
2. *Quand j'étais chez ma tante, [je racontais/j'ai raconté] plusieurs fois mes aventures.*
(When I was at my aunt's [I would tell/I told] my adventures many times)
3. *En 1885, Victor Hugo [mourait/est mort].*
(In 1885 Victor Hugo [was dying/died]) (p. 559)

Coppieters states that 'all NS's indicated that they felt a strong and marked contrast between the *imparfait* and the *passé composé* in the sen-

tences included in this section' (p. 559). Native speakers used mostly *passé composé* with sentences 1 and 2 and *imparfait* with sentence 3. Undoubtedly, native speakers were accessing a huge database which provides a context for the adequate interpretation of these apparently decontextualized sentences. Whatever the nature of the information base of the native speakers, their judgements were homogeneous. On the other hand, the judgements of the non-native speakers were heterogeneous, and hence ambivalent (non-native-like). Coppieters judged the results of his test sentences on the basis of homogeneity of responses only, because any one of the two possible answers for the sentences above (*passé composé* or *imparfait*) is grammatically valid. That is to say, the responses of the non-native speakers were not wrong per se, although they were not homogeneous across subjects because they lacked access to the same discursive environment that characterizes the responses of native speakers.

The conventions of use represent the type of information that the native speaker may not share with the non-native speaker, and thus are an area where the discrepancies between the two may surface. Smith (1991) argues that

the speaker expresses a given aspectual meaning according to the grammar of the language and the conventions of use for that language. The grammar of a language relates linguistic forms to meanings. *The conventions involve standard and marked choices, shared information between speaker and receiver, and other pragmatic considerations* [italics added]. The conventions are principles for language use rather than rules. They have the flexibility characteristic of rules of text and conversation, unlike the relatively firm rules of sentence grammar.' (p. 12)⁷

In essence, the system of aspectual distinctions developed by classroom students may not necessarily coincide with the developmental stages representative of natural language learners (e.g., Andersen, 1986, 1991) – especially in terms of the expected development of the marked forms (stages 5 to 8 of Table 2).⁸ In sum, previous theoretical analyses and empirical studies show that (1) adult L2 learners are cognitively capable of narrating stories set in past-tense contexts (e.g., Dietrich et al., 1995; Schumann, 1987); (2) narratives among both native and non-native speakers are structured along the lines of figure and ground (unmarked aspectual value) (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Kumpf, 1984; Meisel, 1987; Reinhart, 1984); (3) untutored learners mark figure and ground (mostly) with pragmatic devices and tutored learners (mostly) with morpho-syntactic means (e.g., Dietrich et al., 1995; Sato,

1990; Schumann, 1987; Trévisé, 1987); (4) marked aspectual values reflect conventional choices made by speakers who share a common background, whether it be determined by linguistic or by cognitive-linguistic factors (e.g., Andersen, 1994; Coppieters, 1987; Ramsay, 1989); and (5) classroom learners do not have access to the distributional bias of aspectual oppositions (cf. marked values) present in native speakers' discourse (e.g., Andersen, 1994; Andersen & Shirai, 1994; Wiberg, 1996). Based on items (1) and (2) we can predict that classroom learners will be able to distinguish foreground versus background in their narratives. Based on item (3) we can predict that tutored learners will focus on morphological means to mark temporality in the L2. Finally, based on items (4) and (5) we may assume that non-native speakers will have difficulties with the selection of marked choices of aspect.

The acquisition of French aspect in tutored settings

The few published studies on the acquisition of past-tense morphological endings in academic L2 French show support for the argument put forth in the previous section. For instance, Kaplan (1987) used a semi-structured oral interview procedure with 16 learners of L2 French to study the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* among beginning and intermediate university students. In Kaplan's study, *passé composé* was attempted more often, and was relatively more accurately used, among third- and fourth-semester students, but not among first- or second-semester students. The first-year students did not overtly mark aspectual differences in past tense to a noticeable level.⁹ Kaplan argues that a combination of several factors could account for the higher use and accuracy of the perfective form. First, Kaplan argues that the order of presentation of aspectual differences in the pedagogical syllabus favours the appearance of *passé composé* first (at least for the subjects this study). Second, the perfective aspect is more salient in form when represented in French *passé composé* (compound verb). Third, the semantic complexity of the *imparfait*, which represents more than one aspect (durative, iterative, habitual, etc.), increases the demands on cognitive processing. Fourth, many instances of the use of *passé composé* occur in holistic phrases learned as 'chunks' (e.g., *je suis allé, comment ça s'est passé?*). Fifth, *passé composé* is used more often than *imparfait* in classroom discourse. Kaplan computed the number of instances that participating teachers used *passé composé* versus *imparfait* in all contexts requiring past tense marking: 84% of the time the instructors used *passé composé*. In terms of grammatical complexity, on

the other hand, *passé composé* is more difficult than *imparfait*: the *imparfait* has regular forms, whereas the *passé composé* requires the use of two different auxiliaries and many irregular past participles.

Bergström (1995) analyzed written narratives from 117 L2 French learners at three levels of instruction from the perspective of the lexical aspect hypothesis. Bergström's data 'show firm use of the *passé composé* not only with accomplishments and achievements but with all three dynamic verbs (activities, accomplishments, achievements) regardless of level' (p. 153). To explain these results, Bergström conjectures that the acquisition of *passé composé* may occur rapidly: since there were very few true beginners among her subjects, Bergström argues that her data were not able to track the development of the use of *passé composé* in L2 French. Bergström explains that the *passé composé* 'has several indications for the learner that it is solidly a past tense while the imperfect does not have any besides a weak temporal one in a certain context that is dissociated from speech' (p. 164). As for the effects of instruction in a communication-based syllabus, Harley (1989) found mixed results. The students who participated in her study – grade 6 immersion students – received 8 weeks of instruction on the use of *passé composé* versus *imparfait* and were tested twice after the end of the instructional period: immediately after instruction and three months later. To measure past-tense aspectual distinctions in L2 French, Harley used a free composition, a cloze test, and an oral interview. Harley's results show a positive effect for the productive distinction of *passé composé* and *imparfait* in the tests administered immediately after instruction; however, no effect was found in the delayed post-test. This is an interesting finding for two reasons. First, these data come from a relatively free production task (at least two of Harley's assessment instruments). Second, it seems that pedagogical manipulations of the input data cannot affect the natural sequence of the acquisition of L2 grammar.

The present study

A review of empirical studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect raises several important questions that need to be addressed. Should we assume that adult classroom learners will develop their L2 grammar in the same way as an adolescent in the natural environment? Is the contextualized use of the target language essential for processing the inherent aspect of each verb? Will formal instruction (i.e., in a classroom setting) help L2 learners notice the most important features of the aspectual system of French? Can classroom language instruction

help learners speed up the acquisition of aspectual differences in the L2 (e.g., Andersen's subjects spent more than two years to incorporate a minimal distinction of past-tense aspect in Spanish)?

Hypotheses

Based on the review of previous research, two assumptions were made for this study: (1) Classroom learners do not have access to the rich, contextualized linguistic environment of 'natural' communicative situations in the target language. The traditional type of academic instruction is likely to distort the normal distribution of occurrences of grammatical aspect in the target language because classroom discourse is not representative of most non-academic discursive environments (distributional bias hypothesis). As a consequence, the relative weight of occurrences of *passé composé* and *imparfait* will be determined by semantico-conceptual universals (relevance principle and congruence principle). (2) Classroom learners develop an unstable grammatical system (academic environment) that depends on the amount of conscious attention given to language form (grammatical syllabus). Different language tasks require different degrees of attention (e.g., Ellis, 1987; Ochs, 1979; Tarone, 1983, 1985, 1988). An unstable linguistic system breaks down when the students are immersed in a communicative situation that places high cognitive demands on both meaning and form.

Based on these assumptions two hypotheses guided this study:

1. H₁: English-speaking students learning French in a classroom setting and French native speakers will differ in their use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* in the target language. The L2 students will favour the use of inherent lexical aspect.
2. H₂: Classroom learners of French will perform better in the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* in a cloze test than in a free narration task (more attention to form determined by fewer demands on cognitive processing). Native speakers will not differ in their use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* from task to task.

Subjects

The subject pool consisted of a total of 69 college students: 39 English-speaking students enrolled in a second-semester college-level French course (FRE122) at Cornell University, and 30 native speakers of French enrolled in the French teaching program at McGill University.

The FRE122 students used the textbook *Deux Mondes* (Terrell, Rogers, Barnes, & Wolff-Hessini, 1993). This textbook presents the uses of *imparfait* and *passé composé* in four of its 12 chapters. In chapter 6 there is a direct reference to the concept of inherent lexical meaning with respect to the likelihood of using *imparfait* versus *passé composé* with stative verbs and *passé composé* with punctual verbs (p. 242). By the time of the study (the end of the semester), all chapters from *Deux Mondes* had been covered. Apart from the material in the textbook, the students watched the pedagogical video *La Marée*. The weekly workload for the FRE122 students included four hours of language practice with a teaching assistant and a one-hour lecture with the coordinator of the course. Thirty francophones taking courses at McGill University participated in the study as the control group. All subjects were informed of the study in advance and were given the option of withdrawing at any time during the study. The data collected were anonymous, although all participants had to sign a consent form authorizing the analysis of the data. The consent form was separated from the testing packet when the materials were collected to ensure the anonymity of all subjects.

All subjects completed a questionnaire with information about their academic background. The FRE122 students' average experience with French in high school and college was 1.74 years and 1.66 semesters respectively. Outside of class, they devoted 3.92 hours each week, on average, to studying French. The students were also asked to provide a self-assessment of their participation in the course they were taking, as well as an overall assessment of their proficiency in French. On a scale of 5 (where 1 was lowest and 5 highest), the average score for course proficiency was 3.66; for overall proficiency it was 2.46.¹⁰ In the control group, 28 of the 30 francophones grew up using French in both home and school environments, while the remaining two had used French at home only.¹¹ All native speakers of French were fluent in English as well.

Materials

Two tasks were employed to assess the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* by native speakers and non-native speakers: a discourse-based cloze test (task 1) and a free written narration of a video clip (task 2). The passage used for the first part of the study (task 1) was an excerpt from an interview in the magazine *Paris Match*. The selected passage contained a high number of uses of both *passé composé* and *imparfait* associated with the four types of verbs (Vendler's classification),

although statives and achievement verbs were predominant. The distributional bias hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994) implies that both *passé composé* and *imparfait* can be used with any type of verb, although the use of *imparfait* with achievement verbs, and of *passé composé* with stative verbs, are marked. In spite of that range of marked and unmarked uses of aspect, the length of the passage was appropriate for use in regular class time (see Appendix A). The original text was not changed, except that choices of *passé composé* or *imparfait* were added to create a grammaticality judgement task and minor adjustments of were made to the vocabulary to render it accessible to the students of a second-semester French course.¹² There were 41 items in total. The second task was the free narration of a film shown on videotape (see Appendix B). The particular film selected for this study was the 6-minute film used in Chafé, 1980, which reports on narratives from native speakers of English and Greek.

Procedure

All testing was conducted during regular class hours. The order of presentation of the tasks (cloze test versus free narration) was counterbalanced to control for any effects of order of presentation. All subjects received a packet of instructions with a cover page which was used as the consent form authorizing the researcher to analyze the data. The packet contained a multiple-choice questionnaire to gather information about academic background and previous exposure to French in other settings; the text used in the cloze test (see Appendix A); and the instructions for the narration of the film (see Appendix B). For the cloze test, the students were given 12 minutes to complete the task and did not receive any special help. For the narration task, the FRE122 students received a list of nouns and verbs depicting some elements or actions present in the film to ensure that all subjects could complete the task.¹³ The participants watched the six-minute video tape only once to decrease the amount of planning time (Ellis, 1987; Ochs, 1979; Tarone, 1983, 1985, 1988). They were told in advance that they would be asked to tell the story after they had seen the film. After the film was shown, the students were asked to produce a written narrative in 15 minutes. All students finished the task in the allotted time.

Scoring

All verb phrases from both tasks were classified according to (1) morphological marking (*passé composé* and *imparfait*) and (2) lexical

aspect (achievements, accomplishments, activities, and states).¹⁴ The classification of verb phrases according to verbal morphology was straightforward: the use of *imparfait* or *passé composé* was assigned one of two possible values (arbitrarily 0 for *imparfait* and 1 for *passé composé*). This binary system produced a series of proportions of use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* for each item.

All verbs were also classified into the four categories of lexical aspectual classes established by Vendler. The classification of each verb in terms of inherent semantic aspect was done by the researcher in accordance with two different sets of operational tests: Bergström (1995) and Vendler (1967). Two sets of tests from Vendler were central to the present analysis: the distinction between activity and accomplishment and the distinction between state and achievement. To distinguish between activities and accomplishments, Vendler presents an operational test based on questioning the predicate of the sentence (test of telicity). For example, drawing a circle is an accomplishment, but pushing a cart is an activity. Hence, the question *For how long did you push the cart?* (activity) is 'grammatical' whereas *How long did it take to push the cart?* (no end point established) sounds odd. The opposite result with the same questions reveals that drawing a circle is an accomplishment (pp. 100–101). The verbs lacking continuous tenses (states and achievements) can be classified in a similar way. Hence, achievements are determined by the question *At what time did you reach the top?* *At noon sharp*, whereas for states the pertinent question is *For how long did you love her?* *For three years* (pp. 102–103).

Bergström's tests were specifically developed for the analysis of French. The tests are based on the use of verbal predicates in the following contexts: *être en train de* (to be in the process of) and *en x minutes* (in x minutes). Table 3 shows the type of outcome expected from each test: asterisks indicate that the verb fails to classify as a member of that category. As we can see, Test 1 negatively specifies states and achievements, whereas test 2 characterizes accomplishments only.¹⁵

TABLE 3
Test used to determine lexical aspect for French (from Bergström 1995)

| | States | Activities | Accomplishments | Achievements |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>être en train de</i> | * | Yes | Yes | * |
| <i>en x minutes</i> | * | * | Yes | * |

In addition, the following general criteria were used in the scoring procedure of the *narrative task*:

1. The cases where there was conflictive (incorrect) double marking of aspect (e.g., the combined use of an auxiliary signalling *passé composé* and the morphological ending of *imparfait* in the main verb) were not considered for the analysis of the data. Examples like the following were eliminated from the analysis, as they were ambiguous with respect to the morphological marking of past tense aspect:

?il était ramassé les poires (NNS #4)

?il a jouait (NNS #5)

However, only 5 tokens were eliminated because of this problem.

2. Various mistakes in the choice of auxiliary or the incorrect use of participle endings were disregarded. Phrases like '*le garçon a prendre ...*' (instead of the appropriate '*le garçon a pris ...*' ['the boy took']) were accepted as correct instantiations of overt morphological marking of aspect (NNS #19).
3. The use of *passé simple* (simple preterite) among native speakers was considered as equivalent to *passé composé* with regards to past tense aspectual marking, since the *passé simple* stands in opposition to *imparfait* as a marker of aspect in more formal contexts (the use of *passé simple* is common in written as opposed to spoken narratives).
4. Modals were considered as the actual predicate that signals inherent lexical meaning. For example, '*... il devait emplier ...*' (NS #4) was counted under the category for the verb *devoir* (must), and not under *emplir* (to fill).

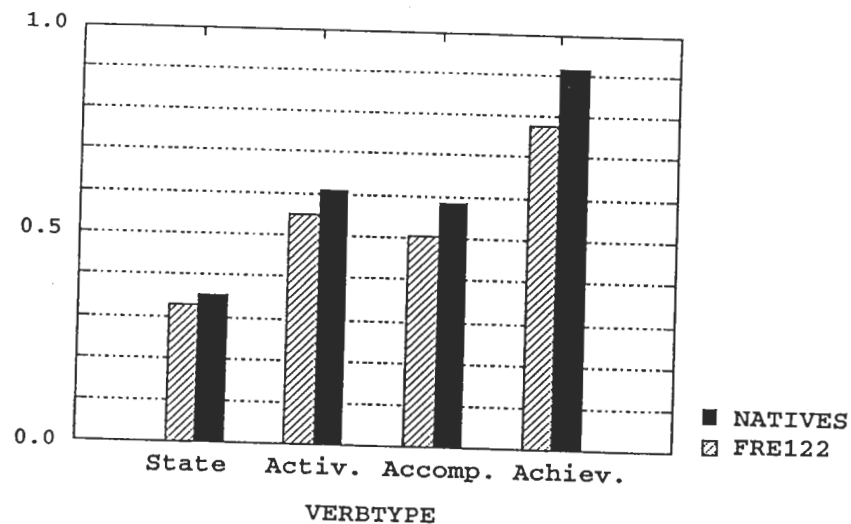
Data analysis

Task 1 (Cloze test)

The distribution of use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* (raw scores) from task 1, the cloze test, is presented in graphical form in Figure 1. As mentioned before, a score of 0 corresponds to the choice of imperfective and a score of 1 represents the choice of perfective. The data are presented as proportions of aspectual selection (between 0 and 1) within each verb type among all subjects. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability of all test items combined is 0.82.

The analysis of Figure 1 reveals that (1) both native speakers and non-native speakers tend to use grammatical aspect (*passé composé* or *imparfait*) according to the distribution of inherent semantic aspect (distributional bias), and (2) native and non-native speakers coincide

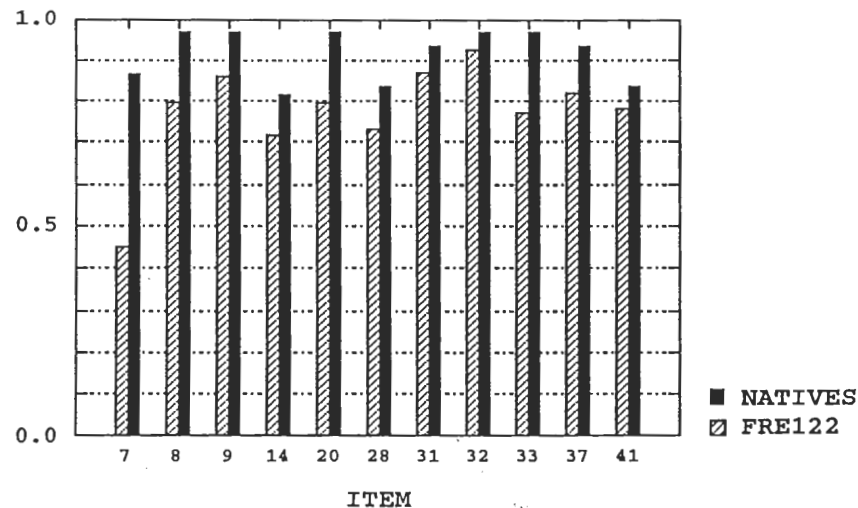
FIGURE 1

Distribution of *passé composé/imparfait* in cloze test by group.

in their choice of aspectual marking in all categories. This is especially true for stative and achievement verbs because the majority of the verbs used in the text are of those types: 18 and 11 tokens respectively (29 out of a total of 41 tokens, or approximately 75%). The results of an ANOVA test of statistical significance (factorial design with four types of verbs and two native languages) show a significant main effect for type of verb ($F(3, 82) = 19.012, p = 0.001$), but no significant main effect for native language ($F(1, 82) = 1.459, p = 0.231$). Also there were no significant interactions between native language and type of verb ($F(3, 82) = 0.240, p = 0.868$). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that the scores for achievements differ from those for accomplishments ($p = 0.023$), activities ($p = 0.009$), and statives ($p = 0.001$), and that statives differ from activities ($p = 0.010$). The results by item and verb type are presented in graphical form in Figures 2 through 5.

Analysis of the results for achievement verbs does not reveal any inconsistencies with the previous analysis: there is a high degree of equivalence in the judgements of both groups for all verbs in this category (with the exception of item 7). In effect, the data from both native and non-native speakers' judgements show a strong tendency to favour the unmarked form of aspectual marking with achievement

FIGURE 2

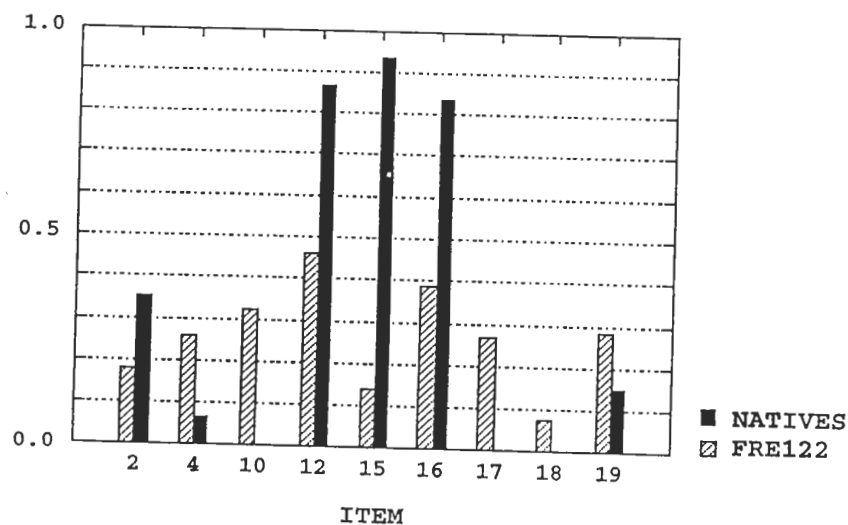
Distribution of *passé composé/imparfait* in cloze test by group.

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 7 = to stop | 14 = to question | 31 = to find | 37 = to depart |
| 8 = to register | 20 = to choose | 32 = to request | 41 = to give |
| 9 = to request | 28 = to take responsibility | 33 = to depart | |

verbs (*passé composé*). None of the items show any significant support for the marked form (*imparfait*).¹⁶ This is an expected outcome if the sole criterion that subjects use in their selection of overt aspectual marking is the inherent semantic aspect of the verb.¹⁷ For item 7, however, the non-native speakers' scores fall in the middle range of the proportions of *passé composé* and *imparfait* (around the 0.5 value). The scores falling on the 0.5 value range represent an ambivalence of judgement, revealing that the subjects are not sure about the grammatical aspect associated with those verbs in the contexts in which they are embedded (cf. Coppieters, 1987). Notice that none of the scores of the native speakers (for achievement verbs) falls within the 'uncertainty range' of 0.5.

The analysis of the results for stative verbs presents a distinct outcome from the one for achievement verbs: in several cases, the judgements of native and non-native speakers do not coincide. In general, the FRE122 students show a strong tendency to use *imparfait*

FIGURE 3
Distribution of use of *passé composé/imparfait* for state verbs per individual item

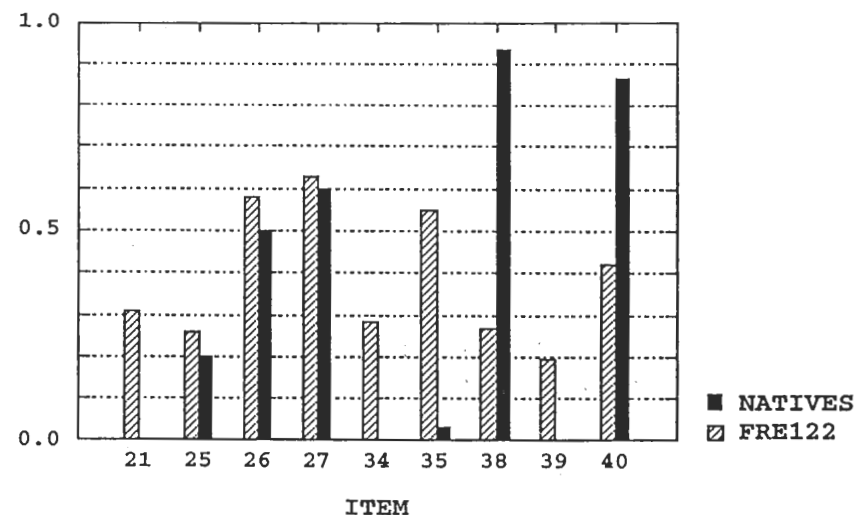


2 = to be 12 = to be 17 = to be
4 = to have 15 = to be 18 = to be
10 = to want 16 = to have 19 = to be

with stative verbs, in close adherence to the value of the inherent semantic aspect of these verbs. This tendency is quite apparent in several items where the native speakers clearly preferred the marked form (*passé composé*): 12, 15, 16, 38, and 40. The only item which contradicts the abovementioned tendency is item 35 – the only verb in this text accompanied by an auxiliary – in which native speakers strongly preferred the unmarked case, whereas non-native speakers selected the marked choice. Finally, notice that items 26 and 27 show a close parallel in the native and non-native speakers' selection of aspectual marking: all scores fall in the uncertainty range of 0.5. It seems that, with these two items only, either aspectual marker is appropriate, judging by the fact that native speakers do not take a categorical stand.¹⁸

The results for accomplishment verbs are presented in Figure 4. The few items which belong to this category do not warrant an extended analysis. However, notice that non-native speakers preferred the

FIGURE 3A
Distribution of use of *passé composé/imparfait* for state verbs per individual item.

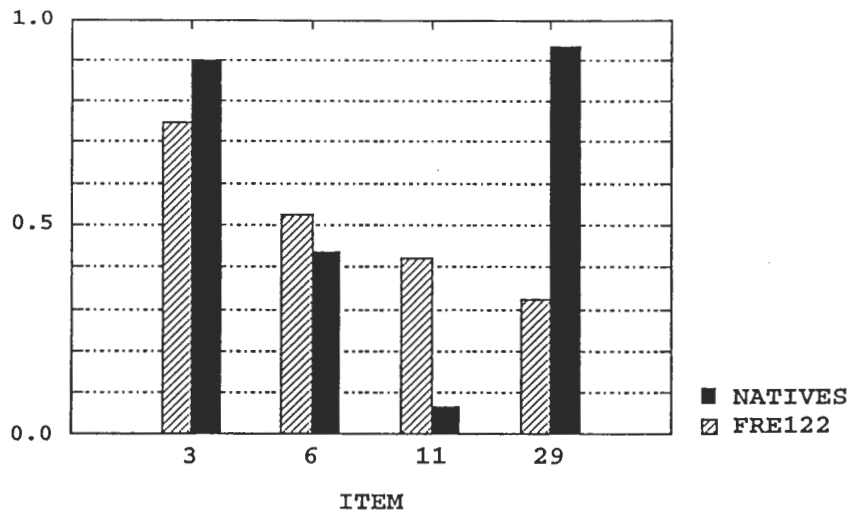


marked combination (*imparfait* with telic event) with item 29 (*faire peur*: to scare), whereas native speakers used the unmarked choice. The results for activity verbs are presented in Figure 5. Two of the most conspicuous items are 23 and 30: both are tokens of the verb *penser* (to think). It is clear that the consistent selection of the non-prototypical marking of grammatical aspect (against the value of inherent aspect) cannot be explained by the lexical aspect hypothesis alone. Analysis from a narrativity perspective may provide a possible answer to this problem.¹⁹

Task 2 (Narration)

Both native and non-native speakers used mostly past-tense marking in their narratives, as requested in the instructions.²⁰ A total of 1200 tokens of past-tense verbs were analyzed in the written narratives of all subjects (see Appendix C). Table 4 presents a distribution of all verb types, discriminated by lexical aspectual classes within each group of subjects. It is important to point out that the analysis of four randomly selected narratives from each group showed that several

FIGURE 4
Distribution of use of *passé composé/imparfait* for accomplishment verbs per item.



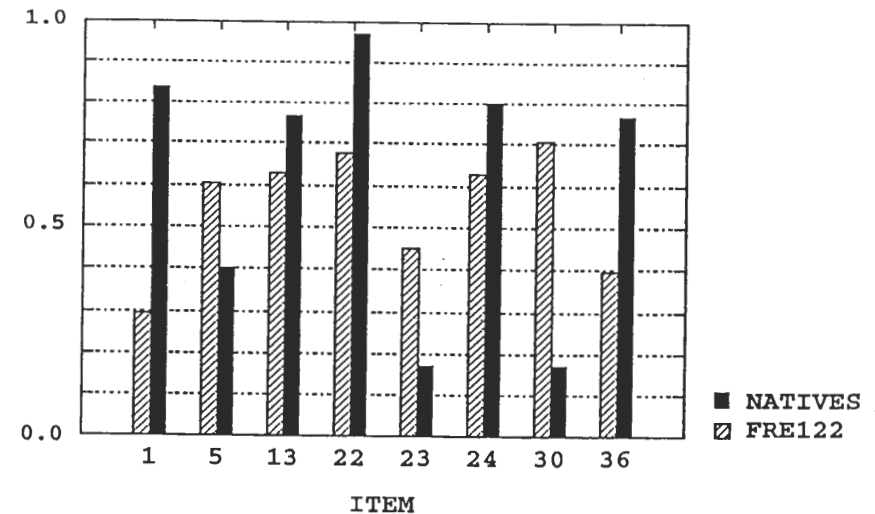
3 = to go 6 = to make 11 = to regroup 29 = to scare

verbs categorized as activity according to the operational tests become telic verbs when pragmatic and discursive factors are taken into account. Hence, telicity has an even stronger effect when contextual information beyond the verb phrase is considered. In essence, the foreground-background distinction may strongly affect the selection of verbal morphology: *passé composé* advances narrative time, while *imparfait* does not (Dry, 1983).

Despite the fact that native speakers used a wider selection of verb types – roughly twice as many as non-native speakers – it is remarkable that the distribution of verb types across lexical aspectual classes is very similar, in terms of percentages within each group. The distribution of all verb tokens according to lexical aspectual classes is presented in Table 5.

Several tendencies are clear in these data. First, the narratives of the native speakers were not necessarily longer than the ones from non-native speakers (although native speakers used a more varied repertoire of verb types, as shown in Table 4). Second, the results from the narrative task are similar to those of the cloze test: inherent lexical

FIGURE 5
Distribution of use of *passé composé/imparfait* for activity verbs per item.



1 = to take place 13 = to take place 23 = to think 30 = to think
5 = to participate 22 = to learn 24 = to participate 36 = to work

TABLE 4
Verb types used in the free narration task classified by lexical aspectual class

| | Native speakers | | Non-native speakers | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| | Verb types | Percentage | Verb types | Percentage |
| States | 21 | 15% | 14 | 19% |
| Activities | 29 | 21% | 17 | 24% |
| Accomplishments | 14 | 10% | 6 | 8% |
| Achievements | 76 | 54% | 35 | 49% |
| TOTAL | 140 | 100% | 72 | 100% |

TABLE 5
Distribution of morphological marking per lexical aspectual class (tokens)

| | Stative | Activity | Accomplishments | Achievement | TOTAL |
|---------|---------|----------|-----------------|-------------|-------|
| FRE122 | | | | | |
| PC | 24 | 46 | 29 | 376 | 475 |
| IMP | 53 | 45 | 22 | 38 | 158 |
| Natives | | | | | |
| PC | 23 | 40 | 33 | 308 | 404 |
| IMP | 65 | 47 | 10 | 36 | 158 |

aspectual values are related to the selection of verbal morphology. Third, the majority of tokens used by all subjects correspond to the combination of achievements and *passé composé*: 55% of all tokens for native speakers (308 tokens) and 59% for non-native speakers (376 tokens). Fourth, it is important to point out that the use of *imparfait* with statives among FRE122 students is highly correlated with two verbs: *to be* (42 tokens) and *to have* (7 tokens). For native speakers, the association is weaker: 34 tokens of statives correspond to the verb *to be*, and 4 tokens correspond to the verb *to have*. In sum, 92% of all uses of *imparfait* with statives among FRE122 students correspond to the two archetypal statives, whereas for native speakers only 58% of uses of *imparfait* with stative verbs correspond to those verbs (see Bergström, 1995, for similar results).

In order to compare the use of past-tense markers between native and non-native speakers, Table 6 summarizes the data from Table 5 in terms of percentages of use of *passé composé* by lexical aspectual class. The difference between the percentages shown in Table 6 and the total of 100% represents the use of *imparfait*.

Both native and non-native speakers used past-tense markers in a similar fashion, except for the distribution with accomplishments (difference of 20 percentage points). However, the number of tokens in the latter category is very small. On the other hand, the almost identical distribution of past tense markers associated with achievements (90% and 91%) is based on a large number of tokens in both groups of subjects (see Table 5). Table 6 shows that non-native speakers have a slight tendency to use *passé composé* more often than *imparfait*. In effect, Table 7 indicates that FRE122 students use *passé composé* in a proportion of 3 to 1 with respect to *imparfait*, whereas for native speakers the proportion of use of *passé composé* to *imparfait* is approximately 3 to 2.

The results of a factorial ANOVA (4 types of verbs and 2 native languages) reveal a significant main effect for type of verb ($F(3, 205)$

TABLE 6
Use of *passé composé* within lexical aspectual class in percentages

| Accomplishment | FRE122 | Natives |
|----------------|--------|---------|
| Stative | 31% | 26% |
| Activity | 51% | 46% |
| Accomplishment | 57% | 77% |
| Achievement | 91% | 90% |

TABLE 7
Use of PC/IMP across all aspectual categories

| | Non-native speakers | | | Native speakers | | |
|------------|---------------------|-----|-------|-----------------|-----|-------|
| | IMP | PC | Total | IMP | PC | Total |
| Tokens | 158 | 475 | 633 | 158 | 404 | 562 |
| Percentage | 25% | 75% | 100% | 39% | 61% | 100% |

= 15.690, $p = 0.001$) and significant interactions between native language and type of verb ($F(3, 205) = 3.685$, $p = 0.013$). However, the main effect of native language is not significant ($F(1, 205) = 1.054$, $p = 0.308$). A Tukey post-hoc test reveals that the significant main effect for verb type is predicated on the contrast between achievements and activities ($p = 0.001$) and between achievements and statives ($p = 0.001$). These results support the theoretical argument that telicity is the major component in the selection of perfective or imperfective aspectual markers (e.g., Dowty, 1986; Smith, 1991).

Discussion

Hypothesis 1 was partially confirmed by the results of the present study. The data from both tasks show that the selection of past-tense marking by native and non-native speakers coincide with respect to the prototypical use of grammatical aspect (inherent semantic values). On the other hand, the data from the cloze test reveal that non-native speakers differ from native speakers in their use of non-prototypical grammatical aspect in L2 French (i.e., when there is lack of congruence between lexical aspectual class and grammatical aspect). The data from the narrative task do not provide direct evidence about the use of prototypical and non-prototypical uses of grammatical marking because the subjects controlled the selection of verbs (free narrative task).

Hypothesis 2 was not directly confirmed by the present data; native and non-native speakers performed similarly in both the cloze and free narration tasks.²¹ This finding is of potential importance because some

influential perspectives on second language acquisition predict an inherent degree of variation in language performance dependent on linguistic task (e.g., Tarone, 1983, 1985, 1988). However, there is some indirect evidence that the selection of past-tense morphological markers in L2 French differed from task to task. The overall proportion of use of *passé composé* versus *imparfait* is higher in the narratives of non-native speakers than in the narratives of native speakers, 2:1 versus 3:2 respectively (see Table 7). If we assume that the *passé composé* represents a more prototypical representative of past tense in French, it is possible that the free written task revealed more clearly non-native speakers' over-reliance on the use of such potential default marker of past tense (Fleischman, 1990, p. 55; Wiberg, 1996).

A more extended discussion of the data will address the following points: (1) the lack of support for the gradual spread of morphological markers of past tense according to aspectual class; (2) the support for the conventional-pragmatic value of aspect as one of the determinants of native speaker's use of morphological markers of temporality; and (3) the effect of distributional biases in the use of morphological markers of past tense (especially with stative verbs) in data from academic environments. First, the results of the narrative task raise some doubts about the gradual developmental spread of morphological markers proposed by Andersen (1986, 1991).²² Although the present data are not developmental, the analysis of the learners' behaviour at one point in time showed a different trend in the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* as compared to previously proposed stages of development. In fact, native and non-native speakers present a similar profile of use of past-tense French morphological markers according to aspectual class. Alternatively, it may be argued that the effect of inherent lexical aspectual values is so strong among academic learners that by the end of two semesters of language instruction, English native speakers have reached stage 4 in Andersen's developmental sequence.

Second, the analysis of the results of the cloze test revealed that classroom students were not successful in the selection of the marked forms associated with statives (non-prototypical). The data from natural language learners such as Anthony (Andersen, 1986, 1991) present a gradual spread of the prototypical forms towards the non-prototypical ones because natural learners are building the system of past-tense aspect in a (highly) contextualized linguistic environment. On the other hand, FRE122 students do not have enough access to the type of (extended) non-classroom discourse that might help them recognize when to reject the prototypical marker of aspect in favour of

the non-prototypical one (see also Coppieters, 1987). In essence, the spread of *passé composé* and *imparfait* forms from prototypical to non-prototypical forms may differ between academic and natural learners.

Third, the statistical tests of the narrative task revealed significant differences in the use of verbal morphology between telic verbs (achievements) and atelic verbs (statives and activities) for both groups. However, native speakers used the *imparfait* more often than non-native speakers across all lexical aspectual classes (i.e., non-native speakers used *passé composé* more often than native speakers). Among non-native speakers, the proportional use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* (approximately 3:1 ratio) remained unchanged across tasks, whereas among native speakers the use of *imparfait* is higher in the narrative task: approximately 3:1 ratio of use of *passé composé* to *imparfait* in the cloze test versus a 3:2 ratio in the narrative task. Furthermore, in the cloze test, FRE122 students encountered problems in extending the use of *passé composé* to statives, which are typically marked with *imparfait* (Figures 3 and 3a). As mentioned earlier, the extended use of the *passé composé* in both tasks among the FRE122 students may plausibly be considered a default marker of past tense. In essence, the selection of *imparfait* among non-native speakers may be explained by (1) lexical aspectual class (the use of *imparfait* is restricted mostly to atelic verbs) and (2) distributional bias (*imparfait* is used with a limited range of archetypal stative verbs).

Conclusion

The data from this study indicate that college-level second-semester students of French show stable and systematic use of aspectual morphology across the two language tasks selected for this study, using mostly prototypical marking. It has been argued that an extended degree of exposure to various discourse environments in the L2 may allow learners to go beyond the basic-level of use of grammatical aspect and extend its use to all types of environments, independent of inherent lexical meaning of the verb, i.e., to use non-prototypical marking. The results of this investigation need to be confirmed with additional evidence from empirical studies that include other modes of data collection (e.g., oral versus written data), the comparison of different types of discourse (e.g., personal interview in contrast with narratives), and the correlated analysis of the same data from alternative theoretical perspectives (e.g., a narrative perspective using the foreground/background distinction).

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Notes

1. I would like to express my gratitude to the instructors of second semester French (Fall 1995) at Cornell University (Tobey Doeleman, Mary Jane Highfield, and Tamara Parker) and the instructors of the French teaching program at McGill University (Roy Lyster, Louise Savoie, and Joanna White) for their generous help in conducting this study. I am also very thankful to Nina Kilgour, Vicky Murphy, and Nina Spada for arranging my visit to McGill University. Finally, I am grateful for comments on an earlier version of this paper by Anna Bergström, Allard Jongman, René Jourdenais, James P. Lantolf, Michel Paradis, Yas Shirai, Linda Waugh, three anonymous reviewers, and the audiences of AAAL 1997 and the Concordia-McGill Applied Linguistics Forum.
2. To the best of my knowledge there are no studies in L2 Italian or Portuguese with adult tutored learners who are native speakers of English.
3. Speakers of Romance languages learning English face a similar problem. Robison (1990) found that his untutored Spanish-speaking informant used English past tense (-ed ending) to mark punctual versus non-punctual distinction. However, the verbal inflection -ing (a marker associated with non-state verbs) was used more often with stative verbs.
4. Waugh (1990) argues that the unmarked aspect form in past tense French is *imparfait*. However, for the purpose of this study, the unmarked value of past-tense aspect in French will be determined in accordance with language acquisition constraints.
5. Schumann does not provide information about the linguistic environment where his informants lived (what language did they use at home or at work?), nor about the amount of time they used English (did they live in a non-English-speaking community?).
6. Binnick (1991, p. 381) claims that in Russian, aspectual choice is 'highly sensitive to focus structure': imperfective is used with old information, but if the verb is in focus the perfective is used.
7. In a discussion of the value of proficiency-based curricula in L2 teaching, Kramsch (1986) states that discourse coherence is achieved by 'entering

temporarily someone else's frame of reference and following the cultural logic of their conversation.'

8. Notice that neither the relevance principle nor the congruence principle described earlier can describe the use of preterite and imperfect after stage 5 of the eight stages posited by Andersen.
9. Kaplan did not analyze the data from the perspective of either the lexical aspect or the discourse hypothesis, but rather from a pedagogical perspective.
10. The self-rating procedure is intended only as a rough measurement of students' perceived ability in the target language. Moritz (1995) reports on the limitations of such assessment procedures in second language learning.
11. Eight subjects from the control group were not included in the study because they had listed a language other than French as the dominant one during their childhood (5 English, 1 Italian, 1 German and 1 Greek).
12. Before the administration of the test, the instructors from the different sections judged the vocabulary accessible to their students.
13. The following words were listed on the blackboard in French (verbs were listed in their infinitive form): hat, pear, ladder, goat, paddle, to pick, to climb and to descend.
14. The analysis of the use of past-tense aspectual distinctions cannot be based on a single native speaker's judgement because the particular choice of grammatical aspect depends on the speaker's point of view. Comrie (1976, p. 4) states that the same situation can be described in both perfective and imperfective terms: *Jean a lu ce livre hier; pendant qu'il le lisait, le facteur est venu* (John read this book yesterday; while he was reading it, the postman came).
15. During the application of these tests some potential weaknesses were found. For instance, the distinction between activities and accomplishments is not straightforward in Bergström's tests for verbs like *manger* (to eat). The application of these tests generates the following output:

Il est en train de manger (He is in the process of eating)

Il mange en 5 minutes (He eats in 5 minutes)

The result of the first test is clear: *manger* is neither a state nor an achievement, but the result is ambiguous with respect to the second test. That is to say, the lexical meaning of the verb will change according to the quantized nature of a non-specified internal argument (see Dowty, 1979, 1986; Smith, 1991).

16. As pointed out by Lightbown (personal communication, May 1996), students' potential test strategies may give cause for concern about these

results; it is plausible to argue that these learners favoured one option overwhelmingly over the other (in this case *passé composé* over *imparfait*) without really making any aspectual decision. However, as we will see later, the results for the other verb categories show that the students did not use such a strategy. We must also bear in mind that achievement verbs were interspersed in the text with the other verb categories.

17. Previous studies of classroom learners that have classified students according to degree of use of past tense in free narrations, instead of by course level placement, have obtained similar results (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996, which analyzes a subset of the data from Bergström, 1995).
18. By definition, native speakers constitute the norm with reference to the selection of aspectual marking. The uncertainty range in this case reflects lack of agreement among native speakers, possibly induced by dialectal variation.
19. Data from a previous study of English speaking learners of L2 French – Salaberry (1996) – show that the verb *penser* is likely to become part of the foreground of the narrative text (high focus).
20. In some rare circumstances non-native speakers conjugated some verbs in the present tense. For all practical purposes the few tokens of present tense use were disregarded for the analysis of the data because (1) the use of present tense does not amount to more than 1% of the total number of tokens, and (2) it is possible that they represent orthographic and spelling mistakes (i.e., present-tense form confused with past-tense form).
21. Hypothesis 2 was not analyzed by means of a direct comparison of data from each task because the types and tokens of verbs were fixed in the cloze test but not in the free narrative task. A better alternative is to analyze the distribution of verbal endings with respect to lexical aspectual classes within each task.
22. However, it should be kept in mind that Andersen's argument is based on the analysis of naturalistic data from adolescent learners.

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Appendix A

Exercise 1 – Time: 12 minutes

(1) Please, circle the option that best fits the context of the narration.

Une Interview

Question: Comment 1 (*s'est déroulée / se déroulait*) votre jeunesse dans votre petite ville?

Réponse: 2 (*J'étais / J'ai été*) lycéenne et 3 (*j'allais / je suis allée*) jusqu'au baccalauréat, option latin-grec, car 4 (*j'avais / j'ai eu*) le goût des études classiques. En même temps, 5 (*je participais / j'ai participé*) à des défilés de mode. 6 (*Je faisais / J'ai fait*) des concours de mannequins, de photos, mais je 7 (*ne cessais jamais / n'ai jamais cessé*) d'étudier. A 17 ans je 8 (*je m'inscrivais / je me suis inscrite*) en fac de droit. Là, les organisateurs de Miss World University 9 (*me demandaient / m'ont demandé*) de représenter mon pays à ce concours. Ils 10 (*ne voulaient pas / n'ont pas voulu*) seulement des filles belles, mais ayant aussi la tête bien faite. Le concours qui 11 (*ne regroupait / n'a regroupé*) que des étudiants, 12 (*durait / a duré*) trois semaines et 13 (*se déroulait / s'est déroulé*) à Séoul, en Corée. J'ai été élue. Au départ, il était organisé sous l'égide des Nations Unies. Pour tester notre culture on nous 14 (*interrogeait / a interrogées*) sur des sujets divers, sur les problèmes du monde. ... Quel que soit le concours, la beauté 15 (*n'était jamais / n'a jamais été*) ma motivation première. Or 16 (*j'avais toujours / j'ai toujours eu*) soif d'apprendre.

Q: 17 (*Etiez-vous / Avez-vous été*) studieuse?

R: 18 (*J'étais / J'ai été*) très bonne élève. Outre le latin et le grec, 19 (*je me passionnais / je me suis passionnée*) pour le français, et l'anglais.

Q: Pourquoi 20 (*choisissiez-vous / avez-vous choisi*) le droit?

R: Parce que 21 (*j'avais / j'ai eu*) l'ambition d'entrer dans une grande organisation internationale, l'Onu, l'Unesco. ... C'est d'ailleurs la raison pour laquelle 22 (*j'apprenais / j'ai appris*) plusieurs langues. 23 (*Je pensais / J'ai pensé*) pouvoir jouer un rôle d'ambassadrice au service d'une organisation, d'un parti politique, ou d'un pays. Si 24 (*je participais / j'ai participé*) à tant de concours depuis l'âge de 15 ans, 25 (*c'était / ça a été*) pour financer mes études. 26 (*Je n'avais pas / Je n'ai pas eu*) de bourse et

27 (*j'étais obligée / j'ai été obligée*) de me débrouiller. Je suis consciencieuse et 28 (*j'assumais / j'ai assumé*) mon choix sans sacrifier les études. Travailler ne 29 (*me faisait jamais / m'a jamais fait*) peur.

Q: En arrivant à Paris 30 (*pensiez-vous / avez-vous pensé*) faire une carrière de mannequin?

R: Pas du tout. Un 'talent scout' 31 (*me rencontrait / m'a rencontrée*) aux Pays Bas et 32 (*me demandait / m'a demandé*) de venir faire un essai de quelques jours à Paris. 33 (*Je parlais / Je suis partie*) entre deux sessions d'études. 34 (*C'était / Ça a été*) en février. Au départ 35 (*je ne devais / je n'ai dû*) rester qu'une quinzaine de jours. Et je suis toujours là! 36 (*Je travaillais beaucoup / J'ai beaucoup travaillé*). Jusqu'au jour où 37 (*j'arrêtais / j'ai arrêté*).

Q: Ne regrettez-vous pas ce métier?

R: 38 (*Je n'avais jamais / Je n'ai jamais eu*) l'ambition de faire une carrière de mannequin. Mon but 39 (*était / a été*) uniquement de voyager et de payer mes études. Si 40 (*je voulais / j'avais voulu*) réussir, je me serais totalement investie dans ce métier. 41 (*Je donnais / J'ai donné*) la priorité aux études.

(Extrait d'une interview de *Paris Match*)

Appendix B

Exercise 2 – Time: 20 minutes

1. You will watch a short video clip (about 5 minutes)
2. After you finish watching the video, please, use the back of this page to narrate the story you have just seen.
3. Please start your narration with the following words: Hier ...

Basic plot of 'The pear story'

The film starts by showing a fruit picker on a ladder picking pears. He descends the ladder, dumps the pears from the pocket of his apron, and climbs the tree again. A man with a goat on a leash walks by. The goat sniffs the pears, the owner pulls on the leash, and they walk away. A boy approaches the tree, gets off his bike, and steals one basket full of pears while the man is busy on the ladder. The boy rides off. A girl on a bicycle approaches him from the opposite direction. When they pass each other, the boy loses his hat and turns his head to look at her, and his bicycle hits a rock. He loses control of the bike and falls down.

Three boys who are in the area help him put the pears back into the basket. When they have finished, they start walking away. One of the kids

notices that the boy's hat is on the road. He whistles at him and runs towards him to return the hat. The boy returns the gesture by giving him three pears. In the final scene, the fruit picker descends the ladder and realizes that one of the baskets is missing. At that moment, the three kids walk by the tree eating the pears that they received from the first boy. The man looks at them, puzzled.

Appendix C: Sample narratives

Sample of native speakers' narrative

Subject NS 5

Hier un monsieur *cueillait* des poires. Un homme *est passé* avec sa chèvre devant les barriques de poires mais *n'a rien pris*. Cependant un gamin qui *se promenait* à vélo a su profiter du fait que le cueillier *était* dans l'arbre pour s'emparer d'un panier de pommes et s'enfuir. Hélas, le gamin *a rencontré* une jeune demoiselle fort jolie qui lui *a fait tourner* la tête. Suite à cette distraction, l'enfant *a frappé* une roche et *a chuté* de sa bicyclette. Les poires *s'étaient éparpillés* sur la route mais trois garçons *sont arrivés* et *ont aidé* le gamin à ramasser les fruits. Pour les remercier, le gamin *a donné* à chacun des garçons une poire juteuse. Un des garçons *a rendu* le chapeau au gamin. Par la suite, les trois garçons *ont poursuivi* leur chemin vers l'arbre du cueilleur. Ce dernier *venait de s'apercevoir* qu'il lui *manquait* un panier lorsqu'il *a aperçu* les trois garçons qui *passaient* devant lui, poire à la main.

Sample of non-native speakers' narrative

Subject NNS 5

Hier le garçon du poires *ramasait* beaucoup des poires. Il *les mettait* dans son tabloir, depuis il *montait* dans l'échelle. Quand il *était* dans l'arbre un petit garçon sur une bicyclette qui *était porté* une chapeau *a prendre* un panier des poires et il *est parti*. Le garçon du poires *n'a pas vu* le mauvais garçon; quand le garçon *était* sur sa bicyclette, il *a vu* une fille sur une bicyclette; il *est tombé* et son chapeau *est tombé*. Trois garçons *l'ont aidé*, et le mauvais garçon *les donnait* trois poires (un garçon qui *aid* le garçon sur le bicyclette *a jouait* avec un racquette) Ces garçons *ses prommenadaient* (by) l'arbre, et le garçon du poires *les a vu*. Il *pensait* que les garçons *prennaient* les poires dans le panier, probablement! C'est l'ironie!

La liaison et son enseignement : des modèles orthoépiques à la réalité linguistique

Alain Thomas

Résumé : La chute irrégulière des consonnes finales du français depuis le Moyen Âge a légué aux locuteurs d'aujourd'hui un problème complexe de « liaison » qui est normalement résolu par simple imitation de l'usage. La question est beaucoup plus délicate pour les apprenants du français langue seconde qui, n'ayant pas l'avantage de l'apprentissage par osmose, doivent s'en remettre aux règles ou tendances prescrites dans les manuels d'orthoépique. Après un bref survol historique, nous examinons ces règles et les comparons à la réalité du phénomène, telle qu'elle se dégage des enquêtes linguistiques menées en France et au Canada. Les divergences observées entre norme et usages nous amènent enfin à formuler quelques conseils pratiques à l'intention des enseignant(e)s, qui font face à ce problème de manière concrète et quotidienne.

Abstract: The irregular dropping of French final consonants since the Middle Ages has left contemporary speakers with a complex 'liaison' problem which is normally solved by mere imitation of usage. Things are not so simple for students of French as a second language, who, because they have little opportunity to learn 'by osmosis,' must rely on rules or tendencies set out in pronunciation manuals. After a brief historical overview, this study examines these rules and compares them with linguistic reality, as defined by various surveys conducted both in France and in Canada. The differences observed between theory and reality lead to practical advice for French teachers, who face the problem of liaison in their day-to-day practice.

Introduction

Nous étions récemment en visite dans une classe d'immersion à l'élémentaire, et la journée commençait par l'hymne national chanté en français : *Ô Canada, terre de nos aïeux, ton front est ceint (= tes seins) de fleurons glorieux*. Non, les élèves d'immersion ne sont pas plus grivois