

## **Aspects on Aspect**

**Theory and Applications of Grammatical Aspect in Spanish**

Published by

LOT  
Trans 10  
3512 JK Utrecht  
The Netherlands

phone: +31 30 253 6006  
fax: +31 30 253 6000  
e-mail: [lot@let.uu.nl](mailto:lot@let.uu.nl)  
<http://www.lot.let.uu.nl/>

Cover illustration: Casa Batlló, Gaudí, Barcelona

ISBN 90-76864-32-2  
NUR 632

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## **Aspects on Aspect:**

Theory and Applications of Grammatical Aspect in Spanish

Aspecten over Aspect:  
Theorie en Toepassingen van Grammaticale Aspect in het Spaans  
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van Doctor  
aan de Universiteit Utrecht,  
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus,  
Prof. Dr. W. H. Gispen,  
ingevolge het besluit van het College voor Promoties  
in het openbaar te verdedigen  
op vrijdag, 7 februari 2003,  
des middags te 4.15 uur

door

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geboren op 26 mei 1973,  
te Barcelona

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*A Toya*



*“La corba tancada és el sentit de limitació,  
així com la recta és l’expressió de l’infinít”*  
Pensament de Gaudí



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## Dankwoord

Ik ben blij dat ik nu de gelegenheid krijg om al die mensen te noemen die er op één of andere manier voor hebben gezorgd dat de laatste vier jaar leuk en interessant voor mij waren.

Eerst wil ik mijn begeleiders bedanken. Huub van den Bergh bedank ik voor al zijn tijd en energie die hij in dit proefschrift heeft gestoken. Onder het genot van een kopje koffie, of meer in de meeste gevallen, hebben we in wekelijkse bijeenkomsten elke stap, in de richting van het voltooien van dit proefschrift, besproken. Week na week waren onze gesprekken inspirerend en gezellig. Zijn begeleiding was niet alleen uitstekend op het methodologische-statistische vlak, hij heeft me ook geholpen om sommige van mijn redeneringen, die ik vanzelfsprekend vond, begrijpelijk te maken voor anderen. Henk Verkuyl bedank ik voor het meedenken over de theoretische analyse en voor zijn commentaar over mijn eigen ideeën over hoe aspect in het Spaans werkt. De theorie ontwikkeld in Hoofdstuk 1 is een combinatie van mijn denkwerk en zijn vasthoudendheid over hoe over aspect gedacht en geschreven moet worden. Henk en Huub zijn beide goede vrienden van mij geworden, en daar ben ik heel dankbaar voor.

I would also like to thank the members of the reading committee: Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig, Aafke Hulk, Peter Jordens, Peter Slagter en Henriëtte de Swart, for the time and energy they spent while reading the manuscript.

Er zijn een aantal mensen die mij op academisch vlak tijdens het schrijven van dit proefschrift de laatste vier jaar op verschillende manieren hebben gesteund. Zonder Hans Bennis, Geert Booij en Peter Jordens was ik hier nooit aan begonnen. Ik bedank hen voor hun steun en in het bijzonder, voor hun geloof in mij. Later in mijn onderzoeksjaren ben ik ook een aantal mensen tegengekomen die op hun eigen manier het mogelijk hebben gemaakt dat dit boek bestaat. Eerst wil ik Jan Don bedanken voor zijn effectiviteit in het regelen van zaken tijdens zijn tijd als AIO-coördinator in Utrecht. Rob le Pair bedank ik voor zijn studenten in Nijmegen die ik heb mogen gebruiken voor een pilot in 1999. A Peter Slagter y David Sanz les agradezco de todo corazón su fantástica colaboración durante la recogida de datos para los Capítulos 3 y 4. Ik bedank ook de studenten van cursus 190 voorjaar 2000 en cursus 090 voorjaar 2001 voor hun inzet en motivatie tijdens het experiment. I would like to thank Roumyana Slabakova, for sharing with me her ideas on the acquisition of aspect in L2, in Iowa City, in the summer of 2000. Aafke Hulk en Henriëtte de Swart bedank ik voor hun constructieve commentaar op eerdere versies van delen van mijn proefschrift.

Probably the person who has contributed most to the creation of this thesis is Rachel Slater: “my dear native”. Most chapters have been written with her always present online comments and support; I would not have made it without her daily help, enthusiasm and efficiency during the writing period. I thank also Sharon Jaffe for checking my English

on Chapter 3 and lending me her gorgeous camera with which the front page photo of the book was taken.

Er zijn ook een aantal AIO's die ik wil bedanken; Olga Borik, I thank her for all those brainstorming sessions we have had together on aspectual issues, for sharing her ideas and commenting on my first chapter several times. All those coffee breaks made my long days in Trans easier to cope with. Silke Hamann, for becoming the best house mate and friend in Santa Barbara, and for all those tea breaks that have allowed me to relax in moments of need. Rick Nouwen, hij is een geweldige kamergenoot geweest, altijd bereid om te helpen met alles. Met name was hij heel handig als er Nederlandse teksten geschreven moesten worden. Speciaal bedank ik hem voor het nakijken van de Nederlandse samenvatting. Er zijn ook andere taalwetenschapcollega's die ik wil bedanken voor hun vriendschap en steun: Patrick Brandt, Takaaki Hara, Maarten Janssen, Nancy Kula, Øystein Nilsen, Kakhi Sakhltkutsishvili, Erica Thrift, Sharon Unsworth, Willemijn Vermaat en Inge Zwitserlood. Het secretariaat van UiL-OTS wil ik ook bedanken want Linda Eilers en Keetje van Heuvel stonden altijd voor me klaar. Esther Kraak bedank ik voor haar efficiëntie tijdens de laatste loodjes van dit boek.

Doy las gracias a mis tíos y primos en Valladolid, la familia González, aunque a distancia, han seguido mi evolución con interés y cariño. A la familia Luna, por ser desde siempre mi segunda familia. Dankzij de familie Siegman heb ik minder moeite gehad om zo ver van mijn eigen familie te zijn; ze zijn mijn Nederlandse familie geworden. Daar heb ik al de steun gekregen die ik nodig had.

A la meva estimadíssima Laura Alfonso li dono les gràcies per estar amb mi sempre sense condicions, per aguantar-me, per intentar entendre'm i per fer-me passar estones inoblidables en els moments més difícils. A la Clara Canals i la Mercè Ortigosa, per ser les meves amigues de l'ànima, perquè la distància només fa que les amistats de veritat es mantinguin amb més força.

A mi queridísima Nuria Arranz, porque ha seguido día a día mis altibajos, por estar siempre ahí, por su apoyo, y sobre todo, por leerse y editar el resumen en castellano; sin sus comentarios, hubiera sido aún más incomprensible. A Víctor Rodríguez le agradezco su gran ayuda a la hora de buscar y convencer a compañeros en un tiempo límite para que dieran sus intuiciones sobre las frases analizadas en el Capítulo 2. A los dos quiero también agradecerles haber escrito esas magníficas redacciones que me han servido de punto de partida para el análisis de los datos del Capítulo 3.

Al mijn Nederlandse vrienden en vriendinnen die betrokken zijn geweest bij mijn proefschrift wil ik graag hier bedanken. Apart wil ik Mirjam Pijnappels bedanken voor haar dagelijkse bijzondere belangstelling en voor de lange wetenschappelijke, persoonlijke gesprekken die we samen hebben gehad. Speciaal bedank ik haar voor een eerste zorgvuldige controle van de Nederlandse vertaling. Sannie Kreuse wil ik bedanken voor haar technische steun op moeilijke computermomenten. Verder bedank ik Astrid Albersen, Michel Bevaart, Wilko Bolt, Hielke Buddelmeyer, Lennie Derde,

Alice Haakman, Iris Ijsendoorn, Gineke Kraa, Edo Kulkens, Derrick Merkus, Thirza van Nimwegen, Patrick Røling, en vele anderen.

A Toya le debo la realización del libro, sin ella, no hubiera sido escrito. Ella me enseñó a disfrutar aprendiendo, a aprender disfrutando. Doy mil gracias a mi madre, por su apoyo y amor incondicional.

En tot slot bedank ik Joost, niet alleen voor het mij doen begrijpen hoe de voltooid tegenwoordige tijd in het Nederlands werkt, maar vooral voor zijn belangstelling, geduld, begrip, vriendschap en liefde.



## Chapter 0

### INTRODUCTION

#### 0.1. The rationale of this study

This thesis embarks upon an intricate quest, which is to try and understand the forms and functions of grammatical aspect from various linguistic disciplines. Literature on this subject is very rich and prolific but often contradicting. It also seems an unrealistic task to find links between aspectual theories, language acquisition theories and didactic applications. Theoreticians, acquisitionists, and didacticists have addressed from their own perspective the problem that grammatical aspect raises, for a semantic theory, for an acquisition point of view and for a teaching methodology, respectively. Grammatical aspect bids many puzzles viewed from different language disciplines. How to describe grammatical aspect? How to learn the forms and meanings of grammatical aspect? How to teach grammatical aspect effectively? Moreover, how can the findings of one discipline help or adapt to research of others? This thesis attempts to answer these questions. However, by aiming to answer every question at its own time, and by profiting from each other's findings, it may be possible to create a semi-complete analysis of theory, acquisition and didactics of grammatical aspect. Each chapter deals with a particular independent language discipline. However, their conclusions are meant to be compatible with each other. Each conclusion is drawn out of the same theoretical description of the relations between aspectual encodings between Dutch and Spanish. These are the language disciplines that will be confronted with their own particular interpretations of the complications behind grammatical aspect (at sentential level):

- 1) Theory;
- 2) L1 intuitions;
- 3) Acquisition L2;
- 4) Classroom instruction.

The languages involved in this collection on aspectual topics are Spanish and Dutch. Spanish has grammatical means to express aspect through verbal inflection. Dutch does not share this characteristic. Intuitively, one can already ask a number of questions: *theoretically*, how do the aspectual systems of these languages work and how are they related? *Acquisitionally*, how do L2 learners begin to acquire an aspectual system different to that of their L1? And *didactically*, how can aspect systems, different from the system contained in the learners' L1, be taught? These questions will be dealt with one by one in the next chapters, always with the help of the Dutch and the Spanish intrinsic encoding of aspect.

The layout of this thesis contains three articles. Chapter 2 discusses ‘Contrast between Aspectual Systems in L2 Learning and its Repercussions’. This article was written in the winter of 2001 together with H.J. Verkuyl. Chapter 3 looks at ‘Distribution of Grammatical Aspect Morphemes in Interlanguage’. This article was written in the summer of 2002. It has been submitted to the journal *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. Chapter 4 addresses ‘Towards an Effective Instruction on Aspect’. This article was written in the winter of 2001 together with H. van den Bergh. It has been submitted to the journal *Learning and Instruction*.

This particular design of presenting a compilation of articles has advantages and disadvantages. The most convenient advantage is the fact that these three chapters can be read independently. The most inconvenient disadvantage is that repetition is unavoidable: the theory presented in Chapter 1 will reappear in every following chapter in a reduced size. Every short description of the analysis proposed in Chapter 1 will be especially aimed at and fitted to the particular discipline of the chapter. In Chapter 2, the theoretical analysis will mostly address the particular intricacies of aspect in L1; the theoretical analysis in Chapter 3 will deal with acquisitional relevance of the theory in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 will look at the application of the theory from an educational perspective.

## **0.2. The organization of this study**

Each chapter of this book has its own “aspectual” quest.

Chapter 1 describes an aspect-temporal framework, which serves as theoretical background and as basis for the empirical analyses that will follow. Established temporal and aspectual theories are discussed and compared. Arguments are given as defence for the chosen temporal analysis. Three levels of completion are proposed, among which two levels of aspectual information are distinguished: predicational and grammatical. It is shown how the two languages at stake, Spanish and Dutch, each encode aspectual meaning.

Chapter 2 first delves into the assumptions language acquisition studies on aspect make on the learning of Spanish as L2 and adapts these assumptions to the theory proposed in Chapter 1. Second, an empirical analysis is carried out which will test whether predicational aspect influences the choice of Spanish native speakers of grammatical past tense forms. This chapter will test whether the Spanish native speaker relies on contextual information or on the predicational information of the sentence in question in order to choose the perfective or the imperfective marker. In other words, the results will point towards a non-interference of aspectual levels or, on the contrary, towards an interchangeability of aspectual meanings between levels.

Chapter 3 presents a number of previous empirical research studies on the acquisition of grammatical aspect for L2 learners with a Germanic language background. The empirical study described in this chapter compares other aspectual language acquisition hypotheses (Andersen 1989, Shirai 2000, Salaberry 2000), with the acquisition hypothesis based on the system of three levels of completion described in Chapter 1. It is tested whether the language realm interfering with the learners’ choice of past tense markers is the outer-aspect, discourse-contextual

plane, rather than the intra-sentential inherent aspect plane. More specifically, it is tested whether, at least for Dutch classroom L2 learners of Spanish, the ‘Predication-effect’ Hypothesis describes the data more accurately than other intra-sentential aspect acquisition hypotheses.

Chapter 4 presents an overview of current theories on the relationship between grammar instruction (explicit and/or implicit) and the achieved proficiency of the learners after receiving the instruction. An experimental instruction on aspect, based on two principles: one theoretical, one methodological, is put into practice. The theoretical principle is described in Chapter 1, which, in a few words, proposes an independency of completion levels. The methodological principle is known as “the already known”; it claims that teaching something new by first introducing something that the learner already knows will help the learning process. A number of things are tested:

- a) Whether applying aspectual theory on an instruction on aspect helps;
- b) Whether teaching grammatical notions is beneficial;
- c) Whether starting an instruction with some notions the learner already knows, helps.

A data collection experiment will illustrate whether the experimental instruction is, in fact, beneficial for Dutch L2 learners of Spanish who want to master the distinction between the two simple pasts in Spanish.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings at each language plane: theoretical, acquisitional, and methodological.



## **Chapter 1**

### **CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF TENSE AND ASPECT IN DUTCH AND SPANISH**

#### **1.1. Surveying the domain of investigation**

Before embarking upon a theoretical analysis of tense and aspect, it is necessary to give a preparatory survey of the domain of investigation which is the base of this analysis. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to present a comparison between the Spanish and the Dutch systems expressing temporal and aspectual information. Aspect and tense are two dependent notions in the realm of temporality, and, as such, they need to be conjointly dealt with. The following introductory sections discuss the rationale behind the requirement of an adequate description of tense and aspect systems for the purposes of this thesis, and present an account of the intimate relationship between three notions that play a crucial role in the domain of investigation: tense, grammatical aspect and predicational aspect.

##### **1.1.1. The requirement of a description of tense and aspect systems**

Among the many grammatical difficulties encountered while learning and teaching Spanish as a foreign language, in particular for speakers of non-Romance languages, one finds the obligatory aspectual expression in the verbal morphology of the two simple past forms in Spanish (Rimmer 1996, Westfall and Foerster 1996) among others). Germanic languages do not exhibit the aspectual division between a past imperfective and a past perfective in their tense system. It is generally believed that the fact that this opposition is not grammaticalized in Germanic languages, is the cause of the difficulty. However, this deficiency is not enough to characterize the acquisitional problems behind the learning of the two past tenses in Spanish for Dutch speakers. Although this thesis focuses only on Dutch, the same is essentially true for other Germanic languages. Other linguistic factors appearing in either the source language or the target language will also need to be taken into account. A cross-linguistic analysis between Dutch and Spanish may point out which are the other linguistic factors that may also influence the intricacies behind the learning and teaching of the Spanish aspectual system.

Cross-linguistic research between languages is a very important tool for establishing general linguistic principles and for acquiring a deeper knowledge of the structure of such languages. This study supports the conviction that a cross-linguistic analysis needs to highlight both the correspondences and the differences between the two languages at stake. To successfully carry out a cross-linguistic analysis between the Spanish and Dutch temporal and aspectual systems, one needs to characterize them both with similar terms. Only then can the language systems be optimally compared. In the present cross-linguistic analysis, the correspondences between the two languages play as important a role as their differences. In

particular, the establishment of the correspondences and the differences will be achieved by comparing the Spanish and Dutch tense systems on the basis of the same sort of organizing principles. The present cross-linguistic analysis will help to understand specific choices made by a language that has a variety of morphological forms available, as opposed to a language where the system is simpler in this respect.

In the area of tense and aspect, evidence has been growing that there are significant cross-linguistic generalizations. To compare tense and aspect systems of certain languages is a challenging task; languages have developed different strategies to encode temporal-aspectual meanings expressed by their sentences. Focusing on the meaning and not on the form, may turn out to be a more straightforward strategy. Cross-linguistic interpretation of grammatical meaning as abstracted from grammatical form will be argued to lead to an efficient cross-linguistic analysis on tense and aspect.

By providing a sufficiently adequate description of Dutch and Spanish tense and aspect systems, regarding both form and meaning, the analysis introduced in the present thesis will serve as tool for understanding the intricacies behind the learning of grammatical aspect in second languages. At different stages of this book, the L1 (Dutch) and the interlanguage production will be compared to the target language (Spanish) by means of the analysis proposed in this chapter.

The present analysis on tense and aspect systems will be restricted mainly to sentential grammar. This implies that the uses of tense and aspect markers in cases where the meaning of the verbal morphology is clearly affected by other tensed forms in the rest of the discourse, are not systematically included in the analysis. Context plays an important role in the understanding of meanings and uses of aspectual morphology as observed by Silva-Corvalán (1983), among many others, who concludes that the meaning of the tensed verbal forms is in part constrained by the narrative context in which they occur. However, the present study is restricted to establish at the micro-level, so to say, what happens aspectually and temporally inside the sentence. A precise understanding of how tense and aspect interact within a sentence is a *sine qua non* condition, not yet obtained, for a better understanding of their roles in discourse. The present analysis is a contribution to a theory that aims to describe tense and aspect in an interlanguage sentence and how this sentence relates precisely to its translational equivalent in L1 and in the target language. In particular, the outcome of this theoretical analysis may contribute to a better understanding of how L2 learners manage to organize the temporal structuring of sentences in L2. The focus of the present research concerns the construction of complex temporal information in the sentential domain. At the beginning stages of language acquisition, second language learners make a distributional choice between the two simple past tenses in Spanish. The signalling of the relevance of the sentential aspectual information in this distribution will be the core of this theoretical analysis.

### 1.1.2. The interdependency of tense and aspect

Temporality is an essential feature of sentences in most languages and its grammatical expression through morphology is obligatory in many languages. The notion of temporality taken in a broad sense covers both temporal and aspectual linguistic elements.

Tense and aspect are often treated as a twin pair having complementary tasks: tense is said to provide the location of the eventuality<sup>1</sup> described, aspect is taken as giving information either about the properties of the eventuality or the way the eventuality is presented. In Romance languages, both tense and aspect are overtly marked in verbal inflection, appearing together in the two simple past tense forms. Tense information is deictic in its essence because it is tied up with the position of the speaker in the real time of the discourse. Aspect, on the other hand, is a non-deictic grammatical device. It does not depend, as tense does, on the specific communicative situation to have a full semantic interpretation. It will be assumed here that aspect can define the temporal hosting domain of an eventuality from two basic perspectives: perfective or imperfective (Borik & González 2000). It is this characterization of aspect as providing perspective that makes its morphological actualisation interfere with other verbal categories, in this case tense, as tense provides a location in time, aspect offers a perspective from which this location can be looked at.

The boundaries between tense and aspect systems are not clear-cut, neither is the notion of aspect itself, as will be made clear shortly. Defining one of the two systems needs to profit from defining the other one. Without taking into account their mutual interaction, a description of the two systems will turn out to be incomplete. Moreover, from a language acquisition point of view, the acquisition of aspect needs to be discussed along with the acquisition of tense, most of all because the latter has been shown to develop in close collaboration with the former, in both L1 and L2 acquisition (Li & Shirai 2000).

To sum up, both aspect and tense will be considered here as two interrelated phenomena in the realm of constructing and interpreting temporal information.

### 1.1.3. Two sorts of aspect

The notion of aspect has been used informally so far to distinguish aspectual information from temporal information. To describe the interdependency of aspect and tense, aspect was taken to mean only what in the literature is generally called grammatical aspect or viewpoint aspect. The picture, however, is more complex than this: following recent proposals (Verkuyl 1997, Borik 2002, Krifka 1998, among others), a distinction will be made between what will be called predicational aspect and grammatical aspect.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eventuality is seen throughout this chapter as the global term embracing states, processes and events. An eventuality will be taken as the semantic value of a tenseless predication. The term situation will be used (informally) to denote a tensed eventuality. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the two, but precise definitions are not really necessary because the terms are used at the pre-theoretical level.

Predicational aspect is essentially the modern successor to the notion of Aktionsart as developed in the study of Slavic aspect. The problem with the notion of Aktionsart is that it was used to describe a lexical property of the verb. Nowadays, it has become clear that it is the verb and its arguments that provide the aspectual information about the aspectual nature of a predication. The old distinction between Aktionsart and grammatical aspect now returns as the distinction between predicational aspect (compositionally formed from the interaction between the verb and its arguments) and grammatical aspect. Grammatical aspect is said to express the perspective on the eventuality described. It is encoded in the verbal morphology of many languages (e.g. Spanish). Predicational aspect takes place at the level of phrase structure.

By distinguishing grammatical aspect and predicational aspect, one could speak about a tense-aspect triangle: tense, grammatical aspect and predicational aspect. As demonstrated below, each of the three phenomena has its own contribution to make to the expression of temporality within the sentence.

The relation between the three notions may become clearer with the help of examples. Consider (1a) below.

- (1a) Peter drank a beer  
 (1b) PAST [Peter drink a beer]

The representation of (1a) given in (1b) expresses that the basic, first-level aspectual information comes from the tenseless predication, i.e. [Peter drink a beer]. In this sense, predicational aspect differs crucially from the temporality contributed by tense. The notion of completion, which is intuitively associated with (1a), is already there before tense is taken into account: the tenseless sentence expresses termination due to the choice of the verb and of the arguments. The tenseless predication in (1b) is terminative (cf. Verkuyl 1972, Krifka 1989 (who uses the term telic in this connection) and many others), because the information expressed by combining ‘a beer’ and ‘drink’ into a verb phrase ‘drink a beer’ and by combining this verb phrase and ‘Peter’ into ‘Peter drink a beer’, expresses something that presents itself as a unit, as something that can be discerned as complete when compared to the rest of the domain of discourse. To underline that the level of aspectual representation, corresponding to the tenseless part of a sentence, is in fact a predication, the aspectual information collected at that level, is called predicational aspect (Vet 1994). Some authors use the term ‘eventuality description’ in this connection (De Swart 1998).

Predicational aspect crucially concerns the information about the relationship between the verb and its arguments. If the speaker of example (1) had used as the direct object the mass noun ‘beer’, or the subject ‘nobody’ or the verb ‘want’, the aspectual value of the predication would have changed (as shown in the sentences (2c) - (2e), which are all durative (or atelic)).

- (2a) Peter drank beer  
 (2b) PAST [Peter drink beer]  
 (2c) Nobody drank beer

- (2d) Peter wanted a beer  
 (2e) Nobody wanted beer

In separating the tense operator PAST from the tenseless predication as in (2b), it is assumed that the aspectual value of a predication determined at this level of representation remains intact. Therefore, its value is taken as independent of any specific tense information. Of course, the tense operator has an effect on the predication, but it will not change its aspectual value. This picture seems to hold for Germanic languages like Dutch and English.

Nevertheless, in some languages, the connection between tense and aspect is more intimate than in Germanic languages. Spanish (like other Romance languages) has two inflectional forms for the past tense sentence (1a): ‘drank’ can be translated as either *bebió* or *bebía* (see examples (3) and (4)).

- (3) *Iñaki bebió una cerveza*  
 PAST PERFECTIVE [Iñaki drink a beer]  
 ‘Iñaki drank a beer’  
 (4) *Iñaki bebía una cerveza*  
 PAST IMPERFECTIVE [Iñaki drink a beer]  
 ‘Iñaki drank/was drinking a beer’

The difference between the two past forms can only be understood by assuming that certain tense forms express aspectual information. This aspectual information is called grammatical aspect and is encoded at an intermediate level between the tenseless level where predicational aspect is determined and the past temporal level. In particular, grammatical aspect characterizes the domain in which the eventuality takes place either as perfective (as in (3)) or imperfective (as in (4)). For French, there are several proposals in which the scheme in (5) has been used to account for the different roles in the tense-aspect triangle (Vet 1994, de Swart 1998):

- (5) TENSE [ASPECT [predication]]

The general idea connected with this scheme is that the lowest level of the eventuality description is taken as expressing predicational aspect, that the next step is provided by aspectual operators expressing perspective, that is, the perfective-imperfective distinction, and that the final step is the application of the tense operator. This scheme opens up the question of how the intermediate position of the aspect operator should be analysed: is it part of tense or does it have close ties to predicational aspect? This question will be discussed in detail below. At this stage, it suffices to point out that, for Spanish, scheme (5) seems to be called for: it will be assumed in the remainder of this chapter.

In the next sections, a detailed description of both the Dutch and the Spanish temporal and aspectual systems will be given. These descriptions will include the three components of the tense-aspect triangle: predicational aspect, grammatical aspect and tense. Extra attention will be given to how each language deals with its available components and how the notions interrelate in a sentential domain. The

emphasis will be on the interpretation of past tenses, in particular, on the differences and similarities in forms and meanings between the two languages at issue: Dutch and Spanish.

### 1.2. The tense system of Dutch and Spanish (Indicative conjugation)

The two tense systems characterized in the following sections have been traditionally presented as in Table 1.

*Table 1 Dutch and Spanish Tense systems*

English	Dutch		Spanish	
	Nomenclature	Example	Nomenclature	Example
'works'	Onvoltooid tegenwoordige tijd (OTT)	<i>werkt</i>	Presente	<i>trabaja</i>
'has worked'	Voltooid tegenwoordige tijd (VTT)	<i>heeft gewerkt</i>	Pretérito perfecto	<i>ha trabajado</i>
'worked'	Onvoltooid verleden tijd (OVT)	<i>werkte</i>	Pretérito imperfecto	<i>trabajaba</i>
'had worked'	Voltooid verleden tijd (VVT)	<i>had gewerkt</i>	Pretérito indefinido Pretérito pluscuamperfecto	<i>trabajó</i> <i>había trabajado</i>
'will work'	Onvoltooid tegenwoordige toekomstige tijd (OTTT)	<i>zal werken</i>	Pretérito anterior Futuro imperfecto	<i>hubo trabajado</i> <i>trabajaré</i>
'will have worked'	Voltooid tegenwoordige toekomstige tijd (VTTT)	<i>zal gewerkt hebben</i>	Futuro perfecto	<i>habrá trabajado</i>
'would work'	Onvoltooid verleden toekomstige tijd (OVTT)	<i>zou werken</i>	Condicional simple o imperfecto	<i>trabajaría</i>
'would have worked'	Voltooid verleden toekomstige tijd (VVTT)	<i>zou gewerkt hebben</i>	Condicional compuesto o perfecto	<i>habría trabajado</i>

In this section, two tense theories that describe the systems in Table 1 are dealt with: Reichenbach's temporal model (1947) and a binary approach traditionally applied to the Dutch temporal system (from as early as the 1860's). Both systems will be applied to the Spanish and Dutch indicative conjugation. The purpose of the present section will be to investigate which of the approaches best describes the Spanish system. Special attention will be given to the terminological confusion behind the terms 'perfect' and 'perfective'. It will be argued that the assumption of an independence of tense and aspect levels may provide a satisfactory solution. That is, it is possible to reduce the confusion by consistently treating the perfect as a tense form and the perfective as an aspectual form.

### 1.2.1. Reichenbach's temporal model

A short description of Reichenbach's model is necessary because his model has become a kind of standard, against which alternatives have to be defined. Reichenbach introduces three temporal units: E (event point), R (reference point) and S (speech point<sup>2</sup>). The relations between these units -- that is, between E and R and between R and S -- are established at the same time. The relative positions of S and R account for the past, the present and the future (R<S, S,R and S<R), whereas the set of relations between E and R are characterized as anterior (E<R), present (E,R) and posterior (R<E). By adding up all positions and their relations in this 3x3 system, nine tenses show up (see Table 2 for examples of each tense form).

The reference point R plays a very important role in Reichenbach's theory, as it behaves as the intermediate point between S and E. This means that there is no direct relation between the two latter. In other words, the time E cannot be located with respect to the time at which the speaker utters the sentence (S) without first locating it with respect to the reference time (R).

As has already been discerned in the literature, there are a number of empirically based objections to Reichenbach's original system. Some of the most important ones are those of Comrie (1981, 1985) and Declerck (1991). An important objection is that Reichenbach's model lacks the capability to describe the tensed form *I would have V+ed*, which appears in all Romance and Germanic languages. However, there is also a conceptual problem. Compositionality is one of the main principles of modern semantics. Due to its 3x3 set up, Reichenbach's model is not compositional (see Verkuyl 2001 for discussion). The relationships between the three temporal units of Reichenbach (E, R, and S) are established at the same time and not on the basis of presence or absence of certain linguistic forms. This means, therefore, that the system does not provide a subsequent set of temporal operations, which would optimally lead to a compositional interpretation of the resulting temporal configuration, which is what modern semantics would prefer.

Reichenbach's system as applied to Dutch results in Table 2 below (as given in Borik, González & Verkuyl 2003). An application of this system to Spanish is given in Table 5.

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<sup>2</sup> The notion 'point' is used here in a loose way so as to make it possible to let a point in the system stand for a point in time but also for an interval.

Table 2 *Reichenbach's matrix applied to the Dutch temporal system*

	Past R<S	Present R,S	Future S<R
Anterior E<R	Anterior Past (Past Perfect) E-R-S	Anterior Present (Present Perfect) E-R,S	Anterior Future (Future Perfect) E-S-R E,S-R S-E-R
Simple E,R	had gewerkt 'had worked' Simple Past E,R-S	heb gewerkt 'have worked' Simple Present E,R,S	zal gewerkt hebben 'will have worked' Simple Future S-E,R
Posterior R<E	werkte 'worked' Posterior Past (Past Future) R- E-S R-S,E R-S-E	werk 'work' Posterior Present (Present Future) S,R-E	zal werken 'will work' Posterior Future (Future Future) S-R-E
	zou werken 'would work'	zal werken 'will work'	zal werken 'will work'

Table 2 illustrates the main two objections to Reichenbach's system: (a) the 'voltooid verleden toekomstige tijd' (VVTT) (*ik zou gewerkt hebben* 'I would have worked') does not have a cell assigned; (b) one and the same form (*Ik zal werken*, 'I will work') occupies the cells 'simple future', 'present future' and 'future future', whereas the cells 'posterior past' and 'anterior future' have three configurations. These objections show that there are some inconsistencies in the system (cf. Verkuyl & Leloux-Schuringa 1985 for a more detailed list of criticisms).

### 1.2.2. The binary approach

In an attempt to improve on the description of the English tense system in Reichenbach (1947), a temporal system based on a binary approach was developed by Te Winkel (1866). This system has been described in Verkuyl & Leloux-Schuringa (1985) as part of a comparison between four tense systems and recently modernized in Verkuyl (2001, 2002). In its present form, the binary system incorporates the virtues of Reichenbach's system (1947), but may prove more effective because it provides solutions for the objections against a 3x3-approach and it adds a compositional element due to its binary set up.

The binary tense system is formed on the basis of Te Winkel's three-layered system of oppositions: (i) Present versus Past, (ii) Synchronous versus Posterior and (iii) Completed versus Uncompleted. In other words, rather than having a 3\*3 Reichenbachian design, the binary system has a 2\*2\*2 set up, correctly predicting

the eight Dutch and English tense forms. Every tense form is composed on the basis of a choice made at each of the three steps. The three oppositions will now be discussed in more detail on the basis of a modernized formal semantic make up:

The system of oppositions discussed here bases its foundations on translational synonymy by abstracting from the specific forms used in the different tense systems. In this way, morphologically rich tense systems of Romance languages can be related to synthetic periphrastic tense systems such as Dutch. In section 2.4., it will be illustrated how the Spanish forms can be analysed successfully with this temporal approach.

*1) Present vs. Past*

For the semantic representation of sentences expressing a Present Tense or a Past Tense the operators PRES and PAST will be used, respectively. They can be semantically interpreted as connecting the information expressed by a tenseless structure either to a point in the present domain of interpretation, or to a point in the past. The point of time introduced by the operator PAST can be seen as fulfilling the point of speech in the past. That is, PAST provides a sort of present in the past from which the rest of the tense information can be calculated. The opposition between Present and Past is primary with respect to the other two operative oppositions. In example (6), the tenseless structure [*Joost slapen*] is connected to a point in the present domain, in example (7), to a point in the past domain.

- (6) Joost slaapt  
PRES [*Joost slapen*]  
'Joost sleeps'
- (7) Joost sliep  
PAST [*Joost slapen*]  
'Joost slept'

The primacy of this opposition is due to the fact that there is no tensed sentence without either a Present or a Past form. For instance, in the Dutch sentence in (8), the form of the future auxiliary *zal* is present as opposed to the past form *zou* in (9).

- (8) Mirjam zal komen  
'Mirjam will come'
- (9) Mirjam zou komen  
'Mirjam would come'

The future and the conditional in Dutch and in English are not primary tenses. One could argue that these forms in Spanish or any other Romance language are primary tenses, where due to the rich tense morphology, future and conditional forms are expressed as independent morphological forms. See examples (10) and (11).

- (10) (Te digo que) vendré mañana  
'(I tell you that) I will come tomorrow'

- (11) (Te dije que) vendría mañana  
 ‘(I told you that) I would come tomorrow’

One could argue here on the basis of the presence of two different morphemes *-ré* and *-ría*, that these verb forms (*vendré* and *vendría*) are morphologically neither present nor past. However, a closer look unveils that the temporal semantic opposition between the two forms points towards an understanding of (10) as related to the present and (11) as related to the past (as the verb form in the main sentence of each example already signifies). *Vendré* in (10) comprises the tense information of present + posterior, and *vendría* in (11) the tense information past + posterior. In terms of the ‘gram’ notion as proposed in Bybee & Dahl (1988), one may say that the auxiliaries *zullen* in Dutch and *will* in English on the one hand, and *zou/would* on the other hand, belong to the same gram as the Spanish morphemes *-ré* and *-ría*, respectively.

The main division made by PRES and PAST implies that apart from the Simple Present and the Simple Past, there are two sets of three tensed forms in the system that are identical except for their being a PRES-form or a PAST-form.

## 2) Synchronous – Posterior

A posterior verb form introduces an index positioned after the point introduced by PRES, or after the point introduced by PAST (see examples (8) and (9)). This opposition can be treated parsimoniously, in which case only one operator POST is introduced. The operator SYNCHR is not necessary. The thought behind this parsimonious treatment is that, ideally, if a description can be given without appealing to an abstract operator, no such operator should be included; operators are only there if there is some overt form to carry them<sup>3</sup>.

The existence of the POST-operator means that the sense of future is not only associated with the utterance time, but also with a point located in the past which has been first introduced by the PAST-operator (see Ogihara (1996) for a similar treatment of the auxiliaries in English). In a binary system, future is made independent of the point of speech: it expresses simply posteriority. This can yield the temporal meaning of a future of the past (see (9)). The POST-operator allows the traditionally named conditional to be understood as a posterior past tense.

In Germanic languages, the operator is expressed periphrastically. For example, in Dutch, it is expressed by the presence of the auxiliary *zullen*, in English by the presence of *will/shall*, used either in present or in past tense (see examples (8) and (9) above).

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<sup>3</sup> The decision to describe the system parsimoniously is practical: it suffices for the presentation of the binary tense system and there is no need to give the system in its full force. Apart from the practical side, one has to cope with the question of whether the SYNCH-operator would express the absence of posteriority or the requirement of the presence of a point synchronous to another point. For discussion on this issue, see Verkuyl (2001).

3) *Completed - Non-completed*

This opposition amounts to the inverse of the previous one, that is, the synchronous-posterior opposition. The PERF-operator will be taken as providing a sense of anteriority.

Existing research shows that there has been a lot of discussion about a second sense contributed by PERF. Some scholars take the position that the focus in a sentence with the operator PERF is a part of the period that follows the end of the situation described, the focus is thus on the result of the eventuality (Moens & Steedman 1987, Kamp & Reyle 1993, among many others). This line of thought will be followed in the present analysis, without a commitment to the position that the expression of a result is part of the meaning of PERF or simply implied by it (as in Depraetere 1998, Verkuyl 2002).

There is a direct correspondence between the verbal compound forms and the simple ones in Romance and Germanic languages. The verbal compound forms composed with the auxiliary *hebben* ('have') contribute to the denotation of all simple verbal forms the indication of precedence or anteriority.

- (12) I read  
PRES [I read]
- (13) I have read  
PRES (PERF) [I read]

In Dutch, the operator PERF is visible in the form of an auxiliary *hebben* and in English, in the form of the auxiliary *have*. The operator PERF in Dutch shows in the compound verbal forms in the system, only when the conjugated auxiliary *hebben* appears. The tense inflection of the auxiliary expresses the temporal point (either present or past) with regard to which the compound form is delimited. For the purpose of this investigation, IMP as an operator is superfluous for the following reasons. First, there is no overt form marking all imperfect-non-complete verbal meanings. Second, if a verbal form is unmarked as far as its completeness is concerned, that already signifies a non-complete temporal meaning, therefore IMP. Again, as the SYNCH-operator, the IMP-operator is seen as being superfluous and therefore unnecessary for the system to function.

The system also allows for the combination of POST and PERF operators, as shown in (14) and (15). It is this sort of combinations that gives this theory its compositional taste.

- (14) Sannie zal een wedstrijd gespeeld hebben  
PRES (POST) (PERF) [Sannie play a game]  
'Sannie will have played a game'
- (15) Sannie zou een wedstrijd gespeeld hebben  
PAST (POST) (PERF) [Sannie play a game]  
'Sannie would have played a game'

Table 3 represents the possible combinations of operators, which make up the complete Dutch temporal system.

*Table 3 Dutch temporal forms according to the binary system*

THE 8 DUTCH TENSE FORMS	
PRES	PAST
1a) Ik schrijf een brief 'I write a letter'	1b) Ik schreef een brief 'I wrote a letter'
PRES(POST)	PAST(POST)
2a) Ik zal een brief schrijven 'I will write a letter'	2b) Ik zou een brief schrijven 'I would write a letter'
PRES(PERF) <sup>4</sup>	PAST(PERF)
3a) Ik heb een brief geschreven 'I have written a letter'	3b) Ik had een brief geschreven 'I had written a letter'
PRES(POST)(PERF)	PAST(POST)(PERF)
4a) Ik zal een brief geschreven hebben 'I will have written a letter'	4b) Ik zou een brief geschreven hebben 'I would have written a letter'

The main advantages of this binary temporal analysis are the following. First of all, the binary system is completely compositional: all eight Dutch tense forms can be derived compositionally as a result of a subsequent application of the operators to a tenseless predication<sup>5</sup>. Secondly, at least in Germanic languages, there is no need for a tripartition between present-past-future, but only the basic opposition between Past and Present remains. The primacy of the Present-Past opposition becomes obvious since, as observed earlier, it is the only opposition that needs both operators to always function in the system and also the one that always applies. It has already been pointed out that in Germanic languages there is no separate inflectional affix marking the future. From the point of view of morphology, there is only the past tense marking and a present tense conjugation. Thirdly, richer and poorer tense systems can also be described by this system.

In the remainder of this section, the third claim will be partly elaborated: the binary system should have the potential to expand in order to capture the verb systems of languages having more than eight forms, or shrink in order to account for the languages with less than eight forms<sup>6</sup>. By applying this temporal analysis to Spanish, it should extend itself to cover the ten indicative forms that the Spanish language contains.

<sup>4</sup> A possible explanation for the not yet solved question about the differences between the Dutch and the English present perfect would be to say that English has present tuning and Dutch perfect tuning, due to adverbial/contextual information. The difference lies in what it is being understood as present; in English, the utterance time equals the present, while in Dutch it does not have to. The present perfect in Dutch can also carry the meaning of a perfective past. A discussion will follow shortly.

<sup>5</sup> Verkuyl (2001) uses the formalism of lambda-abstraction for the derivation of the tense forms. The operators are therefore seen as lambda-functions taking their appropriate values.

<sup>6</sup> Borik, González & Verkuyl (2002) present a tentative application of this theory to the poor tense system of Russian.

### 1.2.3. The Spanish Temporal system

The modern literature dealing with the temporal system of the Spanish language has mainly used the Reichenbachian analysis as a description model. A contemporary application of Reichenbach system to the Spanish language is found in Carrasco (1998). Table 4 below is taken from this work, where Carrasco (1998: 158) exemplifies the Reichenbachian system with the Spanish indicative conjugation:

Table 4 Spanish conjugation according to Reichenbach temporal system

Combination	Nomenclature	Example	Spanish nomenclature
E-R-S	Anterior past	<i>había trabajado</i> 'had worked'	Pretérito pluscuamperfecto
E,R-S	Simple past	<i>trabajé,</i> <i>trabajaba</i> 'worked'	Pretérito perfecto simple Pretérito imperfecto
R-E-S R-S,E R-S-E	Posterior past	<i>trabajaría</i> 'would work'	Condicional
E-S,R	Anterior present	<i>he trabajado</i> 'have worked'	Pretérito perfecto compuesto
S,R,E	Simple present	<i>trabaja</i> 'works'	Presente
S,R-E	Posterior present	<i>trabajaré</i> 'will work'	Futuro
S-E-R S,E-R E-S-R	Anterior future	<i>habré trabajado</i> 'will have worked'	Futuro perfecto
S-R,E	Simple future	<i>trabajaré</i> 'will work'	Futuro
S-R-E	Posterior future	-	-

Carrasco (1998) points out some empirical problems for the application of this system to the Spanish language. The most important of them is the fact that there is a Spanish verbal form, the conditional perfect (*habría trabajado*), which does not have a temporal structure, just as its English or Dutch counterpart (*I would have worked, Ik zou gewerkt hebben*).

The proposal of a system regulated by temporal operators may provide a better description and an explanation of the systematic organization of the Spanish indicative tense paradigm. Table 5 adapts Table 4 into the matrix already given for Dutch in Table 3. In this way, the comparison between the temporal systems according to a Reichenbachian analysis of the two languages is facilitated.

Table 5 *Reichenbach's matrix for Spanish*

	Past R<S	Present R,S	Future S<R
Anterior E<R	Anterior Past (Past Perfect) E-R-S	Anterior Present (Present Perfect) E-R,S	Anterior Future (Future Perfect) E-S-R E,S-R S-E-R
Simple E,R	había trabajado 'had worked' Simple Past E,R-S trabajaba 'worked'	ha trabajado 'has worked' Simple Present E,R,S trabaja 'works'	habrá trabajado 'will have worked' Simple Future S-E,R trabjará 'will work'
Posterior R<E	Posterior Past (Past Future) R- E-S R-S,E R-S-E trabajaría 'would work'	Posterior Present (Present Future) S,R-E trabajará 'will work'	Posterior Future (Future Future) S-R-E trabajará 'will work'

Tables 5 and 6 present the Spanish tense forms from two perspectives. Table 5 illustrates the matrix on Spanish Indicative verb forms according to Reichenbach's proposal; Table 6 presents an application of the system of operators assigned to the Dutch temporal verb forms to the Spanish conjugation.

Table 6 Spanish indicative tense system according to the binary system

Presente PRES 1a) Escribo una carta I-write-PRES a letter 'I write a letter'	Pretérito imperfecto PAST 1b') Escribía una carta I-write-PAST a letter 'I wrote a letter'	I M P E R F E C T I V E
	Pretérito perfecto simple 1b'') Escribí una carta I-write-PAST a letter 'I wrote a letter'	
Futuro PRES(POST) 2a) Escribiré una carta I-write-FUT a letter 'I will write a letter'	Condicional PAST(POST) 2b) Escribiría una carta I-write-COND a letter 'I would write a letter'	
Pretérito perfecto PRES(PERF) 3a) He escrito una carta I-have-PRES written a letter 'I have written a letter'	Pretérito pluscuamperfecto PAST(PERF) 3b') Había escrito una carta I-have-PAST written a letter 'I had written a letter'	I M P E R F E C T I V E
	Pretérito anterior PAST(PERF) 3b'') Hube escrito una carta I-have-PAST written a letter 'I had written a letter'	
Futuro perfecto PRES(POST)(PERF) 4a) Habré escrito una carta I-have-FUT written a letter 'I will have written a letter'	Condicional perfecto PAST(POST)(PERF) 4b) Habría escrito una carta I-have-COND written a letter 'I would have written a letter'	

Indicative forms of the Spanish verbal paradigm can be characterised in the same way as the Dutch tense system: as a combination of operators. The only difference is that in the darkened cells, instead of one form, there are two forms. The form doubling in the PAST cell 1b and in the PAST (PERF) cell 3b will be discussed shortly.

### 1) *Present versus Past*

Comparable to the Dutch forms, Present tense forms in Spanish connect the information expressed by the tenseless predication with a point in the present; Past tense forms with a point in the past.

However, there are two simple past forms in the Spanish table above. Roca Pons (1960) already pointed out that “from a temporal point of view, it is evident that there is no difference whatsoever between the imperfective and the perfective as far as its distance with the present is concerned”<sup>7</sup>. Silva-Corvalán (1983:233) states: “segmentation of anteriority is not a meaning which is preterit (past perfective<sup>8</sup>) specific”, which means that anteriority is shared with the imperfective form. The difference between these forms is aspectual, not temporal. This is why a temporal system does not need to describe the meaning differences between them in terms of different cells in the system.

### 2) *Synchronous-Posterior*

At first sight, all arguments are in favour of a description of the future and the conditional in Spanish as primary tenses. In fact, this is the leading position in traditional grammar. Its rich verbal morphology allows Spanish to express a future and a conditional forms (recall *vendré*, ‘I will come’, *vendría*, ‘I would come’) without having to appeal to auxiliary forms. However, as observed earlier, it is possible to analyse the tense morphemes in terms of the operators PRES (POST) and PAST (POST), respectively. The presence of the operator POST in Spanish associates its future not only with the present time (operated by PRES, see example (16)), but also with a point located in the past introduced by the PAST operator (as in (17)).

- (16) (Digo que) *vendré* a las ocho  
 ‘(I say that) I will come at eight’  
 (17) (Dije que) *vendría* a las ocho  
 ‘(I said that) I would come at eight’

The notion of gram (Bybee & Dahl 1988) enables this system to analyse these forms in the same way as their counterparts in Dutch; that is, with the support of the POST operator (like cells 2a and 2b in Table 6).

### 3) *Completed versus Non-completed*

All simple forms in Table 6 are characterized and distinguished by not employing the PERF operator. Until now it matches the Germanic table exemplified by Dutch sentences (Table 2). Verb forms that are not provided by a sense of anteriority in Spanish are simple, while those forms that focus on the result of the eventuality described, make use of an auxiliary to carry the inflections. The auxiliary form adds

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<sup>7</sup> Own translation

<sup>8</sup> Own terminology

temporal positioning, whereas the participle adds the verbal semantic information. Together they express the idea of completion at the temporal level.

The PAST (PERF) cell 3b is, again, like the PAST cell 1b, occupied not by one, but by two verbal forms. The rationale behind this positioning of tenses is the same as the one found between the perfective and the imperfective simple forms. The difference between the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’ (past perfect imperfective) in cell 3b’ and the ‘pretérito anterior’ (past perfect perfective) in cell 3b’’, both examples from Table 6, is also to be taken as being of an aspectual nature.

Nowadays, the distinction between these last two forms is obsolete. The ‘pretérito anterior’ is, in current Spanish, a literary form, the use of which, therefore, is very limited and restricted to the written language. The past perfect perfective (‘pretérito anterior’, example in cell 3b’’ in Table 6) indicates that the eventuality is immediately anterior to another eventuality in the past; that is, it expresses a past situation, anterior to another one also in the past, (as in (18)). The feature that has traditionally characterized the ‘pretérito anterior’ is the power to mark an immediate precedence of some situation with respect to a point in the past. In the regular use of language, however, it is usually replaced either by the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’ (past perfect imperfective, Table 6, cell 3b’) or by the ‘pretérito perfecto simple’ (past perfective, Table 6, cell 1b’’).

- (18) En cuanto hubo terminado de hablar, se marchó  
 As soon as have+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE finished of to talk, self  
 leave+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE  
 ‘As soon as he had finished talking, he left’

It seems as if the Spanish language finds it no longer necessary to mark a form both with perfect tense and perfective aspect and that it prefers to replace it either by a past perfective or a past perfect. As long as the form is in past tense, it seems sufficient to mark it either as perfect or perfective, rather than as perfect perfective.

The question of whether the differences between perfective and imperfective are temporal or aspectual has attracted much discussion. The idea that the difference is temporal, has already been proposed by Bello (1847). Bello defined the imperfective form as a co-preterit, treating it as a present in the past. Therefore, the imperfective form, in Bello’s theory, has its own temporal characteristics. The differences between the two past tense forms in cells 1b’ and 1b’’ of Table 6 can be accounted for by taking them as aspectual differences.

Treating the perfective as an aspectual marker makes it possible to deal with the perfect as a temporal marker. This point will be discussed in detail in the next section. The aspectual description of the two past tenses of cell 1b in Spanish is, in essence, in accordance with García Fernández (1998). It will be shown that the past imperfective in 1b’ is best characterized as a combination of past tense and imperfective aspect and the past perfective in 1b’’ as a combination of past tense and perfective aspect. Perfective aspect and imperfective aspect will be defined in section 1.3.2.1.

To sum up, a system of oppositions has been applied to the Spanish temporal indicative system. It has been shown that the analysis used for Dutch does not really

need any additional assumptions or tools in order to be extended to cover the ten indicative tense forms of Spanish. Actually, the Spanish indicative conjugation can also be represented with an eight-tense-form system if the two additional verbal manifestations are taken as only adding aspectual information. The aspectual information expressed by the four tense forms in 1b and 3b does not have to be dealt with as part of a temporal system as long as the perfective and imperfective forms are independently treated in an aspectual analysis that complements what is expressed by the tense forms, on the basis of expressing strictly tense information.

#### 1.2.4. Perfective versus Perfect

In this subsection, the perfective and perfect meanings and their manifestations in language will be briefly described in order to separate tense information from aspectual information more clearly. First, the present perfect in cell 3a and the past perfective forms in 1b'' will be compared; second, the function of the present perfect in Dutch will be described; and finally, the past perfective in cell 1b'' and the past perfect(s) in 3b will be contrasted.

##### 1.2.4.1. Differences in functions

Lyons (1977) points out that the dividing line between tense and aspect is not always clear, more particularly because anteriority (marked by the perfect tense) usually goes together with completion (marked by the perfective aspect). In a way, following this analysis, it could be proposed that a perfect tense form actually marks completion, but at the temporal level. Therefore, both notions (perfect and perfective) can be kept apart as long as a distinction in terms of different levels of completion is taken as a guide. In the present analysis, the idea of completion rendered by the perfect tense form in cells 3a and 3b will be taken as temporal: they express that in a period of time either in the present (in cell 3a) or in the past (in cell 3b) the eventuality has already taken place<sup>9</sup>. The completion expressed by the perfective forms in cell 1b'' and 3b'' is aspectual, along the lines discussed in section 1.3. It is therefore non-deictic. Its meaning does not depend on the situation in which it is used; one knows that the eventuality is in the past because of the tense part of the morphological information, not because it is perfective<sup>10</sup>.

The imperfective forms in 1b' and 3' also have a past tense. As discussed above, this means that in the past a hosting domain is given having an open end. In this respect, they are different from the perfective aspect, which characterizes the hosting domain in which the eventuality takes place as complete, as closed off. Both forms (perfective and imperfective) place the eventuality in a unit of time not compatible with the present (because of the PAST operator). In other words, perfect marking in cell 1a is a grammatical device the main function of which is to mark completion at a temporal level (by anteriority, that is), whereas perfective marking in cell 1b'' is a grammatical device the main function of which is to mark

<sup>9</sup> Comrie (1976) considers the perfect as an aspect.

<sup>10</sup> In Russian, the temporal system allows for morphologically present perfectives, which proves that 'perfective' does not necessarily have to always be linked to pastness.

completion at a higher level. Note that this way of treating the opposition between perfective and imperfective comes close to what is expressed by it in Slavic languages (Borik 2002).

In 1931, La Real Academia Española (the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE)) reflected on the terminological problem of considering the perfective in cell 1b'' of Table 6 as a perfect form (also see Rojo 1988)<sup>11</sup>. Spanish distinguishes the perfect verb forms from the non-perfect ones (like Dutch or English), and has two parallel complete series of tenses to express them: the perfect and the imperfect. The correspondence cannot be more exact: every simple tense or imperfect verb form corresponds in a one to one way to one compound tense or perfect form. This is exemplified in Table 6: each of the four cells in the first half of the table has a perfect correspondent in the second half. To treat the past perfective as a past perfect form would completely break the system because it would be a simple form but yet perfect in meaning. By doing so, however, it would not be possible to oppose the past perfective ('pretérito perfecto simple') in 1b'' to its compound correspondent ('pretérito anterior', or past perfect perfective) in 3b''. Because of this, the Academia resorted to considering the past perfective in 1b'' a 'pretérito indefinido' (indefinite past), basing this nomenclature on the fact that it expresses sometimes the eventuality as incipient, and sometimes as finished. This explains the differences in terminology between Table 1 and Table 6 ('pretérito indefinido' versus 'pretérito perfecto simple')<sup>12</sup>.

To solve the disputed point of whether the perfective forms should be treated as perfect or not, the following proposal is suggested: the temporal system does not have to deal with the perfective-imperfective distinction. It only needs to state that, in Spanish, they are both past tense. In this way, the 'pretérito perfecto simple' of 1b'', Table 6, can still be referred to as "perfective", which is the adequate term to compare its aspectual meaning to the imperfective form in 1b', without interfering with the perfect forms. The new nomenclature for the two past tenses that will be proposed in this thesis is 'pretérito perfectivo' versus 'pretérito imperfectivo'<sup>13</sup>.

To see the difference between perfective and perfect more in detail, it is important to see that the past perfective in 1b'' places the period of time when the eventuality took place in the non-present, whereas the present perfect in cell 3a informs that in a period of time taken as the extended present, the eventuality has already taken place. Such a characterization captures the similarities in meaning

<sup>11</sup> American literature on aspect (Slabakova 1999, Andersen 1991, Shirai 2000 among many others) insists on calling the past perfective "preterit"; however, this term will not be used because it is not only incorrect but also confusing. "Preterit" just means past; the imperfective is therefore also a preterit form. Bello (1847) used the term 'pretérito' for the perfective too, but together with 'co-pretérito' for the imperfective. To use one of these terms without the other is to take it out of context; calling one 'preterit' and the other one 'imperfect' loses the link that unites both past tenses.

<sup>12</sup> Boogaart (1998:12) also discusses the possible double interpretation of the past perfective: "A perfective past presents a bounded situation occurring before the point of speech. This characterization is vague in the sense that it does not specify which bound of the situation is concerned: the left bound (starting point) the right bound (end point) or both bounds at the same time".

<sup>13</sup> Another important reason to keep calling the distinction between the two simple past tenses perfective versus imperfective is because of its striking similarities with the perfective-imperfective aspectual meanings in Russian (see Borik & González 2000).

between both verbal forms but highlights the temporal differences between present in 3a and past in 1b''. The following sentences exemplify this opposition:

- (19) He leído una novela de Delibes  
Have+1<sup>st</sup>P+PRES read a novel of Delibes  
'I have read a novel by Delibes'
- (20) Leí una novela de Delibes  
Read+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE a novel of Delibes  
'I read a novel by Delibes'

Sentence (19) expresses by PRES a present tense and locates by PERF the eventuality in a point anterior to the point of speech S, as in cell 3a of Table 6. The interaction of the two operators expresses that at some point in the past the semantic object denoted by the terminative predication [*leer una novela de Delibes*] ('read a novel by Delibes') was finished. Due to the present operator, the result of the event is automatically given as holding at S.

Sentence (20), on the other hand, expresses by PAST that at some point in the past I read a novel written by Delibes. The use of the past operator leads back to a point where the focus is on the event itself, as in cell 1b'' of Table 6. The aspect of this verbal form is perfective because the period of time when the eventuality took place is represented as closed off, as complete.

Summing up, the perfect emphasizes that an eventuality, seen from the present, already took place and is located before a certain point of reference, the perfective only characterizes a past period of time as a closed domain in which the eventuality took place.

Examples in (21) and (22) show that durative predications behave exactly the same as the terminative predications in (19) and (20). The difference between them is exactly the same as between (19) and (20): in (21) the verb is temporally marked as perfect, in (22) the verb is aspectually marked as perfective.

- (21) He leído novelas de Delibes  
Have+1<sup>st</sup>P+PRES read novels of Delibes  
'I have read novels by Delibes'
- (22) Leí novelas de Delibes  
Read+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE novels of Delibes  
'I read novels by Delibes'

Whether the predication in the sentence is terminative or durative does not influence any of these two grammatical levels of completion (temporal or aspectual). In (19), the sentence conveys completion both at the temporal level (perfect marking) and at the predicational level (terminative). Sentence (20) conveys completion at the aspectual level (perfective marking) and at the predicational level (terminative). In example (21) the sentence conveys completion only at the temporal level in terms of the anteriority relation between the eventuality and a certain point of reference, and finally, example (22) conveys completion only at the aspectual level, where the

hosting domain is part of the information about the eventuality as part of the discourse information.

#### 1.2.4.2. Present Perfect versus Past Perfective

The established nomenclature of past perfective on the one hand and present perfect on the other hand, already indicates the crucial difference between them. A present perfect makes a claim involving the present; a perfective past makes a claim with the past as harbouring the central point of calculating the location of the eventuality.

An important morphological characteristic of the present perfect is that the auxiliary verb is actually in the present form. Nevertheless, the temporal interpretation of sentences with present perfect verb forms remains unambiguously that the eventuality referred to takes place in the past. To understand the temporal and interpretational differences between present perfect and perfective on the one hand and past perfect and perfective on the other, the verbal morphology may give a simple clue. The verbal inflection of the perfective form in cell 1b'' of Table 6 is past, whereas the verbal inflection of the perfect is present in 3a. However, in both cases, the eventuality is placed in a past time domain. The difference is that the temporal domain determined by the perfective past in 1b'' does not include the present<sup>14</sup>, whereas the temporal domain determined by the present perfect does, as indicated by the form of the auxiliary verb.

Below there is a list of temporal and aspectual information each verb form conveys:

Past Perfective form in 1b'':

[PERFECTIVE]	Presents the hosting domain as closed off (aspect description)
[PAST]	Selects a point S' before S as the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)

Present Perfect in 3a:

[PRES]	Makes the moment of speech the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)
[PERF]	Provides a sense of anteriority (tense description)

The following sentences exemplify the differences between forms:

- (23a) La semana pasada fuimos dos veces al cine  
 The week last go+1<sup>st</sup>P+PL+PAST+PERFECTIVE two times to+the cinema  
 'Last week we went twice to the cinema'
- (23b) ?Esta semana fuimos dos veces al cine  
 This week go+1<sup>st</sup>P+PL+PAST+PERFECTIVE two times to+the cinema  
 'This week we went twice to the cinema'

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<sup>14</sup> Present as an utterance/speech time.

- (23c) Esta semana hemos ido dos veces al cine  
 This week have+1<sup>st</sup>P+PL+PRES gone two times to+the cinema  
 ‘This week we have gone twice to the cinema’
- (23d) ?La semana pasada hemos ido dos veces al cine  
 The week last have+1<sup>st</sup>P+PL+PRES gone two times to+the cinema  
 ‘Last week we have gone twice to the cinema’

The sentence in (23a) contains the past perfective form of the verb ‘to go’: *fuimos* (‘we went’). The sentence is fully grammatical because the adverbial phrase *la semana pasada*, ‘last week’ covers a closed off period in the past. On the other hand, the sentence in example (23b) sounds odd, as the adverbial phrase *esta semana*, ‘this week’, denotes a temporal period that includes the moment of speech. Therefore, the perfective marker is incompatible with the fact that the temporal domain hosting the eventuality is still relevant. Sentences (23c) and (23d) illustrate the opposite phenomena. The sentence in (23c) is fine as it contains a perfect marking and the relevant time domain is still valid at the moment of speech. The sentence in (23d) is odd because the verb is in the perfect tense but the period of time hosting the eventuality lies entirely in the past and therefore is no longer available at the moment of speech.

Thus, the relevant difference in the interpretation of perfective and perfect is whether the temporal domain exemplified in these sentences includes the present or not. It seems that the present perfect form needs to operate on predications whose hosting past temporal domain is still valid for the present. Moreover, this periphrastic form focusses on the results of the eventuality. This means that what is emphasized is not the end of the period that hosts the eventuality, but a piece of the period that follows the end of such eventuality.

In other words, the present perfect in Spanish presents an eventuality that is still relevant in the extended present, that is to say, in a period of time that the speaker still considers relevant. The past perfective presents an eventuality that is hosted in a period of time that the speaker considers a non-current plane, seen from a past perspective.

#### 1.2.4.3. Dutch Present Perfect: a Perfective?

In Dutch, the verbal category labelled present perfect is sometimes used to express not only the semantic notion of present perfect but also the semantic notion of past perfective.

Bybee & Dahl (1988) pointed out that expressions with perfect markings could semantically develop to become first perfectives and finally pasts. For instance, in spoken French, the first step (perfect also accommodating perfective) has already happened, where the perfect marking can also be considered as a perfective marker. The form of the present perfect has been reported to follow a semantic path that starts with perfect meaning and finishes with perfective meaning (Bybee & Dahl 1988)<sup>15</sup>. In Dutch, the same phenomenon seems to take place. This

<sup>15</sup> For an entertaining history of the ‘passé simple’ and the ‘passé composé’, in French, see Weinrich (1964).

means that the sense of relevance in the current moment of the perfect may disappear altogether, allowing for sentences such as (24b) and (24c), where the temporal domain hosting the eventuality covers a closed off period in the past ('yesterday', and 'last month', respectively):

- (24a) Vanochtend ben ik om 7 uur opgestaan  
This morning be+1<sup>st</sup>P+PRES I at 7 hour got up  
'This morning I got up at 7 o'clock'
- (24b) Gisteren ben ik om 7 uur opgestaan<sup>16</sup>  
Yesterday be+1<sup>st</sup>P+PRES I at 7 hour got up  
'Yesterday I got up at 7 o'clock'
- (24c) Afgelopen maand ben ik elke dag om 7 uur opgestaan  
Last month be+1<sup>st</sup>P+PRES I every day at 7 hour got up  
'Last month I got up every day at 7 o'clock'

The English temporal system, on the other hand, very often uses its simple past to mark perfectivity (see examples in (25)). Therefore, there is no need for the present perfect in English to take the role of the perfective. The Dutch Simple Past behaves differently (see van Hout 1996 for discussion).

- (25a) This morning I woke up at 7 o'clock  
(25b) ??This morning I have woken up at 7 o'clock  
(25c) Yesterday I woke up at 7 o'clock  
(25d) \*Yesterday I have woken up at 7 o'clock  
(25e) Last month I woke up every day at 7 o'clock  
(25f) \*Last month I have woken up every day at 7 o'clock

Although the simple past in English and in Dutch allow for both perfective and imperfective readings, the instances in which they are unambiguously interpreted as either perfective or imperfective are not the same. The simple past in English seems to often convey a perfective reading, also in cases where in Dutch an imperfective reading is more prominent (Boogaart 1998). For instance, the Dutch counterpart of *she walked*; *ze wandelde*, which has a perfective reading in English, is imperfective in Dutch. This is probably why the present perfect in Dutch is developing towards also being interpreted as being a perfective marker, as its other past tense (the simple past) has more often than not as default reading the imperfective aspect (mostly in durative sentences).

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<sup>16</sup> (24b') Gisteren stond ik om 7 uur op. This sentence is also possible, however, the interesting fact of the Dutch language is that also allows (24b); more naturally than its simple past counterpart.

#### 1.2.4.4. Past Perfective versus Past Perfect

In Spanish, the past perfective ('pretérito perfecto simple') in 1b'' of Table 6 and the past perfect ('pretérito pluscuamperfecto') in 3b' are both past tenses. Again, as in the case of the present perfect and the past perfective, there is a meaning analogy that has developed into terminological confusion. The past perfect and the past perfective are temporally related, but there is an aspectual meaning difference that can only be observed when taking both the grammatical aspect level and the temporal level into account. The opposition described now is the one between the perfective *escribí* (write+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE) and the past perfect *había escrito* (have+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECT+IMPERFECTIVE written).

Below there is a list of temporal and aspectual information each verb form contains:

Past Perfective in 1b'':

[PERFECTIVE]	Presents the hosting domain as closed off (aspect description)
[PAST]	Selects a point S' before S as the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)

Past Perfect in 3b':

[PAST]	Selects a point S' before S as the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)
[PERF]	Provides a sense of anteriority (tense description)
[IMPERFECTIVE]	Presents the hosting domain as open (aspect description)

The next pair of sentences exemplifies the uses of these two verb forms:

- (26) *Ángela había escrito una carta cuando se apagaron las luces*  
 Ángela have+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE written a letter when self go-off+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PL+PAST+ PERFECTIVE the lights  
 'Ángela had written a letter when the lights went off'
- (27) *Ángela escribió una carta a Esther el verano pasado*  
 Ángela write+PAST+PERFECTIVE a letter to Esther the summer past  
 'Ángela wrote a letter to Esther last summer'

These examples show the differences in meaning between the past perfective and the past perfect imperfective. Sentence (26) needs another tense form to which the form in the main sentence can be temporally anchored (*se apagaron*). Sentence (27), with the perfective, does not seem to need extra verb forms to fully function and give a temporal meaning to the sentence.

The past perfective simply informs that the eventuality took place in the past and that the period of time that hosts the eventuality is closed off. The closure of the period that hosts the eventuality is, in this analysis, an identifying characteristic of the perfective aspect. On the other hand, the past perfect imperfective informs that

the eventuality is located in a hosting temporal domain in the past with no right bound of a domain closing it off. It provides the sense of anteriority given by the auxiliary 'have', focussing on the result of the eventuality. Moreover, the past perfect imperfective encompasses an imperfective aspect meaning, formally expressed by the imperfective past tense inflection on the auxiliary. Its imperfective sense indicates that the hosting domain in the past is not closed off. Two characteristics of the past perfect imperfective seem to contradict each other. First, the indication that the imperfective reading leaves the end of the hosting domain open and, second, the fact that the perfect pushes the verb to focus on the result of the eventuality. How can the completion of an eventuality be established if the period of time in which this eventuality is hosted does not seem to have an end? A plausible answer is this: an extra clause is needed, a subordinate clause (as in (26)), which provides a temporal boundary for the hosting past domain, so that the result asked by the perfect is fulfilled.

In other words, to fully understand sentence (26), additional temporal specification is needed to close the time domain in which the eventuality is hosted. In this sentence, the additional temporal specification is given by a subordinate clause. The adverb *ya* ('already') would also work. In sentence (27), on the other hand, the perfective verbal inflection itself gives all the information needed to close the temporal domain where the eventuality is hosted.

The past perfective and the past perfect are then similar in that both take place in the past. However, the perfective on its own does not only provide a reference bound marking the beginning of the temporal interval in which the eventuality is located, but also an aspectual anchoring point marking the end of the temporal interval. The past perfect, on the other hand, needs both indices (because of the perfect), but, due to the imperfective nature of the auxiliary, it can only offer the beginning bound on its own. The second closing bound is supplied by some extra information in the sentence, as in (26).

Formally, the past perfect in Spanish is more exhaustive with respect to tense, since two operators apply compositionally, the PERF and the PAST. It is also an imperfective form, as the auxiliary is not only marked temporally by the past inflection but also by the imperfective inflection. The perfective is only temporally marked once as past.

To sum up, a description of the Dutch temporal system in terms of temporal operators (PRES, PAST, POST and PERF) has been argued to be adequate. The same system of operators when applied to Spanish successfully accounts for all verb forms in the indicative conjugation. However, the distinction between two pairs of forms, the 'pretérito perfecto simple' versus the 'pretérito imperfecto' in the cells 1b' and 1b'' in Table 6 and the 'pretérito pluscuamperfecto' versus the 'pretérito anterior' in 3b' and 3b'' cannot be accounted for in a strictly temporal analysis. In order to find some solution to this descriptive problem, a more in-depth analysis of the Spanish aspectual system is called for. It will be argued in the next section that the hosting domain in which the eventuality takes place can only be characterized in terms of aspectual perspective, that is, with the intervention of grammatical aspect.

### 1.3. Aspect

In this section, the remaining two components of the tense-aspect triangle will be discussed in more detail: predicational aspect and grammatical aspect. Both of them are aspectual notions, but they work at different levels: predicational aspect works at a tenseless level, grammatical aspect manifests itself through verbal inflectional morphology or by the presence of certain auxiliaries, and is therefore closer to the tense level. Predicational aspect is responsible for defining the tenseless predication as terminative or durative<sup>17</sup>; grammatical aspect characterizes the temporal domain hosting this eventuality in the past as perfective (closed at the right-hand side) or imperfective (open at the right-hand side). In the case of Spanish, morphological linguistic devices mark the aspectual distinctions of grammatical aspect in the temporal conjugation of all verbs. Both types of aspect may affect each other very subtly, in such a way that combinations of the formal markers of predicational aspect and grammatical aspect determine the aspectual meaning of the whole sentence. The ways in which these notions affect each other also vary among languages. Not only can languages differ in the way they let aspectual information interact with their tense systems, but also in their aspectual encoding. The focus of the present description of aspectual systems is on both grammatical and predicational aspect. One of the theoretical aims is to get more background on the contribution of the tenseless predication to the temporal structure in which it interacts with tense. It will be shown that although grammatical aspect and predicational aspect are two distinct linguistic categories, it is almost impossible to entirely exclude one from the discussion of the other.

#### 1.3.1. Atemporal aspectual information

Verkuyl (1972) observed that, aspectually speaking, some sentences in Dutch and in English behave similarly to their Russian equivalents in spite of the fact that Germanic languages do not have morphological means to express grammatical aspect. To illustrate the similarities in aspectual meanings between a language with grammatical aspect marking and a language lacking it, Spanish will be given as the language expressing grammatical aspect. In order to remain consistent with the rest of the chapter, Spanish will take the place of Russian in Verkuyl's analysis<sup>18</sup>.

- (28a) Víctor leía poesía  
 Víctor read+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE poetry  
 'Víctor read/was reading poetry'
- (28b) Víctor leyó una poesía  
 Víctor read+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE a poem.  
 'Víctor read a poem'

<sup>17</sup> The term Aktionsart is not used here because it refers uniquely to the mode of action of the verb, while it is being proposed that what offers aspectual information is the verb and its arguments, that is, the whole predication.

<sup>18</sup> For a description of similarities between the Spanish and the Russian aspectual systems, see Borik & González (2001).

- (28c) Víctor read poetry  
 (28d) Víctor read a poem

The English sentences in (28c) and (28d), express aspectual information, without marking grammatical aspect morphologically or by means of an auxiliary. In (28c), this information states that the tenseless predication [‘Víctor read poetry’] is durative, which means that it expresses no endpoint. The process of reading poetry does not contain a point in time that marks an ending of the eventuality. On the other hand, the tenseless predication in (28d), [‘Víctor read a poem’], is terminative, as it expresses that there is a necessary moment in time at which the eventuality will reach its end, the point at which one can say that a poem has been read. Moreover, although this information may be similar to the aspectual information given by the verbal morphology (grammatical aspect), it should not be confused with it, as both aspects can interact, yielding not only sentences like (28a) (imperfective-durative) and (28b) (perfective-terminative), but also (28e) (perfective-durative) and (28f) (perfective-terminative):

- (28e) Víctor leyó poesía  
 Víctor read+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE poetry  
 ‘Víctor read poetry’  
 (28f) Víctor leía una poesía  
 Víctor read+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE a poem  
 ‘Víctor read/was reading a poem’

Examples (28e) and (28f) demonstrate that, on the one hand, a durative predication, such as [‘Víctor read poetry’] can also occur with perfective marking (as in (28e)). On the other hand, a terminative predication, such as [‘Víctor read a poem’] allows for imperfective marking (as in (28f)). In section 1.3.1.1., a particular analysis of the atemporal aspectual information will be given, exemplified with Dutch and Spanish sentences. In section 1.3.3., some potential semantic incompatibilities will be reported and illustrated.

### 1.3.1.1. Predicational aspect

Table 7 shows the combination of past tense forms with both durative and terminative predications.

Table 7 *Dutch simple past*

	Onvoltooid Verleden (Imperfect Past)
Durative	1 Edo zong ‘Edo sang’
Terminative	2 Edo zong een lied ‘Edo sang a song’

Durativity and terminativity are the two aspectual values characterizing predicational aspect and recognized at the tenseless level of the bare eventuality. The basic principle at this level of representation is the so-called Plus Principle (Verkuyl 1993), which governs the compositional procedure by which the dynamicity of a verb together with certain quantificational restrictions on the denotation of its arguments yields a compositionally formed terminative aspect. All other cases are durative. The terminativity of the predication of cell 2 in Table 7 is due to two factors: the verb is taken to express progress in time and the arguments of the verb to denote restricted quantities. The second restriction is absent in cell 1 in Table 7, because there is not an internal argument that could make the predication terminative. Other types of sentences with predications expressing durativity are those where the internal argument is a bare plural as in (29), since it fails to specify a restricted quantity, and those sentences where the verb has a stative nature, as in (30).

- (29) Edo zong liederen  
       ‘Edo sang songs’  
 (30) Edo haatte dat liedje  
       ‘Edo hated that song’

The Plus Principle turns out to be a useful tool for drawing attention to the contribution of the predication as a whole to aspectual information: it expresses the requirement that all atomic entities involved in the aspectual composition at this level have to have a positive value in order to derive a terminative predication.

Following the compositional procedure adopted in Verkuyl (1993), the terminativity of the tenseless [‘Edo sing a song’] is obtained in two steps. Firstly, the verb and its internal argument are combined into a VP. Secondly, the VP and the external argument are put together into an S. To mark the non-stative nature of verbs like ‘write’, ‘eat’, ‘hit’, ‘grow’, etc. (as opposed to stative verbs like ‘hate’, ‘love’, ‘want’, ‘hang’), a verbal semantic feature called [ $\pm$ ADDT0] can be used as expressing the contribution of the verb to the aspectuality at lexical level. Its plus-value expresses the dynamicity of the verb, as it refers to something going on in time. For stative verbs, the value of the feature is negative. The aspectual contribution of the NP can be described in terms of an NP-feature [ $\pm$ SQA], where SQA stands for ‘Specified Quantity of A’, where ‘A’ is the denotation of the Noun of the NP. Its plus-value expresses the quantification and delimitation of the arguments. Thus, NPs like ‘a letter’, ‘three sandwiches’, ‘some whisky’, ‘five acres of land’, etc. are labelled [ $+$ SQA], whereas NPs like ‘sandwiches’, ‘whisky’, etc. are [ $-$ SQA]. The term Specified Quantity generalizes over count and mass. The sentences in (31) show this feature notation for different predications<sup>19</sup>:

<sup>19</sup> In a sentence such as ‘*no-one ate an apple*’, the denotation of the external aspect is [ $-$ SQA], which also yields a compositionally formed durative aspect. Examples involving a [ $-$ SQA] external argument are not analysed here. This is a result or consequence of the fact that there is an asymmetry between the internal and the external argument; the verb and its internal arguments have closer ties as far as aspectual structure is concerned.

(31a)	Ella	at	een stukje taart	=>EVENT	Terminative
	+SQA	+ADD-TO	+SQA		
	'Ella ate a piece of cake'				
(31b)	Ella	at	taart	=> PROCESS	} Durative
	+SQA	+ADD-TO	-SQA		
	'Ella ate cake'				
(31c)	Ella	wilde	een stukje taart	=> STATE <sup>20</sup>	
	+SQA	-ADD-TO	+SQA		
	'Ella wanted a piece of cake'				

Events, Processes and States are aspectual classes. States and processes are both durative predications and, from now on, will be treated as belonging together to the durative type of predications. One minus value suffices to make a sentence durative. Terminativity is, therefore, the marked case.

Temporal domains can be specified by temporal adverbs like 'yesterday', 'in the summer' or 'in 1998'. They are purely temporal, that is, they do not relate to the aspectual characteristics of a predicate or VP. As observed earlier, these aspectual characteristics are atemporal, and are determined irrespective of the relation of an eventuality to its hosting temporal domain<sup>21</sup>.

Predicational aspect works exactly the same in Dutch and in Spanish, which means that the Plus Principle applies to Spanish resulting in the same aspectual values as in Dutch:

(32a)	Nuria	comía <sup>22</sup>	un trozo de tarta	=>EVENT	Terminative
	+SQA	+ADD-TO	+SQA		
	'Nuria ate a piece of cake'				
(32b)	Nuria	comía	tarta	=> PROCESS	} Durative
	+SQA	+ADD-TO	-SQA		
	'Nuria ate cake'				
(32c)	Nuria	quería	un trozo de tarta	=> STATE	
	+SQA	-ADD-TO	+SQA		
	'Nuria wanted a piece of cake'				

There are two aspectual tests that display the semantic differences between durative and terminative predications. Their application also proves that predicational aspect works the same way in both Spanish and Dutch. The tests involve, on the one hand, adverbial phrases expressing duration (the 'for an hour' test) and, on the other, the adverbial phrases requiring some sort of termination of the eventuality (the 'in an

<sup>20</sup> The individual interaction of events, processes and states with perfective and imperfective verb forms is given in Chapter 2. The distinction between processes and states in SLA does not seem to be relevant; therefore, it will not be further examined here.

<sup>21</sup> Hereby, the idea developed in Verkuyl (1993 and elsewhere) about the atemporal nature of the durative/terminative aspectual distinction is maintained.

<sup>22</sup> The verb is imperfective here, however, this does not influence the predicational aspect; these sentences with perfective forms would display basically the same characteristics.

hour' test). The verbs in (33) to (38) are all perfective forms, which does not interfere with the 'in an hour' versus 'the whole day' end-point interpretation.

- (33a) Gisteren heb ik 10 kilometer gelopen  
 (33b) Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros  
 'Yesterday I ran 10 kilometres'<sup>23</sup>
- (34a) Gisteren heb ik in een uur 10 kilometer gelopen  
 (34b) Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros en una hora  
 'Yesterday I ran 10 kilometres in one hour'
- (35a) \*Gisteren heb ik de hele dag 10 kilometer gelopen  
 (35b) \*Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros todo el día  
 'Yesterday I ran 10 kilometres the whole day'
- (36a) Gisteren heb ik gelopen  
 (36b) Ayer corrí  
 'Yesterday I ran'
- (37a) \*Gisteren heb ik in een uur gelopen  
 (37b) \*Ayer corrí en una hora  
 'Yesterday I ran in an hour'
- (38a) Gisteren heb ik de hele dag gelopen  
 (38b) Ayer corrí todo el día  
 'Yesterday I ran the whole day'

Sentences (34a) and (34b) are grammatical because they contain a terminative predication, and terminative predications are compatible with adverbial phrases pertaining to domains that harbour terminative predications, and not durative predications. However, sentences (35a) and (35b) are ungrammatical, because the terminative tenseless predications in both sentences do not accept a durational adverbial of the type 'the whole day'. Terminative predications ask for a domain in which something can be located and they do not want some constituent which expresses durational measurement. Predications such as those in (37) and (38) are durative. Durative predications only allow for durative adverbials because the essence of a durative predication seems to be that it pertains to something having a duration that can be measured. This is why sentences (37a) and (37b) are ungrammatical, while (38a) and (38b) are grammatical. The relation between durative and terminative predications and durational adverbials appears to be quite constant in languages. Moreover, the form of the verb, perfective in the case of the Spanish sentences (37) and (38), does not interfere with the terminative-durative predicational aspect: the compatibility or incompatibility of predicational aspect with adverbials does not concern the perfective form.

The next section will explore grammatical aspect in Spanish. In section 1.3.2., a description of the Spanish aspectual system will be presented, followed, in section 1.3.2.1., by a discussion of the different readings of the imperfective. Section 1.3.3. explores the strategies that the Spanish language employs in expressing terminativity

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<sup>23</sup> The translation is the same for both the Dutch and the Spanish sentence.

at the predicational level with an uncompleted temporal domain in the past, and expressing durativity at the predicational level with a completed temporal domain in the past.

**1.3.2. Grammatical Aspect in Spanish**

In Spanish, grammatical aspect is morphologically marked in a systematic way by means of specific morphemes: it is visible in the alternation of aspects in the past, since the morphological encoding of grammatical aspect is only obligatory in the past tense (imperfective-perfective). The perfective-imperfective distinction in Spanish is inflectional, where every verb has both a perfective and an imperfective past form.

Spanish, as compared to other Romance languages, is the neo-Latin language that has achieved the most vital conservation of aspectual information in the verb form. As discussed earlier, grammatical aspect concerns the characterization of the completion of the temporal domain in which an eventuality is hosted in the past. If the domain is characterized as closed off, the perfective aspect results, whereas if the domain can be characterized as not necessarily complete or closed off, then the imperfective is called for. Grammatical aspect is not a strict temporal notion, as it is not deictic. It merely modifies in some way a domain in the past in which the eventuality is located as to its being bounded or not, so that information can be obtained about the way which the eventuality is presented.

There is not a clear well-defined relationship between the Dutch simple past tense form and the Spanish past tense forms. Spanish has two forms, both of them introducing aspectual as well as temporal information together with the verb form itself. Table 8 provides examples of terminative and durative predications and shows how they interact with the two Spanish simple past tenses.

*Table 8 Spanish simple pasts*

	Pretérito Imperfectivo (Past Imperfective)	Pretérito Perfectivo (Past Perfective)
Dur. (1a)	Raul cantaba Raul sang+IMPERFECTIVE	(1b) Raul cantó Raul sang+PERFECTIVE
Term. (2a)	Raul cantaba una canción Raul sang+IMPERFECTIVE a song	(2b) Raul cantó una canción Raul sang+PERFECTIVE a song

Put very simply, the imperfective forms in the cells 1a and 2a in Table 8 imply that the period of time hosting the eventuality described by the predication is of an incomplete nature (it does not have a right bound), whereas the perfective forms in 1b and 2b in Table 8 imply that the domain hosting the eventuality described by the predication is closed off. This causes the process of Raul singing in cell 1b to be presented as bounded. In this sense, there are two sorts of completion in 2b. One is expressed by the terminative nature of the predication; the other is the completion of the domain in which the eventuality is hosted. The difference between imperfective

and perfective taken in this sense is not stated in terms of the temporal location of the eventuality itself, which is, in both cases, the past tense, nor in terms of the aspectual properties of the eventuality. What matters here is the characterization of the temporal domain where the eventuality takes place. In Table 7, containing Dutch examples, the characterization of the temporal domain, that is, grammatical aspect, is lacking. The Dutch sentences in Table 7 only show, on the one hand, the aspectual properties of the eventuality, and, on the other hand, the past location of the eventuality.

### 1.3.2.1. Imperfective forms

It is a characteristic of the imperfective to focus on open situations and not to provide information about its ending. Through the perspective of the imperfective form, only an internal part of the eventuality (or, in the case of habituality, part of a series of similar eventualities) can be seen. It leaves open the temporal domain hosting the eventuality, which means that there is no information given as to when the period of time is closed off or whether the eventuality goes on. On the other hand, with the perfective, the temporal domain of the situation coincides with that of the situation itself, which means that a closed off temporal domain hosts the eventuality. In this way, one can see the basis for the translational equivalence between Dutch and Spanish forms.

The imperfective has three different readings, according to mainly pragmatic and discursive reasons:

1. Episodic/background reading
2. Habitual/repetitive reading
3. Progressive/ongoing reading

A verb form that takes the imperfective morphology conveys on its own a lack of information as to when the period of time hosting the eventuality is closed off. But it does not notify the particular imperfective reading the sentence carries. In order to distinguish among the three readings, one needs to search outside the sentence, as the responsible elements are either adverbials or contextual clues in the narrative.

- a) The imperfective form has an episodic reading when the eventuality described by predication is in the background, for example as part of a description, at the beginning of a story:

- (39) Ayer Mercè cantaba una canción porque estaba contenta  
 Yesterday Mercè sing+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE one song because  
 be+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE happy  
 ‘Yesterday Mercè sang a song because she was happy’

- b) An imperfective form has a habitual or repetitive meaning when the eventuality described by the predication occurs more than once in the past:

- (40) Mercè cantaba canciones cada domingo  
 Mercè sing+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE songs every Sunday  
 ‘Mercè sang songs every Sunday’
- c) The imperfective form expressing progressivity<sup>24</sup> has the property of focusing on the rolling status of the eventuality. Moreover, it has to be supported by another tensed clause for the sentence where it occurs to fully function:
- (41) Mercè cantaba cuando me la encontré  
 Mercè sing+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE when me her  
 find+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE  
 ‘Mercè was singing when I found her’

It should be noted that the Spanish language also has the means to express progressivity with a verbal periphrasis, like in English or, in a way, in Dutch:

- (42) Mercè estaba cantando cuando me la encontré  
 Mercè be+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE singing when me her  
 find+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE  
 ‘Mercè was singing when I found her’

These data show that imperfectivity cannot be treated as identical to what is expressed by a progressive form in English.

What is the difference between the imperfective form expressing progressivity and the progressive verbal periphrasis in Spanish? To answer this question, one needs to find out first if there is a meaning that the progressive periphrasis has that the imperfective form does not express. Both sentences make use of the imperfective inflection, either on the auxiliary form, as in (42), or on the main verb, as in (41). Thus, it seems that the difference between these two sentences is not due to a different aspectual form, because both sentences accept the imperfective inflection. The difference seems to have to do with the placement of the imperfective inflection. If the inflection is found together with the main verb, such as in (41), then the sentence acquires a straightforward imperfective meaning, where the temporal domain hosting the predication is not given as complete. This is compatible with all imperfective readings. On the other hand, if the speaker chooses to place the inflection in the auxiliary verb, as in (42), then the main verb needs to take the gerundive inflection, which brings out an “action in progress” meaning. Both of these sentences imply that the time domain where the eventuality is taking place is not given as completed, the difference is that when the speaker chooses the periphrasis, s/he emphasizes the progression of the eventuality itself. However, the auxiliary in the progressive periphrasis can also take perfective morphology:

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<sup>24</sup> The imperfective past expressing progressivity may be regarded, in some particular contexts, as less natural than the progressive periphrasis.



- (47) Cada mañana Víctor compraba bizcochos  
 [+ADD-TO] [-SQA]  
 Every morning Víctor buy+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE cakes  
 ‘Every morning Víctor bought cakes’

All these sentences are grammatical, which indicates that the two levels of aspectual representation interact without transforming internal values in those languages where the distinction perfective-imperfective is formally present.

Hence, aspect needs to deal simultaneously with the characterization of the predicational aspect and with the question of whether the period of time in which the predication is situated is left as open or closed off. This task of dealing with two aspectual levels may lead to aspectual combinations within sentences, which may look like incompatibilities. This is the case in sentences (45) and (46), as the senses of completion of the sentence and the predication it contains are reversed.

The possible incompatibilities with imperfective verbal forms are reviewed first. The combination of imperfective marking and a durative predication, as the more natural combination of two incomplete levels, does not present any complications. That is, a sentence that features an imperfective form, implying that the temporal domain hosting the described eventuality is not complete does not conflict with the fact that the eventuality is durative. Both aspectual levels are defined as non-complete (sentence (47)). However, sentences with an imperfective form but with compositionally formed terminative aspect can create a problem, as in sentence (46). For convenience, the sentences given above as (40), (41), and (42) will be repeated here:

- (48) Mercè cantaba una canción cada Domingo = Habitual  
 ‘Mercè sang a song every Sunday’  
 (49) Ayer Mercè cantaba una canción porque estaba contenta = Episodic  
 ‘Yesterday Mercè sang a song because she was happy’  
 (50) Mercè cantaba una canción cuando me la encontré = Progressive  
 ‘Mercè was singing a song when I found her’

A range of completion values at the predicational level can be traced between the three imperfective readings. In sentence (48), only the tenseless predication in *Mercè cantaba una canción*, with habitual reading, can be understood as terminative, since the eventuality of singing a song occurs several times but each time the eventuality is complete, it becomes, so to speak, an accumulation of terminative eventualities. Sentence (49) is not incompatible with whether in reality Mercè finished singing that one song. However, this information is not given by the sentence itself. Finally, sentence (50) cannot express a terminative reading due to the presence of the *when*-clause and hence the sentence becomes durative: the imperfective form of the verb overrules and modifies the tenseless terminative meaning given by the internal structure of the verb and its arguments by preventing the whole predication from being actualised in real time. To be able to still consider this sentence with a progressive meaning as containing a terminative predication, the progressive could be understood as making a commitment to the process part of the

event. In this way, the predication keeps its tenseless terminative value; but the focus is on its progress in real time, not on its termination or completion.

Imperfectivity, whether it is traditionally a property of a tense system or an aspect system, can be given a uniform analysis based on the notion of an incomplete temporal domain. The range of available interpretations is absolutely the same in the case of terminative and durative sentences in the imperfective. This points to the fact that imperfectivity is ‘stronger’ in the sense that it is able to override the terminative/durative distinction. A terminative predication together with the progressive reading of the imperfective is the only case where the two aspectual levels may not work independently. However, this problem is solved if the reading of progressivity is understood as focussing on the progress of the event rather than on its being presented as complete.

The present approach suggests that an adequate analysis of the imperfective value of grammatical aspect cannot be given in terms of an eventuality description, whether it concerns the part/whole relation (as in the progressive reading of the imperfective) or its durative vs. terminative character. As argued, such an analysis should be adopted in terms of a characterization of the temporal domain, hosting an eventuality.

The perfective form allows for the other type of the so-called aspectual incompatibilities. The combination of perfective and terminative aspectual values, as the more natural combination of two complete levels, does not give a problem (as shown in sentence (44)). The other combination with the perfective, that is, a perfective verbal form and durative predication, in sentence (45), repeated here for convenience, may be considered problematic for the idea of independency of aspectual levels.

- (51) Ayer comí porquerías todo el día  
 Yesterday eat+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE junk food whole the day  
 ‘Yesterday I ate junk food the whole day’

One could say that intuition would direct the predication [‘I eat junk food’] towards expressing an end point in this sentence, because of the perfective marker, although the Plus Principle should characterize it as a durative predication. However, the eating of junk food by someone is known to end not because it becomes a terminative predication, but because the period of time when the durative predication takes place is closed (requirement of the perfective form). Sentence (51) does, therefore, not create a problem for the idea of independence of aspectual levels either.

Another problematic case may be found in those sentences with [-ADD-TO] verbs (statives):

- (52) Laura estuvo enferma  
 Laura be+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE sick  
 ‘Laura was sick’

There is nothing wrong, however, in affirming in (52) that [*estar enferma*] ('be sick') is a durative predication and that the domain accommodating the state is complete and closed off, as in cell (1b) of Table 8. There is, again, no real incompatibility of aspectual meanings. On the contrary, grammatical aspect seems to determine the amount of information given about an eventuality in terms of the domain hosting it. It can be concluded that none of the perfective durative combinations is a problem for a two-level aspectual description analysis.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, there are ungrammatical cases with some types of predications and the perfective form. They turn out to be pragmatic incompatibilities. Permanent predications such as that in (53a) express qualities that cannot be subjected to variation (c.f. García Fernández 1999). They cannot be modified neither by adverbial complements (53b), nor by temporal subordinated sentences as in (53c), nor can they appear with the perfective (53d). But they are grammatical with the imperfective (53e).

- (53a) [Luis to be from Barcelona]  
 (53b) \* Luis was from Barcelona since a couple of months  
 (53c) \* Luis was from Barcelona since she was born  
 (53d) \* Luis fue de Barcelona  
       Luis be+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE from Barcelona  
       'Luis was from Barcelona'  
 (53e) Luis era de Barcelona  
       Luis be+3<sup>rd</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE from Barcelona  
       'Luis was from Barcelona'

This semantic incompatibility emerges also with the present perfect, as it is shown in (53f).

- (53f) \*Luis ha sido de Barcelona  
       'Luis has been from Barcelona'

Sentence (53f) exemplifies that the incompatibility is not aspectual in nature, but pragmatic, as the predication is not only incompatible with the perfective aspectual marker, but also with the perfect temporal marker.

#### 1.4. Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, it was argued that a theory of aspect should be able to explain not only the distinction between the different linguistic strategies that languages use to encode aspectual information, but also the links between the strategies. To be able to explain how aspect works cross-linguistically, a tense system is also of crucial importance, as different languages express different aspectual notions by means of different temporal forms available in their tense system.

<sup>25</sup> For another theoretical standpoint on the interaction of the two aspectual levels, see de Swart (1998). De Swart describes what she calls aspectual shifts and coercion, proposing the idea that perfectives only describe events; imperfectives only states and processes.

The schema in (5) (repeated here in (54) for convenience) plays a crucial role in the present temporal-aspectual system of the Spanish language.

(54) TENSE [ASPECT [predication]]

It is not only predicational aspect and grammatical aspect that express completion information; the tense system also adds this sort of information too.

The temporal-aspectual description of the Spanish language given in this chapter assumes a separation of three levels of temporal/aspectual information, each of them contributing its own particular interpretation of the semantic notion ‘completion’:

- An interpretation at the predicational aspect level (terminative versus durative predications);
- An interpretation at the grammatical aspect level (perfective versus imperfective forms);
- An interpretation in the temporal level (perfect versus imperfect forms).

The interactions among the three planes of completion interpretation have been presented as constituting a complete aspectual system of the Spanish and Dutch languages. The analysis of each of its parts in different languages has established, for the purposes of this thesis, a complete cross-linguistic description of aspectual phenomena. As shown, the perfect forms allow for a complementary perfective behaviour in languages that do not formally contain a perfective-imperfective division at the level of grammatical aspect. Moreover, in those languages where grammatical aspect is present in the tense system, the temporal forms containing the operator (PERF) may either take over the values of the perfective, as in spoken French, or the perfect may become superfluous when appearing together with a perfective marker. Or the other way around, the perfective may become superfluous when appearing together with the perfect. This has been demonstrated for the Spanish past perfect perfective, the ‘pretérito anterior’, which is no longer used, and has been replaced by either the simple past perfective form or the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’, the past perfect form (for a discussion, see section 1.2.3. in this chapter).

The unique behaviour of each of the two focused simple past forms in Spanish (the imperfective and the perfective), in the tense system and in the aspectual system proposed in this chapter suggests that the past form creating some empirical and theoretical complications for the temporal analysis is the perfective past. In addition, the simple past form that deserves special treatment when developing an aspectual analysis of the simple past pair is the imperfective past. This asymmetrical behaviour of the grammatical aspect forms at different aspecto-temporal levels turns out to have the following implications:

- (a) Aspectually, the extensive unmarked form is the perfective;
- (b) Temporally, the past imperfective is the unmarked form.

In other words, for the perfective simple past, its aspectual properties could be seen as dominant, more salient, relative to its temporal properties; the perfective form is therefore seen as the default aspect. This means that for the perfective form, the aspectual meaning of completion dominates the temporal meaning of pastness. On the other hand, for the imperfective form, the temporal meaning of pastness dominates the aspectual meaning of incompleteness (this idea is further developed in Bosque (1991)). This may have repercussions on the learning of these particular forms in L2. It may be that the learners use the perfective form therefore to mark aspect and the imperfective form to mark tense.

The present cross-linguistic theoretical analysis aimed at contributing to both a theory on the acquisition of aspect in second languages and to a didactic approach to the teaching of the two grammatical aspectual forms. A description of forms and uses of the two grammatical aspect forms in Spanish, perfective and imperfective, is obviously a requirement to understand how aspect works in this particular language. Moreover, it may also contribute to the understanding of the intricacies behind its problematic learning as a L2. Therefore, to reach an understanding of both Spanish L1 and Spanish L2 aspectual intricacies, a description of the Spanish grammatical aspect as given above was necessary.

Yet, for acquisition and didactic directions, mastering only the Spanish grammatical aspect system does not suffice. The learner's L1 must also be analysed to have a more complete aspectual picture of interlanguage production. The language with which Spanish has been cross-linguistically analysed is Dutch, which does not formally have grammatical aspect markers. However, Dutch marks completion in other ways, at other levels of interpretation: at the temporal level (perfect versus imperfect tense forms) and at the predicational aspect level (terminative versus durative predications). To report on the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish, proper descriptions of the Dutch temporal and predicational systems are required. Only then will an identification of how Dutch speakers mark completion in their L1 be achieved. This means that the required analysis must also contain a description of the temporal system in Dutch, on the one hand, and a description of predicational aspect in Dutch, on the other hand, as given above. However, Spanish has also a full-fledged temporal system and identifiable predicational aspect. Accordingly, a description of the other two levels of completion in Spanish was required, that is, a description of the temporal system in Spanish and a description of the predicational aspect in Spanish must also be presented.

Once the three levels of completion representation have been recognized and presented, it is necessary to compare the means each language has to convey completion meanings: at the tense level and at the predicational aspect level for Dutch; at the tense level, at the grammatical aspect level and at the predicational aspect level in Spanish.

This is what this chapter has tried to accomplish. In order to help the understanding of the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish, an appropriate description of the temporal and aspectual systems of both languages has been provided.

### **1.5. Application of this analysis to L2**

In order to prepare on what can be expected, a brief characterization of the content of the three following chapters will be given in view of the wish to connect the present chapter to each of the following three.

Chapter 2 will try to answer the question of whether native speakers of Spanish are influenced by the predicational aspect level when making use of the two simple past forms. Understanding how the intuitions of L1 speakers work over grammatical aspect, may also contribute to the comprehension of the problematic issues behind its learning. Spanish native speakers fill in a questionnaire where their intuitions are requested about a number of sentences with past tense markers. There are two possible answers to each sentence. They may give a sentence as acceptable or as non-acceptable. They can accept the perfective, on the one hand, only when it appears with terminative predications or they can accept the imperfective, on the other hand, when it appears with durative predications. It is also possible that the predicational aspect hosted by the sentence does not influence their decision on whether the sentences are grammatical. An analysis of the answers of the natives will show whether it is the case that Spanish native speakers rely on the aspectual information of the predication in order to make a choice between perfective and imperfective forms. Or on the contrary, whether the predication in itself does not give the information as to which aspectual form the verb needs to take. Results will point to either independency or interference of completion levels in native language.

Chapter 3 contains a second language acquisition study. This study tries to contribute to the ongoing debate of whether the atemporal information of a sentence interferes with the distribution of the two Spanish past tenses in interlanguage. All participants will write a number of compositions, where they narrate different personal experiences that occurred in the past. Each verb form on the one hand and each predication on the other hand will be cross-analysed and conclusions will be drawn according to the findings. The aim of the test is to find out whether inherent aspectual information influences Dutch learners of Spanish in their choice of grammatical aspect. More specifically, results will indicate whether it is the verb itself alone as a lexical unit that interferes with the choice of grammatical aspect (as often assumed in the literature), or the compositionally formed predicational aspect hosted in the sentence.

Chapter 4 tries to find an answer to the question of whether overtly instructing the independency of aspectual levels to Dutch learners of Spanish facilitates the acquisitional path. An experimental instruction will be put to the test. This instruction will focus on the similarities between Dutch and Spanish predicational systems and the differences between predicational and grammatical aspect in Spanish. Two methods of data collection will take place: compositions and standardised tests. Students will be tested before and after the instruction. The results of the study provide an answer to the question of whether showing the differences between levels will allow the learner to understand the intrinsic meaning

of the two past tenses in Spanish. Thus, the experimental instruction given to the students of the study described in Chapter 4 is tested in order to see whether it affects positively or negatively their performance after receiving the instruction.

In Chapter 5, a description and discussion of the findings at each language plane (theoretical, acquisitional, methodological) will be given. Observed contradictions between the theoretical expectations and the empirical findings will also be dealt with and possible directions for further research are outlined.



## Chapter 2

### CONTRAST BETWEEN ASPECTUAL SYSTEMS IN L2 LEARNING AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

#### 2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to contribute to a better understanding of why it is that Dutch speakers learning Spanish make specific mistakes in the domain of temporality and aspectuality. By understanding how the intuitions of L1 speakers over grammatical aspect work, we may also add to the comprehension of the problematic issues behind its learning.

Temporal expressions in natural language have begun to receive attention as an area of research in adult second language acquisition. An increasing interest in aspect has developed in SLA research. The acquisition of a temporal system is slow and gradual, and as such, it is worth investigating (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). Many researchers have pursued the study of the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology in the interlanguage of L2 learners. There have been two basic lines of thought: a functional/pragmatic/context oriented research (among others, Salaberry 2000) and sentential level research. Discourse analysis is extremely important to be able to grasp the functional needs of languages as far as their aspectual intricacy is concerned; however, without a clear picture of how aspect works at the sentential level, there is no possibility to lay hold of the essence of temporal and aspectual systems. A framework for this type of research is the one provided by the Aspect Hypothesis, as stated in Andersen and Shirai (1994: 133):

*“Second language learners will initially be influenced by the inherent semantic aspect of verbs or predicates in the acquisition of tense and aspect markers associated with or affixed to these verbs”*

The Aspect Hypothesis is based on evidence obtained from English native speakers learning Spanish. This hypothesis has been generalized to learners with other Germanic first languages, such as Dutch (García & van Putte 1988, Martínez Baztán 1994), which means that the opposition between perfective and imperfective constitutes one of the major difficulties encountered, not only by English speakers, but also by native speakers of Germanic languages engaged in learning Spanish as a second language. There have been a number of studies which analysis of data proves that Dutch learners of Spanish encounter the same problems postulated by the Aspect Hypothesis:

García & van Putte (1988) compared the selection of past tense aspectual morphology between 15 Spanish native speakers and 20 L1 Dutch teachers of Spanish. Their results corroborate those found in Andersen study. García & van Putte (1988: 277) concluded that:

*“(The non-natives) ignore the cues provided by the mediate, larger context, in favour of the immediate context – such as, in particular, the lexical meaning of the verb.”*

Martínez Baztán (1994) analysed 30 written compositions written by 15 Dutch advanced learners of Spanish. One of his aims was to investigate until which point the sequence proposed by Andersen (the Aspect Hypothesis) guided the learners’ use of the Spanish past tenses. Martínez-Baztán (1994: 44) concluded:

*“As a whole, we believe that a certain influence of the acquisition order of the aspectual system between perfective and imperfective described by Andersen can be demonstrated<sup>1</sup>.”*

Taking into account the results of these two studies, we may conclude that the acquisition of Spanish past tenses by Dutch learners can be also described using the Aspect Hypothesis.

This article aims to contribute to a better understanding of why it is that Dutch speakers learning Spanish make specific mistakes in the domain of temporality and aspectuality. By understanding how the L2 native speakers’ intuitions over grammatical aspect work, we may also add to the comprehension of the problematic issues behind its learning. To be able to understand the learner’s complications, we have to provide a common theoretical basis upon which it is possible to compare the Spanish and Dutch aspectual systems. This study has been carried out on the basis of a theoretical framework in which the role of the verb in the acquisition of tense and aspect has received a lot of attention, specifically with respect to the question of which sort of aspectual information is provided by the verb and which sort of aspectual information is given at higher levels of sentential structure such as the VP-level or the S-level, where the verb and its arguments form semantic complexes. Thus, one of the purposes of this paper is to contribute to the insight that a more precise use of the term ‘verb’ in this line of research is necessary. In that sense, this approach intends to reduce the terminological confusion that seems to haunt the literature on aspect. In particular, in the formulation of the Aspect Hypothesis, the phrase ‘inherent aspect of verbs or predicates’ cannot be maintained without running into problems. We will improve on the Aspect Hypothesis by applying the proper aspectual tools so as to be able to make an appropriate analysis of the data collected in the L1 intuitions reporting experiment conducted in the present paper.

## **2.2. Aspectual theory**

In this section, a review of aspect theories and approaches is given. We will start with a description of the predicational aspect approach, and will defend it against the lexical aspect approach. In addition, some machinery will be presented, the Plus-Principle, and its compositionally application explained. Moreover, a comparison

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<sup>1</sup> Own translation

between different views on aspectual classes will be given. This section will end up with an overview of forms and functions of grammatical aspect in Spanish.

### 2.2.1. Lexical aspect versus predicational aspect

One of the problems inherited from the past is the use of grammatical terms that date from a period in which linguistic theory did not have enough tools to distinguish properly between levels of phrase structure. A case in point is the unfortunate use of the term ‘lexical aspect’. Traditional Slavic aspectology distinguished—and many in this tradition still distinguish—between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect. The opposition between imperfective and perfective aspect in Slavic linguistics is generally considered to be grammatical because it is said to express an opposition between presenting an eventuality either as uncompleted (or repeated) or as completed. These notions pertain, so to say, to the eventuality as described by the whole sentence. In the Russian pair of sentences in (1)

- (1a) Ivan pisal pismo  
Ivan write+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE letter  
‘Ivan wrote a letter’
- (1b) Ivan napisal pismo  
Ivan write+PAST+PERFECTIVE letter  
‘Ivan wrote a letter’

the imperfective sentence (1a) is said to present Ivan's writing as seen from the inside, whereas (1b) presents Ivan's writing as having been completed. The notion ‘grammatical’ in grammatical aspect has to do with the fact that the eventuality as a whole is positioned in a certain way, either as going on or as completed.

To distinguish the sentences in (1) from the sentences in (2),

- (2a) Ivan nenavidel otca  
Ivan hate+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE father  
‘Ivan hated his father’
- (2b) Ivan voznenavidel otca  
Ivan hate+PAST+PERFECTIVE father  
‘Ivan hated his father’

aspectologists considered it necessary to also distinguish lexical aspect: it is evident that a verb like ‘hate’ has different temporal properties from verbs like ‘write’. After all, the imperfective aspect of (1a) concerns an eventuality that inherently expresses some sort of boundedness: that is why (1a) expresses the potential terminativity of the event in question. After the situation described in (1a) the letter may have come to a close. This is not the case in (2): to hate someone does not imply anything about the possible termination of the hate-relation existing between Ivan and his father.

This is why (2b), with the perfective prefix, expresses “start to hate” rather than “ends to hate”.<sup>2</sup>

The problem we are facing is that the notion of lexical aspect viewed in this way got firmly rooted in Slavic aspectology before linguistic theory developed syntactic tools to be able to speak more properly about phrase structure. On a closer view, there is nothing lexical about the difference between (1) and (2). That is, the inherent boundedness of the eventuality expressed in (1) and the unboundedness of the state described in (2) for which the term lexical aspect was invented, has nothing to do with the difference between the verbs ‘write’ and ‘hate’. This can be easily shown by (3).

- (3) Ivan pisał stixi  
Ivan write+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE verses/poems  
‘Ivan wrote poems’

This sentence does not pertain to something bounded in the middle of which the imperfective aspect would position a point of view. As pointed out in Verkuyl (1972), the choice of a plural noun (phrase) *stixi* (‘poems’) has an effect on the inherent boundedness expressed by the predication as a whole. In other words, the verb ‘write’ itself is neutral with respect to the boundedness expressed in (1) and the unboundedness in (3).

Two consequences are important. Firstly, it should be clear that the notion of lexical aspect is misleading in the sense that it is the predication rather than the verb itself, which expresses the boundedness of the sort discussed above. So we have to get at the phrase level to experience inherent boundedness.

Verkuyl (1972, 1993) has shown that, for Germanic languages, what has been called lexical aspect, is in fact compositionally formed. In Verkuyl (1993), aspectuality at the VP level and aspectuality at the sentential (S) level are distinguished<sup>3</sup>. This distinction will be discussed below in more detail because the VP level in particular might be very important as the level at which children (L1 learners) and L2 learners learn verbs.

In the present paper, however, we will fully accept the difference between the two sorts of aspect and assume that the notion of grammatical aspect is necessary as a sort of lubricant between tense and the tenseless predication, which is the input to tense. In addition, predicational aspect yields a tenseless semantic object on which tense is going to operate. In other words, we will analyse Germanic sentences like (4a) as in (4b), where the part between the brackets is the tenseless predication which, by the application of Past, gets located in a temporal position with respect to the speaker or to some reference point already introduced in the discourse.

- (4a) Alex wrote a letter

<sup>2</sup> So, the perfective prefix takes the first “slice” of some interval and by that the predication itself denotes a completed eventuality ‘begin to hate’, which is actualised in real time.

<sup>3</sup> To evade a possible misunderstanding: we will use the term VP to denote a combination of a verb and its complement and the term S as the domain where NP and VP form a tenseless sentence, whereas S' will be used to denote a sentence having tense.

(4b) PAST (Alex write a letter)

For Spanish, the situation is more complex because in sentence (5a) the period of time in the past, where the bounded eventuality of ['Alex write a letter'] is presented as completed; whereas the grammatical aspect in sentence (5b) presents the bounded eventuality either as ongoing or as a repeated/habitual event.

- (5a) Alex escribió una novella  
 Alex write+PAST+PERFECTIVE a novel  
 'Alex wrote a novel'
- (5b) Alex escribía una novela  
 Alex write+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE a novel  
 'Alex wrote/used to write/was writing a novel'

Evidently, one cannot live here with the representation in (4b), because Past is not sufficient, so we should have something like (6).

(6) PAST (ASP)(Alex write a letter)

Here one has a justification for distinguishing between predicational aspect and grammatical aspect: the former yields a predication of some sort (in this case expressing inherent boundedness), the latter operates on this predication so as to yield a proper input for the application of tense. The underlying reason is that tense on its own should be neutral as to the nature of the predication on which it operates, so the aspectual meaning differences between (5a) and (5b) should be found in some extra operator mediating between tense and predicational aspect.

### 2.2.3. Compositionality and the Plus-Principle

As observed, the notion of predicational aspect is of an atemporal nature. This means that the information expressed by the tenseless predication in (6) is a complex semantic object put together by an operation that amalgamates the meaning of the verb and its arguments before tense is applied.

Following the compositional procedure adopted in Verkuyl (1993), the terminativity of the tenseless ['Alex write a letter'] is obtained in two steps. Firstly, the verb and its internal argument are combined into a VP; secondly the VP and the external argument are put together in an S. To account for the non-stative nature of verbs like 'write', 'eat', 'hit', 'grow', etc. as opposed to stative verbs like 'hate', 'love', 'want', 'hang', a verbal semantic feature called [+ADDT0] is assumed as the contribution of the verb to the aspectuality at phrase level. For stative verbs, the value of the feature is negative. The contribution of the NP to aspectual information can be accounted for in terms of an NP-feature [ $\pm$ SQA], where SQA stands for 'Specified Quantity of A', 'A' being the denotation of the Noun of the NP. It expresses the quantification and delimitation of the arguments. Thus, NPs like 'a letter', 'three sandwiches', 'some whisky', 'five acres of land', etc. are labelled

[+SQA], whereas NPs like ‘sandwiches’ (as in ‘She buttered sandwiches’), ‘whisky’ (as in ‘She drank whisky’), etc. are [-SQA].

Only a combination of a [+ADDTO]-verb with [+SQA]-arguments yields a compositionally formed terminative aspect. All other cases are durative. This is what Verkuyl (1999) calls the Plus-Principle; it refers to the requirement that all aspectual atoms ([ADDTO] and [SQA]) involved are plus values. Terminativity involves a compositional amalgamation of lexical semantic information given by the verb and structural information given by the arguments. As can be seen from the tenseless examples in (7), terminativity shows up as the marked case.

		Aspectual value	Aspectual class
(7a)	Alex write a letter [+SQA] [+ADDTO] [+SQA]	=> terminative	Event
(7b)	Alex write letters [+SQA] [+ADDTO] [-SQA]	=> durative	} Process
(7c)	Somebody write a letter [-SQA] [+ADDTO] [+SQA]	=> durative	
(7d)	Alex expect a letter [+SQA] [-ADDTO] [+SQA]	=> durative	State

This is interesting in view of the fact that L2 learners may have the option of learning marked cases earlier than unmarked cases, or the other way around. Another property of the algebra used to yield complex predicational information is that it predicts three aspectual classes on the basis of the two features [ $\pm$ SQA] and [ $\pm$ ADDTO], as shown in (7).<sup>4</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Aspectual classes

In the aspectual literature, there is a disturbing tendency to mix up the three levels distinguished above: (a) the Verb level; (b) the VP level; and (c) the S (= the full predicational) level. The tendency is disturbing because the idea of a compositional approach to aspect seems to conflict with the need to distinguish verb classes. We will restrict ourselves to the discussion of the two main partitions:

- (8a) the tripartition State - Process - Event
- (8b) the quadripartition State-Activity-Accomplishment-Achievement

The first partition tends to be made at the predicational level. It can be found in Comrie (1976), Bach (1981). Verkuyl (1993) construed the three classes from the two semantic notions [ $\pm$ ADDTO] and [ $\pm$ SQA]. As to the second classification in (8b) proposed by Vendler (1957), it is more difficult to see what people have in mind when they speak about verb classes. Many of them know that this might be a sloppy

<sup>4</sup> The machinery is more complex than discussed here. A sentence like ‘Nobody wrote a letter’ would be a state, because negation operates on the cumulative ADDTO-feature of the verb (Verkuyl 1993). We will come back to the issue of aspectual classes and their explanatory value below.

way of speaking so that in fact they distinguish four types of predications, but there are also those who really think that they speak about aspectual properties of the verb itself when they speak about an Accomplishment verb like ‘buy’ or an Achievement verb like ‘reach’. In the latter case, there is some real sloppiness in the use of the notion of verb, because ‘reach’ cannot occur without a complement. This makes it difficult to believe that people really have in mind when they distinguish among four verb types.

We will not confront the readers with some theoretical discord. In fact, we will turn this sort of disagreement into a fruitful strategy. After all, the notion of lexical item may be dubious in the sense that it is not really the verb itself that we learn. We cannot evade learning a verb in terms of its arguments, notably its internal argument. We may learn it so as L2 learners: ‘to write a book’, ‘to cross the street’, ‘to mail a letter’, ‘to kiss the bride’, etc. Note that we learn prototypically in this way, in the sense that we hardly encounter phrases like ‘to write nothing’, ‘to cross canals’, ‘to mail letters’, ‘to kiss people’, etc. What we may in fact learn are full terminative VPs with specific aspectual properties expressing boundedness at the VP-level.

In order to be able to discuss literature in which the Vendler classification is adopted in terms of the tripartition, let us rephrase the quadripartition in (8b) as (8c):

(8c) State-Process-Event<sup>1,2</sup>

The simplification in (8c) is possible because Processes and Activities are the same sort of class with different nomenclature. The difference between the two classifications can boil down to the question of whether or not Achievements can be distinguished properly from Accomplishments. It is only when an aspectually relevant distinction between Vendler’s Accomplishments and Achievements can be made that the distinction could make sense (cf. Verkuyl 1993: Chapter 2 for discussion).

The properties of the tripartition are given in Table 1.

*Table 1*                      *Tripartition of Aspectual Classes and their Predicational Properties*

Predication	Properties
Event	Bounded, discrete, discernible, as a unit, countable
Process	Unbounded, continuous, not discernible as a separate unit, non-countable
State	Omnipresent

What follows from the position that Vendler classes are not verb classes in the strict sense of that word, is that we have to rephrase the Aspect Hypothesis as formulated by Andersen (1989). This will be done later on in the paper.

### 2.2.5. Grammatical aspect in Spanish

Grammatical aspect as distinguished from predicational aspect cannot be seen apart from the application of the tense operator. This is shown in languages such as French and Spanish where certain tense forms also express information that concerns the presentation of an eventuality as completed as going on or as part of a habit or generality. Grammatical aspect does not say anything about the duration or the inherent boundedness of the event or situation itself. Rather it locates the temporal domain that hosts the eventuality in a past such that the domain is considered as closed off at a certain point of reference (completed) or in a past leaving open the possibility that the domain has not yet been closed off at a certain point of reference (uncompleted). Note that in this way of expressing ourselves a distinction in levels plays a role: the completedness concerns the temporal domain, not the predication itself<sup>5</sup>. Let us clarify this point with the help of (9).

- (9a) PAST+IMPERFECTIVE (Ramón drink a beer) = Ramón bebía una cerveza  
 (9b) PAST+PERFECTIVE (Ramón drink a beer) = Ramón bebió una cerveza

We will say that the perfective aspect concerns the temporal domain D in which the situation is presented in the past and included as closed off from the present. The imperfective aspect also places the eventuality in the past but presents that part of the temporal domain D in which it is located as a half open interval. The imperfective aspect leaves things open. It is a way to underinform listeners with respect to what happened with the predication. Note that by adopting this position, we explain why imperfective and perfective meanings are insensitive to the nature of a predication.

- (9c) PAST+IMPERFECTIVE (Ramón drink beer) = Ramón bebía cerveza  
 (9d) PAST+PERFECTIVE (Ramón drink beer) = Ramón bebió cerveza

The difference between (9c) and (9d) is the way the eventuality (in this case a process) is reported: in (9d) the process is put in the domain D in a subpart of it that is closed off and so we know from it that Ramón was involved in an unbounded eventuality that was completed, in (9c) Ramón might still be drinking beer because of the closed-open nature of the interval in the domain D.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of grammatical aspect operating at a higher level than predicational aspect gives enough room to explain the use of certain tenses in Spanish. In (10), an

<sup>5</sup> So we use the term '(un)-bounded' for semantic objects denoted by the tenseless predication itself and the term '(in) completed' so as to pertain to the way in which the temporal domain is presented in which the eventuality is located.

<sup>6</sup> A domain represented as an interval may be open, ( ), or closed [ ], or closed-open [ ] or open-closed ( ). In our case, we assume that the left side of the domain is closed. In (9c) the eventuality described by the predication is either used as background, or as having habitual or repetitive reading or as expressing progressivity. The sentence as it is given in (9c) does not specify which one of the three readings it has; therefore, all interpretations are valid.

unbounded eventuality is located in a closed temporal domain and in (11), a bounded eventuality is located in an open temporal domain:

- (10) comí porquerías todo el día  
 I eat+PAST+PERFECTIVE junk food all the day  
 ‘I ate junk food the whole day’  
 Unbounded eventuality + closed time domain
- (11) leía el periódico los domingos  
 I read+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE the newspaper the Sundays  
 ‘I read the newspaper on Sundays’  
 Bounded eventuality + uncompleted time domain

A language acquisition implication behind the postulation of two independent aspectual levels in Spanish points at the fact that it is the presence of (un-)boundedness<sup>7</sup> at the predicational level and (in-) completeness at the grammatical level that creates the confusion the L2 learner has and not the existence or non-existence of an end point in the predication. In general, tense is not interested in the nature of the predication itself. Therefore, grammatical aspect should also not be interested in the nature of the predication, because it belongs essentially to the tense part of the information. Grammatical aspect provides partial or complete access to the predication irrespective of whether this is terminative or durative.

Until now, aspectual phenomena have been described as (intra-) sentential, as most theories on aspect do<sup>8</sup>. Everything that needs to be known before deciding whether a sentence is terminative or durative seems to reside in the (tenseless) VP and/or the S (if the external argument is also taken into account). The terminativity of a sentence seems to find all its requirements in the semantic relationship of the verb and its arguments and therefore the scope of this notion is restricted to a sort of kernel predication covering the semantic unit formed by the verb and its arguments. In addition, we have seen, thanks to the Spanish examples, that it is the form of the verb that informs us of its grammatical aspect.

However, there are arguments to the effect that information found outside the basic predication may be crucial for deciding whether a sentence is perfective or imperfective. Given the stable nature of the basic predication, language offers many possibilities to operate on this semantic object. In this connection, (Verkuyl 1993, 1999) makes a distinction between inner and outer aspectuality. Verkuyl’s notion of inner aspectuality concerns the aspectual information yielded by the composition of the information contributed by the verb and its arguments. Modifications of the basic predication take place in the domain of outer aspectuality. This raises the question whether grammatical aspect is an inner or outer aspectual operation.

<sup>7</sup> In Chapter 1, the boundedness at the predicational level is also considered a completion level. Boundedness and completion at the predicational level should be understood as being the same phenomenon.

<sup>8</sup> Hinrichs (1986) opened up the discourse perspective on aspectuality, and Kamp & Reyle (1993) developed a discourse-oriented analysis of tense and aspect. They added two aspectual operators to their temporal system: PROG (progressive) and PERF (perfect), for English progressive and perfect sentences, respectively. Nevertheless, they do not approach all the other nuances of aspect found in either Romance or Slavic languages, which are known to have a richer aspectual system than any Germanic language.

Let us consider the Spanish sentences (12) - (15), where it is shown how grammatical and predicational aspect can be taken apart.

- |      |   |                 |
|------|---|-----------------|
| (12) | Nuria comió un trozo de tarta               |                 |
|      | Nuria eat+PAST+PERFECTIVE a piece of cake   | => perfective   |
|      | [+SQA][+ADDTO][+SQA]                        | => terminative  |
|      | ‘Nuria ate a piece of cake’                 |                 |
| (13) | Nuria comió tarta                           |                 |
|      | Nuria eat+PAST+PERFECTIVE cake              | => perfective   |
|      | [+SQA][+ADDTO][-SQA]                        | => durative     |
|      | ‘Nuria ate cake’                            |                 |
| (14) | Nuria comía un trozo de tarta               |                 |
|      | Nuria eat+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE a piece of cake | => imperfective |
|      | [+SQA][+ADDTO][+SQA]                        | => terminative  |
|      | ‘Nuria was eating/ate a piece of cake’      |                 |
| (15) | Nuria comía tarta                           |                 |
|      | Nuria eat+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE cake            | => imperfective |
|      | [+SQA][+ADDTO][-SQA]                        | => durative     |
|      | ‘Nuria was eating/ate cake’                 |                 |

Sentence (12) has a perfective marker and the predication it affects is terminative. Sentence (13), however, has a perfective marker but the predication it affects is durative. Sentence (14) has an imperfective marker and the predication it affects is terminative, and finally, sentence (15) has an imperfective marker and the predication it affects is durative. All four sentences are beyond any doubt grammatical.

The examples (12) - (15) are grammatical. However, there is a difference in meaning between (12) and (14) on the one hand and (13) and (15) on the other hand. This difference in meaning relies on the context in which the sentences are produced. This fact points out the relevance of distinguishing outer (contextual) sentential information when deciding which aspectual meaning the sentence has. Languages seem to deal with this extra aspectual information in different ways. They cut the pie differently. English (and Dutch for that matter) and Spanish go the same way in establishing predicational aspect but they differ at the level of grammatical aspect.

In the remainder of the article, we shall deal with empirical material the analysis of which may contribute to this discussion. It is necessary to discuss the Aspect Hypothesis because this has specific claims about the acquisition of grammatical aspect. Its claims are based on a different aspectual theory than the one we are presenting in this article. The repercussions brought up by the different theoretical approaches will affect the way the learning process is described and explained.

**2.3. Acquisition of aspect in L2**

In the next section, the Aspect Hypothesis will be described and empirical research supporting it will be presented. According to the theory advocated in section 2.2., the Aspect Hypothesis needs to be rephrased. This rephrasing is given in section 2.3.2.

**2.3.1. The Aspect Hypothesis**

The Aspect Hypothesis was first named Defective Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen 1986). It stated that in beginning stages of language acquisition only inherent aspectual distinctions were encoded by verbal morphology, not tense or grammatical aspect. Andersen (1986) studied the acquisition of Spanish as a second language by two English-speaking children. To classify his data, Andersen used the four-way division of Vendler (1957): states, activities, accomplishments and achievements. Andersen presented a developmental sequence for encoding tense and aspect with past inflections, containing 9 stages (see Table 2). Many researchers have used this developmental sequence as their point of departure in order to study the acquisition of Romance past tenses.

*Table 2 Stages in the acquisition of perfective/imperfective forms in Spanish as L2 (--: only present forms; I: only imperfective forms; P: only perfective forms; IP: both im/perfective forms appear)*

Stage/type	States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
1	--	--	--	--
2/3	--	--	--	-P
4	I-	--	--	-P
5	I-	I-	-P	-P
6	I-	I-	IP	-P
7	I-	IP	IP	-P
8	I-	IP	IP	IP
9	IP	IP	IP	IP

The Aspect Hypothesis makes the following claims<sup>9</sup>:

1. Perfective forms are first used with achievements, then with accomplishments, spreading later to activities and, finally, states.
2. Imperfective forms appear later than perfective forms and they appear first with states, spreading later to activities, accomplishments and, finally, achievements.

<sup>9</sup> The Aspect Hypothesis makes two more claims, which will not be included, as they are not considered to be relevant for the purposes of this paper.

There have been many empirical studies based on the Aspect Hypothesis in second language acquisition. These studies, some of which have been summarized below, have as their target language a Romance language, as it is in these cases that a clear division can be made with respect to the use of the temporal-aspectual morphological marking in an L2.

According to Andersen, in the first relevant stages, the perfective form is only found with achievements and the imperfective form only with states. Later on, the perfective is also found with those verbs referring to accomplishments and the imperfective with activities. That is, telic verbs (those referring to achievements and accomplishments) are used only with perfective forms and atelic verbs (those referring to states and activities) only with imperfective forms. The first atelic verbs that are found with perfective are activities; the first telic verbs found with the imperfective are accomplishments. Finally, both forms are found in the four types of verbs.

Based on this study, Andersen (1989) posited four stages in the acquisition of perfective past: from achievements, to accomplishments, to activities and finally to states and four stages in the acquisition of the imperfective past: from states to activities, to accomplishments and finally to achievements. The main effect of the influence of aspectual class seems to be that, when verbal morphology emerges in the interlanguage of the learner, it is in complementary distribution to the type of aspectual class the verb belongs to.

The Prototype Theory makes some generalizations from the effects pointed out by the Aspect Hypothesis. According to the Prototype Theory (Shirai & Andersen 1995, Li & Shirai 2000), a category has its best exemplars, the prototypes, which share many characteristic features with members of the category; development starts with the prototype of the category, then extends to items similar to the prototype, and finally to the least prototypical members. The following example clarifies their claim: the prototype of a category (say “ongoing”) seems to contain a durative predication. The category “ongoing” and its prototype “durative” share the feature [-bounded]. When the category ‘ongoing’ is being learnt, development will start with its prototype, that is, with durative predications, and finally it will cover also the least prototypical members of the category, the non-durative predications, which could then be considered as peripheral members of the category, because although they do not share the feature [-bounded] with the category, they are still part of it.

Several studies have found evidence for Andersen’s hypothesized stages of the acquisition of both the perfective and the imperfective past. Hasbún (1995) and Bergström (1995) studied the written narratives of 80 learners of Spanish and 117 learners of French, respectively. Both groups were enrolled in university language courses. Both studies attested Andersen’s associations of perfective past with events and imperfective past with states and the sequence of stages of both forms. In Bergström study, the perfective form stages are less robust; there are fewer stages, missing the base form stage, which probably means that these learners’ proficiency is higher than that of the Spanish learners of Hasbún study.

In Cadierno (2000), a study of advanced Danish learners of Spanish, data are presented that can be understood as belonging to what Andersen calls stage 9: the spreading of the imperfective to include its use with achievements. Even when the imperfective has spread to terminative cases and the perfective to durative cases, the rates of appropriate use are higher with the prototypical uses than the non-prototypical uses. That is, L2 learners make fewer errors with the perfective when the predication is terminative and fewer errors with the imperfective when the predication is durative.

Studies on non-Romance languages also show similar results. The tenses involved in studies examining Germanic languages are usually the simple past versus the present perfect. Bardovi-Harlig (1998) found a clear progression of past tense use in English as L2 from achievements to accomplishments to activities in the data from oral narratives.

The Aspect Hypothesis postulates that the aspectual nature of the verb will influence L2 learners acquiring tense and aspect markers. It gives a description of the aspectual systems of the learner's interlanguage, but it does not explain why the learners make errors in the use of both prototypical and non-prototypical cases. The Congruence Principle (Andersen 1993) tries to explain the errors by saying that learners will use tense-aspect morphemes whose meanings are most similar to those of the verbs. However, until we understand what makes the meaning of the tense-aspect morphemes comparable to the intrinsic meaning of the verb, there will not be any clear explanation as to why the acquisition of an aspectual system is difficult. Moreover, as it has been shown, the intrinsic meaning of the verb is not the carrier of all the aspectual information. Without taking into account the aspectual semantics of the arguments, the Aspect Hypothesis will not shed any relevant light into what actually takes place in the learning process.

### **2.3.2. The Aspect Hypothesis rephrased**

To rephrase the Aspect Hypothesis can be done in an interesting way, because two questions arise: (a) is the notion of Event (irrespective of a difference between Achievements and Accomplishments) marked as compared with Process and State and is this visible in language learning? (b) is it possible to empirically show that there is a clear difference between verb- (phrase)s that on Vendler's classification would belong to the achievements and those that would be labelled accomplishments?

It is here where the tripartition State-Process-Event, described in the section of this paper on aspectual classes, comes into the picture. Why should we use a quadripartition when everything that needs to be accounted for is covered by a tripartition? The quadripartition is based on allegedly verbal meanings, the tripartition, on predicational meanings. Andersen's distribution of aspectual classes is primarily based on verb meanings. However, as we have already shown, it is the predicate that belongs to an aspectual class, not the verb on its own. The aspectual division given by the Aspect Hypothesis may not be valid. The learner's use of aspectual information may to focus on whether the predicational information is continuous or discrete, and, according to the Aspect Hypothesis, choosing for the

discrete options. As we have already seen, events are discrete; therefore, the marked option is also discrete. Events (thus both achievements and accomplishments) are discernable as units, therefore first learnt as discrete units. This may be the reason why the Aspect Hypothesis proposes that the event prototypes are the first ones to be learnt.

If the learners in Andersen's study first acquire, in his terms, achievements, it is because, as events, they are learnt as discrete units. The problem arises now when trying to define both accomplishments and achievements no longer as an aspectual characteristic of the verb but of the predication. At the predicational level, both achievements and accomplishments can be defined as pertaining to discrete units. To differentiate between accomplishments and achievements, the latter have been often described as point events. However, all events do contain some sort of duration; which is as a total discrete and bounded, in opposition to the duration of processes, which is unbounded and expressing continuity. Of course, there are different ways of expressing duration, depending on the meaning of the verb (compare 'discover' to 'eat', for example, because the nature of discovering something differs from the nature of eating something), but the distinction between accomplishments and achievements does not add anything relevant in terms of eventhood. They are both events and that is it. We can eat a complete lunch in the form of a pill, which makes it a shorter event than discovering the body of a dinosaur.

Until now we have only rephrased the Aspect Hypothesis as far as predicational aspect is concerned. However, learning a Romance aspectual system implies learning two different aspectual levels: the predicational and the grammatical level. The tripartition of aspectual classes gets now combined with the perfective-imperfective distinction. Table 3 shows what happens with the properties of the aspectual classes when combined with each of the grammatical aspect options:

*Table 3 Grammatical and predicational aspect combined*

Class	Inflection	Characteristics
State	Perfective	The predication is closed off in a past complete time domain
	Imperfective	It focuses on the nature of the state as an omnipresent unit
Process	Perfective	It locates the unbounded predication into a countable, discrete, complete temporal domain
	Imperfective	It focuses on the nature of the activity or process
Event	Perfective	The bounded predication is located in a temporal complete domain
	Imperfective	It locates a part of a bounded temporal event in a time span that either gets repeated, or marks the internal process of the event progressively or episodically

If this is the case, the Aspect Hypothesis only points out the already obvious, which is that there are some aspectual meanings that will be clustered at the beginning of the acquisition and that the verbal morphology encoding some of these meanings will spread to less prototypical cases. Thus, it does not mean that the learner is making mistakes; it means that the learner has to broaden a fixed aspectual system to cover all the possible aspectual combinations the target language has to offer.

The fixed aspectual system that the learner seems to start with is given in Table 4:

*Table 4 Aspectual Oversimplification of the Learner*

Stages	Predicational Aspect		Grammatical Aspect
1 <sup>st</sup>	Bounded	=	Complete
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Unbounded	=	Incomplete

The first grammatical form predicted to appear is then the perfective form, but only with events. The unbounded predications located at a complete time domain (states and processes with perfective verbal inflection) will not appear yet. The second grammatical form to appear will be the imperfective form, but only with processes and states. All those bounded predications located at an incomplete time domain (events with imperfective verbal inflection) will be added to the system later.

The learning of a specific aspectual system in first language may interfere with the learning of a different system in second language. This may be caused by the fact that grammatical features involved in the aspectual composition of a language do not necessarily match those used in another language. Spanish seems to need outer aspectual context (everything outside the aspectual meaning given by the combination of verb, arguments and verbal inflection) to make a choice between the two past tenses (as shown by (12) - (15)). Dutch, like English, does not have two simple past tenses encoding perfective and imperfective meanings. Therefore, the combination of information found inside and outside the boundaries of the sentence need not be taken into account. This may also have acquisitional implications: outer sentential information may give us clues as to why the aspectual systems of languages with grammatical aspect are in general very difficult to learn in a second language. It may be expected that when Dutch L2 learners of Spanish encounter the L2 aspectual system, they are not going to look further than what predicational aspect offers them and therefore they will simplify the Spanish system, covering the only aspectual completion options their own language would.

Learning the aspectual paradigm in a L2 is complicated. Understanding how aspect works may shed light into, firstly how aspect is acquired, and secondly which errors are more likely to appear in the first stages of L2 development.

If we separate predicational aspect and grammatical aspect, as presented in the previous section, we may have a system pointing out in the right direction. Each of the two levels can be characterized as expressing information about discrete or continuous temporal units: at the predicational level in the form of the opposition (un-) boundedness, (or completion at the predicational level) at the grammatical

level in the form of the opposition (in-) completeness (or completion at the grammatical aspect level). The problem for L2 learners seems to arise when the sense of discreteness of both levels does not match. The independency of the levels is hard to understand because the same type of features seems to characterize them both.

Our aspectual theory expects no interferences between the two aspectual levels (grammatical and predicational levels) in adult L1 grammar, but explains why these interferences appear in SLA. Therefore, it is necessary to check how these theoretical expectations function in L1 grammar before dealing with the intricacies of L2 learning. If the expectation of non-interference is fulfilled, then L1 speakers of Spanish will say that any past sentence, no matter how the predicational level is being characterized (as bounded or unbounded), can accept both grammatical aspect paradigms. Moreover, if it is true that the predicational level offers no aspectual information that may interfere with the choice of past tense for L1 speakers, this means that the important information the learner has to interiorise when learning an aspectual system in an L2 is outside the boundaries of the predicational level. Only when the learners interiorise the outer aspect information as relevant for their choice of verbal form, they will be able to properly differentiate between the two simple pasts of any Romance language.

#### **2.4. Methodology**

In this section, the methodology used for the empirical study is described.

##### **2.4.1. Participants**

Thirty-eight native speakers of Spanish gave their intuitions about the acceptability of 30 Spanish simple past sentences (see Appendix I).

##### **2.4.2. Hypotheses, Materials and Procedure**

The following hypotheses have been constructed:

- a) The predicational aspect of each sentence (whether the predication is either a state, a process or an event) will not influence the choice of grammatical aspect form, that is, the boundedness (or completion) of the predication will not necessarily imply the completeness of the temporal domain in which it is located.
- b) The choice of grammatical aspectual form will be made according to the extra aspectual information, which does not involve predicational aspect (that is, all the aspectual modifiers that may also be given in the sentence, such as adverbials):
  - Sentences including extra information pointing to some sort of limitation of time will only be considered acceptable with the perfective form.

- Sentences including extra information pointing to some sort of repetitive, habitual or progressive meaning will only be considered acceptable with the imperfective form.
- Sentences with no extra aspectual information will be considered equally acceptable with both perfective and imperfective forms.

The subjects are given the list of sentences and they are asked whether they consider the sentences acceptable. Sentences are grouped in pairs of equivalent sentences, the only difference between them being the aspectual form of the verb. The different pairs of sentences are randomly ordered in the questionnaire. Some pairs of sentences include no extra aspectual information apart from that given by the verb while others add outer aspectual information about the limitation, the repetition, or the progression of the action. Three groups of pairs are then presented:

Type A: Sentences with limitation of time (complete time domain)

- (16) Ayer por la mañana Ulpiano compró el periódico (A3)<sup>10</sup>  
 Yesterday during the morning Ulpiano buy+PAST+PERFECTIVE the newspaper  
 ‘Yesterday morning Ulpiano bought the newspaper’
- (17) Ayer por la mañana Ramón compraba una revista(A4)  
 Yesterday during the morning Ramón buy+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE a magazine  
 ‘Yesterday morning Ramón bought a magazine’

Type B: Sentences with repetitive, habitual or progressive meaning (incomplete or repeated time domain)

- (18) Los barcos llegaban cada media hora (B9)  
 The ships arrive+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE every half hour  
 ‘The ships arrived every half an hour’
- (19) Los trenes llegaron cada media hora (B10)  
 The trains arrive+PAST+PERFECTIVE every half hour  
 ‘The trains arrived every half an hour’

Type C: Sentences with no extra aspectual information (no extra specified time domain)

- (20) Por la noche contábamos cuentos (C5)  
 During the night tell+1<sup>st</sup>P PL+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE stories  
 ‘At nighttime we told stories’
- (21) Por la noche contamos cuentos (C6)  
 During the night tell+1<sup>st</sup>P PL+PAST+PERFECTIVE stories  
 ‘At nighttime we told stories’

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<sup>10</sup> A3, A4, B9 etc. stand for the same sentences as occurring in the table and later on in Appendix I.

Out of the 30 sentences, there are 18 durative (14 processes, four states) and 12 terminative; which means that nine durative predications have a perfective marker and six terminative predications have an imperfective marker. These are the cases where interference of the un/boundedness (or completion) of the predication could affect the choice of verbal morphology marking grammatical aspect.

## 2.5. Results

The judgements given by the informants were analysed. The results are summarised in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 presents the proportions of acceptance of the pairs of sentences with perfective and imperfective forms. Four options were found:

- a) None of the sentences in the pair is acceptable;
- b) Only one of the sentences in the pair is acceptable (either the perfective or the imperfective);
- c) Both sentences in the pair are acceptable.

In order to assess the percentage of accepted sentences according to their predicational aspect, the pairs of sentences were divided in three groups: events, processes and states.

*Table 5 Choice of verb form according to the predicational aspect*

Predicational aspect	None	Perfective	Imperfective	Both
Terminative: Events	7.9%	25%	26.3%	40.8%
Durative: Processes	7.1%	33.8%	33.8%	25.2%
States	5.8%	23.3%	32.3%	38.5%

Table 5 shows that the judgement of the speakers is randomly distributed. It indicates that the predicational aspect does not contribute to the choice of grammatical aspect. When the predication is an event there is a slight preference to choose both forms as correct, when the predication is a process, there is a slight preference for either one of the forms; and when it is a state, again, the preference lies on choosing both forms as acceptable.

A chi square test was performed on the observed frequencies of perfective and imperfective acceptable sentences. The results are the following:

Table 6 Percentages of acceptability<sup>11</sup>

SENTENCES	MEAN		MEAN PER TYPE	
	PERF.	IMPERF.	PERF.	IMPERF.
A1/A2	94.7%	42.1%		
A3/A4	97.4%	10.5%		
A5/A6	94.7%	52.6%	96.3%	31.6%
A7/A8	97.4%	28.9%		
A9/A10	97.4%	23.7%		
B1/B2	52.6%	76.3%		
B3/B4	36.8%	97.4%		
B5/B6	18.4%	81.6%		
B7/B8	15.8%	84.2%	30%	87.2%
B9/B10	47.4%	92.1%		
B11/B12	39.5%	78.9%		
B13/B14	0%	100%		
C1/C2	84.5%	89.5%		
C3/C4	97.4%	60.5%	90.5%	80.7%
C5/C6	89.5%	92.1%		

Table 6 shows the following results:

- a) In sentences with a sentential marking of limitation of time (the A-type), the perfective is the preferred form (96.3% vs. 31.6%). This difference is significant ( $\chi^2=12.76$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).
- b) In sentences with a habitual, repetitive or progressive sentential meaning (the B-type), then the chosen form is the imperfective (85.1% vs. 27.2%). This difference is significant ( $\chi^2=11$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).
- c) In sentences with no extra aspectual information (the C-type), both options are equally acceptable (90.5% vs. 80.7%;  $\chi^2=0.14$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.71$ ).
- d) For all sentences of A and B type, there is a significant difference of acceptance ( $\chi^2 \geq 4.57$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p \leq 0.033$ ). The perfective is preferred in A-type sentences and the imperfective is preferred in B-type sentences. The only exception is the pair (B1/B2) for which both options are equally acceptable ( $\chi^2=1.65$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.199$ ).

As the data in Table 6 already suggest, the overall differences between the A-type sentences in which the perfective is preferred and the B-type sentences in which the imperfective is preferred is significant ( $\chi^2=23.68$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

Summarising the results, whether the predication involved in the sentence was terminative or durative did not play a role for the intuitions of the subjects; those sentences with a limitation of time are mostly preferred with the perfective

<sup>11</sup> The actual sentences are given in Appendix I as they were presented to the informants. At the end of every sentence in Appendix I have added to which pair of sentences it belongs

form; those sentences with a habitual/progressive/repetitive meaning are mostly preferred with the imperfective form, and those with no extra aspectual meaning are more or less basically equally accepted.

However, there are some findings that need to be explained.

- 1<sup>st</sup>: Although there is a tendency to choose the default option in the first and second types of sentences, there is still a relatively high percentage of acceptance of the non default option (31.6% for the imperfective forms in sentences with limitation of time and 27.2% for the perfective forms in sentences with a habitual, repetitive or progressive meaning).
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Both forms are highly accepted in those sentences with no aspectual information, but the percentages still differ (90.5% vs. 80.7%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>: Within each group, every pair of sentences behaves differently, sometimes having very high acceptance of the non-default option (such as sentences (A5/A6)), or a relatively low acceptance percentage of the default option (such as sentences (B1/B2)).
- 4<sup>th</sup>: the variation in results of the non-default options is bigger than that of the default options.

Remarkably, out of the 15 pair of sentences (added in Appendix I) there is only one pair that is accepted equally by each informant:

- (22) \*Antes se estudió francés en el instituto (B13)  
Before it study+PAST+PERFECTIVE French in the high school  
'In the past, French was studied in high schools'
- (23) Antes se estudiaba alemán en el instituto (B14)  
Before it study++PAST+IMPERFECTIVE German in the high school  
'In the past, German was studied in high schools'

Nobody accepts sentence (22) while everybody accepts sentence (23), that is, all the subjects say that only the imperfective form is the right one. The native intuitions about the other 14 pairs of sentences do not match as perfectly.

The question that arises here is why all the informants accept these two sentences equally. The default option for these sentences is definitely the imperfective, because of the adverb *antes* ('before', 'earlier'), which clearly indicates that the eventuality described by the verb and its arguments took place in the past, and that it was habitual. A way to transform this sentence so that it allows the perfective marking on the verb is to render the past time domain in which the eventuality is placed into a closed one. We will show now with the help of the next examples how this can be done.

- (24) En 1992 se estudió francés en los colegios  
In 1992 it study+PAST+PERFECTIVE in the schools  
'In 1992, French was studied in schools'

Sentence (24) is grammatical. It has the same construction as (23) and it is accepted with the perfective<sup>12</sup>. Thus, the root of the problem seems to be in the temporal difference between ‘in 1992’ and ‘in the past’. By placing both adverbial constructions in one sentence, it is possible to see which of them may have a stronger influence on the verb.

- (25) Antes, en 1992, se estudiaba francés en los colegios  
 Earlier, in 1992, it study+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE French in the schools  
 ‘In the past, in 1992, French was studied at schools’
- (26) \*Antes, en 1992, se estudió francés en los colegios  
 Earlier, in 1992, it study+PAST+PERFECTIVE French in the schools  
 ‘In the past, in 1992, French was studied at schools’

Sentence (26) is ruled out. Even by adding a temporal adverb that limits the time domain in the past where the eventuality took place, the verb only accepts the imperfective. It seems that the adverb *antes* (‘earlier’) has a very strong influence on the aspectual meaning of the sentence, and whenever it appears, only the imperfective form can be used.

## 2.6. Discussion

As shown in the previous section, there seems to be a general pattern to make one of the two options the default option, which in the clear-cuts is due to the sentential aspectual information, never to the predicational aspect of the eventuality at stake. The predicational aspect does not influence at all the grammatical aspect choice the native speaker makes. The results also show the variability of native speakers’ intuitions. However, there are some patterns that seem to be followed consequently.

In sentences with a sentential marking of limitation of time, the perfective is the chosen form. In sentences with a habitual, repetitive or progressive sentential meaning, the chosen form is the imperfective. Again, the terminativity of the predication does not play a role, as predicted by the first hypothesis. This means that there is an extra aspectual layer added to the [NP [V+NP]] construction that decides what form the verb needs to take. However, the results also show that even when there is extra sentential information, the non-default option is also accepted.

The second hypothesis stated that the choice of grammatical aspect would be made according to the extra aspectual information. Sentences including extra information pointing to some sort of repetitive, habitual or progressive meaning would be only accepted with the imperfective form. Sentences (18) and (19) ((B9) and (B10)) only differ in the aspectual form of the verb. We will repeat them here for convenience:

- (27) Los barcos llegaban cada media hora (B9)  
 The ships arrive+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE every half hour  
 ‘The ships arrived every half an hour’

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<sup>12</sup> This sentence is also perfectly grammatical with the imperfective form.

- (28) Los trenes llegaron cada media hora (B10)  
 The trains arrive+PAST+PERFECTIVE every half hour  
 ‘The trains arrived every half an hour’

These sentences have extra aspectual information which points to repetition (‘every half an hour’). This is why sentence (B9), with the imperfective form, is judged grammatical by 92.1%. Until this point, the second hypothesis proves to be correct. However, 42.4% of the informants finds (B10) also grammatical. The hypothesis did not expect this result; therefore it needs to be rejected. The native informants seem to have created a situation in their minds where the sentence also accepts the perfective form, and this is achieved by adding another layer of aspectual information, in this case something like (29):

- (29) Ayer los trenes llegaron cada media hora  
 Yesterday the trains arrive+PAST+PERFECTIVE every half hour  
 ‘Yesterday, the trains arrived every half an hour’

‘Yesterday’ limits the time; it gives a beginning and an end to the event; the temporal domain is made complete. Therefore, in this case, the perfective is also an acceptable form in (B10). This may lead us to think that aspectual choice is not only a sentential notion, but also a contextual, discourse phenomenon.

The second part of the second hypothesis stated that sentences including extra information pointing to some sort of limitation of time would be only accepted with the perfective form. Sentences (16) and (17) ((A3) and (A4)), again, only differ in the form of the verb. We will repeat them here for convenience.

- (30) Ayer por la mañana Ulpiano compró el periódico (A3)<sup>13</sup>  
 Yesterday in the morning Ulpiano buy+PAST+PERFECTIVE the newspaper  
 ‘Yesterday morning, Ulpiano bought the newspaper’
- (31) Ayer por la mañana Ramón compraba una revista (A4)  
 Yesterday in the morning Ramón buy+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE a magazine  
 ‘Yesterday morning, Ramón bought a magazine’

These sentences have extra information regarding a specific point in time, with its own beginning and end (‘yesterday morning’). Therefore the sentence with the perfective form is judged grammatical by 97.4% of the informants. However, 10.5% of the informants also consider sentence (A4) acceptable. Two things need to be explained here. First of all, how can it be that 10.5% accepts sentence (A4). Secondly, why is the acceptance of the non-default option of this pair of sentences lower than the acceptance of the non-default option of (B9) and (B10), which include extra aspectual information pointing to a habitual reading? By answering the second question first, the former will speak for itself.

The imperfective simple past in Spanish gives an ongoing or repetitive sense to the meaning of the sentence. The imperfective form expressing ongoingness has

<sup>13</sup> A3, A4, B9 etc. stand for the same sentences as occurring in the table and later on in Appendix I.

the unusual property of always having to be in relation to another tense for the sentence where it occurs to fully function. The habitual/repetitive meaning of the form can function on its own, as long as the time domain is clearly specified. Sentence (A4) ((31) in the text) can never express habituality, since it has been already fixed to only one time in the past. There is only one time domain, which means that a repeated temporal domain is out of the question<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the only way this sentence can work with an imperfective marker is by understanding it as representing an episodic or progressive situation. Thus, a full sentence as its context has to be added. It seems logical that informants may find it easier to encounter a context as in (29), where only one word is needed to make the sentence acceptable than in (32) here below, where another tense is added for the sentence to function with imperfective marking:

- (32) Ayer por la mañana Ramón compraba una revista cuando se encontró con David  
 Yesterday during the morning Ramón buy+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE a magazine when him find+PAST+PERFECTIVE with David  
 ‘Yesterday morning Ramón was buying a magazine when he met David’

Our first question regarding sentence (31) is hereby answered. The 10.5% of the informants who accepted (31) must have created a whole extra sentence such as in (32) where the imperfective can function adequately.

In those sentences with no extra aspectual information, it was hypothesized that both sentences would be equally acceptable. This is exemplified by sentences of type C). All pairs of sentences lack extra sentential information. If aspect were an intra-sentential phenomenon, it would be expected that one of both sentences would be more acceptable than the other (according to the predicational aspect of the sentence). The results show that this is not the case. Both sentences are equally accepted because the predication in itself does not give enough information as to which aspectual form the verbs need to take. It is easy for the informants to imagine the two needed contexts, one for the perfective form and another for the imperfective form. Hypothesis three is hereby proven to be correct.

All this extra temporal-aspectual information outside the [NP+V+NP] construction seems to play an extremely important role when deciding which form the Spanish past verb needs to take. It is the outer aspect information. The use of outer aspect seems then to be relevant to the final aspectual meaning of any sentence.

Two points will have to be taken into account when developing a second language acquisition of aspect analysis: the effect the learner’s native language and the new information of the L2. In other words, the effect that the L1 aspectual system will have on the acquisition of the aspectual encoding of the L2 will have to be dealt with, and, as we have shown here, the temporal aspectual information outside the [NP+V+NP] is crucial to decide the grammatical marking on the verb,

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<sup>14</sup> The repetition is not of the eventuality, but of the hosting domain. This is why *ayer por la mañana Ramón compraba tres revistas* (‘yesterday morning Ramón bought+IMPERFECTIVE three magazines’) is ruled out.

and this is information the L2 learner confronts for the first time. Here we may hint at what exactly is their learning task in acquiring the system of the L2.

### 2.7. Conclusion

A satisfactory analysis of aspect should account for the similarities and differences in the aspectual systems of all languages of the world. The difficulty for a cross-linguistic comparison is that languages seem to have developed quite different strategies to encode aspectual information. This makes it necessary to work with well-defined distinctions. We have shown here what we believe to be such a basic clear-cut between two notions that are crucially involved in the analysis of aspectual information at the sentential level: predicational aspect and grammatical aspect.

Spanish has developed into a language with a very rich tense system that makes it possible to harbour aspectual information, which in languages with a poorer tense system, like Dutch, is not possible. Andersen (1986, 1991) argued that English L2 learners of Spanish approach the L2 system by linking aspectual marking and lexical meaning. A theoretical problem with this statement is that lexical meaning is not what fully constitutes aspectual meaning: the forming of predicational aspect takes place at a higher level. Taking into account the aspectual information of the arguments may lead to a different interpretation of the data, which means that Andersen's leading hypothesis should be rephrased. By making a clear distinction between the two aspectual levels, we may not only describe the data more accurately, but also we may be able to explain them too. Our data show how this division of aspectual levels and their independency is crystal clear for Spanish L1 speakers.

L2 learners of Spanish seem to tend to confuse the morphological markers of grammatical aspect with the terminativity or durativity that the predicate of the sentence in question conveys. Although Slabakova & Montrul (1999) claim that L2 learners do not have difficulties, we need to keep in mind that that is only the case for advanced speakers. Dutch beginners and semi-advanced students have been shown to have serious difficulties with the learning and understanding of the Spanish aspectual system. What we propose is that these difficulties are born from the fact that Germanic languages do not need to look outside the meaning of the verb and its arguments to find out what inner aspectual meaning a sentence has. Outer aspect contains therefore crucial information about grammatical aspect. Extra attention needs to be given to the use of outer aspect marking in Spanish and to the consequences of such use.

As we also indicated, the domain of outer aspect is quite complex. One could say that the contribution of grammatical aspect is a low-level outer aspectual phenomenon because it interferes with tense, but, as we have shown, adverbials may interact with grammatical aspect in the sense that they can modify the aspectual information that has been formed, first at the level of the predication and then at the level of tense. This area has not yet fully been explored in the theoretical literature, so we restricted ourselves here to just signalling the problems ahead.

Our data have shown that for L1 speakers of Spanish the division between the two aspectual levels is crystal clear. This has definitely implications on SLA.

Acquiring Spanish as L2 means not only abstracting from the L1 aspectual system but also put into practice the L2 system. What we have indicated is that in order to account for the transfer in information that needs to take place in the learner's mind, one can appeal to a combinatorial machinery that yields the same sort of information in L1 and L2 albeit at a different level of structure, as far as Germanic and Romance languages are concerned. The acquisitional difficulty will take place when relating the complex aspectual and tense information encoded in the learner's L1 into the even more complex counterpart in the L2.



## Chapter 3

### DISTRIBUTION OF GRAMMATICAL ASPECT MORPHEMES IN INTERLANGUAGE

#### 3.1. Interpretation of distribution of interlanguage past tenses

There have been many studies that approach the problematic issue of interpreting the particular distribution of the past aspectual morphology in interlanguage. The most recent studies on the matter are Li & Shirai (2000), Bardovi-Harlig (2000) and Salaberry (2000). The Spanish language has aspectual morphological verbal markers, which do not have a counterpart in languages from the Germanic family. It is this mismatch in aspectual representations between these languages' temporal system and the Spanish temporal system that may be the source of the complications behind the learning of Spanish aspect by Germanic speakers. This might be the reason why acquisition of tense and aspect forms and uses in both first and second language research has received so much attention in the field of applied linguistics. Particularly, it is interesting to study the use of the perfective and imperfective past tense markers of Spanish made by L2 learners with a Germanic L1.

The goal of the present study is to characterize the initial stage(s) of the acquisition of the L2 Spanish aspectual system by L1 Dutch adult learners. Special focus on the possibly existing relation between lexical aspect (the aspectual meaning of the verb) and verbal morphology is given. Two theoretical views will be applied. First of all, the aspectual division on verb classes (Vendler 1957) will be presented and applied to a description of the distribution of interlanguage past tense morphology of beginning learners. Secondly, a two-way predicational-aspectual analysis, that is, a division into terminative and durative predications, will also be applied as a possible tool for an optimal description of what happens in the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish. Moreover, other pragmatic-discourse factors will also be taken into account as they may add relevant clues to the characterization of the distribution of morphological markers in L2 Spanish.

In general, descriptive approaches to the learning of temporality are either meaning-oriented or form-oriented. This means that interlanguage is described either as the distribution of semantic concepts or as the distribution of verbal morphology (Bardovi-Harlig 1999). On the one hand, meaning-oriented studies focus on how different semantic concepts are expressed; on the other hand, form-oriented studies focus on how different morphological forms are used in language production.

Those studies asserting that lexical aspectual classes guide the learner in acquiring the grammatical aspectual markers are form-oriented. Such studies maintain that perfective morphology appears initially on eventive (telic) predicates, imperfective morphology appears initially on states (Andersen 1989, among others). Since lexical-aspectual classes are characterized as belonging to aspectual information found within the sentence, these studies are carried out independently of discourse structure. Meaning-oriented studies, on the other hand, examine the

linguistic devices learners use to express a particular aspectual meaning (von Stutterheim & Klein 1987, among others, pursue this approach).

The distribution of past tenses in interlanguage (and indeed in L1) can also be influenced by narrative structure. This is what has been called Discourse Hypothesis. The interlanguage Discourse Hypothesis predicts that learners use emerging verbal morphology to distinguish foreground from background in narratives (Bardovi-Harlig 1994).

Narrative structure is considered as comprising two parts, the foreground and the background. As the names indicate, and very simply put, the foreground is basically the sequence of eventualities that are being narrated. The background provides a form of scene-setting where the eventualities in the foreground are being placed. Several studies have shown that narrative structure influences the distribution of tense-aspect morphology in interlanguage (Trevisi 1987, among others). Other studies have gone even further, checking the differences among narrative types (Noyau 1984), which may also influence the production of tense-aspect morphology in interlanguage. Bardovi-Harlig (2000), among others, claims that past is predominantly used in the foreground whilst progressive is used in the background.

In this study, it will be explored whether to take into account how aspect works at the sentential level is a pre-requisite to lay hold of the essence of, on the one hand, a theory of temporal and aspectual systems, and on the other hand, the aspect marking distribution of interlanguage. Discourse information will also be investigated as to whether it allows for a better grasping of the functional needs of Spanish as far as their aspectual intricacies in production are concerned. Without context, an optimal description of the use of grammatical aspect will probably not be achieved. This study does not aim at a discursive analysis of the data; on the contrary, data are described from a within-the-sentence perspective. However, discourse structure will be touched upon every time its contribution seems necessary, as it may be decisive to account for specific factors that will influence the collected data.

Moreover, this study does not use any particular theory of SLA to inform the research; it merely sets out to give the best possible characterization of the data collected. The development of learning is thought to take place as follows: a new piece of information piles up on top of 'already known' information. Thanks to the cross-linguistic analysis summarized in section 3.2, two sorts of information are made clear: a) the information the learner already possesses from his/her L1 and b) the new information gained from the L2. Whilst this analysis could suggest a L1-driven SLA theory, it is not the purpose of this analysis and as such no commitment to any SLA theory will be made.

### **3.1.1. Two aspectual levels**

The notion of aspect is responsible for some of the phenomena relative to the expression of the temporality within the sentence. There is a clear distinction between the temporal and atemporal levels of semantic aspectual representation.

Here is where the opposition grammatical aspect - predicational (also called lexical, inherent, etc.) aspect takes a leading role in this description. The term aspect is therefore used for two different but related temporal notions. For the purposes of this study, a useful description of the aspectual phenomena can only be presented with languages that overtly mark grammatical aspect. Germanic languages only overtly show one aspectual level: the atemporal level of aspect. See (1a) here below.

- (1a) Rachel and Andy bought a house  
 (1b) PAST [Rachel and Andy buy a house]

In (1b), it is shown that the primitive aspectual information of (1a) comes from the tenseless predication, i.e. [‘Rachel and Andy buy a house’]. The aspectual notion of completion is already there before tense is taken into account. In this sense, aspect differs crucially from the temporality contributed by tense. However, this is because the aspectual information of the tenseless part of (1) is predicational. The tenseless part of sentence (1) is terminative (cf. Verkuyl 1972 and Krifka 1989, the latter calls it telic). The predicational aspectual opposite of sentence (1) is exemplified by the durative predication in (2):

- (2a) Rachel and Andy wanted a house  
 (2b) PAST [Rachel and Andy want a house]

It is assumed that the aspectual value of a predicate determined at this level of representation (or the lexical aspectual category of the verb, for that matter) remains intact and is independent of any temporal information. Only when the inflection has been added, can the eventuality be placed in real time.

Some languages show a bond between tense and aspect. Spanish (like other Romance languages) has two different inflectional forms for the past tense in (1). The difference between the two past forms can only be understood by assuming that certain tense forms express aspectual information, that is, information which characterizes the “past” either as perfective or imperfective (see sentences (3) and (4)). A detailed characterization of perfective and imperfective uses is given in section 2.3.

- (3) Rachel y Andy compraron una casa  
 PAST PERFECTIVE [Rachel and Andy buy a house]  
 ‘Rachel and Andy bought a house’  
 (4) Rachel y Andy compraban una casa  
 PAST IMPERFECTIVE [Rachel and Andy buy a house]  
 ‘Rachel and Andy bought/were buying a house’

This grammatical phenomena is applicable to any sort of predication<sup>1</sup>, therefore it also applies to durative ones:

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<sup>1</sup> García Fernández (1998) shows that there are some predications, the “permanent predications”, which do not allow the perfective.

- (5) Rachel y Andy quisieron una casa  
PAST PERFECTIVE [Rachel and Andy want a house]  
'Rachel and Andy wanted a house'
- (6) Rachel y Andy querían una casa  
PAST IMPERFECTIVE [Rachel and Andy want a house]  
'Rachel and Andy wanted a house'

Grammatical aspect, therefore, interacts with predicational aspect.

### 3.2. Theory on aspect

In the next section, an overview of different theoretical descriptions of the atemporal level of aspectual information will be given. Moreover, a short description of grammatical aspect in Spanish will follow. These theories are used and applied to the distribution of the two morphological aspectual markers of Romance languages at the initial stage(s) of acquisition.

#### 3.2.1. Comparing aspectual systems

In the area of tense and aspect, evidence is growing that cross-linguistic generalizations can be made (Bybee & Dahl 1989). Nevertheless, languages have developed different markings to encode their temporal-aspectual nuances. Moreover, aspectual descriptions do not always fit languages other than the languages treated at that moment. The purpose of this aspectual description is to serve as a tool for understanding the complications behind the learning of grammatical aspect in second languages. A comparison between the Dutch and Spanish languages will reveal which parts of the aspectual systems are equal and which parts different. This comparison may make it possible to point at the new information the learner has to acquire, and also to discern the forms and functions in which both language systems converge. The cross-linguistic converging elements may stand for the information the learner can recycle from their first language and possibly apply it to the second language.

A cross-linguistic theoretical analysis between the learner's L1 and L2 may therefore help discern, firstly, what has to be learnt in the L2, and secondly, which parts of the L1 may overlap with the L2 and therefore potentially help the learning process. By executing a cross-linguistic theoretical study, the effect of the learner's L1 on the acquisition of the aspectual properties of the L2 may be contemplated. This leads to the well-known theoretical enigma in SLA studies of whether there is L1 transfer or not (White 1996) at the beginning states of language acquisition. Although it is not one of the goals of this study to enter this discussion, results may point to some particular standpoint on the matter.

Understanding how aspect works in the learner's L1 may be a valuable clue in the interpretation of the specific morpheme distribution the learner first makes when acquiring the past aspectual forms of L2 Spanish. In order to explore this possibility, a proper description of the L1 and the L2 aspectual systems is needed. A cross linguistic analysis of the systems may help to, firstly, weigh the effect of the

L1 on the SLA of aspectual properties, and secondly, recognise the aspectual information the L2 learner confronts for the first time.

Predicational aspect and grammatical aspect will be disassociated. Each of the two levels can be characterized as expressing information about discrete or continuous units: at the predicational level in the form of the opposition terminative/durative and, at the grammatical level in the form of the opposition perfective/imperfective. Terminative and perfective are aspectual terms referring to semantically complete notions. The completion they refer to, however, emerges at different levels: terminative completion applying at the atemporal-predicational level, and perfective completion applying at the grammatical-inflectional level.

### 3.2.2. Inherent semantic level

‘Aktionsart’, ‘lexical aspect’, ‘inherent aspect’, ‘inherent lexical aspect’, all these terms refer to the characterization of inherent nature of the situation portrayed: whether it is static or dynamic, punctual or durative, bounded or unbounded, continuous or iterative. They all refer to the intrinsic temporal qualities of a situation. Verbs tend to have inherent aspectual meaning because the activities, situations and events described by verbs, tend to have inherent temporal properties. Although theories on verb semantics are very useful at the lexical level, it may be the case that they are not appropriate to describe the distribution of patterns of acquisition of aspect in second languages. Actually, verbal semantics and predicational semantics tackle two different aspectual phenomena (Verkuyl 1993). Both approaches will be described. It will be investigated whether for L2 phenomena, the possible influence comes from the aspectual information of the verb in a tenseless level, or from the semantic amalgamation of the verb and its arguments.

A short description of Vendler’s well-known classification of verb classes will now follow. It is necessary in order to understand the principle behind the Aspect Hypothesis, which will be described shortly. Moreover, a description of Verkuyl (1999)’s theory on predicational aspect will be given, as it contains the theoretical basis needed to follow the Predication-effect Hypothesis on L2 learning, which will be reported on shortly. Finally, a characterization of grammatical aspect meanings and functions will be presented; and attention will be called to its close relation to predicational aspect.

#### 3.2.2.1. Vendler

Vendler (1957)’s verb classes (states, activities, accomplishments and achievements) are an established classification of verb meanings according to their inherent aspectual information.

- (7) Alice wanted a book (state: no dynamics)
- (8) Alice walked (activity: duration and homogeneity)
- (9) Alice walked a mile (accomplishment: duration with an inherent end point)
- (10) Alice discovered a treasure (achievement: single point in time)

According to Vendler, state verbs do not encode either phases or endpoints ('to want'); activity verbs encode situations consisting of phases but no endpoint ('to walk'), accomplishment verbs have also phase and an endpoint ('to walk a mile'), and finally achievements have an endpoint which is instantaneous, therefore without phases ('to discover'). See Table 1:

*Table 1 Characteristics of Vendler's quadripartition*

	Phases	Endpoints	Example
State	-	-	to want
Activity	+	-	to walk
Accomplishment	+	+	to walk a mile
Achievement	-	+	to discover

Bardovi-Harlig (2000) mentions a number of diagnostic tests that distinguish the verbal categories from each other. The idea behind the tests is to ask oneself the questions below. Positive answers will convey the verb category in question written before each question:

- States: does the verb have a habitual interpretation in simple present?  
 Activities: if you stop in the middle of V-ing, have you V-ed?  
 Accomplishments: if X V-s Y, in a period, was X V-ing during that time?  
 Achievement: if X will V Y in a period, will X V Y after that time?

For a more detailed description of these tests, see Bardovi-Harlig (2000).

### 3.2.2.2. Verkuyl

Verkuyl (1972, 1993) has shown for Germanic languages that, what has been called lexical aspect, is in fact compositionally formed, with the help of two aspectual features: [ADD-TO] and [SQA].

To account for the non-stative nature of verbs like 'write', 'eat', 'hit', etc. as opposed to stative verbs like 'hate', 'love', 'want', a verbal semantic feature called [ADD-TO] is assumed as the contribution of the verb to the aspectuality at a tenseless level. It expresses the dynamicity of the verb. For dynamic verbs, such as 'write', 'eat' etc., the value of the feature is positive; for stative verbs, such as 'hate', 'love' etc., the value of the feature is negative. The contribution of the NP internal argument to aspectual information can be accounted for in terms of an NP-feature [SQA], where SQA stands for 'Specified Quantity of A', 'A' being the denotation of the Noun of the NP. It expresses the quantification and delimitation of the arguments. Thus, NPs like 'an apple', 'three beers', 'a piece of bread', etc. are labelled [+SQA], whereas NPs like 'apples', 'beer', 'bread', etc. are [-SQA].

Only a combination of a [+ADD-TO]-verb with [+SQA]-arguments yields a compositionally well-formed terminative aspect. All other cases are durative. It

describes a bipartition of predicational values: terminative versus durative. This is what Verkuyl (1999) calls the Plus Principle, since it refers to the requirement that all aspectual atoms ([ADDTO] and [SQA]) involved in a terminative predication are plus values. Predicational aspect thus involves a compositional amalgamation of lexical semantic information given by the verb and delimiting information given by the arguments. As seen in the tenseless examples in (11), terminative predications are the marked case, as opposed to the durative predications. These are unmarked and thus more common in language production.

					Aspectual value
(11a)	Clara	write	a letter		
	[+SQA]	[+ADDTO]	[+SQA]	=>	terminative
(11b)	Clara	write	letters		
	[+SQA]	[+ADDTO]	[-SQA]	=>	durative
(11c)	Children	write	a letter		
	[-SQA]	[+ADDTO]	[+SQA]	=>	durative
(11d)	Clara	expect	a letter		
	[+SQA]	[-ADDTO]	[+SQA]	=>	durative

González & Verkuyl (2003) show that the Plus Principle is also a valid tool to characterize Spanish predicational aspect. Both operators receive the same values regardless whether a sentence is produced in Spanish or in Dutch.

### 3.2.3. Grammatical aspect

Grammatical aspect in the Spanish language, as distinguished from predicational aspect, cannot be seen apart from the application of the tense operator. Grammatical aspect does not interfere with the duration or the inherent completion of the event or situation itself (see González & Verkuyl 2003). Rather, it locates the temporal domain that hosts the eventuality in a past such that the domain is considered as closed off at a certain point of reference (perfective) or in a past leaving open the possibility that the domain has not yet been closed off at a certain point of reference (imperfective).

(12a) Laura compró un ramo de flores  
PAST+PERFECTIVE [Laura buy a bouquet of flowers]

(12b) Laura compraba un ramo de flores  
PAST+IMPERFECTIVE [Laura buy a bouquet of flowers]

The perfective aspect characterizes the temporal domain in which the situation is presented in the past as closed off from the present, so in (12a) the sentence represents a situation in the past that happened once as a unique case. The imperfective aspect also places the eventuality in the past but characterizes the temporal domain in which it is located as a half open interval. The imperfective aspect leaves things open, hence in (12b) it can be that something happened while Laura was buying the flowers (progressive reading) or that she bought them in several occasions (habitual reading). Note that by adopting this position, it is

claimed that imperfective and perfective are insensitive to the nature of a predication. Their contribution to the aspectual meaning of the sentence does not vary according to the aspectual category of the predication. Taking only into account grammatical aspect, (12a) and (13a) can be equally characterized as perfective sentences. The opposite goes for (12b) and (13b), as they are both marked with an imperfective verb form.

- (13a) Laura compró flores  
PAST+PERFECTIVE [Laura buy flowers]  
(13b) Laura compraba flores  
PAST+IMPERFECTIVE [Laura buy flowers]

In (13a) the temporal domain in the past hosting the durative eventuality [‘Laura buy flowers’] is characterized as being closed off and complete; in (13b) the temporal domain in the past hosting the same eventuality is characterized as left open or incomplete, in an habitual, repetitive, progressive or episodic way.

The idea of grammatical aspect operating at a higher level than predicational aspect gives the necessary space to explain the use of certain tenses in Spanish. In (14) a durative eventuality is located in a perfective, complete temporal domain (and so the effect on the predication is that the eventuality must have stopped) and in (15) it is the other way around: a terminative eventuality is located in an open temporal domain; in this particular example, the imperfective has a habitual repetitive reading.

- (14) Comí porquerías todo el día  
eat+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+PERFECTIVE junk food whole the day  
‘I ate junk food the whole day’  
Unbounded eventuality + closed time domain  
(15) Leía el periódico los domingos  
read+1<sup>st</sup>P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE the newspaper the Sundays  
‘I read the newspaper on Sundays’  
Bounded eventuality + uncompleted time domain

### 3.3. Approaches to use of interlanguage past morphology

This section discusses several characterizations of the initial state of the acquisition of temporal systems in a L2. The following items will be treated separately; Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen 1991), the Prototype Theory (Li & Shirai 2000), Salaberry’s approach (Salaberry 2000) and a new approach, the Predication-effect Hypothesis, based on the theoretical position proposed in section 2.2.2. In order to find out which characterization best describes the initial stage, the data collected for this study will be later analysed according to each of these approaches.

### 3.3.1. Lexical Aspect Hypothesis

There are several acquisition studies that have tackled the influence of aspectual classes (as defined by Vendler 1957) on the interlanguage tense-aspect morphology of L2 learners of Spanish. The main contribution to this line of research is the Aspect Hypothesis. The Aspect Hypothesis was first named Defective Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen 1986). This nomenclature was borrowed from the L1 acquisition research of Weist (1986). In both L1 and L2, the (Defective) Aspect Hypothesis stated that in beginning stages of language acquisition, only inherent aspectual distinctions, neither tense nor grammatical aspect, were encoded by verbal morphology.

Andersen (1986) studied the acquisition of Spanish as a second language by two English-speaking children. To classify the inherent aspectual distinctions displayed in the production data of the two children, Andersen reformed Vendler (1957)'s four-way division: states, activities, accomplishments and achievements (see section 2.2.1.). He presented a developmental sequence for encoding tense and aspect with past inflections, containing 9 stages (see Table 2).

*Table 2* Stages in the acquisition of perfective/imperfective forms in Spanish as L2 (-: only present forms; i: only imperfective forms; p: only perfective forms; ip: both im/perfective forms appear)

Stage/type	States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
1	--	--	--	--
2/3	--	--	--	-p
4	i-	--	--	-p
5	i-	i-	-p	-p
6	i-	i-	ip	-p
7	i-	ip	ip	-p
8	i-	ip	ip	ip
9	ip	ip	ip	ip

The Aspect Hypothesis makes predictions about two acquisition features: firstly, the distribution of verbal morphology, and secondly, the development of aspect morphology in beginning stages of acquisition. Both predictions behave according to inherent aspectual meanings. According to the Aspect Hypothesis<sup>2</sup>, the perfective forms are used first with achievements, then with accomplishments, spreading later to activities and, finally, states. The imperfective forms appear later than perfective forms. They appear first with states, spreading later to activities, accomplishments and, finally, achievements (see Table 2).

<sup>2</sup> The Aspect Hypothesis makes two more claims that are not considered relevant for the purposes of this description (3<sup>rd</sup>: languages with progressive aspect, the progressive will begin with activities, then accomplishments and achievements; 4<sup>th</sup>: progressive markings are not incorrectly overextended to stative)

According to Andersen, in the first stages of acquisition of verbal past morphology, the perfective form is only found with achievements and the imperfective form only with states. Later on, the perfective is also found with those verbs referring to accomplishments and the imperfective with activities. That is, telic verbs (those referring to achievements and accomplishments) are used only with perfective forms and atelic verbs (those referring to states and activities) only with imperfective forms. The first atelic verbs that are found with perfective are activities; the first telic verbs found with the imperfective are accomplishments. Finally, both forms are found with the four types of verbs (see Table 2). When verbal morphology emerges in the interlanguage of the informants, it appears as if it is in complementary distribution to the aspectual class the verb belongs to.

There have been many empirical studies based on the Aspect Hypothesis in second language acquisition. The selected studies aiming at a description of the interlanguage of L2 learners of a Romance language are summarized below. These studies appear to have found evidence for Andersen's hypothesized stages of the development of the perfective and the imperfective pasts. Hasbún (1995) and Bergström (1995) analysed the written compositions of 80 learners of Spanish and 117 learners of French. Both groups followed university language courses. Both studies attest not only Andersen's associations of perfective past with events and imperfective past with states, but also the sequence of stages of both forms. In Bergström study, the perfective form stages are less clear-cut; the first stage is missing, probably because the proficiency of the learners was too high to show the first stage of acquisition of past verbal morphology. These studies also defend that classroom learners distribute past tense morphemes according to the Aspect Hypothesis.

Cadierno (2000) analysed written and oral data of advanced Danish learners of Spanish. Cadierno's data are presented as belonging to stage 9 of Andersen: the imperfective spreads, accommodating also achievements. She discovered the following findings: her L2 learners make fewer mistakes with the perfective when the inherent aspect is telic or punctual and, to the contrary, they also make fewer errors with the imperfective when the inherent aspect is non-punctual or atelic.

The Aspect Hypothesis postulates that the aspectual nature of the verb will influence L2 learners acquiring tense and aspect markers. It gives a description of the aspectual systems of the learner's interlanguage, but it does not explain, among other factors, why the learners make errors in the use of both prototypical and non-prototypical cases. The Congruence Principle (Andersen 1993) presents an explanation as to why errors occur: learners will use tense-aspect morphemes whose meanings are most similar to those of the verbs. This statement, though very compelling, may not always be valid. A theory-driven inquiry of aspectual systems may help to comprehend the reasoning behind both common and uncommon errors. First of all, a theory on aspect must clarify and exhibit the rationale behind the reason why tense-aspect morphemes can semantically correspond to and be mistaken for the intrinsic meaning of the verb. Secondly, a better definition of 'inherent' aspect is needed, as the intrinsic meaning of the verb is not the carrier of all the aspectual information. Without taking into account the aspectual semantics of the arguments, the Aspect Hypothesis cannot clarify what actually takes place in the

beginning stages of acquisition. Should the claims of the Aspect Hypothesis be valid, the collected data will present a different distribution in the use of the Spanish past tense markings according to the type of verb class (states, activities, accomplishments, achievements).

### 3.3.2. The Prototype Theory

The Prototype Theory abstracts from the consequences indicated by the Aspect Hypothesis. According to the Prototype Theory (Shirai & Andersen 1995, Li & Shirai 2000), each category has its best exemplars, the prototypes, which share characteristic features with members of the category. In the first stages of development, the prototype of the category emerges. Afterwards, it extends to items similar to the prototype, and finally to least prototypical members. Applied to SLA, the claim is that L2 learners acquire a linguistic category starting with the prototype of the category, and later expanding its application to less prototypical cases. In other words, the Prototype Theory would expect any verb to follow the next path: firstly, to behave in a prototypical way in the first stages of the development of its acquisition, and secondly, to experience in time a growing process in meaning. This allows less prototypical uses to be combined with the verb.

To give an example, the imperfective form *tenía* is prototypical for the state *tener* ('have'). *Tuve*, its perfective partner, is then considered non-prototypical and marginal. *Tenía* will be first used; *tuve* will appear later. This developmental path, according to the Prototype Theory, should happen to every verb. On the one hand, those verbs with an intrinsic aspectual meaning of completion, such as 'discover', or 'realize', will first appear with the perfective morphological marker. On the other hand, those verbs with an intrinsic aspectual meaning of duration, incompleteness, such as 'have' or 'run', will first appear with the imperfective morphological marker. Should the Prototype Theory be correct, the data collected in this study will show that verbs behave prototypically at the beginning stages of its acquisition.

### 3.3.3. Salaberry

Salaberry (2000) also describes the particular distribution of the past aspectual morphology at various stages of development. Salaberry studied the distribution and development of past tense markers in three sets of data: movie narratives, cloze and editing tasks and speak-aloud protocols. The languages involved in his study are English (L1) and Spanish (L2).

At the very beginning (stage 1), Salaberry's learners rely on a single marker of past tense verbal morphology: the perfective. This finding was already reported in Wiberg (1996). This finding is explained as being an under-application of the rule of past tense formation in Spanish. By not using both forms, which are necessary to have a complete system in Spanish, the learners are under-applying the rules of past tense formation in Spanish. The learners of this study use the perfective as default marker of past tense. In stage 2, students realise that they need to use two different markers of past tense, and they use them according to the inherent lexical semantics associated with verb types (lexical aspect). In stage 3, students are more proficient,

and they unexpectedly overgeneralize the use of past tense markers associated with specific lexical aspectual classes (the prototypical cases). Salaberry's explanation for this unexpected overgeneralization is that the degree of association between lexical aspectual classes and inflectional morphology increases with time to the point that it overgeneralizes to a level that surpasses the target language distribution. Finally, in stage 4, students are able to focus on language-specific discursive-pragmatic factors that provide them with information about when to use both markings of verbal morphology.

There are two main differences between Salaberry's stages and those presented by Andersen's Aspect Hypothesis:

- 1) Salaberry's first stage, which presents the perfective as the default past tense in beginning stages of interlanguage, is not predicted by the Aspect Hypothesis.
- 2) Studies supporting the Aspect Hypothesis have not encountered data where the more proficient students over-generalise the prototypical cases (Salaberry's overgeneralization stage).

Salaberry's second stage agrees with the Aspect Hypothesis claims, as it also relies on the inherent aspectual meaning of the verb.

#### **3.3.4. Binary categories**

Bardovi-Harlig (2000) presents a number of studies that divide inherent aspect into two categories. A short overview of previous studies that have structured inherent aspectual meaning in a two-way classification is outlined below.

First of all, Robinson (1990) differentiated punctual versus non-punctual verbs. Robinson basically compared achievements with the rest (states, activities and accomplishments). It is therefore a different type of bipartition than the one presented in this analysis (i.e. terminative versus durative predications). Secondly, Kaplan (1987) classified verb meanings in events and non-events; not stating clearly what each of them represents. Because of the lack of clear definitions, the results of Kaplan's study become less suitable for an effective description. Finally, and of most relevance for this study, Giacalon-Ramat (1990) and Bayleys (1994) classified inherent aspectual meanings as telic or atelic. Essentially, telic-atelic opposition distinguishes predicates with endpoints from predicates without endpoints. Terminative-durative opposition does basically the same, since it divides predications in two groups. The first group contains those prepositions that are complete and closed off, whilst the second group contains the predications that are incomplete and left open (see section 2.2.2.).

There are some problems with Bayley's distribution of aspectual meanings. Bayley does not seem to make a distinction between the two levels of aspectual information (that is, grammatical aspect and inherent semantic aspect), therefore collapsing the information of both levels. This is probably a consequence of the fact that the concerned target language (English) does not have overt markers for

perfectivity and imperfectivity, only for progressivity and past. The relationship between the two aspectual levels can only be efficiently assessed in studies that have as their target language a language with perfective-imperfective formal distinctions.

Giacalone-Ramat (1990) analysed data collected from English L2 learners of Italian. She emphasizes the relevance of the intrinsic semantic value of verbs (*Aktionsart*) in order to understand the results of her study: in particular, the duration and the presence of a final point expressed by the verb. Although Giacalone-Ramat makes a bipartition of aspectual meanings at the atemporal level in order to present her data (duration versus end-point), the classification still relies on the intrinsic semantic value of verbs.

These studies are developed, in a way, following a similar semantic interpretation of the atemporal level of aspectual information to the one presented in section 3.2.2.2. However, they are dubious or unclear in their definitions, a fact that makes them incomplete.

### **3.3.5. Predication-effect Hypothesis: a new approach**

A two-way predicational aspect division will portray the use of the interlanguage past tense morphology from a different perspective than a four-way inherent verbal semantic distinction. Following a predication perspective, the distribution of verbal morphology at a particular point in acquisition will be represented according to the aspectual value of the predication, that is, whether the predication is either terminative or durative. A predicational aspect classification may add valuable and intrinsic information to the changes in interlanguage during the first stages of acquisition of grammatical aspect marking, which from a lexical aspect perspective may not be assessed. The complications behind the learning of this particular grammatical notion will therefore also be approached from a predicational perspective.

The quadripartition is based on allegedly verbal meanings, whereas the bipartition (the two-way predicational aspect division) is based on predicational meanings. Andersen's distribution of aspectual classes is primarily based on verb meanings. Salaberry also bases his second stage on lexical aspect according to verb types. However, as proposed in section 2.2.2., it is probably the predication that belongs to an aspectual class, not the verb on its own. It may be sufficient to distinguish two opposite types of predicational aspect: both achievements and accomplishments can be defined as pertaining to discrete units, therefore terminative; activities and states can be defined as predications that are left open, therefore durative.

The theoretical analysis proposed in sections 2.2.3. and 2.3. may also supply a theoretical rationale behind the incomplete interlanguage distribution of Spanish past tenses across aspectual classes. The first step is to acknowledge that there are two levels of aspectual information within the sentence: predicational aspect and grammatical aspect. Each of the two levels can be characterized as expressing information about its completion: at the predicational level, it is in the form of the opposition terminative/durative and at the grammatical level, it is in the form of the opposition perfective/imperfective. The problem for L2 learners seems to arise when

the sense of completion of both levels does not match. If this situation arises, the predicational level may take over, influencing the choice of verb form. In other words, when both verbal forms emerge, the completion value of the predication may cause errors in interlanguage, and not the meaning of the verb on its own. The independency of the levels (predicational and grammatical) may be hard to identify because the same type of feature seems to characterize them both: the completion feature. Nevertheless, the learner has to become aware that the two levels can interact. Only then can s/he broaden her/his interlanguage aspectual system to accommodate those options that at first seem unorthodox. In other words, it is to be expected that learners will first use the grammatical aspect completion marker (the perfective) with those predications that are also marked as complete, that is, with terminative predications; and the grammatical aspect non-completion marker (the imperfective) with durative predications. The less expected combinations are those of perfectives with durative predications and imperfectives with terminative predications. It is the task of the learner to discover that those options are as valid and as common as those where both completion levels match.

Having two opposites at the predicational level allows for a simpler and more straightforward comparison with the two opposites at the grammatical level: terminative/durative versus perfective/imperfective. It may very well be that this juxtaposition of aspectual levels alters to exchangeability in interlanguage. This exchangeability predicts that in L2 production data, collected at beginning stages of acquisition, on the one hand, perfective morphology will be clustered with terminative predications; and on the other hand, imperfective morphology will occur more often with durative predications. Unfortunately, it may not be as clear-cut as this. There are other factors that may interfere with this proposed exchangeability of aspectual meanings. First of all, narrating a story in Spanish, typically calls for the perfective<sup>3</sup> (for a review of studies defending a discursive approach to grammatical aspect, see Salaberry 2000). Therefore, the perfective is the most prominent past tense marker. Secondly, the durative value is definitely the unmarked predication in language production (see section 2.2.2.), and as unmarked, appears more often. Most sentences in L1 and L2 language production contain durative predications.

These two factors together (namely, perfective as the most used past tense form and durative as the most common predication type) postulate a problem to the in-progress prediction presented until this point, since it expects perfective markers to appear with verbs in terminative predications and imperfectives with verbs in durative predications. These two factors are considered and the hypothesis reformulated.

Claims Predication-effect Hypothesis:

- 1) Perfective will appear first and with all types of predications;
- 2) Imperfectives will appear later, and, when present, will occur more often with durative predications.

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<sup>3</sup> A pilot study shows that two native speakers of Spanish, who were asked to write the same compositions as the Dutch learners in the study presented in this chapter, chose the perfective form 57% of the occasions where a past tense was given (39 out of 68 cases).

Claim (1) proposes that although the perfective would be first intuitively expected to appear only with terminative predications, it will not be the case, as the perfective is the prominent past tense marker and will appear everywhere, irrespective of the type of predication. Claim (2) predicts that inherent aspect of the predication also plays a role in interlanguage, proposing that when the imperfective starts showing, it will be more often than not with durative predications.

The main hypothesis presented in this study states that the durative/terminative distinction proves relevant for the description of the development of aspect system of L2 learners, rather than the Vendler classification of verb meanings, or the intrinsic meaning of the verb: the imperfective/perfective choice the learners will make at the beginning stages of acquisition will be related to the predicational aspect of the eventuality they aim to describe. Therefore, it is proposed that the verb on its own does not explain why the past forms are distributed as they are and the quadripartition is not enlightening because a pattern in the use of the Spanish past tenses according to the four-verb types of Vendler may not exist.

According to each approach, the following results are expected:

- a) If the Prototype Theory is right, the data will show that verbs behave prototypically at the beginning stages of its acquisition;
- b) If the Aspect Hypothesis is true, the collected data will present a different distribution in the use of the Spanish past tense markings according to the type of verb class (states, activities, accomplishments, achievements);
- c) If Salaberry's approach is correct, the data will show a clear preference for the perfective and later an influence of the inherent aspectual information on the verb morphology;
- d) If the Predication-effect Hypothesis proves right, data will show that a combination of factors plays a role in the distribution of aspectual markers: the type of predication (terminative or durative) and discourse factors (the perfective as default form).

An analysis of the use and accuracy of the two past tenses of Spanish by L2 learners will provide sufficient findings to postulate which approach characterizes the data most accurately. The distribution of past tense morphology in the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish will be analysed according to each acquisitional approach.

This study acknowledges the relevance of the tenseless aspectual information presented in any sentence to describe the particular distribution of the past aspectual morphology of the interlanguage Spanish of Dutch L2 learners. However, the essential difference between the Predication-effect Hypothesis and those approaches that defend the relevance of the tenseless aspect in the acquisition of the two past tenses in Spanish (or in any Romance language, for that matter) is basically in the definition of lexical aspect, inherent aspect, also called *aktionsart*. This study will argue empirically that these definitions may be inadequate.

There is also space to assess development. The Predication-effect Hypothesis claims that the first acquisition stages will present an overload of perfective markers on all types of predications. When the imperfective also emerges, it will appear predominantly with durative predications.

There is another acquisition issue that emerges in this discussion. If it is true that predicational aspect influences the choice of verbal morphology in Spanish interlanguage, is it transfer<sup>4</sup> from the L1 (see White 1996 for a classification of different approaches to the L2 initial state and the relevance of the L1 in the first stages of SLA) or is it only a mix-up in aspectual levels of the L2? It may be expected that when Dutch L2 learners of Spanish encounter the L2 aspectual system, they are not going to look further than what predicational aspect offers them. Therefore, they will simplify the Spanish system. Alternatively, it may also be the case that their L1 does not play a role, and the predicational aspect in L2 is the one interfering. However, as both languages in this study express predicational aspect equally, there is no accessible way to find out to which language (L1 or L2) this acquisition phenomenon can be attributed. Comparing languages with different inherent aspect markings would probably add some clarification to the puzzle. As this is not the case in this study, this puzzle remains unsolved.

### **3.4. Methodology**

#### **3.4.1. Participants**

Dutch beginner learners of Spanish (N=13) participated in this study. They were following a beginner's Spanish course at the University College in Utrecht. Results from seven students that also followed the course were not analysed because their mother tongue was not Dutch. This was done to avoid potential L1 interferences as side effects. Most of the students were 18 years old. According to a language-experience questionnaire distributed at the beginning of the course, each participant was already proficient in at least a second language (English) but none of them had any prior knowledge of Spanish. Therefore, the exposure to Spanish was only through academic instruction at the college level. This allows for the set up to guarantee that they are all at the same proficiency level when the data collection study took place. This particular study focuses on a single level of proficiency, specifically a beginner's stage of language acquisition. To focus on a single level of proficiency, it is more convenient to deal with classroom learners, specifically, with those students starting a beginner's course. In this manner, it is positive that none of the students has had any contact with Spanish prior to this course. This is a *sine qua non* condition for affirming they all share the same proficiency level.

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<sup>4</sup> *Transfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired (Odlin 1989: 27)*

### 3.4.2. Materials and Procedure

This study investigates the first stages in the acquisition of the Spanish aspectual systems by Dutch learners in a classroom environment. The collection of data took place over a five-week period during the winter semester of 2001. Weekly, free-production compositions were collected during this period. The regular course at the University College lasted three months; the chosen five weeks began after the two first weeks of the regular course. This meant that the students have already received a short introduction to the forms of the two past tenses, enabling them to form their own initial idea as to when each of the two past tenses needs to be used.

Not all collected compositions are eligible for analysis. Parallel to this data collection study, an experimental study took place. It involved a particular instruction on aspect. Only those compositions written before the students receive the experimental instruction are valid for this study. Furthermore, several compositions are handed in late, and there is no certainty that they are written before the instruction was given. The late compositions are also not considered for analysis. At the end, only 20 compositions are analysed, as only those that are positively written before instruction are valid for this study. In order to code the distribution of past tenses, the compositions are decomposed into the predications they contain. There are 183 valid predications. The rest of the predications written (a total of 1224) are not located in one of the two past tenses we are interested in (perfective versus imperfective), but they are located either in another inflected verbal form (present, future, past compound forms, etc.), they are negated, or they are accompanying modals. A random extract of one of the compositions is given in (16).

- (16) *Un día llegamos acampar en la noche. Ya estábamos cerca del sur de Francia. Éramos muy casandos, pero fuimos a la ciudad de todos modos para una cerveza. Eso no era una buena idea, porque por ninguna razón cinco hombres lucharon con mí. El policía vino y trae me al hospital. El día siguiente mi papá me trajo casero con su coche, para recuperarme. Claro eso era un grand decepción, pero este año voy a intentarlo otro vez.*<sup>5</sup>

All verb forms are coded according to their aspectual morphology; those verb forms that are unrecognised are not coded; whereas misspelled verbs are counted as either perfective or imperfective (as long as it is obvious which form the participants are intending to write: for example, *quería* instead of *quería* ('wanted', I+want+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE) or, in the text in (16) *vino* instead of *vino* ('came' I+come+PAST+PERFECTIVE)).

In order to compare hypotheses, the coding of the 183 predications is as follows: each predication is observed and characterized from three points of view:

<sup>5</sup> Literal translation (including errors): "One day we arrived (PERF) to camp in the night. we were (IMP) near the south of France. We were (IMP) very tired, but we went(PERF) to the city anyway for one beer. That was (IMP) not a good idea, because for no reason five men fought (PERF) against me. The police came (PERF) y bring (PRESENT) me to the hospital. The day after my dad brought (PERF) me home with his car, to recover. Of course, that was a big deception, but this year I am going to try another time."

firstly, according to the verb of the predication on its own; secondly, according to Vendler's quadripartition and finally, according to the durative/terminative division.

To distinguish between predications, the Plus Principle described in section 3.2.2.2. is applied; to distinguish among the four-way classification of Vendler, the question-test outlined in section 3.2.2.1. is adopted.

A cross-tabulation took place in order to find out whether the terminative/durative repartition of the predications is valid. Two independent linguists divided 155 out of the total of 1224 predications into either terminative or durative. The proportion of agreement is high (89.7%); and the proportion corrected by chance (Cohen's Kappa) was 0.775 ( $se=0.053$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Those cases in which there are differences in rating, the answers of grader 1 are consistently taken as the valid ones.

This analysis will be across-category and within-category analysis, which means that it takes, first of all, the perspective of the particular morpheme and sums up all predications that occur with this particular morpheme; secondly, it looks at how each of the lexical aspectual categories are marked (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). Thirdly, a global perspective allows the researcher to see out of the total production, which combinations are most utilized. The across-category analysis is sensitive to unbalanced distribution across categories (for example, many more states appearing than accomplishments), whereas the within-category analysis is not. The within-category analysis is not sensitive to more frequent production of one lexical aspectual class than another. Carrying out different types of analysis will present a more complete description of the data. Therefore, both across-analysis and within-analysis are necessary to successfully interpret the results.

Some acquisition patterns will be estimated when comparing the percentages of form uses among weeks.

The accuracy of the use perfective/imperfective is also taken into account. It will be investigated whether the use of the past tense forms gives information about the acquisition development of aspect in a second language, and also the accuracy of such use. The Predication-effect approach will expect the following:

- a) The perfective will be more often rightly used with terminative predications
- b) The imperfective will be more often rightly used with durative predications.

By understanding both the errors and the proper use at the beginning stages of aspectual acquisition, one can ultimately comprehend the particular distribution of the use of the past aspectual morphology of L2 learners of Spanish.

### **3.5. Results**

First of all, a description of the use of past tense morphology in interlanguage will be given. The description will be presented according to the different hypothesis of each of the acquisition approaches described above. Secondly, there is a delineation of the development of the distribution of forms according to developmental patterns each theory proposes. Finally, a description of the learner's accuracy according to each approach will be added.

### 3.5.1. Use of past tense morphology

The use of the past tense markers in the 20 compositions was analysed. There were 183 valid predications. Each verb and each predication were analysed according to the grammatical aspect form the verb was given in interlanguage.

#### 3.5.1.1. According to the Aspect Hypothesis

Table 3 summarises the use of perfective/imperfective forms according to lexical inherent aspect of verbs (quadripartition). Two perspectives have been taken: the perspective of the verbal form used (a cross-category analysis) and the perspective of the verb type (a within-category analysis). Generally, states are the verb type mostly used (107; 60% of all predications); followed by accomplishments (49; 26%), activities (19; 10%) and finally achievements (8; 4%). The verb form mostly chosen is perfective (147; 80% of all verb forms).

*Table 3 Within-category analysis of the distribution of Spanish past tense forms (perfective and imperfective) according to lexical aspect*

Form	State		Act.		Acc.		Ach.	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	72	77	98.5	17	91.8	45	100	8
Imperfective	28	30	10.5	2	8.2	4	0	0
TOTAL	100	107	100	19	100	49	100	8

In Table 3, one can see the numbers and percentages according to the ‘within-category’ analysis of the perfective and the imperfective, referring to the percentage of times each verbal category is used with perfective or imperfective markers. This table shows that all verbal categories are more frequently used with the perfective form (states 72%, activities 89.5%, accomplishments 91.8%, achievements 100%). The difference among the number of appearances of the perfective for each type of verb category is significant ( $\chi^2=79.03$ ,  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Among states, the perfective is the preferred form, however, it is only in this type of verbs that the imperfective verb form is chosen with some regularity (28%)<sup>6</sup>. The rest of the combinations with imperfective forms are nearly non-existent (6 tokens of imperfective form in verbs other than states). The difference in tokens of imperfectives with activities, accomplishments and achievements is non significant ( $\chi^2=4$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p>0.10$ ). The appearance of imperfectives with states is significantly more prominent than with the rest ( $\chi^2=16$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

<sup>6</sup> Here all copula verbs are taken into account, a fact that may have influenced the results. The copula never appears in a base form, and thus behaves differently from other verbs.

*Table 4 Across-category analysis of the distribution of Spanish past tense forms (perfective and imperfective) according to lexical aspect*

Form	State		Act.		Acc.		Ach.		Total	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	52.4	77	11.6	17	30.6	45	5.4	8	100	147
Imperfective	83	30	6	2	11	4	0	0	100	36

Table 4 shows the percentages according to the ‘within-category’ analysis, which states the percentage of times the perfective and the imperfective forms appear within each verbal category. It shows that both verbal forms are more frequently used with states (perfectives 52.4%, imperfectives 83%). Among the perfective forms, states (52.4%) are the most common predications, followed by accomplishments (30.6%), activities (11.6%) and finally achievements (5.4%). The overall number of achievements was already very low (8 with perfectives, none with imperfectives). The imperfective verb form is mainly chosen with states (83%). Activities and accomplishments follow in frequency (6% and 11% of imperfective uses); there are no achievements presented with imperfective form. Among the imperfective forms, states are again the most common predications; the rest are nearly non-existent.

In general, the preferred combination according to verb types is: perfective + states (42% of the total of predications), followed by perfective + accomplishments (24.6%); followed by 16% of imperfective + states; and finally, 9.3% of perfectives and activities. The rest of the combinations are not worth enumerating since the number of tokens are too small to be of any significance. The difference among the mentioned combinations is significant: ( $\chi^2=47.4$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

According to the Aspect Hypothesis, in the first stages of acquisition one would find the perfective with accomplishments; followed by imperfective with states; perfective with achievements, imperfective with accomplishments, ending up with all verb types appearing with both verb forms. Figure 1 shows how each verb type gets used with the perfective form (a percentage drawn of total simple past tense forms):

Figure 1 Use percentages of perfective forms according to verb class

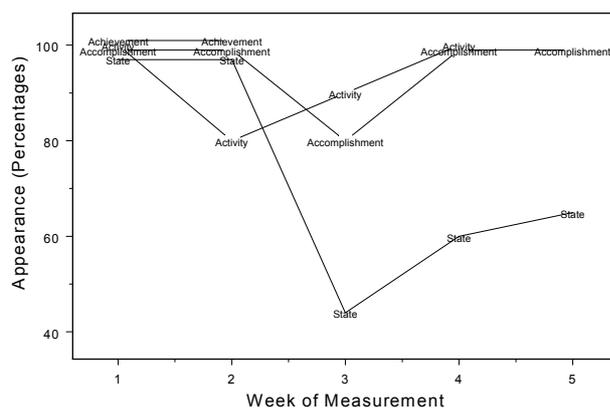


Figure 1 shows no real pattern of development according to verb class. All four verbal categories appear first with the perfective marker. States start being produced with imperfective forms after two weeks, whereas activities, accomplishments and achievements are essentially always used with perfective marking.

### 3.5.1.2. According to the Prototype Theory

According to the Prototype Theory, individual verbs should behave in the same manner in different environments at the beginning stages of their past tense acquisition. Out of the 183 predications analysed, five verbs are worth analysing in this way, since they appear often enough to allow for some generalizations<sup>7</sup>. The remainder of the verbs appear five or less than five times. Table 5 shows the frequency of appearance of the five most used verbs:

Table 5 Frequency of verbal forms

Verb	Translation	Perfective		Imperfective		Total
		(n)	%	(n)	%	
Estar	<i>to be</i>	12	75	4	25	16
Haber	<i>there be</i>	6	100	0	0	6
Ir	<i>to go</i>	13	86.67	2	13.33	15
Ser	<i>to be</i>	27	60	18	40	45
Tener	<i>to have</i>	11	91.67	1	8.33	12

<sup>7</sup> *Ser* and *estar*, (copula verbs) are among the five most used verbs (see footnote 5).

Regardless of what type of verb type they belong, or what type of prototype they should follow, all verbs seem to blindly choose the perfective option; even those whose prototype is the imperfective form, as is the case with these five verbs, all being either states or activities. There is only one stative verb (*ser* (to be)), which although still not behaving according the Prototype Theory, is produced more often than the rest with the imperfective (60% with perfective and 40% with imperfective).

From a developmental point of view, these five verbs follow the next paths:

*Table 6*                      *Number of perfective/imperfective uses per verb and percentage of use perfective form*

Verb	Translation	Week1 P/I-%P	Week2 P/I-%P	Week3 P/I-%P	Week4 P/I-%P	Week5 P/I-%P
<i>Estar</i>	to be	7/0-100%	3/0-100%	0/3-0%	0/1-0%	2/0-100%
<i>Haber</i>	there be	-	5/0-100%	1/0-100%	-	-
<i>Ir</i>	to go	1/0-100%	1/1-50%	8/1 89%	2/0-100%	1/0-100%
<i>Ser</i>	to be	8/0-100%	6/1-86%	6/9-40%	6/6-50%	1/2-33%
<i>Tener</i>	to have	4/0-100%	1/0-100%	1/0-100%	3/0-100%	2/1-67%

The developmental pattern the Prototype Theory would expect these verbs to follow is: initially, with imperfective forms; and later on, also with perfective forms. None of the verbs follow this path; on the contrary, they all start being produced with the perfective.

### 3.5.1.3. According to Salaberry

The data collected for this study may represent Salaberry's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stages: Salaberry's first stage claims that the perfective is used as default past; the second stage claims that both forms will be used, but only according to the verb's inherent semantics. Salaberry also refers to the aspectual atemporal information as "the inherent lexical semantics associated with verb types". Table 3 can therefore be referred to, since in this table the aspectual division is based on verbal semantics. First of all, this table shows that out of 183 sentences, 147 are with perfective marker. This is not as clear-cut as Salaberry's stage 1 proposes. Data shows that both forms are used at the beginning, and although the perfective is used more often, the imperfective also appears. Secondly, out of the 36 imperfective forms, 83% appear with stative verbs, out of the 147 perfective forms, 52.4% appear with states. Again, the perfective rules the past tense marking of interlanguage, with no interference of the type of verb class.

As for development, the results of the collected data pattern Salaberry's 1<sup>st</sup> stage of acquisition, as all but one verb in the first week collected data takes the

perfective form<sup>8</sup>. Salaberry's second stage postulated that verb forms would distribute according to the verbal meaning in question. Figure 1 (given as an illustration of development according to verb classes) shows that this categorization of verb types is an unclear tool to explain the distribution of past tenses in interlanguage. Stage 3 of Salaberry could not be assessed, as a five-week period did not cover enough time to test the so-called "overgeneralization stage".

#### 3.5.1.4. According to the Predication-effect Hypothesis

Tables 7 and 8 summarise the use of perfective/imperfective morphology according to the aspectual information of the predication, that is, whether the predication is terminative or durative, from a within- and across- categories analysis, respectively. Generally, durative predications are present more often than terminative predications (126 versus 57; durative cases appearing nearly 70% of the occasions). There is thus a clear tendency to produce durative predications. Obviously, the number of perfectives and imperfectives has not changed from the analysis given in the previous sections.

Table 7 *Within category analysis of the distribution of Spanish past tense forms according to predication aspect*

Form	Terminative		Durative	
	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	93	53	74.6	94
Imperfective	7	4	25.4	32
TOTAL	100	57	100	126

Within the terminative predications, 93% are used with the perfective form of the verb. The difference is significant ( $\chi^2=42.12$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Within the durative cases, 25.4% are used with the imperfective form. The difference is also significant ( $\chi^2=30.50$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

There is a clear distinction between terminative predications and durative predications as far as their choice of imperfective form is concerned: only four terminative cases versus 32 durative cases (7% versus 25.4%). This difference is significant ( $\chi^2=21.78$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

<sup>8</sup> The period understood as "beginning" or stage 1 is not clear. It if contains only the data collected the first week, Salaberry's claim is fulfilled, but if it contains 5 weeks, it is not accurate in its description (see paragraph above).

Table 8 *Across-category analysis of the distribution of Spanish past tense forms according to predicational aspect*

Form	Terminative		Durative		Total	
	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	36	53	64	94	100	147
Imperfective	11	4	89	32	100	36

Overall, the preferred combination is: perfective + durative (51.5% out of the total predications analysed); followed by 29% perfective + terminative; imperfective + durative (17.5%) and finally, imperfective + terminative (2%); which means that imperfective + duratives are used much more often than imperfective + terminatives (32 vs. 4). The difference of appearance among the 4 combinations is significant ( $\chi^2=94.27$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

Some development in time was assessed. Figure 2 illustrates the use of perfective forms out of the total of simple past tense forms in the 5-week period the data was collected.

Figure 2 *Percentage of perfective forms per week*

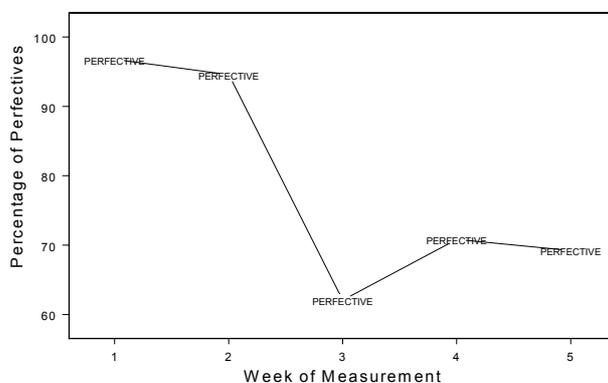


Figure 2 shows a clear preference for the perfective forms in the first two weeks. It decreases in its appearance later on, but is still being used more often than the imperfective form in every week.

Figure 3 compares the use of perfective forms with terminative and with durative predications.

Figure 3 Use percentages of perfectives according to predication type

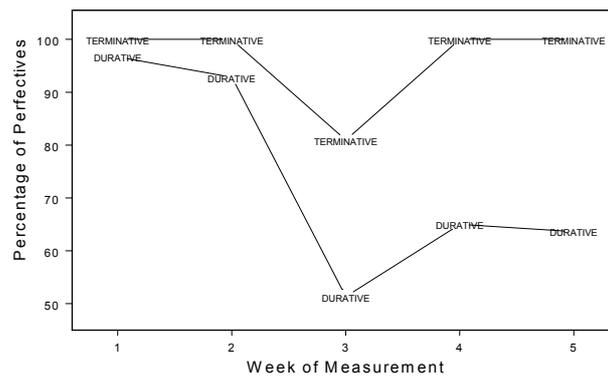


Figure 3 shows that the terminative predications are consistently overused during the 5 weeks with the perfective form. With durative predications, the perfective starts being the preferred form, but after three weeks, it is used approximately only 50% of the occasions. In other words, after three weeks, durative predications in interlanguage appear 50% with perfective markers, 50% with imperfective markers. However, in weeks 4 and 5, the perfective form seems to take over again, appearing more than 60% of the occasions.

### 3.5.2. Accuracy in the use of past tense morphology

Out of the 183 analysed predications, there are more sentences where the verb form is properly used than not (122 proper uses versus 61 errors), that is, in 67% of the occasions where a simple past tense was used, it was in an accurate context (see Tables 9 and 10 for overall tokens and percentages). Recall that misspelled verb forms are also taken into account as long as it is obvious which form the students meant to produce.

#### 3.5.2.1. According to the Aspect Hypothesis

Tables 9 and 10 illustrate the number and percentages of accuracy of the past tense forms according to lexical aspect, that is, according to the aspectual verb semantics.

Table 9 *Within-category analysis of the accuracy of Spanish past tense forms (perfective and imperfective) according to lexical aspect*

Form		State		Act.		Acc.		Ach.	
		%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	Right	36.4	39	63.2	12	87.8	43	62.5	5
	Wrong	35.5	38	26.3	5	4.1	2	37.5	3
Imperfective	Right	18.7	20	10.5	2	2	1	0	0
	Wrong	9.3	10	0	0	6.1	3	0	0
TOTAL		100	107	100	19	100	49	100	8

Table 10 *Across-category analysis of the accuracy of Spanish past tense forms (perfective and imperfective) according to lexical aspect*

Form		State		Act.		Acc.		Ach.		Total	
		%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	Right	39	39	12	12	44	43	5	5	100	99
	Wrong	79.2	38	10.4	5	4.2	2	6.2	3	100	48
Imperfective	Right	87	20	8.7	2	4.3	1	0	0	100	23
	Wrong	77	10	0	0	23	3	0	0	100	13

The differences in appearance among each type of verb category have been further analysed and their significance assessed. First of all, the difference in appearance of proper use of the perfective form, taking into account the proper use within every verb type, is significant ( $\chi^2=44.43$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Secondly, among the errors committed with perfective forms, there is a significant difference between their appearance with states and the rest ( $\chi^2=16.2$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The rest (activities, accomplishments and achievements) are united, as their difference is not significant ( $\chi^2=1.4$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p>0.5$ ). Hence, there is no distinction between the accurate appearances of activities, accomplishments and achievements with perfective forms. Among the accurate uses of the imperfective, the difference between their appearances with states and the rest is significant ( $\chi^2=12.56$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The rest are, again, united, as their differences are non-significant ( $\chi^2=2$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p>0.25$ ). These findings are not very substantial, as the accuracy rate is not compared to a total of uses of the particular form within the verb type. This is contemplated in Table 11, where the construction of a model according to verb types is presented.

Table 11 presents the appearances of the perfective and imperfective forms with each of the verb categories. To assess whether the differences in accuracy of verb form according to verb types in the compositions collected are significant, a logit model was specified. In such a model, the logit of the proportion (Fienberg 1980) correctly used verb forms is analysed as a function of the dimension of a cross-table (in this case, verb types, verbal morphology and accuracy). In Table 11, the fit of the quadripartition model is presented. The only significant differences in proportions of accuracy are found with accomplishments. The remainder of the

categories do not contribute to a description of the observations; they occur as likely as ‘States-Perfective’ occur. Hence, these distinctions appear to be redundant. Accomplishments, on the contrary, are significantly more accurately used with perfectives and significantly less accurately used with imperfectives ( $p < 0.05$  in both cases) than the rest of verb types (states, activities and achievements). These results are reminiscent of those presented by Robinson (1990) (see section 3.5.).

*Table 11 Model for quadripartition: ‘verb type’ model (logit of proportion correct: Constant + quadripartition + perfective/imperfective + interaction quadripartition and perfective/imperfective)*

Estimate	s.e.	Combination
0.03	0.23	States-Perfective
0.85	0.58	Activities- Perfective
3.04	0.76	Accomplishments –Perfective
0.48	0.76	Achievements- Perfective
0.67	0.45	States – Imperfective
-0.16	1.73	Activities – Imperfective
-4.83	1.43	Accomplishments – Imperfective
-12.54	251.5	Achievements – Imperfective

In section 5.2.3., this model will be compared to the model for bipartition. This comparison will show which of the two models describes the observed (logits of the) proportions adequately and is most parsimonious (with the minimum number of parameters).

### 3.5.2.2. Accuracy according to the Predication-effect Hypothesis

Table 12 shows the accuracy results according to the aspectual information the predication in the sentence has.

*Table 12 Within-category analysis of the accuracy of Spanish past tense forms (perfective and imperfective) according to predicational aspect*

Form		Terminative		Durative	
		%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	Right	84.2	48	40.5	51
	Wrong	8.8	5	34.1	43
Imperfective	Right	1.8	1	17.5	22
	Wrong	5.2	3	7.9	10
TOTAL		100	57	100	126

*Table 13 Across-category analysis of the accuracy of Spanish past tense forms (perfective and imperfective) according to predicational aspect*

Form		Terminative		Durative		Total	
		%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Perfective	Right	48.5	48	51.5	51	100	99
	Wrong	10.4	5	89.6	43	100	48
Imperfective	Right	4.4	1	95.6	22	100	23
	Wrong	23	3	77	10	100	13

The percentages are drawn within the type of predicational aspect the sentences in question conveys. The terminative predications are hardly ever used with imperfective verb forms. This was already attested at the tables above, where the use of the forms were illustrated; the new information presented here is that most of the time the terminative predications are rightly combined with the perfective verbal form. On the other hand, the durative predications are more divided among the perfective/imperfective-right/wrong cells. Out of the 126 durative predications, 94 were produced with perfective, 32 with imperfective. Moreover, among the imperfective verb forms used properly, there is a clear preference for those including a durative predication (17.5% vs. 1.8%). Finally, among the perfective verb forms used properly, there is a clear preference for the terminative predications (84.2% vs. 40.5%).

Terminative predications are more accurate with perfective marking than with imperfective marking; whereas durative predications are more often accurate with imperfective marking than with perfective marking (these results are comparable to those in Cadierno 2000).

The differences in appearance among each type of predication category have been further analysed and their significance assessed. First of all, the difference in appearance of proper use of the perfective form, taking into account each proper use within predication type, is non-significant ( $\chi^2=0.09$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p>0.750$ ). Secondly, among the errors committed with perfective forms, there is a significant difference between their appearance with terminative and durative predications ( $\chi^2=30.08$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Thirdly, among the accurate uses of the imperfective, the difference between their appearances with terminative and durative predications is significant ( $\chi^2=19.17$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Finally, among the errors committed with imperfective forms, the difference between their appearances with each predication type is significant ( $\chi^2=3.76$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.05$ ). These results do not take into account the total of appearances of verb form per predication type. This perspective is given in Table 14, where the construction of a model according to predication types is given.

The next step is to know whether a bipartition model fits the data better than the quadripartition model described in Table 11; that is, whether this model describes

the observed (logits of the) proportions adequately and is most parsimonious (i.e. with the minimum number of parameters).

Table 14 presents the appearances of the perfective and imperfective forms with each of the predication types. On the one hand, the appearance of terminative and perfectives is taken as the starting point for the other possible combination with perfectives (durative-perfective). On the other hand, terminative predications and imperfective forms are taken as the comparing point for the other possible combination with imperfective forms (that is, with durative predications). Perfectives are significantly more often accurately used with terminative predications and imperfectives with durative predications (in both cases,  $p < 0.05$ ).

*Table 14 Model for bipartition: 'predication type' model (logit of proportion correct: Constant + terminative/durative distinction + perfective/imperfective distinction + interaction terminative/durative distinction and perfective/imperfective distinction)*

Estimate	s.e.	Combination
2.26	0.47	Terminative – Perfective
-2.09	0.51	Durative – Perfective
-3.36	1.25	Terminative – Imperfective
3.98	1.32	Durative – Imperfective

This table, drawn according the aspectual information of the predication used, shows the following findings. As for the perfective forms, Table 14 illustrates that, on the one hand, the combination durative-perfective presents more errors than the combination terminative perfective; and, on the other hand, the combination durative imperfective appears more often in accurate contexts than the terminative-imperfective combination.

### 3.6. Discussion

In this section, every acquisition approach will be discussed and scrutinized. The different approaches to the acquisition of aspect will appear in the following order: first, the Aspect Hypothesis, second, the Prototype Theory, third, Salaberry's approach and finally, the Predication-effect Hypothesis.

#### *Aspect Hypothesis*

Through the point of view of the Aspect Hypothesis, the three analysis perspectives (the across-category perspective, the within-category perspective and the global perspective) show severe flaws when describing the use of the two past tense forms in interlanguage.

From a within-category perspective, the finding that among states and activities the perfective is the most chosen form goes against the Aspect Hypothesis

predictions. Accomplishments and achievements do behave as expected; however, this may just be a consequence of using most verbs with the perfective past form.

From an across-category perspective, it is shown that states are the most common verb types, with both perfectives and imperfectives. This goes against the Aspect Hypothesis prediction, which claims that the first type of verbs to emerge with past tense morphology are eventive. Moreover, of those verbs given with imperfectives, states are the most common, a fact that fits with the expectations of the hypothesis.

From a global perspective, the preferred combination is perfective-states, which is definitely not an expected finding according to the Aspect Hypothesis.

From each of the three perspectives, there are severe problems if the data are to be described according to this hypothesis. First of all, states and activities are mostly combined with perfectives, and not with the expected imperfective form. Secondly, states are the first type of verb to emerge with past tense markers, and not achievements; and thirdly, the most common combination is that of perfective marker on stative verbs, which is again rather unexpected. In conclusion, the Aspect Hypothesis does not describe the data properly.

The data is also incorrectly described when a developmental path is assessed. It may be the case that the data collected is not sufficient to present findings that would correspond to the Aspect Hypothesis' claims; however, results retrieved from the data do not relate to any stage of the Aspect Hypothesis. Firstly, because the perfective is overused and this is not what this theory expects, and secondly, because the verb type division of aspectual information does not give any hint as to how the interlanguage data should be described.

The Aspect Hypothesis does not make predictions as to the accuracy of the use, but nonetheless, to discover how the quadripartition of verb meanings correlates with accuracy, it is useful to later on compare the way in which the bipartition also correlates with accuracy. The only intriguing finding related to the accuracy rates is that, among accomplishments, the difference between the proper use and the errors with perfective marking is significant. However, the differences within the other seven combinations are not significant. In general, the picture is very unclear, there are no clear patterns in the results; therefore, no points of discussion or conclusions can be drawn, other than that there is no particular outstanding result.

### *Prototype Theory*

According to the Prototype Theory, verbs such as *estar* ('to be'), *haber* ('there be'), *ser* ('to be') and *tener* ('to have'), are expected to appear first with the imperfective aspectual marker, as they belong to the stative class of verbs. *Ir* ('to go') is also expected to appear first with the imperfective marker, because it is an activity verb. Nevertheless, what happens is the following: no matter what type of verb they are, or what type of prototype they should follow, all verbs choose the perfective option; even those whose prototype is clearly the imperfective form. The verbs analysed in this study behave consistently and robustly opposite to what the Prototype Theory would expect from them. There is only one stative verb (*ser* ('to be')), which although it still does not behave according to the Prototype Theory, is used more

often than the rest with the imperfective (60% with perfective and 40% with imperfective). Even in this case, the perfective, that is, the marginal verbal form for a verb such as '*ser*', is used more often than its expected prototype. Moreover, in the period of five weeks, all forms behave basically the same, proof in itself that goes against the Prototype Theory.

The Prototype Theory, based on the aspectual meanings of each verb, does not explain the data properly. It is not the case that each verb behaves in the same prototypical way at the beginning. The second claim of the Prototype Theory, that is, that a verb expands its meanings and uses in order to adapt to less prototypical cases, could not be tested. This is due to the fact that the data was only collected in a period of five weeks. However, since the first claim is already rejected, the second one does not need to be assessed.

### *Salaberry*

The data presented in this study serves as empirical argument in favour of Salaberry's first stage. All simple past verb forms used in the first week, with the exception of one, are perfective. However, his second stage is not illustrated with this data. Once the imperfective starts being produced together with the perfective, it is not the case that it appears with states and with activities and the perfective with accomplishments and achievements. First of all, the learners are still using the perfective in most occasions. That is, in the data collected for this study, the over-use of the perfective is found together with first appearances of the imperfective forms. It is not the case that, at any given moment, the imperfective takes over the perfective when the predication is either a state or an activity. Secondly, Salaberry's second stage relies on the meaning of the verb to assess the distribution of past tenses. Results of the present study illustrate that the verb on its own does not influence the choice of past tense marker in the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish. Thirdly, Salaberry's third and fourth stage could not be argued for or against with the help of the collected data; as it seems that that stage covers a higher proficiency level than the one represented by the classroom learners of this particular study.

### *Predication-effect Hypothesis*

After having observed the data according to previous approaches, it is evident that none of them optimally describes the data of this study.

As done for the Aspect Hypothesis, according to the Predication-effect Hypothesis, data were described from three perspectives: firstly, the across-category perspective, secondly, the within-category perspective, and finally, the global perspective.

From a within-category perspective, both predications appear more often with the perfective marker, but terminatives more often than duratives. From an across-category perspective, both verbal forms appear more often in durative predications, but imperfectives more often than perfectives. From a global perspective, the preferred combination is perfective + durative, followed by

perfective + terminative, imperfective + durative and finally imperfective + terminative. The Predication-effect Hypothesis optimally describes all these facts, as it not only explains the aspectual “preferences” but also the influence of pragmatic factors.

Essentially, it makes more sense having two types of aspect, which can have conflicting meanings in the minds of the learners if each level has the same division type. If an aspectual system is described with two levels, one predicational, one grammatical, and in each level only one opposition, it seems to provide a more powerful explanation to imagine the two levels conflicting than when one of the levels contains four values, and the other one only two.

From a developmental point of view, results support what was hypothesized by the Predication-effect claims: the perfective is the only past tense form used at the beginning; the appearance of the imperfective form comes later and only with durative predications.

The Aspect Hypothesis misses the first stage (perfective as default); moreover, it also claims that when the perfective appears, it will be only with achievements; when the imperfective appears, it will be only with states. Salaberry, on the other hand, following Wiberg (1996), rightly hypothesized that the perfective form would appear first as default marker of past tense. However, his second stage, where both forms are used, is not accurate as it is claimed that the distribution will be according to the lexical aspect of verbs. Therefore, as for a development in the distribution of the two past tenses in the interlanguage of Dutch learners of Spanish, the Predication-effect Hypothesis explains and describes the data better than Salaberry’s claims and the Aspect Hypothesis. The Predication-effect Hypothesis takes into account the overwhelming appearance of the perfective at the beginning stages of acquisition and explains the distribution of the emerging imperfective according to the aspectual information the predication contains. The short period of time also shows that the stages are not clear-cut. The imperfective starts appearing, but the perfective form is still present with all types of predication.

From an accuracy angle, the bipartition allows for a more substantial analysis of results than the quadripartition. From a within-category perspective, it can be seen that out of the perfective sentences used properly, there is a clear preference for the terminative predications. From an across-category perspective, terminative predications are more accurate with perfectives than with imperfectives, while durative predications are more often accurate with imperfectives than with perfectives. In other words, the durative predications are better used with imperfective marking; whereas the terminative predications are better used with perfective marking. These findings are significant. A comparison between the two models, the ‘verb type’ model and the ‘predication type’ model, shows that the latter describes the observed proportions more adequately and is most parsimonious in its description.

This is a clear case of interference of aspectual values. The juxtaposition of aspectual levels becomes exchangeability of meanings, at least in accuracy results. Learners seem to correctly use the verb forms with predications whose intrinsic aspectual meaning most closely resembles the completion value of the

morphological marking of grammatical aspect. These findings highlight the level of complexity in the analysis of the distribution of verbal morphology in a L2.

Two reasons may help discern why the learning of Spanish aspect follow the paths described here:

- 1) In Dutch, the aspectual system only overtly marks predicational aspect;
- 2) The learner simply looks at the aspectual meaning of the predication in L2. It is here where the predicational aspect starts influencing the morphological choice.

The dilemma is: which one of the predicational aspects are the learners relating the forms of grammatical aspect: the predicational aspect in the L1, or the predicational aspect in L2? A reformulation of this question results in the next puzzle: what has an effect: the L1 aspectual system or simply predicational aspect? This particular study cannot illustrate which one of these two factors is more relevant to the acquisition of Spanish by Dutch learners, as they overlap. To ascribe this phenomenon to predicational aspect seems to be the easy way out. In a way, as an across-languages phenomenon, it also covers the idea that the L1 only marks predicational aspect and not grammatical aspect. Nevertheless, meaning is universal. Meanings of predications are the same, thus, it is not known whether predicational aspect in the L2 or predicational aspect in the L1 is the one to attribute this fact, as they are the same in both languages. However, it is particularly interesting to see that they perform in L2 in the way their L1 aspectual information would tell them to. Whether it is only coincidence, it needs to be further researched. This line of research would tackle the second language acquisition issue of whether there is an effect of a learner's native language on the acquisition of aspectual properties in a second language. A way to investigate this would be to compare languages that mark predicational aspect in different ways, and check whether their interlanguage production of grammatical aspect assembles the L1 or the target language's predicational aspect marking.

### 3.7. Conclusion

There are basically two main conclusions that can be drawn from this study. First of all, the use of verbal morphology is clearly influenced by predicational aspect and, secondly, pragmatic factors should also be taken into account for a proper optimal description of interlanguage distribution of past tense forms. As Bardovi-Harlig (1998: 335-336) says:

*“The influence of lexical aspect interacts with narrative structure, suggesting that the investigation of either one alone provides a partial picture of the interlanguage tense aspect use.”*

However, “the influence of lexical aspect” should be rephrased as “the influence of predicational aspect” since, as shown in this study, it provides a better theoretical description of the tenseless level of aspectual information, at least as a tool for a

description of second language acquisition aspectual phenomena. In essence, the use of the perfective is extended to all predications, which means that the perfective was used as the default marker of past tense. Thus, narrative structure influences the distribution of tense-aspect morphology in interlanguage. It consequently appears likely that two sorts of modifications are needed in order to transform other aspect acquisition theories into an efficient instrument to describe the data: first of all, the definition of aspect should be adapted, and secondly, some relevance should be given to discourse factors. On the one hand, giving predicational aspect the deserved right to classify aspectual information and, on the other hand, allowing pragmatic factors explain the perfective form as default marker of past tense would represent a viable way to develop a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of the processes behind the selection of past tense verbal morphology among L2 classroom learners, at least for Dutch L2 learners of Spanish.

## Chapter 4

### TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION ON ASPECT

#### 4.1. Introduction

There has been increasing research interest in the role of formal instruction in second language acquisition (SLA). Moreover, acquisition of tense/aspect morphology has been extensively studied in the L2 acquisition of Spanish. The present study focuses on the second language research issue of whether instruction directed at specific grammatical features results in their acquisition. In particular, the main concern of this paper is whether the teaching of grammatical aspect might contribute to its understanding and acquisition in a second language.

In spite of the fact that both Germanic and Romance language speakers have a mental concept for (im)perfectivity, the obligatory expression in the verbal morphology constitutes one of the biggest problems in the acquisition of the Spanish language. More specifically, in Germanic languages, this opposition is not grammaticalized. In Spanish, the simple past tense forms are aspectually marked through inflection. In Germanic languages, this concept remains unexpressed, the aspectual relations being understood thanks to the context in which they are produced.

It has been shown that English L2 learners of Spanish approach the L2 system by linking aspectual marking and lexical meaning (Andersen 1991)<sup>1</sup>. Spanish grammatical aspect marking (that is, the two simple past tense forms) is initially interpreted as a redundant marker of inherent aspect (the intrinsic meaning of the verb). This means that the inherent aspectual information of the verb (whether it refers to a state, or an activity, etc.) seems to be taken by L2 learners of Spanish as the information they need to produce sentences with past tense morphemes. An established classification of verb meanings according to their inherent aspectual information is Vendler (1957)'s verb classes: states, activities, accomplishments and achievements:

- (1) Rick wanted a book (state: no dynamics)
- (2) Rick walked (activity: duration and homogeneity)
- (3) Rick walked a mile (accomplishment: duration with an inherent end point)
- (4) Rick discovered a treasure (achievement: single point in time)

This verbal information is understood as the aspectual clue the learner has to follow to use the two simple past tenses in Spanish. This is given as the reason why L2 learners of Spanish with English as L1 seem to have problems when acquiring the

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the notions of lexical aspect or inherent aspectual information of the verb are misleading. A proper aspectual theory is described in section "Theory on aspect". This nomenclature is included here as they are the terms used to describe the Aspect Hypothesis.

Spanish aspectual system (Andersen 1991). Andersen postulates the Aspect Hypothesis, which makes the following claims<sup>2</sup>:

1. Perfective forms are first used with achievements, then with accomplishments, spreading later to activities and, finally, states.
2. Imperfective forms appear later than perfective forms and they appear first with states, spreading later to activities, accomplishments and, finally, achievements.

Several studies have found evidence for Andersen's Aspect Hypothesis (Hasbún 1995, Bergström 1995, Cadierno 2000, Bardovi-Harlig 1998, among others). The data presented in these studies seem to follow the pattern established by Andersen in order to describe the acquisitional development of the two past tenses in Spanish. For a summary of relevant studies, see Bardovi-Harlig (2000) or González & Verkuyl (2002). It is likely that these results can be generalised to other Germanic languages as they share the same aspectual system, where predicational aspect plays an active role in a sentence with a simple past verb form but grammatical aspect does not, because it is not overtly marked (for discussion, see Borik & González 2001). Besides, there have been a number of studies where their analysis of data also proves that Dutch learners of Spanish encounter the same problems postulated by the Aspect Hypothesis: García & van Putte (1988) and Martínez Baztán (1994). The former study shows that Dutch learners of Spanish rely on the "*lexical meaning of the verb*" (García & van Putte 1988: 277) to produce verbal morphology, that is, the meaning of the verb (whether it is a state, an activity, an accomplishment or an achievement) seems to influence the choice of past tenses the Dutch learners of Spanish make. Martínez Baztán concludes that a certain influence on the acquisition order of the aspectual system described by Andersen can be demonstrated by the data of his Dutch students. Taking into account the results of these two studies, we may conclude that the acquisition of Spanish past tenses by Dutch learners is also a complicated process, where the learner relies on the information conveyed by the predicational aspect to choose one of the two simple past verbal forms in Spanish.

From a cross-linguistic analysis between a Germanic language and a Romance language, it can be deduced that grammatical features involved in the aspectual composition of a language do not necessarily match with those used with another language. Such differences may be the cause of the difficulties in acquiring the aspectual system of a language, with a different system than that of the learner's L1. If the source of the difficulty is found in the differences between aspectual systems, pointing them out may be an instructional solution.

#### **4.2. Instruction on grammatical items**

The main concern in previous research on the role of formal instruction in SLA is whether instruction makes a difference in the acquisition of a L2. Ellis (1997)

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<sup>2</sup> The AH makes two more claims which will not be included as they are not considered to be relevant for the purposes of this paper.

addresses a number of problems on the teaching and learning of grammatical items in a second language. Ellis agrees with the Weak Interface Hypothesis: the kind of explicit knowledge which typically results from formal grammar instruction can convert, through practice, into the kind of implicit knowledge that is required for use in communication.

To be able to prove whether explicit knowledge can be converted in implicit knowledge, one has to predict that the proficiency level of the learner improves after instruction. There have been a number of empirical studies that demonstrate that learners who receive instruction outperform those who do not, both with respect to the rate of acquisition and ultimate level of achievement (Long 1983, 1988, Ellis 1985, 1990, among many others). The instruction these learners received entailed grammar teaching; which led them to conclude that teaching grammar to learners contributes to their linguistic development.

After reviewing literature on the effect of explicit instruction on L2 acquisition, de Graaff (1997:19) concludes:

*“fluent performance is based upon implicit knowledge; the acquisition of implicit knowledge is hypothesized to require detection (Tomlin & Villa 1994), or awareness at the level of noticing (Schmidt 1990). Detection or noticing can be facilitated by explicit knowledge, causing more input to be converted into intake. Explicit knowledge about language, then, does not convert into implicit knowledge of language but facilitates the acquisition of implicit knowledge by enhancement of noticing.”*

It seems right to state at this point that grammar teaching can work if explicit knowledge is transferred to implicit knowledge. What needs to be found out now, is which sort of grammar teaching works and what is the role of the learner in the second language classroom. As aspect is a grammatical phenomenon, its explicit teaching might be worthwhile; the rate of acquisition might be accelerated and student errors might be circumvented, but only if its teaching aims at converting grammar instruction into implicit knowledge.

However, not every grammatical program will work. We need to elaborate on some criteria to develop a possible successful instruction. On the basis of the research on the effects of form-focused instruction on accuracy, there is enough evidence to show that form-focused instruction can result in definite gains in accuracy. By form focus instruction, we refer to the attempt to focus learners' attention on specific linguistic features in the input and the meanings they realize.

A successful instruction on aspect needs to fulfil three criteria:

First of all, in indirect explicit grammar teaching, learners are provided with data illustrating the use of a particular grammatical structure, which they analyse in order to arrive at some generalization that accounts for regularities in the data. For the learner to arrive at some generalization, the task has to call for some logical reasoning. By eliciting a correct response or rule from a learner, achieved through logical reasoning, we will be promoting active learning. This will be our first

criterion: the learning techniques used in the experiment must promote active learning, that is, the learner is required to process the new information by solving problems, answering questions, formulating questions of their own, discussing, or explaining during class.

Secondly, the techniques used must be, not only attention focusing, but also compatible with the way learners learn. To make the learner the focus of the instruction and not the grammatical item, we first need to know which processes will be more appropriate to learn any new information (Ausubel 1968, Slagter 2000). It is stipulated that what is to be learnt must be first linked in some meaningful way to the “already known” (the Principle of Learning). This will be our second criterion: linking the already known to the unknown. What the Dutch L2 learners of Spanish already implicitly know about aspectual systems is how it works in their own language. Making them aware of the principles of the Dutch aspectual system, which they automatically use correctly, serves as the already known, and can therefore be linked to the unknown Spanish aspectual system. This can be achieved by first making the learners aware of the similarities between the two aspectual systems and then finishing with the full Spanish aspectual system, which covers both the aspectual information that overlaps with the Dutch aspectual system and the Spanish grammatical aspectual information, which does not have a counterpart in the Dutch system.

The third criterion is to develop an adequate theory on aspect. There are two main reasons that compel us to carry out a cross-linguistic analysis of the phenomenon ‘aspect’. The first reason is methodological. To have a clear picture about what the learner already knows (Criterion 2), we need to understand how the aspectual system of the first language works. Only then can we relate it to the aspectual system of the second language. The second reason is theoretically oriented. Previous studies on the acquisition of aspect have taken Vendler’s verb classes as point of departure. Verkuyl (1993, 1997) shows that the verb on its own does not contain all the aspectual information; to find it, one needs to look into the combination of the verb and its arguments; therefore, into the whole predication. A description of this theoretical framework is therefore needed. Our third criterion is thus to create a theory on aspect, which can provide a descriptive explanation for the Dutch and Spanish aspectual systems, with both their similarities and differences. An indication of their shared characteristics and their intrinsic qualities will exhibit an overview of, not only what the learner is dealing with for the first time, but also of what the learner already implicitly, through his/her L1, knows.

An interesting issue emerges when studying the acquisition and learning of the two past tenses in Spanish by learners with a Germanic mother language (that is, the learning of grammatical aspect by learners with an L1 which does not overtly mark it, therefore they do not implicitly know their meaning and uses). Is it the form or is it the meaning what needs to be learned? Is there a correlation between the two? Can form be learned independently from meaning and/or the other way around? In her study on the development of tense/aspect morphology in English, Bardovi-Harlig (1992) suggests that the development of form precedes appropriate use. Learners provide morphological markers, but sometimes in incorrect contexts. That is, fully

grammatical forms emerge and are used by the learners before they carry target-like meaning. Montrul and Slabakova (2002) set out to investigate whether there was a connection between the acquisition of the morphological markers and their meanings. They concluded that, with instructed learners, the acquisition and use of past tense morphology preceded the acquisition of the semantic properties associated with these past tenses. If, after all, the ultimate goal of foreign language learning stretches far beyond the learning of linguistic features, aiming for a communicative function, our goal in this study is to investigate whether the learner can acquire the target-like meaning of the past tense forms in Spanish, and whether the learner can use it accurately.

The European Science Foundation (ESF) carried out a number of studies including target languages such as English, Dutch, French, German and Swedish. Dietrich et al. (1995) conducted different studies with learners of each of the five target languages. Some of the learners received instruction; some did not. This allows for comparison between instructed and uninstructed learners. One of the key findings is that instruction on its own is not responsible for success, rather it is a form of access to the target grammatical phenomenon; and as such, it has a positive effect on its acquisition.

#### 4.3. Theory on aspect

Predicational aspect and grammatical aspect are two closely related but different notions in the realm of aspectual systems. Both may occur in any language overtly or covertly. A brief definition of both aspects will now follow.

Predicational aspect is determined by the compositionality of the verb and its arguments (Verkuyl 1993). The lexical semantic information given by the verb combines with structural information from the verbal arguments to express whether the situation expressed by the clause has, or lacks, a natural inherent end point (terminative versus durative clauses). Grammatical aspect is a verbal morphological category referring to the semantic opposition between perfective and imperfective aspectual past tenses. The use of the perfective form is an instruction to take the situation as a completed, closed entity, often putting an emphasis on its beginning or end; in contrast, the imperfective form presents the situation as ongoing in either an episodic or a habitual sense. Examples of both types of aspectual coding are given in the Dutch and Spanish sentences presented below.

Spanish and Dutch have two different aspectual systems. Not only do they differ in their aspectual systems but also in their aspectual encoding. While Spanish formally expresses both predicational and grammatical aspect, Dutch does not have the means to overtly mark an im/perfective distinction.

- |     |  |                  |
|-----|--|------------------|
| (5) | Laura dronk een cola<br>'Laura drank a coke' | PAST TERMINATIVE |
| (6) | Laura dronk cola's<br>'Laura drank cokes'    | PAST DURATIVE    |

Sentence (5) expresses an end point while sentence (6) does not. However, there is no information about whether the situation is to be viewed as completed or ongoing.

The two grammatical aspect markers in Spanish combine with both durative and terminative sentences, giving way to 4 different combinations:

- (7) Laura *bebió* una Coca-Cola PAST PERFECTIVE TERMINATIVE  
'Laura drank a Coca-Cola'
- (8) Laura *bebía* una Coca-Cola PAST IMPERFECTIVE TERMINATIVE  
'Laura drank a Coca-Cola'
- (9) Laura *bebió* Coca-Colas PAST PERFECTIVE DURATIVE  
'Laura drank Coca-Colas'
- (10) Laura *bebía* Coca-Colas PAST IMPERFECTIVE DURATIVE  
'Laura drank Coca-Colas'

Sentence (7) contains a terminative predication, which conveys that the eventuality ['drink a coke'] reaches an end point; and a perfective marker on the verb, which presents the situation as closed off, as completed. Sentence (8) contains the same terminative predication but the imperfective morphology tells us that the situation is to be understood as ongoing in either an episodic, progressive or habitual sense (depending on the context in which the sentence is produced). Sentences (9) and (10) contain a durative predication ['drink cokes'], which is not bounded, that is, it does not reach an endpoint on its own. Nevertheless, this predication can be presented in two ways, with perfective marking (9) or imperfective marking (10). The same happens to examples (7) and (8), the former presents the predication in a completed closed off temporal domain; the latter in an uncompleted, open period.

What Dutch and Spanish share, therefore, is the marking of predicational aspect. This shared characteristic is crucial for our educational purposes. At the instruction, the predicational aspect distinction in Dutch will be introduced first ("the already known"). The learners will have to become conscious of how the Dutch aspect system works. The second part of the instruction will contain the same sentences they received in the Dutch predicational aspect instruction but this time in Spanish. The idea is that their intuitions for their first language can be applied in the Spanish sentences, since the predicational aspect in Spanish works the same way as it does in Dutch. Here it is expected that the learners will apply the "already known" to the unknown, that is, the rules they created for the Dutch sentences can be recycled and used for the Spanish sentences. Only when it is clear that the students know that their intuitions for Dutch can be used for Spanish, then the distinction perfective/imperfective will be shown, giving extra emphasis on the role of the context, since it decides, in most cases, which aspectual form the verb needs to take (González & Verkuyl 2003). A meticulous description of the instruction is given in section 4.4.2.

Although this study may suggest an L1-driven SLA theory, the purpose is not to make any commitment to any particular SLA theory. Moreover, the learning process of these students is manipulated (following the Weak Interface Hypothesis) and therefore the results may be polluted, becoming less appealing for an L2 acquisition

theory. This paper will aim at showing that grammatical instruction on aspect focusing on active learning, with attention focusing techniques and a primary focus on the “already known” improves significantly the accuracy of Spanish simple past form choices and uses of the Dutch L2 learner.

#### **4.4. Method**

##### **4.4.1. Two studies**

Two parallel studies were carried out, the first one with an intermediate group, the second one with a beginners group. The instruction and design of the study were nearly the same for both groups (some differences will be dealt with later on). The same teacher gave the instruction to both classes. The teacher was also the researcher.

Respondents in the intermediate study (N=20) participated in a Spanish course at the intermediate level given at the University College in Utrecht. Results from three students are not analysed because their mother tongue is not Dutch. Most of the students were 19 years old. All had successfully followed the same beginner’s course in Spanish a year earlier. This had been their only formal access to the Spanish language up to this point.

Respondents in the beginner study (N=20) participated in a Spanish course at the beginners level given at the University College in Utrecht. Results from seven students were not analysed because their mother tongue was, again, not Dutch. Most of the students were 18 years old. None of them had had any contact to Spanish prior to this course.

##### **4.4.2. Course**

Ellis (1997) gives a clear overview of different sorts of instruction methods. To avoid terminological confusion, we will stick to his terms and define the instruction practised in this study as being of indirect explicit grammar instruction type. It belongs to the feature focused type of instruction (together with implicit grammar instruction). It distinguishes itself from instruction that focuses on communication. Both types of focusing belong to the learner-performance option of teaching grammar. Indirect explicit grammar instruction makes use of rule search conditions. The students are not given a grammatical rule but are asked to come up with one. This can be achieved by making use of input oriented implicit grammar instruction, in particular presenting examples from an input enhancement interpretation task: the learner is exposed to multiple exemplars of the target structure. The instructor increases the prominence of the target structure in the input by setting some task that requires learners to attend to the structure (e.g. asking questions that will lead the learners to pay careful attention to the structure).

Every week a subgroup of two or three students received the extra instruction on the use of the two past tenses in Spanish. The average instruction took around 1 hour and 30 minutes. Each student received the instruction only once.

The experimental instruction included a list of sentences with which the learners were provided with data illustrating how predicational aspect works in their L1 (Dutch) and in the L2 (Spanish) as well as a list of sentences showing how grammatical aspect in the L2 (Spanish) works (see Appendix II). Input oriented implicit grammar instruction can be achieved when the learner is exposed to multiple exemplars of the target structure. This is basically what the actual teaching practice does, as it presents a large number of sentences with both Spanish past tenses.

The instruction on aspect in Spanish was divided in two main parts, (a) the predicational instruction and (b) the grammatical instruction. Each part of the instruction consisted of a number of pages in which a couple of sentences were given to attract the students' attention to a specific aspectual value. After each part of the instruction, the students were asked to outline and summarise the main points covered in the particular section.

The predicational aspect distinction was introduced first becoming the "already known". The first half of this instruction referred to their L1 (Dutch) (Appendix II, pages 1 to 6). Only when they understood and recognised predicational aspect in Dutch sentences, the distinction in Spanish was shown. This part of the instruction involved a recognition task first.

At the end of the Dutch predicational instruction, the students were asked to construct rules summarising the grammaticality and ungrammaticality of the Dutch sentences. The Dutch examples allowed the students to create the following tests:

- A    "*in een uur*" + quantifier = grammatical  
       (in an/one hour)  
       (11)     Laura heeft in 1 uur 3 appels gegeten  
               'Laura ate 3 apples in one hour'
- B    "*de hele dag*" + quantifier = ungrammatical  
       (the whole day)  
       (12)     \*Laura heeft de hele dag 3 appels gegeten  
               'Laura ate 3 apples the whole day'
- C    "*in een uur*" – quantifier = ungrammatical  
       (in an/one hour)  
       (13)     \*Laura heeft in 1 uur appels gegeten  
               'Laura ate apples in one hour'
- D    "*de hele dag*" – quantifier = grammatical  
       (the whole day)  
       (14)     Laura heeft de hele dag appels gegeten  
               'Laura ate apples the whole day'

The only theoretical addition during the instruction was to state that sentences that fit into case (A) were those with an inherent endpoint, whereas those sentences that would fit into case (D) were those lacking an endpoint. This was the most direct

explicit part of the instruction on predicational aspect, where (meta)linguistic information was included.

The second part of the instruction contained the same sentences they received in the Dutch predicational instruction but this time in Spanish (Appendix II, pages 6 to 11). The idea was that their intuitions for their first language could be applied in the Spanish sentences. This constituted the applying the already known to the unknown part. At the end of the second part (Appendix II, page 11), four new pairs of sentences were added, which had not been included in the Dutch predicational aspect instruction. The reason for this extra page in the instruction was to see whether the students could abstract rules from the Spanish sentences that had been already presented in Dutch and apply this same rule to brand new examples. Producing the same rules for Spanish as they did for Dutch is evidence that they now know that predicational aspect works the same way in both languages.

The third and last part of the instruction added information to the knowledge the students already had of the two simple pasts in Spanish. They had to verbalise what they knew about the two simple pasts in Spanish. Only then were they given further theoretical information (again, metalinguistic information, therefore, direct explicit instruction):

- A Perfective form: 1 action in the past
  - (15) El viernes jugué al baloncesto  
'On Friday I played basketball'
- B Imperfective form: more than 1 action in the past = habituality
  - (16) Cada viernes jugábamos al baloncesto  
'Every Friday we used to play basketball'  
Situation = progressive meaning, episodicity
  - (17) El viernes, cuando jugábamos al baloncesto, me torcí el tobillo  
'Last Friday, when we were playing basketball, I tore my ankle'

A number of sentences attempting to focus the learner's attention on the differences in meaning were presented (Appendix II, pages 12 to 18). During this part of the instruction extra emphasis was put on the non-influential role of predicational aspect and on the indispensability of context, since it decides, in most cases, which aspectual form the verb needs to take. This section of the instruction included sentences such as (18):

- (18) Mis padres paseaban por las Ramblas cada tarde  
'My parents walked along las Ramblas every evening'

Table 1 summarises what needs to come across thanks to the instruction. It was given at the end of every session:

*Table 1 Summary of the experimental instruction on aspect*

Sentence	Verb form	Endpoint	Grammatical?
1	Perfective	Yes	Yes
2	Perfective	No	Yes
3	Imperfective	Yes	Yes
14	Imperfective	No	Yes

The idea behind this instruction is, therefore, that of the weak interface hypothesis: explicit knowledge can indirectly promote the acquisition of implicit knowledge. The extent of explicitness may vary in the three instruction steps. At the beginning of the instruction, attention is given to the implicit knowledge of the learner about the aspectual system of their L1, that is, the Dutch predicational aspect, and they are made aware of the existence of such a system by eliciting the students to use their native intuitions. The second part of the instruction makes use of the awareness the learner now has about the functioning of the aspectual system in their L1 and calls for an application of such awareness in the L2. The L1 is used as a step to focus attention to the grammatical feature at hand. The third part gives explicit attention to, firstly, the forms of the two past tenses in Spanish, secondly, the non-decisive nature of the aspectual information of the predication, and thirdly, the importance of context in order to make the right choice.

There are several differences between the instruction given to the intermediate group and the instruction given to the beginners group. These differences need to be outlined in order to understand the results. First of all, the study with the intermediate course took place in spring of 2000; the study with the beginners took place in spring of 2001. Secondly, although both groups were taking courses at the University College in Utrecht, each of them had their own regular teacher. The Spanish teacher giving the intermediate course at the University College gave as little attention as possible to the aspectual phenomenon in Spanish; however, just before the experiment began, the beginners group received a more traditional lesson on the two past tenses in Spanish, so that they would get acquainted with the morphological markings and could fill in the pre-test. This was not necessary for the intermediate group, as they had received an extra semester of instruction; and were, therefore, already familiarised with the two forms of the past tenses in Spanish. As a consequence, there was a small but significant difference in the form of the instructions. While the intermediate group is expected to already have acquired the morphological markers of past tense (in the previous course), this does not hold for the beginners group. As already mentioned, this group received an extra lesson on the forms of the two past tenses; but they were not expected to have successfully acquired all the forms. This is why the instruction for the beginners group included an extra page that was handed out to each student so they could see the complete conjugation of both simple past tenses in Spanish, with simple default examples of their use (see Appendix III). This extra page was given right before the instruction

on grammatical aspect in Spanish, that is, before the third part of the experimental instruction.

#### 4.4.3. Data Collection and Design of the Study

The total of weeks that the intermediate level needed to receive the experimental instruction was eight weeks; the beginners' group needed seven (as there were less students attending the regular beginners' course at the University College). All students took standardised tests at three occasions: at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the course. Furthermore, students were required to write a composition each week. Every week during the experiment each student, in groups of two to four, participated once in the experimental instruction on aspect.

In the first week, before the experimental course on aspect, students took a pre-test on their knowledge about the two past tenses in Spanish (past perfective and past imperfective). To avoid memory effects, students took a parallel test of the pre-test after 4 weeks. At the end of the course, every student had received the experimental instruction and all participated in a final test. This post-test was a replica of the pre-test.

The second test allowed us to compare the results of those students who had received the experimental instruction with the results of the students who had not received the instruction. At this moment half of the students formed the experimental group, and the other half served as a control group. But this design allows for more comparisons. It is expected that the students who received instruction will show a gain in the correct use of either perfective or imperfective verb forms. Therefore, a gain in scores between the pre-test and the mid-test is to be expected for the students who received instruction between these two tests. The students who did not receive instruction will not show a gain in results. They will show a gain in scores in the second half of the experiment when they will have received their instruction. This means that the last test allowed us to compare the results of the second group in both the first and second test with their results in the last test.

All students were randomly assigned to either one of the two groups. The first group received an instruction in the first half of the experiment whereas the second group received the same instruction in the second half of the course. Simply put, before the mid-test, half of the students form the experimental group; the other half is the control group. At the second half of the regular course, the instruction is given to those students who until now belong to the control group.

The intricacy of the design was caused by the fact that having one control group and one experimental group would mean that the control group would not profit from the experimental instruction. The University College in Utrecht did not consider this appropriate. This complication forced us to develop a design that was ultimately very useful and efficient for our purposes: not only could we assess differences in performance between the two groups (at the second measurement occasion) but also we could assess a developmental pattern within each learner's acquisition path.

In addition, every week each student wrote a 100 word essay on different topics. These compositions allow a comparison of verb use of students who have and who have not received the experimental instruction. Ideally, the students who received instruction would outperform those who had not received the instruction yet. These data were collected weekly and at the end of the experiment both conditions were compared. Note, however, that the control group and the experimental group were not fixed. The number of students in the experimental group gradually increased each week while, inversely, the control group membership decreased. At the beginning of the experiment, all subjects were part of the control group, by the end of the experiment, they all had moved to the experimental group.

#### 4.4.4. Instruments

As mentioned in the previous section, two types of measurement resulted from the two methods of data collection: (I) two standardised tests and, (II) weekly compositions.

##### 4.4.4.1. Standardised tests

The standardised tests were of two types: a multiple-choice test and a fill-in-the-blanks test. In the pre-test and in the post-test, both types of standardised tests were taken (see Appendix IV). In the middle-test the students only took the multiple-choice exercise (see Appendix V). The multiple-choice exercise included 11 sentences. The filling the blanks exercise consisted of two paragraphs with 15 total blanks. The multiple-choice items were presented in the following way:

- (19) Antes la vida fue (PERFECTIVE) / era (IMPERFECTIVE) más barata  
'In the past life was cheaper'
- (20) Aquella noche me acosté (PERFECTIVE) / acostaba (IMPERFECTIVE) a las ocho  
'That night I went to bed at eight'
- (21) Clara e Iñaki se casaron (PERFECTIVE) / casaban (IMPERFECTIVE) por la iglesia  
'Clara and Iñaki got married in church'

For each item, students had three choices, of which only one was correct:

- A. The imperfective form;
- B. The perfective form;
- C. Both forms are possible.

The fill-in-the-blanks exercise included two short stories for the intermediate group and one story for the beginners group. It was expected that the beginners would take more time to fill in the test; therefore, less blanks were given, which resulted in one story less. The stories contained blanks wherever a simple past tense was needed.

The students were given the infinitive form of the verb and they had to fill the blank in with the right verbal form, that is, either the perfective or the imperfective form.

- (22) Ayer \_\_\_\_\_ (pasar) un rato en el café donde Nuria \_\_\_\_\_ (tomar) el desayuno todos los domingos. \_\_\_\_\_ (estar) muy animado. (...)  
 ‘Yesterday (to spend) a while in the café where Nuria (to have) breakfast every Sunday. (To be) very busy.’

Using these two types of tests allowed us to see whether there was a difference in accuracy between results collected when students were only asked to name the form of the verb that they thought was correct and when students were asked to give the morphological form.

The standardised tests were tested in a pilot study to construct parallel versions for the multiple-choice tests (see Table 2). Parallel versions of the same test are needed in order to make sure that exactly the same phenomenon is being tested in both tests. To be able to construct parallel versions, the mean, standard deviation and reliability of both versions have to be (almost) equal. This is of course a necessary condition for parallel tests. The reliability –as estimated by a random matched sub-test procedure (Gullikson 1950)- of the multiple-choice tests equals 0.88 in both tests, and for the two fill-in-the-blanks exercise the reliability was estimated as 0.79 and 0.86 respectively. Furthermore, the scores show that the tests are neither too difficult nor too easy for both proficiency levels, as the pilot was carried out with both beginners and intermediate students. Thus, we have assessed that all the differences between occasions are not attributable to the differences between the (parallel) forms of both multiple-choice tests.

*Table 2 Results of pilot of multiple choice and fill-in- the-blanks tests (M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; Ni: Number of Items; MIN: Lowest Observed Score; MAX: Highest Observed Score; Ns: Number of Students;  $\alpha$ : Coefficient Alpha)*

		M	SD	Ni	MIN	MAX	Ns	$\alpha$
Multiple choice	Version A	6.51	2.12	11	1	11	35	0.88
Multiple choice	Version B	6.94	2.48	11	1	11	35	0.88
Fill-in-the-blanks	Story A	4.83	1.82	7	0	7	35	0.79
Fill-in-the-blanks	Story B	3.71	2.84	8	0	7	35	0.86

#### 4.4.4.2. Compositions

The topics of the compositions were chosen following two criteria. First, the topic had to be related to the past, so the students would be forced to use both past tenses in Spanish. Second, the topics had to be of general interest, so the students would be motivated to write the stories (see Appendix VI for a list of all compositions). The aim of this exercise was to make an analysis of the use of forms made by the learners according to their aspectual function. Some topics' examples are:

1. Describe your best party ever
2. Describe your first childhood memory

As it has already been mentioned, the experimental instruction was first given to the intermediate group. While analysing the data from this group, we discovered that one topic of composition was not as reliable for our purposes as the rest. The topic in particular was “describe your worst nightmare”. Since the use of past tense when describing a dream falls under secondary marked uses of the past tenses, we decided to remove this topic from the list of composition titles of the beginners’ group. Special attention to this fact is given in the discussion section.

The following variables were taken into account when correcting the compositions:

1. Number of perfective forms used in the proper way out of all the verbs used with perfective forms.
2. Number of imperfective forms used in the proper way out of all the verbs used with imperfective forms.
3. Number of other verbal forms that should have been either a perfective or an imperfective form.

Two independent correctors graded nine out of the 136 compositions of the intermediate group. The correction focused on the use and misuse of the two past tenses in Spanish. The proportion of agreement was high (94.1%); and the proportion corrected by chance (Cohen’s Kappa) was 0.91 ( $se=0.028$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The rest of the compositions were graded by the main corrector.

#### **4.5. Results**

This section includes a presentation of findings in the standardised tests and in the compositions of both proficiency groups.

##### **4.5.1. Standardised tests**

###### **4.5.1.1. Intermediate group**

In Table 3, the scores of the intermediate group on the standardised tests are presented per measurement occasion. The data are analysed by means of a regression analysis<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Let  $Y_{ij}$  be the score of student  $j$  at occasion  $i$ . Furthermore,  $G1_{ij}$  and  $G2_{ij}$  are dummy variables that indicate whether a student belongs to the 1st or the 2nd group. That is,  $G1_{ij}$  is turned on (equals 1) if a student belongs to the first group and turned off (equals 0) if a student belongs to the second group. The second dummy variable is coded the other way around. The next three dummy variables are defined to distinguish between the three measurement occasions (pre-, middle- and post-tests). Together these dummy-variables define all six combinations of Group and Measurement occasion. Hence, in the model for all combinations of group and measurement and occasion a mean score can be estimated. The difference between these means can be tested by means of a contrast comparison (Goldstein 1979), which yields a chi-square distributed testing statistic.

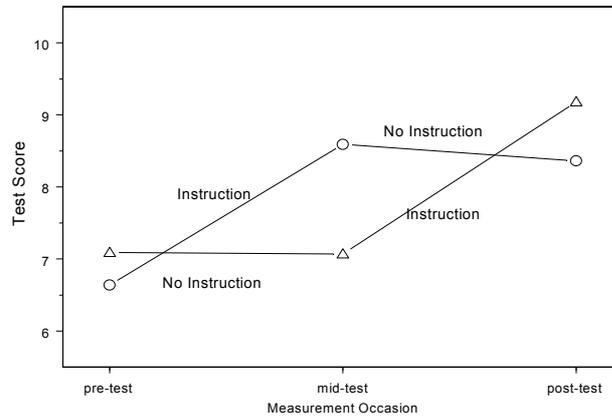
Table 3 *Results on the standardised tests (se: standard error of estimate) for intermediate students*

Test	Group	Pre-test		Middle-test		Post-test	
		Mean	se	Mean	se	Mean	se
Multiple Choice	1 <sup>st</sup>	6.64	0.59	8.59	0.59	8.36	0.62
Multiple Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup>	7.09	0.56	7.07	0.56	9.18	0.62
Fill in the blanks		9.83	0.54	-	-	11.36	0.59

In the pre-test the means of both (randomised) groups (6.64 vs. 7.09) for the multiple choice test do not differ ( $\chi^2=3.19$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.074$ ). For the first group the mean score on the pre-test (6.64) is lower than either the mean score on the middle-test (8.59) or the post-test ( $\chi^2=7.57$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.006$ ). This corresponds with an effect size of 0.64 (Cohen 1977). The difference between the latter two means for this group (8.59 vs. 8.36) is non-significant. Only a gain in scores can be shown after participation in the experimental instruction.

These effects are graphically illustrated in Figure 1. The round sign stands for the results of the first group, the triangle stands for the results of the second group.

Figure 1 *Effect of instruction on standardised tests for the intermediate group*



For the second group only the mean on the multiple choice post-test (9.18) is significantly higher than either the mean of the pre-test (7.09) or the middle test (7.07) ( $\chi^2=8.97$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), effect size 0.88. The latter two mean scores of

course do not differ significantly. Also, for the second group only after the experimental course a gain in scores can be shown (see Figure 1).

On the middle test there is a difference in mean scores between the students who have received the experimental instruction (8.59) and those who have not (7.07;  $\chi^2=3.52$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.03$ ), effect size 0.88. The former clearly outperformed the latter on the multiple-choice test.

For the second standardised test, 'fill-in-the-blanks', there is a significant difference between pre-test (9.83) and post-test scores (11.36), ( $\chi^2=4.09$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). After instruction in the experimental course the scores are higher than before.

We conclude that in both standardised tests, the students in the intermediate level who received the experimental instruction outperformed those students who had not received the instruction yet. The scores of each student were significantly higher after receiving the instruction than before.

#### 4.5.1.2. Beginners' group

In the pre-test the means of both (randomised) groups (6.75 vs. 6.6) of the beginner's course for the multiple choice test do not differ ( $\chi^2=1.38$ ;  $df=1$ , ns).

For the first group, the mean score on the pre-test (6.75) is lower than either the mean score on the middle-test (8.87) or the post-test (8.62) ( $\chi^2=10.2$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.001$ ). The difference between the latter two means for this group (8.87 vs. 8.62) is non-significant. Only a gain in scores can be shown after participation in the experimental instruction.

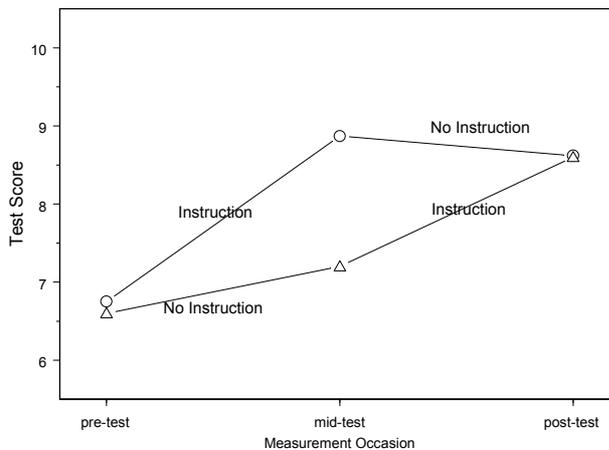
For the second group, only the mean on the multiple choice post-test (8.6) is significantly higher than either the mean of the pre-test (6.6) or the middle test (7.2) ( $\chi^2=7.48$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.006$ ). The latter two mean scores, as expected, do not differ significantly. Also, for the second group, only after the experimental course a gain in scores can be shown. On the middle test there is a difference in mean scores between the students who have received the experimental instruction (8.87) and those who have not (7.2) ( $\chi^2=2.68$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.05$ ). The former clearly outperformed the latter on the multiple-choice test. These results are exemplified in Table 4.

Table 4 Results on the standardised tests (se: standard error of estimate) for beginners

Test	Group	Pre-test		Middle-test		Post-test	
		Mean	se	Mean	se	Mean	se
Multiple Choice	1 <sup>st</sup>	6.75	0.53	8.87	0.53	8.62	0.53
Multiple Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup>	6.6	0.67	7.2	0.67	8.6	0.67
Fill-in-the-blanks		4.87	0.48	-	-	5.4	0.32

Figure 2 shows the gain in accuracy of both groups after receiving the experimental instruction. The round symbol represents the results of the first group to receive the experimental instruction; the triangle stands for the results of the second group.

Figure 2 *Effect of instruction on standardised tests for beginners*



For the second standardised test, 'fill-in-the-blanks', there is not a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ( $\chi^2=1.74$ ;  $df=1$ ; ns). However, by analysing the groups separately, we see that after instruction in the experimental course the scores of the group that received the instruction at the first half of the course are higher than before, and the difference is significant ( $\chi^2=2.77$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.04$  one-sided). The difference in results of the second group is obviously not significant ( $\chi^2=0.007$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=0.39$ ).

We conclude that for the intermediate group, in both standardised tests, those students who received the experimental instruction outperformed those students who had not received the instruction yet. The scores of each student were higher after receiving the instruction than before. On the other hand, for the beginners group, only in the multiple-choice exercise, those students who received the experimental instruction outperformed those who had not. There are no significant results for the answers of the second group to the fill-in-the-blanks exercise of the beginners' group.

### 4.5.2. Compositions

To assess differences in verb use in the essays of those who followed the experimental instruction and those who did not, several logit models were specified. In such a model the (logit<sup>4</sup> of the) proportion (Fienberg 1980) correctly used verbs is analysed as a function of the dimensions of a cross table (in this case: 'week', and 'instruction'). In this study, four models are necessary. In the first model, the 'no-effect model', it is assumed that neither an effect of week --or topic of the essay, for that matter-- or the experimental instruction can be assessed. In the second model, it is assumed that only differences between weeks or topics can be shown. Week of instruction and/or topic of composition are indistinguishable, since as the weeks went on, the topics of compositions changed. This model will be called the 'week model', but it needs to be kept in mind that it is actually week + topic what is being assessed with it. In the third model, an effect of instruction is added. This model is indicated with the term 'instruction-effect model'. In this model, it is assumed that the effect of instruction is equal in all weeks of the study. In the fourth and last model, the 'week X instruction model', this assumption is relaxed, and the effect of instruction is allowed to vary between weeks (or topics, for that matter).

Before the model parameters can be interpreted, we need to know which of the four models fits the data best for each proficiency group. That is, which of the models describes the observed (logits of the) proportions adequately and is most parsimonious (with the minimum number of parameters).

#### 4.5.2.1. Intermediate group

1706 predications written by the intermediate students are hereby statistically described. The rest of the predications written (a total of 2171) were not located in one of the two past tenses we are interested in (perfective versus imperfective), but they were located either in the present, in the present perfect or the form was unrecognisable.

In Table 5, the fit of each model for both perfective and imperfective verb use is presented. As the models are nested, the increase in fit can be tested by means of the differences in  $\chi^2$  (with the corresponding difference in degrees of freedom). Thus, the fit of the models can be compared.

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<sup>4</sup> remember  $\text{logit}(p) = \ln [p / (1-p)] = \ln [F / (N-F)]$ , where p stands for proportion, F for the observed frequency of the phenomenon and N for the total number of observations respectively.

Table 5 *Fit of four models to describe the use of the perfective and imperfective form in the compositions for the intermediate students*

Model	Model Fit			Comparison			
	$\chi^2$	df	P		$\chi^2$	df	P
<b>Perfective</b>							
(A) No effect	77.41	13	<0.001	A vs. B	55.67	6	<0.001
(B) Week	21.73	7	0.003	B vs. C	15.93	1	<0.001
(C) Instruction	5.799	6	0.448	C vs. D	5.799	6	0.448
(D) Week-instruction	0.000	0	1.00				
<b>Imperfective</b>							
(A) No effect	68.145	13	<0.001	A vs. B	44.823	6	<0.001
(B) Week	23.322	7	0.001	B vs. C	13.955	1	<0.001
(C) Instruction	9.367	6	0.15	C vs. D	9.367	6	0.15
(D) Week-instruction	0.0000	0	1.00				

Table 5 shows that for the perfective, the model A, the 'no-effect model', does not provide a good description of the data ( $\chi^2=77.41$ ,  $df=13$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The 'week model' fits the data better than the 'no-effect model'; it gives a significantly better description of the observed data ( $\chi^2=55.67$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). However, this description is still not accurate enough since the discrepancy between the observations and the expected frequencies is still significant ( $p<0.001$ ). The 'instruction-effect model' fits the data best ( $p=0.448$ ). The increase in fit is significant as compared to the previous 'week-model', and adding the interaction of 'week X instruction' as in the fourth model does not significantly improve the fit to the data. Hence, we need to interpret the parameter estimates of this model, which show that there is an effect of week (+topic) and an effect of instruction. The interaction of week and instruction does not contribute significantly to the description of the observations; therefore we must conclude that the effect of instruction is (proportionally) equal in all weeks (see Table 5).

For the imperfective forms, the 'instruction-effect model' is also the best model to describe the observed frequencies ( $p=0.15$ ); it matches the data significantly better than the 'week model' ( $p<0.001$ ) and the final model does not improve the fit to the observed data significantly.

*Table 6 Proportions of the use of the perfective and imperfective forms in the weekly compositions for the intermediate students*

Week	Perfective Instruction		Imperfective Instruction	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	0.90	0.78	0.79	0.60
2	0.75	0.60	0.77	0.58
3	0.75	0.60	0.90	0.78
4	0.84	0.72	0.84	0.68
5	0.63	0.46	0.94	0.87
6	0.89	0.80	0.85	0.70
7	0.78	0.67	0.93	0.85

Table 6 shows the estimated proportions of the correct use of the perfective and imperfective forms in the compositions. The last composition of the course is not included because it was written after all students had completed the experimental instruction. Therefore, at this measurement occasion, a comparison between the experimental group and a ‘control group’ was not possible.

It can be seen in Table 6 that after the experimental instruction, the proportions are higher in all weeks than their counterparts of students who have not received the experimental course yet. Those who received instruction on the Spanish aspectual system make more frequent correct use of both types of the Spanish past tenses.

Note that the proportions vary between weeks. Every week there was a different topic of composition. This fact points out that there is not only a difference due to the independent variable “instruction”, but also the factor “composition+week” plays a crucial role. This means that week/topic effect may exceed the effect of instruction. We must conclude that the effect of instruction on the compositions is smaller than in the standardised tests.

The third variable mentioned in the Method section involved all those other verbal forms (present tense, present perfect, subjunctives, conditionals...) that were wrongly used in the position where a perfective or imperfective form was expected. The use of these forms proved to be randomly distributed over weeks/topics of compositions. The analysis results came out non-significant.

#### **4.5.2.2. Beginners’ group**

656 predications written by the students are hereby statistically described. The rest of the predications written (a total of 1224) were not located in one of the two past tenses we are interested in (perfective versus imperfective), but they were located either in the present, in the present perfect or the form was unrecognisable. The topics were basically the same as in the study with intermediate learners; however, as the topic “describe your worst nightmare” did have its own intricacies as far as the use of past tenses is concerned, we left it out of the analysis (see section 4.3.4.2.). However, the total number of composition was much lower than the

number of compositions written by the intermediate group. There are two reasons for this difference in number of analysed compositions. First of all, the number of Dutch students in the intermediate group was higher (17 versus 13). Secondly, the beginners group handed in compositions late, more often than the intermediate group. Thirdly, some of the compositions handed in on time by the beginners group were written completely with the present tense. These compositions were not taken into account when analysing the use of the past tenses, as they were not present<sup>5</sup>.

In Table 7, the fit of each model for both perfective and imperfective verb use is presented. As the models are nested, the increase in fit can be tested by means of the differences in  $\chi^2$  (with the corresponding difference in degrees of freedom). Thus, the fit of the models can be compared.

Table 7 *Fit of four models to describe the use of the perfective and imperfective form in the compositions for beginners*

Model	Model Fit			Comparison			
	$\chi^2$	df	P	$\chi^2$	df	P	
Perfective							
(A) No effect	32.26	7	<0.001	A vs. B	22.34	3	<0.001
(B) Week	9.92	4	0.041	B vs. C	5.70	1	0.016
(C) Instruction	4.22	3	0.239	C vs. D	4.22	3	0.239
(D) Week-instruction	0.000	0	1.00				
Imperfective							
(A) No effect	9.26	7	0.235	A vs. B	0.23	3	>0.20
(B) Week	9.03	4	0.060	B vs. C	6.98	1	0.008
(C) Instruction	2.05	3	0.562	C vs. D	2.05	3	0.562
(D) Week-instruction	0.0000	0	1.00				

This table shows that for the perfective, the model A, the 'no-effect model', does not provide a good description of the data ( $\chi^2=32.262$ ,  $df=7$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The 'week model' fits the data better than the 'no-effect model'; it gives a significantly better description of the observed data ( $\chi^2=9.92$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p=0.041$ ). However, this description is still not accurate enough since the discrepancy between the observations and the expected frequencies is still significant ( $p<0.001$ ). The 'instruction-effect model' fits the data best ( $p=0.24$ ). The increase in fit is significant as compared to the previous 'week-model', and adding the interaction of 'week X instruction' as in the fourth model does not significantly improve the fit to the data. Hence, we need to interpret the parameter estimates of this model, which show that there is an effect of week (+topic) and an effect of instruction. The interaction of week and instruction does not contribute significantly to the description of the observations; therefore we must conclude that the effect of instruction is (proportionally) equal in all weeks (see Table 7).

<sup>5</sup> These compositions are pending analysis, so as to assess development within learner from a 0-use of the past tense markers to their first emerging instances.

For the imperfective forms, the ‘instruction-effect model’ is also the best model to describe the observed frequencies ( $p=0.56$ ); it matches the data significantly better than the ‘week model’ ( $p>0.008$ ) and the final model does not improve the fit to the observed data significantly.

*Table 8 Proportions of the use of the perfective and imperfective forms in the weekly compositions for beginners*

Week	Perfective Instruction		Imperfective Instruction	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	0.96	0.93	0.79	0.55
3	0.72	0.59	0.79	0.54
4	0.78	0.66	0.83	0.61
5	0.81	0.72	0.90	0.74

Table 8 shows the estimated proportions of the correct use of the perfective and imperfective forms in the compositions. Again, as for the intermediate study (Table 6), the last composition of the course is not included.

Also for the beginners group, it can be seen in Table 8 that after the experimental instruction, the proportions are higher in all weeks than their counterparts of students who have not received the experimental course yet. Note that the proportions vary between weeks, as they did in Table 6. Again, there is not only a difference due to the independent variable “instruction”, but also the factor “composition and/or week” plays a crucial role.

There are group differences in results between the intermediate and the beginners groups. First of all, we need to keep in mind that the number of analysed predications for the beginners group was much smaller than that of the intermediate group (656 versus 1706). The proportions of the beginners’ findings are therefore higher than it would otherwise have been expected. In particular, the proportion of properly used perfective forms before instruction (0.93) is very high. This can be a result of the low number of used perfectives ( $n=3$ ). On the other hand, the proportion of properly used imperfective forms before instruction (0.55) is relatively low. Again, the scarce use of this form ( $n=3$ ) can be the reason why the proportion is low.

#### **4.6. Discussion**

This article describes a study that focuses on the second language research issue of whether instruction directed at specific grammatical features results in their acquisition. In particular, the main concern of this study is whether the teaching of grammatical aspect might contribute to its understanding and acquisition in a second language.

In this study, the effect of experimental instruction on the Spanish aspectual system on two types of measurement in two proficiency levels was investigated. A complicated quasi-experimental design was needed in order to assess the effects of the instruction, without being able to form a distinct control group.

On both standardised tests as well as on written compositions an effect of instruction was shown for the intermediate group. On the multiple-choice exercise, an effect of instruction is found in both the beginners and the intermediate group. On the fill-in-the-blanks exercise, an effect is found for all students in the intermediate group. However, a small number of students in the beginners group did not improve their overall performance in the fill-in-the-blanks exercises. There is probably a relationship between their proficiency level and this result. The fact that the beginners performed better in the multiple choice after the experimental instruction shows that they did understand the meaning difference between the two forms; they only had to point out which form they considered correct; that is, the form was already given. On the contrary, for the fill-in-the-blanks exercises, they needed to come up with the form itself. This result, however inconclusive, may point out to the direction that having acquired the semantic distinction between the forms does not presuppose the acquisition of the related morphological markers. It may also be that because of being such a small group, the result is just a coincidence.

The success of students can be therefore partially proficiency related, as far as the fill-in-the-blanks exercise is concerned, if we discuss the fact that a small group of students (n=6) did not significantly improve after having received the experimental instruction in this test as a relevant result. This may have been caused by the fact that the intermediate group only filled in one of the two stories in the fill-in-the-blanks exercise. Eight blanks may not have been enough to test whether they had improved their proper use of the two past tenses in Spanish.

The intermediate group's results of the standardised tests, for the multiple choice and the fill-in-the-blanks, show the positive effect of the experimental instruction on the performance of the students. Making Dutch students of Spanish aware of how the aspectual system works in their own language by using a recognition task allows them to understand the L2 Spanish aspectual system better than if they were unaware of the differences and similarities between the two languages. Therefore, those students who have followed the experimental instruction about the Spanish aspectual system perform better in standardised tests than those students who had not received the experimental instruction.

The success of students also seems to be task related. While in the standardised tests the effect of the experimental instruction is, in general, positively judged, the effect of the experimental instruction in the results of the compositions is not so clear. Logit analysis shows that those students who followed the instruction are better than those who have not, in using the past forms in the right contexts in their written assignments. Nevertheless, the proportions vary between weeks. This illustrates that not only is there a difference due to the independent variable "instruction", but that the factor "topic of composition" also plays a critical role.

The composition results are more complicated to analyse, due to large differences among weeks. As Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam (1999:13) state,

*"the nature of writing processes is recursive and dynamic: different sub processes can and do occur at any moment during the process"*

Experiments based on written results involve not only the grammatical knowledge of the learner, but also cognitive factors understood from an individual perspective such as general knowledge, memory, etc. These cognitive factors may affect the data more strongly than we had expected. This may be the reason why the ‘topic of composition’ effect is stronger than the instruction effect.

An explanation for the fact that the ‘topic of composition’ effect is stronger than the instruction effect can be found for week 5 of the intermediate group study. The topic for the composition was “describe your worst nightmare”. It was only after collecting the compositions that we realised nightmares in Spanish are described with imperfective forms; no matter whether the situation or action is completed or not. This is why this topic was removed from the second study, the beginners’ proficiency level. This special characteristic of describing dreams could explain why the proportion numbers in the perfective columns are so low and why the percentages of the imperfective columns are so high (0.63/0.46 vs. 0.94/0.87). However, what happens with the topic of composition “describe your worst nightmare” may not be generalised to the remainder of composition topics.

This leads us to conclude that, in written tasks, there is more at stake than only the acquisition of certain grammatical phenomena. The instruction-effect model provides the best description of the data. However, it does not explain why the proportions vary between weeks. This proves that other processes are occurring during writing, which strongly affect the correct use of grammatical phenomena, as in this case, the use of the two simple pasts in Spanish. However, this paper has shown that when, during instruction, a clear link is made between the L1 system and the L2 system (in this case aspectual systems), the student’s proficiency significantly improves.

The main result of this combined study is, nevertheless, that teaching aspectual distinctions in this way, works. This way would include linking the aspectual system of the L1 into the to-be-learnt aspectual system of the L2 by explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods. This finding may have repercussions to both language acquisition theory and instructional methodology. On the one hand, this study has proved that incorporating explicit and implicit options to the teaching of grammar works and, on the other hand, comparing L1 and L2 grammar systems in order to understand the difficulties L2 learners may have can clarify the acquisitional problems found in L2 learning of the Spanish aspectual system by students with a Germanic L1.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

This book covers a wide range of research on various issues of learning and teaching of grammatical aspect. The common theme of the studies presented in this thesis is their aim to contribute to a better understanding of a) the complexities of L2 learning and b) the difficulties involved in teaching grammatical aspect to learners whose L1 does not formally mark grammatical aspect, in particular, to Dutch L2 learners of Spanish. Both theoretical and empirical research are undertaken.

On the theoretical side, a particular description of the Spanish and Dutch temporal aspectual systems is given in Chapter 1. It is assumed that the effect of completion contributed by grammatical aspect (perfective versus imperfective aspectual meanings) is one of the three sorts of completion information that a sentence in Spanish can present. In addition, Spanish can encode completion at the tense level and at the predicational level. The completion distinction between perfective and imperfective is non-existent in Dutch, whereas the completion distinctions between durative and terminative (predicational aspect) on the one hand and perfect and imperfect (at the temporal level) on the other hand, are part of the temporal-aspectual system of the Dutch language. This is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1                      *Completion levels*

Completion level	Values	Spanish	Dutch
Predicational aspect	Terminative/Durative	+	+
Grammatical aspect	Perfective/Imperfective	+	-
Grammatical tense	Perfect/Imperfect	+	+

The cross-linguistic analysis of temporal-aspectual completion systems serves as a description tool for the aspect acquisition approach proposed in this thesis. With this particular theoretical comparison of languages, the following phenomena are assessed:

- 1) What the learner already implicitly knows about aspect completion from his/her L1;
- 2) Which aspectual phenomena of the L1 are comparable and identical to the L2;
- 3) Which aspectual phenomena of the L2 the learner does not know through his L1.

Section 5.2. summarizes the discussion and conclusions drawn in Chapter 1.

The empirical research in Chapter 2 involves the intuitions of native speakers about the preferences of verb forms according to varying aspectual sentence information. The goal of this study is to find out whether native speakers of Spanish base their intuitions on the acceptance of the grammatical aspect forms according to the other prime aspectual information contained in a simple sentence. That is, the idea is to see whether in Spanish, predicational aspect influences the choice of grammatical aspect markers. Section 5.3. summarizes the results and conclusions of Chapter 2.

The empirical study described in Chapter 3 involves free-production data in L2 of classroom Dutch L2 beginning learners of Spanish. The goal of this study is to characterize the distribution of the two past tense forms in Spanish in the learners' interlanguage. Acquisition theories are presented and used to describe the data, and their hypotheses are cross-examined. A new approach to the L2 acquisition of grammatical aspect, which takes as its theoretical starting point the cross-linguistic analysis of the first chapter, is put to the test. Section 5.4. summarizes the results and conclusions of Chapter 3.

The third empirical study, presented in Chapter 4, puts into practice an aspect instruction developed on the theoretical premises of the first chapter and the second language acquisition research findings of the third chapter. Beginners and intermediate classroom L2 learners of Spanish followed the instruction. The experimental instruction involves both explicit and implicit methods of teaching grammar. Section 5.5. summarizes the results and conclusions of Chapter 4.

In the present chapter, a description and discussion of the findings at each language plane (theoretical, acquisitional, methodological) will be given. Section 5.2. contains a short overview of an intra-sentential theory of aspect in both Spanish and Dutch. Section 5.3. gives a summary of the findings of the first empirical study, involving the intuitions of native speakers of Spanish and showing that their L1 understanding of past tenses is not influenced by intra-sentential predicational information. In section 5.4., a summary of the findings of the acquisitional study will be given. This study contributes to the conviction that interlanguage production of the two simple past tenses in Spanish by Dutch classroom L2 learners of Spanish is influenced by predicational aspect. In section 5.5., a brief summarizing discussion of the results of the classroom instruction study will be given, which illustrates that an instruction of aspect that demonstrates that predicational aspect is not relevant in order to make a choice between the two simple past tenses, helps L2 learners of Spanish understand the distinction between the uses of the two past tenses better than if they have not received the experimental instruction.

## **5.2. Chapter 1: Cross-linguistic analysis of Tense and Aspect systems in Dutch and Spanish**

Chapter 1 provides a cross-linguistic analysis of the temporal and aspectual systems of both Spanish and Dutch languages. The goals of this description are:

- a) To provide a theoretical background for a more accurate portrait of the interlanguage production of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish;
- b) To provide a strong theoretical basis to a grammar teaching instruction on aspect.

Chapter 1 does not actually present empirical findings, but rather a theoretical basis involving an account of tense systems and aspectual systems in Romance and Germanic languages, more specifically, in Spanish and Dutch. Thus, the claims are theoretical and they are maintained on a basis of a cross-linguistic analysis.

It is argued, from a cross-linguistic point of view, that intra-sentential semantic structure contains three potential levels of completion, one temporal, two aspectual. Every language uses different strategies to create interaction between the available levels. Due to its poor morphology, Dutch expresses only two levels, one aspectual, one temporal. By its richer verbal morphology, Spanish expresses three levels, one temporal and two aspectual. One of the aspectual levels in Spanish is therefore missing in the Dutch temporal aspectual system. This missing level may be the cause of the difficulties for its L2 acquisition for Dutch learners, as this level is not formally present in the Dutch language. A description of each of the levels in each of the two languages and a comparison between such descriptions leads to, firstly, a deeper knowledge of the completion markers in the learners L1 and secondly, a clear picture of the difference between the L1's completion markers and those of the target language.

Two tense theories are investigated. Reichenbach (1947)'s approach is evaluated and it is argued that his tense system is not optimal, due to its non-compositional nature, and its lack to account for some of the tenses. A second temporal description is provided: the binary system (Verkuyl 1999). This system, having firm roots in traditional grammar, has the tools to provide a precise description of the Dutch tenses. On the basis of this system, an extension can be made that seems to cover the richer Spanish tense system. For the purpose of the present study, the binary system can be argued to be more appropriate.

Moreover, two aspect theories are also tested. Vendler (1957)'s verb semantics is challenged as a descriptive theory for atemporal aspectual phenomena. As an improvement on this particular verb semantics theory, a predicational semantics approach is presented (Verkuyl 1993) and is applied to Spanish sentences. This approach is a formalization of the idea that aspect seen at an atemporal level can only be complete when the verb and its arguments are combined forming an aspectual unit. This predicational approach also proves to be an optimal representation instrument for both Spanish and Dutch atemporal aspectual information.

To sum up, the temporal analysis adopted in Chapter 1 is a binary approach, where every tensed form collects its temporal meaning from a series of operators compositionally combined. In the tenseless aspectual analysis, every predication receives its atemporal aspectual meaning from the combination of the lexical meaning of the verb and the delimiting information of the arguments. Spanish grammatical aspect is a sort of lubricant between tense and the tenseless predication,

between the tense level and the predicational level; it provides aspectual information but uses tense forms as the carriers of such information.

The analysis developed in Chapter 1 allows for predictions at theoretical and empirical levels. However, although it is an appropriate tool for understanding the problems learners and teachers of Spanish will face in lesson(s) about grammatical aspect, it is an analysis, not a complete theoretical description. This thesis was never intended to cover all the theoretical intricacies grammatical aspect in Spanish contains. Among others, the following theoretical questions are left open. Their answers could lead to a better grasp of the grammatical aspect phenomena, and probably also to a better characterization of the distribution of past tenses in interlanguage. First of all, grammatical aspect is presented as a context related notion but its description stops at the sentential level. A more extensive theory covering not only sentential grammatical forms and functions but also discourse representations will give a more complete picture. Secondly, secondary uses of the imperfective and the perfect verbal forms have not been dealt with. Learning a language involves not only learning the principal uses of the forms, but also the secondary less common ones. As the perfect forms are related to the perfective-imperfective distribution both in the target language and in interlanguage, a more in depth scrutiny of the uses of the perfect forms would probably also add light to the discussion. Thirdly, an enlargement of the theory could be applied to cases where any Germanic speakers group learnt any Romance language. However, each language has its own aspectual characteristics. Making this description a global one would be a noteworthy improvement on the theoretical approaches to the learning of aspect markers; however, in order to do so, the intrinsic aspectual characteristics of other Germanic and Romance languages should be taken into account.

Although there are a few deficiencies in the theoretical analysis presented in Chapter 1, it covers all aspectual information that takes place at the sentential level, in both Spanish and Dutch languages. The application of this analysis to different disciplines of applied linguistics (description of L1 intuitions, SLA and SL instruction) illustrates that its purpose, which is to be adequate and parsimonious, is fulfilled.

### **5.3. Chapter 2: Contrast between aspectual systems in L2 learning and its repercussions**

The target of Chapter 2 is to empirically exclude the possibility that in L1 Spanish the distribution of the two simple past tenses can also be influenced by the lower aspectual completion level (the atemporal level). In other words, this study was carried out in order to discover whether the juxtaposition of aspectual levels at the realm of the sentence is for Spanish native speakers as independent as Chapter 1 claims it to be.

In order to assess whether the distribution of past tenses made by L2 learners of Spanish is inappropriate, first it has to be made clear that the same distribution is intuitively non-existent for Spanish native speakers. That is, to understand the past tense distribution in interlanguage of L2 learners as unique and insufficient, first it has to be proven that L1 speakers do not share that particular distribution. The

questionnaire for natives called for acceptance or rejection of 15 pairs of sentences with perfective and imperfective markings. The difference between each pair was the form of the verb, one was perfective, the other imperfective. 40 native speakers of Spanish filled in the questionnaire. They were asked to follow their intuition and answer whether they considered every individual sentence in the questionnaire acceptable. All but two informants were adult speakers, all native speakers of the Castilian, the official language in Spain.

Results of this experiment illustrate that there is absolutely no correlation between predicational aspect and grammatical aspect in the eyes of native speakers, which means that when choosing between the perfective-imperfective verb forms, natives are not influenced by the lower aspectual level of completion (predicational). In other words, in Spanish, the terminative/durative distinction does not play a role on the native's choice of simple past tense verb form. Moreover, this chapter starts hinting at the importance of "outer aspect" information in Spanish when making a choice between both past tenses. Outer aspect is the aspectual information found outside the boundaries of the predication. Native speakers choose between the two inflected aspectual forms according to the contextual discourse information, not according to the atemporal predicational information. The expectations formulated according to the aspectual analysis of Chapter 1 are confirmed: among native speakers of Spanish, the two levels of aspectual information that can be found in a sentence are juxtaposed and not combined.

There are some inconsistencies between the proposals with respect to the stages of learning of aspect given in this chapter and the hypothesis and findings of Chapter 3. In Chapter 2, an explanation is given as to why Andersen's first stage concerns only eventive verbs. Andersen's empirical findings are further explained under the terms of the predicational approach. If what is being learnt is the semantics of the predications and not the semantics of the verbs, it may be the case that learners may at first produce eventive, terminative predications. They are discrete units, and discrete units are probably the first ones to be learnt. However, this reasoning contradicts the hypothesis and findings of Chapter 3. In Chapter 3, it is hypothesized that durative predications will be the first ones to appear, as they are the unmarked case and therefore appear more often than terminative predications in discourse<sup>1</sup>. The findings corroborate this hypothesis. Therefore, although the reasoning in Chapter 2 is interesting and logical, empirical research has shown that it is incorrect, at least in the compositions of Dutch beginning learners of Spanish.

There is some possible bias to the data elicitation task. First of all, most informants had been or were university students when they answered the questionnaire. The answers, therefore, belong mostly to one group of the Spanish population, which does not necessarily mean that their answers can be generalized to all Spanish native speakers. Secondly, most of the informants had some vague idea of what this study was dealing with; this may have influenced their answers. Thirdly, this particular data, moreover, can only demonstrate how grammatical aspect is understood in the peninsular variant of Spanish, not covering per se its uses in American dialects. Therefore, these results cannot be straightforwardly compared

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<sup>1</sup> This finding may also be dependent on the type of test given, a free-production task.

to results in American studies, as they take as the target language Spanish dialects spoken in America, with a slight different distribution of grammatical aspects in production. Moreover, the three groups of sentences presented to the informants are not equal in number. Sentences of type C, with no extra aspectual information, are scarce. This is due to a misguided early assumption that they would not be as interesting as the other two types of sentences.

Nevertheless, the results of this study are very robust. Although a broader study, covering people of different Spanish dialects, would give the findings a more argumentative force, the findings of this study uphold very steadily that not one of the participants relied on predicational information for his or her acceptability judgements.

#### **5.4. Chapter 3: Distribution of grammatical aspect morphemes in interlanguage**

The target of Chapter 3 is to establish which of the various aspectual theories can be bestowed as the most appropriate to describe the distribution of Spanish past tense morphology in the early stages of interlanguage of Dutch classroom L2 learners. 17 Dutch classroom L2 learners of Spanish following a beginner's course took part in this experiment. They wrote a number of compositions from which results and conclusions were drawn.

A hypothesis testing analysis was carried out and the results illustrate that only when predicational aspect is taken as the atemporal level of aspectual encoding, can the interlanguage data be properly described. A hypothesis comparing analysis shows that it is not the lexical semantics of the verbs what partly influences the verb choice but predicational aspect. The bipartition of the Predication-effect hypothesis is effective because it maps not only into the division perfective/imperfective in number but also in meaning (both presenting their own understanding of completion).

There is another important finding in this chapter. The participants consistently use the past perfective as a default marker for past. This result leads to a discussion at the discourse level: pragmatic factors, such as the primacy of the perfective as past tense marker in discourse, are needed in order to present a proper description of the results.

This chapter presents a study that corroborates what already a number of studies on the matter propose: second language acquisition research involving the acquisition of grammatical aspect is a confirmation for the juxtaposition of grammatical aspect and inherent aspect. According to most studies on the matter, L2 verbal morphology correlates with lexical aspect; when L2 verbal morphemes enter interlanguage, they are not uniformly distributed across all verbs, but are distributed according to the lexical aspectual classes of the verbs. Grammatical aspect morphemes in interlanguage redundantly mark lexical aspect (Aspect Hypothesis). Nevertheless, although this line of thought has hinted definitely in the right direction, it is not accurate enough. It is shown in Chapter 1 that considering the lexical meaning of the verb as the carrier of all inherent aspectual information is a

first false step, as it neglects the relevance of the internal arguments semantics for the overall meaning of the bare aspectual level.

Research on the acquisition of aspectual values is also interested in two general acquisition research topics. First of all, does the learners' L1 influence the acquisition of the L2? Secondly, is it really aspect or is it tense, what learners mean to express with the first temporal past tense markers they use?

Research specifically interested in the learning of aspectual markers in L2 reformulated these questions as follows: which effect will a learner's native language have on the acquisition of the aspectual properties of the L2: what do they know about their L1's temporal-aspectual system? More specifically, Chapter 3 is interested in the next question: will aspect in Dutch (terminative/durative distinction) have an effect in their L2 learning ability? The idea behind the early proponents of the Aspect Hypothesis is that initially lexical aspect is mapped onto tense, not onto grammatical aspect. This topic of discussion is not studied in this thesis. To know whether it is tense or it is aspect what gets marked in interlanguage is not a prerequisite to find out which are the theoretical foundations behind the complications of the learning of aspectual markers in L2. That is, to speculate theoretically on why Dutch L2 learners of Spanish make errors when learning the Spanish aspectual system and how these errors may be prevented, does not benefit from this particular discussion. Moreover, since grammatical aspect and tense morphology are fused in the past morphology in Spanish, there is no reliable procedure to find out whether it is pastness or it is perfectivity what they are marking when they use either one of the two simple past tenses. However, the Dutch language currently operates its present perfect tense marker also as an aspectual marker for the perfective past. If it is postulated that completion marking in the L1 can influence the choice of aspectual past tense markers in an L2, Dutch learners of Spanish can pursue one of the two following paths when first producing the Spanish past tense subsystem:

- a) They can either use the present perfect form in Spanish in those cases where they would use it in Dutch, that is, also as perfective marker;
- b) They can ignore the behaviour of the Dutch present perfect and therefore not use its Spanish formal equivalent to mark perfectivity, focussing only on the two simple past forms.

The students of this particular acquisition experiment behave accordingly to the second possible observation, that is, they do not engage the present perfect form in Spanish in situations where they would use the present perfect in Dutch. Results illustrate that the tense level of completion (perfect-imperfect) does not influence the distribution of past tenses. The present perfect form is seldom used in the collected compositions; let alone as marking perfective meaning. Moreover, it actually suggests that it is not aspectual information but temporal information what the perfective in the first instance adds to the meaning of the sentence in interlanguage. The perfective is used as a past tense, not as a perfective aspect marker.

The first finding (predicational aspect influencing grammatical aspect in interlanguage) is supported by the aspectual analysis of Chapter 1, which points out the similarities in meaning between the two aspectual levels. The second finding (perfective used as default past) is corroborated by the findings of Chapter 2, as it hints at the noteworthiness of aspectual discourse cues (outer aspect) in grammatical aspectual representation. Results in Chapter 2 illustrate that, in order to grasp the full picture of aspectual intricacies of a language with grammatical aspect marking, discourse analysis needs to be taken into account. Results in Chapter 3 show that also discourse analysis is indispensable if the data collected for the acquisition study are to be properly described.

There is a very intriguing contradiction between the second finding in Chapter 3 and the theoretical analysis of the perfective and imperfective markers given in Chapter 1. In Chapter 1, the imperfective past marker is presented as the default simple past tense in a temporal system and the perfective past marker is presented as the default simple past tense in an aspectual system. If the imperfective past tense marker is described in a tense system as the default simple past, how can it be possible that in L2 production (and in pragmatics, for that matter) the perfective past is used as the default past tense? (This is a finding of the study in Chapter 3).

Moreover, there are several methodological deficiencies. First of all, the period of time in which the data was collected is short (5 weeks). Secondly, the number of participants is small (13). Thirdly, all learners have already learnt at least a second language. Therefore, other languages may have also influenced the particular aspectual distribution in their interlanguage. Although compelling generalizations could be made thanks to the results of this study, these are deficiencies that may reduce the importance of the findings presented in this chapter.

The theoretical contradiction between what was proposed in Chapter 1 (imperfective as default past tense, perfective as default aspect) and what was found in Chapter 3 (perfective as default past tense) can be clarified in the following way. In the temporal system advocated in Chapter 1, the completion temporal level divides all forms in either perfect or imperfect. Both simple past forms in Spanish are defined as imperfect, as they both have their own perfect counterpart. However, only one of the two simple past forms is imperfective. It makes sense that as past imperfect imperfective, it becomes the default past tense in a temporal system. On the other hand, in a discourse analysis, it also makes sense that the past imperfect perfective is the default form, because of mainly two reasons. First of all, in an aspectual system the perfective is presented as the default form. Grammatical aspect is a discourse notion; it has been argued throughout this thesis that the choice of form always depends on the context, never on the predication contained by the sentence. Secondly, the notion 'perfective' is closer to the tense notion 'past' than the notion 'imperfective', therefore, in discourse; it makes sense that narrating something in past tense chooses as the most common form the perfective.

As for the methodological problems, the findings are certainly very persuasive. The second language of most students is English, which almost completely matches the temporal and aspectual description of Dutch (as far as its cross-linguistic analysis with Spanish is concerned). Therefore, there is no interference expected from the English language. Although the period of time in

which data was collected was short, and the number of students small, the hypothesis-testing study shows effectively that a predicational aspect-based description characterizes the data more fully and more efficiently than a lexical aspect-based approach.

#### **5.5. Chapter 4: Towards an effective instruction on aspect**

This third empirical study aims to find out whether an instruction based on the independence of predicational and grammatical aspect levels helps Dutch L2 learners of Spanish produce more accurately the two past tenses of the target language. Moreover, this study contributes to the ongoing debate of whether teaching grammar in L2 classroom facilitates the learning of the language phenomenon in question (aspect, in this case).

An experimental instruction was tested on students with two proficiency levels: beginners and intermediate students. All of them are classroom learners, which means that they miss all contact with the pragmatic rules that are picked by naturalistic learners through true communicative interaction. There were two elicitation tasks, standardised tests on the one hand and written compositions on the other hand. Free-production tests (compositions) reflect more naturally what happens in interlanguage, whereas standardised tests allow for a better control of the disproportion of terminative and durative predications in the data collected in narrative production. The mix of elicitation tasks also reinforces the results of the experiment.

The most important methodological finding of this chapter is that teaching the difference between the two types of aspect (predicational and grammatical) and following the “already known principle” (which is, in this case, predicational aspect in Dutch) helps Dutch L2 learners of Spanish use the two past tense forms in different data elicitation tasks better than if the connections between aspectual levels and between languages were not made. Results in both tasks show how the experimental instruction positively affects the performance of the participating students. Therefore, combining implicit and explicit grammar teaching methods allows for higher proficiency results of the students.

In this thesis, the importance of discourse in aspectual description has been pointed out several times. Discourse helps distinguish not only the aspectual distribution of the two past tenses in L1 Spanish (Chapter 2) but also the distribution of such forms in interlanguage (Chapter 3). Classroom L2 acquisition is different from naturalistic language learning, mainly because the input the learners receive is manipulated. Learners who participate in this experiment no longer receive random or spontaneous language, full of pragmatic clues, but a language that is manipulated in order to facilitate the learning of the particular phenomenon, in this case, the aspectual system of Spanish. However, even if classroom interaction incorporates more free conversation tasks, it is still doubtful that the functional needs of true communicative interaction (natural settings) can be successfully recreated. Therefore, the pragmatic clues the learners need to discover which grammatical aspectual form one should use are mostly lacking in classroom settings. If classroom learners are to learn grammatical aspect and understand the difference between the

two forms, then other strategies on top of the contextual ones must be presented. Allowing them to see how grammatical aspect interacts with predicational aspect has proven to be a successful teaching strategy. Other studies (for discussion, see Salaberry 2000) have shown that untutored learners mark perfective and imperfective meanings with pragmatic means, and classroom learners with morphosyntactic means. Focussing on the morphosyntactic means in grammar instruction may help classroom learners speed up the process of properly marking aspect on verbal morphology.

There are several methodological problems in this study. First of all, the researcher is also the instructor, and it is always the same person giving the experimental instruction. To be able to prevent this methodological problem, different instructors could be asked to give the instruction to different groups of students. Secondly, the successful instruction is assessed in groups of two to four students. This may mean that the instruction is valid not because of the instruction itself, but because students in small groups are more accessible and more prepared to receive new information than students in bigger groups. Thirdly, the students are only tested after a short period of time to see whether it was not only memory effects what brought the students to perform so effectively after the instruction. An extra post-test would reinforce this result.

These methodological deficiencies can be seen as directions for future research. This study has shown that the experimental instruction helps the learners perform more effectively than before they receive it. The same instruction can be put to the test at a larger scale, where several instructors participate and more classroom settings are taken into account.

## **5.6. Aspectual disciplines interrelated**

All research topics and research studies presented in this thesis fit in, displaying an overall picture of the grammatical phenomenon of aspect and its learning and teaching complications. An effective instruction on Spanish aspect (Chapter 4) has benefited from a good interpretation of the specific development of the past aspectual forms of L2 Spanish (Chapter 3). For such an interpretation to be complete, a clear picture of how aspect works, not only in the L2, but also in the learner's L1 should be presented (Chapter 2). Nevertheless, this clear picture is only achieved once a proper description of the L1 and the L2 aspectual systems is been given (Chapter 1). A cross-linguistic analysis of the aspectual systems is therefore indispensable in this line of thought.

These optimal interrelations between the presented aspect issues also work the other way around. Studies on the acquisition of time and aspect, as the one presented in Chapter 3, provide the linguistic research on atemporal predicational semantics and verb morphology with additional confirmation concerning not only the close relation between both linguistic phenomena, but also their peculiar behaviour in different languages. SLA research both draws on and contributes to linguistic theory as empirical and explanatory background.

This book has shown that although grammatical aspect is a context-discourse phenomenon, to understand its distributional acquisition and to develop a successful

instruction, sentential aspectual information is very helpful. Sentential level analysis not only explains the distribution of the Spanish perfective-imperfective use when verbal morphology emerges in interlanguage, but also the application of such an analysis on an instruction on aspect, focussing on the already known from Dutch, is efficient. At the theoretical level, this thesis shows that investigating L1, L2 and interlanguage aspectual distributions give strong arguments to defend this particular analysis. This thesis adds to the understanding of the acquisition of grammatical aspect research world by showing that predicational aspect explains the distribution of the two simple past tenses in interlanguage better than lexical aspect based on verb meanings. This thesis adds to the teaching methods of grammatical aspect by demonstrating that, although grammatical aspect is a context-dependent grammatical notion, showing what happens within the sentence aids the classroom learners' understand the use of the two past tenses to a greater extent than when only the pragmatic contextual factors are presented.

#### **5.7. Future directions**

This thesis has thrown up several related issues for future discussion. A list of the most significant follows.

- 1) Cross-linguistic investigation of two languages functioning as both source and target language (2-way analysis) should provide an even stronger base for the investigation of language specific effects. Examining the complications Spanish L2 learners of Dutch encounter when learning the Dutch temporal and aspectual system would add empirical base for the effect of both languages as L1 and as L2.
- 2) It would also be noteworthy to not only point out that discourse is extremely important to understand the grammatical aspect phenomenon, but also to study exactly and in detail the influence of discourse in the language production of both Spanish speakers and in the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish. An in-depth study of the role of contextual information according to the sentential theory proposed in this thesis may present a more complete description of aspectual phenomena in Spanish.
- 3) A study examining oral free-production of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish will add more insights into the production difficulties in interlanguage. It has been shown in Chapter 1 that, in Dutch, the present perfect enlarges gradually its use becoming also a past perfective marker. In the study presented in Chapter 3, the temporal level of completion (perfect/imperfect) and the grammatical aspect level of completion (perfective/imperfective) did not interact in interlanguage. This may be different in oral production, as the learners are less consciously aware of performing a task where something is expected from them (in this case, the use of the two simple pasts).

In the last decades, much attention has been given to the acquisition of aspectual makers in second languages. Many accounts have been proposed, among others the Discourse Hypothesis and the Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis. Bardovi-Harlig (1998) compared the predictions of both accounts and concluded that both of them were needed to have a clear picture of what really happens in interlanguage. This thesis enters this discussion, and the results on language acquisition (Chapter 3) agree with those of Bardovi-Harlig but on one very important theoretically based difference. This difference grows from a deviating aspectual analysis where the lexical meaning of the verb is no longer responsible for atemporal aspectual information. Allowing the predication to be the basis of atemporal aspectual description describes L2 data more accurately and more parsimoniously than if the verb was taken as the sole unit of aspectual meaning. What is more, this thesis also shows that this theoretical analysis is not only responsible for a better characterization of the distribution of Spanish past tenses in interlanguage. Its application in a language teaching methodology has also resulted in an effective instruction on aspect. The examined aspectual disciplines (theory, use, acquisition and teaching) all naturally fit into the proposed framework.

## APPENDIX I

### Questionnaire for natives

Hola,

Antes de nada, gracias por contestar a mis preguntas. No tardarás más de 5 minutos.

Nombre:

Edad: 10-20    21-30    31-40    41-50    51-60    61-70

Lugar de nacimiento:

Guíate por tus intuiciones como hablante de castellano, y dime si las siguientes frases están bien hechas o no, es decir, si te parecen correctas. Marca tu respuesta con un círculo:

Ejemplo:

correcta incorrecta

De pequeñas Nuria y yo saltábamos juntas a la comba	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	X
1. Laura comió carne en el restaurante.(C3)	✓	X
2. Cada mañana Víctor compró el pan.(B1)	✓	X
3. Luis me llamaba tres veces al día. (B3)	✓	X
4. Nuria estudió inglés hace veinte años.(A1)	✓	X
5. Pepa comía pescado en el restaurante.(C4)	✓	X
6. Cada domingo mis padres pasearon por las Ramblas.(B5)	✓	X
7. Ayer por la mañana Ulpiano compró el periódico.(A3)	✓	X
8. Manuel iba al cine todos los meses.(B7)	✓	X
9. Por la noche contábamos cuentos.(C5)	✓	X
10. A mi abuela no le gustaban los gatos.(C1)	✓	X
11. Los barcos llegaban cada media hora.(B9)	✓	X
12. Nacho me llamó tres veces en un día. (A5)	✓	X
13. Antes se estudió francés en los institutos.(B13)	✓	X
14. Un día fuimos juntos de paseo por la playa.(A7)	✓	X
15. Cada mañana Pedro compraba el pan.(B2)	✓	X
16. Juan fue al cine todos los meses.(B8)	✓	X
17. Ayer por la mañana Ramón compraba una revista.(A4)	✓	X
18. Los trenes llegaron cada media hora.(B10)	✓	X
19. Javier me llamaba tres veces en un día.(A6)	✓	X
20. Raúl estudiaba francés hace diez años.(A2)	✓	X
21. Un día íbamos juntos de paseo por la playa.(A8)	✓	X
22. Álvaro me llamó tres veces al día.(B4)	✓	X
23. Antes se estudiaba alemán en los colegios.(A14)	✓	X

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 24. Henar me llamó tres veces cada día.(B11)              | ✓ | X |
| 25. Ayer estudiaba en la biblioteca.(A9)                  | ✓ | X |
| 26. Cada domingo mis padres paseaban por las Ramblas.(B6) | ✓ | X |
| 27. Nuria me llamaba tres veces cada día.(B12)            | ✓ | X |
| 28. Ayer estudié en la sala de ordenadores.(A10)          | ✓ | X |
| 29. Por la noche contamos cuentos.(C6)                    | ✓ | X |
| 30. A mi madre no le gustaron los hamsters.(C2)           | ✓ | X |

## APPENDIX II

### Instruction

#### Page 1

1. Gisteren heb ik 20 appels gegeten.
2. Gisteren heb ik appels gegeten.
3. Gisteren heb ik appel gegeten.

#### Page 2

1. Gisteren heb ik in een uur 20 appels gegeten.
2. Gisteren heb ik in een uur appels gegeten.
3. Gisteren heb ik in een uur appel gegeten.

#### Page 3

1. Gisteren heb ik gelopen.
2. Gisteren heb ik 10 kilometer gelopen.
3. Gisteren heb ik in een uur gelopen.
4. Gisteren heb ik in een uur 10 kilometer gelopen.

#### Page 4

1. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag 20 appels gegeten.
2. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag appels gegeten.
3. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag appel gegeten.
4. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag gelopen.
5. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag 10 kilometer gelopen.

#### Page 5

1. Gisteren heb ik in vijf minuten 2 appels gegeten.
2. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag 2 appels gegeten.
3. Gisteren heb ik in vijf minuten appels gegeten.
4. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag appels gegeten.
5. Gisteren heb ik in vijf minuten appel gegeten.
6. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag appel gegeten.
7. Gisteren heb ik in dertig minuten 10 kilometer gelopen.
8. Gisteren heb ik de hele dag 10 kilometer gelopen.
9. Gisteren heb ik in dertig minuten kilometers gelopen.
10. Gisteren heb in een uur 10 kilometers gelopen.

#### Page 6

1. Ayer comí 20 manzanas.
2. Ayer comí manzanas.
3. Ayer comí manzana.

## Page 7

1. Ayer comí 20 manzanas en una hora.
2. Ayer comí manzanas en una hora.
3. Ayer comí manzana en una hora.

## Page 8

1. Ayer corrí.
2. Ayer corrí diez kilómetros.
3. Ayer corrí en una hora.
4. Ayer corrí diez kilómetros en una hora.

## Page 9

1. Ayer comí 20 manzanas todo el día.
2. Ayer comí manzanas todo el día.
3. Ayer comí manzana todo el día.
4. Ayer corrí todo el día.
5. Ayer corrí diez kilómetros todo el día.

## Page 10

1. Ayer comí 2 manzanas en cinco minutos.
2. Ayer comí 2 manzanas todo el día.
3. Ayer comí manzanas en cinco minutos.
4. Ayer comí manzanas todo el día.
5. Ayer comí manzana en cinco minutos.
6. Ayer comí manzana todo el día.
7. Ayer corrí diez kilómetros en media hora.
8. Ayer corrí diez kilómetros todo el día.
9. Ayer corrí kilómetros en media hora.
10. Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros en una hora.

## Page 11

1. Ayer leí el periódico en una hora.
2. Ayer leí periódicos en una hora.
3. Ayer mi madre caminó en una hora.
4. Ayer mi madre caminó durante horas.
5. Ayer bebí cocacolas en cinco minutos.
6. Ayer bebí dos cocacolas en cinco minutos.
7. Mi sobrina dibujó círculos toda la tarde.
8. Mi sobrina dibujó círculos en una hora.

## Page 12

1. Laura comió 3 manzanas.
2. Laura comía 3 manzanas.
3. Laura comió manzanas.
4. Laura comía manzanas.

## Page 13

1. Ayer [Laura comió 3 manzanas]
2. Ayer [Laura comía 3 manzanas]
3. De niña [Laura comió 3 manzanas] cada día.
4. De niña [Laura comía 3 manzanas] cada día.
5. Ayer [Laura comió manzanas]
6. Ayer [Laura comía manzanas]
7. De niña [Laura comió manzanas]
8. De niña [Laura comía manzanas]

## Page 14

1. De pequeña [Nuria nunca reía]
2. Ayer [me compré un vestido]
3. La semana pasada [Pilar no vino a clase]
4. Antes [la gente iba más al cine]

## Page 15

1. Mis padres paseaban por las Ramblas cada tarde.
2. El verano pasado mis padres pasearon por las Ramblas cada tarde.
3. Ayer por la mañana compré una revista.
4. Ayer por la mañana compraba una revista cuando vi a Juan.

## Page 16

1. En vacaciones comíamos/comimos manzanas todo el día.
2. En vacaciones comíamos/comimos 20 manzanas en 1 hora.
3. En vacaciones comíamos/comimos una manzana todo el día.
4. María estudiaba/estudió la lección en una hora.
5. María estudiaba/estudió inglés durante días.
6. María estudiaba/estudió inglés en una hora.

## Page 17

1. Ayer compré manzanas, hoy quiero comprar peras.
2. Ayer compraba manzanas, hoy quiero comprar peras.

3. Cuando tenía cinco años, me encantaban los perros.
4. Cuando tenía cinco años, me encantaron los perros.
  
5. Ayer estudié literatura todo el día.
6. Ayer estudiaba literatura todo el día.
  
7. Ayer, cuando entró Luis, jugábamos a las cartas.
8. Ayer, cuando entró Luis, jugamos a las cartas.
  
9. Cada día Víctor devoraba la cena en cinco minutos.
10. Cada día Víctor devoró la cena en cinco minutos.
  
11. El mes pasado leí dos novelas en una semana.
12. El mes pasado leía dos novelas en una semana.
  
13. Cada verano leí dos novelas por semana.
14. Cada verano leía dos novelas por semana.
  
15. Al profe se le cayó el bolígrafo cada día cinco veces.
16. Al profe se le caía el bolígrafo cada día cinco veces.

## Page 18

1. Ayer leí dos artículos en media hora.
2. Ayer comí porquerías todo el día.
3. Cada mañana Víctor leía el periódico en una hora.
4. Cada mañana Víctor comía bizcochos durante horas.

## APPENDIX III

### Extra instruction for the beginner's group

#### **Pretérito perfecto simple** (Pretérito indefinido):

Je kan de 'pretérito perfecto simple' in het Spaans gebruiken als de actie één keer in het verleden is gebeurd (er is een begin en een einde van de actie):

1. Gisteren heb ik basketbal gespeeld.
2. Op mijn 10<sup>e</sup> verjaardag speelde ik basketbal.

#### **Pretérito imperfecto**

De 'pretérito imperfecto' heeft 2 betekenissen:

- a) Als de actie meer dan een keer in het verleden is gebeurd; dus er is repetitie van de actie:
  3. Elke zaterdag speelden we basketbal.
- b) Als de actie een situatie wordt; dus er is een gevoel van voortgang, progressiviteit:
  4. Toen we basketbal aan het spelen waren, ben ik gevallen.

Pretérito perfecto:

hablar	comer	vivir
hablé	comí	viví
hablaste	comiste	viviste
habló	comió	vivió
hablamos	comimos	vivimos
hablasteis	comisteis	vivisteis
hablaron	comieron	vivieron

Pretérito imperfecto:

hablar	comer	vivir
hablaba	comía	vivía
hablabas	comías	vivías
hablaba	comía	vivía
hablábamos	comíamos	vivíamos
hablabais	comíais	vivíais
hablaban	comían	vivían



## APPENDIX IV

### Standardised tests (1)

Hola,

Antes de empezar el test, contesta por favor a las siguientes preguntas :

Nombre:

Años estudiando español:

Primera lengua:

Segundas lenguas (aparte del español):

E-mail:

#### *Ejercicio 1:*

¿Qué forma del verbo te parece la más adecuada: el **indefinido**, el **imperfecto**, o son **ambas** correctas en el contexto de la frase? **Redondea** la forma que elijas. Si eliges las dos, redondea las dos.

1. Antes la vida fue (IND) / era (IMP) más barata .
2. Aquella noche me acosté (IND) / acostaba (IMP) a las ocho.
3. Clara e Iñaki se casaron (IND) / casaban (IMP) por la iglesia.
4. Compraron (IND) / compraban (IMP) la casa por 25 millones de pesetas.
5. Durante las vacaciones cada mañana Víctor compró (IND) / compraba (IMP) el pan.
6. Iba (IMP) / Fui (IND) a Francia el 5 de mayo de 1990.
7. La semana pasada Laura no fue (IND) / iba (IMP) a clase.
8. Laura almorzó (IND) / almorzaba (IMP) ayer con su primo de Madrid.
9. Me siento igual que cuando tuve (IND) / tenía (IMP) 20 años.
10. Mi abuelo se llamó (IND) / llamaba (IMP) Ramón Guillermo.
11. Sergio estudió (IND) / estudiaba (IMP) dos meses en Holanda.

**Ejercicio 2:**

¿Que forma utilizarías en cada uno de los espacios, el indefinido o el imperfecto?  
Escribe en el espacio la forma que te parezca más adecuada.

**EL CAFÉ**

Ayer \_\_\_\_\_(pasar) un rato en el café donde Nuria \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_(tomar) el desayuno todos los domingos. \_\_\_\_\_(Estar) muy animado.  
Yo \_\_\_\_\_(pedir) un café con leche y Laura un cortado. Entonces  
\_\_\_\_\_(entrar) Nuria. La música \_\_\_\_\_(estar) muy alta, así  
que nos \_\_\_\_\_(ir) al bar de enfrente.

**EL COCHE**

El pasado fin de semana \_\_\_\_\_(coger) el coche por primera vez en cinco años.  
Antes de empezar \_\_\_\_\_(estar) nerviosísima, pero una vez me  
\_\_\_\_\_(sentar) delante del volante me \_\_\_\_\_(calmar). Las  
calles \_\_\_\_\_(estar) desiertas porque \_\_\_\_\_(ser) domingo.  
Cuando \_\_\_\_\_(llegar) a casa, todavía me  
\_\_\_\_\_(temblar) las manos.

## APPENDIX V

### Standardised tests (2)

Nombre:

Hola, aquí estoy de nuevo con un ejercicio para vosotros, SUERTE!

#### *Ejercicio:*

¿Qué forma del verbo te parece la más adecuada: el **indefinido**, el **imperfecto**, o son **ambas** correctas en el contexto de la frase? **Redondea** la forma que elijas. Si eliges las dos, redondea las dos.

1. Ayer por la mañana compré (IND) / compraba (IMP) una revista cuando vi a Luis.
2. De niña Marta nunca rió (IND) / reía (IMP).
3. El hombre estuvo (IND) / estaba (IMP) muerto.
4. En el avance noticiario dieron (IND) / daban (IMP) a saber los resultados electorales.
5. En julio pasamos (IND) / pasábamos (IMP) 2 semanas en el Caribe.
6. Hace medio siglo los jóvenes respetaron (IND) / respetaban (IMP) a los ancianos
7. Pilar conoció (IND) / conocía (IMP) a Nacho desde hacía 2 años.
8. Por la noche contamos (IND) / contábamos (IMP) cuentos.
9. Por su santo, Henar le regaló (IND) / regalaba (IMP) una pluma estilográfica.
10. Ramón nació (IND) / nacía (IMP) en Valladolid.
11. Siempre pensé que viviste (IND) / vivías (IMP) con tus padres.
12. Un día fuimos (IND) / íbamos (IMP) juntos de paseo por la playa.



## **APPENDIX VI**

### **Titles of compositions**

- Describe your best vacation ever
- Describe your first love
- Describe your best party ever
- Describe your last nightmare
- Describe the last time you were sick
- Describe your first memory ever
- Describe the happiest day of your life



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**SAMENVATTING**  
**Aspecten over Aspect:**  
**Theorie en Toepassingen van Grammaticale Aspect in het Spaans**

Dit boek omvat een brede collectie van studies naar verschillende kwesties die zijn gerelateerd aan het leren van grammaticaal aspect. Het gemeenschappelijke thema van de studies van dit proefschrift is hun streven naar een beter begrip van a) de complexiteit van het leren van aspect in een tweede taal en b) de problemen in het onderwijs van grammaticaal aspect aan leerlingen wiens eerste taal geen formele markering voor grammaticaal aspect bevat, in het bijzonder aan Nederlanders die Spaans als tweede taal leren. Het onderzoek bevat zowel theoretische als empirische benaderingen.

**Hoofdstuk 1**

Hoofdstuk 1 beschrijft een cross-linguïstische analyse van de temporele en aspectuele systemen van zowel de Spaanse als de Nederlandse taal. De doelen van deze beschrijving zijn:

- a) Het toevoegen van een theoretische achtergrond voor een nauwkeuriger beeld van de intertaal-productie van Spaans lerende Nederlandstaligen.
- b) Het geven van een sterke theoretische basis voor instructies over aspect in grammatica onderwijs.

De cross-linguïstische analyse van temporele-aspectuele voltooiings systemen kan als beschrijving worden gebruikt voor de in dit proefschrift voorgestelde aanpak van aspectuele verwerving. Met deze theoretische vergelijking van talen, zijn de volgende fenomenen bepaald:

- 1) Wat de leerling al impliciet weet over aspect-voltooiing in zijn/haar eerste taal;
- 2) Welke aspectuele fenomenen van de eerste taal vergelijkbaar en identiek met de tweede taal zijn;
- 3) welke aspectuele fenomenen van de tweede taal de leerling niet uit zijn/haar eerste taal kent.

Vanuit een cross-linguïstische oogpunt, bevat de semantische structuur binnen een zin drie potentiële voltooiings-niveaus, één temporele en twee aspectuele. Elke taal gebruikt verschillende strategieën om een interactie tussen de beschikbare niveaus te creëren. Het Spaans bevat door zijn rijke morfologie alle drie de niveaus. Het Nederlands daarentegen, heeft door zijn arme morfologie slechts twee niveaus: een temporele en een aspectuele. Het ontbrekende niveau is wellicht de oorzaak van de problemen van Spaans lerende Nederlandstaligen met de verwerving van de tweede taal, omdat zij vanuit hun eerste taal niet bekend zijn met dit niveau.

Een beschrijving van elk niveau in beide talen en een vergelijking tussen zulke beschrijvingen leidt enerzijds naar een diepere kennis van de voltooiings-markeerders in de eerste taal van de leerling en anderzijds naar een duidelijker beeld van het verschil tussen de voltooiings-markeerders van de eerste en de tweede taal.

Kortom, de gekozen temporele analyse van Hoofdstuk 1 is een binaire benadering, waarbij elke temporele vorm zijn temporele betekenis van een serie compositioneel gecombineerde operatoren ontvangt. In de atemporele aspectuele analyse verkrijgt elke predikatie zijn aspectuele betekenis van de combinatie van de lexicale betekenissen van het werkwoord en de begrenzen informatie van de argumenten. Het Spaanse grammaticale aspect is een soort smeermiddel tussen het temporele en het predicationele niveau; het voorziet in aspectuele informatie, maar maakt gebruik van temporele vormen als de dragers van zulke informatie.

### **Hoofdstuk 2**

Het empirisch onderzoek van Hoofdstuk 2 betreft de intuïties van eerste-taal sprekers over hun preferenties voor werkwoordsvormen volgens verschillende aspectuele zinsinformatie. Het doel van deze studie is het achterhalen of sprekers van het Spaans als eerste taal hun intuïties over de goedkeuring van de vormen van het grammaticale aspect baseren op de andere aspectuele informatie binnen een eenvoudige zin. Er moet worden gekeken of het predicationele aspect in het Spaans de keus van grammaticaal aspect markeerders beïnvloedt. Het doel van Hoofdstuk 2 is het empirisch afwijzen van de mogelijkheid dat de distributie van de twee verleden tijden in het Spaans ook beïnvloed kan worden door het lagere aspectuele voltooiingsniveau. Met andere woorden, deze studie werd uitgevoerd om te kijken of de juxtapositie van aspectuele niveaus binnen een zin inderdaad zo onafhankelijk is voor sprekers van het Spaans als eerste taal als in Hoofdstuk 1 wordt geclaimd.

Voordat bepaald kan worden of de gemaakte distributie van verleden tijden door leerlingen van het Spaans als tweede taal ongeschikt is, moet het duidelijk zijn dat dezelfde distributie voor sprekers van het Spaans als eerste taal niet bestaat. Oftewel, om de distributie van Spaans lerende Nederlandstaligen te begrijpen als uniek en onvoldoende, moet eerst bewezen worden dat eerste-taal sprekers niet diezelfde distributie delen.

De resultaten van dit onderzoek laten zien dat het terminatief/duratief onderscheid geen rol speelt in de keus van de eerste taal sprekers voor de onvoltooid verleden tijdsvorm. Bovendien, wordt in dit hoofdstuk geduid op het belang van “outer aspect”, de aspectuele informatie die buiten de zinsgrenzen gevonden wordt. Eerste taal sprekers kiezen tussen de twee aspectuele vormen aan de hand van contextuele discourse informatie. De verwachtingen geformuleerd volgens de aspectuele analyse van Hoofdstuk 1 zijn bevestigd: bij sprekers van het Spaans als eerste taal, worden de twee aspectuele informatieniveaus die in een zin gevonden kunnen worden gejuxtapositioneerd en niet gecombineerd.

### **Hoofdstuk 3**

De empirische studie beschreven in Hoofdstuk 3 betreft tweede taal vrije-productie data van Nederlandse beginners in het Spaans. Het doel van deze studie is het

karakteriseren van de distributie van de twee verleden tijden in het Spaans in de intertaal van de leerlingen. Verwervingstheorieën worden gepresenteerd en gebruikt om de data te beschrijven en hun hypothesen worden zorgvuldig onderzocht. Ook wordt een nieuwe benadering naar de tweede taal verwerving van grammaticaal aspect getoetst, die de cross-linguïstische analyse van Hoofdstuk 1 als theoretisch startpunt neemt.

De resultaten laten zien dat, alleen wanneer predicationeel aspect als het atemporele niveau van aspectuele codering genomen wordt, kan de data van de intertaal op de juiste manier beschreven worden. Niet de lexicale semantiek van de werkwoorden, maar juist predicationeel aspect beïnvloedt de keus van het werkwoord gedeeltelijk.

Een andere belangrijke bevinding in dit hoofdstuk is dat de deelnemers consistent zijn in hun gebruik van de perfectieve vorm als standaard voor verleden tijd. Dit resultaat leidt tot een discussie op het discourse niveau: pragmatische factoren, zoals het grote belang van de perfectief als verleden tijd in discourse, zijn nodig om een correcte beschrijving van de resultaten te kunnen geven.

De eerste bevinding (predicationeel aspect beïnvloedt het grammaticale aspect in intertaal) wordt ondersteund door de aspectuele analyse van Hoofdstuk 1, die wijst op de overeenkomsten in betekenis tussen de twee aspectuele niveaus. De tweede bevinding (perfectief wordt gebruikt als standaard voor verleden tijd) wordt bevestigd door de bevindingen van Hoofdstuk 2, omdat dit het opmerkelijke belang van aspectuele aanwijzingen uit de discourse (outer aspect) in grammaticale aspectuele representatie suggereert.

#### **Hoofdstuk 4**

De derde empirische studie, gepresenteerd in Hoofdstuk 4, brengt een aspect instructie ten uitvoer. Deze instructie is ontwikkeld op de theoretische premissen van het eerste hoofdstuk en het tweede taal verwervingsonderzoek van het derde hoofdstuk. Beginners en mid-gevorderde leerlingen van het Spaans volgden de instructie. De experimentele instructie betreft zowel expliciete als impliciete methodes van grammatica onderwijs.

Het leren van een taal in een leslokaal is anders dan het leren van een taal op straat, met name omdat de input die de leerlingen krijgen is gemanipuleerd. Deelnemers van dit experiment krijgen geen willekeurige of spontane taal, vol met pragmatische hints, maar eerder een taal die dusdanig is gemanipuleerd dat het leren van het bepaalde fenomeen, in dit geval het aspectuele systeem in het Spaans, wordt vergemakkelijkt. Ook wanneer meer spontane conversatie taken worden toegevoegd bij klassikaal onderwijs, is het nog altijd de vraag of in de behoeften van echte communicatieve interactie wordt voorzien. Kortom, de pragmatische hints die leerlingen nodig hebben om te ontdekken welke grammaticaal aspectuele vorm men zou moeten gebruiken, bestaan niet in een lesomgeving. Als leerlingen grammaticaal aspect moeten leren en het verschil tussen beide vormen willen begrijpen, dan zijn andere strategieën nodig. Het blijkt dat het een succesvolle onderwijsstrategie is om hen te laten zien hoe grammaticaal aspect en predicationale aspect op elkaar inwerken.

Deze derde empirische studie probeert uit te vinden of een instructie, gebaseerd op de onafhankelijkheid van de predicationele en grammaticale niveaus van aspect, Nederlandstalige leerlingen van Spaans helpt om de twee verleden tijden nauwkeuriger te produceren. Bovendien draagt deze studie bij tot de lopende discussie of lessen in grammatica in tweede taal-onderwijs het leren van het taalfenomeen in kwestie (in dit geval aspect) bevordert.

De belangrijkste methodologische bevinding van dit hoofdstuk is dat, in onderwijs, het verschil tussen de twee soorten aspect (predicationeel versus grammaticaal) enerzijds, en het volgen van het “al gekend principe” (in dit geval, predicationeel aspect in het Nederlands) anderzijds, Nederlandstalige leerlingen van het Spaans beter helpt om de twee verleden tijden te gebruiken dan wanneer de connecties tussen aspectuele niveaus and tussen talen niet gemaakt worden. De resultaten bewijzen hoe de experimentele instructie de vaardigheid van de deelnemers op een positieve manier beïnvloedt.

#### **Algemene conclusies**

In dit proefschrift wordt herhaaldelijk gewezen op het belang van discourse in aspectuele descriptie. Discourse helpt niet alleen bij het maken van onderscheid in de aspectuele distributie van de twee verleden tijden in het Spaans (Hoofdstuk 2), maar ook de distributie van zulke vormen in intertaal (Hoofdstuk 3).

Dit boek heeft laten zien dat, ondanks het feit dat aspect een context-discourse fenomeen is, aspectuele zins-informatie noodzakelijk is om de verwerving m.b.t. zijn distributie te begrijpen en om een succesvolle instructie te ontwikkelen. Analyse op zinsniveau verklaart niet alleen de distributie van het gebruik van het Spaanse perfectief en imperfectief wanneer werkwoords-morfologie in intertaal verschijnt, maar de toepassing van zo'n analyse op een aspect instructie blijkt ook efficiënt wanneer op het “al bekend” principe wordt geconcentreerd.

Op het theoretische niveau laat dit proefschrift zien dat onderzoek naar de eerste taal, tweede taal en intertaal distributies onweerlegbare argumenten geeft om deze bepaalde analyse te verdedigen. Dit proefschrift levert een bijdrage aan het begrip van de acquisitie van grammaticaal aspect in de onderzoekswereld, omdat het laat zien dat predicationeel aspect de distributie van de twee verleden tijden in intertaal beter verklaart dan lexicaal aspect, gebaseerd op werkwoord betekenissen. Dit proefschrift draagt tevens bij aan de onderwijsmethodes van grammaticaal aspect, omdat het bewijst dat, ondanks het feit dat grammaticaal aspect een context-afhankelijk notie is, wanneer men laat zien wat er binnen een zin gebeurt, dit het begrip en gebruik van twee verleden tijden door tweede taal leerlingen aanzienlijk beter helpt dan wanneer alleen contextuele factoren gepresenteerd worden .

**RESUMEN**  
**Aspectos del Aspecto:**  
**Teoría y Aplicaciones del Aspecto Gramatical en Castellano**

Esta tesis presenta las conclusiones derivadas de la investigación de varias cuestiones relacionadas con el estudio y la enseñanza del aspecto gramatical. Los objetivos primordiales de los estudios en esta compilación son, en primer lugar, contribuir a un entendimiento más preciso sobre las complejidades del estudio del aspecto gramatical en segundas lenguas y, en segundo lugar, mostrar las dificultades en el aprendizaje del aspecto gramatical para estudiantes cuya lengua materna no lo marca formalmente, en particular, para estudiantes holandeses de castellano. Este estudio es el fruto de una cuidadosa investigación empírica soportada por una sólida investigación teórica.

**Capítulo 1**

Desde un punto de vista teórico, el Capítulo 1 proporciona un análisis lingüístico comparativo de los sistemas temporales y aspectuales de las lenguas castellana y holandesa. El objetivo de este análisis es conseguir una base teórica :

- a) Que proporcione una visión más exacta de las dificultades que, en el aprendizaje del castellano, puedan tener los estudiantes holandeses;
- b) Que aporte una base teórica contundente para una instrucción gramatical sobre el aspecto.

Este análisis lingüístico comparativo sirve como instrumento teórico-descriptivo para el particular enfoque sobre el aprendizaje del aspecto gramatical propuesto en esta tesis. Gracias a esta comparación lingüística, los siguientes puntos pueden ser evaluados:

- a) Aquello que el estudiante implícitamente ya conoce sobre el aspecto gramatical en su lengua materna;
- b) Los fenómenos aspectuales de la lengua materna que son comparables e idénticos a los del segundo idioma;
- c) Los fenómenos aspectuales del segundo idioma que el estudiante no conoce a través de su lengua materna .

Desde el punto de vista de la lingüística comparativa, semánticamente, la estructura oracional de castellano expresa tres niveles potenciales de finalización, uno temporal y dos aspectuales. Cada idioma usa sus propias estrategias para crear interacción entre los niveles que tiene disponibles. Debido a su pobre morfología, el idioma holandés expresa sólo dos niveles, uno aspectual y uno temporal. Sin embargo el castellano, gracias a su rica morfología verbal, expresa tres niveles, uno temporal y dos aspectuales. Por lo

tanto, uno de los niveles aspectuales del castellano no está presente en el sistema aspectual holandés. Puede ser que este nivel de finalización ausente en holandés pero presente en castellano, sea la causa de las dificultades a las que el estudiante holandés se enfrenta a la hora de diferenciar entre los dos pretéritos del castellano.

La descripción de cada uno de los niveles en cada una de las dos lenguas y la comparación entre ellas conduce, en primer lugar, a un conocimiento más profundo de las expresiones de finalización en la lengua materna del estudiante y, en segundo lugar, contribuye a ofrecer una imagen más clara de la diferencia entre las formas de finalización aspectual en la lengua materna y en el segundo idioma (holandés y castellano, respectivamente).

El análisis temporal reflejado en el Capítulo 1 es un acercamiento binario, donde cada forma temporal recoge su significado de una serie de operadores combinados composicionalmente. En el análisis sobre el aspecto atemporal, cada predicación (= oración sin marca de conjugación verbal) recibe su significado de la combinación del léxico verbal y la delimitación de los argumentos (interno y externo) que acompañan al verbo, diferenciando así entre predicaciones terminativas y durativas. El aspecto gramatical castellano es una especie de lubricante entre el tiempo verbal y el aspecto predicacional, entre el nivel temporal y el nivel atemporal; el aspecto gramatical proporciona, por lo tanto, información aspectual (oraciones perfectivas e imperfectivas), pero usa formas temporales como portadoras de tal información.

## **Capítulo 2**

El Capítulo 2 es el reflejo de la investigación empírica llevada a cabo haciendo especial hincapié en las intuiciones del castellanohablante sobre sus preferencias en el uso de las formas verbales, según la información aspectual correspondiente a cada oración. El objetivo de este estudio es averiguar si el castellanohablante basa dichas intuiciones según el otro tipo de información aspectual que la oración en concreto pueda presentar. La idea es ver si en castellano, el aspecto predicacional (nivel atemporal de finalización) influye en la elección entre las dos formas del aspecto gramatical.

El objetivo del Capítulo 2 es rechazar empíricamente la posibilidad de que en castellano, el uso de los dos pasados simples esté influenciado por el nivel atemporal de la oración (el aspecto predicacional). En otras palabras, este estudio pretende descubrir si la yuxtaposición de niveles aspectuales en la oración es tan explícita para los hablantes de castellano como el Capítulo 1 sugiere. Además, para evaluar si los estudiantes holandeses realizan un uso correcto de los pasados en castellano, primero se debe comprobar qué criterios de uso siguen los castellanohablantes.

Los resultados de este experimento demuestran que la distinción entre una oración terminativa o durativa no desempeña ningún papel en la elección de cualquiera de las dos formas simples de pasado en castellano. Además, en este capítulo comienza a insinuarse la importancia del aspecto externo; de la información aspectual que se encuentra fuera de las fronteras de la oración. Los castellanohablantes escogen entre las

dos formas del pasado según la información discursiva-contextual, no según la información atemporal- predicacional. Se confirman las expectativas formuladas en el Capítulo 1: Entre los castellanohablantes, los dos niveles de información aspectual que pueden encontrarse en una oración son yuxtapuestos y no combinados.

### **Capítulo 3**

El estudio empírico descrito en el Capítulo 3 analiza redacciones de estudiantes holandeses de castellano. El objetivo de este estudio es caracterizar la utilización de las dos formas de pasado del castellano en las redacciones de los estudiantes. Así pues, se analizan diversas teorías para describir la utilización de la morfología de los pretéritos en los primeros pasos del aprendizaje del castellano. Se pone a prueba un nuevo enfoque en el aprendizaje del aspecto gramatical en segundos idiomas, tomando como principio teórico el análisis lingüístico comparativo realizado en el Capítulo 1.

La investigación ilustra que para describir correctamente los resultados, se debe tener en cuenta el aspecto predicacional de cada una de las oraciones escritas. No es sólo el significado léxico de los verbos lo que influye en la elección de forma verbal, sino el aspecto predicacional (el verbo y sus argumentos).

Hay otro resultado importante en este capítulo. Los estudiantes usan reiteradamente el pretérito perfectivo como prototipo del pasado. Por consiguiente, para presentar una descripción coorrecta de los resultados, se tienen que valorar factores pragmáticos (el pretérito perfectivo es la forma más corriente para contar una historia).

El primer resultado (la influencia del aspecto predicacional sobre la elección del aspecto gramatical) es respaldado por el análisis aspectual del Capítulo 1, que indica las semejanzas de significado entre los dos niveles aspectuales. El segundo resultado (el uso del pretérito perfectivo como prototipo del pasado) es corroborado por las conclusiones del Capítulo 2, ya que insinúa la importancia del aspecto externo en la representación del aspecto gramatical.

### **Capítulo 4**

En el Capítulo 4 se pone en práctica una instrucción sobre el aspecto gramatical que combina las premisas teóricas del primer capítulo y los resultados de la investigación sobre el aprendizaje del aspecto gramatical en segundas lenguas del tercer capítulo. Esta instrucción experimental implica tanto métodos explícitos como implícitos en la enseñanza de la gramática.

Aprender un idioma en clase es diferente que aprenderlo en la calle, principalmente porque en la clase, el lenguaje que se usa es manipulado por el profesor. Los estudiantes que participan en este experimento no reciben un lenguaje arbitrario y espontáneo, lleno de pistas pragmáticas, sino una lengua que es manipulada para facilitar el estudio del sistema aspectual del castellano.

Este tercer estudio empírico pretende averiguar si una instrucción basada en la independencia de los dos niveles aspectuales (gramatical y predicacional) puede servir de ayuda al estudiante holandés de castellano para aprender con más exactitud los dos

pretéritos simples del castellano. Además, este estudio contribuye al debate en curso de si la enseñanza de la gramática en el aula facilita el aprendizaje del fenómeno gramatical en cuestión (el aspecto, en este caso).

El resultado metodológico más importante de este capítulo es el efecto positivo de la enseñanza de la diferencia entre los dos tipos de aspecto (predicacional y gramatical) junto con el uso de "el principio de lo conocido" (en este caso, el aspecto predicacional en holandés). El efecto es positivo ya que ayuda al estudiante holandés de castellano a usar las dos formas de pretérito con más eficacia que si las conexiones entre dichos niveles y lenguas no se hubieran producido. Así pues, los resultados demuestran que la instrucción experimental afecta positivamente el aprendizaje del pretérito perfecto y el pretérito imperfectivo en castellano.

Incluso si la interacción en el aula incorpora tareas de conversación más libres, no está nada claro que las necesidades funcionales de una verdadera interacción comunicativa puedan ser recreadas satisfactoriamente. Por lo tanto, las pistas pragmáticas que los estudiantes deben descubrir, son escasas o incluso ausentes en el aula. Para que los estudiantes aprendan el aspecto gramatical y entiendan la diferencia entre las dos formas se debe poner a prueba otro tipo de estrategias que no sean contextuales, por ejemplo, demostrando a los estudiantes cómo el aspecto gramatical se relaciona con el aspecto predicacional.

### **Conclusiones generales**

En esta tesis, la importancia del discurso en la descripción aspectual ha sido indicada varias veces. La información pragmática ayuda a distinguir no sólo la distribución aspectual de los dos pretéritos en el castellano L1 (Capítulo 2) sino también la distribución de tales formas en la producción como segundo idioma (el Capítulo 3).

Este libro pretende mostrar que si bien el aspecto gramatical es un fenómeno discursivo y contextual, la información aspectual que se encuentra en la oración simple es muy útil para entender su distribución y para desarrollar una instrucción acertada. La distribución del uso en castellano de las formas perfectivas e imperfectivas cuando surge la morfología verbal en estudiantes se entiende solo cuando el aspecto predicacional se tiene en cuenta. Además, el uso de tal análisis en una instrucción sobre el aspecto gramatical, enfocando lo ya conocido a través del holandés, es eficiente.

En el ámbito teórico, esta tesis muestra que la investigación de lenguas maternas y segundos idiomas da argumentos irrefutables para defender el análisis aspectual presentado en el primer capítulo. En el ámbito descriptivo, esta tesis muestra que el aspecto predicacional influye en la distribución de los dos pretéritos simples en el lenguaje del estudiante. En el ámbito didáctico, esta tesis confirma que, aunque el aspecto gramatical sea una noción dependiente del contexto, si se muestra lo que ocurre dentro de cada oración, el estudiante entenderá el uso de los dos pretéritos mejor que cuando sólo se presentan factores pragmáticos.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Paz González was born in Barcelona on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1973.

In 1991, she began her studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, in the Anglo-Germanic Department. In 1994, she was granted an Erasmus scholarship for two years and moved to Amsterdam to continue her M.A. studies in English Language and Literature at the Universiteit van Amsterdam. She specialized in Applied Linguistics, and in particular, Second Language Acquisition.

Paz received her M.A. degree from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in July 1996. In September 1996, she started writing her M.A. thesis for the Universiteit van Amsterdam. Her Master's thesis was a cross-examination of the acquisition of English by immigrant children and Dutch children in a Dutch learning environment. This M.A. was successfully completed in April 1997.

In September 1997, she enrolled as a PhD student at HIL (Holland Institute of Linguistics), at the Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam, following the (HIL) Advanced Masters Programme at the Universiteit van Leiden. In January 1999, she obtained the position of PhD researcher at the Institute of Linguistics OTS, Universiteit van Utrecht. The study presented here is the result of that research.