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## **THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE ACQUISITION OF PAST TENSE-ASPECT MORPHOLOGY (Review of the literature)**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper represents a conceptualization of L1 and L2 developmental stages of the acquisition of English past tense aspect verbal morphology. It constitutes the theoretical chapter of a PhD doctoral thesis that investigates the acquisition of past tense-aspect verbal morphology of EFL Moroccan university learners. The paper basically attempts to provide a recent review of related studies that account for the thesis topic. Primarily, it collects and reproduce the major and the prominent results that tackles the emergence of -ed and -ing past markers in the L1 and L2 context. Various studies attempted to give an understanding the nature of English past markers in different contexts adopting longitudinal or cross-sectional method, either in the natural environment or in the instructed one. Actually, this paper attempts to provide a consistent body of literature to account for the nature of the processes responsible for the emergence the tense-aspect system which differs from L1 to EFL context. Despite discrepancies in the findings, there's still a consensus on the route of acquisition that seems to be similar among L1 and L2 learners with some respect. Therefore, most researchers seek to investigate the emergence of past tenses marking system through approaching how the interplay between the situational aspect and viewpoint aspect took place. However, this paper will focus on a prototype-based account to explain the nature of past tense-aspect acquisition development.*

## **Keywords**

Prototype Account, Markedness, Lexical Aspect, Grammatical Aspect, Aspect Hypotheses

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## **1. Introduction**

The analysis of the emergence of aspectual distinctions in both L1 and L2 acquisition is strongly linked to the theoretical specification of aspect as a linguistic category. The conceptual understanding of aspect, however, does not appear to be as straightforward as it would seem. For instance, Olsen (1997) adds that “given the variety of lexical, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic elements contributing to the interpretation of aspect, it is not surprising that analyses-whether broadly theoretical or examinations of aspect in a particular language- differ widely” (p.3). Consequently, it is necessary to address the theoretical conceptualization that underlies various definitions of aspect that have been used as the foundation for the analysis of the development of past tense verbal morphology in English. In this chapter I present an overview of aspect as a linguistic phenomenon which is part of the larger notion of temporality.

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study of the acquisition of past tense-aspect in EFL context. In section 1, I distinguish the interaction between the notions of tense and aspect, lexical and grammatical aspect as well as discuss the interaction between lexical in the L1, L2, and foreign language, while in section2, I review a few empirical studies on the nature of emergence of past tense-aspect.

## **2. Tense and Aspect**

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology in the first and second language. Humans found a linguistic encoding system of temporal situations that is varied greatly.

### **2.1 The Concepts of Tense and Aspect**

Salaberry and Shirai (2002) defined Tense as “a deictic category that places an event in time relative to some other time, resulting in future, present and past. Aspect, on the other hand, is a fuzzy concept which tackles how an event unfolds in time” (P.2). The concepts of tense and aspect are very linked. In fact, while tense is indicating event’s location in time, aspect is indicating the texture of the time in which an event has occurred, while aspect is considered to be embedded in tense to describe how the time in which it occurs is viewed.

**Table 1:** Aspects and Aspect Markers in English

Aspect	Aspect Marker
<i>Simple</i>	∅
<i>Perfect</i>	have+ V-en
<i>Progressive</i>	Be+ V-ing
<i>Perfect Progressive</i>	have been +V-ing

### 2.1.1 Lexical Aspect

Lexical aspect is also known as ‘semantic aspect’. It refers to the semantics properties inherent in the meaning of the predicate (Robinson, 1995; Salaberry, 1999). Vendler’s (1967) provides a framework of lexical aspects that consists of states, activities, accomplishment and achievements. These four lexical classes can be differentiated from each other using three features: dynamicity [±], telicity [±], and punctuality [±] which are defined by Lee as follows: (Anderson, 1991; Chung and Timberlake, 1985; Comrie, 1976).

**1: States (STA)** denote stative situations that have no dynamics, and continue without additional effort or energy being applied (love, hate, want, seem, know).

**2: Activities (AVT)** denote events or actions that have duration, but without a specific endpoint (run, walk, play, sing, talk, rain)

**3: Accomplishments: (ACC)** are similar to activities in that they denote events or actions that have inherent duration, but they have an inherent endpoint once the goal is reached (make, build, paint).

**4: Achievements: (ACH)** denote situations that take place instantaneously, and can be perceived as being reduced to a single point without duration (reach, arrive, leave, recognize, and notice).

**Table 2:** Semantic Features for Vendlerian Classification of Inherent Lexical Aspect

	States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
<b>Punctual</b>	–	–	–	+
<b>Telic</b>	–	–	+	+
<b>Dynamic</b>	–	+	+	+

Besides Vendler’s four-way classification introduced previously, there are other classification methods: stative versus dynamic distinction (Robison, 1990), and punctual versus durative (Robison, 1990).

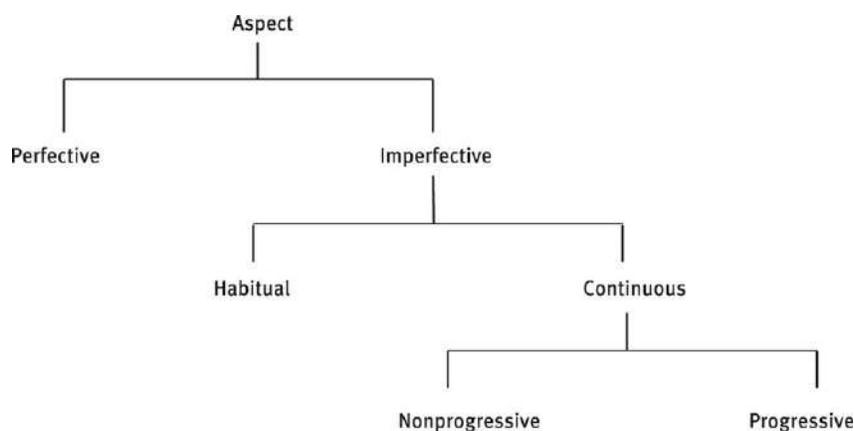
In spite of the tremendous efforts to group lexical verbs into clear-cut categories, a sharp distinction between Vendler's four types of inherent lexical aspect is not always possible. Therefore, many lexical verbs can be classified into more than one category. Apart from presenting comprehensive lists with the classification of verbs according to their inherent lexical aspect (Dowty, 1979; Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995; Collins, 2002), a number of studies have used an developed several diagnostic tests in order to distinguish between Vendler's four categories (Anderson and Shirai 1995; Brinton 1998; Brinton 2000).

### 2.1.2 Grammatical Aspect

We mean by grammatical aspect the grammatical encoding of aspectual notions which are realized differently from one language to another. For example, through the use of inflectional morphology, derivational morphology, auxiliary, or periphrastic constructions. A variety of typological studies reveal the recurring patterns of aspectual marking in different language all over the world (Comrie 1976; Bybee 1985; Baylee and Dahl 1989; Baylee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994). In this section We will see in detail the grammatical aspectual patterns and how they are related to each other.

Grammatical aspect is a system to distinguish utterances base on the viewpoint that they transmit to the listener (Comrie, 1976; Smith, 1997). In English, grammatical aspect is encoded through the use of progressive and perfect aspects. The majority of scholars prefer to use the perfective and imperfective since these terms cover a large spectrum of aspects.

According to Comrie, the imperfective aspect perceives a situation as a closed event, while the perfective perceives a situation as a open event. The following figure subdivided aspect into these components:



**Figure 1:** *Imperfective Components (adapted from Comrie 1976: 25)*

### **3. The Acquisition of Tense-Aspect**

Over the last two decades, the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology has received a remarkable attention. The development of tense-aspect morphology is immensely impacted by the lexical aspect inherent in the verb to which inflections are attached. This tendency has been revealed in various studies in English. (Robinson 1990, 1995; Bardovi-Harlig;1998; Collins 1998; Jabbari, 1998). These Studies has been carried out within the Aspect Hypothesis framework (AH) to investigate the emergence of aspect-verbal morphology of both first and second language (Shirai and Kurono, 1998).

AH provides four promises to account for the influence of lexical aspect on the tense forms:

- a. Learners start using perfective past marks from achievements and accomplishments and then extend it to activities and statives.
- b. Imperfective past precedes perfective past in the languages which encode this distinction, and it begins with stative form of verbs extending to activities, accomplishment and achievement respectively.
- c. In languages encoding progressive aspect, progressive marking follows this pattern: activities, accomplishment, and achievements.
- d. There is no wrong overextension of progressive markings to statives (Haznedar, 2007; Gabriele, Martohardjono, and McClure, 2005; Shirai, 1991, cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 2002).

These promises are rooted in prototype theory (Rosch, 1973 cited in Gabriele, Martohardjono, and McClure, 2005). Which was developed in cognitive psychology by Eleanor Rosch to account for human categorization. The claim was that children and learners of second language acquire a linguistic category starting with a prototype of the category, and later expand its application to less prototypical cases (Rosch 1973, 1978; Rosch, Mervis 1975).

We hope that the reviewed data will enlighten us about the principles and processes that are responsible for learners' acquisition of English tense-aspect morphology.

#### **3.1 First Language Acquisition**

Number of studies have come results supporting the AH predictions in both naturalistic and instructed L2 learning contexts (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2000; Salaberry and Shirai 2002). In this section, we provide the findings that accounts for the development of lexical semantics and morphology regarding Aspect Hypothesis and its extended version of prototype account (Bowerman 1978; Barrett 1982, 1986; Greenberg and Kuczaj 1982; Slobin 1981, 1985; Sachs 1983; Taylor, 1989).

### **3.1.1 The Aspect Hypothesis**

AH is the first theoretical framework that was provided to account for the tense aspect development in L1 and L2. Anderson (1991), Robison (1990, 1995), Andersen and Shirai (1996), Bardovi-Harlig (1998) have all argued that the acquisition of tense aspect morphology is guided by the inherent aspectual properties of predicates during the early stages either in the L1 or in the L2 acquisition. They believe that the lexical properties of a verb play a prominent role in the developmental processes during the acquisition stages of past tense-aspect morphology. Therefore, they propose that learners acquire verb's aspectual properties prior to tense features.

Many studies that adopt AH seem to support the findings for the spread of past/perfective markers from telic to atelic. In spite of the considerable agreement on the course of development of tense-aspect morphology, a remarkable disagreement exist about the phenomenon, in terms of both description and explanation. However, not all studies' findings conform with the aspect hypothesis. However, any occurred inconsistency in findings might be due to the researcher methodological choices; to terminological differences. (Bickerton, 1989; Cziko 1989; Weist 1989).

### **3.1.2 The Emergence of -Ing Grammatical Aspect in English**

The imperfective progressive aspect is expressed in English by a number of ways such as lexical means and grammatical morphology that imposes the insertion of the Be+ing device on the verb. According to Brown (1973), young English learners primarily perform the inflected base form of the verb for different aims like progressive situations. In fact, -ing marker happen to be the first morpheme in Brown children studied as results have been shown. (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

Obviously, the children in Brown study never made mistakes like the utterances of "I am liking this" or "are you wanting that?". This finding at the first moment, is astonishing, due to the fact that other grammatical morphemes markers –ed, for example, are often overgeneralized like "goed" for went. Brown's findings were considered as a proof for the existing innate distinction of state vs process for the child language. (Bickerton 1981, 1984; Cziko 1989; Smith 1991, 1997). (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

Furthermore, Bickerton explains that the reason why children don't come to overgeneralize –ing marker to stative verbs, as they do with other grammatical morphemes, is grounded in the fact that they could distinguish states from processes at the beginning stage of their use of the form, therefore they restrict the use of –ing to only stative verbs.

Furthermore, Brown provided an alternative explanation for the lack of the overgeneralization of –ing to stative verbs in his data. He adds that the children might be equipped with innate devise to

subcategorize verbs as processes against states. Moreover, Brown suggests that children are possibly learned verbs as “ingable” as consequence to their mothers’ speech output. So, they would apply –ing to verbs that happen to be used frequently with –ing in the input to those that rarely or never do. The validity of the hypothesis that account for the impact of input was approved through a comparison with another study of Brown that took as its subject the nature of use of progressives by EVE and her mother (Brown: 326- 328; see also Kuczaj 1978). (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

Even though Brown mentioned that children do not use –ing when it come to the semantic category of statives, he did not come to reveal which categories children do use –ing with. However, another study by Bloom, Lifter, and Hafitz (1980) discovered that verbs such as play, ride, and write occur with –ing marker. These verbs form a coherent semantic category that matches with Vendler’s activity verbs. In fact, more studies have confirmed the association of –ing with activities such as McShane and Whittaker (1988) (Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

### **3.1.3 The Development of Past Tense Forms**

In the same line of study, Brown attempts to account for children’s first use of past tense forms. He notices that the children’s use of past tense is restricted to a small set of verbs such as fell, dropped, slipped, crashed, and broke which demonstrate events that are punctual and telic (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

Similarly, Bloom, lifter, and Hafitz’s (1980) study details more about Brown’s observation that English-children go for the “undergeneralization” use of tense-aspect forms in which they restrict their use to a definite set of verbs. Furthermore, in their research, they try to seek the existing relationship between the semantic properties of verbs and the use of English inflectional morphology. They conclude that the distribution of children’s inflections was greatly correlated with verb categories in each developmental period. On one hand, they found that –ing occurred frequently and exclusively with action verbs that titled durative, non- completeive events, which correspond to activity verbs. On the other hand, they discovered that-ed and irregular past tense form occurred with verbs that named non-durative, completeive events in which the events denoted by the verbs that entails results like find and break (telic verbs, achievements or accomplishments) (2011). In the interpretation of their findings, (Bloom, Lifter, Hafitz observe that the inflections start to extent to a variety of verb categories at the last developmental period of their study. Consequently, they concluded that inherent lexical aspect had a great impact and indispensable role on children’s acquisition of English tense aspect morphology (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

In other study that was conducted by Mcshane and Whittaker (1988). The findings were similar to those of Bloom, Lifter and Hafitz. The researchers discovered that by the age of 4 the children started to distinguish between the uses of the past tense and progressive forms. In fact, they have investigated whether the situations were telic or atelic, and whether they were iterative (semelfactive events) or non-iterative (durative events), then assign the right past or progressive marker according to the nature of the expressed situation. In other words, the children started to use past tense more frequently with telic and semelfactive events, and –ing more frequently with atelic and durative events (2011). However, these results contrasted with those of Bloom, Lifter and Hafitz and Harner. The dispute stands on the point of development, in which the former study argues that the correlation between tense-aspect markers and temporal features of situations did not exist ahead of time, or from the beginning, but rather happened and took place overtime. The majority of the stated studies concluded that past tense marking was related to the semantic features of (+telic) and (+punctual), in contrast; the progressive marking was related to (-telic) and (+dynamic) (2011). (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

Tomassello (1992) and Clark (1992), in their longitudinal studies, have reached the same conclusion about the acquisition of verb morphology by children of 1 to 2-year-old. Tomassello revealed that the earliest past-tense forms that have been noticed are: made, spilled, dropped, gave, and so on, in which the majority of them are state verbs( telic verbs); whereas, the child's earliest progressive forms (17to 23) were: crying, sweeping, clapping, drinking, talking, driving, and so on, in which he found the majority of them were atelic activity verbs, but there were 4 verbs stated by Tomassello that are classified as stative verbs, yet they appeared in progressive forms like: coming, doing, putting, falling . Consequently, Tomassello's data have confused Bloom, Lifter, and Haditz's earlier proposal that children in the early stage of acquisition they haven't come yet to acquire a flexible, generalizable system of verb morphology (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

As have been shown in the previous studies, a highly consistent data gives a reliable consideration about the emergence and function of the early inflectional categories of tense and aspect markers in child language (2011)

### **3.1.4 The Stages of the Acquisition of Tense-Aspect in English**

There are number of stages that characterizes the sequences of the child's acquisition of tense-aspect marking.

- a. **The First Stage:** Child in this stage haven't come yet to analyze the morphological markers as independent constituent of the word that it attached to. He mainly tends to get familiarized with the lexical endeavor of the words. They deal with –ing or –ed and its stem word as one unit.

(Bowerman 1982, 1983; Karmiloff-Smith 1983; Peters, 1983; Tomasello) Moreover, children construct their knowledge of the lexical functioning based on their generated made associations between visual images of scenes and corresponding language forms (Lexical items). Overall, in this stage, children relate lexical form with the provided scenes. Without any observable performance, but just adopting data-driven processes that was the main traits of this stage (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

- b. **Second Stage:** In this stage, the abstraction tendency of approaching the lexical representation is taking place. The children begin to generate the salient features that happen frequently in form-mapping process. In other words, children will start recognizing that there are stable situations without change (State), whereas, there are other changeable situations (event or process). Consequently, they realize that some situations result in different state(event), while other situations go on during observations and end in no change of state (process). By the end of this stage, Children acquired the ability to distinct between the situations as a result of their careful observations, therefore, they come to be equipped with a crude system onto which they can as a result map linguistic forms they hear (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).
- c. **The Third Stage:** This stage gives us in depth insights on child inflectional acquisition of tense aspect. We can describe this phase as merely morphological and correlational analysis stage. They receive information from adult input that seems to have a prominent role at this stage. Children will remark that whenever a process of action is taken place, V-ing is assigned as an inflectional marker. Moreover, V-ing forms occur repeatedly with verbs that indicate process (activity verb) in the parental speech. This happen in this stage due to the fact that parents use –ing to describe what going on around the child. Once children have recognized the patterns in terms of the noticed commonalities among the verbs, they will initiate to abstract –ing as a distinct morpheme, and then attach its function to ongoing actions. So, by the end, children construct a prototype concept of the progressive meaning (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

### **3.1.5 A Prototype Theory Account of the Emergence of Tense Aspect Morphology**

The founder of the prototype theory is Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues (Rosch 1973, 1975, 1978; Rosch and Mervis 1975). The theory has been used in the field of language acquisition, especially in the acquisition of lexical semantics.( Bowerman, 1978; Barrett 1982, 1986; Greenberg and Kuczaj 1982), also in the acquisition of morphology (Slobin 1981, 1985) and it has a related interest in this research thesis because it give account to the past morphology ( Sachs, 1983; Taylor, 1989). (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

**The claim is that children acquire a linguistic category by starting with the prototype of the category, and only later extending its application to less prototypical, peripheral members of the Category. The process of extension is governed by the relative distance from the prototype; that is, children extend the application of a linguistic category first to instances similar to, but a little different from, the prototype, and then to instances of greater differences. (Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011.p.66)**

Based on the previous definitions of the prototype account of tense aspect morphology, we will proceed in the upcoming paragraphs by giving a detailed overview of how this theory can present a comprehensive account of the acquisition of tense aspect morphology. The following claim might be considered as a relevant conceptualization of how the prototype model set up a strong ground to overcome all the old discrepancies in the body of literature as far as the acquisition of tense aspect morphology is concerned (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

**An important claim of the prototype account is that development starts with the prototype of the category, then extends to items similar to the prototype, and finally to least prototypical members. Shairi (1991) showed that progressive marking emerges with “action in progress” as its prototypical meaning, first with activity verbs, and then with accomplishment verbs. This is because the prototype of progressive is associated with the feature (-telic) which applies to activities but not accomplishments. That is, the presence of the feature (+telic) prevents accomplishment verbs from being used with –ing at the earliest stage. Only later on will children relax the use of –ing and extend it beyond the telicity boundaries (Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011.p.67).**

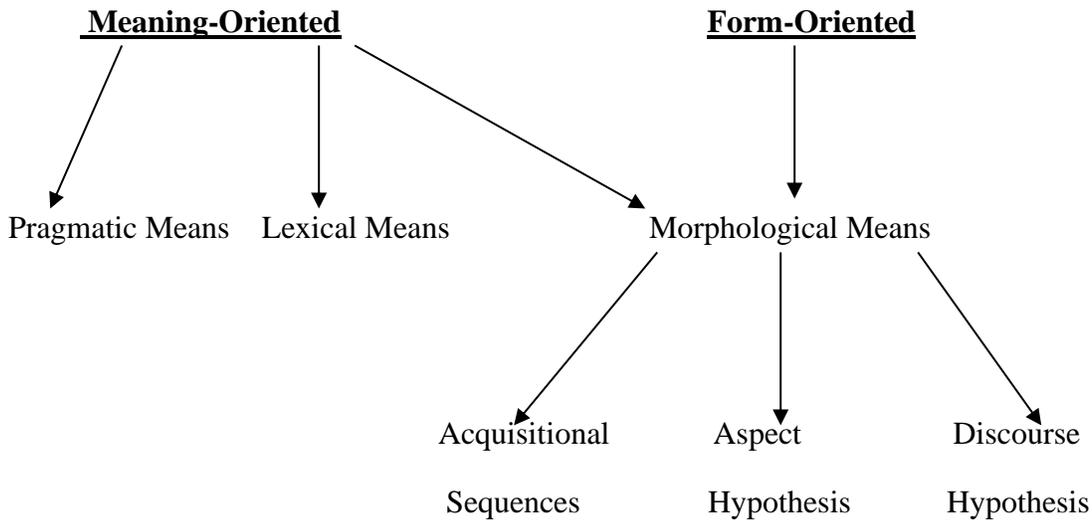
The prototype explanation gave a well consistent description of the development of tense aspect morphology. It reported that the learner spreads prototypes to non-prototypes and it ends in the acquisition of tense aspect morphology in child by the age of 5 in the case of first language acquisition. Also, Shirai (1991) discovers in his study a very convincing data that gave a validity to the prototype model (Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

To sum up, children construct a semantic representation of the morphology in which they begin with a totally restricted one than they adult have. Later, they move to formulate a preliminary prototype that tend to reach the size of adult. In fact, the implication the model of prototype provide the researchers with an explanatory power to account for the underlying mechanism that drive the process of acquisition of the morphology of tense aspect that seems to be a form-function mapping process (2011).

#### **4. Second Language Acquisition**

Various studies have been conducted to approach the interplay between lexical and grammatical aspect in different populations and various perspectives- natural environment, instructed environment, adults and children either with single L1 or mixed L1 background.

Bardovi-Harlig (2000) described two major trends to study the acquisition of temporality in second language which are the meaning-oriented approach and form-oriented approach.



**Figure 2:** *The Major Trends to Study the Acquisition of Temporality in Second Language (Sonia Rocca, 2007).*

The meaning-oriented is dominated in the adult L2 acquisition studies tradition that approached cross-linguistically by the European Science Foundation researchers (Klein and Perdue 1992; Perdue, 1993; Dietrich et al. 1995; Becker and Carroll 1997). The aim was to investigate the concept of temporality while learners pass from a pragmatic to a lexical and finally to a morphological stage. (Klein and Perdue, 1997). First, the pragmatic stage underlies the encoding of temporal relations by scaffolding their discourse, by structuring their narrative in chronological order and by implicitly referring to a situational context. Second, the lexical stage presupposes that learners express temporality using temporal and locative adverbs (Now, then, yesterday, here, there), and connectives (and, so), calendric reference (January 27). Finally, in the last stage, learners express temporality by the development of verb morphology. However, the form-oriented approach is divided into three overlapping ‘stands of inquiry’: acquisitional sequence, aspect hypothesis and discourse hypothesis (Sonia Rocca, 2007). The present study works within the framework of the aspect hypothesis which based on the research of the first language acquisition (Andersen 1986, 1989, 1991; Weist, 1984) (Bronckhart and Sinclair 1973; Antinucci and Miller 1976; Bloom et, 1980). The hypothesis applied to both first and second language acquisition. In the next section, I will review some cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that address the Aspect hypothesis to account for the acquisition of past tense-aspect morphology in the natural and structured context.

#### **4.1 Development of –ing and Overgeneralization**

L2 acquisition of aspect morphology marking is observed to be similar to L1 route of acquisition according to the aspect hypothesis. However, there are some differences when it comes to the process of L2 learners' overgeneralization of progressive marking over stative verbs. In fact, L1 learners scarcely show an overgeneralization of progressive marking over the stative verbs because they inherent innate mechanism that prevent any kind of the mentioned errors. The predisposed device of L1 learners prevent any misuses of stative progressive instances, unlike L2 learners who are not equipped with such device according to the critical period hypothesis (Lennerberg, 1967; Long 1990; Johnson and Newport, 1990; Bialystok and Hakuta,1999). Moreover, many researchers have conducted studies to correlate the use of progressive marking with different semantic notions like lexical aspect. The studies drive our understanding to the nature of overgeneralization of stative verbs and progressive markers in the L2 environment. Still some of these studies report some contradiction in the use of stative progressive by even the native speakers in some occasions. Therefore, it is not manifested as ungrammatical or even an overgeneralization, but rather a consideration while interpreting the L2 uses of stative progressive (cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

#### **4.2 Naturalistic Learners**

Several studies which took a naturalistic environment of learning as its setting, concluded that the uses of stative progressives varied. Robinson (1990) studied a 30-year-old immigrant worker (Spanish L1) who immigrated to US in his 20's. He found that his uses of –ing form often happened with stative verbs. 28% percent of the used verbs are with stative verbs. Besides, there are clear examples of overgeneralization like: wanting, liking, having. (Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011)

Another study by Kumpf (1984) provides a comprehensive analysis of verbal forms used by Tomiko, a Japanese immigrant who acquired English in an English-speaking environment. He had been noticed to “fossilized” after 28 years in US. Her uses of progressive marking were on dynamic verbs and especially on activity verbs. However, no case of stative progressive is reported. So, Tomiko's interlanguage act upon the state-process distinction, not like Robinson's implications (Ping Li, Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

Andrea Rohde is considered to be the first researcher to analyze the verbal inflections in L2 English (1996). She investigated whether the deviant use of inflections in L2 learner's speech

is compliant with the aspect hypothesis. Rohde concerned with uninflected verb forms and non-target like inflections in naturalistic L2 data of children aged 4 to 9(L1 German/ L2 English). She concluded that 6-year children didn't show overgeneralization; However, the 9-year-old child uses stative progressives rarely, and this obviously goes against the predicted route of acquisition. Some of these overgeneralizations are: loving, smelling, seeing (Rohde 1996: 123 cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011)

### **4.3 Instructed Learners**

Robison (1995) uses cross-sectional database of college students learning English in Puerto Rico. He finds a high correlation between lexical aspect and tense aspect morphology in conversational interviews in which the use of stative progressive is as follow:

**Table 3: Tokens for the Different Proficiency Groups**

<b>Tokens</b>	<b>Levels</b>
1 Token, 1.7% of all progressive uses.	Level I (Lowest) Proficiency group.
12 Tokens 12.1%	Level II
5 Tokens 3.7%	Level III
5 Tokens 6%	Level IV (highest) Proficiency group

Robinson's study didn't focus on the process of overgeneralization of the progressive, but he just reported learners' misuses instances of stative progressives. In his test, he actually distinguishes stative from dynamic verbs using the criteria of "compatibility with progressive form. And as a conclusion, he finds some discrepancy between instructed learners group(12.1%) and his previous naturalistic learners study (28%) in terms of the uses of stative progressive (Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011)

As mentioned earlier, we conclude that the process of overgeneralization occurs more frequently in the naturalistic context of L1 learning than in the instructed context of L2. In the following section, we will give a detailed account of how prototype approach applies to the acquisition of tense aspect morphology in L2 (Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011).

#### 4.4 A Prototype Account of the Development of Tense Aspect Morphology in L2 English Context

Based on the stated body of literature, the majority of the previous studies reveals a strong correlation between –ing marking and activity verbs. In fact, the prototype hypothesis explains how L2 learners’ progressive morphology is restricted to activity verbs, and as the learner moves to an advanced level, he becomes able to use morphology more accurately.

In the heart of this framework, the process of acquisition entails the spreading of the semantic boundaries of tense-aspect markers from prototypes to non-prototypes.

**Table 4:** Predicted Order of Development of Morphology from Prototypes to Non-Prototypes

	<i>State</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Accomplishment</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
<i>(Perfective)Past</i>	4 ◀=====	3 ◀=====	2 ◀=====	1
<i>Progressive</i>	? ◀=====	1 =====▶	2 =====▶	3
<i>Imperfective</i>	1 =====▶	2 =====▶	3 =====▶	4

“...the cell numbered ‘1’ is the prototype, and the acquisition of the morphological marking spreads from this prototype to the peripherals (2 through ‘4’)( Cited in Ping Li and Yasuhiro Shirai, 2011)

### 5. Conclusion

We can draw several conclusions from the reviewed case studies. They all tried to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying processes that guide the route of acquisition of tense-aspect morphology and lexical aspect of English as a second language.

Overall, L2 learners’ route of acquisition is not fully compatible with the patterns of L1 acquisition, especially when it comes to the transition from the prototype stage to the non-prototypical stage.

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