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The guiding questions in this particular research project are *Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meanings in narratives help students make inferences while reading?* The motivating factor for this capstone was combining textual enhancement with explicit instruction to aid in helping students notice aspect and make inferences. Aspect is a complex semantic domain so it proves difficult for students to learn.

This study works to combine textual enhanced narratives by color (red and blue) and explicit instruction (modeling, guided practice and independent practice) to help ESL students make inferences while reading narratives. Aspectual retention in both short term and long term memory was tested. Results showed that after instruction, students were more likely to notice perfective aspect (Long Term Working Memory) and mention imperfective aspect (Long Term Memory.)

PERFECTIVE AND IMPERFECT ASPECT ACQUISITION IN A NARRATIVE CONTEXT IN UNIVERSITY ESL STUDENTS USING EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION AND TEXTUAL ENHANCEMENTS

by
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Here is a typical conversation between an English as a second language (ESL) student and me.

Me: What did you do today?

Student: I was washing the dishes. Then, I was going to the coffee shop.

Me (in my head): Why isn't she finishing her thoughts? What was she doing while she washed the dishes? What happened while she was going to the coffee shop?

It was interesting to me, as an ESL teacher, how frequently she used this pattern of speech. It was also surprising to me how long it took me to realize we were having an issue with aspect. She got the tense correct; it did happen in the past. And she may have realized that the action was complete, but what she did not realize was what aspect to use in English.

This student is not alone in her misuse of aspect. Aspect, which incorporates such morphosyntactic forms as *is* and *was verb-ing* and *had* and *have verb-ed*, is difficult to learn and even more difficult to use properly. My research looked at the Simple Past and the Past Progressive Form, which are associated with the meanings referred to as Perfective and Imperfective aspects of verbs respectively (Klein, 1994, Comrie 1976). These forms of verbs can impact a student's ability to make inferences. As an ESL teacher, I was interested in how to help students use these verb forms to make inferences.

I did research to see if instruction before reading a textually enhanced narrative could encourage students to connect meaning and form and make discourse more accurately understood. I wanted to draw students' attention to form (grammatical aspect) while processing meaning in context.

This chapter introduces the issues associated with acquiring the meaning of past progressive and simple past verb forms for non-native English speakers. The topics of temporality in verbs (tense and aspect), instruction, noticing and textual enhancement, and finally causality and making inferences will be discussed in this chapter.

Background

Temporality

Aspect and tense are linguistic terms that describe time. Tense is the more accessible, well-known and well-taught temporality marker. Past, present and future are tense meanings, which most students recognize, have background knowledge about in their own language and use effectively within a short time of instruction (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995). Tense shows a relationship between the time of speech and the event described (Klein, 1994). For example, (1) and (2) below contain both tense and aspect:

(1) *Gary wrote the paper*

(2) *Gary was writing the paper*.

The tense in both (1) and (2) is something that most school children would identify as past. The event, writing of the paper, took place before the time of speech.

What differs about the above examples is aspect. Aspect shows an event and its relationship to other events going on. Where tense relates to some other time, usually the speaking time, aspect views the time content of events and situations internally (Comrie, 1976). "Aspect is not relational; rather it designates the internal temporal organization of the situation described by the verb" (Klein, 1994). In example (1) the perfective aspect is used. Perfective aspect indicates something (event) having been started and ended before the time of another event that is being talked about. It indicates the situation is to be viewed as a whole (Klein, 1994). The meaning of the form 'wrote' is that he was writing something and then he stopped. It is completed within the time being talked about. In example (2) we have the same tense, past, as expressed by "was". The action started in the past (before time of utterance). Yet the aspect is changed; we do not know if or when the action of writing ended in relation to the time being talked about. The imperfect aspect (progressive) aspect indicates an event that is in process (we do not know about the beginning or the end). The imperfective indicates to look inside the temporal boundaries of the situation (Klein, 1994). These two aspectual forms were used in this study because they help us sequence events (Schramm, 1998). This ability to sequence events and therefore create coherence in reading will help us in understanding what students need in order to notice aspectual forms and acquire the meanings of these forms within discourse.

Instruction: Getting to Focus on Form

Researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have debated how to teach grammar to students for decades. The history of SLA has been influenced by Behaviorism and Universal Grammar (Spada, 1997). There is an instructional continuum from one primarily based on imitation and grammar lessons to classroom environments where communication is the only focus. However, there is a rising voice of combining the two to make instruction even more effective (Doughty and Williams, 1998).

Behaviorism is the foundation of the early days of SLA. Native language development was viewed as formation of habits. For English learners (ELs) it was just a matter of using habits from their native languages (L1s) and applying them to learning English (Spada, 1997).

Many researchers did not think these methods were adequate for teaching ELs so they looked to other approaches. Heavily influenced by Chomsky's Universal Grammar (Chomsky, 1965) and the concept that all children are born with an innate knowledge of how to learn a language, some SLA researchers suggested that ELs might benefit from this perspective (White,1998), as cited in Spada 1997). Krashen (1982) based his Monitor Model of language acquisition on Chomsky's theory. He believed that with no conscious attention to language form students learn languages. Instead, ELs who are in an English-rich environment will learn English naturally. Researchers have found that some linguistic features do not become targetlike for ELs in a solely communicative environment (Spada, 1997).

This led some in the research community to Focus on Forms (FoF). FoF is not the opposite of communicative teaching or more traditional grammar teaching, but a blend of the two. FoF "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, p. 45-6). FoF is a way of instruction where the primary focus is on meaningful activities but with an attempt to learn forms that help get the meaning across (Long, 1998).

Connection of Form and Meaning

The way a student acquires a language skill is by making a connection between the form and meaning. Forms are the actual written or spoken language and by themselves carry very little meaning (Fauconnier, 1999). Meaning, on the other hand, is the underlying, deeper structure of communication. Meaning refers to what that form is trying to communicate. If we are only aware of a form, we are still unaware of what the meaning of the form is. If we understand meaning only, we do not know what forms go with that meaning. We need to connect both the form and meaning to be effective communicators.

Instruction and Noticing

'Nothing is learned unless it is noticed' (Schmidt, 2001). It is generally agreed that noticing is a necessary part of connecting the form and meaning. For students to learn anything about a form's meaning they must notice the form first (Schmidt, 1990). One good way to notice a form is to have teachers draw attention to it (Schmidt, 1990).

In some cases, usually when the forms are not recognizable or the meaning is unknown, this can cause the students to be unable to connect the form and the meaning (Gass, 1988). This is where teachers can come in and lessen the burden on students' memories by first teaching meanings and then drawing attention to forms.

Once students know the meaning, one way to get students to notice the form is by enhancing the text or input. Textual enhancement is a technique that manipulates the text by changing the font color or using all capital letters (Sharwood-Smith, 1993). Changing the font can create salience of a grammatical form that can enhance noticing and make meaning easier to understand (Han, Park, & Combs, 2008).

Causality and Inference Making

Processing of causal relations in text is an important part of the comprehension process (Myers, 1990). The comprehension of a text involves more than just words and sentences. It also includes constructed representations including inferences based on the readers' knowledge of what they have read and the world around them (Myers, 1990). The reader draws upon prior knowledge to find causes for the events; this results in the perception of coherence of a text (van den Broek, 1990). For example in narratives, events that are part of the causal chain are better remembered than parts of the story that are not important to the chain (van den Broek, 1990). There are four things a reader needs to have a coherent mental picture of what is going on in a text. First, the meaning of the words needs to combine to make meaningful sentences. Second, the reader has to have access to the right information (either from the text or from prior knowledge) about

the events. Third, they must be able to understand causality and have the developmental capabilities to understand the events. Finally, they must have adequate time and freedom from distractions to make causal connections (van den Broek, 1990).

Guiding Questions

This thesis was motivated by the following research questions: *Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meanings in narratives help students make inferences while reading?* This research was a continuation of research started by Andreas Schramm (1998) and continued by his student Jonna Meidal (2008). In the study by Meidal, non-native speakers (NNS) received narratives with verb forms textually enhanced but without grammar instruction. While reading the narratives, NNS gave a verbal report of the thoughts that occurred to them. After reading the narratives, they were to answer a question. Though the participants noticed the enhancement of grammatical forms of aspect, this did not carry over into meaning and discourse comprehension. In her conclusion, Meidal suggests to provide more explicit instructions as a balance to the communicative (meaning-focused) approach of textual enhancements (Meidal, 2008).

As a follow-up to Meidal's research, I wanted to incorporate explicit (form-focused) instruction on the meaning of aspect and provide textual enhancements during the meaning-focused data collection tool that Meidal used in her research. Following the

advice of Batstone and Ellis (2009) I used three procedures of explicit teaching to help my participants acquire past imperfective and simple past verb meanings and forms. First, I utilized my participants' existing knowledge in their L1s to make a connection to the meaning of the aspects. I showed a direct connection between the aspectual meaning and the form they manifest themselves in. Second, I directed attention to grammatical aspect by changing the font of verbs. Finally, I gave the students practice in communicative tasks to negotiate meaning. This was done by supplying students with narratives that focus on meaning comprehension not form. The research was conducted by me. The participants were foreign non-native English speaking college students who were recruited to take part in this study.

Importance

This research is important so teachers can understand how learners notice grammatical forms and acquire them. It is also important because it involves a grammatical form that is best understood at a sentence meaning level and is used in making inferences. Finally, it can provide insight into how best to teach these forms to students.

Summary and Chapter Overviews

In this chapter I introduced topics of tense and aspect, explicit instruction, noticing, causality, and textual enhancements. I also mentioned the previous research done which directed my own research. Finally, I explain the importance of this research to myself and other teachers. In Chapter Two, I provide a literature review relevant to

explicit teaching, noticing and acquisition in SLA, and the meaning of aspect and tense. Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and methodology that guides this study. Results of the study are presented in Chapter Four. Finally, in Chapter Five, I reflect on the data collected. I also discuss the limitations of the study, implications for further research and recommendations for classroom application.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to research instruction on meaning awareness of morpho-syntactic forms connected with the semantic domain of aspect. Specifically, the study will look at the following guiding questions. *Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meanings in narratives help students make inferences while reading?* The verb tense and aspects of (imperfective) past progressive and (perfective) simple past have been identified as the research focus because their meanings are tied closely with pragmatic functions in narratives. If a student can track aspectual meaning, they will be able to make inferences. The ultimate goal is to determine if explicit instruction on aspect will impact discourse analysis and if practice using these forms and meanings in a textually enhanced communicative language situation will encourage students to track meaning of grammatical aspect.

This chapter represents an overview of 1) tense and the semantic domain of aspect, the components of aspect and its role within syntax and discourse (specifically reading comprehension), 2) causality and making inferences, 3) noticing, 4) explicit instruction, and finally 5) textual enhancement.

Tense and Aspect

Aspect and Temporality

Aspect was chosen for this study because it is important not only at the sentence level but also in discourse. It is difficult to for English learners to acquire (Andersen & Shirai, 1996) and requires special attention for students to learn. Though closely related to tense, it is a bit different because aspect expresses the relation between the time spoken about and another event (Klein 1994). It "hooks up" this other event to the time spoken about. For example, we use aspect when we say the sentence *Mother was going to the store*. It presents a time spoken about (here it is the past) and is located at the same time as the event of "going to the store." By contrast, tense locates a situation in time. It expresses the relation between the time of speaking and a time we speak about. For example, we use tense when we say the sentence *At eight, mother went to the store*. It locates the event *go to the store* in the past relative to the time of speaking, the now. The time spoken about is before the time of speaking.

There are two types of aspect: Lexical (situational) and grammatical (viewpoint) (Smith, 1997). Lexical aspect is called so because it is conveyed by verbs and their subjects. It is represented by types of situations: states (for example ‘have’), activities (for example ‘run’), accomplishments (for example ‘run a mile’) and achievements (for example, ‘realize’) (Smith, 1997). Grammatical aspect is processed on the sentence level, is useful for discourse sequencing and represents a viewpoint; it makes the situation ‘visible’. Grammatical aspect gives "a full or partial view of the situation talked about”

(Smith, 1997). The two main viewpoints presented in grammatical aspect are perfective, (for example, 'walked'), and imperfective aspect (for example 'was walking') (Smith, 1997).

Grammatical aspect (viewpoint) was chosen for this study because of its importance in discourse sequencing and its influence in causal inferencing in a text (Schramm, 1998). The two types of aspect compared in this study are imperfective and perfective aspect. Li and Shirai (2000) state that imperfective, progressive aspect is used for events in progress when something else happened and descriptive events, which are part of a narrative background. Imperfect aspect is marked morpho-syntactically not just morphologically. For example, morphological marking changes the word form and is the '-ed' found in the past tense 'walked.' In contrast, to mark morpho-syntactically, there is a word added and a change added to the action. The 'was' is the syntactic change and the '-ing' is the morphological change in 'was walking.' The morpho-syntactic change also changes the meaning of the sentence. Imperfective aspect is a reference to only a part of a situation (the beginning and the end are not asserted), for example, *Mary <u>was eating</u> the apple*. The start and end of eating the apple are not asserted; we just express the process. By contrast, in perfective aspect there is no reference to any part of the inherent temporal structure; it is expressed all as a single unit, including beginning, process, and end, for example, *Mary <u>ate</u> the apple*. The way it is expressed, it started, continued and finished all in its entirety. When expressed in the perfective aspect, the event has reached completion.

Thus, changing the grammatical aspect of a verb can greatly change the interpretation of the situation (Smith, 1997). In the following examples the tense for both is past but the viewpoint aspect of the situation differs.

(3) *Mary ate the apple.*

(4) *Mary was eating the apple.*

In (3), the action of eating the apple is presented completely/perfectively. The eating of the apple began and ended before the time of speech. In (4), the action of eating the apple is presented from one part of the situation. The beginning and the end are not referred to therefore it is incomplete/imperfective. The eating of the apple began before the time of speech, is in progress during time of speech, and ends at an unknown time.

As stated above, lexical aspect expresses different categories: states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements to name a few. For this study, I will focus on accomplishments only, such as *eat the apple, cook the food, pass the truck,* because these verbs have a clear final point. This will allow my research to focus on the question of whether a situation is accessible to non-native speakers for making inferences when in the imperfective as opposed to the perfective.

Causality and Inference Making

Imperfective and perfective aspect influence comprehension of text and are important for non-native students to learn. When students read narratives for comprehension, they need to make causal connections between what they have read and what they are reading. These causal relationships are one part of creating coherence in text (van den Broek,

1990). There are four components to causal relationships, though the one most important for this study is 'operativity.' Operativity is when 'a cause is active when the consequence occurs.' (van den Broek, 1990, p. 424). Operativity is demonstrated in Table 1.

There is substantial data suggesting causal inferences provide the basis for coherence, and bridging inferences and elaborations are generated in Long Term Working Memory (or LTWM) routinely during reading. Since the temporal relationship between antecedents and consequents is critical for the computation of causal inferences connecting two events (van den Broek, 1990), it is reasonable to assume that imperfective aspect could have a greater likelihood of generating causal inferences than perfective aspect because it is incomplete and open-ended (Smith, 1997; Comrie, 1976; Magliano & Schleich, 2000). Recent research in discourse processing shows that aspect affects, for example, the availability of intentions of agents or spatial information associated with an event (Hart & Albarracin, 2009; Ferretti, T. R., Kutas, M., & McRae, K, 2007).

In Table 1 two things are operative when the consequent happens, if the aspect is imperfective. Both (3) writing the report and (4) feeling sick are operative when Gary decides not to go to the party. If the aspect is in perfective, only one reason is operative (4) feeling sick. Therefore, at the time Gary does not go to the party, we conclude it is because he is sick.

Table 1

Disappointing Day at the Office-Inference

(1) In the morning, Gary's manager told him that the business proposal should be finished that evening and put on his desk.	Setting
(2) This project was Gary's top priority and would take up a good portion of the day.	Initiating Event
(3) Gary found all the necessary information and ***WAS WRITING*/WROTE** the proposal	Antecedent 1
(4) In the afternoon, Gary started feeling sick, but he stayed at work.	Antecedent 2
(5) Right before quitting time there was a birthday party, but Gary couldn't go.	Consequent

The second language acquisition of the linguistic means to express operativity in narratives has not been studied very well. Therefore this study will investigate the acquisition of how linguistic aspect expresses operativity between events in a narrative. For example, the perfective reduces operativity. The imperfective keeps both antecedents operative. This is often done through inferencing.

Inferences are when a reader uses literal information in a text and background knowledge to draw a conclusion. (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). "Inferences occur primarily as readers attempt to maintain coherence for each event or state that they encounter in the text" (van den Broek & Gustafson, 1990, p. 24). Because of the function of inferences in textual coherence, making inferences is important for students to do. Van den Broek (1990) identifies two main types of inferencing: backwards inferences and forward inferences. Backward inferences connect individual events in a narrative. In order for these inferences to create coherency in a text they must be operative. Forward inferences

allow readers to form expectations about the next occurrence in a text. They may build causal relationships in the future. The reader may anticipate what will be necessary for future events. For example, in a detective story, mention of details about a character likely become important when solving the crime. So a forward inference is made by the reader.

In order for readers to comprehend a text, they need to be able to use their own world knowledge and information from the text to generate appropriate inferences (Magliano, 2001). This research will look at ways to encourage readers to use aspect to make backward inferences.

Noticing: Connection of Form and Meaning

Input

One thing teachers can do is help students notice forms quickly and make a connection between form and meaning. VanPatten (2002) has proposed several principles for L2 input processing. The two most relevant to this study are listed below.

> Principle 1: Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form. Content words are processed first. Lexical items are processed before grammatical items. Finally, meaningful morphology is processed before non-meaningful morphology.
>
> Principle 2: If learners are to process a form that is not meaningful, they must be able to process communicative content at little cost to attention.

Principle 1 is important for this study because grammatical items such as ‘aspect’ are not processed as quickly. Therefore, teachers pointing out these features will be helpful to the students to recognize and hold information in long-term memory to make a connection. Principle 2 is important because if a student does not recognize a form as meaningful they may lose their ability to comprehend, briefly. If a student does not recognize the importance of a particular grammar form and its meaning, he or she might not fully understand what the author is trying to convey. This is where a teacher can come in and make a meaning and form connection, to lessen the burden on a student. In this research, I am hoping to lessen the burden on students by explicitly explaining to them the meaning of aspectual forms and its impact on making inferences in narratives. It is hoped that this, along with textual enhancements, will provide an easier route for students to understand the narratives presented to them.

Making the connection between form and meaning is the main goal in this research. How to do it is another question.

Noticing Hypothesis

In order for intake to become input it must be noticed first (Schmidt, 2001). As teachers we need to find ways to help student notice important things. In order for students to make meaning connections, they must first notice the form. In order to acquire syntax and morphology, students must notice the meanings of the words and morphemes and the order of the words (Schmidt, 2001). Schmidt (2001) believes that noticing is the first step to acquiring a language form. Some level of attention to form is

needed for language acquisition to take place (Radwan, 2005). It is unclear, however, how much attention is needed exactly (Schmidt, 2001). Tomlin and Villa (1994) believe that, in addition to noticing, learners must be able to hold a form in working memory long enough for a connection between form and meaning to occur at the sentence level. Leow (1997) (as cited in Schmidt, 2001) found students who exhibited the highest level of awareness learned the most.

Textual Enhancement

Since according to the Awareness Principle (Schmidt, 2001), awareness is necessary to create new maps of form-meaning connections, and since highly frequent input, such as aspect, may not be attended to, a conscious representation of the form-meaning map needs to be developed. It has been claimed that teachers can create more salient input to increase noticing and a more conscious form-meaning representation, and thus reduce the load on students' processing systems (Sharwood-Smith, 1991). One way to focus on form is textual enhancement. Textual enhancement is changing text for visual input. This can be done by increasing the size of font, changing colors, italicizing and capitalizing letters. While there has been little evidence showing that students acquire meaning from Textual Enhancement alone (Izumi (2002), as cited in Han, Park & Combs, 2008), there are studies that show noticing of grammar forms increases because of textual enhancement (VanPatten, 2002). However, since input is processed for meaning first, textual enhancement of morpho-syntactic forms connected with aspectual meanings did not yield conclusive results in a previous study (Meidal, 2008).

Instruction

There has been some debate about the best way to teach (and learn) grammar. Originally, teachers were expected to teach explicitly what they wanted the students to know. Because explicit instruction does not provide for all the needs of students, there was a shift to believing the best instruction was that in which students learn in the most natural environment possible, so-called implicit instruction. Krashen (1982) and others believe that learners learn best in an implicit instructive and communicative learning environment and that language cannot be taught explicitly. However, Harley (1998) discovered students continue to make mistakes even when they are immersed in a language. This has led researchers and practitioners in the field to believe that there is a need for explicit teaching in certain areas.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit teaching is thought, by numerous researchers, to be more effective than implicit instruction (Alanen (1995), Harley (1998), and Robinson (1997) as cited in Radwan, 2005). Focus on Form instruction has been shown to be more effective than Focus on Forms with general grammar learning over four years (Klapper Rees (2003) as cited in Macaro & Masterman, 2006) and specific grammar forms such as relative clauses (Doughty (1991) as cited in Macaro, 2006). Explicit teaching is explaining a rule directly, instead of expecting a learner to inductively discover the meaning (DeKeyser, 1998). This type of teaching is best when focused on producing specific learning outcomes by breaking a subject down into smaller more digestible parts. There are

several components to explicit teaching, for example, metalinguistic explanation, modeling (both thought processes and actions), examples and practice. DeKeyser (1998) cites experiments that lead researchers to believe that explicit instruction is often an effective mode of lessening the burden on students' learning. Explicitly teaching how meaning is created by a form and following up with ample opportunity to practice that rule was more effective than just the exposure to the rule. Also, students taught with explicit grammar presentations followed by examples and opportunity to practice outperformed students taught only implicitly (Ellis, 2002).

Implicit Instruction

Implicit, or communicative, instruction emphasizes conversation, true-to-life language use (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This instruction method does not rely on a teacher to teach a specific rule, but to provide an opportunity to use language in a meaningful task such as replying to a classified advertisement or learning biology (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Implicit instruction has been found effective with simple and salient language features (Chung, 2007). The most salient forms in sentences are lexical items (nouns and verbs) (VanPatten, 2002). These are processed first and are more likely to be acquired in a communicative approach. The strength of implicit instruction lies in being more similar to real-life communication. Therefore, it is more likely that students will use language taught through this approach.

Grammatical features, such as the forms carrying aspectual meanings, are not very salient for students or easy to learn. Explicit instruction may be needed to make these grammatical forms understood. This is why I have chosen explicit instruction for my research. Explicit instruction can draw students' attention to grammar forms such as aspect morphemes. Combining explicit instruction with communicative learning may be a good combination to teach these difficult parts of language. This combined approach to teaching will be investigated in this study.

Focus on Form

Focus-on-form instruction is just such a combination of both communicative and explicit instruction. The intention of this instruction is to focus on form while integrating meaning. Because people have a limited ability to pay attention to multiple things, the most efficient way to teach form is likely in a meaningful context. (Doughty & Williams, 1998). It is a type of instruction that both acknowledges the importance of communicative language teaching principles, such as authentic communication and student-centeredness, and values the occasional overt teaching of problematic L2 grammatical forms (Long & Robinson, 1998). Focus on form is a type of explicit instruction that attempts to draw learners' attention to types of form that are found in a more natural, communicative context. This is an attempt to balance a need for explicit instruction in a communicative environment.

Previous studies have looked at aspect education with textual enhancements alone. This study's aim is to examine the effectiveness of a combination of explicit and

communicative tasks in past imperfective and perfective aspect form recognition and meaning tracking. Explicit instruction will include metalinguistic instruction of the definition of aspect, how it is used to make inferences, modeling its use and practicing it in narratives. Communicative practice will include a textually enhanced narrative reading.

Summary

In this section I elaborated on the need for explicit instruction as well as form focused instruction within a meaningful context. The importance of students' noticing grammatical forms was expounded upon under the pretext of learner input becoming uptake. Finally after delineating the temporal relation between tense and aspect, I explained the reasoning for choosing the grammatical forms and connected aspectual meanings found in this study.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the methodology of what I will do in my research project. Chapter Three will explain why I chose my instrument of research, how I chose my participants and the particular process of conducting the research used here.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this research project, I wanted to be able to examine the effectiveness of explicit instruction and textual enhancement, in a communicative format on learners' ability to accurately track meaning of aspect forms in narratives. The research was designed to investigate if test scores improve after a short, explicit grammar lesson of aspect and input enhancement (specifically textually enhanced narratives.) My research questions are *Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meanings in narratives help students make inferences while reading?*

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I will discuss the pre- and post- test designs and the rationale for their use. I will also explain the materials used, participant demographics, setting in which the research took place and finally the procedures I chose to teach aspect to the participants.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm that was used was quantitative. Quantitative research ‘generally starts with an experimental design in which a hypothesis is followed by the

quantification of data and some sort of numerical analysis is carried out (e.g., a study comparing students' test results before and after an instructional treatment)' (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The following components and characteristics of my research indicate that it is quantitative. I had a hypothesis (*students will be more likely to choose antecedent 2 as the cause of the effect when antecedent 1 is in simple past [or in the perfective aspect]*), an experiment with a teaching intervention (*participants' reading comprehension is tested before and after the intervention*) and a numerical analysis (*comparing pre- and post- treatment tests*). Quantitative research is also verifiable (it can be repeated by other researchers who may get similar results) and generalizable (the results are not just limited to my site or situation). My research was a quasi-experimental on 15 students from a university class. They were not chosen at random. Though I only tested one group of students, one could take my results and compare them to other quantitative research done previously by Schramm (1998) and Meidal (2008). Because qualitative research is not easily quantified, and analysis is interpretive, I do not believe this is a good fit for my research. In addition, my research relied on straightforward answers that do not require observation or description, which is found in qualitative research.

Data Collection

Participants

This study took place in a small public college in a Midwestern state. Participants chose to be part of this research and were part of the regular classroom, credit-bearing activities. I was not the regular instructor, but the materials I covered were on the final

exam. The research took place during two class periods, each of which was two hours long. The students had an English proficiency of at least 80 on the IBT/TOEFL (L. Beling, personal communication, November 2011). The students' native languages, countries of origin and number of years studying English were not a factor in selection. I did, however, ask them to fill out a brief questionnaire. Fifteen students took part in this research.

Location

This research took place in a small, public college in a Midwestern state. The participants and I met as a group in a classroom. Each student had her or his own chair and writing space. I administered the consent forms, questionnaire, and pre- test in paper form during the first class period. The second class period I instructed the students on aspect, causal inference generation in narratives and identifying the textual enhancements. Finally the students took the post-tests. While they completed the pre and post-tests, I was available for questions.

Materials

The narratives in this study were taken from Schramm (1998) and used by Meidal (2008) to test aspect meaning acquisition. The specific quantitative method of collecting data was the pre- and post- test. This was recommended by Meidal (2008) as a follow up to her research. She suggested pre- and post-tests would be able to assess students' actual improvement because there would be a starting point to compare the result to. In addition, Mackey and Gass (2005) explain the pre- and post- test shows the effect of the teaching

methods immediately after instruction. This would allow me to know where my students are starting from in regards to aspectual knowledge and application. The tests were designed as narratives presented in either perfective or imperfective past tense. Each narrative (about 10-15 sentences each) required (and relies on the notion) that readers draw inferences as to the cause of a consequence partially based on understanding of aspect as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Disappointing End of Day at the Office-Methodology

(1) In the morning, Gary's manager told him that the business proposal should be finished that evening and put on his desk.	Setting
(2) This project was Gary's top priority and would take up a good portion of the day.	Initiating Event
(3) Gary found all the necessary information and ***WAS WRITING*/WROTE** the proposal	Antecedent 1
(4) In the afternoon, Gary started feeling sick, but he stayed at work.	Antecedent 2
(5) Awhile later, one of his co-workers stopped by to ask him a question about semiconductors.	Filler
(6) Semiconductors were Gary's specialization, and he did not mind answering questions about them.	Filler
(7) In fact, the company was thinking about giving him a raise because of this superior knowledge in that area	Filler
(8) Right before quitting time there was a birthday party, but Gary couldn't go.	Consequent
(9) Re_ _ _ _	Word Completion
(10) Why could Gary not go to the party?	Final Question (written)

The pre- and post-test showed students' understanding of aspect meaning within a narrative. In order to avoid any bias in testing, the aspectual condition of pre- and post-test narratives was randomly assigned and counterbalanced, though each participant received all sixteen narratives. The order of the narratives were also randomized. After instructing them on the meaning of these aspectual forms, I then tested again to see actual improvement. Though a better sense of acquisition would be discovered if a delayed post-test was administered, for the reasons of participant attrition (students dropping out), 'extra-experimental' exposure (some students learning more about this grammar point in class) and general 'maturation' (understanding because of time) (Mackey & Gass, 2005), I did not do a delayed post-test.

Procedure

General Overview

Participants met as a group with the researcher and were volunteers. The participants and I met for approximately two hours to accomplish pre-test, post-test and instruction. After arriving and signing the consent form, a pre-test was administered. The pre-test consisted of reading eight randomly assigned short narratives, in paper form. There was no time limit, though they were asked to read at a normal pace and were not allowed to look back at when they read. The pre-test took between thirty and sixty minutes. Following the pre-test, I presented an explicit grammar lesson on the meaning of past imperfective and past perfective aspect. This lesson consisted of metalinguistics of aspect focusing on the unboundedness/boundedness of aspect, using this boundedness

to make inferences in discourse and explanation of textual enhancements. I taught the students that perfective starts and ends (bounded) and the imperfective starts and is not necessarily done (unbounded.) Students learned this by first examining why a joke was funny (cf. Figure 1).

Introduction: Pirate Story

An old pirate ***was sitting*** in the bar. He ***was smoking*** a pipe and ***drinking*** a glass of rum. He ***was wearing*** an eye patch and he had a parrot on his shoulder and a wooden leg. Instead of his right hand he had a metal hook. A young sailor ***was chatting*** with the pirate and he asked him about his adventures at sea.

'So, how did you lose your leg?', the young man **ASKED** the pirate.

'Arrr! ,' said the pirate, 'You see, some sharks ***were circling*** the ship when I **FELL** overboard. Luckily, my men pulled me back onto the ship before the sharks ate me completely, but one of the sharks got my leg.'

'And how about the hook on your hand? How did you lose your hand?'

'I ***was boarding*** a ship when another sailor **CUT** off my hand with a sword.'

'That's amazing! What a life full of adventures!' said the young man. 'And how about your eye? How did you lose that?'

'I ***was eating*** a grapefruit when the juice **WENT** into my eye.'

'But I don't understand. How did you lose your eye from the grapefruit juice?'

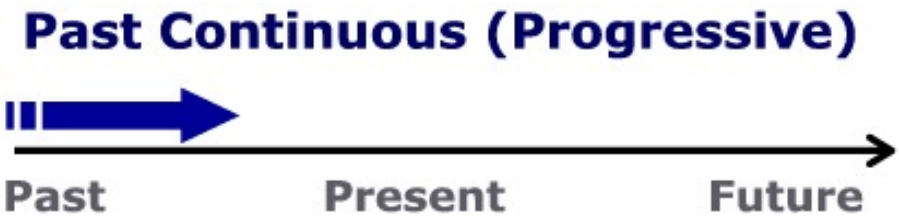
'Arrr!' said the pirate, 'it was my first day with the new hook.'

Figure 1. Slide With Joke Demonstrating Un/Boundedness Of Aspect

Second, the lesson included notes on the definitions of the perfective and imperfective (cf. Figure 2).

Past Progressive.

- I ***was eating*** a grapefruit, then I stuck my hook in my eye.



Simple past.

I **ATE** a grapefruit. Then I got a hook in my eye.

Figure 2: Explanation of Perfective and Imperfective

And third, there was modeling and guided and independent practicing how to use the perfective and imperfective in context in the lesson (cf. Figure 3.) With the guided practice and independent practice, students received a narrative in either the perfective or imperfective aspect. After reading the narrative, they were asked to read and answer a comprehension question similar to the one in the tests. We then discussed this as a whole clas. Students shared their answers and how they got to their answers.

The School Dance
Ben was at the school dance. He had really dressed up for it. After a fast dance, he slipped around the corner because his clothes felt uncomfortable. He **was tightening** his belt. Then he noticed that there was a huge mustard stain right on his tie. Ben was very upset because it was one of his favorites. He had gotten it as a Christmas present. When the girl he liked came around the corner, Ben was so embarrassed.

- Why was Ben embarrassed?

Figure 3: Guided and Independent Practice Narrative

These materials were created by Feyder (2009) and can be found in Appendix E. Finally eight additional, and different, narratives were presented. Following the silent reading, they completed the word edge and the question at the end of each narrative that can be seen at the end of the sample in Table 3. A word edge is a LTWM test in which a student receives a word with the first letter or two and then has to fill in the rest. This shows what words are in LTWM based on what they fill in. If the story is in the imperfective, the word to be filled in will more likely be in LTWM so should show up on the word-edge completion portion of the test. The comprehension question at the end of the narrative requires that the student choose a reason something happened. If the narrative was in the imperfective, it will be more likely that the first of the two reasons will show up in student answers because it is still active in LTM. The post-test took thirty minutes.

Pre-test

Participants received the pre-test in a packet form (provided by researcher). After reading the provided practice narrative as a group, one sentence at a time, participants were allowed to ask clarifying questions about the narrative and procedure. When they express a readiness to move on, the final silent reading ensued and the word completion

task (long term working memory test) and question (long term memory) were presented. Students answered the question on a piece of paper provided for them. The answers were be in English.

Narratives and Description

Eight narratives were provided for the pre-test (half with simple past and half with past progressive) and eight different narratives were provided for the post-test (again, half with simple past and half with past progressive) Each narrative consisted of a setting, an initiating event, two antecedents (which students may choose from to answer the final question), filler sentences (to ensure neither antecedent is in long term working memory) and a consequent (the result of the antecedent events). A fill in the blank word-edge and a final question were the testing portion, testing long term working memory and long-term memory respectively. Table 3 delineates each main part of a typical story. Explanations of these sections of the test follow.

Table 3

Disappointing End of Day at the Office-Explanation

(1) In the morning, Gary's manager told him that the business proposal should be finished that evening and put on his desk.	Setting
(2) This project was Gary's top priority and would take up a good portion of the day.	Initiating Event
(3) Gary found all the necessary information and ***WAS WRITING*/WROTE** the report	Antecedent 1
(4) In the afternoon, Gary started feeling sick, but he stayed at work.	Antecedent 2
(5) Awhile later, one of his co-workers stopped by to ask him a question about semiconductors.	Filler
(6) Semiconductors were Gary's specialization, and he did not mind answering questions about them.	Filler
(7) In fact, the company was thinking about giving him a raise because of this superior knowledge in that area	Filler
(8) Right before quitting time there was a birthday party, but Gary couldn't go.	Consequent
(9) Re_ _ _ _	Word Completion
(10) Why could Gary not go to the party?	Final Question (written)

The first antecedent was provided to the participants in either the past perfective or past imperfective aspect. Past imperfective was textually enhanced by capitalization in red as recommended by Meidal (2008). She found that color was not mentioned by students when asked about noticing, but capitalization was. I kept the color for the sake of consistency.

Long Term Working Memory

Word completion was chosen to test the antecedent's being activated in long term working memory. From the word completion task we can see if the student draws an inference back to the imperfect antecedent in their mind upon reading the consequent. I predicted if the antecedent is in the imperfect, the reader would be more likely to fill in the blanks with a word from the first antecedent sentence than if it is in the perfective. If, in antecedent 1, the aspect is imperfective, *Gary was writing the report*, we would assume that Gary could not go to the party because either he was not finished writing the report (Antecedent 1) or he was too sick to go to the party (Antecedent 2). This means the meaning from antecedent 1 will still be active in the learner's mind in the imperfective version because it is not completed and therefore, still inferable in the narrative development. In the perfective the word will be less likely to be filled in from the first antecedent.

In the example in Table 3, the word to be completed in the task is, Re_ _ _ _ referring back to the word "report" in antecedent 1 of the story. It is important that students completed this as quickly as possible because the word presumably was re-activated in long term working memory (LTWM) when participants read the consequent. If they could not complete the word within 15 seconds, they were asked to draw a line through the word completion task. This, as well as choosing a word other than in the antecedent, may indicate that students are not processing the meaning of the imperfect and are therefore not inferring the importance of Antecedent 1 for narrative development.

If the aspect is perfective in Antecedent 1, *Gary wrote the report*, we would assume that Gary had finished the proposal and that part of the story is complete. This part would no longer be important to the story and therefore would not be taking up valuable space in working memory. Thus, students who understand the aspectual meaning would most likely fill in the word completion with something else.

Long Term Memory

In this part of the experiment we are checking for comprehension in long-term memory, i.e., whether people integrate aspectual meanings in their memory representation of the stories. In the imperfective this means that both antecedents could be potential causes of the event in the final sentence. In other words, Gary could not go to the party either because he was still working on the proposal or because he got sick. In the perfective, antecedent 1 is much less likely a cause for final event because it was completed. Participants are less likely to give the report-writing as the reason why Gary couldn't go to the party. They will infer Gary's being sick as the more likely cause.

Instruction

After the pre-tests were administered, the participants were presented with a lesson about perfective and imperfect aspect. This also was suggested by Meidal (2008) as students noticed the grammatical aspect but it was not reflected in how they answered the final question of the narratives, suggesting they did not process meaning of the grammar forms. She suggested this type of grammar form needed more explicit teaching about its meaning. The participants were given explicit information about what aspect is

and encouraged to pay attention to the enhanced words in the narratives. The explicit instruction included a metalinguistic explanation of both aspects (focusing on bounded-ness of perfective aspect and the unbounded-ness of imperfective aspect), their impact on discourse and making inferences and how to read the narratives with textual enhancements. Textual enhancements were used to differentiate between the imperfective and the perfect aspect. For the imperfective, I used a lower case, italics in blue. They were instructed to recognize when a verb is textually enhanced in such a manner that the action is on-going and should be open for further use. For the perfect, I used upper case letters in red. I told students that when they read a verb with this textual enhancement they should be able to recognize that it is a completed action and is no longer needed for processing the rest of the story. After giving an explicit definition, I modeled for students by reading a practice narrative called 'The Dance'.

The School Dance

Ben was at the school dance. He had really dressed up for it. After a fast dance, he slipped around the corner because his clothes felt uncomfortable. He *was tightening* / TIGHTENED his belt. Then he noticed that there was a huge mustard stain right on his tie. Ben was very upset because it was one of his favorites. He had gotten it as a Christmas present. When the girl he liked came around the corner, Ben was so embarrassed. Why was Ben embarrassed?

Here are the steps I took.

1. MODELING

I read the text aloud (in the imperfective) and modeled my thinking aloud. For example, after Ben tightens his belt, I noted the aspect and that it is unbounded in the imperfective. When it is unbounded in the imperfective, this means that it is still active and something else can happen at the same time. Then I noted, after the tie has a stain, that this is also something that could embarrass Ben.

I then went through the narrative again in the perfective and noted that the bounded perfective aspect of 'tightened his belt' means that it is done. He could no longer be embarrassed by it. So the only reason to be embarrassed would be the mustard stain.

2. GUIDED PRACTICE

I then had students practice in a guided environment. Students were given a text and asked to highlight the imperfective (unbounded) aspect in red and the perfective aspect (bounded) aspect in blue. Then, they told me what they think the cause is and why.

I also asked the students to take one of the completed actions on this page, and change it so it was incomplete.

3. INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Finally, I gave the students time to practice this independently. I gave students four samples of practice narratives and they could work independently on these. When we finished, we went through the answers and explanations as a class. Students were

allowed to ask questions about aspect before starting the post-test. Questions and answers were noted. The next step was the application of the skills learned.

Post-test

The post-test was administered immediately after the instruction period. The eight post-texts were, again, randomly assigned, though it was ensured that every student received the eight narratives they did not read in the pre-test. This helped in making an accurate comparison of the pre-test results. Students were not allowed to use dictionaries for either the pre- or post-test.

Data Analysis

The pre- and post-tests were both analyzed for semantic aspectual content. For the LTWM and LTM questions, answers were be coded, as suggested by Gass and Mackey (2005), for a priori categories of “present” or “absent”. For LTM, a response was marked “absent” if it did not mention either antecedent or if it mentioned Antecedent 1 in the perfective sentence. When in the perfective, Antecedent 1 should not be active in LTM because it is a completed action. When Antecedent 1 is in the perfective, Antecedent 2 is the option that is best. All other answers were marked ‘present.’ For LTWM, responses were marked “present” if they completed the partial word from the Antecedent 1 sentence whether it was in imperfective or not. If Antecedent 1 was in perfective, the words are not necessary to be in long term working memory, so words from Antecedent 1 were expected to be present less. Statistical analyses were run on this information. I found the means of responses, their statistical deviation and conducted-

tests. This showed whether the findings can be generalized and useful for other researchers and practitioners.

Verification of Data

Reliability was ensured by the 'equivalence of forms' found in the pre-test and post-test (Gass and Mackey, 2005). Equivalence of forms means the narratives were the same level of difficulty and randomly assigned to either the pre-test or the post-test category. Regarding the answers to the final questions, I utilized another rater to ensure inter-rater reliability. This rater was the creator of the original project and very familiar with the stories. After coding the answers and placing them in categories, I asked another person familiar with my topic to do the same with 10% of the narratives. We then compared our answers. If our answers were different, we looked at the disagreement together and tried to come up with a solution. We aimed for an agreement rate of 80%. I also believe this research was reliable because it can be replicated by other researchers.

These narratives and tests are internally valid because they answered my research question in the following way. I am curious to see if certain methods (explicit teaching and input enhancement) result in high acquisition of grammatical aspect understanding. I believe my tests address this question because I am compared participants' comprehension of the narratives before and after my teaching intervention as I discussed in more depth in the Narratives and Description section of Chapter Three. Narratives have a consistent design (they all consist of the same exact format and have been used by

two other researchers) and so do the tests, where we checked for LTWM and LTM contents in the context of these narratives.

Ethics

Each participant in this study was a volunteer. Before the research began, I provided each participant a general description of what the research is about (grammar and teaching, not specifically aspect because I did not want to give hints) and their expected role within the research. They were also given a practice narrative. I also obtained written permission from participants and ensured their anonymity. This information was provided in their native language upon request, although testing was administered in English only. Finally, any answers participants wrote were used verbatim and no liberties were taken to change their answers. When the tests were completed, and the data has been analyzed, I will store the narratives in a safe place for 7 years as required before shredding them.

Conclusion

The current chapter described methods I used to determine if explicit instruction and input enhancement increase learner acquisition of grammar meanings. I discussed that my research were quantitative because the results were numerically analyzed, I had a hypothesis and I conducted an experiment, which supported the hypothesis. My data collection was pre- and post-testing because it gave me empirical data showing a direct effect of instruction methods. I also briefly addressed how the data was analyzed, the

validity of my data collection method, the reliability of my analysis methods and the ethical treatment of my participants. The next chapter presents the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I present the results on the retrieval of information in both working memory and long-term memory. Both the pre and post-test data will be shown and analyzed. This study posed the following questions: *Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meanings in narratives help students make inferences while reading?* To collect data to answer these questions, I used two data collection procedures: word edge completion and question-answering. We checked for memory contents at two different points to assess if participants attended to aspectual meaning. The first data collection point was for noticing in LTWM and was immediately at the end of the narrative. It was a word-edge completion in which the answer could have been from Antecedent 1. The second data collection point was after finishing reading the narrative and the word-edge completion and tested for intake in LTM. Students had to answer a question in which Antecedent 1 could have been an answer.

For collecting data on the final comprehension task, I utilized another rater to ensure inter-rater reliability. This rater was the creator of the original project and very familiar with the stories. After coding the answers and placing them in categories, I asked him to do the same with 10% of the narratives. We then compared our answers. If

our answers were different, we looked at the disagreement together and tried to come up with a solution. We aimed for an agreement rate of 80%. We coded 80% of the chosen stories the same way. With the remaining 20%, we came to agreement on the coding.

Long-Term Working Memory

Pre-Instruction

First I will compare the perfective and imperfective aspect in regards to the students noticing it before they received any instruction. I did this by having students fill in a word-edge completion immediately at the end of the narrative as demonstrated in Table 4. To give an example, I will be using ‘Disappointing Day.’

Table 4

Disappointing Day at the Office-Working Memory

(1) In the morning, Gary's manager told him that the business proposal should be finished that evening and put on his desk.	Setting
(2) This project was Gary's top priority and would take up a good portion of the day.	Initiating Event
(3) Gary found all the necessary information and ***WAS WRITING*/WROTE** the report	Antecedent 1
(4) In the afternoon, Gary started feeling sick, but he stayed at work.	Antecedent 2
(5) Awhile later, one of his co-workers stopped by to ask him a question about semiconductors.	Filler
(6) Semiconductors were Gary's specialization, and he did not mind answering questions about them.	Filler
(7) In fact, the company was thinking about giving him a raise because of this superior knowledge in that area	Filler
(8) Right before quitting time there was a birthday party, but Gary couldn't go.	Consequent
(9) Re_ _ _ _	Word Completion
(10) Why could Gary not go to the party?	Final Question (written)

The long term working memory data point collection was at (9). When the antecedent in (3) is in the imperfective as opposed to in the perfective, it should more often cause the students to write 'report' into the word edge completion.

Writing 'report' in the word edge would show that that antecedent was reactivated and was still available for being the cause of the consequent. If the student was keeping the antecedent available, my thought was that they would be more likely to put that word into the blanks. This would show that they noticed aspect and were keeping it available for further use and making inferences. The imperfective could have more likelihood of

generating causal inferences because it is incomplete and open-ended. Students noticed the imperfective aspect at a frequency of .27 compared to .42 in the perfective (cf. Figure 4). This is contrary to what I was expecting, In fact, the difference between imperfective and perfective had a *p*-value less than .05 so it is significant. The perfective results were similar to that of native graduate-school speakers (Schramm, personal communication). This may mean the students were processing the perfective aspect. However, it appears that participants noticed imperfective situations less often than perfective ones. This is contrary to the expectation that participants would generate a causal inference more often in the imperfective narrative than in the perfective narrative.

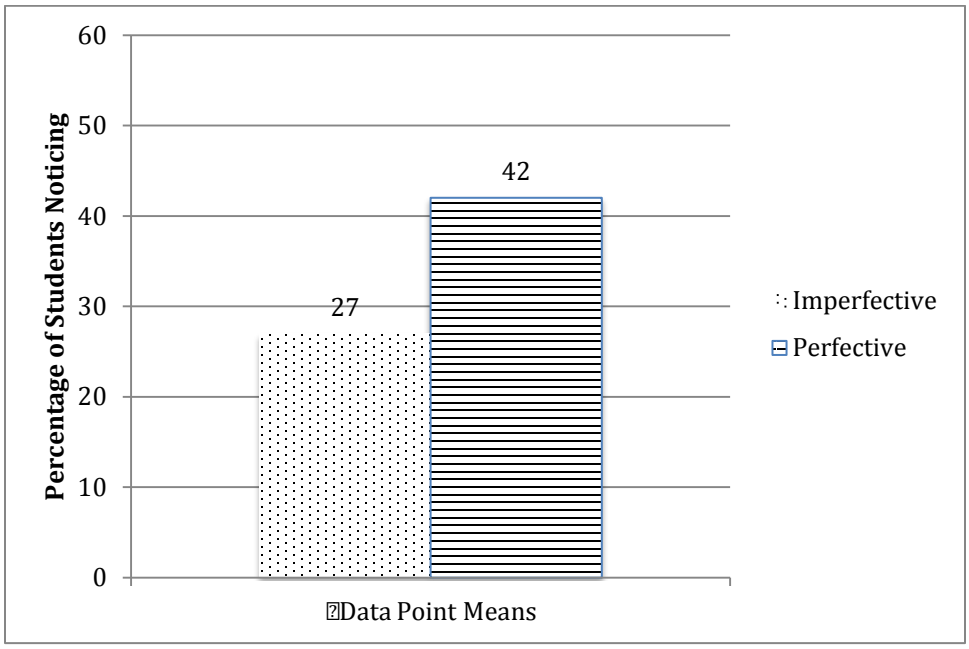


Figure 4: Word Edge Completion Before Instruction

Post- Instruction

I repeated the same procedures in the post–test for LTWM. As can be seen in Figure 5, students completed word-edges in the imperfective condition at a mean frequency of .27 and in the perfective one at a mean frequency of .17. The difference between the two was not statistically significant with a p-value of .19. Students in this case did seem to notice the imperfective aspect more often than the perfective, but because of the p-value shown it could be just a coincidence. In fact, the frequency in the imperfective is the same as in the pre-instruction condition, while it is considerably lower in the perfective. This shows me that their attention may have been drawn to the perfective after the instruction. Their interests were piqued in the right direction but for an unexpected reason and with unexpected results; they were potentially avoiding the perfective. Students seemed to be suppressing the use of the perfective. After my teaching, they seemed to know to avoid it. However, having the imperfective more available means students could have a greater likelihood of generating causal inferences in LTM.

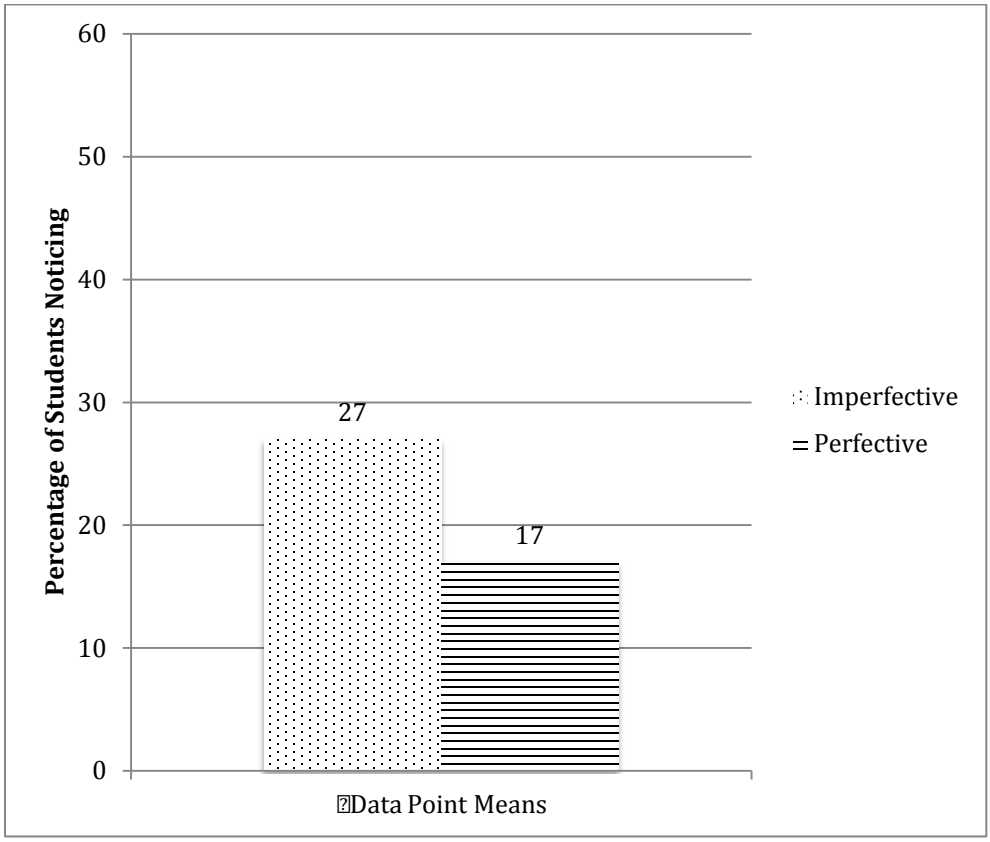


Figure 5: Word Edge Completion After Instruction

Comparing Pre and Post Instruction

The amount of noticing imperfective aspect was similar in Pre and Post-test; however, the focus was on the perfective aspect and the imperfective aspect remained the same as the Pre-test (cf. Figure 6). In the pre-test and post-test, the imperfective was noticed .27; the frequency of .27 in the imperfective matches neutral activation in native speakers (Schramm, 1998). In the pre-test the perfective was noticed a mean of .42, which is above neutral activation. In the post-test the perfective was noticed a mean of .17, which is below neutral activation. This could be a sign of suppression. Suppression occurs when during a process of learning something new, students make the older

knowledge less accessible (Gernsbacher, 1997). Students in this case would have been learning about the imperfective aspect and then suppressed the older knowledge of the perfective. They were told to focus more on what was happening with the imperfective antecedent and therefore suppressed the likelihood of the perfective being important to processing the story.

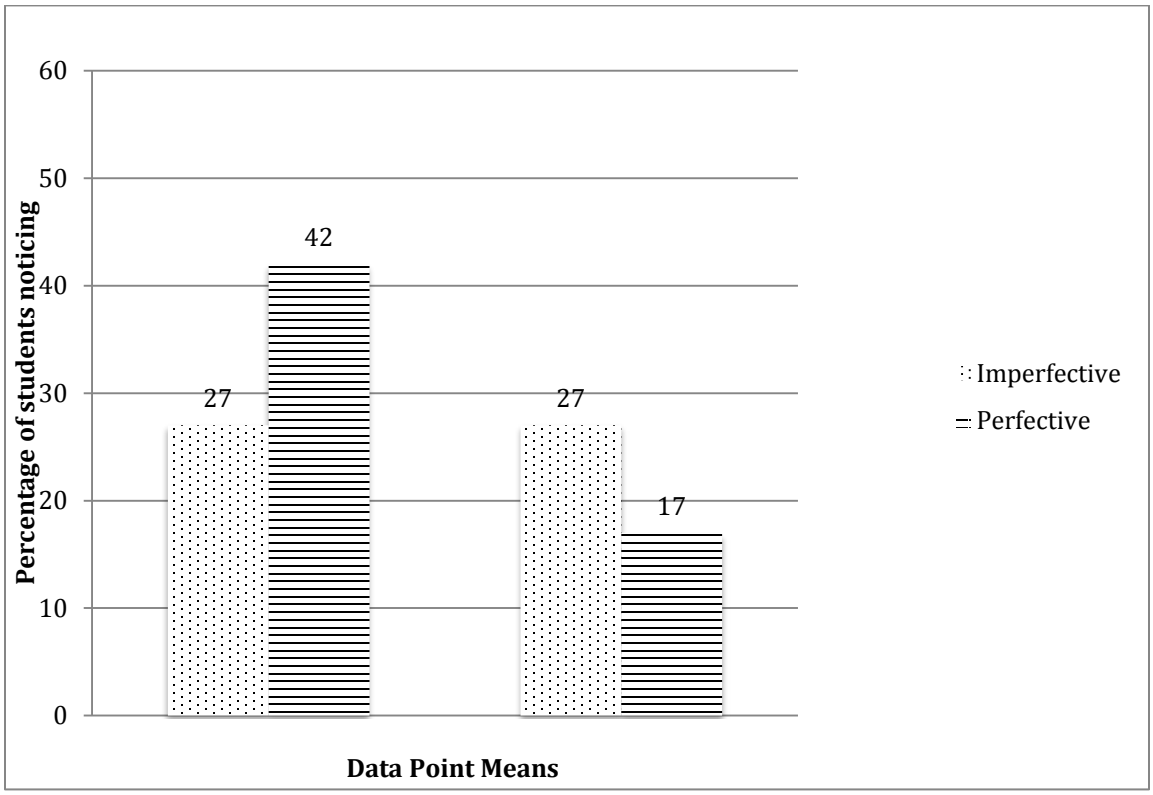


Figure 6: Word Completion Comparison

Long Term Memory

Pre-Instruction

I tested for content in LTM by asking a comprehension question at the end of the narrative. I will show how this was done using the example 'Disappointing Day' in

Table 5. After reading the story with two antecedents, one in (3) and one in (4), students were asked a question. This question led students to answer with one or both of the two antecedents. If the first antecedent was mentioned, we could acknowledge that that antecedent was still available at the end of the story for use in story understanding. For example if the aspect in (3) was imperfective, Gary could be writing the proposal and that is one reason he could miss the party. If the aspect in (3) was in the perfective, Gary would be finished writing the proposal so it would fall on the antecedent in (4) that he was too sick to make the party. Antecedent 1 would more likely be the answer to the question in line (10) if the aspect was imperfective than if it was in the perfective.

Table 5
Disappointing Day-Long Term Memory

(1) In the morning, Gary's manager told him that the business proposal should be finished that evening and put on his desk.	Setting
(2) This project was Gary's top priority and would take up a good portion of the day.	Initiating Event
(3) Gary found all the necessary information and ***WAS WRITING*/WROTE** the report	Antecedent 1
(4) In the afternoon, Gary started feeling sick, but he stayed at work.	Antecedent 2
(5) Awhile later, one of his co-workers stopped by to ask him a question about semiconductors.	Filler
(6) Semiconductors were Gary's specialization, and he did not mind answering questions about them.	Filler
(7) In fact, the company was thinking about giving him a raise because of this superior knowledge in that area	Filler
(8) Right before quitting time there was a birthday party, but Gary couldn't go.	Consequent
(9) Re_ _ _ _	Word Completion
(10) Why could Gary not go to the party?	Final Question (written)

The LTM Pre-test had students noticing the imperfective a mean frequency of .36 and noticing the perfective a mean frequency of .30. This led to a *p*-value of .75; there was no significant difference between the two. This lack of significant difference in the pre-test was expected and has been shown with previous studies by Meidal (2008) and Schramm (2012).

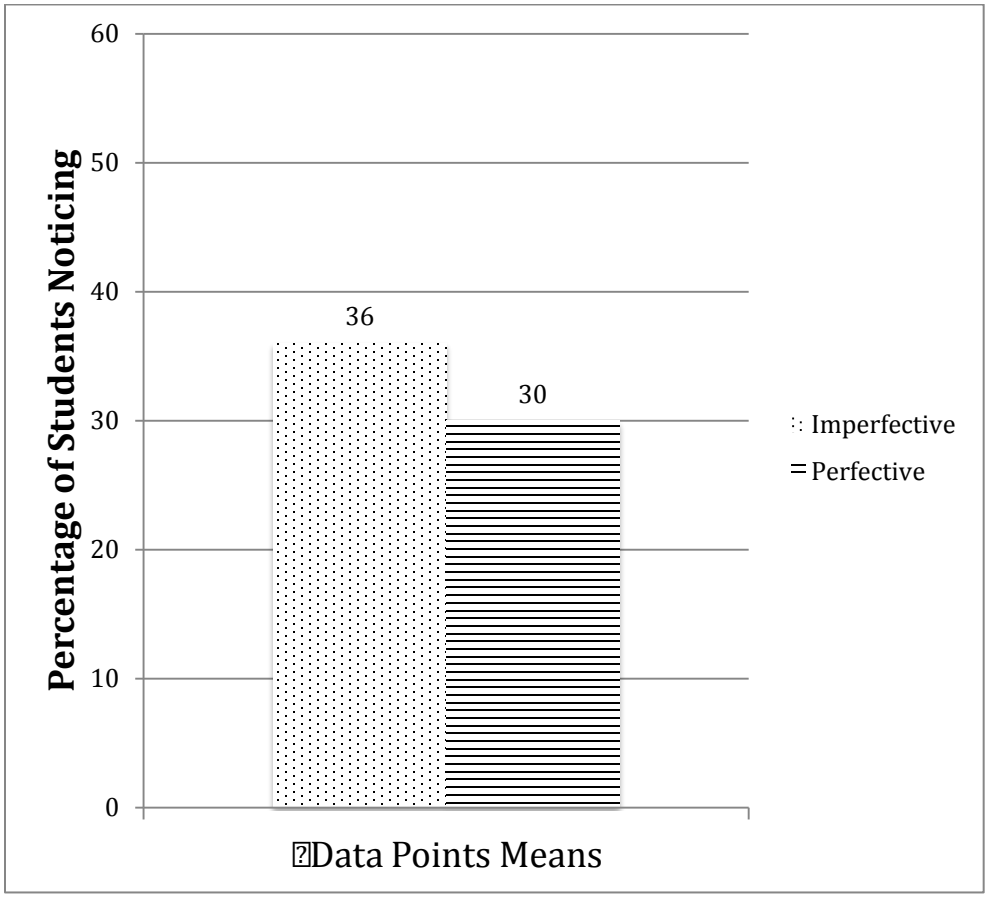


Figure 7: Question and Answer Before Instruction

<u>Post-Instruction</u>

Imperfective antecedents were referenced a mean of .52 times and perfective antecedents a mean of .22 times. Figure 8 shows that Post-instruction LTM tests revealed a highly significant difference between perfective and imperfective. The *p*-value was .01. It seems that after instruction, students were more likely to use the imperfective antecedents for inferencing than the perfective ones. It also appears that there was a sizeable increase in inferencing from .36 to . 52 in the imperfective condition between before and after the instruction. It was beyond the scope of this research topic to analyze such results.

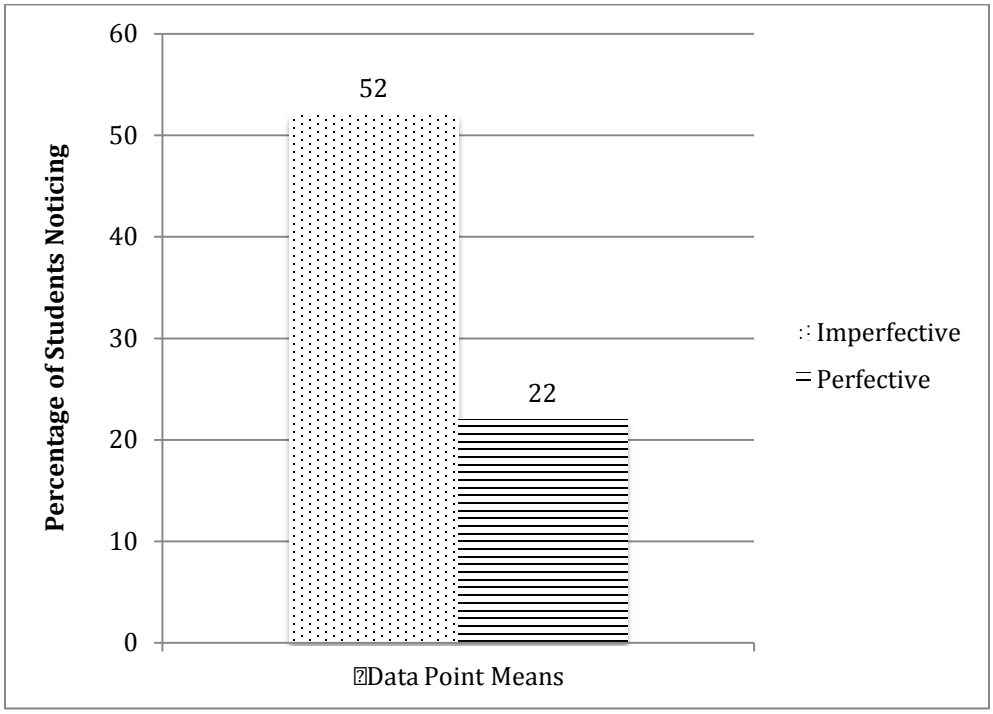


Figure 8: Question and Answer After Instruction

Comparing Pre-Post LTM

As Figure 9 shows, in the pre-instruction condition, Imperfective antecedents were referenced .36 in LTM; after instruction they were used .52. This shows that students, after instruction, appear to be able to recognize that the imperfective situations needed to stay in focus and retrieved it from LTM. The students seemed to be listening to the instruction and noted that if the antecedent was in the imperfective, it could be used for further referencing. The perfective was noticed a mean frequency of .30 in the pre-test and only a mean frequency of .22 in the post-test. Students choosing the perfective a mean of .22 shows that they chose it at about chance (Schramm, personal communication). Students choosing the perfective around a mean of .25 is similar to what

Andreas Schramm (1998) found while researching native speakers. It could show that students were learning to draw inferences based on what aspect was given in a narrative.

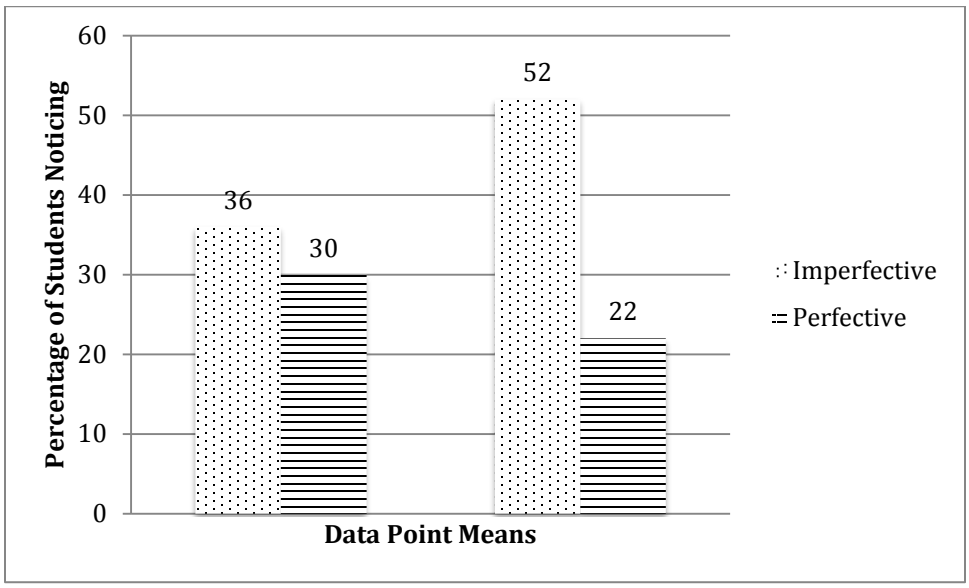


Figure 9. Question and Answer Comparison

Overall Analysis

<u>LTWM vs. LTM</u>

In the Pre-instruction data collection points for LTWM, the difference between the imperfective and perfective was a *p*-value of .05. This means there was a significant difference, but it was not in the predicted direction. Students were more likely to pick the perfective over the imperfective. This could be because simple past is the default aspect when people read narratives (Hopper, 1982). By comparison there was no significance in LTM in the pre-instruction condition. There was a mean of .36 in the imperfective condition and a mean of .30 in the perfective one with a *p*-value of .75. This could be

because students may not have known how to answer the questions by using one of the given antecedents.

In the post-instruction condition in LTWM the means of the imperfective stayed the same as in the pre-instruction condition and that of the perfective went down. The p-value was .19 for the difference between students retrieving the imperfective and perfective in LTWM. This shows a trend but not significance. Comparing the pre-LTM with the post-LTM means the difference between the two aspects in LTM went from a p-value of .75 in the pre-test to a highly significant .01 in the post-test. I think the significant difference between the two aspectual conditions in LTM in the post-instruction condition may have shown up partially because that is what students were taught about in the instruction period. This explicit instruction of aspectual meanings with practice using the skill in context gave the students time to be comfortable with the use of the grammar form. With the cognitive processing load lightened (Sharwood-Smith, 1991) students could focus on how the form impact the outcome of the story and make appropriate inferences. Instruction in the meaning of the two aspects and in pragmatic inferencing based on causality appears to have been helpful.

Summary

The word completion results probing WM content showed similar results as that of other studies. It did not have as conclusive evidence of being aware of aspect as the results from question-answering in LTM did. However, this may have been because of suppression of memory content in the perfective. The LTM check, the question and

answer, showed what was predicted: growth in paying attention to the aspect of the antecedent.

The next section I will discuss further implications of this study and further areas of research one might take this.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study asked the following guiding questions: *Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meanings in narratives help students make inferences while reading?* We were able to determine that after a lesson of FoF, students were more likely to notice the imperfective aspect and therefore make inferences more likely.

I asked the question: Given the situation of college students learning a second language, are they helped to track meaning of aspect by text enhancement in conjunction with explicit instruction? Based on my findings the combination of explicit instruction and text enhancement did help students track meaning of aspect. We could see that in post-instruction students were more likely to use an imperfective than a perfective word in the word edge; they tracked the incomplete meaning of progressive imperfective aspect and the complete meaning of the perfective simple form. This concurs with Magliano and Schleich (2000), who state that when processing a sentence, imperfective is more likely to be ready for later use. With it available for later use, students were able to use it to make inferences as they continues to read.

And they were indeed more likely to reactivate and mention imperfective meaning in the comprehension question. This addressed the question, will the explicit instruction and ability to track the aspectual meaning in narratives help students make

inferences while reading? Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995) stated that tense and aspect is not learned any faster with instruction. However, it seems that in this situation students were able to pick up on tense and aspect due to instruction. For my instruction, I combined explicit grammar instruction of the meaning of the perfective and imperfect in a sentence. I made it clear to students that when perfective is used the event is complete and when imperfect is used the event has continued. I taught them how to use this to make inferences and causality connections while reading. This was followed up by a chance to practice with narratives. Students read narrative texts and made inferences based on the aspect in the story.

Future Research

Based on the conclusions of this study, I have listed below some ideas for future researchers:

(1) Include a probe after the pre-test word edge completion.

(2) Perform a delayed post-test.

(3) Set up a comparative study.

Probing

One thing that could help us understand better what is going on in the students' minds is to ask them about what they noticed while they were testing. I could see that they noticed something during the Question and Answer phase of the testing, but I did not know exactly what it was. Because I did not know what the thought process during the LTWM test was, this would be a good place to ask students what was happening in their

heads. It would be helpful to find out because these students seemed to notice aspect initially. An example would be that if a student wrote the correct word in the blanks, they could be asked further questions such as: did they notice the textual enhancement, why did they choose that word, and did they connect the word-edge task to what they read in the narrative. A researcher could find out what they were noticing, what they were paying attention to, and how different students processed the information in the narratives.

Delayed Post-test

A second idea for further research would be to administer a delayed post-test. This study showed a significant difference between students noticing the imperfective and perfective aspect in LTM in an immediate post-test. To see how well they hold onto this information, it would be helpful for a researcher to administer a delayed post-test a week or two weeks later. Another researcher could test the students initially and come back in two weeks to see how much retention of aspect the students had. A researcher could either ask about explicit knowledge on the two aspects or run a delayed post-test with narratives just testing the ability to apply what they learned.

Comparative Study

The final recommendation for further research is to compare students who receive instruction on how to use the textual enhancements to help guide their understanding of the story by following the methods described in Chapter 3 and students who had no instruction but still had the textual enhancements. Some students would receive instruction to notice the aspect based on color and what that aspect means to understand a

narrative. A control group would receive just the materials textually enhanced but no instruction. In the current study, students may have picked up on the aspect and textual enhancements just by doing the stories twice. Another researcher could determine the helpfulness of the instruction by comparing with students who had no instruction.

Shortcomings

The study showed that instruction worked at helping students pay attention to aspect and make appropriate inferences. Given the small scale of this study, replication with a larger number of participants would produce more definitive results.

Additionally, there was a significant difference in the post-test between noticing the imperfective and the perfective during question-answering. However, among fifteen students there were five L1s. Ideally the group would have been of one L1 to reduce the number of variables. Each language has a different aspectual system that can play on the ability to notice and learn English aspect in a timely manner. With these differences it would be hard to ascertain how much students came to the table able to transfer from their L1s. Having a single L1 would give the opportunity to better ascertain what was picked up through textual enhancement and instruction.

Reflection

As a practicing teacher, I will take this instruction technique (Focus on Form) into my classroom. While the grammar focus was too advanced for my middle school students, the instruction technique could be changed to address other needs my students have. I am excited about the opportunity to use this in the classroom to see results. If

indeed I feel it successful in the classroom, I would like to share it with my colleagues who may work in the mainstream and have ELLs in their classrooms. In addition to my colleagues, I think other researchers may be interested in the results of this study. I would like to go to professional conferences and share this study with others.

Another practice that I learned from the process of developing and following through with a research project was the important of research on my teaching practices. This capstone impressed on me the benefits and importance of staying abreast of the field of ESL and Applied Linguistics. With more knowledge and more techniques, I can be a better instructor for my students.

Chapter Summary

This chapter consisted of a recap of the study's guiding questions. I followed up the guiding questions with suggestions for future research that might help us understand better what is going on in the minds of our students, see how long the effects of the instruction lasts, and gives us more of an insight into. Chapter Five ended by my own reflection on how I will continue to use this research in my professional life.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Reading and Remembering of Short Stories
(November, 2011)

You are invited to be in a research study of investigating the psychological processes involved in reading and remembering simple stories. You were selected as a possible participant because English is not your native language. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.
This study is being conducted by: Cadi Kivimagi, Hamline University.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to find out if non-native speakers can be prompted to notice certain grammatical forms with the purpose to discover how such forms are learned.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
Read 18 very short (one paragraph) narrative texts. After each story, you will be asked to do two things: (1) complete a test word that may have occurred in the story, and (2) write a one-sentence answer to a question about the story. The study will take about 60 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study involves no risk to you.
Taking part in this study will inform you about a specific grammar point and show you how to use that to become a better reader.

Compensation:

You will receive class credit in return for your participation even if you choose to withdraw.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. It will be published as a Master's thesis, but will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Winona State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researchers conducting this study are: Cadi Kivimagi and Andreas Schramm. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Cadi Kivimagi at ckivimagi01@hamlineuniversity.edu or Andreas Schramm at aschramm@gw.hamline.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

(November, 2011)

APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF STUDY

Understanding Simple Stories

Researchers have been interested in recent years in finding out how aspect, as opposed to tense, is understood by native speakers of English. Aspect in language is a complicated phenomenon. It presents the time structure of events as opposed to tense, which locates events in time. There are two basic aspects in English: the imperfective aspect, expressed by the Progressive Form, and the perfective, expressed by the Simple Form. For example, we find the imperfective aspect in the progressive event “Pat was eating the apple”. It has the meaning or function of partially focusing the process of eating; in other words, one can not be sure after reading the sentence whether Pat finished eating the apple. The perfective aspect can be found in “Pat ate the apple” and is expressed by the Simple Form of the predicate. It has the meaning or function of focusing the entire event from beginning to end. Upon reading this sentence, we know that Pat finished eating the apple.

The study you participated in investigates the role of aspect in text comprehension. It helps us find out whether native speakers of English will cognitively process the two aspects and will maintain information in working memory depending on aspect. To determine this point, we look at your understanding of simple stories. The stories were designed especially for this study. In them, potential relationships exist between two events that are several sentences apart. For example, in one of the stories that you read the protagonist is eating an apple. Later on, he or she falls and hurts him/herself. Did it occur to you that the protagonist’s injury was related to eating the apple? If you noticed an imperfective aspect in that sentence, it could have. If you noticed a perfective aspect, it shouldn’t necessarily have occurred to you. In order to find out whether native speakers notice aspect we did two things. First, at the end of the stories stories we asked you to decide whether the word "apple" appeared in the text. If you had already made the connection between the apple and the injury, you were probably able to indicate that this word was in the text. If you had not made the connection, you probably indicated that the word did not appear in the text. Second, we simply asked you to answer the question why the protagonist was in pain. If you answered something like, “She/he choked on the apple.” and you read the imperfective version of the sentence (“Pat was eating the apple”), we will take that as evidence that the information connected with the imperfective aspect was recalled.

If you want to learn more about this study or about aspect, please contact Cadi Kivimagi. Thank you!

APPENDIX C: LANGUAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your native language?

2. How many years have you studied English in school?

3. What is your age?

4. Have you studied other languages?
    a. If yes, what were they?

5. How many years have you lived in the United States or some other English speaking country?

6. How well can you talk with you English speaking friends?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all								Excellent	

(Circle one)

7. How well can you express what you want to say in your language class?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all								Excellent	

(Circle one)

8. How much do you understand in your language class?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all								Excellent	

(Circle one)

9. How much do you understand when you read in your language class?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all								Excellent	

(Circle one)

10. How well can you express what you want to write in your language class?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all								Excellent	

(Circle one)

APPENDIX D: INSTRUCTION

Introduction: Pirate Story

An old pirate ***was sitting*** in the bar. He ***was smoking*** a pipe and ***drinking*** a glass of rum. He ***was wearing*** an eye patch and he had a parrot on his shoulder and a wooden leg. Instead of his right hand he had a metal hook. A young sailor ***was chatting*** with the pirate and he asked him about his adventures at sea.

'So, how did you lose your leg?', the young man **ASKED** the pirate.

'Arrr! ,' said the pirate, 'You see, some sharks ***were circling*** the ship when I **FELL** overboard. Luckily, my men pulled me back onto the ship before the sharks ate me completely, but one of the sharks got my leg.'

'And how about the hook on your hand? How did you lose your hand?'

'I ***was boarding*** a ship when another sailor **CUT** off my hand with a sword.'

'That's amazing! What a life full of adventures!' said the young man. 'And how about your eye? How did you lose that?'

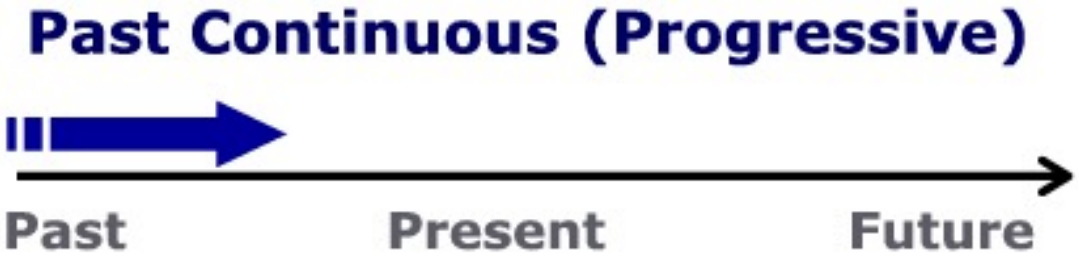
'I ***was eating*** a grapefruit when the juice **WENT** into my eye.'

'But I don't understand. How did you lose your eye from the grapefruit juice?'

'Arrr!' said the pirate, 'it was my first day with the new hook.'

Past Progressive.

- I ***was eating*** a grapefruit, then I stuck my hook in my eye.



Simple past.

I **ATE** a grapefruit. Then I got a hook in my eye.

Modeling and Guided Practice: The School Dance, The Snowman

The School Dance
Ben was at the school dance. He had really dressed up for it. After a fast dance, he slipped around the corner because his clothes felt uncomfortable. He **was tightening** his belt. Then he noticed that there was a huge mustard stain right on his tie. Ben was very upset because it was one of his favorites. He had gotten it as a Christmas present. When the girl he liked came around the corner, Ben was so embarrassed.

- Why was Ben embarrassed?

The Snowman
Winter was Julie's favorite season. When the fresh snow started falling she decided to make a snowman. She rolled up two giant balls of snow and put one on top of the other. She was placing the head on top when her dog, Max, ran up to her. Julie forgot about the snowman's eyes, nose and mouth while Max danced around her legs. He was very excited to play in the new snow with Julie. She and Max were having such a fun time. It was time to go in for the night, but her snowman wasn't finished.

a. *Find the 'placing of the head.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive*

b. How much of the snowman was finished?

Independent Practice: Allowance Money, The Tooth, Afterschool Duties, The Science Project

Allowance Money
Nick's parents would give him a $1 allowance if he did all his chores. He usually would save up just enough to buy a new video game. Today he needed to straighten, dust, and sweep his room. Nick cleaned his room. Suddenly he heard the ice cream truck outside, so he made a run for it. His friends were outside playing soccer and he decided to join them. Nick was thrilled when he scored a goal. But the next day the thrill was gone when Nick opened his wallet at the video game store to find he did not have enough money.

a. *Find the 'cleaning of his room.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.*

b. *Why wasn't there enough money for the game?*

The Tooth
Jose's tooth was getting looser by the minute. He simply could not leave it alone while sitting in class. Wiggling it with his tongue had become a habit. For a quick snack, Jose was eating a delicious beef jerky. When he bent down to pick up the wrapper he had dropped, he hit his lip on the corner of desk. He wasn't quite done

with his task, but his class was lining up to go to gym. Jose still needed to change into his gym shoes. Next thing he knew he felt a sharp pain and he felt something pointy swimming around in his mouth.

a. Find the 'eating of the jerky' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.

b. Why did Jose lose his tooth?

After School Duties

When Sam got home from school, his first job was to let the dog out. His second job was his homework. After a very hard day, Sam decided to play a game on the family computer because he needed a brain break. When he heard his Dad's footsteps up the stairs, Sam turned off the computer. Sam quickly started unpacking his backpack and realized he had never let the dog out. He had been in trouble with his dad earlier that month for his after school behavior. His dad had been so mad that Sam was grounded for a weekend. When Sam looked at his dad's face to say hello, he knew he was in trouble again.

a. *Find the ' turning off of the computer.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.*

b. Why was Sam in trouble again?

The Science Project

After school, Brendan realized he needed some things for his big assignment. He went to the store and found a large poster and some markers. But when Brendan couldn't find the glue, he was told it was in row six. Brendan got the glue. Suddenly he bumped into someone, and he scrambled to hold his items. He went to the cashier, paid, and left the store. While walking home, he tried to enjoy his free time. When Brendan began working on his project he realized that there was no glue in his shopping bag.

a. *Find the' getting of the glue.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.*

b. Why was there no glue in his shopping bag?

APPENDIX E: INSTRUCTION STORIES

The Snowman

Winter was Julie's favorite season. When the fresh snow started falling she decided to make a snowman. She rolled up two giant balls of snow and put one on top of the other. She was placing the head on top when her dog, Max, ran up to her. Julie forgot about the snowman's eyes, nose and mouth while Max danced around her legs. He was very excited to play in the new snow with Julie. She and Max were having such a fun time. It was time to go in for the night, but her snowman wasn't finished.

a. *Find the 'placing of the head.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive*

b. How much of the snowman was finished? _____

Allowance Money

Nick's parents would give him a $1 allowance if he did all his chores. He usually would save up just enough to buy a new video game. Today he needed to straighten, dust, and sweep his room. Nick cleaned his room. Suddenly he heard the ice cream truck outside, so he made a run for it. His friends were outside playing soccer and he decided to join them. Nick was thrilled when he scored a goal. But the next day the thrill was gone when Nick opened his wallet at the video game store to find he did not have enough money.

a. *Find the 'cleaning of his room.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.*

b. Why wasn't there enough money for the game? _____

The Tooth

Jose's tooth was getting looser by the minute. He simply could not leave it alone while sitting in class. Wiggling it with his tongue had become a habit. For a quick snack, Jose was eating a delicious beef jerky. When he bent down to pick up the wrapper he had dropped, he hit his lip on the corner of desk. He wasn't quite done with his task, but his class was lining up to go to gym. Jose still needed to change into his gym shoes. Next thing he knew he felt a sharp pain and he felt something pointy swimming around in his mouth.

a. Find the 'eating of the jerky.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.

b. Why did Jose lose his tooth? _____

After School Duties

When Sam got home from school, his first job was to let the dog out. His second job was his homework. After a very hard day, Sam decided to play a game on the family computer because he needed a brain break. When he heard his Dad's footsteps up the stairs, Sam turned off the computer. Sam quickly started unpacking his backpack and realized he had never let the dog out. He had been in trouble with his dad earlier that month for his after school behavior. His dad had been so mad that Sam was grounded for a weekend. When Sam looked at his dad's face to say hello, he knew he was in trouble again.

a. *Find the 'turning off of the computer.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.*

b. Why was Sam in trouble again? _____

The Science Project

After school, Brendan realized he needed some things for his big assignment. He went to the store and found a large poster and some markers. But when Brendan couldn't find the glue, he was told it was in row six. Brendan got the paste. Suddenly he bumped into someone, and he scrambled to hold his items. He went to the cashier, paid, and left the store. While walking home, he tried to enjoy his free time. When Brendan began working on his project he realized that there was no glue in his shopping bag.

a. *Find the' getting of the glue.' Highlight the phrase red if it is in simple past and blue if it's in past progressive.*

b. Why was there no glue in his shopping bag? _____

APPENDIX F: SHORT STORIES

Running Late

It was late when Pat got up. She did not have time for breakfast so she grabbed a shiny piece of fruit from the fruit bowl. Pat rushed out the door. On her way downstairs, she ***was eating*/ATE** the apple. Near the exit, the janitor was mopping the floor. This reminded her that it was the day of the office cleanup. She would have to go through her papers and get things off the floor. Pat liked organizing her work place since the next day all of her documents were back where they belonged. Next thing she knew, Pat was cringing in pain.

A P _ _ _

R _ _ _

Why was Pat cringing in pain?

Work Day

Rebecca and Tanya decided to get some work done around their apartment. In the morning they painted Tanya's room. In the afternoon they waxed the floors. Now it was evening. Rebecca was tired, sat down, and started reading through her old magazines. Tanya still wanted to put up her favorite picture. She marked the wall and ***was hammering*/HAMMERED** in the nail. Rebecca, while getting one of her magazines, bumped into a big stack of books, which came crashing down. Tanya sighed in relief. It was a good thing that she had moved her antique doll collection. She was an art collector and really liked those dolls. Some of them came from faraway places and were dressed in ethnic clothes. A neighbor called to complain about the noise.

N _ _ _

O T _ _ _

Why was there so much noise that a neighbor called?

Back from Vacation

Sam had just come back from vacation, and things had really become backed up during his absence. So he worked on the computer code for a new task all day. In the afternoon, he finished writing the code and had to decide whether there was enough time to run it right away. After all, trying out new code often crashed the system, and it took forever to start up the computer again. Sam made his decision and ***was testing*/TESTED** the program. Exhausted, he played a self-designed computer game hoping that nobody had messed with it during his absence. He really needed a short break from his work, and he enjoyed playing on the computer tremendously. He sat back to get comfortable in his chair. He sipped coffee from his favorite mug. Then the screen froze.

P R _ _ _ _ _

Y O _ _ _

What caused the screen to freeze?

Driving Around

Jean-Louis was driving along the Cote d'Azur in his native San Tropez, when he noticed a leak in the cooling system of his vehicle. He was barely able to drive back to his house. He drove into the garage and immediately went to work. He ***was replacing*/REPLACED** the hose to the radiator. While Jean-Louis was getting a snack, his girlfriend Joelle jumped in the car wondering if he had finally put in a new battery. But she couldn't find the key. She searched all of her purse. She checked her pockets - still without luck. Then she remembered the key that was hidden in the garage. She got the key and climbed back into the car. When she turned the key, the car would not start

H _ _ _

S H _ _ _ _

Why didn't the car start?

Home from School Soon

The kids would be home from school soon. Since they were usually starving, it was time to prepare dinner. Sandy cleaned all the vegetables she needed for the dish she wanted to prepare. She put all the ingredients into a pot and ***was cooking*/COOKED** the meal. While getting some parsley from her garden to decorate the dish Sandy stopped to chat with Phyllis, who was grilling hamburgers. Phyllis always knew the latest neighborhood news. Another neighbor's daughter was seriously ill and had been told not to have children. Since things were not going smoothly in that daughter's marriage, she had gotten pregnant anyway. Now everybody was rather interested in the mother's reaction. After a few minutes, the two friends noticed the smell of something burnt.

M _ _ _

B L _ _ _ _ _

Why was there the smell of something burnt?

Assembling a Swing

Janet was assembling a swing in the front yard. To see the final size of the structure, she took all the pieces and loosely put them together. Janet asked Mike, her 12-year-old, to start with the yard work, while she was working on the swing. Mike wasn't too excited because he wanted to play baseball with his friends. He ***was mowing*/MOWED** the lawn. When Janet returned from the hardware store where she had picked up a missing tool, she saw a dog frantically charging across all the neighbors' properties. Janet slowed down and set her signal. Traffic was heavier than usual. She had to wait a while to make her turn. When Janet glanced over to the swing it had been knocked down.

L _ _ _

A N _ _ _ _

Why did the swing get knocked down?

Emergency Operation

It was an emergency operation. Dr. Greene and Dr. Ross needed to prepare the patient as quickly as possible. Therefore Dr. Greene ***was administering*/ADMINISTERED** a new and somewhat risky procedure. Dr. Ross, well aware of a recent patient's death under similar circumstances, carefully gave an injection for the operation. The nurse came into the operating room. She needed to get ready for the operation. She cleaned the instruments and placed them within the doctors' reach. All of a sudden, the patient's vital signs deteriorated.

P R _ _ _ _ _ _ _

D R _ _ _

Why did the patient's vital signs deteriorate?

Repair Jobs

Mother had noticed that a step on the stairs leading down to the basement needed to be repaired. She told Dad. So, on Saturday, Dad tackled the stairs, before doing several other repair jobs in the basement. He ***was replacing*/REPLACED** the board. The children had their blocks scattered all over the top of the stairs, when the phone rang. Mom answered, but it was for Dad. Mom and Dad have a small business, for which they needed to be available on Saturdays, too. Several years ago, they started selling homemade quilts Mom and her friends make. Dad was doing the advertising and accounting. Racing up the stairs, Dad stumbled and started falling.

B O _ _ _

P A _ _ _ _

Why did Dad stumble?

Day at the Office

In the morning, Gary's manager had said that he would be back later that evening and the proposal had to be on his desk then. This project was Gary's top priority and would take up a good portion of the day. Gary found all the necessary information and ***was writing*/WROTE** the report. In the afternoon, Gary started feeling sick, but he stayed at work. A while later, one of his co-workers stopped by to ask him a question about semiconductors. Semiconductors was Gary's area of specialization, and he did not mind answering questions about them. In fact, the company was thinking about giving him a raise because of his superior knowledge in that area. Right before quitting time there was a birthday party, but Gary just couldn't go.

R E _ _ _ _

D _ _ _

Why could Gary not go to the party?

Visiting the Grandparents

Shelley was visiting her grandparents in Northern Minnesota. It was a beautiful drive, the narrow two-lane road lined with trees, leaves beginning to turn. The road was empty except for this slow poke in front of her. Impatiently, she ***was passing*/PASSED** the pickup. Unexpectedly, a deer came charging out of the woods forcing her to turn the steering wheel to the right. Within split seconds, several thoughts raced through her head. The car belonged to the company her dad works for. Would she get in trouble for taking it without asking? Would he punish her by not letting her use his car again? She felt a strong bump.

P I _ _ _ _

S H _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Why did Shelley feel a strong bump?

Time for Baths

It was definitely time for baths. The children had played outside in the rain and were all muddy and cold. Mr. Duncan went upstairs to the bathroom. He ***was filling/*****FILLED** the tub with warm water. Back downstairs while waiting for his kids, the heavy rainfall reminded him to have the hole in the roof fixed. Meanwhile his daughter was taking her time. First she did not like the carrots, and then she needed more to drink. Mr. Duncan got up and got her some apple juice from the refrigerator. Right then, Mrs. Duncan came running into the kitchen to tell him that there was water dripping from the ceil

T _ _

T A _ _ _

Why was there water dripping from the ceiling?

Rob and Alisha's System

Rob and Alisha had a nice system going. Each day they split up their duties and rotated them. Today, Alisha took care of the living room, and Rob was down for kitchen chores. Rob ***was washing/*****WASHED** the dishes. Alisha watered the plants and started arranging flowers in one of their special vases. She felt bad because it had been a terrible day for her. She overslept, missed her bus, and was reprimanded by her boss. In her rush she forgot her purse. And on top of everything her lunch date did not show. Suddenly there was a shattering noise.

D I _ _ _ _

U N _ _ _ _ _

What was the cause of the shattering noise?

Christmas Celebration

Jodie was at the annual Christmas celebration. She had really dressed up for the occasion. She was enjoying herself but needed to slip around the corner because her clothes felt uncomfortable. She ***was adjusting*/ADJUSTED** her pantyhose. She also noticed that there was a huge mustard stain right on her special skirt. Jodie was very upset. It was one of her favorite skirts. It was made out of pink satin and was very becoming. She had gotten it as a present from her sister after finishing college. When her boss came around the corner, Jodie was so embarrassed.

P A _ _ _ _ _ _ _

N O _ _ _

Why was Jodie embarrassed?

Sunday Paper

Walter fetched the Sunday paper from the porch and sat down on the floor to look through it. Before he even touched the rest of the paper, he looked through the coupon section. Walter decided which coupons they could use. He grabbed a scissors from the table and ***was cutting*/CUT** out all of those coupons with it. While slowly leaning against the shelves to support his back, Walter lost his balance. Immediately, he started worrying about the coupons. They might get wrinkled and ripped. Then he wouldn't be able to use them, which he couldn't afford. His job as clerk just did not pay enough. He felt a strong pain.

S C _ _ _ _ _ _

P R _ _ _ _ _

What caused the pain when Walter lost his balance?

Moving In

Carl and Miriam had been dating for several years. He recently asked her to move in with him, and she had promised to let him know by today. It was almost noon, and he had been checking his e-mail account all morning to see if she had said yes. But Miriam had been very busy in the morning and did not have time to write him her positive answer. She finally ***was sending*/SENT** the message. Then, their financial agent called to tell her that he had just spoken with Carl about their joint stock market portfolio's terrible performance. During the call Miriam's eyes wandered across the room. She saw the dishes on the table, and her eyes rested on a picture of her favorite Dali painting she put up many years ago. The rest of the room was hard to make out because the curtains were drawn. Meanwhile, Carl was feeling extremely depressed.

M E _ _ _ _ _

F L _ _ _

Why was Carl feeling so depressed?

Heavily in Debt

In the year 1790, Mozart was heavily in debt. Fortunately, one morning a wealthy patron asked him to write a short piece of music for a substantial sum of money. But there was one condition: Mozart had to finish it by the evening of the same day. The work proved very difficult because of Mozart's failing health. Mozart ***was composing*/COMPOSED** the sonata. To clear his mind, he went out with several of his friends and treated them to beer and wine. It was cold and snowy on that day in Vienna. Winter had finally set in. The snow was coming down in big, heavy flakes. People were shoveling sidewalks. When he returned home late that night, Mozart's wife started crying because there was not enough money to buy food for the family.

S O _ _ _ __

A _ _ _

Why wasn't there enough money for food?