Interaction of Lexical and Morphological Aspect in L1 English L2 Spanish

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1. Introduction

Research on the second language (L2) acquisition of future tense has seen significant growth in the last ten years, but little of that growth has investigated the relationship between future temporality and aspect. Differences between English and Spanish with respect to aspect gives rise to a surprisingly similar distribution of aspectual interpretations in the future, including progressive and modal readings, though different ones in the present tense. In the present tense, the availability of an ongoing interpretation differs between English and Spanish primarily on the basis of lexical, or inherent, aspect. English stative predicates, such as in (1), allow for an ongoing reading, here denoted by the possible inclusion of *right now*. English dynamic predicates, such as in (2), do not allow for an ongoing reading. However, the present tense of Spanish allows ongoing readings with both stative predicates similar to (1) and dynamic predicates as in (3).

(1) John is at home (right now).
(2) John eats cake (*right now).
(3) Juan come pastel (ahora mismo).
    Juan eats cake right now

In the future tense, both English and Spanish have two morphological options. Both have a periphrastic future tense using *to go* (4-5). English additionally has the option of an auxiliary (6), and Spanish has a synthetic future often referred to as future simple (7). Importantly, both future simple morphology (e.g., Gennari, 2002) and English future with an auxiliary (e.g., Sarkar, 1999) have been observed to be interpretable with an ongoing, modal reading in stative predicates (8-9).

(4) John is going to eat cake (later).
(5) Juan va   a comer pastel (más tarde).
    Juan go$_{PRES}$ to eat   cake   later
(6) John will eat cake (later)./John'll eat cake (later).

(7) Juan comerá pastel (más tarde).
Juan eat_FUT cake   later
(8) John will be home (already/right now)./John'll be home (already/right now).
(9) Juan estará en casa (ya/ahora mismo).
Juan is_FUT   at home (already/right now)
'Juan is probably at home already/right now.'

This study presents two experiments. The first asks whether an epistemic modal reading is available for English future tense and if that reading is moderated by lexical aspect. The purpose of the first experiment is to verify that the generalizations in Sarkar (1999) reflect the English monolingual population in which the L2 Spanish learners live The second experiment uses the results of the first as a basis for assumptions of L1 transfer from English to L2 Spanish and finds that transfer alone cannot explain the results: L1 English L2 Spanish learners allow ongoing readings for both predicate categories (stative, dynamic) in the present tense but do not distinguish between periphrastic future and future simple with respect to modal interpretations.

2. Lexical Aspect and Morphology in Present and Future Tense

The interaction of two types of aspect gives rise crosslinguistic differences, especially as pertains to tense and mood. In this section, I discuss lexical aspect in the present tense and aspectual distinctions pertaining to various types of future tense. Differences between English and Spanish are discussed.

2.1. Stativity and the Present Tense

The stative/dynamic contrast in examples (1-3) is the result of the combination of lexical and grammatical aspect. Lexical aspect pertains to the predicate level. Although verbs themselves are proposed to have aspectual meaning in some form of semantic primitives, they take on their eventual meaning in combination with their argument structure. This combination has been analyzed to either take place semantically via aspectual shift (e.g., Dowty, 1979; van Valin, 2005) or syntactically using features (e.g., Verkuyl, 2005).

What is common among semantic and syntactic accounts is that stativity is either stable or undergoes change due to its argument structure, but stativity is never the result of a change. Accounts of aspectual shift describe moving away from stativity rather than towards it[1], and feature accounts propose that a feature

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[1] See, for example, Dowty's (1979) analysis in which statives lack an operator whereas other verb types have some combination of DO, CAUSE, and BECOME. Similarly, van Valin (2005) utilizes BE for statives which can be combined with other operators to achieve activities and telic readings.

on the verb marks it as stative, which at least under some analyses cannot be changed by addition of other features in the predicate[2].

In the present tense, English only allows an ongoing aspectual reading for stative verbs (10). Verbal predicates that fall in the other Vendler categories require overt morphology marking progressive aspect; otherwise they can only elicit a habitual reading such as in (11). Spanish has no such requirement, allowing translational equivalents of (10) and (11a) to both denote ongoing aspectual readings (12-13).

(10)   John needs a nap (right now).
(11) a.   John takes a nap (*right now).
    b.   John is taking a nap (right now).
(12)   Juan necesita una siesta (ahora mismo).
    Juan needs   a   nap   right   now
(13)   Juan toma una siesta (ahora mismo).
    Juan takes a   nap   right   now

The other piece of the puzzle is grammatical aspect. Grammatical aspect, which is sometimes marked with overt morphology, is the aspectual interpretation that reflects the speaker's perspective. Grammatical aspect arises from the a combination of the existing information from the predicate's lexical aspect with tense, aspect, and mood, and the results of the combination differs cross-linguistically. With respect to the present tense, the grammatical aspect available in the present tense consistently includes progressive in Spanish, meaning that the speaker can denote an ongoing activity without overt morphological marking. In English, ongoing grammatical aspect in the present tense is simply unavailable for dynamic predicates. So, while lexical aspect does not unto itself explain the data in (10-13), the interaction of lexical and grammatical aspect does.

2.2. Modality and Aspect in the Future Tense

Stativity also has a role in the availability of an ongoing, modal reading in Spanish future tense. Spanish future tense has two morphological realizations, a periphrastic future with *ir* ('to go') (5) and the so-called 'future simple' that is formed by addition of an affix to the infinitive (9). Gennari (2002) notes that the modal reading is available in Spanish future simple if two conditions are satisfied. First, the predicate must be stative, and second, the modal reading must be plausible rather than simply possible. Consider (14-15) below.

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[2] Verkuyl (2005), for example, proposes that the feature contributed by the verb to the predicate aspect is [+/- ADD_TO] wherein the feature ADD_TO is defined in terms of stativity. [-ADD_TO] pertains to stative verbs/predicates, and [+ADD_TO] combines with other features to create other Vendlerian lexical categories.

(14)   # Si fuera   rica, compraré un auto.
         If be$_{subj.}$ rich buy$_{fut-1per.}$ a car.
         'If I was rich, I will buy a car.'

(15)   ?? Juan quiere   venir pero no sabe   si puede. Vendrá el jueves.
         Juan want$_{pres}$ come but not know$_{pres}$ if can$_{pres}$. Come$_{fut}$ the Thursday
         'Juan wants to come but does not know if he can. He'll come Thursday.'

                                                          [Gennari, 2002: (28-9)]

Unlike (9), which can be implicitly construed to be plausible, examples (14) and (15) have contexts where the future-tense marked verb is either entirely hypothetical (14) or not necessarily likely (15). This is achieved by the use of context elements such as clauses headed by the complementizer *si* ('if').

English future tense also has two morphological realizations, one that mirrors Spanish periphrastic future (4) and one that uses an auxiliary (6). The latter, like Spanish future simple, has been observed to instantiate modal readings (e.g., Sarkar, 1998) including epistemic modality as in (16). Because epistemic modality is inherently stative, the data for Spanish and English future tense are parallel[3], which hypothetically could be transferred from English to L2 Spanish.

(16) a.   That will be the milkman.
     b.   Tell him Prof. Cressage is involved – he will know Prof. Cressage.
                                                          [Sarkar, 1999: (5a-b)]

3. L2 Acquisition of Aspect in Future Tense

Part of the motivation for studying the L2 acquisition of the Spanish future tense is that research suggests that learners' exposure to and use of future tense morphology is unbalanced and incomplete. Both classroom and study abroad data from L2 Spanish learners suggests that, even in an immersion setting, learners produce the periphrastic future before the future simple (7) (Kanwit & Solon, 2013; Solon & Kanwit, 2014), potentially due to transfer of English periphrastic future. Lee (2002) has shown that L2 learners can acquire the future simple through incidental acquisition alone, but it is unclear to what extent the epistemic modal reading is acquired in the manner.[4]

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[3] Giannakidou and Mari (2018) observed epistemic modal future across Greek, Italian, Dutch, and German as well, suggesting that is something inherent about future tense.

[4] With regard to the possibility of explicit learning, Orozco and Thoms (2014) surveyed L2 Spanish textbooks and found that many do not teach the periphrastic future explicitly and that all taught future simple explicitly. It is unclear how many of those texts address the availability of a modal reading, though the authors themselves mention the phenomenon.

With regard to lexical aspect, the vast majority of research concerning the L2 acquisition of aspect investigates the past tense, due in no small part to the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen, 1986, *et seq*; Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1996). Two elements from the Aspect Hypothesis research relevant to the current study concern the role of lexical aspect and the contrast in predictions between past and present tense. The Aspect Hypothesis, according to Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé (2020), proposes that the L2 acquisition of tense and aspect is influenced by lexical aspect categories at the initial stages (p. 1139), and there learners demonstrate target-like use of grammatical aspect earlier in the present tense than in the past. Although the current study does not investigate first or second semester students, the fact that at least one of the two types of future tense does not emerge until later may suggest that lexical aspect may plays a large role in its interpretation by L2 learners, even at the intermediate proficiency level.

Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013) is the only study on future in L2 Spanish whose isolated factors allow for a glimpse into the availability of a modal reading with future simple. They studied five levels of Spanish learners[5] using a word choice task that asked participants to choose between two of the following per item: future simple, periphrastic future, or present tense. The items varied in terms of the presence of temporal adverbials, temporal distance (today, within a week, within a month, greater than a year), and whether or not the context indicated certainty or not. If learners were to have a modal interpretation of future simple, it would expected that they would use future simple either in the temporal distance "today", when the context denotes uncertainty, or both. Instead, all five levels of Gudmestad and Geeslin's participants were equally likely to use future simple or periphrastic future for items reflecting a temporal distance of "today". Level one was also equally likely to use future simple or periphrastic future regardless of certainty whereas levels two through four were more likely to use periphrastic future in uncertain contexts.

The results of Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013) suggest that L2 Spanish learners have not acquired the full range of the future tense, which contrasts with results from L2 French. Generally, L2 French learners show the opposite emergence of types of future morphology: future simple, which is emphasized in classrooms, is used earlier and more frequently than periphrastic future (e.g., Ayoun, 2014; Howard, 2012). Ayoun (2014), in particular, found that learners demonstrated both non-canonical aspectual and modality readings with increasing proficiency, which may be facilitated by their preference for future simple.

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[5] Level 1 = 2nd semester; Level 2 = 4th semester; Level 3 = 7th semester introductory literature course; Level 4 = students in a 4th year linguistics course in Spanish; Level 5 = graduate students or instructors of Spanish, all but one of which had lived abroad

4. Research Questions

In order to isolate the range of possible aspectual readings in English present and future tense in the target population (New England), Research Question 1 investigates the interpretation of monolingual English speakers as presented in Experiment 1. Research Question 2 investigates L2 Spanish of learners from the same population as appears in Experiment 2.

(17)   RQ1: Does monolingual English speakers' interpretation of present tense or future tense differ by lexical aspect?

(18)   RQ2: Do speakers of L2 Spanish who are English natives (L1) exhibit interpretation of present tense or future morphology that differs by lexical aspect?

5. Experiment 1: Monolingual English
5.1. Participants

For Experiment 1, 68 participants were recruited via a subject pool in a 100-level linguistics class at a New England public university. Participants were removed if they either self-reported as not identifying as a native speaker of English or if they reported having grown up around a language besides English. The remaining subject pool included 54 participants.

5.2. English Truth-Value Judgment Task

The stimuli for the truth-value judgment task (TVJT) were varied by predicate type (stative, dynamic) to produce 12 lexicalizations of each (e.g., (21-23) represents a dynamic lexicalization). A version of each item was written with three types of morphology (future with auxiliary, periphrastic future, present). Where appropriate, stimuli used contractions for verbal morphology because of insights from norming the task beforehand: The task was presented as a conversation (see (27-28) below), and native English speaker consultants suggested that contractions were more natural in a conversation.

(21)   He'll eat a cookie.   [dynamic, future with auxiliary]
(22)   He's going to eat a cookie.   [dynamic, periphrastic future]
(23)   He eats a cookie.   [dynamic, present]
(24)   He'll want an answer.   [stative, future with auxiliary]
(25)   He's going to want an answer.   [stative, periphrastic future]
(26)   He wants an answer.   [stative, present]

Participants saw two versions of each subtype (21-26) in pseudo-randomized order structured as a three-part item as in (27-28) below.

(27)   Sample dynamic predicate context
         Tim: What's John doing?
         Abby: He'll eat a cookie.   /He's going to eat a cookie.   /He eats a cookie.
                 Future w Auxiliary   /Periphrastic Future   /Present
         Prompt: Does Abby believe that John is eating a cookie right now?
(28)   Sample stative predicate context
         Tim: What's Mike doing?
         Abby: He'll want an answer. /He's going to want an answer. /He wants an answer.
                 Future w Auxiliary   /Periphrastic Future   /Present
         Prompt: Does Abby believe that Mike wants an answer right now?

The items represented an exchange between two speakers with a context question (e.g., *What's John doing?*) and a stimulus responding to the question (e.g., *He's going to eat a cookie.*). The prompt that followed asked a yes/no question about what the speaker of the stimulus believes. The instructions told participants that they would be reading conversations between two people, Tim and Abby, who were discussing their friends. After reading the conversations, participants were told they would be asked to evaluate what one of the people, Abby, believes in each context. The prompt question always asked whether Abby believed that the predicate in the stimulus was currently ongoing, either representing a progressive meaning in the present or a modal interpretation of the future.

Participants saw two practice sentences with pseudo experimental items, and then they completed the TVJT composed of 12 stimuli and 12 distractors featuring other forms of the remaining lexicalizations. For both the practice items and the experimental items, the context question and stimulus appeared on one slide, and the prompt question appeared on the next. A fixation cross appeared between items, and the task was untimed. For each item, participants selected either "yes", "no", or "I don't know." Responses of "I don't know" were removed from the dataset. Remaining responses were coded as 1 for "yes" and 0 for "no" to represent the proportion of the time that Abby believed the predicate was ongoing.

5.3. Results

The average proportion of responses of "yes" by subtype are plotted in Figure 1. Visual inspection suggests that monolinguals responded "yes" to the prompt question at a rate over 0.9 with stative predicates in the present tense whereas the other subtypes received a response of "yes" at a rate of 0.5 or below. The subtypes

that received the lowest rate of "yes" responses (< 0.25) were dynamic predicates using future with auxiliary and stative using periphrastic future.

A 3x2 repeated measures ANOVA was run with the within-subjects factors Predicate Type (dynamic, stative) and Stimulus Type (future with auxiliary, periphrastic future, present). A main effect was found for Predicate Type ($F = 35.552$, $p < 0.001$) that was driven by an overall higher response rate of "yes" for stative predicates. A main effect was also found for Stimulus Type ($F = 47.1087$, $p < 0.001$); driven by a higher response rate of "yes" for present tense. An interaction was found ($F = 30.9441$, $p < 0.001$) due to the fact that both present and future with auxiliary stimuli elicited a "yes" response significantly more with stative predicates than with dynamic predicates. However, the post hoc showed no difference between types of future for either Predicate Type.
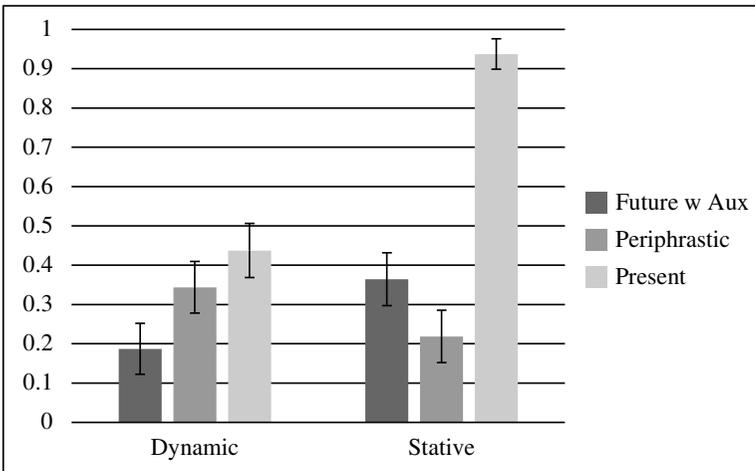
Figure 1. English Monolinguals' Average Response of "Yes" by Predicate Type and Stimulus Type

The results of Experiment 1 are in line with the analyses of lexical aspect in English presented in section 2 suggesting that the analyses reflect the target population. Research question 1 asked whether lexical aspect affected English speakers' interpretation of present tense or future morphology. In the present tense, an ongoing reading was robustly available for stative verbs but not dynamic ones. For future morphology, the interpretation of the interaction tentatively suggests that there is also a relationship between lexical aspect and the availability of a modal reading in the future tense. Overall, the two types of future were interpreted significantly less frequently as representing an ongoing reading, especially as compared to the present tense. However, the presence of a epistemic modal reading for future with auxiliary was indicated by an increase in the acceptance

of ongoing readings with stative verbs as compared with dynamic verbs. No differences were found with periphrastic verbs.

6. Experiment 2: L1 English L2 Spanish
6.1. Participants

The participants in Experiment 2 were L2 Spanish learners from the same geographical region as the monolinguals in Experiment 1. Learners were recruited from a 300-level L2 Spanish conversation course that could be taken during the fourth semester or later. Three participants were concurrently enrolled in a fourth semester course, and six were enrolled in a sixth semester course. Two of the fourth semester students were taking Spanish as an elective course, and one was a linguistics major. The sixth semester students were either majors in linguistics ($N = 2$) or minors in Spanish language ($N = 4$). Learners were asked to self-rate on four proficiency areas (speaking, understanding, reading, writing). The average self-rating across the four proficiency areas for the fourth semester students was 1.25 ($SD = 0.25$), and the average for the sixth semester students was 3.375 ($SD = 0.31$). Learners in the fourth semester group reported having studied an average of one language other than English and Spanish ($SD = 1.00$), and the sixth semester group averaged 2.5 other languages ($SD = 1.87$).

6.2. Spanish Truth-Value Judgment Task

The materials for the Spanish TVJT were made to be as similar to those in English as possible, and they were normed on a native speaker from Guatemala. Items (29-34) below are parallel to those in (21-26) except for a few differences. First, the predicate for (29-31) is *limpiar la cocina* ('clean the kitchen') and for (32-34) is *estar en casa* ('to be at home'). Second, the Spanish TVJT had future simple instead of future with auxiliary. Finally, the stimuli had null pronouns because the subject was introduced in the context question.

(29)   (Guillermo) Limpiará la cocina.   [dynamic, future simple]
(30)   (Guillermo) Va a limpiar la cocina.   [dynamic, periphrastic future]
(31)   (Guillermo) Limpia la cocina.   [dynamic, present]
(32)   (Julieta) Estará en casa.   [stative, future simple]
(33)   (Julieta) Va a estar en casa.   [stative, periphrastic future]
(34)   (Julieta) Está en casa.   [stative, present]

Half of the items in each predicate type were presented with a reason. Examples (35) and (36) below demonstrate the difference between those items with a reason (35) and those without (36) using the same lexicalization. In

addition to the stimuli, participants saw two practice items and 24 distractors, and the presentation of the items was the same as Experiment 1.

(35)   Sample stative predicate context with a reason (Reason condition)
  a. Isabel: Dónde está Julieta?
      Mario: Está enferma así que va a estar en casa.
      <u>Prompt</u>: Mario cree que Julieta está en casa ahora.
  b. Isabel: Where is Julieta?
      Mario: She is sick so she is going to be at home.
      Prompt: Mario believes that Julieta is at home right now.

(36)   Sample stative predicate context with no reason (None condition)
  a. Isabel: Dónde está Julieta?
      Mario: No sé. Va a estar en casa.
      <u>Prompt</u>: Mario cree que Julieta está en casa ahora.
  b. Isabel: Where is Julieta?
      Mario: I don't know. She is going to be at home.
      Prompt: Mario believes that Julieta is at home right now.

Because students varied in proficiency, the Spanish TVJT featured a declarative statement for the prompt to which participants indicated whether it was true or false. Use of a true/false judgment mirrored students' experience with in-class assessments. Participants' responses were coded as 1 for "true", and 0 for "false", and the dependent variable was proportion of times the participant chose "true". Responses of "I don't know" were removed from the dataset, which for fourth semester students was 5/72 items (7%) of the data and for sixth semester students was 19/144 items (13%).

6.3. Results

Overall results for Experiment 2 appear in Table 1. Results specific to the dynamic predicates and stative predicates appear in Figures 2 and 3, including the additional variable Reason (Reason, None) reflecting the distinction between items like (35) and (36). Where the response rate of 0 appears, it is due almost exclusively to participants responding "false". Note that there is only one missing data point pertaining to fourth semester students in Figure 3.
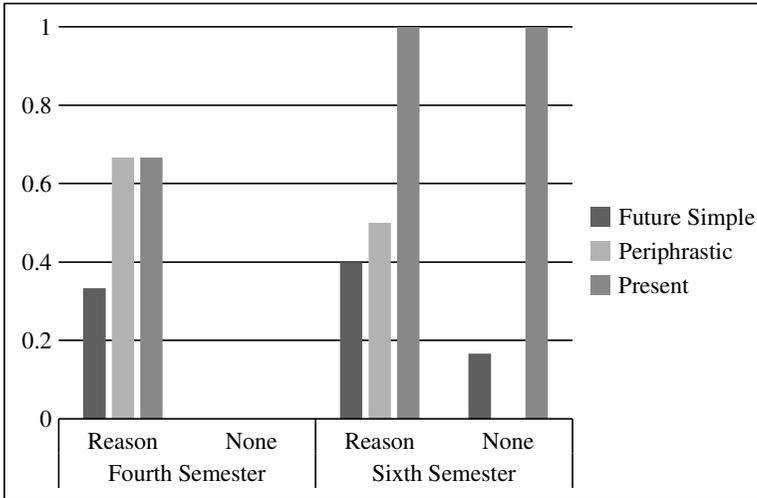
Table 1. Average Response Rate of "True" by Semester, Predicate type, and Stimulus Type

Semester	Predicate	Future Simple	Periphrastic Future	Present	All
Fourth	Dynamic	0.111 (0.32)	0.278 (0.46)	0.571 (0.51)	0.300 (0.46)
($N = 3$)	Stative	0.167 (0.41)	0.333 (0.52)	0.400 (0.55)	0.294 (0.47)
Sixth	Dynamic	0.188 (0.40)	0.194 (0.40)	1.000 (0.00)	0.446 (0.50)
($N = 6$)	Stative	0.273 (0.47)	0.273 (0.47)	1.000 (0.00)	0.515 (0.51)
	All	0.179 (0.39)	0.242 (0.43)	0.847 (0.36)	0.406 (0.49)

Across both types of predicates, sixth semester students indicated an ongoing reading in the present tense with both predicates ($M = 1.0$, $SD = 0.00$). Fourth semester students were less likely overall to interpret any item as pertaining to an ongoing or modal reading, with a maximum response rate of "true" of 0.67.

Research question 2 asked whether L2 Spanish learners' interpretation of present tense and future morphology differed by lexical aspect. Unlike the monolinguals in Experiment 1, the sixth semester students had no apparent difference in the present tense between dynamic and stative predicates. The fourth semester students were only slightly more likely to indicate choose "true" to indicate an ongoing reading in the present tense with dynamic (0.57) rather than stative (0.40) predicates. Thus the answer to research question 2 differed by learner level, with a difference by lexical aspect in fourth semester but no difference in sixth semester.
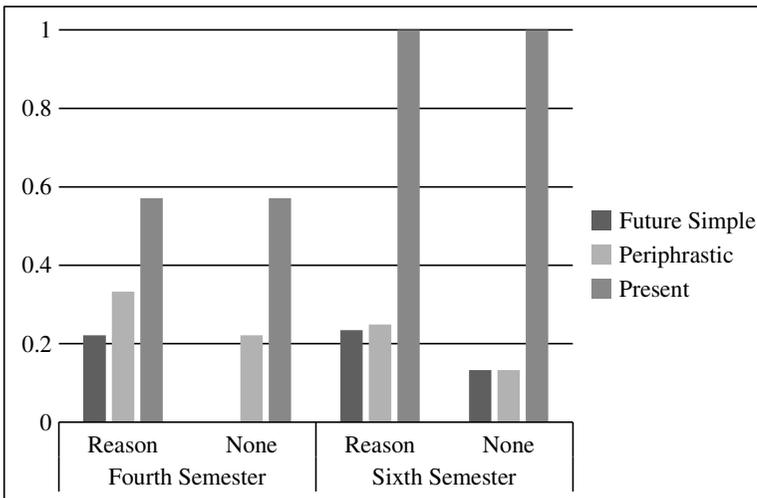
Figure 2. Interpretation of Dynamic Predicates, Average Response of "True" by Semester, Stimulus Type, and Reason

Figure 3. Interpretation of Stative Predicates, Average Response of "True" by Semester, Stimulus Type, and Reason

For the future morphology, both groups were more likely to choose "true" with stative predicates than with dynamic predicates. The inclusion of a reason (e.g., see (35) above) increased the likelihood that participants would respond "true" at least marginally in all cases, with the biggest difference found in stative predicates with the periphrastic future, following a general trend of a greater proportion of acceptance with stative predicates overall. The generalized effect for including a reason, including in periphrastic future, was not predicted; rather the presence of a reason was predicted increased the availability of an epistemic modal reading in only future simple.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of Experiment 2 suggest that neither group differentiated between the use of the future simple and periphrastic future. The one exception to this pattern is that fourth semester students displayed a greater use of periphrastic with stative predicates in the presence of a reason. The current study is most comparable to Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013), who found the same two patterns: either (i) no difference between future simple and periphrastic future or (ii) a greater use of periphrastic future in contexts that could give rise to modal readings that are only available with the future simple. Though it's tempting to blame these two patterns on development, Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013) found both patterns in even their highest proficiency levels, which included graduate students and instructors of university-level Spanish.

Experiment 2 methodologically expands upon the results of Gudmestad and Geeslin (2013) in two ways that could increase the likelihood of a future modal reading: manipulation of lexical aspect (dynamic, stative) in the predicate and inclusion of a reason condition. Manipulating the lexical aspect of the predicate gave rise to a slightly higher proportion of acceptance of the modal reading in stative predicates, but the effect was seen in both types of future morphology. The reason condition also increased the proportion of modal interpretations, especially in stative predicates, but it gave rise to pattern (i) in the sixth semester students and pattern (ii) in the fourth semester students.

Comparison to Experiment 1 leads to the conclusion that the results of Experiment 2 are not due to transfer alone. Both groups showed signs of having acquired an appropriate interpretation of lexical aspect in present tense. The sixth semester students allowed an ongoing interpretation in the present tense for both predicate types across the board. The fourth semester students accepted the ongoing reading with the present tense at above chance for dynamic predicates, and they accepted the ongoing reading in stative predicates in the presence of a reason. The rejection of stative predicates without a reason may signal over-reliance on context elements for interpretation (c.f., Gennari, 2002).

Further, the pattern from English future tense was not instantiated in either learner group, at least not differentially. Both groups' acceptance of stative predicate items in the reason condition suggests a sensitivity to a modal reading. However, learners did not differentiate between the types of future morphology with respect to the availability of the modal reading, which suggests that their acquisition of aspect in the future tense is incomplete.

The results of this study and previous research give rise to questions of why L2 learner knowledge of the association between the modal reading and the Spanish future simple has not yet been found, even at high proficiency. In the current study, one participant in the sixth semester group did consistently interpret future simple as ongoing/modal. The participant, whose self-rated proficiency was 3, was the only one that reported having studied French for more than two semesters. Given that Ayoun (2014) found that L2 French learners demonstrate modality readings in the future simple, the exceptional learner in Experiment 2 could have transferred from French. This interpretation of the results is consistent with the Cumulative Enhancement Model for L3 acquisition (Flynn et al., 2004) if the participant is at intermediate proficiency or below.

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