

L2 Acquisition of the Russian Telicity Parameter

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1. Introduction

It is often reported in the Russian pedagogical literature that Russian aspect represents a particular challenge for second language (L2) learners. In this paper, I report the results of an experiment which demonstrate that English native speakers acquiring Russian as a second language experience no problems in acquiring *inner* aspect. These findings demonstrate that whatever difficulties L2ers face while acquiring Russian aspect, these difficulties are not of a 'syntactic' type.

2. The aspectual system of Russian dynamic verbs

Slavic languages, in general, and Russian, in particular, mark aspectual value of their verbs morphologically. Indeed, the vast majority of Russian dynamic verbs, with exception of a small class of biaspectual verbs, can appear in either one of the two existing aspectual forms: imperfective (IMP) or perfective (PERF).¹ For instance, the verb "to read" has two morphologically distinct forms: the imperfective *čitat'*-IMP and the perfective *pročitat'*-PERF.

Russian IMP verbs can assume one of the following morphological structures: ROOT + T/AGR (*primary* imperfectives or PIs) or Asp₁ + ROOT + Asp₂ + T/AGR (*secondary* imperfectives or SIs), where Asp₁ = aspectual prefix (preverb) and Asp₂ = *-va*, e.g., *pit'* - *vypivat'* "drink PI-SI". When it comes to Russian PERF verbs, the majority of them have the following morphological form: Asp₁ + ROOT + T/AGR, where Asp₁ = aspectual prefix (preverb), e.g., *vypit'* "drink PERF".² Although preverbs are morphological markers of perfectivity, from purely 'lexical' perspective, they can be classified into two classes: those that do not change the basic meaning of the root they attach to, e.g., *čitat'* "read-PI" vs. *pročitat'* "read-PERF" and those that endow the root with a new meaning or shades of meaning, e.g., *čitat'* "read-PI" vs. *perečitat'* "reread-PERF". PERF verbs that contain the former type of prefixes entail completion, e.g., *Petja pročital knigu* "Petja read-PERF a/the book" → Petja read a/the entire book.³ In this study, I will investigate L2 acquisition of this type of Russian perfective verbs together with primary imperfectives.

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¹ This generalization is not true for non-dynamic verbs such as states and achievements. In particular, Russian stative verbs are always imperfective and Russian achievement verbs are always perfective.

² Russian also has bare perfectives, e.g., *dat'-davat'* "to give PERF-IMP", and well as perfectives derived by the suffixation with *-nu*, e.g., *prygnut'-prygat'* "to jump PERF-IMP", by ablaut, e.g., *brosit'-brosat'* "to throw PERF-IMP", by stress shift *urézat'-urezát'* "to cut off PERF-IMP" and by suppletion, e.g., *vzjat'-brat'* "to take PERF-IMP". These perfectives, however, will not be discussed in the present paper.

³ Contrary to common believes not all perfective verbs entail completion. For instance, inceptive verbs (i.e., verbs that encode the initial boundary of an event) or delimitative verbs (i.e., verbs that encode both the initial and final boundaries of an event) do not entail completion, e.g., *Petja zapel pesnju* "Petja started singing a/the song" -/→ Petja sang a/the entire song; *Petja počital knigu* "Petja read a/the book for a while" -/→ Petja read a/the entire book.

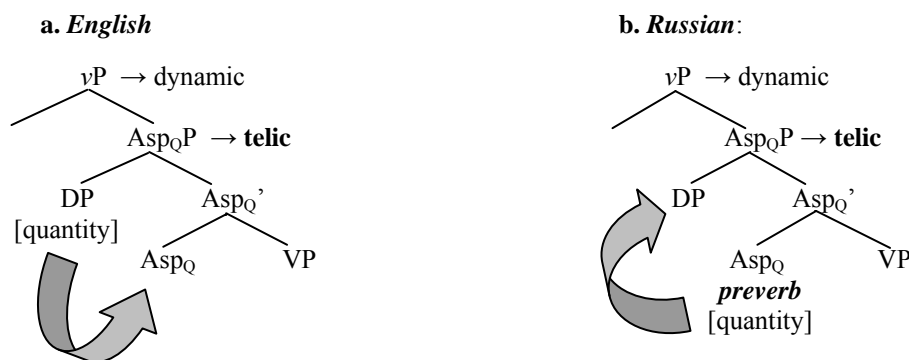
3. The syntactic analysis of inner aspect

Recent research on event structure reveals that natural languages encode aspectual information syntactically. Researchers who adopt the syntactic approach to aspect generally postulate at least two aspectual projections: a *vP*-internal or *inner* aspect projection and a *vP*-external or *outer* aspect projection (AspP) (Verkuyl 1993, Travis 1994, Borer 2005, Ramchand 2008). While the inner AspP encodes the telic/atelic distinction, the outer AspP encodes the bounded/unbounded distinction (Depraetere 1995, Slabakova 2001). Since this paper is concerned with L2 acquisition of inner aspect, in what follows I will simply present the syntactic structure of inner aspect, remaining silent about the syntactic structure of outer aspect.⁴

Following Borer's (2005), I assume that for a verbal predicate to acquire a telic interpretation the two universal syntactic conditions must be satisfied: (i) the *vP*-internal *Quantity phrase* (Asp_QP) must be merged into the verbal structure and (ii) the open value of the Asp_Q^o must be assigned range or, alternatively, the verbal predicate in Asp_Q^o must acquire the [quantity] value.

The set of elements that can license the merger of an Asp_QP seems to be universal. In particular, quantity DPs, verbal 'bits' such as prefixes, suffixes or particles, as well as path-goal PPs (in the case of motion Vs) are among elements that can trigger the merger of an Asp_QP (Nossalik 2009).⁵ Despite this universality which, if true, suggests that languages compute their telicity within an Asp_QP cross-linguistically, each language chooses between two empirically attested telicity-assigning mechanisms (Borer 2005). While in languages such as English, a dynamic verb in Asp_Q^o acquires the [quantity] feature *indirectly*, via spec-head agreement, from a quantity DP in [Spec, Asp_QP], in languages such as Russian, it acquires this feature *directly*, from an aspectual morpheme that merges onto the Asp_Q^o. In Russian this feature is, then, transmitted to the DP in [Spec, Asp_QP], via spec-head agreement. The direction of the spec-head agreement relation within an Asp_QP is reversed in English and Russian: 'downwards' in English and 'upwards' in Russian, as shown in (1).

(1) TELICITY PARAMETER⁶



⁴ Readers are referred to Nossalik (2005) for L2 acquisition of Russian outer aspect.

⁵ This 'universal' list is based on elements that can trigger merger of an Asp_QP in both English and Russian. It might well be that in reality this list is much larger than what we have here. Identifying all elements that can license the merger of an Asp_QP cross-linguistically is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁶ To explain the difference between Slavic and English telicity-assigning mechanisms Slabakova (2001) proposes a Telicity parameter similar to that in (1). Following Verkuyl and De Swart (1999), she postulates that Russian and English compute their telicity in distinct projections. While English verbal predicates acquire their telicity value within an Asp_QP, their Slavic counterparts acquire their telicity value in a projection that merges right above the Asp_QP, i.e., in an Perf(ective)P. The second major difference between Slabakova's Telicity parameter and the one presented in here is that, while Slabakova has an inner aspect projection in both telic and atelic predicates, the former being associated with the [+telic] feature and the latter with the [-telic] feature, I, following Borer (2005), assume that Asp_QP is only present in telic predicates, and is associated with the [quantity] feature. This implies that the Telicity parameter presented in this paper is only relevant to telic but not atelic predicates.

Because English verbs acquire their telic value indirectly from the Incremental theme argument (i.e., a quantity DP in the [Spec, Asp_QP]), the aspectual value of this argument plays a crucial role in telic composition. Only vPs that contain a quantity internal argument such as a singular count, a definite plural or an overtly quantificational noun receive a telic interpretation (Verkuyl 1993), as shown in (2) and (3):

- (2) a. 10 minutes ago, John ran a mile *and he is still running that mile now. **telic**
 b. 10 minutes ago, Mary ate the apples *and she is still eating them now. **telic**
 c. 10 minutes ago, Susan drank three beers *and she is still drinking them now. **telic**
- (3) a. 10 minutes ago, John ran and he is still running now. **atelic**
 b. 10 minutes ago, Mary ate apples and she is still eating apples now. **atelic**
 c. 10 minutes ago, Susan drank wine and she is still drinking wine now. **atelic**

In the sentences in (2), the singular count noun *a mile*, the definite plural noun *the apples* and the overtly quantificational noun *three beers* are all quantities. Being quantities they trigger the merger of an Asp_QP as well as assign range to the open value of the Asp_Q^o, i.e., they transmit their [quantity] feature to the verbal predicate that moves into the Asp_Q^o, making it quantity/telic. In contrast, in the sentences in (3), an Asp_QP is not licensed, given that these sentences lack a legitimate range assigner, i.e., a quantity internal argument. While the sentence in (3a) lacks an internal argument all together, the sentences in (3b) and (3c) contain a non-quantity internal argument: the bare plural *apples* and the mass noun *wine* respectively. As a result, the sentences in (3) receive a non-quantity/atelic reading.

Unlike the telicity status of English verbal predicates, the telicity status of Russian verbal predicates does not depend on the aspectual value of the verb's internal argument. This is because Russian, unlike English, employs the direct mode of telicity assignment. In Russian, it is the morpho-syntactic structure of the verbal predicate that plays a crucial role in telic composition. Specifically, with the exception of few lexically telic bare verbs, only verbs that contain an aspectual morpheme that can properly license an Asp_QP are interpreted as telic. Given that in Russian preverbs are such morphemes⁸, the verbs that contain a preverb (and lack *-va*)⁹ are computed as telic.¹⁰ In contrast, verbs that lack a preverb, i.e., primary imperfectives (PIs), with few exceptions, are atelic:

- (4) a. Petja **počinił** mebel' *½ časa/za ½ časa. **telic**
 Petja fixed-PERF furniture *for ½ hour/in ½ hour.
 'Petja fixed the furniture *for ½ hour/in ½ hour.'
- b. Maša **pročitala** gazety *½ časa/za ½ časa. **telic**
 Masha read-PERF newspapers *for ½ hour/in ½ hour.
 'Masha read the newspapers *for ½ hour/in ½ hour.'

⁷ In order to determine the telicity status of the events containing a quantity DP, as opposed to those that contain a non-quantity DP or no DP at all, I use the Complement diagnostic – a diagnostic according to which telic, but not atelic events, disallow for continuation of the event they encode. I deliberately did not use the Adverbial modification diagnostic, given that in English *for X-time* type adverbials can appear with some telic events, giving rise to a 'process' reading of a telic event, e.g., *Susan ate the sandwiches for ½ hour/in ½ hour*.

⁸ The question as whether preverbs encode inner or outer aspect is highly controversial. In fact, in the literature we find opposing views. Some researchers argue that Russian preverbs should be associated with inner aspect (Kipka, 1990, Pinon 1995, Krifka 1998, Schoorlemmer 1995, Borer 2005, among others), while others, following traditional view on aspect, maintain that preverbs should be associated with outer aspect (Stoll 2003, Pereltsvaig 2005). As I extensively argue in Nossalik (2009), Russian prefixes are species of inner aspect. Not only do they trigger the merger of an Asp_QP but also supply its head with the [quantity] feature (see 1).

⁹ The suffix *-va* 'overrides' the telic value of the stem that *-va* attaches to, producing an unbounded event.

¹⁰ For the clarity of presentation, in this paper I deliberately present an oversimplified generalization that accounts for the most but not all of the Russian perfective verbs. Thus, in Russian verbs that lack a preverb, but contain the semelfactive suffix *-nu* are also telic, while their suffixless counterparts are atelic. Semelfactive verbs, however, will not be discussed in this paper. Hence, the generalisation provided above holds for the set of perfective verbs that I investigate in this study. For a more elaborated account readers are referred to Nossalik (2009).

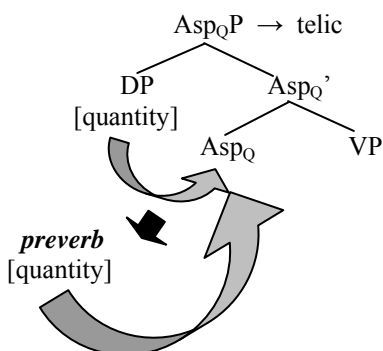
- (5) a. Maša risovala portret ½ časa/*za ½ časa. *atelic*
 Masha painted-PI portrait for ½ časa /*in ½ časa.
 ‘Masha was painting a/the portrait for ½ časa /*in ½ časa.’
- b. Petja čital eti knjigi ½ časa/*za ½ časa. *atelic*
 Petja read-PI these books for ½ hour/*in ½ hour.
 ‘Petja was reading these books for ½ hour/*in ½ hour.’
- c. Katja pisala tri statji 15 minut/*za 15 minut. *atelic*
 Katja wrote-SI three articles for 15 minutes/*in 15 minutes.
 ‘Katja was rewriting three articles for 15 minutes/*in 15minutes.’

The Russian verbs in (4) are telic, as they contain a preverb (and lack *-va*). In contrast, the verbs in (5), lacking a legitimate range assigner, e.g., a preverb, are atelic. Importantly, the verbs in (4) are telic despite the fact that they appear with non-quantity internal arguments. Neither the mass noun *mebel* ‘furniture’ nor the bare plural *gazety* ‘newspapers’ in any way influence the telicity status of the verbal predicate. In Russian, a quantity DP by itself cannot properly license an Asp_QP. This is why the sentences in (5) containing a prefixless verb are atelic, despite the fact that they contain a quantity internal argument. In particular, the singular count noun *portret* ‘portrait’ in (5a), the demonstrative noun *eti knjigi* ‘these books’ in (5b) and the overtly quantificational noun *tri statji* ‘three articles’ in (5c) do not make the verb telic, revealing that Russian lacks indirect telicity assignment.

To recap, in Russian a quantity DP does not make verbal predicates telic. For a telic interpretation to arise, the presence of a preverb is essential, indicating that Russian uses a direct range assignment. Only in English – a language that uses indirect range assignment – does the quantity Incremental theme yield a telic vP. This pattern is due to the parametric variation in telicity-assigning mechanism presented in (1), with Russian using a direct range assignment and English an indirect one.

To conclude this section, note that to acquire Russian verbal system, English speakers must reset the telicity parameter from indirect to direct, as shown in (6).¹¹

(6) RESETTING OF TELICITY PARAMETER: from indirect to direct



To attain native-like competence with Russian inner aspect, English learners of Russian must reset the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct. L2ers who have successfully reset the Telicity parameter from English-like to Russian-like are predicted to pay close attention to the verb’s morphological make up, ignoring the aspectual value of the verb’s internal argument. In contrast, L2ers who have not reset the Telicity parameter are predicted to pay close attention to the aspectual status of the verb’s internal argument, ignoring the verb’s morphological structure.

¹¹ Note that although English verbal particles can trigger the merger of an Asp_QP, they cannot by themselves properly licence this projection (Nossalik 2009). Hence, particles, instead of helping L2ers to reset the Telicity parameter, may, in fact, interfere with such resetting, at least at the initial stages of acquisition.

4. Experiment

As mentioned above, to properly compute the telicity value of Russian verbs, English speakers acquiring Russian as L2 must reset the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct. To see whether they are capable of doing so I conducted an experiment, the details of which I present next.

4.1. Participants

51 subjects participated in the experiment: 41 L2 learners and 10 L1 native-controls. 15 of the L2 subjects and 2 native speakers were recruited through McGill University's classified ads, and the others through personal contacts. Only participants who judged their Russian to be high intermediate, advanced or near-native were accepted for the study.

All of the L2 participants were native English speakers, ranging in age from 20 to 47. They all had their first exposure to Russian in their early 20s. 35 of the L2 participants learned Russian in a North American University, in a formal classroom setting. 6 of the L2ers acquired Russian in Russia, in a mainly naturalistic setting. Except for 3 subjects, even L2ers who learned Russian in a formal setting had spent some time in Russia, ranging from 1 month to 5 years. In fact, 9 of them were living in Russia at the time of testing. The majority of Canadian participants who took the test in Montreal ($n = 14$) had some knowledge of French, ranging from basic to advanced. None of the L2ers were exposed to any Slavic language in their childhood.

The L2 subjects were classified into three proficiency groups, based on their performance on a Cloze test. 5 of the 41 L2 participants were classified as Advanced¹², 27 as High Intermediate (HI) and 9 as Low Intermediate (LI).

As for the native Russian subjects, 8 of them live in Russia and 2 in Ukraine.

4.2. Stimuli

40 Russian sentences containing non-stative verbs in their past tense form were tested. Half of these sentences contained bare verbs (PI) and the other half contained the corresponding prefixed verbs (PERF). Each sentence consisted of only 3 elements: the subject, the verb and the direct object, as shown in (7).¹³ There were 20 distractors.

- (7) a. Petja činil stul.
 ‘Petja fixed-PI a/the chair.’
- b. Petja počinil stul.
 ‘Petja fixed-PERF a/the chair.’

All verbs tested in the experiment are listed in (8):

- (8) *gladit*/'*pogladit*' "to iron PI/PERF",
 krasit/'*pokrasit*' "to paint PI/PERF",
 pisat/'*napisat*' "to write PI/PERF",
 risovat/'*narisovat*' "to draw/paint PI/PERF",
 žarit/'*požarit*' "to fry PI/PERF",
 delat/'*sdelat*' "to do/make PI/PERF",
 gotovit/'*prigotovit*' "to prepare PI/PERF",

¹² In fact, two of the L2 participants were near-native speakers of Russian. To increase the number of participants within the Advanced group, with the purpose of obtaining more reliable results, I took liberty of combining near-native and advanced proficiency speakers together into the Advanced group. This move did not compromise the results, given that the performance of advanced speakers minimally diverged from that of the near-native speakers.

¹³ For the full list of stimuli sentences, consult Appendix A.

pit'vypit' "to drink PI/PERF",
rezat'/narezat' "to cut PI/PERF",
varit'/svarit' "to cook PI/PERF",
čistit'/počistit' "to clean PI/PERF",
čítat'/pročítat' "to read PI/PERF",
šít'/sšít' "to sew PI/PERF",
stírat'/postírat' "to do laundry PI/PERF",
stroit'/postroit' "to build PI/PERF",
čínit'/počínit' "to fix PI/PERF",
est'/sest' "to eat PI/PERF",
kurit'/vykurit' "to smoke PI/PERF",
peč'/ispeč' "to bake PI/PERF",
vjazat'/svjazat' "to knit PI/PERF".

Note that the difference in meaning between the bare IMP verbs (PIs) and their corresponding prefixed PERF verbs is purely aspectual. Thus, the preverbs used in this experiment only add final boundaries to the events encoded by the roots, without altering their basic meaning. As a result, the only difference between the PERF and IMP forms listed above is that the former but not the latter entail completion.

To test whether the L2 participants still use the English telicity-assigning mechanism, the stimuli sentences contained four different variants of internal arguments. 10 of the stimuli appearing with IMP verbs as well as 10 appearing with their PERF counterparts contained non-quantity DPs, 5 of which were mass nouns and 5 bare plurals, as in (9):

(9) Non-quantity stimuli Ns

Mass Ns		Bare plural Ns	
<i>domašnee zadanie</i>	"homework"	<i>rubáški</i>	"shirts"
<i>m'aso</i>	"meat"	<i>steny</i>	"walls"
<i>borš'</i>	"borsch"	<i>kartiny</i>	"paintings"
<i>vino</i>	"wine"	<i>pis'ma</i>	"letters"
<i>ris</i>	"rice"	<i>kotlety</i>	"burgers"

Another 20 sentences, 10 IMP and 10 PERF, contained quantity DPs, 5 of which were singular count nouns and 5 overtly marked quantity nouns (i.e., referential nouns or nouns modified by the cardinals), as in (10):

(10) Quantity stimuli Ns

Singular count Ns		Overtly marked quantity Ns	
<i>stul</i>	"chair"	<i>svoi zimnie sapogi</i>	"self winter shoes"
<i>pirog</i>	"pie"	<i>svoi jubki</i>	"self skirts"
<i>buterbrod</i>	"sandwich"	<i>dva platja</i>	"two dresses"
<i>sigara</i>	"cigar"	<i>doma N°8 i N°10</i>	"the buildings #8 and #10"
<i>šarf'</i>	"scarf"	<i>na ulice Gor'kogo</i>	"on Gorky street"
		<i>rasskazy Stivena</i>	"the novels by Stephen King"
		<i>Kinga «Nona» i «Tuman»</i>	"King "Nona" and "The Mist"

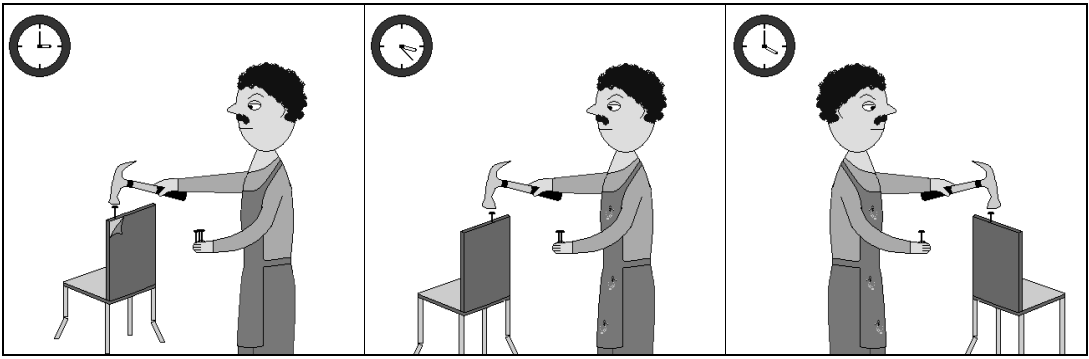
4.3. Task

A variant of the Truth value judgment task was used. Participants were asked to indicate whether a stimulus sentence matched an event depicted by a sequence of three pictures.

Each of 40 sentences appeared twice during the test, once with pictures showing an uncompleted event and once with pictures showing a completed event. An uncompleted event was represented by a sequence that depicted the event in progress. A completed event was represented by a sequence, where the first two pictures depicted the event in progress and the third picture showed only the end-state of the event.

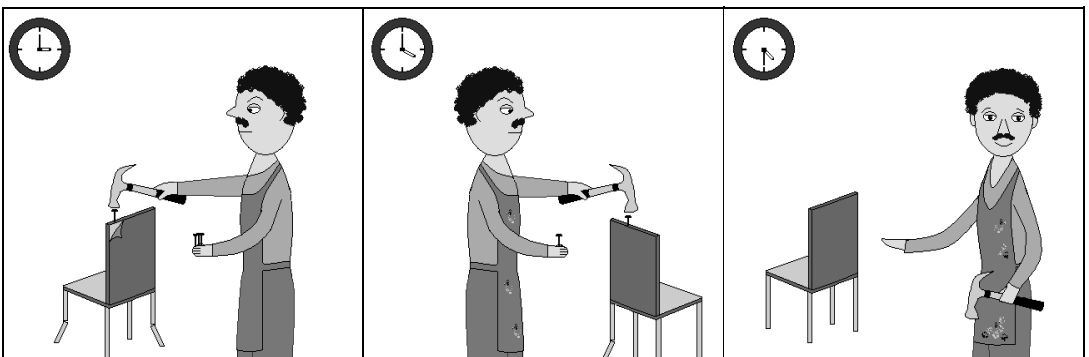
To demonstrate, consider the sentence *Petja počinił stul* “Peter fixed the chair”, containing the PERF variant of the verb “to fix”. This sentence appeared once in the context of an uncompleted event and once in the context of a completed event. The uncompleted *fixing* event was represented by the sequence in (11), which depicted Petja fixing a chair:

(11)



The completed *fixing* event was represented by the sequence in (12), where Petja was shown fixing a chair only on the first two pictures and the third picture showed Petja pointing to a fixed chair:

(12)



The participants were asked to determine whether the sentence *Petja počinił stul* “Peter fixed the chair” matches the depicted event. There were three choices of answers available to the participants: *Yes*, *No*, *Don't know*. The participants were specifically instructed to use *Don't know* only if they encounter some unfamiliar vocabulary.

4.4. Predictions

Depending on which telicity-assigning mechanism the participants use, direct or indirect, they were expected to behave in two different ways.

The L2 participants who have successfully reset the Telicity parameter from English to Russian were expected to interpret prefixed PERF verbs as entailing completion, as in (13):

(13) Perfective verbs:

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| a. | Petja | s-varil | <u>ris.</u> | ⇒ completed |
| | ‘Petja | cooked-PERF | rice-MASS.’ | |
| b. | Petja | po -gladil | <u>rublaški.</u> | ⇒ completed |
| | ‘Petja | ironed-PERF | shirts-PL.’ | |
| c. | Petja | po -činil | <u>stul.</u> | ⇒ completed |
| | ‘Petja | fixed-PERF | a/the chair-SG.’ | |
| d. | Maša | s-šila | <u>dva platja.</u> | ⇒ completed |
| | ‘Masha | saw-PERF | two dresses-Q PL.’ | |

In terms of the task used in the experiment, this means that L2 subjects who employ the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism were expected to judge the sentences containing PERF verbs as matching completed but not uncompleted events. Moreover, their performance was expected to be independent of the aspectual value of the internal argument.

As for prefixless PI verbs, the L2ers who used the Russian mode of telicity assignment were expected to treat these verbs as not entailing completion, as in (14):

(14) Imperfective verbs:

- | | | | | |
|----|--------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| a. | Petja | varil | <u>ris.</u> | -/⇒ completed |
| | ‘Petja | cooked-PI | rice-MASS.’ | |
| b. | Petja | gladil | <u>rublaški.</u> | -/⇒ completed |
| | ‘Petja | ironed-PI | shirts-PL.’ | |
| c. | Petja | činil | <u>stul.</u> | -/⇒ completed |
| | ‘Petja | fixed-PI | a/the chair-SG.’ | |
| d. | Maša | šila | <u>dva platja.</u> | -/⇒ completed |
| | ‘Masha | saw-PI | two dresses-Q PL.’ | |

Importantly, although PI verbs do not entail completion they are, nonetheless, compatible with completed events. In particular, they can be used to describe the internal stages of completed events. Note that from the perspective of the task used in the present experiment, sentences containing a PI verb were expected to be judged as matching both uncompleted and completed events.¹⁴ L2 participants who have acquired the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism were expected to exhibit this native-like behaviour, accepting PI sentences in both uncompleted and completed conditions. Just as in

¹⁴ Why this is so, can be demonstrated by an example. Consider, for instance, the sentence *Petja činil-PI stol* ‘Petja was-fixing a/the chair’. This sentence certainly matches those parts of the event in (12) that are depicted by the first two pictures. In fact, if *Petja fixed a/the chair* is true then it is also true that *He was fixing it*. This being said note that since the PI does not match the last picture in (12), the PERF is a ‘better’/‘preferred’ candidate to describe a completed event, given that, unlike the PI, it matches all three pictures.

the case with the PERF sentences, their performance on the PI sentences was expected to be independent of the aspectual value of the verb's internal argument.

In contrast, L2 participants who still employ the English telicity-assigning mechanism were expected to pay attention to the aspectual status of the verb's internal argument, considering only the verbs that appeared with a quantity internal argument, such as a singular count or overtly quantified noun, to be telic, or, to put it differently, entailing completion (see 15 & 16). Their performance was expected not to correlate with the morphological make up of the verb.

(15) Perfective verbs:

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| a. | Petja | s- varil | <u>ris.</u> | -/⇒ completed | *incorrect |
| | 'Petja | cooked-PERF | rice-MASS.' | | |
| b. | Petja | po- gladil | <u>rubáški.</u> | -/⇒ completed | *incorrect |
| | 'Petja | ironed-PERF | shirts-PL.' | | |
| c. | Petja | po- činil | <u>stul.</u> | ⇒ completed | |
| | 'Petja | fixed-PERF | a/the chair-SG.' | | |
| d. | Maša | s- šila | <u>dva platja.</u> | ⇒ completed | |
| | 'Masha | saw-PERF | two dresses-Q PL.' | | |

(16) Imperfective verbs:

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------|------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| a. | Petja | varil | <u>ris.</u> | -/⇒ completed | |
| | 'Petja | cooked-IMP | rice-MASS.' | | |
| b. | Petja | gladil | <u>rubáški.</u> | -/⇒ completed | |
| | 'Petja | ironed-IMP | shirts-PL.' | | |
| c. | Petja | činil | <u>stul.</u> | ⇒ completed | *incorrect |
| | 'Petja | fixed-IMP | a/the chair-SG.' | | |
| d. | Maša | šila | <u>dva platja.</u> | ⇒ completed | *incorrect |
| | 'Masha | saw-IMP | two dresses-Q PL.' | | |

In relation to the task used in the present experiment, subjects who still use the English telicity-assigning mechanism were predicted to make two types of errors in Russian. First, they were expected to inaccurately assume that sentences containing a PERF verb and a non-quantity DP, such as a mass or plural noun, are atelic and, thus, match both completed¹⁵ and uncompleted events, when in reality they only match completed events. Second, they were predicted to incorrectly compute the telicity value of the PI verbs that appear with a quantity DP as being telic. This would force them to wrongly judge these predicates as matching completed but not uncompleted events, while in reality they match both.

Keeping these predictions in mind let me present the results of the experiment.

4.5. Results

Table 1 reports the rate of acceptances of the stimuli sentences containing PI and PERF verbs in a completed as well as uncompleted context:

¹⁵Just like Russian PI verbal predicates, English atelic verbal predicates can describe internal stages of a telic event. Consequently, they too are compatible with completed events. Thus, if it is true that *Peter ironed the shirts*, then it must also be true that *He ironed shirts*.

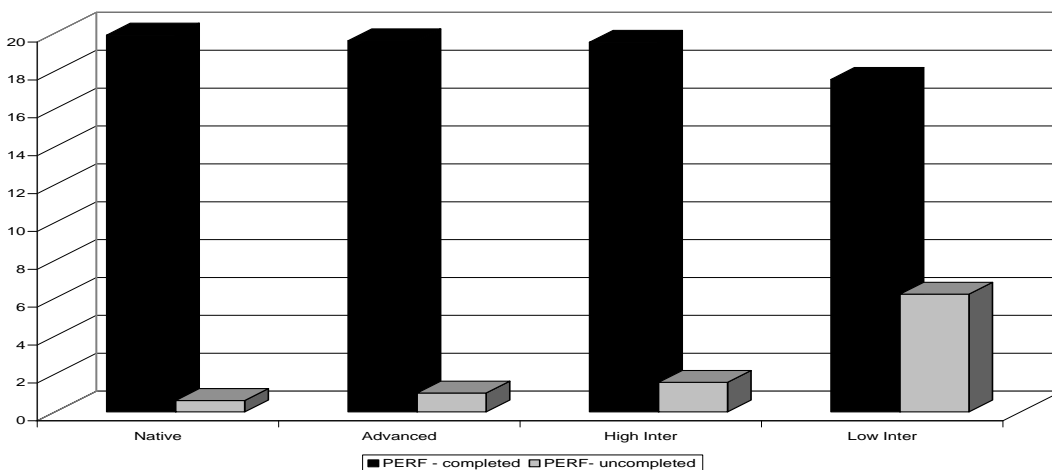
Table 1: Group results: Mean Acceptances

Type of condition	Controls (n=10)			Advanced (n=5)			Hi Int (n=27)			Low Int (n=9)		
	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%
PERF-COM (T)	19.9	0.32	99.5	19.6	0.89	98	19.5	0.75	97.5	17.6	2.07	88
PERF-UNC (F)	0.6	0.84	3	1	0.71	5	1.6	1.34	8	6.2	2.49	31
IMP-COM (T or F)	15.5	7.93	77.5	8.6	9.99	43	9.5	9.46	47.5	10.7	7.02	53.5
IMP-UNC (T)	19.8	0.63	99	19.4	0.89	97	19	1.27	95	15	0.71	75

As can be seen from this table, the behaviour of the Advanced and HI participants on the PERF-COM (perfective-completed) and PERF-UNC (perfective-uncompleted) conditions approximated that of the native controls, with only the low intermediate subjects performing worse than other three subjects. The important thing to note in respect to these two conditions is that the performance of all L2 participants, including the LI group, mirrors that of the native controls, as they too judged the sentences with PERF verbs as matching completed events more often than uncompleted events.

This tendency to judge the stimuli with PERF verbs as matching completed but not uncompleted events can be even better seen in the Figure 1 which depicts performance of all four groups of participants with respect to the PERF stimuli:

Figure 1: Group results: PERF sentences, acceptances (out of 20)



The results of a two-way ANOVA confirm that there is a significant difference between group performances in the PERF-COM and PERF-UNC conditions ($F = 6.463$, $df = 3 \text{ \& } 94$, $P = 0.001$) and that the rate of acceptances of the PERF sentences is significantly higher in the PERF-COM condition than in the PERF-UNC condition ($F = 3003.143$, $df = 1 \text{ \& } 94$, $P < 0.001$). There is also a significant interaction between groups and the two conditions under consideration ($F = 37.658$, $df = 3 \text{ \& } 94$, $P < 0.001$), with the LI group performing significantly worse than the other three groups in both of these conditions. Importantly, even the participants of this group did accept 17.56 of the PERF sentences in completed but only 6.22 of these sentences in uncompleted condition.

In addition to the results on the PERF sentences, Table 1 reports the results on the PI sentences. Although the acquisition of PI verbs does not involve resetting of the Telicity parameter, these results were included to show that L2 participants, similarly to native controls, do not treat PIs as entailing completion, accepting them in both completed and uncompleted conditions.

The results of a one-way ANOVA reveal a group effect in the IMP-UNC condition ($F = 41.447$, $df = 3 \text{ \& } 47$, $P < 0.001$), with the LI group performing, once again, significantly worse than the other

three groups. In contrast, the differences between group performances were not statistically significant in IMP-COM condition ($F = 1.241$, $df = 3 \& 47$, $P = 0.305$).¹⁶

To recap, when performing the task, the Advanced as well as the HI participants exhibited behaviour similar to that of the native controls on all four tested conditions. As for the LI participants, they were less accurate than the other participants on three out of the four conditions, namely on the PERF-COM, PERF-UNC and IMP-UNC conditions. Importantly, even the LI participants whose performance differed significantly from that of other three groups accepted significantly fewer of the PERF sentences in the uncompleted than in the completed condition.

Table 2 reports the results of the experiment taking into consideration the aspectual value of the internal argument. From these results we can determine whether or not the participants, especially those of the LI group whose performance differed significantly from that of other three groups, were paying any attention to the aspectual value of the verb's internal argument, while computing telicity of the stimuli.

Table 2: Group results: Interaction between conditions and the types of nouns

Conditions	Noun Type	Controls (n=10)			Advanced (n=5)			Hi In (n=27)			Low In (n=9)		
		M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%
PERF-COM (T)	Q	9.9	0.32	99	9.8	0.45	98	9.8	0.4	98	9.1	0.6	91
	NQ	10	0	100	9.8	0.45	98	9.7	0.47	97	8.4	1.59	84
IMP-COM (T)/(F)	Q	7.7	4.08	77	4.4	5.13	44	4.9	4.69	49	6	3.46	60
	NQ	7.8	3.88	78	4.2	4.87	42	4.6	4.81	46	4.7	3.61	47
PERF-UNC (F)	Q	0.2	0.42	2	0.4	0.55	4	0.6	0.74	6	2.1	1.27	21
	NQ	0.4	0.52	4	0.6	0.55	6	1	0.76	1	4.1	1.45	41
IMP-UNC (T)	Q	9.8	0.63	98	9.4	0.89	94	9.3	0.96	93	6.6	0.53	66
	NQ	10	0	100	10	0	100	9.6	0.49	96	8.4	0.53	84

As we can see, in both completed conditions, i.e., PERF-COM and IMP-COM, the L2 participants judged the sentences similarly regardless of whether they contained quantity (Q) or non-quantity (NQ) nouns. According to Welch's unpaired t test, however, the differences between the acceptances of the sentences with quantity Ns and those with non-quantity Ns are not statistically significant in both completed conditions. Specifically, in the case of the PERF-COM condition the differences are the following: $t = 1$, $P = 0.3306$ for Controls, $t = 0$, $P = 1$ for Advanced, $t = 0.95$, $P = 0.3492$ for HI and $t = 1.1767$, $P = 0.2565$ for LI, while in the case of the IMP-COM condition $t = 0.0561$, $P = 0.9559$ for Controls, $t = 0.0632$, $P = 0.9511$ for Advanced, $t = 0.2292$, $P = 0.8196$ for HI and $t = 0.8$, $P = 0.4354$ for LI.

Just like in the completed conditions, in the uncompleted conditions too, the difference in performance on the sentences with quantity Ns and the sentences with non-quantity Ns was not statistically significant for the Control, Advanced and HI group: in PERF-UNC $t = 0.9487$, $P = 0.3553$ for Controls, $t = 0.5774$, $P = 0.5796$ for Advanced, $t = 1.6327$, $P = 0.1087$ for HI, and in IMP-UNC $t = 1$, $P = 0.3306$ for Controls, $t = 1.5$, $P = 0.1720$ for Advanced, $t = 1.4263$, $P = 0.162$ for HI. This difference, however, was found to be statistically significant in the case of the LI group: in PERF-UNC $t = 3.1099$, $P = 0.0067$ and in IMP-UNC $t = 7.6026$, $P < 0.0001$. Hence, once again, the LI group exhibited a behaviour that diverges from the behaviour of the other three groups.

Having presented the results, let us now turn to their discussion.

¹⁶The reason why I do not compare the participants' performance on the IMP-COM and IMP-UNC conditions is because in the IMP-COM condition, unlike in the IMP-UNC condition, both T and F replies were acceptable. Even though the L2ers chose F more often than the native controls, exhibiting stronger preference for having a PERF rather than an IMP verb in a completed context, their performance was, nonetheless, accurate. As can be seen from the individual results reported in Appendix B, each L2er, just like each Russian native, consistently chose only one of two options, either T or F. Interestingly, the pattern whereby native Russians accept both uses of PIs more often than L2ers was also discovered by Slabakova (2005).

4.6. Discussion

I will start the discussion by considering, first, the performance of the L2 participants on the stimuli containing PERF verbs, as the acquisition of these verbs depends on the resetting of the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct mode. Recall that the L2ers, who have successfully reset this parameter, were expected to judge the sentences with prefixed PERF verbs as matching completed but not uncompleted events, given that these sentences entail completion (see 13 & 14).

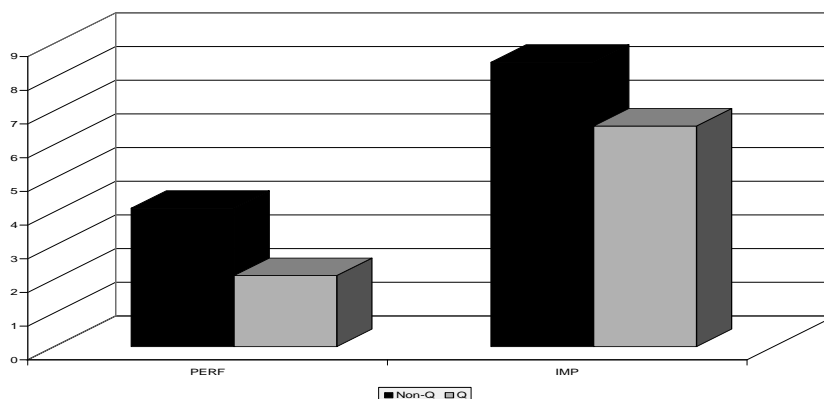
As we have seen in the previous section, all four groups of participants accepted significantly more sentences with PERF verbs in the context of completed than in the context of uncompleted events. This trend to accept the PERF stimuli with completed but not uncompleted events reveals that the L2 participants computed the PERF verbs as telic and, hence, as entailing completion (i.e., as being compatible only with completed events) most of the time. But in order to properly compute a telicity value of Russian perfective verbs, as they did, the L2 participants must have switched the Telicity parameter from the English to Russian setting. These findings demonstrate that English speakers acquiring Russian as L2 can successfully reset the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct, thus attaining a native-like competence in the domain of inner aspect.

This being said note that the performance of the LI group differs significantly from the performance of the other three groups. The question is: was the relatively lower performance of the LI participants caused by negative transfer from English? In other words, could it be that the majority of errors produced by the LI participants were interference errors? This is where the results reported in Table 2 come into play. Before we interpret these results recall that L2ers who use the English telicity-assigning mechanism were predicted to incorrectly judge sentences with a non-quantity N, but not those with a quantity N, as matching uncompleted events, without paying any attention to the morpho-syntactic structure of the verbs used in these sentences (see 15 & 16).

While none of the participants displayed such ‘drastic’ behaviour, the LI group, nonetheless, displayed a tendency, in both the PERF-UNC and IMP-UNC conditions, to accept more of the sentences with a non-quantity N, than those with a quantity N. This trend was found to be statistically significant. These findings suggest that the significantly lower performance of the LI group in relation to other three groups can be explained by negative transfer from English, which, not surprisingly, is still strong in the case of this proficiency group.

Importantly, although the LI participants did not use the Russian telicity setting 100% of the time, neither did they use the English telicity setting 100% of the time. Otherwise, we would expect them to judge 10 of PERF sentences with homogenous Ns and 0 of PERF sentences with quantity Ns as matching uncompleted events. Instead, they only accepted 4.1 of PERF sentences with homogenous Ns and 2.1 of PERF sentences with quantity Ns, as shown in Figure 2. Moreover, if the LI subjects only used the English telicity-assigning mechanism, they would have judge 10 of the IMP sentences appearing with homogenous Ns and 0 of the IMP sentences appearing with quantity Ns as matching uncompleted events. Yet, what we find is that they accepted 8.4 of the IMP sentences appearing with homogenous Ns and 6.6 of the IMP sentences appearing with quantity Ns:

Figure 2: Low Inter group: Uncompleted conditions, acceptances (out of 10)



As we can see from Figure 2, not only does the performance of the LI participants show signs of only partial transfer, with the stimuli with non-quantity Ns being accepted less than 100% and the stimuli with quantity Ns more than 0% in both the PERF-UNC and IMP-UNC conditions, but also it reflects the fact that even these participants started to pay attention to the morphological make up of the tested verbs, accepting more of the PI (with a bare prefixless verb) than PERF (with a prefixed verb) sentences in the uncompleted context. While these results reveal LI's emerging knowledge of the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism, this knowledge is, nonetheless, incomplete. Thus, unlike participants of the higher proficiency groups, the LI subjects have not completely blocked transfer from English. Consequently, they sometimes use the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism and sometimes the English one. To put it differently, their behaviour is characterized by optionality, whereby they use both telicity settings: that found in L2 and that found in L1. Importantly, since the participants of the HI and ADV groups disallow residual optionality, we can conclude that they behaviour matches that of the native controls.

To sum up, in this section we have considered the results of an experiment that tested the L2 acquisition of the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism by English native speakers. The performance of the L2 subjects indicates that the Advanced and HI participants have successfully switched the Telicity parameter from the English to Russian setting. The performance of the LI group reveals residual transfer from L1. All these findings replicate those found by Slabakova (2005).

The question that I will address before concluding this paper is whether successful resetting of the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct argues in favour of the Full Access part of the FTFA hypothesis.¹⁷ In other words, do L2ers need to have access to UG in order to learn the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism? The answer to this question is yes. To see why consider the alternatives.

One way to explain the successful L2 acquisition of the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism by English speakers is by claiming that these speakers simply apply metalinguistic rules that they have either learned in the formal setting or directly extracted from the input (Bley-Vroman 1989, 1990, Clahsen & Muysken 1986 and Schachter 1990, 1996). The problem is that the metalinguistic 'rules' that are formally taught are often inaccurate¹⁸ as well as ineffective (White 1991, Bruhn-Garavito 1995, Belikova 2008). As I have mentioned before, 6 of the L2 subjects that participated in the experiment had no exposure to formal instructions. Nonetheless, they were able to acquire the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism just as well as the other 35 L2 participants.¹⁹ These findings suggest that formal instructions play no crucial role in L2 acquisition of the Russian telicity-assignment mechanism.

Can it then be that L2ers extracted the relevant 'rules' from the input? Given the complexity of the Russian system, this task is nearly impossible, unless L2ers know a priori (from UG) what they are looking for. For one thing, Russian uses both lexical and syntactic telicity-assigning mechanisms. Second, syntactically, it can mark a verb as telic using either a preverb or the suffix *-nu*. Third, Russian preverbs perform different semantic functions. They can either change or not change the meaning of

¹⁷ Slabakova (2005) claims that the ability of English learners to acquire Russian inner aspect supports FTFA. Since she postulates that Russian, unlike English, contains a PerfP, for her the native-like performance of English speakers indicates that they have successfully acquired a new functional projection, the acquisition of which is apparently not possible without UG. In the light of the parameter that I propose in this paper, cases of successful acquisition of inner aspect, however, simply indicate that L2ers are able to reset the Telicity parameter. The question is: is successful resetting possible without UG?

¹⁸ Russian grammar books contain a metalinguistic rule that mistakenly equates the term *perfectivity* with *completion*. In fact, even the Russian name for *perfective verbs*, i.e., *glagoly soveršenogo dejstvija*, literary means 'verbs of completed actions'. However, as mentioned in footnote 3, Russian inceptive and delimitative verbs are both perfective and non-completive. If L2 instructions were guiding L2 acquisition, L2ers would never be able to properly acquire Russian inceptive verbs, given the deficiency of the rule they are taught in class. Not only would this rule lead them down the garden path, causing them to mistakenly analyse Russian inceptive and delimitative verbs as completive, but, without UG, they would be unable to ever backtrack from this misanalysis, given the ineffectiveness of negative evidence (Schwartz & Gubula-Rysakm 1992, Bruhn-Garavito 1995, Belikova 2008). Unfortunately, in my experiment I did not test L2ers' knowledge of inceptive and delimitative verbs. I, thus, leave the task of showing whether L2ers are able to acquire these 'exceptional' verbs to further research.

¹⁹ Curiously, these participants performed worse than the participants who learned Russian in a formal setting on the standard proficiency test that I initially used, as this test tested knowledge of various idiosyncrasies of Russian morphological system, e.g., case and agreement endings. They, however, performed better than the rest of the L2 participants on the Cloze test – a test that I used, at the end, to determine a proficiency level of the L2 participants.

the root they attach to. Moreover, they can add an initial, final or both points to the event encoded by the root they attach to, depending on the meaning of the root. And on top of that verbs containing preverbs are often inflected with the SI suffix *-va*. Even linguists who work on aspect cannot come to a consensus of whether Russian perfective verbs form a single class. More so for formally untrained L2 learners. The Russian aspectual system is too complex to determine, based on the input alone, the rule(s) responsible for assigning an accurate telicity value to Russian verbs. They need UG to access a telicity setting distinct from the one found in their L1.

In the light of this argument, the successful resetting of the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct that we have observed supports the Full Access part of the FTFA hypothesis.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we looked at the experiment that tested ability of English speakers learning Russian as L2 to switch the Telicity parameter from indirect to direct. As a result of our investigation, we have discovered that L2ers experience no particular problems in resetting the Telicity parameter. Even the performance of the less proficient low intermediate participants unveiled their emerging knowledge of the Russian telicity-assigning mechanism. And although their performance was not completely target-like (as it revealed residual transfer), it, nonetheless, shows that L2ers start resetting the Telicity parameter early in the acquisition process.

These findings suggest that English learners of Russian are able to attain native-like competence with Russian morpho-syntax related to inner aspect. Any difficulties that they experience with Russian aspect must lie outside of syntax.

Appendix A

Table 3 Individual results: Native controls, acceptances (out of 20)

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Native controls</i>									
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
PERF-COM	20	20	20	20	20	19	20	20	20	20
PERF-UNCOM	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2
IMP-COM	20	20	20	0	19	1	19	19	19	18
IMP-UNCOM	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	18

Table 4 Individual results: Advanced L2ers, acceptances (out of 20)

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Advanced subjects</i>				
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
PERF-COM	20	20	20	20	18
PERF-UNCOM	0	2	1	1	1
IMP-COM	2	19	20	0	2
IMP-UNCOM	19	20	20	18	20

Table 5 Individual results: High Intermediate L2ers, acceptances (out of 20)

<i>Condition</i>	<i>High Intermediate subjects</i>										
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11
PERF-COM	20	20	18	20	20	20	20	18	19	19	20
PERF-UNCOM	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	6	3	3	0
IMP-COM	0	0	0	0	2	20	2	19	18	18	20
IMP-UNCOM	17	20	20	20	18	17	19	17	18	20	20

Condition	High Intermediate subjects										
	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17	S18	S19	S20	S21	S22
PERF-COM	20	20	20	20	18	20	20	20	19	20	18
PERF-UNCOM	1	3	1	0	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
IMP-COM	18	2	20	0	2	20	0	0	19	20	18
IMP-UNCOM	20	17	20	20	17	20	19	20	19	20	19

Condition	High Intermediate subjects				
	S23	S24	S25	S26	S27
PERF-COM	19	20	20	19	20
PERF-UNCOM	3	2	0	1	1
IMP-COM	0	19	0	19	0
IMP-UNCOM	20	18	20	17	20

Table 6 Individual results: Low Intermediate L2ers, acceptances (out of 20)

Condition	Low Intermediate subjects								
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9
PERF-COM	20	14	18	17	17	18	15	20	19
PERF-UNCOM	11	5	5	5	5	4	10	6	5
IMP-COM	14	5	19	17	2	2	5	17	15
IMP-UNCOM	15	15	14	15	16	15	14	16	15

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