The Complicity of Telicity in the Root Infinitive Effect in Child L2 English

Elena Gavruseva
University of Iowa

1. Introduction

The research on consecutive child L2 acquisition demonstrates that non-finite root predicates occur in abundance in the productions of children acquiring English, French, and German (Armon-Lottem, 1997; Grondin and White, 1996; Haznedar, 2001; Haznedar and Schwartz, 1997; Ionin and Wexler, 2002; Paradis, Le Corre and Genesee, 1998; Prévost, 1997; Prévost and White, 2000). In child L2 English specifically, children use bare stems to express a variety of temporal and aspectual meanings. Consider the utterances in (1) produced by an L1 Japanese learner (Toshiko, 6.4) whose L2 syntactic development will be discussed in this study:

(1) a. My make rainbow (pres., ongoing) [file 8]
b. He want dinosaur (pres.) [file 8]
c. I do awesome picture (past) [file 8]
d. I make it for your house (fut/modal) [file 8]
e. He love dinosaur (pres.) [file 8]

All predicates in (1) lack tense/agreement morphology and signal ongoing and non-ongoing eventualities in present, past, and future temporal domains. The productions in (1) are quite representative of L2 English child learners.

A theoretical question that the data in (1) suggest is this: What is the syntactic architecture of child L2 clauses with non-finite verbs? The literature on the topic generated several theories differing in how missing finiteness inflections are interpreted in their frameworks. On the *Truncation Hypothesis* (TH) (Rizzi, 1993/94), non-finite predicates can be analyzed as reflexes of syntactic representations lacking in functional categories AgrSP and TP (the components of Infl). According to Rizzi (1993/94), the non-projection of these is caused by an optional violation of the 'Root=CP' Principle that constrains syntactic derivations. If the child's grammar provides for an option of dispensing with the CP layer (the topmost layer in a syntactic representation), the subordinate functional layers can also be dispensed with. The non-finiteness of children's root predicates is indicative of a 'truncated' functional layer in syntactic structure.

The Morphological Deficit Hypothesis (MDH) (Haznedar and Schwartz, 1997; Lardiere, 1998; Prévost and White, 2000) approaches the problem of missing inflections differently.[1] In particular, it does not take the surface form of 'bare' predicates to be directly linked to ill-formed syntactic structures in the child's grammar. The MDH proponents observe that L2 children's root clauses differ in some respects from their L1 counterparts. For example, one typically finds Nominative (Nom) case on subjects of non-finite predicates in child L2 acquisition (see the data in (1)), unlike in L1 acquisition (Gavruseva and Lardiere, 1996; Haznedar and Schwarz, 1997). If Nom case suggests the presence of Infl, missing tense/agreement infections cannot be attributed to the truncation of functional projections. Therefore, the proposal is that child L2 grammars may have some deficit in the

[1] The 'Morphological Deficit Hypothesis' is an umbrella term for a number of accounts of morphological variability in the use of verb predicates by child and adult L2 learners ('Missing Inflection Hypothesis', as in Haznedar and Schwarz (1997), 'Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis', as in Prévost and White (2000), and the "dissociation between the development of inflectional affixation and syntactic knowledge of formal features", as in Lardiere (1998:370)).

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mechanism that ensures mapping of formal features (e.g. tense and/or phi-features) onto the appropriate inflectional morphology. In claiming the existence of 'mapping problems' at the syntax/morphology interface, the MDH assumes 'full competence' in the computational component.

The TH and MDH predict statistical optionality in children's use of verbal predicates. Because the 'optionality' issue is central to the definition of the root infinitive stage, I want to reflect on it a bit further. Consider Table 1 that displays the proportions of finite and non-finite past tense predicates in the L2 child data (Dasha and Alla are the other two children who participated in the study):

Table 1. *Omission rates for past tense inflection*

Children	Non-fin past	Finite past
Toshiko	44% (29)	56% (37)
Dasha	50% (64)	50% (63)
Alla	23% (22)	77% (74)
Overall	40% (115)	60% (175)

In Table 1 we observe statistically optional uses of past tense morphology in Toshiko's and Dasha's data (the split is approximately 50/50). Alla's data show lower omission rates for past tense inflections. Regardless of the individual child differences, these results demonstrate that when the verbs are put into two categories (finite vs. non-finite), we are likely to see statistical optionality in the use of morphology.

The main objective of this study is to present new empirical evidence from child L2 that is problematic both for the TH and the MDH. The developmental trends of interest involve the correlations between the emergence of tense/agreement morphology in English *(-s* and *–ed*) and the predicate's *Aktionsart* (stem-level aspectual semantics such as the eventive/stative contrast, among many others). For example, in Toshiko's data, the 3PSg *-s* emerges on stative predicates and has much higher occurrence rates on statives than on eventives throughout the developmental period studied. Consider Table 2:

Table 2. *Aktionsart and the use of –s in Toshiko's data*

Aktionsart	Non-finite	Finite
States	16% (6)	84% (32)
Events	95% (20)	5% (1)

The data in Table 1 indicate that stative predicates in 3rdPSg contexts are much more likely to appear in a finite form than eventive predicates. Consider some of Toshiko's utterances that show the use and non-use of *–s* depending on the verb's *Aktionsart*:

(2) *Stative predicates:*
   a. Computer goes middle ('goes'='belongs') [file 6]
   b. Next one has it [file 7]
   c. Pig likes this girl [file 8]
   d. Something smells bad and feels bad [file 10]

(3) *Eventive predicates:*
   a. And round it go [file 7]
   b. The monkey get out of zoo [file 9]
   c. He swim [file 9]
   d. Charmadar fly and up [file 10]

The use of past tense morphology in the children's L2 English suggests that regular *(-ed*) and irregular morphology emerges on eventive predicates referring to punctual (momentary) events (e.g. *said*, *got*, *found*, etc.) and extends gradually to eventive predicates referring to non-punctual events (e.g., *played*, *drew*, etc.). (The statistics for this trend will be discussed later in the article.) Note that neither the TH nor the MDH predict that such correlations should be observed in L2 development. Thus, the questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

(4) *Research questions:*
(a) How do we account for the fact that the emergent inflections are linked to a particular aspectual class?
(b) What can the patterns of 'finiteness spread' (that is, the spreading of inflections across the aspectual classes) tell us about the nature of root infinitives and the 'optionality' effect in child L2?

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents and describes the data used in the analysis. Section 3 introduces the 'aspect-before-tense' hypothesis (Antinucci and Miller, 1976) and explains its relevance to the study of early syntactic representations. Section 4 discusses Vendler's (1967) aspectual typology and introduces the distinction between semantic and syntactic (compositional) telicity. Section 5 discusses the notion of temporal chains and explains the role of telicity features in their syntactic licensing mechanism. The same section also contains a new account ('the telicity hypothesis') of the root infinitive phenomenon in child grammar. Section 6 presents the data on the use of inflections in the language of three child L2 learners of English and discusses how these data can be accommodated within the proposed theory. Section 7 concludes the article.

2. Data

The data for the study come from three child L2 learners of English (all female). Two of the learners (Dasha 8.1 and Alla 6.9) speak Russian as their L1 and one learner (Toshiko 6.4) is an L1 Japanese speaker. All children had no prior knowledge of English before coming to the United States with their parents. They continued to communicate with their parents in their native language while learning English as L2 naturalistically. (The parents were visiting lecturers or researchers at major American universities but spoke very little English and so were not a source of the English input.) The children's parents enrolled them in local elementary schools within the first three months of arrival in the US and so the children were at very comparable developmental stages at the beginning of the study.

The study was designed as a longitudinal investigation of children's naturalistic productions. The child learners were visited approximately every three to four weeks at home by the author or a research assistant and their speech was audio-recorded in spontaneous play. One of the children (Dasha) often played with an English-speaking playmate of the same age and so the author was more of an observer than a participant during the recording sessions. The other girls (Alla and Toshiko) were audiotaped in play sessions with a research assistant who was in her mid-20s and was a native speaker of English. The play sessions were subsequently transcribed and checked for accuracy by another research assistant. Table 3 gives the data collection schedules for the three children:

Table 3. *Data collection schedule*s

File	Toshiko (6;4) L1: Japanese	Dasha (8;1) L1: Russian	Alla (6;9) L1: Russian
File 1	Oct. 4, '00	Nov. 14, '94	July 13, '00
File 2	Oct. 25, '00	Nov. 30, '94	Aug. 30, '00
File 3	Nov. 29, '00	Dec. 7, '94	Sept. 14, '00
File 4	Dec. 15, '00	Dec. 18, '94	Sept. 28, '00
File 5	Jan. 24, '01	Jan. 13, '95	Nov. 5, '00
File 6	Feb. 21, '01	Jan. 20, '95	Dec. 3, '00
File 7	Mar. 21, '01	Jan. 27, '95	Jan. 14, '01
File 8	Apr. 11, '01	Feb. 10, '95	Mar. 4, '01
File 9	May 2, '01	Feb. 17, '95	Mar. 24, '01
File 10	May 23, '01	Mar. 3, '95	Apr. 4, '01

The child data analyzed here consist of fully intelligible declarative utterances with a lexical verb as a predicate. All self-repetitions in the same context, repetitions of others' utterances, and unintelligible utterances were excluded from the analysis. Each root predicate was coded for *Aktionsart*, the absence or presence of inflection, and temporal/aspectual interpretation.

3. The 'aspect-before-tense' hypothesis

Some earlier investigations of how English-speaking children acquire inflections reported that the earliest uses of past tense were restricted to a specific semantic type of verbs (Antinucci and Miller, 1976; Bronckart and Sinclair, 1973). Antinucci and Miller (A&M) (1976:182-183) claimed that past tense forms in their data were found with "verbs of the change of state type" (e.g. *fall*, *fix*, *fold*, *open*, *wipe*, *tear*, *spill*, etc.). A&M (1976) offered a cognitive explanation for this developmental pattern: "the child lacks an abstract conception of time" (p. 184) and therefore "the meaning of the child's past tense is...rather limited" (p. 183). In fact, according to A&M (1976: 183), the meaning encoded by past tense forms is not temporality of a specific kind but rather "the past 'tense' has more of an aspectual than a temporal value". A&M's (1976) account of the child data is referred to as the 'aspect-before-tense' hypothesis precisely because the early uses of inflections are claimed to be guided by the verb's aspectual semantics. Note here that A&M (1976) do not define an aspectual class of 'change of state verbs' in terms of any formal semantic/aspectual features. Their approach to aspectual semantics is based on a uniquely contextual usage of verbs by the child. (In other words, a verb's meaning is evaluated in a specific context and not as an independent lexical item that stands in a particular semantic relationship/opposition to other lexical items in the child's lexicon. I will return to this point in section 4.)

The 'aspect-before-tense' hypothesis provides an explanation for the observed correlations between the verb's *Aktionsart* and the use of inflection, unlike the TH and other theories of root infinitives (e.g. Wexler's (1994, 1998) ATOM model). However, this approach has little to say about the nature of non-finite predicates in children's grammar (although statistical optionality does not seem to follow from its central claim). The TH, on the other hand, assumes non-finite verbs to be in free variation (i.e., 'optional') with finite verbs and attributes the non-finiteness phenomena to the non-projection of CP/IP. The finite predicates are taken as evidence of syntactic knowledge of Tns (and Agr). The differing claims about children's knowledge of time (and tense) result from these differences in perspective on the child data.

What I will address next is the relevance of the 'aspect-before-tense' claim to the studies of the root infinitive phenomena. The question that I ask is this: if 'aspect-before-tense' were to be applied to the acquisition of clause structure, what would it say about clausal representations in child grammar? If tense inflections have an "aspectual value", it follows that AgrSP/TP should be underspecified in early syntax. Assuming that Infl is not active, we should expect high omission rates of tense/agreement morphology with 'non-change of state' predicate types. For example, predicative structures should show high omission rates of copula *be*, especially because *be* is devoid of any aspectual semantics. Therefore, children should be unaware of its formal feature (tns/agr) specifications and *be* should be dropped.[2] Let us consider the omission rates for *be* in the L2 learners' data:

Table 4: *Omission rates for copula be*[3]

Children	Null 'be'	Overt 'be'
Toshiko	7% (11)	93% (138)
Dasha	23% (31)	77% (102)
Alla	10% (4)	90% (36)
Overall	14% (46)	86% (276)

Table 4 shows that copula *be* is omitted quite infrequently in the children's productions, in any case, much less so than past tense morphology (cf. Table 1). Furthermore, the use of overt *be* in predicative structures is much more consistent across the children than the use of past tense. For example, in

[2] Observe that copula *be* is dropped in predicative structures rather than being spelled out in a non-finite form (that is, children hardly ever produce utterances such as 'She be from Russia'; instead, a child would say 'She from Russia'). This pattern of error might suggest that copula *be* is base-generated in a functional projection and so when the relevant projection is missing *be* is dropped.

[3] The predicatives coded for the analysis included declarative and negative utterances with overt NP subjects or pronominal referential subjects (*he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, etc.).

Toshiko and Dasha's data we observed statistically optional uses of past tense morphology. No evidence of statistical optionality is found in the data on the acquisition of the copula. (Notice here that this difference in the optionality effect between different types of inflections is not predicted under the TH and MDH.)

More importantly, however, 'aspect-before-tense' does not fare well in explaining the acquisition of finiteness with non-thematic verbs in principle. Non-thematic verbs are 'semantically vacuous' (Chomsky, 1995) and appear, nevertheless, in a finite form in the children's language. If the acquisition of finiteness morphology is guided by the verb's semantics, how do we explain the high finiteness rates with copula *be*? In what follows, I will address the issue of optionality and the finiteness contrast between thematic and non-thematic verbs. However, first, I take a more detailed look at the typology of aspectual classes, in particular, the eventive/stative distinction.

4. Statives and eventives as aspectual classes

I pointed out earlier that A&M (1976) do not assume any formal aspectual typology of verbs and so assign children's verbs to a 'change of state' type based on contextual information. However, when the list of verbs used by Eve (1.9-2.2) (who was one of the children in A&M's study) is examined carefully, it is easy to see that the stative/eventive distinction is maintained in A&M's analysis. The problem that A&M attempted to address in their 'aspect-before-tense' proposal had to do with the fact that only a subset of eventive verbs received past tense morphology in the children's productions. A large proportion of verbs, while being used to express past tense events, appeared as bare stems. In this section, I will take a closer look at eventives as an aspectual class in order to determine whether children might be attuned to any formal feature in the verb's meaning that may play a role in the acquisition of inflectional morphology.

Let us begin by considering a well-known aspectual typology devised by Vendler (1967). Consider Table 5:

Table 5. *Aspectual verb classes (Vendler, 1967)*

	States	Events		
Features	State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement
punctual	-	-	-	+
telicity	-	- telic	+ telic	+
dynamic	-	+	+	+

Table 5 shows that Vendler (1967) makes a distinction between states and events and, furthermore, subdivides events into three aspectual subtypes: activities, accomplishments, and achievements. An advantage of Vendler's classification is that it uses three formal/semantic features (punctuality, telicity, and dynamicity) to define each aspectual type. In Vendler's system, verbs can be grouped into several aspectual oppositions based on the aspectual features: punctual/non-punctual, telic/atelic, dynamic/non-dynamic. The examples of verbs within each aspectual type are given in (5):

(5) a. State: love, want, need, etc.
b. Activity: *write*, *play*, *sing*, *run*, etc.
c. Accomplishment: *write* a novel, *play* a tune, *sing* an aria, *run* a mile, etc.
d. Achievement: break, fall, notice, etc.

Now notice that some verbs (e.g. *write*, *play*, *sing*, etc.) simultaneously appear in two aspectual classes (activities and accomplishments). The distinction between 'write' and 'write a novel' is based on the telicity feature (from the Greek *telos*: end, goal, result) (see the shaded area of Table 5). How can it be that one and the same verb is categorized as both telic and atelic?

Verkuyl (1972, 1999) argues that some verbs in Germanic (and Romance) languages are best described as 'aspectually transient', namely, one and the same verb can appear in more than one aspectual subclass. This is the case with verbs that we find in the 'activity' and 'accomplishment' categories in Vendler's (1967) system. How does a verb become telic or atelic? Verkuyl (1972, 1999) observes that the verb's arguments play an important role in the telicity value of a predicate.

When an argument can be described as a 'specific quantity argument' (+SQA), the verb receives a telic reading. When an argument is interpreted as a 'non-specific quantity' (-SQA), the verb gets an atelic interpretation. Consider the examples in (6):

(6) a. Spencer wrote [a poem$_{[+SQA]}$] (+telic)
b. Spencer wrote [poetry[$_{-SQA}$]] (-telic)

The examples in (6) show that the predicate 'wrote a poem' is telic when the event of writing a poem is brought to completion (that is, Spencer finished writing a poem). On the other hand, the predicate 'wrote poetry' is atelic because 'poetry' is a non-count noun and so no single event of writing (and completing) a work of poetry can be singled out. In my earlier work (Gavruseva 2002a), I suggested that verbs like 'write' should be characterized as having no inherent telicity specification. That is, in the lexicon, these verbs are unspecified for telicity (this can be formally represented as $V_{[+/-telic]}$). Following Verkuyl (1972, 1993), Borer (1994), I proposed that in the case of aspectually transient verbs, we deal with a compositional (syntactic) telicity feature which is computed in the AspP projection. Consider the representation in (7), based on Borer (1994), for the predicate 'wrote a poem':

(7) $[_{CP}\ [_{IP}\ [_{AspP}$ a poem $[Asp_{[+measure]}]_{VP}\ ]]]$

The DP argument 'a poem' specified as [+SQA] (or [+measure], as in Borer (1994) moves to the Spec of AspP where it triggers a [+measure] (that is, [+telic]) specification on the syntactic aspectual head. The verb 'picks up' this specification via head-movement to Asp. When no DP argument with a [+measure] feature moves to Spec, AspP, the [+measure] feature remains inert and the predicate is interpreted as atelic.

As for states and accomplishments, I suggested (Gavruseva 2002a, 2002b) that these aspectual classes are characterized by an inherent (semantic) specification for telicity. For example, the class of states is always atelic, regardless of whether a predicate combines with a 'measure' or a 'non-measure' DP:

(8) a. Spencer loved [a poem$_{[+SQA]}$] (-telic)
b. Spencer loved [poetry[$_{-SQA}$]] (-telic)

Given that the semantics of nominal arguments do not cause any changes in the telicity value of stative predicates, I suggested (Gavruseva 2002b) that verbs with inherent telicity simply check a semantic telicity feature of the appropriate value in a VP-internal aspectual projection (AktionsartP, or AktP):

(9) $[_{CP}\ [_{IP}\ [_{VP}\ [_{AktP}$ Akt $_{[+/-telic]}\ [_{VP}]]]]]$

In Gavruseva (2002a, 2002b), I also argued that Vendler's (1967) aspectual typology can be much simplified and the distinction between states and events can be drawn solely on the basis of inherent (semantic) vs. non-inherent (syntactic) telicity feature. Consider Table 6:

Table 6. *Gavruseva's (2002a, 2002b) aspectual typology based on inherent/non-inherent telicity*

States	Events	
	Non-punctual	Punctual
-telic(inherent)	+/- telic (unspecified)	+ telic (inherent)

In the next section, I consider how the syntax of inherent (non-inherent) telicity is relevant for understanding the issues of finiteness spread by aspectual verb type, optionality effect, and the thematic/non-thematic contrast in the acquisition of finiteness morphology.

5. Temporal chains and telicity syntax

Children's knowledge of finiteness in the root infinitive literature has been approached from two perspectives: (i) as the acquisition of V-to-I chains (Wexler, 1994) and (ii) as the acquisition of

temporal chains (Hoekstra and Hyams 1998). Here I will argue that the notion of a temporal chain (as in Guéron and Hoekstra, 1995), largely construed as a relationship between T and the tense operator in the CP, provides a better framework for an analysis of the specifics of children's clausal structure.

In Gavruseva (2002a, 2002b), I proposed that syntactic aspectual features be viewed as forming part of a temporal chain and, furthermore, that syntactic licensing of temporal chains is based on the constraint as in (10):

(10) *Constraint on syntactic licensing of temporal chains:*
A tense operator cannot bind T unless telicity of a VP predicate is specified.

In the same work, I argued that syntactic aspectual projections are underspecified in early child grammar of English. I also argued that the feature values of AktP might be acquired earlier than those of AspP because the properties of the former do not hinge on the semantics of verb arguments (and hence no aspectual feature needs to be triggered in conjunction with DPs). When a predicate remains syntactically unspecified for telicity, no T-chain can be licensed and so the predicate is spelled out in a non-finite form. Conversely, when a telicity value is checked, the predicate is finite. My approach to the acquisition of finiteness predicts the following correlations between inflectional morphology and the verb's aspectual type:

(11) *Predictions for the acquisition of inflections:*
(a) Verbs with inherent telicity specifications should be overwhelmingly finite.
(b) Verbs with an unspecified telicity feature (aspectually transient verbs, or non-punctual eventives) will be predominantly used in a non-finite form.
(c) Non-thematic verbs should be overwhelmingly finite because they do not need to check any telicity features.

The constraint in (10) allows us to explain the patterns that we observed in the L2 data, namely, the contrast in finiteness between thematic and non-thematic verbs, the earlier emergence of morphology with states and punctual eventives, and the use of aspectually transient predicates in a non-finite form. Furthermore, the constraint argues against statistical optionality and predicts, contrary to the TH and MDF, that children's use of non-finite predicates is constrained by the aspectual properties of verbs.

In the next section, I investigate whether the predictions in (11) hold for the L2 data that I use in this study.

6. Results

To begin, let us compare punctual eventives with non-punctual eventives in terms of finiteness rates. Consider Table 7, which presents the distribution of past tense morphology with these two aspectual classes:

Table 7. *Past tense morphology with punctual and non-punctual eventives: overall pattern for the three children*

File	Punctual eventives		Non-punctual eventives	
	+Finite	-Finite	+Finite	-Finite
Overall pattern	73% (120)	27% (44)	41% (38)	59% (55)

The results in Table 7 support the predictions of the 'telicity hypothesis' (I will refer to the constraint in (10) as such in the rest of this article). Inherently telic predicates (punctuals) occur in an inflected form more frequently than non-inherently telic predicates (non-punctuals) (73% vs. 41%). Conversely, non-punctuals occur in an uninflected form more frequently than punctuals (59% vs. 27%).

Tables 8, 9, and 10 show the distribution of past tense inflection in individual child L2 data:

Table 8. *Dasha: past tense morphology with punctual and non-punctual eventives*

File	Punctual eventives		Non-punctual eventives	
	+Finite	-Finite	+Finite	-Finite
Files 1-3	100% (6)	0	0	100% (4)
Files 4-10	66% (48)	34% (25)	21% (7)	79% (26)
Overall	68% (54)	32% (25)	19% (7)	81% (30)

Table 9. *Alla: past tense morphology with punctual and non-punctual eventives*

File	Punctual eventives		Non-punctual eventives	
	+Finite	-Finite	+Finite	-Finite
Files 1-6	53% (10)	47% (9)	0	100% (10)
Files 7-10	100% (40)	0	85% (11)	15% (2)
Overall	85% (50)	15% (9)	48% (11)	52% (12)

Table 10. *Toshiko : past tense morphology with punctual and non-punctual eventives*

File	Punctual eventives		Non-punctual eventives	
	+Finite	-Finite	+Finite	-Finite
Files 1-10	73% (16)	27% (16)	61% (20)	39% (13)

The results in the preceding tables show that the correlations between finiteness morphology and an aspectual verb type are maintained in the data from all three girls (although less so in Toshiko's case).

Now, let us turn to stative predicates. These are predicted to occur with more or less the same finiteness rate as punctual eventives (statives are inherently atelic and so check their atelic feature in AktP). Consider Table 11:

Table 11. *Tense morphology and stative predicates*

Children	Past		Present	
	-Finite	+Finite	-Finite	+Finite
Dacha	82% (9)	18% (2)	93% (25)	7% (2)
Alla	7% (1)	93% (13)	7% (2)	93% (27)
Toshiko	0	100% (1)	16% (6)	84% (32)

The predictions of the 'telicity hypothesis' are borne out in Alla's and Toshi's data (see the shaded area in Table 11) but not in Dasha's data. However, 47% (16/34) of Dasha's non-finite stative predicates feature the verb *have*. Blom and Krikhaar (2002) report that *hebben* ('have') is the only stative verb that is non-finite in child Dutch. A question, then, arises: is this a coincidence between the two Germanic data sets? In Gavruseva (2002b), I proposed that the verb *have* may not be analyzed as a stative verb by some children because the input provides conflicting information about its aspectual properties (cf. 'I had a snack' vs. 'I had a dog'). In the first example, *have* functions as a light verb and is used in a non-stative sense, unlike in the second example where it clearly signals a stative-like meaning of possession. If we remove *have* from the calculations in Dasha's data, 67% (2/3) of past statives would be finite, along with 12% (2/17) of present statives. The finiteness rate for present tense statives is still quite low. However, it is not at all uncontroversial that present tense morphology in English *(-s* and irregular stems such as *has*) is a spell-out of tense. For example, Kayne (1989) argues that *–s* is a number marker and so the spell-out of present tense in English might be a null morpheme. In any case, some individual differences in the rate at which children acquire the properties of AspP and AktP must be assumed. I will leave this issue for future research.

7. Conclusions

In this article, I argued that the 'telicity hypothesis' provides a better account of the root infinitive phenomenon in child L2 English because (i) it explains why the emergence of finiteness morphology patterns along aspectual verb type, (ii) it accounts for the contrast in finiteness rates between thematic

and non-thematic verbs, and (iii) it shows that children's use of non-finite forms is not statistically optional, but rather is constraind by the aspectual properties of predicates (namely, by the verb's specification for telicity). Thus, I propose that the 'truncation hypothesis', 'the morphological deficit hypothesis', and the 'aspect-before-tense-hypothesis' be revisited in light of the empirical evidence and theoretical arguments of this article.

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