

Acquiring Geographically-Variable Norms of Use: The Case of the Present Perfect in Mexico and Spain

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1. Introduction

The present study adds to the growing body of research on the second language (L2) acquisition of variable structures in Spanish. This area of research stems from the recognition that an essential part of effective communication in an L2 is managing the variation in linguistic forms that occurs in response to linguistic, social and interactional variables present in the discourse context among native speakers (NS) of a given language. Although research on the L2 acquisition of variable structures in Spanish has covered a wide range of grammatical structures and learner populations (see Geeslin, 2011a, 2011b for a review), this body of research has been conducted primarily outside the target language environment and has focused on the acquisition of linguistic constraints that are believed to describe NS use across geographic regions (e.g., Geeslin, 2003; Gudmestad, 2012; Killam, 2011). In response to this existing research, we focus our analysis on the L2 acquisition of the present perfect / preterit distinction, grammatical structures that also vary according to geographic norms both in their frequency of use and the contexts in which they are deemed acceptable. Moreover, we use a longitudinal design to follow learners in two different study abroad contexts in order to examine the degree to which differing regional norms impact language development. In this way, our research connects the study of the L2 acquisition of variable structures to the ever-growing body of research on the role of study abroad in the process of language learning, adding evidence of the specific changes that take place in learner grammars during a stay in the target environment. Our study joins a very small body of work (e.g., Salgado-Robles, 2011) that assesses the degree to which learners of Spanish acquire the variable norms of the target environment.

The present analysis is based on results from a group of 46 English-speaking learners of Spanish who participated in intensive seven-week immersion programs in two distinct locations, Valencia, Spain and San Luis Potosí, Mexico. At the same time, we tested a group of NSs from each region to create an appropriate model by which to measure learner linguistic gains. Learners completed a written contextualized questionnaire at the beginning and end of their seven-week stay in the target community. This instrument was designed to examine the selection of the preterit and the present perfect forms in describing past-time contexts. Our work follows previous studies in that it employs an analysis of the frequency and predictors of selection of variable forms (Fafulas, 2010, 2012; Geeslin, 2003, 2011a; Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, & Killam, 2010, 2012; Gudmestad, 2006) in order to evaluate learner development in a study abroad context. Results indicate that the learners showed sensitivity to particular speech community norms in each region, even after a relatively short period of time in the host country, as demonstrated through the modification of the linguistic constraints on selection of the present perfect form. We begin this paper with a brief review of research on the L2 acquisition of variable structures and continue with an overview of research on the present perfect / preterit distinction for first (L1) and second language speakers. We continue with a detailed description of our participant group, our elicitation methods and the analysis conducted. Finally, we present our findings and discuss the implications of these results for the fields of sociolinguistics and L2 acquisition more generally.

2. The acquisition of L2 variation

Research on L2 variation has led to a detailed understanding of the ways in which learner grammars may exhibit variation throughout the developmental process. Learners may demonstrate vertical (Adamson & Regan, 1991), or Type I (Rehner, 2002) variation (see Geeslin, 2011a for an overview), indicative of a stage in which they move from the competition of two forms (one native-like and one not) for the expression of a single function, to a consistent use of the target-like form. More importantly for the purposes of the current study, however, learners may also exhibit horizontal, or Type II, variation, in which two native-like forms are used to fulfill the same function, with frequencies that differ according to social, linguistic and contextual constraints. Although this second type of variation has long been studied as part of NS language (Labov, 1972; Silva-Corvalán, 2001; Winford, 2003), there has been a great deal of recent research on L2 language users who have been found to exhibit similar properties across languages, grammatical structures and learner populations (Adamson & Regan, 1991; Mougeon & Dewaele, 2004; Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003). In Spanish, there are numerous studies of L2 morphosyntactic variation, including research on the copula contrast (Geeslin, 2000, 2003), mood distinction (Gudmestad, 2012), future and past time expression (Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2010), simple present / present progressive variation (Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012), and *leísmo* (Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, & Killam, 2010; Salgado-Robles, 2011), among others. Among the major findings stemming from this body of work, Geeslin (2011b) notes that learners from distinct levels of proficiency show an effect based on the type of task and grammatical structure under observation, that the acquisition of sentential constraints generally precedes discourse-pragmatic constraints (although learners may give priority to pragmatic cues at the expense of semantic ones once they are acquired), and that learners show greater sensitivity to linguistic variables in comparison to extra-linguistic variables.

One recent example of this type of research is Geeslin and Gudmestad (2010), which analyzed five grammatical variables in Spanish. The data in that study came from sociolinguistic interviews from 16 English-speaking advanced NNSs and 16 NSs of Spanish, residing in the same US speech community. The morphosyntactic structures analyzed were (1) copula choice, (2) mood choice, (3) past-time reference, (4) future-time reference and (5) subject expression. In addition, the authors examined the effect of extra-linguistic variables such as gender, time abroad, and years of formal study on the use of these structures. Geeslin and Gudmestad argued that contexts for analysis should be identified according to function (cf. Schwenter & Torres Cacoullous, 2008) and that the full range of forms that occur in each context should be included in the analysis. Geeslin and Gudmestad's results indicated that both NSs and NNSs use a wider range of forms in each context (except for mood contrast) than previously accounted for in the sociolinguistic literature. Further, NNSs and NSs showed distributional differences in the frequency of forms used in almost all contexts. For example, NNSs used the periphrastic future at a rate of 75.9% of the time and the morphological future 8.8% of the time, whereas NSs used the periphrastic form 59% of the time and the morphological form 16.5% of the time. The study also revealed differences between NSs and NNSs in regard to the extra-linguistic factors: while the NSs showed gender differences for null subjects, personal pronouns, and morphological future forms, NNSs did not. This study and others like it have expanded our knowledge of how variable structures develop in L2 Spanish and how advanced NNSs differ from NSs in their use.

Research on the intersection of the acquisition of L2 variation and research on the study abroad environment have generally received less attention, but there is growing interest in how learners incorporate information regarding the variability of grammatical structures into their developing grammars during a stay in the target environment (Geeslin, 2011b; Preston, 1993). One study that addresses this research goal is Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009), who studied the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by Irish NSs of English studying abroad in francophone communities. These scholars reviewed the L1 variation studies which detail the factors constraining NS selection of 4 variable structures: *ne* deletion, /l/ deletion, the *nous/on* alternation, and future-time reference, in order to formulate hypotheses for learner development of these same structures over a year's time. For each sociolinguistic variable, they conducted multivariate analyses to determine the differences and similarities in rates of use and predictors of use for NSs and NNSs. They observed that their findings indicated "robust evidence that the acquisition of variation patterns of the L2 speech community was significantly positively affected by contact with native speakers" (2009: 139). Additionally, several

French language immersion studies demonstrate similar findings in regard to the positive effect of NS contact on L2 grammars (e.g. Mougeon & Rehner, 2001; Mougeon, Rehner, & Nadasdi, 2004; Nagy, Blondeau, & Auger, 2002). In general, this research shows that learners are indeed influenced positively by contact with the target and, over time, are able to develop a high degree of sociolinguistic competence.

Turning specifically to research on the acquisition of variable norms in Spanish in the target environment, few studies exist. To date, the structures that have been examined include the use of /s/-weakening and the interdental fricative (Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008), the present perfect (Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, & Killam, 2012) and *leísmo* (Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, & Killam, 2010; Salgado-Robles, 2011). The work on the present perfect will be described in greater detail in section 3 because of its relevance to the current study. Of the studies mentioned here, Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008) did not employ a longitudinal design, but rather used a background questionnaire to assess the importance of study abroad, as well as the recentness and length of that experience on learners' use of the given structures studied, and found that the vast majority of their participants did not employ such regional variants even in cases where there was demonstrable experience with the target norm. In contrast, the work by Geeslin et al. (2010) did show that learners participating in an intensive study abroad program for a period of seven weeks moved from a generalization of the *le* forms for all human referents (a typical stage for L2 development where a one-to-one form-meaning mapping is employed prior to further differentiation of forms and function and/or multi-functionality of a form) toward prescriptive norms through an increase in the use of *lo* and *la* forms (i.e., the accusative forms) and finally, at the third test time, toward the regional norms for use of *le*, as demonstrated by changes in the frequency of use of these forms as well as the constraints on that use. To our knowledge, Salgado-Robles (2011) is the only study to date that examines the acquisition of a variable structure in two different study abroad contexts. In that study, learners in Valladolid, Spain moved toward the regional norm by increasing their frequency of use of the *le* forms while learners in Seville, Spain also moved toward regional norms by decreasing their use of *le* forms over the course of their stay abroad. As with the existing research on L2 French, this group of studies shows that the L2 acquisition of sociolinguistic competence is possible, and that learner rates of use and predictors of use change over time. Moreover, it shows that response to target norms in the study abroad environment may vary according to the grammatical structure under examination and, thus, warrants further attention.

3. Research on the present perfect

As indicated in the previous section, research on variable structures in L2s often takes as its point of departure the research conducted on the use of that structure among NSs. This is because in order to analyze the use of a given structure by NNSs, one must describe this use in terms of not only how often a given form is used, but also in terms of the linguistic and social factors that constrain that use. Given this research tradition, what follows is a review of the previous research on NS variation of the preterit / present perfect distinction in Spanish. We begin with a brief description of the structure under examination, followed by details on the norms of use among NSs. In instances where geography has been found to play a role in variation, this will be noted, as it is a primary focus of the current study. Finally, we will review the research conducted to date on the L2 acquisition of the preterit / present perfect distinction from a variationist perspective, focusing on research conducted in the target environment.

3.1. NS and NNS use of preterit and present perfect forms

In Spanish, the preterit or simple past, (*comí* 'I ate') and the present perfect (*he comido* 'I have eaten') can both be used to express completed action in contexts of past-time reference. Typological research indicates that prototypically perfect aspect signals a past situation that is viewed as currently relevant while perfective aspect conveys a situation viewed as temporally bounded (Comrie, 1976). In several Romance languages (e.g., French and Italian, Squartini & Bertinetto, 2000) the present perfect has followed a common cross-linguistic pathway and evolved from a marker of perfect to perfective aspect (Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca, 1994). As the present perfect evolves, it encroaches upon the

domain of the simple past and acquires novel usages previously held by the latter in the language. At the same time, it retains semantic and grammatical properties of its original functions, indicative of previous stages along the perfect-to-perfective diachronic pathway (Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca, 1994). Crucially, as the perfect expands its range of uses, it does not necessarily displace the preterit form and, thus, both forms may co-exist in the same functional domain. The Spanish present perfect has been posited to be undergoing a diachronic shift along this evolutionary chain; however, not all dialects are at the same point on the continuum, nor are they equally constrained by the semantic and pragmatic features associated with the use of this form in Romance languages (Howe, 2006; Howe & Schwenter, 2008; Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós, 2008). This previous research indicates that the preterit and present perfect can be viewed as two grammaticalizing variants that encompass a range of functions along a similar cross-linguistic pathway. For this reason there exists considerable synchronic variation between preterit and present perfect forms, observable through dissimilar contexts of use and frequencies of use, across different speech communities of the Spanish-speaking world (see Howe, 2006 for an overview). In the current study we adopt the stance taken by previous scholars that the preterit and present perfect constitute a single linguistic variable and broadly define our variable context as the perfect-to-perfective evolutionary pathway documented for other Romance languages (e.g., Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós, 2008).

Empirical research on this variation in NS Spanish has shown that in some Peninsular varieties (e.g., Alicante: Howe & Schwenter, 2003; Schwenter, 1994a; Bilbao: Burgo, 2012; Kempas, 2006; Madrid: Serrano, 1994; Schwenter, 1994b; Valencia: Howe, 2006) the present perfect functions as a hodiernal ('today') perfective, overwhelmingly chosen over the preterit to indicate past situations that occurred within the same day as speech time. However, there are regional exceptions to this tendency, most notably in Northwestern Spain (Kempas, 2006) and the Canary Islands (Piñero Piñero, 2000). Regarding Mexican varieties, it is held that the Mexican present perfect is at a developmental stage prior to that of most Peninsular varieties, acting as a perfect in which past situations are viewed as still ongoing at speech time. In a study that specifically addressed the variation between the preterit and present perfect in Spain and Mexico, Schwenter and Torres Cacoullós (2008) confirmed the claim that these variants are constrained by different linguistic predictors of use in each variety. In Mexico the present perfect was employed in 15% of all contexts while in Spain this form reached a use of 54%. In both varieties, the present perfect was favored by co-occurring proximate (e.g., *esta semana* 'this week') and frequency adverbials (e.g., *muchas veces* 'many times'), as well as with plural direct objects. Differences were found regarding lexical aspect whereby Mexican Spanish disfavored the present perfect with achievement verbs (e.g., *recordar* 'to remember') while Spain showed no linguistic conditioning based on semantic class. The most significant divergence between Spain and Mexico regarded the factor temporal reference. In Mexico the present perfect was strongly favored in irrelevant temporal reference contexts (.94) and most disfavored by specific temporal reference (hodiernal and prehodiernal combined .17). In Spain, irrelevant temporal reference was also highly favored (.94), however, in stark contrast to Mexico, the present perfect was nearly categorical in hodiernal temporal contexts (.93) while being disfavored in prehodiernal contexts. This previously outlined body of research indicates that time of reference, adverb type and lexical aspect are all important variables in NS use of preterit and present perfect forms. Further, regarding geographic variation, Peninsular Spanish evidences a preference for the present perfect in hodiernal contexts, in addition to a higher overall frequency of use of the form, when compared to Mexican varieties. Given that NS predictors and frequency of use of these forms vary based on geographic location, this is a key structure for testing the acquisition of regional norms by NNSs.

In spite of this previous work on NS use of the present perfect, little research exists on L2 acquisition of the present perfect. To our knowledge, the only study to specifically address this issue is Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, and Killam (2012), which examined L2 development of these forms over the course of a seven-week intensive immersion stay in León, Spain as compared to use by NSs of the same region. Data from both learner and NS participants were elicited using a written contextualized task in which the variables time of action (one hour ago, today, one week ago, one year ago or more), telicity, anteriority (i.e., relevance to the present) and the presence of background information (i.e. contrast with the imperfect) were manipulated so that each possible combination of the categories of these variables appeared at least once. The 33 English-speaking learners completed different versions of this same task (i.e., different lexical items with the same combinations of the categories of each variable) at three different times during their stay abroad.

The 24 NSs completed the final version only. The results showed that learners began their immersion stay with rates of selection of the present perfect at 40%. This rate was higher than NSs of the same region who selected the present perfect at a rate of 30%. From the first to the second test time NNSs demonstrated no change in their rate of selection of the present perfect form. By Time 3, however, the learners showed a selection rate of 35%, indicating a decrease in the direction of the NS norm. Thus, learners actually began their stay with higher rates of selection than the target norm. Looking at the predictors of form selection, the authors found that NS selection of the present perfect was predicted exclusively by *time of action*. For events that took place an hour ago or today, the selection rate of the present perfect was near 50%. For events that took place a week ago or a year or more ago, the NS selection rate decreased to 12% and 9%, respectively. This factor was the only linguistic factor included in the predictive model for the learners at Time 3, showing further evidence of acquisition and movement toward the target norm. Nevertheless, even at Time 3, these learners had elevated rates of selection of the present perfect in events that took place one week (24%) and one year or more ago (28%). At earlier stages of development (Times 1 and 2) the linguistic factors telicity and presence of background information (Time 2 only) were predictors of selection of the present perfect, but time of action was not. Counter to expectations, however, selection of the present perfect was higher in contexts that were atelic and lacked background information. The authors claimed that this was because learners at these earlier stages were still exhibiting a one-to-one connection between the preterit and telic actions. Specifically, the acquisition of the present perfect was characterized by a move away from a one-to-one association between the preterit and telic contexts toward a tendency to use the present perfect for actions that took place more recently than a week ago. Given the connection between geographic location and norms of use demonstrated in the L1 sociolinguistic research, the current study seeks to confirm these results for Spain and extend them to Mexico in order to examine whether the rates or predictors of use differ for our learners across SA locations. In considering the possible role of geographic variation in our comparison of Peninsular and Mexican Spanish, we would expect that, if sensitive to the regional variety, our learners in Spain would demonstrate greater use of present perfect forms than learners in Mexico, particularly in hodiernal contexts.

4. The current study

The goal of the current study is to track the development of the present perfect in past-time contexts over the course of a seven-week immersion experience and to assess this development in light of NS data that were collected to establish a local comparison group for each group of learners. In order to accomplish this goal, we seek to answer the following research question:

1. For the choice between the present perfect and preterit forms:
 - a. What is the frequency of selection of the present perfect for learners before and after participation in an immersion setting in San Luis Potosí, Mexico or in Valencia, Spain?
 - b. What linguistic variables predict selection of the present perfect at each test time?
 - c. How do the learners in Mexico and Spain differ in terms of frequencies of selection and linguistic predictors?
 - d. How do the learners in each study abroad site compare with NSs of that region?

4.1. Participants

A total of 64 participants completed the current study. The first participant group consisted of 46 NNSs of Spanish (L1 English), all of whom were high school students in their final year of study, participating in a seven-week intensive immersion program abroad. Of these 46 students, 33 were females and 13 were males. Their average age was approximately 17 years. 22 of these students participated in a program based in San Luis Potosí, Mexico (17 females, 5 males) and the other 24 in Valencia, Spain (16 females, 8 males). As part of their immersion program, students in both countries attended culture, grammar, literature, and conversation classes five days per week, as well as a

pronunciation course four times per week. All classes were conducted in Spanish and taught by both NSs and NNSs of Spanish. In addition, all students lived and interacted with host families of each particular speech community. Each student signed a 'no English commitment' prohibiting the use of English from the moment they entered the country until the day of their flight home. Any student who broke the rule was subject to immediate expulsion from the program. None of the students in the current study were sent home.

The second participant group was comprised of 18 NSs of Spanish, all native-born members of the two speech communities in which our NNSs were residing. Ten NSs were from San Luis Potosí, Mexico and eight were from Valencia, Spain. The level of education and ages of the NSs varied. Table 1 summarizes the backgrounds of all participants.

Table 1. Participant groups of the current study

<i>Group</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>NNS Mex</i>	17 (fem.) / 5 (male) total = 22	(<i>m</i> =16.9)	All high school students, with an L1 of English.
<i>NNS Spain</i>	16 (fem.) / 8 (male) total = 24	(<i>m</i> =16.8)	All high school students, with an L1 of English.
<i>NS Mex</i>	3 (fem.) / 7 (male) total = 10	(<i>m</i> =31.3)	All born in San Luis Potosí or lived majority of life in region. All have at least a secondary level education.
<i>NS Spain</i>	6 (fem.) / 2 (male) total = 8	(<i>m</i> =32.4)	All born in Valencia or lived majority of life in region. All have at least a secondary level education.

4.2. Data elicitation

Each participant completed two tasks, a background questionnaire, which elicited the information summarized in the preceding section, and a contextualized questionnaire which targeted the present perfect / preterit distinction. The NNSs completed the latter task two times: (1) within the first week of their arrival in the target community and (2) in the week prior to their departure. The NSs completed the tasks only once.

The 16-item contextualized questionnaire presented participants with contextualized stories followed by two sentences that differed only in the verb form included (i.e., the preterit or present perfect). Rather than being required to make a forced choice, participants were asked to select the form they preferred or to indicate an equal preference for both structures in a third option, *both* (i.e., *A and B*). An example from the contextualized questionnaire follows.

Mario le comenta a José Luis que se ve muy cansado.

A. José Luis: Anoche, me levanté varias veces durante la noche.

B. José Luis: Anoche, me he levantado varias veces durante la noche.

___ Prefiero la frase A ___ Prefiero la frase B ___ Prefiero A y B

The variables manipulated in the contextualized questionnaire were chosen based on the findings of previous research on both native and non-native use of preterit and present perfect forms. We included the variables time of action, telicity, and repetition of the event and these are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of coding scheme with present perfect examples

Variable	Categories	Example	Criterion
Time of action	[today] [yesterday] [before yesterday] [undetermined]	<i>He tomado un café esta mañana.</i> <i>He tomado un café ayer.</i> <i>He tomado un café la semana pasada.</i> <i>He tomado un café.</i>	When did the predicate occur?
Telicity	[- telic] [+ telic]	<i>He caminado.</i> <i>He caminado cinco millas.</i>	Does the predicate have specifiable endpoints?
Repetition	[+ repetition] [- repetition]	<i>Juan ha visitado Italia muchas veces.</i> <i>Juan ha visitado Italia.</i>	Does the predicate have a repetition of events?

5. Results

We first present the overall distribution of selection of preterit and present perfect forms by both NSs and NNSs (times 1 and 2) from each region. Next, we provide results for each participant group obtained from individual regression analyses conducted with the statistical package GoldVarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005), a program which evaluates how the independent (linguistic/extra-linguistic) variables interact with the dependent variable. The regression analysis used in this program measures the probabilistic weight of each independent variable in relation to the application value (in our case: the present perfect). A weight above .5 indicates that the particular factor in question favors the selected application value, while a weight below .5 indicates a disfavoring effect. The individual analysis of each group for each factor can be found in the appendix.

5.1. Frequency and predictors of use: preterit / present perfect forms in Spain and Mexico

We begin our analysis with the overall distribution of the selection of preterit / present perfect forms collected with the contextualized questionnaire for each participant group in our study: NSs from Mexico, NSs from Spain, and NNSs residing in these regions over a seven-week period. For the NNS group we present results from the contextualized questionnaire at the beginning and end of their stay abroad (i.e., Times 1 and 2). Tables 3 and 4 provide the token count and the percentage of the total tokens for the three response options, a verb form in the preterit, in the present perfect or both. The results from Mexico for NSs and NNSs are summarized in Table 3 and the results for Spain are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. Distribution of preterit / present perfect forms for NSs and NNSs in Mexico

MEXICO	NNS Time 1		NNS Time 2		NS	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Preterit</i>	203	63.6	204	64.2	113	71.5
<i>Pres. perfect</i>	78	24.5	102	32.1	35	22.0
<i>Both</i>	38	11.9	12	3.8	10	6.3
Total	319	100	318	100	158	100

Table 4. Distribution of preterit / present perfect forms for NSs and NNSs in Spain

SPAIN	NNS Time 1		NNS Time 2		NS	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Preterit</i>	147	38.4	128	33.5	74	57.8
<i>Pres. perfect</i>	126	32.9	161	42.1	53	41.4
<i>Both</i>	110	28.7	93	24.3	1	0.8
Total	383	100	382	100	128	100

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate differences between the NSs of Spain and Mexico, as well as some change from Time 1 to Time 2 by the NNSs residing in these speech communities. The NSs from Mexico show a ratio of selection of preterit and present perfect forms different from their NS counterparts from Spain. Most notably, the NSs from Spain selected the present perfect form at a rate of 41.4%, while the NSs from Mexico showed a preference for the same form only 22.0% of the time. This is in line with previous studies analyzing NS use of present perfect / preterit forms in these regions. Howe (2006) used a written sentence judgment task to document dialect differences between Spain (Madrid and Valencia) and Peru (Cusco). The frequencies reported in his study for Valencia are similar to the NS participants in our study; Howe observed the following distribution: present perfect 47.5%, preterit 45.4%, and present perfect / preterit 7.1%. Similarly, Schwenter and Torres Cacoullous (2008), using the variationist comparative method with data from oral corpora, found a greater token frequency of the present perfect relative to the preterit in Spain (54% present perfect) as compared to Mexico (15% present perfect). The data from the current study corroborate their findings with the implementation of a different elicitation instrument and extend this generalization to distinct regions of Spain and Mexico from those analyzed in their study.

Regarding the distribution of NNS preterit / present perfect forms, we observe that in both regions, learners increased their overall selection of the present perfect from Time 1 to Time 2. The difference between the learners lies in the observation that for the NNSs in Spain the increase from Time 1 to 2 aligns them with NS selection rates from the same region, while the NNSs in Mexico increase their selection of the present perfect to a rate greater than NSs from the same region. Geeslin, García-Amaya, Hasler-Barker, Henriksen, and Killam (2012) found the opposite trend in that the learners in their study decreased their selection of the present perfect form over the course of their immersion period in León. One notes, however, that in both studies the NNSs were moving toward the NS norm. Thus, this difference could be related to the nature of the task itself given that the written contextualized questionnaires used in both studies were constructed with two of the same variables (time of action and telicity) but also differed in that the earlier study also contained the variables background information and relevance to the current moment, whereas the current study included the variable repetition and, thus, each instrument presented participants with different contexts. Additionally, the participants in both studies resided in distinct regions of Spain.

Table 5 summarizes the results of six separate regression analyses (see appendix for additional details of these tests). Each regression examines the degree to which the linguistic factors in the current study predict the selection of the present perfect form. The number shown in each cell of the table is the factor weight taken from the best binomial stepping up and down regression.

Table 5. GoldVarb X results for prediction of present perfect for NSs and NNSs in Spain and Mexico.

Groups and Factors		NSs	Mexico	Learners	NSs	Spain	Learners
		Mexico	Time 1	Time 2	Spain	Time 1	Time 2
Temporal Reference	<i>Hodiernal (Today)</i>	.38	.58	.41	.96	[.59]*	.60
	<i>Yesterday</i>	.30	.30	.36	.05	[.41]	.35
	<i>Before Yesterday</i>	.61	.47	.53	.14	[.50]	.42
	<i>Undetermined</i>	.75	.66	.70	.82	[.51]	.63
	Range	45	36	29	91	--	28
Lexical-Aspect	<i>Telic</i>	[.58]	[.55]	[.55]	.69	[.50]	[.51]
	<i>Non-telic</i>	[.43]	[.45]	[.45]	.31	[.50]	[.49]
	Range	--	--	--	38	--	--
Adverb	<i>Frequentative</i>	[.56]	[.55]	.61	[.52]	[.54]	[.54]
	<i>Non-freq.</i>	[.44]	[.48]	.39	[.48]	[.46]	[.47]
	Range	--	--	22	--	--	--

Note: *[] bracketed numbers indicate that the factor was not selected as significant in the regression.

For NSs, the range¹ indicates that temporal reference is the most important factor in determining selection of the present perfect form. Within this factor group, differences between the NSs of Spain and Mexico are observable. For example, in Spain the present perfect is almost categorically selected in reference to hodiernal events (.96), while in Mexico it is strongly disfavored in that context (.38). These results are in line with the findings of Schwenter and Torres Cacoullós (2008), among other authors (see Howe, 2006), who also found the present perfect form to be used in reference to hodiernal events by speakers from Spain at a significantly higher rate than speakers from Mexico.

Turning now to the learner group studying abroad in Mexico, we see that as with NSs, at Time 1 the NNS model indicates that temporal reference is a significant factor in determining the selection of present perfect forms. However, by Time 2 their acceptance of the present perfect in hodiernal contexts is reduced in the direction of NS use. In fact, the same can be said for contexts before yesterday and undetermined contexts, as in both instances learners move toward the NS norm of the community.

The learners in Spain also demonstrate sensitivity to NS norms. While at Time 1 no factor was significant in determining their selection of the present perfect, by Time 2 the learners demonstrate sensitivity to temporal reference precisely in the direction of the NS target, as the same two contexts, hodiernal and undetermined, most strongly favor selection of the present perfect for both learners and NSs.

Finally, we observe that lexical aspect was significant for the NSs from Spain but for no other group, and that at Time 2 the learners from Mexico indicated sensitivity to adverb type while no NS group did. However, it is worth noting that while not significant for the local NSs, the movement is in the target-like direction for the learners in Mexico. To summarize, our data corroborate the findings for NSs in previous research (Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós, 2008) showing a higher selection of present perfect forms for Peninsular than Mexican Spanish, particularly in reference to hodiernal events, while also indicating that NNSs of Spanish are sensitive to the constraints on use of these forms and are capable of modifying their use in the direction of norms particular to these speech communities.

6. Discussion

It will be recalled that the current study was designed to answer several research questions that explore the contrast between the simple past and the present perfect forms in past-time contexts. The questions examined how NSs in Mexico and Spain responded to the contextualized questionnaire, how learner responses compared to these responses and how they changed over the course of the immersion period. In comparing present perfect and preterit forms, we found that NSs in Spain select the present perfect more frequently overall than the NSs in Mexico and more frequently in contexts that take place that day (hodiernal). In considering the learners in these respective regions, both groups show an increase of selection of the present perfect over time, meaning that the NNSs in Mexico are moving away from NS norms whereas the learners in Spain move toward them. Nevertheless, the predictors of this rate of selection do indicate development on the part of both groups since the NNSs in Mexico show a reduction of use of present perfect forms in hodiernal contexts whereas the predictive model for learners in Spain shows the addition of this factor is significant at Time 2 which includes a favoring effect for the present perfect form in hodiernal contexts, similar to the NSs of the community. In other words, while frequency of selection only shows movement toward the regional norm for only one group of learners, the predictors of this selection do indeed show acquisition in the direction of the regional norm for both groups. In sum, we provide evidence that learners are capable of moving in the direction of regional norms, as indicated by some of the changes in frequency of rates of selection of preterit and present perfect forms and the predictors (and/or their relative ordering) of these rates of selection. Moreover, the linguistic factors that condition the present perfect show modification in the direction of NS norms, both generally and in relation to the regional norm.

There are several factors that were not explored in the current study but which might also have a bearing on the acquisition of regional norms, which include individual differences as well as features of the learning context. Previous research has shown that the living situation of the study abroad experience as well as the quantity of interaction with native speakers are both important predictors of

¹ The range can be found by subtracting the smallest from the largest value within each significant factor group. The ranges for each group and factor are also listed in the appendix.

overall acquisition (Allen, 2010; Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; DeKeyser, 2010; Freed, 1990; Guntermann, 1995; Lam, 2000; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Given the intensity of the contact with NS of Spanish, the requirement to use only Spanish and the in-home living situation of our learners, we do not predict that these same changes will be observed during every 7-week stay abroad. In fact, we predict that longer stays abroad under less intensive conditions would be necessary to see these same developments. Likewise, there are individual factors which also influence the degree to which regional norms are adopted. These factors have to do with motivation, desire to integrate oneself into the target culture and numerous other personality factors such as introversion (see, for example, Kuriscak, 2006; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005). Such factors may identify learners who demonstrate progress with prescriptive rules in the grammar but who opt not to adopt the regional norms for individual reasons. Although little research has been done on this topic, there is one study that showed that in a group of nine learners in Spain, all but one increased dramatically in their use of the interdental fricative which is so widely associated with Spain (Willis, Geeslin, & Henriksen, 2009). The remaining learner actually decreased her use of this variant over time, despite showing an overall increase in proficiency. Thus, we note that there is tremendous ground left to cover in this regard and we do not assume that the current study is indicative of a single, unified process of acquisition but rather that additional individual factors are likely to play an important role in explaining additional variation in the dataset.

It is important to note that the current study does not provide a direct comparison to the influence of at-home study, but several inferences can be made. For example, the fact that there are differential effects of input according to the context of study abroad implies that in the at-home environment, regional norms would at least be acquired more slowly and such variability would only be acquired in cases where input comes in greater frequency from a speaker or speakers from the same regional variety. In other words, learners may also be sensitive to the variability that reflects norms of the country of origin of an instructor or a personal acquaintance who provides a large portion of the input. In contexts where input is more geographically mixed, as is the common context in most language programs in the US, where instructors hail from many different countries of origin, learners are likely only to acquire the variability that is common across speech communities, rather than that associated with a particular region. This is consistent with previous research on French by Regan, Howard, and Lemée (2009) which showed through an analysis of oral interview data that many sociolinguistic norms were only acquired by the learners who had spent one year abroad.

Finally, it is worth noting that the methodology in the current study departs from that employed in previous research on study abroad. While clearly different from the types of measurements geared toward measuring overall proficiency, such as standardized written tests or oral interviews such as the Oral Proficiency Interview, our methods are also different from work employing error analyses (e.g., Ryan & Lafford, 1992). This is because those methods were not designed to track changes in the use of sociolinguistically-variable structures such as those under examination in the current study. Nevertheless, an important part of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) is the ability to vary one's speech according to the discourse context and the characteristics of the interlocutors as well as the individual speaker. By examining the frequency of selection of a given form and the linguistic predictors of selection of that form, as is the standard in research on L2 variation in Spanish, we are able to identify changes over time and make reasonable comparisons to native targets without the need to assess accuracy. Additionally, by using a written instrument (or series of instruments) that control the discourse contexts we can elicit comparable tokens across a wide range of participant groups, making comparison to local norms more feasible. Perhaps most importantly, these methods can be easily improved as new findings are made available by integrating new factors into the instrument itself or by controlling their presence across items as they are discovered. Thus, while we note that these findings are not necessarily representative of free production for any of these groups, this controlled task is a reasonable beginning and provides a basis for future comparison to additional speech communities as well as the same speech communities on different elicitation tasks.

7. Limitations and future directions

The current study has extended research on the impact of study abroad to the second language acquisition of grammatical structures which vary by region. In so doing, it adds to both research on study abroad in general and to investigations of the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence,

regardless of the learning context. By including NS target groups from each region in our analysis we demonstrated that the input learners receive in each case is significantly different, at least in regard to simple past and present perfect forms and, thus, prescriptive measures alone would be unable to track acquisition of geographically-conditioned variation. In other words, through a design which includes two different study abroad environments, we were able to show that some changes that occur in learner grammars during a stay abroad are indeed a reflection of the local norm, rather than overall development and, thus, our learners modified their grammars in different directions (either in terms of frequency or predictors of selection of a form or both) as a result of contact with a specific, regional norm. Perhaps most importantly, our findings demonstrate that learners are indeed sensitive to regional norms and even after a short period of immersion, learners are able to modify both the frequency of selection of a given form and the linguistic predictors of that selection.

Despite these findings, there is a tremendous need for future research. Our study benefits from the use of a single task that was applied equally for NSs and NNSs across geographic regions, but future research would do well to confirm these findings using additional tasks, especially those which allow for free production of the forms under examination. Likewise, additional speech communities should be added to enhance our knowledge of how structures differ in their development during study abroad, and learners might be followed for greater periods of time. Our research would benefit from an at-home comparison group, which would further clarify the distinction between regionally-based development and developmental steps that are inherent in the process of acquiring Spanish as a second language, regardless of learning context. Finally, there are a host of additional factors, including characteristics of the learners themselves as well as of the study abroad environment and activities of the learner that have been shown to influence second language development, and these factors should also be examined in the context of variable structures. In sum, our research represents an important first step in the complex process of understanding how input impacts the acquisition of variable norms in a second language.

Appendix

Table A1: Multivariate analysis of present perfect selection, Mexico Native Speakers

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of internal and external factors selected as significant to the probability of the inclusion of <i>present perfect</i> ; factor groups not selected as significant in square brackets			
Native Speakers from Mexico			
Corrected mean (input)			.26
Log likelihood			-84.762
Total N			158
	Factor weight	% (pr. perfect allowed)	N
FG1: Temporal Reference			
Undetermined	.75	51	20/30
Before Yesterday	.61	35	14/40
Today	.38	15	6/40
Yesterday	.30	13	5/39
Range	45		
FG2: Lexical Aspect			
Telic	[.58]	35	27/78
Non-telic	[.43]	23	18/80
FG3: Adverb			
Frequentative	[.56]	33	26/78
Non-Frequentative	[.44]	24	19/80

Table A2: Multivariate analysis of present perfect selection, Mexico Learners at Time 1

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of internal and external factors selected as significant to the probability of the inclusion of <i>present perfect</i> ; factor groups not selected as significant in square brackets			
Mexico Learners at Time 1			
Corrected mean (input)			.35
Log likelihood			-198.819
Total N			319
	Factor weight	% (pr. perfect allowed)	N
FG1: Temporal Reference			
Undetermined	.66	51	41/80
Today	.58	43	34/80
Before Yesterday	.47	33	26/80
Yesterday	.30	19	15/79
Range	.36		
FG2: Lexical Aspect			
Telic	[.55]	41	65/160
Non-telic	[.45]	32	51/159
FG3: Adverb			
Frequentative	[.55]	41	66/160
Non-Frequentative	[.48]	31	50/159

Table A3: Multivariate analysis of present perfect selection, Mexico Learners at Time 2

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of internal and external factors selected as significant to the probability of the inclusion of <i>present perfect</i> ; factor groups not selected as significant in square brackets			
Mexico Learners at Time 2			
Corrected mean (input)			.34
Log likelihood			-191.101
Total N			318
	Factor weight	% (pr. perfect allowed)	N
FG1: Temporal Reference			
Undetermined	.70	54	43/79
Before Yesterday	.53	38	30/79
Today	.41	28	22/80
Yesterday	.36	24	19/80
Range	.34		
FG3: Adverb			
Frequentative	.61	45	72/159
Non-Frequentative	.39	26	42/159
Range	.22		
FG2: Lexical Aspect			
Telic	[.55]	40	64/160
Non-telic	[.45]	32	50/158

Table A4: Multivariate analysis of present perfect selection, Spain Native Speakers

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of internal and external factors selected as significant to the probability of the inclusion of <i>present perfect</i> ; factor groups not selected as significant in square brackets			
Native Speakers from Spain			
Corrected mean (input)			.32
Log likelihood			-41.084
Total N			128
	Factor weight	% (pr. perfect allowed)	N
FG1: Temporal Reference			
Today	.96	91	29/32
Undetermined	.82	66	21/32
Before Yesterday	.14	9	3/32
Yesterday	.05	3	1/32
Range	.91		
FG2: Lexical Aspect			
Telic	.69	50	32/64
Non-telic	.31	34	22/64
Range	.38		
FG3: Adverb			
Frequentative	[.52]	44	28/64
Non-Frequentative	[.48]	41	26/64

Table A5: Multivariate analysis of present perfect selection, Spain Learners at Time 1

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of internal and external factors selected as significant to the probability of the inclusion of <i>present perfect</i> ; factor groups not selected as significant in square brackets			
Spain Learners at Time 1			
Corrected mean (input)			.61
Log likelihood			-255.040
Total N			383
	Factor weight	% (pr. perfect allowed)	N
FG1: Temporal Reference			
Today	[.58]	70	66/95
Undetermined	[.51]	63	60/96
Before Yesterday	[.50]	62	59/96
Yesterday	[.41]	53	51/96
FG2: Lexical Aspect			
Telic	[.50]	62	119/192
Non-telic	[.50]	61	117/191
FG3: Adverb			
Frequentative	[.54]	66	126/192
Non-Frequentative	[.46]	58	110/191

Table A6: Multivariate analysis of present perfect selection, Spain Learners at Time 2

Multivariate analyses of the contribution of internal and external factors selected as significant to the probability of the inclusion of <i>present perfect</i> ; factor groups not selected as significant in square brackets			
Spain Learners at Time 2			
Corrected mean (input)			.67
Log likelihood			-233.575
Total N			382
	Factor weight	% (pr. perfect allowed)	N
FG1: Temporal Reference			
Undetermined	.63	78	75/96
Today	.60	76	72/95
Before Yesterday	.42	59	57/96
Yesterday	.35	53	50/95
Range	.28		
FG2: Lexical Aspect			
Telic	[.51]	67	129/192
Non-telic	[.49]	66	125/190
FG3: Adverb			
Frequentative	[.54]	70	133/191
Non-Frequentative	[.47]	63	121/191

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