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### چکیده

این مقاله نقش وجه فعل در زبان انگلیسی در فراگیری فراگیری زمان فعل را توسط ۴۵ نفر فارسی زبان مورد مطالعه قرار می دهد و در مورد فرضیه وجه فعل که بیان می کند بین واژه زمان گذشته و وجه فعل تکوینی ( Accomplishment & Achievement Aspects )، و واژه استمرار و وجه فعل فعالیت (Activity Aspect) همگرایی وجود دارند اما واژه استمرار با وجه فعل حالت (Stative Aspect) ارتباطی ندارد به تحقیق می پردازد .  
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## English Interlanguage of Persian Native Speakers

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### Abstract

This paper is the study of the acquisition of tense and aspect in English by 45 Persian speakers and specifically investigates the Primacy of Aspect hypothesis that claims there is: (1) an association of past/perfective morpheme with achievement and accomplishment verbs (2) progressive morpheme with activity verbs and (3) no overextension of progressive inflection to stative verbs. The study also considers the syntactic implications of the data for the 'initial state' hypotheses in present data.

**Keyword:** Persian Speakers English acquisition tense and aspect

### BACKGROUND

The main question regarding the syntax-lexical semantic interface is whether there exists an association between lexical properties of predicates and the syntactic structure in which they can appear. Why should such a correlation be proposed to exist? One good reason is that a strong correlation between meaning and structure might explain the rapidity of language acquisition; language learners need not learn syntactic structures of verbs on an item-by-item basis, but rather, they make generalizations on the basis of regular correlation, while the syntax-lexicon interface can be described according to several different approaches<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> **Lexical-entry driven approaches vs. Predicate-based approaches**

The lexical-entry driven approaches assume that the syntax of verbs is projected from

### **Projection of Arguments in English**

In what follows, I follow a model of the interface, which is based on the model proposed by Borer (1994). Borer was the first to suggest that arguments have no thematic labels, but rather, are interpreted semantically in specifiers of aspectual projections. Arad (1996), Borer (1994), and McClure (1995) have the same position that arguments have no thematic role in themselves; rather the roles are “aspectually determined” when the arguments occur in specifiers of aspectual projections. However, Arad claims that arguments do not move out of VP to the specifiers of aspectual projections. In other words, arguments are base-generated in the Spec of aspectual projection, whereas Borer and McClure claim that arguments move out of VP to the specifiers of aspectual projections. In the present study, I have followed Arad’s model.

### **Projection of Arguments in Persian: Statives in Persian**

In Persian, most verbs are expressed as compound verbs. All simple and compound verbs that end in ‘*budan*’ ‘to be’ (e.g. *xosh’hal budan* ‘to be happy’ *bimar budan* ‘to be ill’) and ‘*dashtan*’ ‘to have’, e.g. *eteghad dashtan* ‘to believe’, *dust*

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their lexical entry, and is determined by this (e.g. Baker’s 1988 UTAH and Chomsky’s 1986 Canonical Structure). However, A predicate-based approach assumes that part of the interpretation of the clause depends on the syntax of the whole clause rather than lexical entries (Borer 1994; van Hout 1996).

#### **Thematic-based approaches vs. Event structure-based approaches**

In thematically based approaches, NP arguments are checked by being assigned a thematic role such as Agent, Causer, Experimenter, Theme, etc. by the verb. Approaches within Government and Binding (GB) belong to this type. In event structure-based approaches, the lexical information available at the interface is the event structure of the verb (Tenny 1989).

*dashtan* ‘to like’) are stative verbs. Stative verbs without ‘*budan*’ ‘to be’ and ‘*dashtan*’ ‘to have’ are expressed by the imperfective prefix *mi-*. The prefix *mi-* does not just mark stative verbs, other aspectual non-stative verbs can be expressed by the imperfective morpheme *mi-*. However, in Persian only stative verbs with the prefix *mi-* are incompatible with the progressive auxiliary ‘*dashtan*’ ‘to have’ (e.g. \**daram midanam* \*‘I’m knowing’), whereas non-stative verbs with the imperfective *mi-* are compatible with the progressive auxiliary as in (1a). Furthermore, the prefix *mi-* with stative verbs is an obligatory morpheme, whereas the morpheme *mi-* with non-stative verbs is an optional morpheme. In other words, non-stative verbs with this morpheme are in progressive form and without this morpheme are perfective (cf. 1a-b), while statives with the state prefix *mi-* are imperfective but not progressive form.

- (1) a. (man) hala arabi mi-dan-am  
I now arabic impf know -1sg  
‘I know Arabic now’
- b. (man) sale gozashteh arabi mi danest-am  
I year last arabic impf knew-1sg  
‘I knew Arabic last year’
- (2) a. (man) hala football bazi mi kon-am  
I now football play impf make-1sg  
‘I am playing football now’
- b. (man) sale gozashteh football bazi kar -d -am  
I year last football play made-perf-1sg

‘I played football last year’

Sentences 1a-b with stative verbs use the prefix *mi-* with both present and past tenses while sentences 2a-b with non-stative verbs use the morpheme *mi-* with present tense but without the prefix with past tense. While Persian obligatorily employs the stative imperfective *mi-* to distinguish the contrast of stative (3a) /non-stative (3b) aspect, English only employs perfective aspect to refer to both stative (4a) and non-stative (8b) aspect.

(3)a.Persian: (u) arabi mi-danes-t vs.b. (U)dav-id

She/he Arabic Impf-knew-3 SG She/he ran-pref

(4)a. English: He knew Arabic. vs. b. He ran

To sum up, the prefix *mi-* with non-stative verbs is either a tense or grammatical aspect marker, whereas the prefix *mi-* with statives is an inherent aspectual marker.

Superficially viewed, the prediction for the L2 acquisition of English is that the lower level Persian learners will associate the stative verbs (marked with the imperfective prefix *mi-*) with the English imperfective form, i.e., -ING, while the higher level learners will no longer associate the progressive -ING form with English stative verbs, because English stative verbs are not compatible with the imperfective<sup>3</sup> form -ING. The question that arises is why the lower level learners would transfer their L1 imperfective form into the target language,

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<sup>3</sup> There exist some English marked stative verbs which are compatible with the imperfective -ING form such as *enjoying* and *looking well*. The English unmarked stative verbs such as *know*, *believe*, and *see* are incompatible with the -ING form, while all Persian stative verbs without ‘*budan*’ ‘to be’ and ‘*dashtan*’ ‘to have’ (such as ‘know’ and ‘desire’) are compatible with the imperfective aspectual marker ‘*mi-*’.

while the higher level learners would not? The reason would be that lower level learners have not received much input yet and would rely on their L1-language. However, the transfer of aspectual markers has to be compatible with the universal aspectual entailment of stative aspect if POA is involved. In English, the attachment of the imperfective marker -ING gives progressive interpretation to verbs, thus the English stative verbs are not compatible with the imperfective marker -ING. However, in Persian the use of the imperfective stative marker *mi-* does not give progressive interpretation to stative verbs. Therefore, the use of the imperfective marker -ING with stative verbs in English violates a universal entailment of stative verbs. The expectation is actually that even the lower level learners will not use the English imperfective marker with stative verbs. Therefore, it could be quite interesting to mention that L1 Persian-L2 English provides an interesting test for the POA: if the POA is correct, we would predict that there will be no influence of L1 inherent aspect markers on the L2. If, however, there is L1 influence in the early stages as predicted by initial state hypotheses like 'Full Transfer/Full Access' there is every reason to predict that Persian speakers will map -ING onto stative verbs, as a stative marker, just as in Persian.

#### **Activities in Persian**

Activities are homogenous like statives, but different in that they have a structure composed of successive stages. An activity or a process has no goal or natural final point. Since activity verbs or predicates have *time 1* (onset time) without *time 2* (end-point). In spoken Persian, activity verbs are

accompanied with the grammatical aspect *mi-* and the progressive marker ‘*dashtan*’.

- (5) *Vaghti man amad-am u dasht mi-david*  
When I came she/he had Impf-ran  
When I came she/he was running

### **Accomplishment and Achievement Aspects in Persian**

In Persian the form of the direct object determines whether a predicate is an accomplishment or activity aspect (Ghomeshi & Massam 1994). The predicates with the direct object markers ‘-*ra*’, ‘-*I*’, or ‘*I-ra*’ indicate that the direct object is definite, indefinite, or indefinite but specific and referential, respectively, whereas a direct object without these markers shows that the NP is non-referential and forms a unit with the verb. In Persian, direct objects with NP markers form accomplishment (6a) or achievement, while the direct objects of accomplishment verbs without NP markers form activity aspect (6b). In Persian all accomplishments can be shifted into activities (6).

(6)a. English: I wrote the book. vs. Persian: (man) *ketab-ra nevesht-am*.

I book-def wrote:pf-1 SG

I wrote the book

b. English: \*I was book writing. vs. Persian: (man) *ke'tab nevesht-am*

I did book writing

English employs definite or indefinite articles with direct objects, but there are few compounds in English for which NP + V forms a unit, e.g. ‘food shopping’.

The distinction between the NPs with and without the direct

object markers '-ra', '-I', or 'I-ra' is semantically and syntactically realised. From the semantic point of view, the NPs without the direct object markers do not bound or measure out the action described by the accomplishment verb, whereas the NPs with the direct object markers measure out the action described by the verb.

However when we look at transitive achievements without the direct object markers '-ra', '-I', and 'I-ra', we find they do not shift into atelic activity unlike accomplishments. Achievements without a direct object marker as in (7b) are incompatible with atelic adverbials, but are still compatible with telic adverbial as in (7a):

- (7) a. (man) dar yek daghighah li'van shekast-am  
I in a minute glass broke-1sg  
'I was glass breaking in a minute.'  
b. \*(man) baraye yek daghighah li'van shekast-am  
I for a minute glass broke-1sg  
'I was glass breaking for a minute.'

The distinction between the fourth type and the first three types of Persian NPs is also syntactically realised. In the fourth type of NP (accomplishments without NP markers), the NP is not aspectually a measurer and forms a unit with accomplishment verbs.

Through the absence of direct object markers, accomplishments in Persian can be switched to activity, whereas achievements cannot. While there are a few compounds in English for which NP + V forms a unit (e.g. food shopping), in Persian shifting accomplishments into atelic events is productive.

The question which arises is whether the above hypothesis



poses any potential problem for the POA. Suppose the data show that the lower level learners would shift accomplishments into activities. In this case, the learners still follow universal entailment of aspect. The data would also have some important implications for initial state hypotheses like 'Minimal Trees Hypothesis' that the lower level Persian speakers do not transfer the functional categories of direct object markers but they would transfer the lexical categories of accomplishments into activities.

#### **Ramifications of Aspect: Semantic evidence of POA hypothesis: Research Hypotheses**

An important part of this study is to test the Primacy of Aspect (POA) Hypothesis which claims verbal morphemes initially mark lexical aspect among lower-level learners before coming to mark tense among higher-level learners (Robison 1995 among others). In other words, the studies which have already been done for English indicate more or less that statives align with present form (i.e. -S), activities with progressive form (i.e. -ING), and telic events (i.e. achievement and accomplishment aspect) with past form (i.e. PAST), regardless of correct Target Time form among lower level learners, while verbal morphemes are used as correct Target Time markers among higher level learners.

So far the Research Hypotheses of the semantics of aspect have been explained. In the following section, the syntactic evidence of aspect will be discussed.

#### **Syntactic Ramifications of POA Hypothesis: Research Hypotheses**

With respect to acquisition of tense and aspect in L1 and L2,

one topic considered in this study is the issue of L2 initial state. L2 initial state which has been addressed in recent studies refers to the starting point in L2 acquisition (e.g. Schwartz & Sprouse 1996; Eubank 1993/94, 1996; Vainika & Young-Scholten 1996a, 1996b). Within the framework of generative L2 acquisition research there are mainly three recent hypotheses that specifically address this research topic. Full Transfer/Full Access hypothesis of Schwartz & Sprouse (1996), which is based on the Strong Continuity hypothesis argue that learners' grammars have the same clausal structure as adult native speakers' grammars (e.g. Boser, Lust, Santelmann & Whitman 1992; Hyams 1992; Pierce 1992; Pinker 1984). The main idea is that early grammars are represented by a full CP projection, that is, all functional projections are present from the beginning. Eubank (1993/94, 1996) also follows the Strong Continuity approach. He hypothesizes that although both lexical and functional categories transfer, the 'strength' values of morphological features under functional heads does not transfer. Eubank's idea is that since overt inflectional morphology does not transfer, neither do the parametric values of features that are determined by this morphology. Following the 'Weak Continuity Approach', Vainikka & Young-Scholten (e.g. 1994, 1996a), however, argue that the underlying prediction is that while learners starts off with a grammar containing only lexical categories, functional categories follow a developmental sequence in which the VP is acquired first,

followed by IP which is in turn followed by CP<sup>4</sup>.

POA suggests that there may be some evidence for the IP system at least in terms of subject-verb agreement of the present tense -S and the tense marker PAST at the early stages of language acquisition. For example, Shirai (1991) investigated the acquisition of verbal morphology by three American children whose ages ranged from 1;6 to 4;10 acquiring English as an L1. He reported that while the children use verbal morphemes to mark inherent aspect (e.g. the biased association of achievement with past form PAST), their use of infinitives (or bare verb form) was frequently observed. I suggest that these associations of verbal forms which co-occur with the use of the infinitive form be semantically in accordance with the universal entailment of aspect and syntactically in accordance with the aspectual projections, rather than evidence of IP. These verbal forms involve projections lower than the IP system, which are checked by the aspectual projections or measurer (the theme) and originator (the agent). To support this claim, any study would also have to show that functional verbal elements including modals, auxiliaries with correct Target Time are more frequent in higher groups when the association of verbal morphemes with aspect is more frequent with lower

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<sup>4</sup> In Radford's (1990) view, early grammars are entirely lexical in nature and functional categories such as IP and CP mature later during the course of acquisition. In support of his claim that there is no INFL system in early grammar, Radford presents data from child English. He observes that children's utterances with infinitival complements of verbs such as *want* do not contain the infinitival marker *to*, as shown in the following examples.

(1) Want [VP mummy [V come]].

(2) Want [VP teddy [V drink]].

(Radford, 1990: 140)

groups.

### **Acquisition of Tense and Aspect in Second Language Acquisition**

Most studies on the second language acquisition of tense and aspect are of English and these data generally support for the POA, that (a) past morphology is associated with achievement or accomplishment verbs (Cushing 1987; Economides 1985; Flashner 1982) and (b) *-ING* is strongly associated with activity verbs (Cushing 1987; Economides 1985; Kumpf 1982). For instance, Robison (1995) analysed English interviews with 26 Puerto Rican university students grouped into four proficiency levels and found an association of verbal inflections with lexical aspect in lower-level groups, while verbal inflections associated with tense in higher-level groups.

### **Participants**

A cross-sectional study using three tasks was conducted involving 45 Persian learners aged 9 to 13 years old at the time of testing at three levels of proficiency from beginning to lower advanced. In order to examine the POA, the learners' English proficiency levels had to be measured to provide an independent means of categorising learners as lower level vs. higher level. The Edinburgh Reading English Test (ERET) was chosen to measure the ESL subjects' proficiency in English. It is constructed to measure learners' general progress in English. On the basis of their scores, the 45 subjects were divided into three groups, with 15 subjects for each group: low, mid, and high-level groups. The low, mid, and high scored about one-third, two-thirds, and higher than two-thirds

of the total score, respectively. Since part of this study aims to check the informants' interlanguage of English Target Times such as present, present perfect, past, past perfect, future, and future perfect tenses against English native speakers, a control group of 15 English Native Speakers (NES) was also given all three tasks. The age range of the control group was between 9 to 12 years old.

#### **The Study: Re-telling Task**

A story Re-Telling Task (RT) was used to elicit the L2 learners' and NES' spontaneous performance regarding tense and aspect. I chose the cartoon film Robin Hood because it contains a lot of actions and situations to prompt the subjects to use different aspectual verbs. In previous studies on the acquisition of tense/aspect, the subjects were usually interviewed to describe what they had done in order to prompt them to refer to past Time. However, the present and future Target Times had not been tackled. The only study that is cited to refer to all Target Times, i.e. present, past, and future Target Times, was carried out by Robison (1995). However, his 26 adult Spanish learners of English produced more utterances to refer to 'past time' than 'present or future time'. In this way, the learners usually refer to 'past time' to describe what had happened to them, while present and future Target Times were usually left with few utterances. However, in the present study, the subjects' use of the Target Times, i.e. past, present and future Times was balanced by how the task was constructed. The subjects watched the film without sound. They were allowed to watch one segment of the film, but then it was stopped and they had to describe what had

happened. This shifted them to past Time. Then, while they were watching the next segment of the film, they had to describe what was happening right then. This shifted them to present Time. Finally the cartoon was switched off again and they were asked to guess what would happen next. This shifted them to future time. All responses were (audio) tape-recorded.

### **Results and Discussion**

To begin with, the data show that the early use of verbal morphology is semantically governed by inherent aspect for the lower-level groups, while the later use of verbal morphology comes to be governed by Target Time reference for the higher-level Persian Speakers (PS) and NES. Furthermore, the data also support the proposal that the lower-level learners' use of verbal morphemes can be described as being syntactically governed by aspectual projections, rather than IP.

### **Overall Association of Verbal Morphemes with Verb Type across the Groups**

Table 1 shows the detailed results of token analyses for the RT, that is, the biased concentration of verbal morphemes such as -S, -ING and PAST, etc with stative, activity, achievement, and accomplishment for Target Time Present. By Target Time Present I mean the tenses which could refer to Present Time in a narrative talk. For this purpose tenses such as simple present, present progressive, present perfect and present tense modals, e.g. may, can, etc were classified as Present Time. Groups are presented from low-level to high-level as well as NES. The results indicate that the overall chi-

square ( $X^2$ ) of the association of verbal morphemes and verb type for Target Time Present is significant for the low, mid-level groups ( $X^2$  (15, N = 156) = 80.55,  $P < .0001$ ) and ( $X^2$  (27, N = 269) = 142.72,  $P < .0001$ ), while the overall chi-square results were not significant for the high group and NES ( $X^2$  (21, N = 313) = 29.76,  $P > .05$  and  $X^2$  (27, N = 314) = 31.72,  $P > .05$ ) respectively:

- (8) The king *wants see*<sup>5</sup> the Robin Hood... .  
 (9) He *is* a soldier of king he's keep their money.  
 (10) The cat *likes* take the money and the snake take the money.  
 (11) Robin Hood say do nothing and *sees* picture there and... .

Table 1. Distribution of verbal morphemes across lexical aspect categories: verb token counts and percentage: Target Time Present

<u>lexical aspect categories</u>					<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				
Low Level	St.	Act.	Ach.	Accom	Mid Level	St.	Ac	.Ach	Accom
(n=15)					(n=15)				
Verbal	M.	Count (%)			Verbal	M.	Count (%)		
PAST	3(9.7)	2(8.3)	23(39.7)	5(11.6)	PAST	12(24.5)	2(4.2)	38(37.3)	7(10.0)
-ING	1(3.2)	11(45.8)	2(3.4)	12(27.9)	-ING	0(0.0)	6(12.5)	4(3.9)	9(12.9)
-S	14(45.2)	0(0.0)	3(5.2)	4(9.3)	-S	29(59.2)	2(4.2)	13(12.7)	8(11.4)
Bare Verb	12(38.7)	5(20.8)	24(41.4)	17(39.5)	Bare Verb	7(14.3)	11(22.9)	28(27.5)	22(31.4)
Target T.1	3(3.2)	6(25)	6(10.3)	5(11.7)	Target T.0	0(0.0)	26(54.1)	19(14.7)	24(34.3)
$X^2$ (15, N = 156) = 80.55, $P < .0001$					$X^2$ (27, N=269) = 142.72, $P < .0001$				

<u>lexical aspect categories</u>					<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				
High Level	St.	Act.	Ach.	Accom	NES	St.	Act.	Ach.	Accom
(n=15)					(n=15)				
Verbal	M.	Coun (%)			Verbal	M.	Count (%)		
PAST	12(28.60)	10(13.9)	25(20.3)	13(17.1)	PAST	5(13.2)	7(9.0)	20(15.3)	8(11.9)
-ING	1(2.4)	4(5.6)	4(3.3)	2(2.6)	-ING	0(0.0)	3(3.8)	1(.8)	4(6.0)
-S	18(42.9)	18(25.0)	40(32.5)	22(28.9)	-S	4(36.8)	2(21.)	10(23.7)	5(20.9)

<sup>5</sup> For Radford, while the adult form of the complements in (2) requires an IP headed by an INFL element *to*, the child uses a simple VP (see footnote 3).

Bare Verb 7(7.1) 11(19.4) 28(14.6) 22(14.5) Bare Verb 4(10.5) 2(2.6) 10(7.5)(7.5)  
 Target T.8(19.0) 26(16.10)36(29.3)28(36.9)Target T 8(29.5)26(42.6)36(47.4)28(53.7)  
 $X^2(21, N = 313) = 29.76, P > .05$   $X^2(27, N = 314) = 31.72, P > .05$

St.=stative, Act=activity, Ach=achievement, Accom=accomplishment, Verbal  
 M.=Verbal Morphemes, PAST=past form of verb, -ING= verb+ing without auxiliary  
 'be', -S= present form of verb third person singular, Target T= Target Time,  
 NES=native English speakers

Part of the RT task was to ask the learners to watch one segment of an episode of the film and then describe what has happened. They were channeled to refer to past time. In a narrative Target Time PAST, one may use simple past, past progressive, past perfect, and past modals. These tenses were grouped as Target Time PAST. Table 2 shows the overall association between aspect types and verbal morphemes for low, mid, high groups and NES as well. The overall chi-square results were significant for the low and mid group ( $P < .00001$ ) but those of high and NES were not significant ( $P > .05$ ):

(12) He put out her money and *stole* it and...

(13) This is father and this father and this is the friend of father and Robin Hood *gave* him...

Table 2. Distribution of verbal morphemes across lexical aspect categories: verb token counts and percentage: Target Time Past

<u>lexical aspect categories</u>					<u>lexical aspect categories</u>						
Low Level	St.	Act.	Ach.	Accom	Mid Level	St.	Act.	Ach.	Accom		
(n=15)					(n=15)						
Verbal	M.	Count	(%)		Verbal	M.	Count	(%)			
PAST	9	(23.7)	2(9.1)	17(44.7)	9(29.0)	PAST	18	(39.1)	5(26.3)	27(49.1)	21(42.9)
-ING	0	(0.0)	7(31.8)	1(2.6)	8(25.8)	-ING	1	(2.2)	3(15.8)	0(0.0)	2(4.1)



<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				<u>lexical aspect categories</u>			
High Level	St. Act.	Ach. Accom		NES	St. Act.	Ach. Accom	
(n=15)				(n=15)			
Verbal	M. Count	(%)		Verbal	M. Count	(%)	
-S	19(50.0)	0(0)	5(13.2)	0(0)	-S	14(30.4)	4(21.1)
Bare V.	9(23.7)	5(22.7)	13(34.2)	13(41.9)	Bare V.	12(26.1)	2(10.5)
Target T.	1(2.6)	8(36.3)	2(5.3)	1(3.2)	Target T.	1(2.2)	5(26.3)
$X^2(18, N = 129) = 88.76, P < .00001$				$X^2(18, N = 129) = 51.27, P < .00001$			

PAST	26(72.2)	16(44.4)	37(69.8)	33(58.9)	PAST	11(44.0)	10(40.0)	21(47.7)	24(61.5)
-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
-S	4(11.1)	6(16.7)	4(7.5)	6(10.7)	-S	8(32.0)	4(16.0)	8(18.2)	51(2.8)
Bare V.	1(2.8)	5(13.9)	4(7.5)	7(12.5)	Bare V.	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(4.5)	2(5.1)
Target T.	5(13.9)	9(25.0)	8(15.3)	10(17.9)	Target T.	3(12.0)	4(16.0)	5(11.3)	3(10.3)
$X^2(18, N = 181) = 23.26, P > .05$					$X^2(18, N = 181) = 23.26, P > .05$				

Table 3. Distribution of verbal morphemes across lexical aspect categories: verb token counts and percentage: Target Time Past

<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				<u>lexical aspect categories</u>			
Low Level	St. Act.	Ach. Accom		Mid Level	St. Act.	Ach. Accom	
(n=15)				(n=15)			
Verbal	M. Count	(%)		Verbal	M. Count	(%)	
PAST	9(23.7)	2(9.1)	17(44.7)	9(29.0)	PAST	18(39.1)	5(26.3)
-ING	0(0.0)	7(31.8)	1(2.6)	8(25.8)	-ING	1(2.2)	3(15.8)
-S	19(50.0)	0(0)	5(13.2)	0(0)	-S	14(30.4)	4(21.1)
Bare V.	9(23.7)	5(22.7)	13(34.2)	13(41.9)	Bare V.	12(26.1)	2(10.5)
Target T.	1(2.6)	8(36.3)	2(5.3)	1(3.2)	Target T.	1(2.2)	5(26.3)
$X^2(18, N = 129) = 88.76, P < .00001$				$X^2(18, N = 129) = 51.27, P < .00001$			
<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				<u>lexical aspect categories</u>			
High Level	St. Act.	Ach. Accom		NES	St. Act.	Ach. Accom	
(n=15)				(n=15)			
Verbal	M. Count	(%)		Verbal	M. Count	(%)	
PAST	26(72.2)	16(44.4)	37(69.8)	33(58.9)	PAST	11(44.0)	10(40.0)
-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
-S	4(11.1)	6(16.7)	4(7.5)	6(10.7)	-S	8(32.0)	4(16.0)
Bare V.	1(2.8)	5(13.9)	4(7.5)	7(12.5)	Bare V.	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Target T.	5(13.9)	9(25.0)	8(15.3)	10(17.9)	Target T.	3(12.0)	4(16.0)
$X^2(18, N = 181) = 23.26, P > .05$				$X^2(18, N = 181) = 23.26, P > .05$			

Association of verbal morphemes and aspect types across groups for Target Time future is reported in Table 4. Contrary to other Target Times, the overall association was just significant for low-level group ( $P < .0001$ ), while those of mid, high, and NES were not significant ( $P > .05$ ).

Table 4. Distribution of verbal morphemes across lexical aspect categories: verb token counts and percentage: Target Time Future

<u>lexical aspect categories</u>					<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				
Low Level St. Act. Ach. Accom					Mid Level St. Act. Ach. Accom				
(n=15)					(n=15)				
<u>Verbal</u>	<u>M.</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>(%)</u>		<u>Verbal</u>	<u>M.</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>(%)</u>	
PAST	3(13.0)	1(10.0)	14(36.8)	5(22.7)	PAST	8(50.0)	2(16.7)	17(38.6)	4(11.1)
-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(13.6)	-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(2.3)	6(16.7)
-S	14(60.9)	0(0.0)	4(10.5)	3(13.6)	-S	4(25.0)	2(16.7)	6(13.6)	8(22.2)
Bare V.	6(26.1)	4(40.0)	12(31.6)	8(36.4)	Bare V.	1(6.3)	4(33.3)	13(29.5)	8(22.2)
Target T.	0(0.0)	5(50.0)	8(20.8)	3(13.6)	Target T.	3(18.8)	4(33.3)	7(15.9)	10(27.8)
$X^2(21, N = 93) = 57.54, P < .0001$					$X^2(18, N = 108) = 34.51, P > .05$				

<u>lexical aspect categories</u>					<u>lexical aspect categories</u>				
High Level St. Act. Ach. Accom					NES St. Act. Ach. Accom				
(n=15)					(n=15)				
<u>Verbal</u>	<u>M.</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>(%)</u>		<u>Verbal</u>	<u>M.</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>(%)</u>	
PAST	2(11.0)	1(7.7)	9(23.7)	3(10.3)	PAST	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(2.8)	0(0.0)
-ING	0(0.0)	1(7.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	-ING	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
-S	10(55.6)	3(23.1)	9(23.7)	7(24.1)	-S	3(30.0)	2(22.2)	7(19.4)	2(11.8)
Bare V.	1(5.6)	2(15.4)	4(10.5)	3(10.3)	Bare V.	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(2.8)	1(5.9)
Target T.	5(27.8)	6(46.1)	16(42.1)	15(55.3)	Target T.	7(70.0)	7(77.7)	27(75.1)	14(82.4)
$X^2(21, N = 98) = 29.07, P > .05$					$X^2(27, N = 72) = 23.44, P > .05$				

### The Use of the Bare Verb

The results also show the degree of the frequency and percentage of Bare Verbs correlate with the groups. Lower level groups used Bare Verbs more frequently than higher level groups (see Tables 1-4). Chi-square test showed that the

correlation between Bare Verb and the type of aspect was not significant ( $P > .05$ ) for the groups; however, the degree of frequency for lower level groups was higher than those of higher groups.

#### **The Use of Target Time**

Tables 1-4 indicate that the subjects used verbal morphemes to mark the Target Times. The Chi-square results showed that the association between the Target Time markers and aspectual types were not significant ( $P > .05$ ) for the groups. The higher level groups however used higher frequency of Target Times markers than the lower level groups.

#### **The development of Verbal Morphemes as a marker of inherent aspect into a Target Time marker: a Semantic View**

A crucial question is, how do the higher-level learners unlearn the acquisition of aspect, i.e. the biased association of the -S, -ING and PAST with aspectual verbs (stative, activity, achievement, and accomplishment) and use correct Target Time forms instead? To investigate what the role of aspectual values for the developmental pattern of the Verbal Morphemes in this study is, I consider the four aspectual values punctual vs. non-punctual, telic vs. non-telic, dynamic vs. non-dynamic and observable end-states vs. no end states. Recall that punctual vs. non-punctual refers to achievement vs. activity, telic vs. non-telic refers to achievement/accomplishment vs. activity /stative, dynamic vs. non-dynamic refers to achievement, accomplishment and activity verbs vs. stative verbs. Finally, observable end-states vs. no end states refer to the cognitive notion of the situations. The

question is which of these aspectual values plays a role in the development of the Target Times. Non-dynamic plays a crucial role as a cognitive factor to shift the subjects to situation outside, i.e. the real world to acquire present Time. Moreover, telic and punctual values also shift the learners to acquire the deictic Future and Past Times.

**The development of Verbal Morphemes as a marker of inherent aspect into a Target Time marker: Syntactic evidence**

It was mentioned earlier that an aspectual projection is the interface between the lexicon and syntax. Lexicon provides two types of information to build up syntax: the number of arguments and aspectual information. Persian learners of English transfer the feature values of the Persian stative markers *-mi*, *dashtan/have*, and *budan/be* into English stative aspect. Moreover, the feature values of the telic events with Persian NP argument markers such as *-I*, *-ra*, and *-I ra* are transferred into English achievement and accomplishments aspects; while the NP arguments without these markers are shifted into English activity aspect.

To investigate whether the biased use of aspect marking *-S*, *-ING*, and *PAST* with verb types, which occur with frequent use of bare verbs, are checked by aspectual projections and the disassociation of aspectual markers with verb types, which co-occur with frequent use of modals, and auxiliaries with correct Target Time forms, are checked by inflectional projection. Chi-square test was carried out to determine whether the use of aspectual and inflectional markers

differentiated the lower-level learners from the higher-level and NES groups for all Target Times. The tests indicated that the use of aspectual markers stands out for the lower-level learners, while the same is true for the use of inflectional markers, i.e. Target Times by the higher-level and NES groups. These differences were significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) for all Target Times. The results support the Research Hypothesis 4a-b, that the lower-level learners use fewer inflectional markers (in proportion to all aspectual markers) than the higher-level and NES groups and vice versa.

#### **Implications of the Study: Syntactic Evidence**

So far, we have concluded that UG is accessible in the L2 acquisition of tense and aspect. That L2 learners already have previous instantiations of UG in their L1 raises the issue of L1 influence and the initial state, i.e. (1) The Minimal Trees Hypothesis (Vainikka & Young-Scholten 1994, 1996a, 1996b), The Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996), and Weak Parametric Transfer Hypothesis (Eubank 1993/94, 1996).

#### **The implications of Initial State Hypotheses in the SLA of Tense and Aspect**

Under the Minimal Trees Hypothesis adopted by V&Y-S, overt use of lexical elements or inflections associated with functional categories is necessary in order to attribute to the learners the existence of that category in their grammar. At first it may appear that since the lower level learners use the present form -S and PAST form, this is an indication of the existence of an inflectional projection. However, the analysis of the data from the present study indicated that the lower

level learners used the -S and PAST forms<sup>6</sup> selectively in association with the lexical category of verb type with correct Target Time form being neglected. At this stage, a significant number of verb types were unmarked (i.e. in the bare verb form) and the use of modals, auxiliaries, and correct Target Time form, i.e. IP markers was significantly rare. On the other hand, the higher-level subjects' use of the correct Target Time forms, modals, and auxiliaries was significant, whereas there was no longer a biased association of the verbal morphemes with aspectual category of verb type and infinitive forms were significantly rare for the higher-level learners. Furthermore, it was also noted earlier that the lower level learners' use of obligatory morphemes (or aspectual markers) was based in part on their L1 aspectual verbs. While native English speakers acquiring their L1 use PAST form with accomplishment aspect at early stages, the lower level learners in this study used -ING form without the auxiliary 'be' when they used accomplishment verbs without direct object markers.

Another assumption of the Minimal Trees Hypothesis is that lower level learners do not use the correct tense form. The data revealed that the lower level learners used neither their L1 tense forms nor L2 tense forms. The learners in this study are proposed to start off with VP and its aspectual projections and end with Inflectional Projection (IP) for the acquisition of English Target Time forms.

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<sup>6</sup> The lower level learners usually used the -ING form without the auxiliary 'be'. Therefore, the use of the -ING is not checked at IP.

In contrast to The Minimal Trees Hypothesis, the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis of Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) hypothesizes that what transfers are both lexical and functional categories. The implication of this hypothesis would be that the lower level learners' use of verbal morphemes should not be associated with inherent aspect; rather they should use verbal morphemes to mark Target Time. The most important finding of the present study is as the lower level learners use the -S and PAST forms linked with verb type, there are a large number of infinitives with all verb types. However, as the link between the -S and PAST disappears, the occurrence of infinitives weakens, while the inflectional markers such as correct Target Time forms, modals, auxiliaries, and sentential negation with auxiliary increases significantly. In other words, the lack of significant use of modals, auxiliaries, and correct Target Time forms in the acquisition of Target Time forms for the lower-level learners, rather than for the higher-level and NES groups is good evidence against the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis.

Finally, the findings of the present study also have implications for Eubank's (1993/94, 1996) Weak Parametric Transfer Hypothesis. This hypothesis is related to the idea that the morphological paradigm of verbs determines the strength of inflection. That is to say that [+/-] strong inflection determines presence or absence of verb raising. For example, Persian has rich verbal inflection (or morphological paradigm), i.e. [+strong] inflection, thus, it has verb raising, while English has weak inflection (or morphological

paradigm), i.e. [-strong], hence, it does not have verb raising. In Eubank's view, the [-strong] value of inflection in English results when the -S or tense morphology is acquired.

At first, the present data seem to support this hypothesis. However, the biased use of the -S and PAST forms with stative and achievement or accomplishment verbs, respectively, with Target Time being neglected does not indicate that the lower level learners have acquired the inflectional projection (or correct Target Time forms). Moreover, as the lower level learners use the -S and PAST forms in association with verb types, they lack modals, auxiliaries, sentential negation with auxiliary and correct Target Time form. If the occurrence of the -S and PAST forms was an indication of IP from their L1 so they do not need to acquire it for the lower level learners, they should also have used modals, auxiliaries, sentential negations with auxiliaries, and correct Target Time forms.

### **Summary**

The data from the Native English Speakers (NES) as control group and the higher level groups are not biased in such a way that they support POA. Firstly, for the lower level groups progressive marking is predominantly used with activity verbs, past marking is predominantly used with achievement verbs, and the present form is predominantly used with stative verbs with tense distinction being neglected. Moreover, progressive inflection is attached to stative verbs very rarely across all groups. Secondly while the lower level learners use the progressive form -ING, the present form -S, and the PAST with verb types regardless of the Target Time forms,



their data include large number of infinitive verb forms, and usually lack correct Target Time forms, modals, and auxiliaries. Finally, it was concluded that the lower level learners have acquired aspectual projections (or aspectual categories) but they have not acquired the Inflectional Projection (IP). As the higher level learners use correct Target Time forms, modals, and auxiliaries, their data usually lack infinitives and the biased association of verbal morphemes with verb type. The results indicated that the higher level learners have acquired IP.

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