




Tense and aspect in learner language

A corpus-based study


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Overview

- o Goals
- o Research Background
- o Data
- o Method
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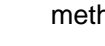
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Goals: Tense and Aspect in Learner Language

- o Purpose → exploration of the acquisition and use of tense and aspect by advanced EFL learners
- o Data → a learner corpus of argumentative essays written by advanced EFL learners with very different L1-backgrounds (German and Bulgarian)
- o Method → computer-aided, corpus-based methodology



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- ● ● | **Goals: research questions**
- Do advanced students of English show non-targetlike use of tense and aspect? Do they overuse, underuse or avoid particular temporal and aspectual constructions?
- Does advanced learners' mother tongue influence the acquisition of tense and aspect in English? Are there other key factors?
- Does advanced learners' use of temporal and aspectual forms support the Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis?

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- ● ● | **Research Background**
- Acquisition of the verb system and verbal morphology → crucial for language acquisition
- Research on tense and aspect acquisition in SLA
 - Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis → POA (Andersen and Shirai 1996) → learners associate verb inflections with the **Inherent Lexical Aspect** of the verb, e.g. they first use the progressive marker *-ing* with activity verbs, e.g. *walk*

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- ● ● | **Research Background**
- POA hypothesis in SLA research
 - mostly English and Spanish as L2s
 - experimental studies → controlled tasks
 - lower-level learners (beginner to intermediate)
- Learner Corpus studies on tense, aspect and POA hypothesis
 - tense errors (Granger 1999)
 - POA hypothesis (Wible and Huang 2003)
 - progressive aspect (Virtanen 1997, Axelsson and Hahn 2001)

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● ● ● | **Data**

- **International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE 1.1, Granger 2002)**, German and Bulgarian components
 - **GICLE** → 235,190 words in 439 argumentative and literary essays by advanced EFL learners
 - **BUCLE** → 200,704 words in 302 argumentative essays by advanced EFL learners
- **LOCNESS** (Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays, American and British English) → control corpus

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● ● ● | **Data**

- **Corpus Comparability**
 - **BUCLE** – only argumentative essays; a single university, most homogeneous
 - **GICLE** → Germany, Austria, Switzerland; argumentative and literary essays
 - **LOCNESS** → British and American English, argumentative and literary essays
 - **BUCLE** and **GICLE** L2-specific variables → L2 exposure, exam situation, reference tools

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● ● ● | **Method**

- **CIA → Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis** (Granger 1996: 44)
 - NL vs. IL, i.e. British English/American English vs. E2German; British English/American English vs. E2Bulgarian
 - NL Norm → British English or American English?
 - IL vs. IL, i.e. E2German vs. E2Bulgarian
 - L1s → typologically and genetically different
 - different tense and aspect systems

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Method

Frequencies of the progressives in 19,000-word samples of the British and American subcorpora of LOCNESS, BUCLE and GICLE

Part of subcorpus	words	progressives	Progressives per 1000 words
BR03	19019	30	1,57
USSCU2	18630	78	4,18
BUCLE_p	18752	26	1,38
GICLE_p	19009	78	4,1

Next steps

- o Corpus tagging
 - error tagging
 - tagging of all predicates for verbal inflection
 - tagging all lexical verbs for inherent lexical aspect (Vendler 1967)
- o Computing of tag frequencies
- o Quantitative analysis of the tag frequencies
- o Qualitative analysis of concordance lines
