Examining transfer and prototypes in L1 Swedish learners of Spanish

The case of aspect: The simple present and the present progressive

Pia Järnefelt
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Abstract

This study is focused on the transfer accounts and the prototype accounts, and examines aspect through looking at L1 Swedish learners of Spanish who are at early stages of acquisition. The prototype accounts postulate that adult learners will acquire the most prototypical forms of a grammatical feature first, and then, as proficiency increases, less prototypical features, called extended meanings, will be acquired incrementally (Shirai & Andersen, 1995, Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012). The transfer accounts claim that all grammatical features of the L1 will transfer at initial stages, and that this will either facilitate or impede acquisition, depending on if there are structures that are realized differently or similarly in the L1 and in the L2 (Kellerman, 1979, Gass & Ard, 1984, Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996, Gabriele et al., 2015). The study uses the stimuli and experiment used in Gabriele et al. (2015), a study that tested L1 English learners of Spanish and found evidence that support the transfer accounts. Results from the present study shows positive evidence of L1 transfer, which is taken as support for the transfer account. The results are not compatible with the prototype accounts. A finding of a marginal difference might be indicative of L2 transfer, which is also taken as evidence for the transfer accounts.

Keywords

prototype accounts, transfer account, aspect, L1 transfer, L1 Swedish, L2 Spanish, core/non-core meanings, extended meanings, simple present, present progressive.
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# Grammatical abbreviations

<table>
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<th>ABBREVIATION</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>Infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>Simple present</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRES PROG</td>
<td>Present progressive</td>
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<td>PREP</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
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<td>V</td>
<td>Verb</td>
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1. Introduction

Why is it interesting to study the acquisition of the second language? Second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) is the research field where the acquisition of the second language (henceforth L2) is investigated, in contrast to the way people acquire their first language (henceforth L1). If SLA is studied from a psycholinguistic point of view, it investigates psychological and neurobiological factors that drive and enable the process of learning a second language.

Generative theories of acquisition suggest that all humans with non-deviating cognitive abilities will learn to speak their first language and learn all the extremely complicated grammatical structures that come with that language. They will learn the language without formal instruction, and even though the input, i.e., everything that is communicated to them in the language, can and will be distorted, they will still fully attain the language. When parents and other grown-ups speak to a child, their oral production will be permeated by mismatches, interrupted sentences and re-starts of sentences. Despite these incorrect and ‘flawed’ variations in the production, children will still learn the language properly.

The first language is believed to be learned in a sequential manner that is similar across different languages. The way we learn our first language, the L1 acquisition, has been thoroughly researched and findings across different languages show that children learn languages in a developmental sequence where the “easier”, and/or the most common features, are acquired first, and then, as proficiency increases, “harder” and less common features of the languages are acquired (Shirai & Andersen, 1995).

Even though some researchers believe that the L1 and the L2 are not acquired in the exact same manner, the question of what role the L1 plays in the L2 acquisition remains. This study aims to contribute to the research on this question, and investigates how adult L1 Swedish learners of Spanish acquire their Spanish, through looking at the grammatical structures that realize aspect. Aspect and tense are two grammatical features that are often studied together and complement each other. Tense is concerned with at what point in time something occurs, while aspect pertains to how an action itself is defined timewise, i.e., how it unfolds over time, irrespective of where on a
timeline it is. Aspect is a category that describe an action or an event as, e.g., ongoing or habitual. Consider following example:

1) He was reading.
2) He is reading.

In these sentences, the words “was” and “is” place this event on a time line, and let the reader know that something took place in the past, or is taking place in the present. The distinction is/was is that of tense. The forms “was reading/is reading” however, convey something else, namely how the act of reading was performed, i.e., the aspect. They tell us that there is some duration, but no specific endpoint to this activity (Shirai & Andersen, 1995).

Two different theoretical models that are concerned with how the second language is acquired are the prototype account, (e.g., Shirai & Andersen, 1995, Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012), and the transfer account (e.g., Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996, Gabriele, Alemán Bañón, López Prego & Canales, 2015, Kellerman, 1979, Gass & Ard, 1984).

Both accounts work under the assumption that there are prototypical meanings in a language, e.g., certain grammatical structures that are common/frequently occurring. These are called ‘core meanings’ (Kellerman, 1979). The meanings that are less common, and farther away from the prototypical meanings are called ‘extended meanings’. The prototype accounts claim that an adult learner who is acquiring a second language will, at initial stages of acquisition, learn the prototypical meanings, and later on, as proficiency increases, meanings that are ‘more difficult’ or farther away from the prototypical meanings will be acquired incrementally. Therefore, the prototype accounts postulate that the second language is acquired similarly to how the first language is acquired (Shirai & Andersen, 1995, Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012).

The transfer accounts, on the other hand, postulate that the L1 of an adult learner will be the point of departure for any acquisition of other languages. This means that all the grammatical features of a learner’s L1 will serve as a basis during the process of acquiring the second language. In cases where all the meanings, prototypical as well as the extended meanings, function in the same way in the L1 and the L2, it will make for an easier and a more successful acquisition. This is known as ‘positive
transfer’. However, in cases where the L1 and the L2 have the same grammatical features, but these are realized in different ways, the acquisition of certain features will instead be impeded by the fact that a grammatical structure has a different status in the L1 and the L2, (e.g., it is grammatical in the L1, but not in the L2, or vice versa). This is called ‘negative transfer’ (see Gabriele et al., 2015, Kellerman, 1979, Gass & Ard, 1984).

The present study investigates adult L1 Swedish speakers’ acquisition of L2 Spanish, and specifically looks at the verb forms simple present and present progressive, and how these function in four different contexts; the habitual context, the ongoing context, the temporary habitual context and the futurate context. These conditions are tested for through looking at the learners’ rates of acceptance of the different sentence types, i.e., simple present and present progressive, in the different contexts. A previous study looking at these sentence types and these contexts for the L1 English-L2 Spanish pairing was carried out by Gabriele, Alemán Bañón, López Prego, and Canales (2015). Permission has been granted to use the same stimuli and experiment that was used in the Gabriele et al. study (2015), and the results of the native speakers (n=20) of the same study will serve as a base of comparison for the results of the present study.

Previous studies have looked at how learners acquire the range of aspectual forms when there is a difference between how aspect is realized in their L1 and in their L2, such as the present progressive in English and Spanish (Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012, Gass & Ard, 1984, Gabriele et al., 2015). In Spanish, for instance, the simple present can be used for ongoing activities, but in English, it cannot. Fewer studies have looked at what happens to learners who are acquiring an L2 that has aspectual features that do not have an equivalent in their L1, such as the L1 Swedish-L2 Spanish case of the present study. Swedish does not have the verb form present progressive, which in Spanish is prototypically used to convey an ongoing meaning.

The prototypical meaning, also called the core meaning, of the simple present in Spanish, is that an event is habitual. A habitual context conveys something that is characteristic of a person or thing. It refers to something that is (or can be) a habit. The prototypical meaning of the present progressive in Spanish is that some event is going on at the same time of speech. This is called the ongoing context (Gabriele et al., 2015). For
example, the question ¿Qué hace Daniel normalmente? (‘What does Daniel do for a living?’) would commonly be answered with a sentence in the simple present, and is prototypically not answered with a sentence in the present progressive, while the question ¿Qué hace Daniel en este momento? (‘What is Daniel doing right now?’) would be answered with a sentence in the present progressive. In Spanish, something that is ongoing can also be conveyed by using the simple present. This means that the answer to What is Daniel doing right now?, could be answered with a sentence in the simple present as well as a sentence in the present progressive. These two sentences should be acceptable at approximately the same rate (see, for example, Gabriele et al., 2015).

These are the core meanings of the simple present and the present progressive, respectively, in Spanish. However, there are other contexts in which the simple present and the present progressive can be used, even though they are not as common. In Spanish, when an event is surprising and clearly delimited within a period of time, the use of both the simple present and the present progressive is allowed. This is the first extended meaning that is tested in the study and the context is called “temporary habitual”. It means that if Daniel is substituting as a teacher for this week only, and it is not his regular profession, the answer to the question What is Daniel doing this week? could be answered by using the present progressive. The simple present is also allowed in this context (see Gabriele et al., 2015). The fourth context, which is the futurate, is an extended meaning as well. A futurate context is something that is placed in the future at time of speech, and could be the answer to a question such as ¿Qué planes tiene Julia para el próximo sábado? (‘What plans does Julia have for next Saturday?’) In several varieties of Spanish, including the one tested for in Gabriele et al. (2015) and the present study, the present progressive cannot be used to convey a futurate meaning. The simple present can be used for this, but it is not the prototypical use.

The present study examines whether L2 learners transfer aspectual meanings that are available in their L1 to the L2 at early stages of acquisition. That is, do learners use all the grammatical structures and features of their first language as the basis for learning the second language? Or does the acquisition of aspectual semantics in the L2 develop in a sequential manner, as in L1 acquisition? In section 2, a theoretical background will be presented. Section 3 provides a summary of previous studies. The linguistic differences between Swedish and Spanish will be outlined in section 4.
Section 5 outlines the method and provides specific goals, research questions and predictions for the present study. Section 6 gives the results and section 7 the analysis and discussion. Finally, section 8 gives the drawn conclusions and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical background

Aspect has been distinguished as either grammatical aspect or inherent lexical aspect. Grammatical aspect has been attributed to inflection and auxiliary verbs, and lexical aspect is the inherent aspect a verb has because of its lexical meaning (Bylin, 2013).

Shirai and Andersen (1995) proposed a theory they call the Aspect Hypothesis, under which they claim development of tense-aspect morphology to be shaped by input and prototype formation and to be strongly influenced by the inherent aspects of verbs.

They investigated how children learned their L1 and found a sequential development based on Vendler’s (1967) four-way classification of verbs. Vendler categorizes verbs as either Achievement verbs, Accomplishment verbs, Activity verbs or State verbs. Achievement verbs are reducible to a single point in time and take place instantly, e.g., recognize, die, reach the summit. Accomplishment verbs have a clear endpoint and some duration: run a mile, build a house etc. Activity verbs last for some time and have an arbitrary endpoint, and the same thing is happening throughout the duration: run, sing, dance, play. Lastly, State verbs continue without any energy or effort applied to them: see, love, hate, want, resemble. In the L1 acquisition of aspect and tense morphology, a consistent pattern of development for these verbs has been found. Results show that children first use progressive to express an action-in-progress. Shirai and Andersen (1995) claim this is the most prototypical meaning of the progressive. Children who learn languages that do inflect progressive aspect (e.g., English and Spanish) predominantly use progressive markings with activity verbs (e.g., running, dancing, singing) at initial stages and later extend this use to accomplishment verbs (he was building a house), and achievement verbs (he was dying). Secondly, in L1 acquisition,
learners do not tend to incorrectly apply progressive marking to stative verbs, e.g., *I am seeing the house, *she is wanting candy\(^1\) (Shirai & Andersen, 1995). One issue that is still under debate in the field of SLA is whether second language learners also follow a developmental pattern like the one found in Shirai and Andersen’s Aspect Hypothesis, or if learners of a second language transfer parts, or entire grammar systems, from their L1.

### 2.1 L1 Transfer, ‘core meanings’ and ‘extended meanings’

Despite ample evidence supporting the Aspect Hypothesis, contrary results from many different studies lend support to the theory that all grammatical features of the native language are transferred at the initial stages of L2 acquisition (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996). The Full Transfer Full Access hypothesis (henceforth FT/FA) claims that there is full L1-L2 transfer at initial stages, and that Universal Grammar will help L2 acquisition. Native-like attainment is possible, but the L2 will not necessarily be processed in the same way as the L1. Schwartz and Sprouse argue for FT/FA and say that it is more plausible than competing theories because; 1) phonetic items fail to transfer from the L1, while all the computational ones do. The initial stage of acquisition is assumed to depend on L1 grammar for a lack of dependency contenders. The entirety of the L1 grammar is the basis of the L2 grammar at initial stages, and 2) the cause of developmental differences in L2 acquisition must be the L1 since input of L2 is constant, and finally 3) the reason why everything transfers, is because the learner needs all the syntactic functional elements as well as the semantic functional elements from the L1 in order to make coherent interpretations of the L2. (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996).

Kellerman proposes that learners will make use of their L1 in producing the L2 whenever they encounter structures in the L2 that are not familiar to them. He claims there are some constraints to this transfer though; it is dependent on the ‘language distance’ between the L1 and the L2. The language distance is how typologically similar the learners perceive the L2 to be to their L1.

\(^1\) The asterisks in the examples *I am seeing her and *she is wanting candy indicate here, and henceforth throughout the thesis when other examples are given, that the sentences are grammatically incorrect.
Kellerman investigated L1 Dutch-L2 English and claims that if the L1 of a learner is close to the L2, the learner will initially transfer all features of the L1 to the L2, since this seems to be the quickest and most accurate way of producing the L2. After some instruction in the L2, the learner will discover that there are distinct differences between the two languages, and transfer will become partial, and the L2 grammar will change. He claims this is dependent on whether the features are core meanings, which he also calls “language-neutral”, or if they are ‘non-core meanings’, which he also calls “language-specific”. These core meanings are features that are so central to the learner’s L1 that they perceive them as central to all languages. The non-core meanings can be semantic oddities, non-frequent forms or forms that are less acceptable than their ‘unmarked’ counter parts (Kellerman, 1979).

Gass and Ard (1984) provide a framework for how universal traits of languages might impact second language acquisition. Spanish and Japanese learners of English were tested on the English progressive. Results showed a preference for the sentences that were close to the prototypical interpretation of the progressive. In agreement with Kellerman’s results, Gass and Ard also show results that suggest that core meanings are more often transferred than non-core meanings. The language distance between Spanish and English is smaller than the one between Japanese and English, so transfer was less operative between the latter two. They investigated the influence on SLA of their proposed *universals*, which are elements that are found in all languages. They claim there is a central meaning range, called the core, for each element of tense/aspect systems in all languages, and that there is a universal set of available core meanings, which they call “focus”, that a language can “choose” from. The semantic range of these elements are determined exclusively by the foci and the pseudometrics, a term which is comparable to Kellerman’s (1979) “distance” (see Gass & Ard, 1984).

### 2.2 Prototype accounts

Shirai and Andersen (1995) discuss the use of the present progressive in English, and propose a developmental sequence for language acquisition that includes the various stages in which the aspectual forms of habitual and futurate interpretations are acquired.
These interpretations are considered less prototypical, which in Kellerman’s terms would be ‘marked’ features. They propose this sequence:

Process (activity $\rightarrow$ accomplishment) $>$ iterative (repeated actions) $>$ habitual or futurate $>$ stative progressive.

The prototype account suggests that “easy” or prototypical features are acquired first, and as proficiency increases, more difficult, non-prototypical features will be learned. Numerous studies e.g., Geeslin & Fafulas (2012), have lent support to this theory.

3. Previous research

Geeslin and Fafulas (2012) investigated the use of *estar + V-ndo*, which is present progressive, in contrast to the simple present in elicited re-told narratives of advanced L1 English learners of Spanish and Spanish native speakers. This was done to further investigate the Aspect hypothesis, under which it is postulated that there is an associative bias that depends on the inherent lexical aspects of verbs. Preterit morphology is used with verbs that have an inherent endpoint, imperfect with stative verbs and most importantly for the authors, progressive is used with activities. They sought to find the frequency of this use and investigated what linguistic variables constrain the use. The results reveal that the L1 English learners use *estar + V-ndo* more than native speakers, but they are guided by the same complex set of constraints as the native speakers. Geeslin and Fafulas propose that highly advanced L1 English learners of Spanish possess a native-like prototype for *estar + V-ndo*, meaning that it is acquirable. What remains for the learners at this advanced level is merely to fine-tune this set of constraints. The authors therefore suggest that further research with different tasks should be conducted, to elicit different production, and that lower levels of proficiency should be tested so that we can investigate which constraints are universal, which ones are acquired over time and which ones are acquired at the later stages of acquisition (Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012).

Gabriele et al. (2015) investigated the properties of present progressive and simple present in Spanish and English, looking at whether there is a sequential
development in learning that is based on prototypical meanings, or if transfer takes place between the two. Interestingly, both English and Spanish use morphological inflection (i.e., a verb ending; -*ing* in English and –*ndo* in Spanish) for the present progressive, and the core meanings are similar, but there are some different features in the extended meanings that serve as an advantageous research point to see what happens in English native speakers who learn Spanish. They investigated the use of present progressive and present indicative (henceforth simple present for the sake of clarity) in Spanish under four different conditions: Ongoing, Habitual, Temporary Habitual and Futurate. Spanish and English only differ in two out of eight of these combinations. A cross-linguistic comparison was made and Gabriele et al. (2015) summarize the similarities and differences in a table:

**Table 1. A comparison of the range of interpretations allowed by the present forms in English and Spanish.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Continuous/Ongoing</th>
<th>Habitual</th>
<th>Temporary Habitual</th>
<th>Futurate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present progressive</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present progressive</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident from the table, the variety of Spanish that is tested cannot use the present progressive for a futurate interpretation, while English allows this. Consider the two following sentences:

*Maria está saliendo para Chicago mañana.*  
*Maria is leaving for Chicago tomorrow.*
The first example in the sentences above is grammatically incorrect, but the second one is correct. English allows for a futurate interpretation with the present progressive, while this is impossible in some varieties of Spanish, including the one investigated by Gabriele et al. (2015). For a continuous activity that takes place in this very moment, the following pattern is found:

\[
\begin{align*}
&	ext{Estoy escribiendo ahora.} \\
&	ext{Escribo ahora.} \\
&	ext{I am writing right now.} \\
&*\text{I write right now.}
\end{align*}
\]

For an activity that takes place right now, Spanish allows for both the simple present and the present progressive, while English can only convey this meaning by using the present progressive. The sentence \textit{I write now} is grammatically incorrect. The prototype account suggests that the present progressive will be used to encode activity-in-progress, as this is the most prototypical meaning of the present progressive.

Although there are many studies that investigate aspect in L2 acquisition, few have followed up on Gass and Ard's work by explicitly examining both the prototypical and non-prototypical interpretations of aspectual forms to understand early stages of L2 acquisition. Gabriele et al. (2015) do this by investigating if transfer is limited to prototypical L1 properties or if the entire L1 grammar transfers at early stages of acquisition. Their results showed that properties of the L1 could facilitate even non-prototypical interpretations for early learners and that rejecting less prototypical interpretations that are available in the L1 but not in the L2, is a challenge. These findings are more in support of the transfer accounts. (Gabriele et al., 2015). Since previous studies (e.g., Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012) have shown results that render more support to prototype accounts, the question remains interesting for future examination.

Gabriele et al. (2015) remark that English and Spanish encode grammatical aspect differently, and this is a reason why this pairing is an advantageous point of departure for the investigation at hand. Do L2 learners acquire the language the way that the Aspect hypothesis describes it or does L1 transfer drive the acquisition? In English,
the present progressive can be used in a futurate reading, and in the variety of Spanish that Gabriele et al. are testing, it cannot. Both Spanish and English allows for a temporary habitual reading of the present progressive. Since these two readings are not the prototypical use of the present progressive, testing English natives on these conditions rendered results that was used to support predictions of the transfer accounts or the prototype accounts. Swedish and Spanish are very far apart typologically when it comes to realizing grammatical aspect. Comparing the two will hopefully yield some interesting results.

4. Cross-linguistic differences in Swedish and Spanish

Swedish and Spanish are fundamentally different in terms of aspect. There is no verb form called the present progressive in Swedish, and to convey the prototypical meanings of the Spanish progressive, Swedish primarily uses the simple present. However, Swedish has other mechanisms to signal that an event is ongoing or habitual. These include 1) pseudo-coordinations, 2) auxiliary verbs that have inherent lexical aspects, and 3) paraphrasing. However, these structures are non-prototypical and non-preferred constructions.

4.1 Pseudo-coordinations

Pseudo-coordinations in Swedish can convey progressive aspect. Consider the two sentences below.

5) Abbe log. ‘Abbe smiled’
6) Abbe satt och log. ‘Abbe sat and smiled’

In Swedish, sentence 6) conveys an ongoing meaning, and does not literally translate to “Abbe was sitting down when the smile occurred”, but rather means that the smile was in some way continuous and had an indefinite, or an irrelevant, duration. Other verbs
that work similarly and convey aspect like ‘sit’ does in sentence 6), are the intransitive verbs *ligga* ‘lie’, and *stå* ‘stand’ (Bylin, 2013).

### 4.2 Auxiliary verbs

The Swedish verb *bruka* is an auxiliary verb that conveys habituality (Dahl, 1985), and since it is an auxiliary, it pertains to the category of grammatical aspect. However, there are also verbs that have the inherent lexical aspect of habituality in Swedish, such as *skåpsupa* ‘being a closet drunk’, *umgås* ‘hang out’, and *veckopendla* ‘commute on a weekly basis’. Aspect in Swedish is not an obligatory grammatical category. The only obligatory grammatical category in Swedish is temporality (Bylin, 2013).

### 4.3 The ‘hold’ construction

The structure “*håller på att + V*” ‘hold-PRES PREP + V-INF’ conveys ongoing activity and is called a ‘hold’ construction (Ebert in Dahl, 2000). It is also common that the progressive forms in Spanish and English are simply translated to an infinitive form, a simple present, or a noun in Swedish. The progressive construction of ‘*hålla på att + V*’ is common in Swedish, but not mandatory. It can be translated to be *+ing* in English, but is not as frequent, and only used when there is emphasis on the imperfective function (Andersson, 1977).

Since this study will be using the same stimuli as Gabriele et al. (2015), the following section will map the preferred Swedish translations of the target sentences in the experiment.

### 4.4 A comparison of Spanish and Swedish: the conditions that are tested for

The four different conditions tested for in the present study are *ongoing, habitual, temporary habitual* and *futurate*. Given that the strategies mentioned in the previous chapter are just that, strategies, and that the author of this thesis could find no equivalent for temporary habitual aspect or the use of some strategy to convey progressive aspect in the futurate meaning in Svenska Akademiens Grammatik (Teleman et al., 2010), it is
concluded that only simple present can be used in this context in Swedish. This section will map the Spanish sentences and their translations into Swedish.

4.4.1 Habitual and ongoing contexts

7) Luísa escribe poesía ‘Luisa write-PRES poetry’
   *Luísa skriver poesi* ‘Luisa write-PRES poetry’

8) Luísa está escribiendo poesía ‘Luísa write-PRES PROG poetry’
   *Luisa skriver poesi* ‘Luisa write-PRES poetry’

Sentence 8) can be written in several different ways, either by using simple present and adding an adverb like *just nu* ‘right now’, or the form ‘*Luísa håller på att skriva på poesi*’, ‘Luísa hold-PRES PREP write-INF poetry’, which conveys the ongoing activity of writing the poetry right now. However, if there is no emphasis on the fact that the activity is ongoing/continuous, the most prototypical way of saying it in Swedish is by using the simple present, ‘*Luísa skriver poesi*’.

4.4.2 Temporary habitual

9) Luísa escribe poesía esta semana ‘Luísa write-PRES poetry this week’
   *Luísa skriver poesi den här veckan* ‘Luisa writes-PRES poetry this week’

10) Luísa está escribiendo poesía esta semana ‘Luísa write-PRES PROG poetry this week’
    *Luisa skriver poesi den här veckan* ‘Luisa write-PRES poetry this week’

The Swedish progressive ‘hold’ structure cannot be used to convey temporary habituality in Swedish (Maria Bylin, personal communication; controlled for in Teleman et al., (2010)). This means that sentence 10) cannot be expressed in any other way than by using the simple present in Swedish.

4.4.3 Futurate

11) Luísa sale para Chicago mañana ‘Luísa leave-PRES for Chicago tomorrow’
Sentence 11) and the translation of it shows that Swedish too allows for a futurate interpretation of the simple present when an adverb is present. This is a common structure to use in Swedish, especially with verbs like komma ‘come’ and gå ‘go’.

12) *Luísa está saliendo para Chicago mañana ‘Luísa leave-PRES PROG for Chicago tomorrow’

*Luísa håller på att åka till Chicago imorgon. ‘Luísa hold PREP go-INF for Chicago tomorrow’

Luísa kommer att åka till Chicago imorgon ‘Luísa come-PRES to go-INF for Chicago tomorrow’

The progressive structure håller på att + V is not allowed in Swedish to convey the futurate sense, and neither is the Spanish present progressive. The only other option, except the non-prototypical (but accepted) simple present, for the futurate use in Swedish comes from auxiliary structures such as kommer att + V-INF, ‘come to + INF’ meaning “will go”, or ska + V-INF ‘shall + V-INF’ which are the futurate forms in Swedish (see Teleman et al., 2010).

Table 2. A comparison of the range of interpretations allowed by the present forms in Spanish and the simple present in Swedish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Continuous/ongoing</th>
<th>Habitual</th>
<th>Temporary habitual</th>
<th>Futurate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Swedish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As is evident from table 2, there is no condition under which we might expect negative L1 transfer, that is, transfer that shows that the learners will reject certain sentences based on the grammar of their L1. This makes it hard to predict anything about the transfer accounts. In Sweden, all children start taking English classes between the ages 9 and 11, so there is a possibility that there will be L2 transfer, that is, transfer from the learners’ L2 (English) to their L3 (Spanish). This issue will be revisited in the discussion section. The prototype accounts, however, will serve as a point of departure for the predictions listed at the end of the next section.

5. Method

5.1 Participants

The participants (n=11) were recruited from around Stockholm. All participants were given a background questionnaire to fill out and the MLA/DELE (Modern Language Aptitude/Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera) proficiency test, as in Gabriele et al. (2015), which tests grammar and vocabulary. The MLA/DELE consists of 50 items and classifies participants into one of three levels of proficiency: low (0-30), intermediate (31-40), and advanced (41-50). The aim was to find participants who scored within the same range as the L2 learners in the study by Gabriele et al. (2015), namely between 11 and 32. However, the participants of this study scored a bit higher, between 16 and 40, with only one participant scoring below 20 (score=16). Seven participants were categorized as low proficiency learners; they scored between 16 and 30 (mean=24), and four participants scored within the intermediate range (31-40), (mean=38).

All learners were native Swedish speakers and all save one had at least one year of university studies. They ranged between ages 22 and 66 (mean=34), and the Age of Acquisition (henceforth AoA) of Spanish ranged between ages 12 and 55 (mean=25). They were all adult learners. Four out of 11 participants started studying Spanish in elementary school in Sweden. This means that they were all instructed in mainland Spanish, a fact that was controlled for by consulting colleagues who teach
Spanish in elementary school. Mainland Spanish does not allow for the progressive form in a futurate reading (see Gabriele et al., 2015). Three of the participants were studying or had studied Spanish at Stockholm University. Consulting a faculty member at the university revealed that the Spanish variety taught at Stockholm University is not regulated by the curriculum, but rather depends on the teacher of the specific class. One of the teachers at Stockholm University is Cuban and teaches that variety, although it is clear from the conversation with the faculty member that no specific emphasis is put on the teacher’s own variety of Spanish during class. Students are however made aware of the major differences in grammar in the different varieties. The Length of Residence (henceforth LoR) in a Spanish speaking country ranged from zero to six months (mean = 3.3 months), and one of the participants had no formal Spanish instruction; the rest of the participants had between four months and nine years of formal instruction in Spanish (mean = 2 years and 9 months). One participant had resided temporarily in both Ecuador and Cuba (5 months and 3.5 months, respectively), one participant had resided temporarily in Ecuador (5 months), and one participant had resided temporarily in both Cuba and Spain (2 months and 4 months, respectively). I will return to these participants later in the discussion, since there are certain variants of Caribbean Spanish where the progressive is allowed in a futurate reading (see Aponte Alequín & Ortiz López, 2010).

Five participants were students, five had other occupations and one was a retiree. All of them had several years of formal English instruction, ranging from 6 to 13 years (mean = 10 years), and four of the participants spoke other language(s) than Swedish, English and Spanish. These languages were German, Italian, French and Russian.

5.2 Task

The experiment consisted of an interpretation task, performed on a computer at the Multilingualism Lab at Stockholm University in April 2018. The program that was used to run the experiment is called Paradigm (Tagliaferri, 2005).

Participants were given short stories consisting of four to five sentences in Spanish. Beneath the story, there was a question, e.g., ‘Qué hace Elena normalmente?’,
What does Elena usually do? There was no time limit for reading the short stories or the questions.

After the participants had read through the story and the question, they pressed a key and a possible answer to the question appeared. They were asked to judge whether the answer could be an answer that a native speaker of Spanish would give. The instructions explained that it does not have to be their own preferred answer to the question, they were just asked to indicate whether a native speaker of Spanish could plausibly give this answer. They indicated this by choosing between the alternatives “Es una buena respuesta” (It’s a good answer) or “Es una mala respuesta” (It’s a bad answer). The answer was a simple sentence with a verb that was either inflected in simple present or in present progressive. Filler items were added to obscure what was being tested for, and to balance out how many sentences were accepted with each verb form. None of the sentences in the stories had activity verbs inflected with either simple present or present progressive of the verb in the possible answer, but sometimes they contained other inflected forms of the verbs. The verbs in the stories were inflected with either perfect haber + -ido, the infinitive form, the preterit, or the imperfect tense. They were first given five examples in a practice session, during which they were instructed to pay close attention to grammatical information in the possible answer, as well as being mindful of judging only whether a native speaker might answer this way, even if it was not necessarily their own preferred answer. None of the available answers contained adverbs, but the questions did, so it was made clear in which context the answer should be interpreted (see Gabriele et al., 2015). Specific examples from the stimuli are provided in the next section.

5.3 Material

This section contains an example from each of the different contexts that were tested in the task. For each condition, one of the examples from the stimuli is given. The examples are structured in the following manner: first, the short story that was presented to the learners is displayed. Then the question appears, and then two different possible answers that they were tested on in the experiment. For each item, only one of these two
possible answers was displayed, and the learners had to choose if the answer was a good answer (“Es una buena respuesta”) or a bad answer (“Es una mala respuesta”). The words ‘accept’ and ‘reject’ after each of the answers indicates the preferred reaction. The interpretation task was divided in six blocks, with each block containing 8 target items and 4 filler items. The order of the blocks was randomized for each participant, and so was the order of the items within each block. Between each block, the participants were given the opportunity to take a small break. The stories appeared twice so that the two different sentences types could be presented as a possible answer. This was also done because the number of items had to be balanced for frequency of the two verb forms. The same story never appeared twice within the same block though. Participants were made aware during the instructions in the beginning that the story could appear more than once (see Gabriele et al., 2015)

The interpretation task on the computer was divided in two parts. In the first part, the contexts habitual, ongoing and temporary habitual were tested on six different activity verbs; *escribir poesía* (‘to write poetry’), *hacer pasteles* (‘to make cookies’), *jugar al baloncesto* (‘to play basketball’), *montar en bicicleta* (‘to ride a bike’), *tocar el piano* (‘to play the piano’), and *comer carne* (‘to eat meat’).

### 5.3.1 Ongoing

In the ongoing context, the short story describes an activity that is going on at the time of speech, and is somewhat surprising. The reason why it is not only describing something that is happening right now is because when the element of something unusual is added, it decreases the risk of the activity being interpreted as habitual.

*Elena es estudiante de matemáticas. Nunca ha escrito un poema en su vida, pero este semestre está en una clase de literatura. Para mañana tiene que escribir un poema de 15 versos sobre el amor. Ahora mismo está con el verso número 10. ¡Esto es horrible!*

‘Elena is a math student. She has never written a poem in her entire life, but this semester she is in a literature class. She has to write a poem of 15 verses about love for tomorrow. Right now, she is on verse number 10. This is horrible!’

¿Qué hace Elena en este momento?
“What is Elena doing right now?”

*Elena escribe poesía.* ‘Elena writes poetry.’ Accept
*Elena está escribiendo poesía.* ‘Elena is writing poetry.’ Accept

In Spanish, both the present progressive and the simple present allow for an ongoing reading, which is why both sentences are followed by the word ‘accept’ in this document. Both the simple present and the present progressive are prototypically used to convey ongoing aspect in Spanish, although previous studies have shown a slight preference for the present progressive with activity verbs (see Geeslin & Fafulas, 2012).

### 5.3.2 Habitual

The habitual context describes something that is characteristic for the situation or for the person. From the context of the story below, it is clearly understood what Gloria does for a living, which is something that conveys habituality, and is not an ongoing activity that is bound to a specific incident.

*Gloria es escritora. Su trabajo consiste en escribir poesía para niños de lunes a viernes. Hoy es domingo, así que está en el cine con unas amigas.* ‘Gloria is a writer. Her work consists of writing poetry for children from Monday to Friday. Today it is Sunday, so she is at the cinema with friends.

¿Qué hace Gloria normalmente? ‘What does Gloria usually do?’

*Gloria escribe poesía.* ‘Gloria writes poetry.’ Accept
*Gloria está escribiendo poesía.* ‘Gloria is writing poetry.’ Reject

In Spanish, only the simple present can convey habituality, and the present progressive cannot. Therefore, the second sentence, *Gloria está escribiendo poesía*, should not be accepted, as indicated by the word ‘reject’. The prototypical way of conveying a habitual context in Spanish, is by using the simple present (see Gabriele et al., 2015).
5.3.3 Temporary habitual

The temporary habitual is an extended meaning in Spanish, i.e., not the prototypical one. When an event is clearly delimited in time, but surprising, such as in the context described below, both present progressive and simple present can convey this meaning. This story describes a habitual activity, and can therefore be conveyed through using the simple present. At the same time, the focus is on the fact that the activity is surprising and temporary, which makes it acceptable to convey through using the present progressive (Gabriele et al., 2015).

Javier es periodista. Normalmente, su trabajo consiste en escribir los horóscopos, pero esta semana tiene que escribir poesía para la sección cultural del periódico. Esta semana Javier ha escrito muchos poemas cada día, pero los dos poemas que escribió ayer son horribles. ‘Javier is a journalist. Usually his work consists of writing the horoscopes, but this week he has to write poetry for the cultural section of the newspaper. This week Javier has written many poems each day, but the two he wrote yesterday are horrible’.

¿Qué hace Javier esta semana?

“What is Javier doing this week?”

Javier escribe poesía. ‘Javier writes poetry.’ Accept
Javier está escribiendo poesía. ‘Javier is writing poetry’ Accept

Both the sentences are acceptable in the context, and adding the words ‘this week’ gives the reader the possibility of reading it as both habitual and temporary, which is why both these interpretations are accepted (Gabriele et al., 2015)

5.3.4 Futurate

In the second part of the study, which was designed in the same manner with a short story, a question and a possible answer, the condition that was tested was the futurate. This was tested on acceptance rates of both the simple present and the present progressive. The verbs included in this part were verbs that can naturally convey some sort of future plan, such as salir (‘to go’) and venir (‘to come’), and contexts that
convey the meaning of participating in a planned event; jugar en una competición de póker (‘play in a poker tournament’) or correr una carrera nacional (‘to run in a national race’). The questions asked for the plans the character of the story had for a specific day or date in the future, to make clear that the futurate reading was intended. No verbs in the stories were inflected with the future tense (Gabriele et al., 2015).

Lucía ha decidido ir a Chicago a ver a su amigo Emilio. Nunca ha estado en Chicago, así que está muy emocionada con el viaje. Ha comprado un billete de autobús para el sábado a las 2pm. ‘Lucía has decided to go to Chicago to see her friend Emilio. She has never been to Chicago, so she is very excited about the trip. She has bought a bus ticket for Saturday at 2 pm.’

¿Qué planes tiene Lucía para el próximo sábado a las 2pm?

“What plans does Lucía have for next Saturday at 2 pm?”

Lucía sale para Chicago. ‘Lucía leaves for Chicago.’ Accept
Lucía está saliendo para Chicago. Lucía is leaving for Chicago.’ Reject

In the variety of Spanish that is tested for in the present study, as well as the one tested for in Gabriele et al. (2015), the simple present can be used for the futurate reading, but the present progressive cannot. The sentence Luísa está saliendo para Chicago is in itself grammatical, since no adverbial is included, and the sentence therefore conveys an ongoing meaning, but the question includes a specific date and time in the future, which makes the answer incompatible with the question at hand, and therefore, it should be rejected, as indicated by the word ‘reject’.

5.3.5 Filler item (Simple Present)

Filler items were incorporated throughout the tasks, in both the first part and in the second part. For each of the eight conditions tested in the first and second parts of the interpretation task, there were 6 items, so all in all, 48 items testing for the present progressive and the simple present. 24 filler items were added, and the answers to the filler item questions should be accepted or rejected based on facts in the stories. The filler items had multiple purposes: they were added to obscure what was being tested
for, but also served as a control to make sure that the learners understood the stories properly. The factual mismatches in the answers in the filler items served as a test for comprehension in that sense. Furthermore, a larger number of these were inflected in the simple present to balance out the number of items that should be rejected and accepted for the simple present, which was 24 items each. The number of items that should be accepted in the present progressive was 12, and the same number of items should be rejected in the present progressive (Gabriele et al., 2015). An example of one of the filler items is given below:

*Clotilde odia los aviones. Tiene mucho miedo a volar, así que prefiere conducir o coger el tren, incluso para trayectos largos. A veces, Clotilde tiene que volar por motivos de trabajo, y se pone enferma.* ‘Clotilde hates airplanes. She is very afraid of flying, and prefers to drive or take the train, even for long distances. Sometimes, Clotilde has to fly for work, and she gets sick’.

¿Qué sabemos de Clotilde?

“What do we know about Clotilde?”

*Clotilde tiene pánico a los perros.* ‘Clotilde is afraid of dogs.’ Reject
*Clotilde sólo viaja en avión.* ‘Clotilde only travels by airplane.’ Reject

The story clearly conveys that Clotilde is afraid of flying and hates airplanes, and mentions no dogs. Therefore, both examples of answers should be rejected if the learner has properly comprehended what the story is about.

### 5.4 Procedure

A couple of days prior to the experiment, participants were emailed a vocabulary list to make sure that their understanding was not lacking due to vocabulary deficiencies. The vocabulary list was partly based on the author’s level of Spanish (B2/C1). But was also proofread by a colleague whose level is B2 Spanish at best, to control for appropriate difficulty for the participants in the study. In one session, the participants filled out a background questionnaire with pen and paper, then completed the task on a computer, and lastly took the proficiency test, also on paper. All in all, one session lasted
approximately 90 minutes. After the experiment, participants were offered refreshments in form of a Swedish fika.

5.5 Specific aims, research questions and predictions

5.5.1 Specific aims

The present study aims to test the contrasting predictions of the prototype accounts, and the transfer accounts. Initially, the goal was to test both the prototype account and the transfer account, but after closely examining how Swedish realizes aspect with progressive markers, it became clear that the experiment most likely cannot yield results that could be unambiguously interpreted as evidence for the transfer account. Since no instances of negative transfer is expected, it could be difficult to tease apart whether results show transfer or simply that the learners have acquired the meanings through input. Therefore, it is important that the learners are tested at early stages, so that too high levels of proficiency do not make it more difficult to interpret the results. The study of Gabriele et al. (2015) showed that most decisions seemed to be based on L1 transfer, but not all. Why did learners show a low acceptance rate for the use of the present indicative in futurate interpretations? If the results are not compatible with the prototype accounts, what interpretations can be made instead?

5.5.2 Research questions

1) Do L1 Swedish learners of Spanish learn the prototypical forms of the progressive in a sequential manner, following the pattern predict by the prototype accounts?

2) Do the results show any evidence of L1 transfer?

5.5.3 Predictions

If the results lend support to the prototype accounts, the results should show this pattern:

1) **Present progressive.** Early learners will accept the present progressive for the ongoing context, since this is the most prototypical use for the progressive, but they will reject it in habitual contexts. As Gabriele et al. (2015) point out, the
learner might have been exposed to the present progressive in the temporary habitual context through classroom input, and therefore accept the present progressive, but they will probably not have been exposed to the present progressive in the futurate reading, since they have been exposed primarily to Spanish varieties that do not allow for such a reading. Therefore, they might accept the present progressive in temporary habitual context, but should not accept the present progressive for the futurate context.

2) **Simple present.** They will also accept the simple present for the ongoing context and the simple present for the habitual context, since these are prototypical meanings of the simple present. They will accept the simple present at a much higher rate than they accept the present progressive for the habitual context. The learners have probably been exposed to the use of simple present in both the temporary habitual and the futurate contexts, since both readings are allowed in Spanish, although they are not prototypical. They should not accept the temporary habitual and the futurate contexts as much as they accept the prototypical meanings.

5.5.4 Limitations

Due to the time span under which this thesis was conducted, the number of participants \((n=11)\) is not as large as would have been preferred. Other factors also played a role; the testing time for each participant (filling out the background questionnaire, performing the tasks and taking the proficiency test) was approximately 90 minutes. Therefore, the statistical analysis will only be conducted on the group as a whole. Smaller subsets of the learners will be discussed descriptively, and the author of this thesis is aware that the assumptions that are made on such a small sample may not be easily generalized to all language pairings. They might however, be suggestive of trends and lend support to the hypotheses that are tested, even as preliminary results.
6. Results

The statistical analysis of the data was carried out in close collaboration with the supervisor of this paper, José Alemán Bañón, who is also a co-author of the Gabriele et al. study (2015). The discussion and the conclusions are carried out solely by the author of this thesis.

6.1 Base of comparison – Native speakers

The Gabriele et al. study (2015) tests native speakers \( n=20 \) to see the acceptance rates for the different sentence types, and the present study will use the pattern shown in that study as a basis of comparison for the learners of the present study. By looking at the mean acceptance rates for sentence types, we can see a pattern of the core meanings the different sentence types have. First, the acceptance rates for the simple present in ongoing and habitual contexts, and the acceptance rates for the present progressive for the same two contexts was tested. The native speakers have a slightly higher acceptance rate for the simple present in the habitual context than in the ongoing, but the difference is small \( t(19) = 2.65, p < .05 \). The present progressive however, has a significantly higher acceptance rate in ongoing contexts than in habitual contexts \( t(19) = 10.13, p < .01 \). The mean acceptance for the simple present were: ongoing (mean≈82 %), habitual (mean≈97 %), temporary habitual (mean≈82 %) and futurate (mean≈62%). For the present progressive: ongoing (mean≈97 %), habitual (mean≈22 %)\(^2\), temporary habitual (mean≈70 %), futurate (mean≈20 %).

\(^2\) The use of ≈ indicates that these are not the exact numbers, since the author of this thesis does not have the statistical data from the Gabriele et al. study (2015), and these numbers are visual estimates from the figures presented in that study. (See Gabriele et al., 2015)
6.2 Learners

6.2.1 First pass analysis

The learners of the present study all performed at ceiling level with the filler items (mean accuracy=98%), all of which are ungrammatical. This means that their Spanish is at a level where they understand the stories, and therefore the acceptance rates of the target items do not reflect an acceptance bias. The pattern for the L1 Swedish learners (n=11) for the present progressive in the ongoing and the habitual contexts and the simple present in the ongoing and the habitual contexts are presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Learners: Core meanings

![Acceptance rates for learners: Core meanings](image)

Figure 1 shows the mean acceptance rates for the core meanings of all learners (Present study, 2018)

During the first pass of analysis, a 2x2 measures ANOVA was carried out; Sentence Type X Context. The factor Sentence Type had two levels: simple present and present progressive and the factor Context had two levels: ongoing and habitual. The ANOVA showed that the learners accept sentences in the present progressive at a comparable rate
as they accept sentences in the simple present. Therefore the main effect of the sentence type was not significant $F(1,10)=3.183, p=.105$. There was a significant main effect of context $F(1,10)=5.295, p=.044$), which is driven by the fact that sentences in the habitual context are accepted at a lower rate than sentences in the ongoing context.

Table 3. Marginal means: Core meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence type</th>
<th>Marginal mean</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>95% confidence interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.709-1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present progressive</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.619-.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.617-.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>.863</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.717-1.010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2x2 measures ANOVA (SP, PROG, ONGOING, HABITUAL), present study.

However, the most interesting finding in this ANOVA is that there is a significant interaction between context and sentence type $F(1,10)=11.772, p=.006$. This interaction is driven by the fact that the simple present and the present progressive are accepted at differing rates depending on context. In order to understand the nature of the interaction, pairwise comparisons were conducted at each level of Sentence Type. By comparing the simple present in the ongoing context with the simple present in the habitual context, we saw that there is a marginal difference ($p=.058$), but when correcting this difference for Type I error, it was not marginal anymore ($p=.116$).

The same comparison was made between the present progressive in the habitual context and the present progressive in the ongoing context, and here we found a highly significant difference: ($p=.004$). This remained significant after correcting for Type I error ($p=.008$). This pattern is similar to the one found in Gabriele et al. (2015), and shows that the L2 learners, as a group, possess the prototypical meanings of both the simple present and the present progressive. For natives, the following pattern holds true for these core meanings; there is no significant difference in the acceptance rates of simple present in the habitual context versus the ongoing context, but in the present progressive for the ongoing context, the acceptance rate is significantly higher than the
acceptance rate of the present progressive in the habitual context. Since the pattern of the first pass analysis shows that the learners indeed possess knowledge of the prototypical meanings of the simple present and the present progressive, the next step is to investigate the extended meanings (i.e., temporary habitual and futurate). If the results in Table 3 are compared to the results of the Gabriele et al. (2015) study, it is clear that the pattern is similar.

6.2.2 Analysis of extended meanings: the habitual contexts

Secondly, the acceptance rates for the habitual and the temporary habitual were compared.

Figure 2. Acceptance rates for habitual and temporary habitual

![Acceptance rates: Temporary habitual and Habitual](image)

The mean acceptance rates for sentence types present progressive and simple present in the contexts temporary habitual and habitual, all L2 learners (Present study, 2018).

The learners accepted the present progressive in a temporary habitual context at a much higher rate (mean=.8473) than they accepted the present progressive in a habitual context (mean=.5445). With the simple present, they accepted it for the temporary habitual context at a similar rate (mean=.8627) as they accepted the simple present for the habitual context (mean=.9545).
Table 4. Marginal means of the ANOVA: Habitual and Temporary Habitual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marginal mean</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>95% confidence interval</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Present progressive</td>
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<td>.071</td>
<td>.537-.855</td>
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<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.617-.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary habitual</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.761-.949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 2x2 measures ANOVA (SP, PROG, habitual, temporary habitual)

An ANOVA with Sentence Type (present progressive, simple present) and Context (habitual, temporary habitual) as repeated factors was carried out. The results show that there was a significant main effect of sentence type, $F(1,10)=9.541$, $p=.011$, which reflects that the learners are accepting the simple present more than they are accepting the present progressive. More importantly, we found a significant interaction between context and sentence type $F(1,10)=7.61$, $p=.02$. The significant interaction between sentence type and context was driven by the fact that the simple present have similar acceptance rates in both the habitual and the temporary habitual, while the present progressive was accepted much less in the habitual context than it was in the temporary habitual context.

Then we compared the simple present in the habitual context with the simple present in the temporary habitual and found only a marginal difference ($p=.051$), that when corrected for Type I error, was not marginal anymore. However, the pairwise comparison between the present progressive in the habitual context and the present progressive in the temporary habitual context, showed a significant difference ($p=.027$). This difference became marginal when corrected for Type I error ($p=.054$).

The difference between the mean acceptance rates of the sentence types in the futurate reading was not significant, $t(10)=1.18$, $p>.1$, simple present in the futurate: (L2:70 %), present progressive in futurate: (L2:55 %), see Figure 3 below:
Figure 3 shows the mean acceptance rates for sentence types (Present progressive, Simple present) in the futurate context. All learners (n=11). Present study (2018).

7. Discussion

The present study investigated aspect through testing L1 Swedish learners of Spanish, to see if evidence that support either the transfer accounts or the prototype accounts could be found. No evidence for the prototype accounts was found, but the results of the simple present in all conditions yielded evidence that support positive L1 transfer, which is in line with the transfer account. Additionally, a marginal difference in the present progressive between temporary habitual and habitual contexts is consistent with L2 transfer, and this is taken as support for the transfer accounts.

If the predictions of the present study held true and rendered support to the prototype accounts, the L1 Swedish learners of Spanish should show a similar pattern to the native control group of Gabriele et al. (2015) when looking at the mean acceptance rates of the core meanings, but less knowledge of the extended meanings. Knowledge of the core meanings involves accepting the present progressive in the ongoing context and
rejecting the present progressive in the habitual context, and accepting the simple present in both the habitual and ongoing contexts. During the first pass of analysis, we saw that this held true, although the learners accepted the present progressive in the habitual context at a higher rate than the native speakers who served as a base of comparison (Gabriele et al., 2015). At a first glance, the fact that these non-advanced learners have good knowledge of the core meanings seems to be consistent with the Aspect Hypothesis, but no conclusion about this can be drawn before a comparison is made between the core meanings and the extended meanings.

The Aspect Hypothesis can only be supported if the learners show less knowledge of the extended meanings than of the core meanings. The mean acceptance rates of the simple present for all the four conditions show that the L1 Swedish learners possess knowledge of both core and extended meanings of the simple present. The fact that they rejected all ungrammatical fillers that were in the simple present, shows that this the acceptance rates of the simple present is not due to an acceptance bias. All of these conditions are possible in Swedish, so this is evidence of L1 transfer, and in support of the transfer accounts. This is positive evidence so it is difficult to tease apart from acquisition based on positive evidence and input.

When looking at the contexts temporary habitual and habitual for both sentence types, an interesting pattern was found. The learners accepted the extended meaning of the temporary habitual with the simple present in a very similar pattern to the one found in the native speakers of the Gabriele et al. study (2015). The pairwise comparison between the present progressive in the temporary habitual and the habitual contexts showed a significant difference before correcting for Type I error, but this difference became marginal after correcting ($p=.054$). Since it is only marginal, it leads to questions rather than conclusions. This is not in line with what the Aspect Hypothesis suggests, and the L1 of the learners cannot account for why they accept this extended meaning. All the learners had several years of formal English instruction though (mean=10 years), and reported high levels of proficiency. In English, the present progressive can be used to convey a temporary habitual context, so this finding can be indicative of L2 transfer. There is nothing in the transfer accounts that specifically argue against the possibility of L2 transfer, which is why this finding is also taken as evidence in support of the transfer accounts.
It is interesting that the acceptance rates for the present progressive in the habitual context are so high in comparison to the native control group (NS ≈ 22 %, L2: 54 %), while the acceptance rates of the present progressive in the temporary habitual context are closer (NS: 70 %, L2: 80 %), and similar to the L2 learners of the Gabriele et al. study, who were native English speakers. Their mean acceptance rate of the present progressive in the temporary habitual context was approximately 79 % (see Gabriele et al., 2015). However, there is no evidence of L2 transfer in the acceptance rates of the other conditions where the present progressive is allowed in English, so this finding is, if anything, preliminary at best.

The mean acceptance rates of the futurate readings with both sentence types were not as similar to the native pattern, and the difference was not significant between the two sentence types. However, the simple present was slightly more accepted, which indicates that although the difference is not significant, the preference is for simple present over the present progressive, which is what the natives are showing as well. Again, this is in line with L1 transfer.

The L1 English learners and the native control group in Gabriele et al. (2015) show similar results in the habitual contexts; both show a main effect of sentence type as well as a main effect of context (habitual vs. temporary habitual), and a significant interaction, which Gabriele et al. take as evidence supporting the transfer accounts. The learners in the present study showed a main effect of sentence type and a significant interaction between sentence type and context, but no main effect of context.

Out of the four conditions that were tested for in the prototypical meanings, three of them were expected to be accepted; simple present in the habitual context, simple present in the ongoing context, and present progressive in the ongoing context. Only the fourth condition, the present progressive in the habitual context, is supposed to be rejected if L2 learners have knowledge of the constraints of the progressive. Therefore, learners who accepted sentence types across the board and failed to reject the present progressive in the habitual context, will also contribute to the native-like pattern with the extended meaning (i.e., temporary habitual) of the progressive.

As Gabriele et al. (2015) point out, it is hard to make predictions based on those learners who accept all the different conditions of the core meanings, and this is
the reason they chose to retain the learners \(n=15\) who correctly accepted the present progressive for the ongoing context, but also correctly rejected the present progressive for the habitual context. When teasing apart those learners who did so in the present study, the number of participants was too small \(n=5\) to run statistical analyses with sufficient power. Therefore, these five learners’ results will be described keeping in mind that the results can only be preliminary findings and suggestive of trends. The same criteria that Gabriele et al. (2015) used was applied to the participants who are further analyzed in the present study: those are retained who correctly accepted 4 of out 6 items of the present progressive in the ongoing context, as well as correctly rejected at least 4 out of 6 items where the present progressive was in the habitual context.

**Figure 4. Retained learners: Core meanings \(n=5\)**

![Core meanings - Subset \(n=5\)](image)

Mean acceptance rates of core meanings for the retained learners \(n=5\) (Present study, 2018)

When looking at the retained learners, their pattern is more similar to the pattern showed by the native control group in Gabriele et al. (2015) than the pattern of all learners in the present study.
Figure 5. Retained learners: Habitual contexts

Mean acceptance rates for the habitual contexts of the retained learners (n=5) (Present study, 2018)

Three of the participants had spent time in countries where the present progressive is allowed in the futurate reading. The first of these three participants had spent five months in Ecuador, and accepted the present progressive and the simple present in the futurate reading at the same rate: 5 out of 6 items for each sentence type and context. The second had spent 5 months in Ecuador, and 3.5 months in Cuba, but only accepted 3 out 6 items in the present progressive-futurate condition, while accepting all the items for the simple present in the futurate context. The third participant had spent 2 months in Cuba and 4 months in Spain, and accepted 4 out of 6 items in the present progressive-futurate and 3 out of 6 items in the simple present-futurate condition. Aponte Alequín and Ortiz López (2010) point out that some Caribbean varieties of Spanish, Cuban among others, allow for a futurate reading to a larger extent than other varieties. However, the case of the participant who spent time in Cuba also spent time in Spain, so it is hard to draw conclusions based on the observations of this participant. These three participants do not show patterns that are similar to each other, so more research is needed to clarify this finding.
Since no significant difference was found in the futurate readings, no ANOVA including these readings was carried out. It is however noteworthy that when looking at the mean acceptance rates for future readings of the retained subset of learners \((n=5)\) who had correctly accepted/rejected 4 out of 6 items of the core meanings, this trend is even more prominent. The subset of learners accepted the simple present in the futurate reading at a mean rate of 57\%, while only accepting the present progressive in the futurate reading at a mean rate of 30\%.

8. Conclusions and future directions

This study investigated aspect in order to test the prototype accounts and the transfer accounts. The sentence types present progressive and simple present were tested in four different contexts, where two of the contexts were prototypical and the other two were not. During the first pass of analysis, when looking at the prototypical meanings of the simple present (habitual and ongoing) and present progressive (ongoing but not habitual), the pattern looked similar to that shown in Gabriele et al. (2015) although the learners showed a higher acceptance rate for the present progressive in the habitual context than the native control group of Gabriele et al. (2015).

However, when looking at the analysis of the extended meanings, in which we investigated the acceptance rates for the sentence types in the habitual context and the temporary habitual context, the results show that the learners also possess knowledge of the extended meanings of the simple present. This is indicative of L1 transfer, although it must be noted that since it is positive evidence, it is difficult to unambiguously determine that the results do not support the Aspect Hypothesis. It could be that the learners are simply advanced enough to have acquired the extended meanings as well, which is why future directions should involve participants at lower stages of proficiency than the present study. The acceptance rates for the present progressive in the temporary habitual context was closer to the pattern of the native control group in Gabriele et al. (2015) than the pattern of acceptance for the present progressive in the habitual was, which could be indicative of L2 transfer. The
acceptance rates of the futurate readings might lend support to L1 transfer, since the pattern is showing a higher acceptance rate for the simple present, a condition that is possible in Swedish, but since the results were not significant this question remains open. Even though the difference was not significant, the retained learners showed even higher acceptance rates for the simple present in the futurate reading. This further strengthens the argument of L1 transfer.

The results of the simple present under all four conditions render support to the transfer account, and the marginal difference detected in the present progressive in temporary habitual versus present progressive in the habitual could be evidence of L2 transfer. There is nothing in particular in the transfer accounts that contradict the possibility of L2 transfer, which means that the results of this study lend support to the transfer accounts in terms of both L1 transfer and the possibility of L2 transfer. Since there was not enough evidence of poorer performance on the extended meanings, the answer to the first research question is: No, L1 Swedish learners do not follow the acquisition pattern of the prototype accounts. This also means that the predictions were not born out. The answer to second research question is: Yes, the results do show evidence of L1 transfer. An interesting study to conduct in the future would be one where more participants are included, preferably at a lower level of proficiency. In such a study, the results could be further supported if there was also a native control group of L1 Swedish speakers that were tested on stimuli translated to Swedish to see what the mean acceptance rates in Swedish would be for the simple present in the different conditions.

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References


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